Leading to Participatory Local Governance?

Participation, Empowerment and Community-Driven Development

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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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I would like to express sincere gratitude to my family members and in-laws for their continuous support and encouragement. Finally, my greatest debt is to my beloved wife Sharifa Iqbal for her sacrifice and support. I must thank my little son Ahnaf for the understanding with which he sacrificed his rights to the moments he could have spent with me.

Although many people and institutions have contributed to this thesis, I alone bear responsibility for its contents and for all the errors and lack of judgment.

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.

Kacha 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).

Pucca 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-*pucca* 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 Alabama[1]

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[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

Source: Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction[2].

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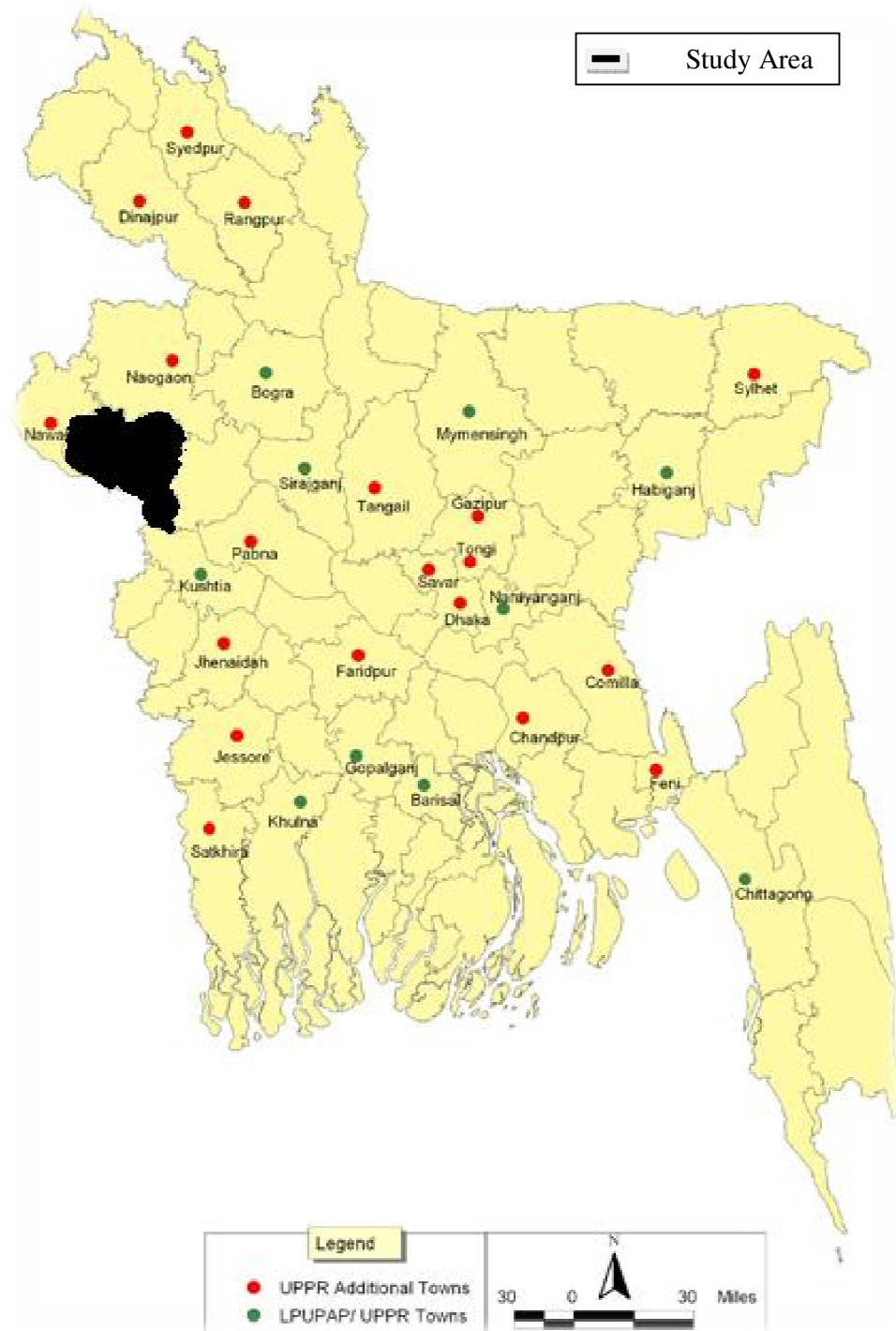
[2]http://www.upprbd.org/Pages.php?TMPID=Q04tMDAz&LTitle=TG9jYXRpb24gb2YgVVBBQUiBQ
cm9qZWN0IFRvd24=. Last visited on 20 January 2012.

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

> *... (LPUPAP aims to) alleviate poverty in the selected urban areas of Bangladesh through the empowerment of poor urban communities and capacity building of local government. (LPUPAP 2007:1)*

1.1. Introduction

Participation and empowerment are two concepts that have gained considerable currency in the contemporary mainstream development language, and are also embedded in social policies and current development practices (Cornwall and Brock 2005; Taylor and Mayo 2008; Ledwith and Springett 2010; Osei-Hwedie and Osei-Hwedie 2010). It is estimated that the World Bank (WB) alone has allocated about 80 billion US dollars towards participatory development projects over the last decade (Mansuri and Rao 2012:2). Besides the WB, various bilateral donors and regional development banks, according to Mansuri and Rao (2012), have spent at least as much, as have the governments of most developing countries. Through many of these development projects, participation and empowerment have been related to the ideas and practices of local governance, which is a relatively more recent development both in theory and practice (Hickey and Mohan 2004; Mansuri and Rao 2004; Ledwith and Springett 2010; Gilchrist and Taylor 2011). However, the concepts of participation and empowerment incur different meanings depending on the use and context (e.g. social, political, institutional and cultural) in which they are applied (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000; Harriss, Stokke *et al*. 2004; Hickey and Mohan 2004; Mansuri and Rao 2004; Cornwall and Brock 2005; Lopez 2006). Therefore, a precise understanding of participation and the underlying processes of empowerment requires a critical analysis of the spaces within which these take place. With this in

perspective, the study examines an ongoing, donor-funded development intervention in Bangladesh—"Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction" (UPPR, 2007-2015), the second phase of the preceding "Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project" (LPUPAP, 2000-2007)—to explore its contributions to community participation and empowerment in moving towards participatory local governance with the aim of reducing urban poverty in a sustainable manner. In doing so, the study focuses not only on the immediate outputs of the project, but also the processes and outcomes in relation to the overall socio-economic, institutional, cultural and political milieu of Bangladesh. The main objective of the study is to explore whether the intervention is contributing to the development of participatory urban local governance process in the Bangladesh context, and in whose interests.

1.2. The Project Background

Over the last half century the world has been experiencing a rapid urbanisation process. Urbanisation is characterised by over concentration of population and economic activities in a few large cities. The process has brought with it an alarming rise in the incidences of urban poverty alongside ever increasing demands for low income housing and provision of basic services, especially in many third world countries like Bangladesh (Banks, Roy *et al*. 2011). In line with the global trend, Bangladesh has been experiencing rapid urbanisation at an estimated annual growth rate of 3.6% and the urban population will be 50 million by the year 2015. It is estimated that in the City Corporation areas in Bangladesh, 35% of the total population live in slums, 43% are ultra-poor and 23% are considered to be extreme poor (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2012). The number of people living in urban slums is expected to double by 2025 (Farhana, Rahman *et al*. 2012). Urban poverty in Bangladesh is generally associated with poor housing arrangements,

danger of flooding, lack of access to potable water and bathing facilities, lack of sanitation facilities, insecurity of tenure, high density and a lack of basic utilities like electricity and supply water (Banks, Roy et al. 2011; Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2012).

Upon realising the urgent need to address urban poverty, the fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) of the Bangladesh government emphasised the role of urban local government and local level participatory planning by stating:

> In the context of it new vision of local government, the present government will entrust the municipalities and City Corporations with enhanced development roles in their respective areas of jurisdiction … Local level participatory planning therefore will start with building a mechanism where people … will provide inputs to the planning process of the country, and people at the grassroots level, through consciencetisation, consultation and participation, will get the scope to determine the local needs and priorities and integrate them into an overall planning exercise of the country through their elected local bodies. (cited in UNDP, UN-HABITAT *et al.* 2002:8)

Accordingly, the country's first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP, 2005-08) also considered addressing urban poverty as one of the key issues. The PRSP emphasised building partnerships and participatory local governance. In response to this state of affairs, a good number of projects are in progress or have already been completed, which directly or indirectly address the issue of local people's participation and institutional strengthening of urban local government bodies. Notable among them are the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP) and the Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project Phase II (STIFPP-II), the World Bank's (WB) the Municipal Services Project (MSP) and the Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund (BMDF), the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID)

Democratic Local Governance Programme (DLGP) and the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) LPUPAP and UPPR.

UNDP supported LPUPAP from 2000 to 2007. This was one of the largest UNDP sponsored projects in Bangladesh, supported by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives. *Pourashavas* (Municipalities)/City Corporations, together with Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) were the implementing agencies of the project, where the UNDP played a facilitator role. The project was implemented in 11 towns with an aim of improving the socio-economic and political status of the urban poor (GHK International 2006). Upon completion of LPUPAP, UPPR has come into operation as the second phase of the former for the time period of November 2007 to March 2015. UPPR is the largest urban poverty reduction initiative in Bangladesh, and one of the largest in the world. The project covers 30 towns and cities (out of 64 district towns) of the country (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2012). Official documents state that UPPR, as it was with LPUPAP, has adopted a community-based, bottom-up and demand-driven approach to achieving its development objectives, so that the poor can improve their socio-economic and political status through their own efforts. Local community groups are involved to identify and prioritise community needs, communicate effectively with local government bodies and participate in designing, implementing and evaluating community level development activities (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2012). More specifically this is a typical community-driven development (CDD) project[3] co-sponsored by UNDP and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). In this context, creating new

[3] CDD is a new type of community-based development approach through which beneficiaries are given more direct control over the project's decision-making, implementation and evaluation process. A comprehensive discussion on CDD approach and practices has been presented in the following chapter two.

community-based organisations and introducing participatory planning and implementation process are integral to the UPPR so that community people can make collective claims on the resources of the programme which would be characterised by popular democracy, accountability and transparency. The intervention intends to support partnership among urban poor community groups, the government, local government bodies, civil society and the private sector (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2006).

All these mean that the project is aimed at promoting participatory local governance practices, as a means of reducing urban poverty, in the selected towns and cities in Bangladesh. The existing body of knowledge suggests that the implementation of UPPR and its outcomes tend to be influenced by many factors; for example, the nature of programme strategies and supports, the extent and nature of community people's participation and the role of local government institutions. In view of these factors, it is particularly important to ask the question, how does the interplay of these factors influence the desired outcomes?

1.3. The Bangladesh Context

Generally the Bangladeshi context of governance—the political history, the political culture and the extent, level and process of decentralisation—is not particularly favourable to the concept and practices of participatory local governance. Situated in South Asia, with a total area of 144,000 square kilometres, Bangladesh is a unitary, independent, sovereign Republic known as the People's Republic of Bangladesh and is home to a total of 160 million people[4]. Bangladesh is bordered in the West, North and East by India, on the South-East by Myanmar (Burma), and on the South by the

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[4] World Development Indicators (2010), World Bank.

Bay of Bengal. It emerged as an independent state on the world map in 1971 with high ideals of democracy and a just society after a bloody liberation war with Pakistani occupiers.

However, the political history and the prevailing political culture resemble a major deviation from pursuing these egalitarian goals. Though the political system of Bangladesh began with a Westminster type[5] parliamentary democracy, it has not yet been institutionalised. Bangladesh did not succeed in establishing freedom of choice and action that could offer people a new orientation towards development (Sobhan 2000). Bangladesh has been identified as one of the most corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International's[6] reports. The political history of Bangladesh, which has been full of traumatic events, can be divided into two distinct periods: authoritarian rule (mostly military rule) from 1972-1990 and democratic rule from 1991 to the present day. Following the downfall of General Ershad's authoritarian regime in December 1990, the nation has experienced the rule of four democratic governments, elected in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008. However, the first three democratic regimes were marked by political instability, and the nation experienced frequent parliament boycotts by opposition parties, nation-wide strikes, short sighted and corrupt political leadership and political violence (Wstergaard 1998:178-79; Islam 2003:189-20). In the recent past, the democratic system came under serious threat when the opposition Awami League refused to take part in the January 2007 national election claiming that the poll would only provoke violence and chaos. Under these circumstances, a military backed caretaker government proclaimed a state of emergency which was in place for two years (2007-2008).

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[5] In essence, Westminster is the name given to the system of parliamentary democracy used in countries such as Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
[6] Transparency International is a global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption (http://www.transparency.org).

Finally, democracy has again been restored after the national parliament election in December 2008. The present on-going regime (2009-present) is also not different, but reflects the continuation of the legacy of the past democratic regimes.

Amid such political struggle, the local government system had gone through a number of attempts at devolution of authority to local bodies through various Presidential Orders, Acts and Ordinances (Siddiqui 2005:287-89). However, the devolution of political power to the local level has been left incomplete in the present system of decentralisation in Bangladesh (Paul and Goel 2010). The constitution of Bangladesh provides provisions for an autonomous local government system and avenues for people's participation in local governance. For example, Article 9 of the constitution, under the Fundamental Principles of the State Policy, states:

> The State shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women.

Nevertheless, the provisions have not been implemented properly and the results of various initiatives, for example, the creation of Gram Sarkar (village government) at the village level by General Ziaur Rahman (1975-1981), the introduction of Upazila Parishad by Lieutenant General Ershad (1982-1990) to bring the administration closer to the local people and promote people's participation, has been frustrating. The frequent changes and experiments have not only destabilised the local government system but caused the system to distance itself from the community it is supposed to serve. Various local self-governance Acts provide spaces for the direct participation of people at the grassroots level, but have not very clearly provided legal sanctity to direct participation of the people. Sobhan (2000) opines that many of the development programmes in the Five Year Plans failed because of the absence

of effective local participation in policy formulation as well as in policy implementation.

This is the overall governance context within which a number of the aforementioned development interventions (along with UPPR) are in operation in order to induce participatory, more pro-poor and responsive urban local governance practices in Bangladesh. Within the given context, I am interested in examining how possible is it for the transformative aspect of CDD to be realised?

1.4. Statement of the Problem

Development intervention is a socially constructed and negotiated on-going process. There is no way to consider development interventions as discrete and localised activities, because interventions are always part of a chain or flow of events located within the broader framework of the activities of the state and/or international development bodies, and the actions of different interest groups (Long 2001:32). According to Long (2001),

> Specific intervention process must therefore be viewed in relation to collective and individual memories (what Bourdieu 1981: 305-6 has called 'objectified' and 'embodied' history) of state-civic society relations, local initiatives and inter-institutional struggles. (Long 2001:33)

Accordingly, Beard and Dasgupta (2006:1464) opine that community level collective action must be understood as part of a milieu of multiscalar social, political and historical factors, both internal and external to a community. All these suggest that we need to look at the UPPR intervention in relation to the overall socio-economic, institutional, cultural and political background of Bangladesh. In this way, the research is not about evaluating the intervention on its own; rather it is an endeavour to understand the context-specific socio-political and institutional realities by putting

the specific intervention within the broader immanent process of development. Immanent development denotes 'development' as a historical process of social change in contrast to 'development' in the form of specific interventions—imminent development (Hickey and Mohan 2004:10).

The urban context, in contrast to rural areas, is generally characterised by the concentration of a large population in relatively small areas, more diversified and heterogeneous professions and occupations of the residents, weaker community feeling among residents marked by a sense of anonymity and aloofness and heavy dependence on the organised infrastructure of civic services (Mukhopadhyay 1993:331). Consequently, the dynamics of community participation in urban areas are diverse and even trickier than in rural areas. Like rural areas, urban poor communities are also characterised by heterogeneous group identity, based on age, sex, religion, ethnicity, income, place of origin and the like (Beard and Dasgupta 2006). As a result, there is a risk of exclusion of some groups in CDD initiatives. Often, this might be the most disadvantaged groups. It is well established that participation could undermine interests of the most disadvantaged groups if development practitioners ignore the socio-economic, cultural and political dimensions of participation (Botes and Rensburg 2000:43-45).

Bamberger (1988) argues that focusing on the poor is relatively easy, but bringing them together to actively participate in a self-sustaining development process is rather difficult because of differences in abilities. For example, differences in socio-economic status, e.g. household income, educational qualification, housing status, traditional male-biased gender relations and so on (Awortwi 1998). In my previous study (Huq 2006) on two low-income settlements in Rajshahi City, Bangladesh, I

found that more than half of the total inhabitants lived below the subsistence level with lower level of educational attainment and poor housing conditions. I also found that traditional gender relations had been serving as an obstacle to the meaningful participation of women in Bangladesh society. So, bringing these disadvantaged people into the main-stream decision-making process and giving them equal opportunities for benefit sharing is one of the challenges for any intervention aimed at reducing poverty through community empowerment and promoting participatory local governance.

Community empowerment and participatory urban local governance are also contingent upon enabling local government. However, local government institutions in Bangladesh face challenges in adopting the practices of participatory local governance mainly due to the colonial administrative legacy (Siddiqui 2005). The administrative system during the colonial era was merely established with an aim to collect revenue and exert control at the very grass-roots level of the society, but not to serve the people in the true sense. In accordance with its historical genesis, the present local government system is also characterised by a weak legal framework, limited autonomy, weak financial strength, poor administrative capabilities and a dysfunctional political culture operating both at the national and local level (Siddiqui 2005). Kamal (2000) claims that the absence of an effective constitutional and political structure to regulate and influence the transparency and accountability of governance impedes the urban poor's ability to project their voices in political change (referred by Banks 2006).

Political culture has also a direct and profound influence on community participation and empowerment. Historically, Bangladesh is a hierarchical society where a

considerable power distance exists between higher and lower classes. The people on the lower rungs are connected to the people on the higher rungs through the relationship of patron-client chains, groupism/factionalism and nepotism/favouritism (Rahman 2000:217-21). These cultural phenomena are also reinforced by the overall political culture in Bangladesh which is characterised by centralisation of leadership, patrimonial attitudes of political parties and leaders, their lack of respect for the democratic institutions, mutual suspicion and betrayal, the arrogance of power, intolerance of opposition and criticism and lack of democratic practices within the respective parties (Ahmed 1995:367-68). Consequently, political support both at the national and local levels as well as policy support is crucial to attain effective participatory governance at local levels.

1.5. Research Objectives

The research objectives derive from the above discussion.

The main objective:

> ➢ To explore whether the UPPR intervention is contributing to the development of participatory urban local governance practices in the context of Bangladesh.

Thus, the sub-objectives of the research are as follows:

> ➢ To identify and analyse the influences of various socio-economic, institutional and political actors and factors on the participatory local governance process in Bangladesh.

- ➤ To explore the nature and the level of community participation, induced by the development intervention, in the local development process.

- ➤ To understand the transformative aspect of community participation in terms of increasing communities' power in participatory local governance.

1.6. Research Questions

In the light of the stated objectives, the questions that the research intends to address are:

- ➤ What processes, actors and important factors influence people's participation in the local governance process?
- ➤ How does the project facilitate community participation in the local governance process?
- ➤ What factors affect participants' ability to acquire and exercise power and control?

1.7. Rationale and the Research Site

The rationale of the research has many aspects. Firstly, I became interested in conducting in-depth research on the outcomes of the project intervention after completing a relatively short-term research project as a part of my M.A in Development Studies completed at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), the Netherlands. My previous research was narrowly focused on identifying the factors that could lead to better community participation. But no serious effort was made to analyse the project-induced participation process by focusing on its outcomes in terms of the promotion of participatory urban local governance. Post-structuralists might argue that a single intervention would not be able to bring about much change, especially when we put an intervention within the wider immanent process of

development. However, the research is inspired by Gaventa's (2004) assertion arguing that specific intervention could be used in places where the necessary pre-conditions for broad based inclusive participation are absent. Interventions can be forwarded to developing such conditions: for example, awareness building on rights and citizenship (political capabilities), building civil associations and social movements and strengthening institutions of governance (Gaventa 2004:33).

Secondly, the recent broadening of a participation agenda, which encompasses institutional issues of governance as well as development policy and practice, requires wider debates and evidences concerning the changing state in relation to processes of democratisation and decentralisation (Hickey and Mohan 2004:4). By referring to their other works, Mansuri and Rao (2012) assert that there is far less evidence on the effectiveness of participatory projects in building sustainable participatory institutions at the local level. Therefore, more research is required. Again, much of the contemporary literature discusses participation where a formal channel of participation does exist in the local governance process (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). But there is a paucity of rigorous research in the context, for example of Bangladesh, where formal channels for participation have been limited or not institutionalised in the local governance process. Moreover, the current scholarship on local governance in Bangladesh is heavily skewed towards rural local government (for example, Huque 1988; Rahman 1991; Ahmed 1993; Morshed 1997; Siddiquee 1997; Khan 2009). A few of the works (for example, Bhuiyan 2004; Panday 2004; Hossain 2007) which deal with urban local governance do not address the issue of people's participation in the governance process.

Thirdly, selecting Bangladesh as a research site for exploring the potential of grass-root participation from the transformation[7] perspective has been interesting in the light of two contesting views held by two authors on the formation of Bangladesh society. Kabeer and Kabir (2009) state that perhaps the most pessimistic view is Wood's (2000) explanation of the problem of governance in Bangladesh. By pointing out the fact that the state in Bangladesh has never been equally accessible to all citizens, Wood (2000) has used the prison analogy to convey the notion of the Bangladeshi society as a 'total institution' which effectively imprisons its inhabitants within relationships of dependence from which there are few avenues of escape. He finally opines that to pursue the 'escape' metaphor, assistance from outside is required. On the contrary, Sobhan (2000) refutes the positive role of the international development agencies in showing concern with problems of democracy, good governance or human rights in dealing with the third world countries. By referring to Sobhan (2000), Kabeer and Kabir (2009) point out that the problems of bad governance in Bangladesh are not inherent in the country's institutions. Though Sobhan (2000) notes that social stratification and with it economic inequality has grown in recent years, he suggests that it is not as deeply embedded within the structures of society in the same way that feudal relationships and caste inequalities are embedded within the social structures of India, Pakistan or Nepal (three neighbouring countries):

> Bangladesh society remains more fluid with considerable scope
> for upward mobility. Few if any people in Bangladesh can
> claim to power through an inherited social legitimacy ...
> Bangladesh's prevailing social hierarchies remain exposed to
> challenge from below as from competing aspirants because the

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[7] Transformation of traditional development practices and, more radically, changes the social relations, institutional practices and minimizing capacity gaps which cause social exclusion (Hickey and Mohan 2004:13). The issue has been further discussed in relation to participation, participation spaces and community empowerment in the following chapter two.

> legitimacy of these differences is not widely accepted. (Sobhan 2000, cited in Kabeer and Kabir 2009:11)

Thus, I find Bangladesh to be a particularly interesting context in which to explore the democratic potential of grass-root participation in the urban local governance process.

Fourthly, as the UPPR is built on the experience of the LPUPAP, the latter was complementary to the Urban Basic Service Delivery Project (UBSDP) which was in operation from 1996 to 2000, supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Likewise, the UBSDP was an extension of the Slum Improvement Project (SIP), a community based effort, which operated from 1985 to 1996 seeking environmental improvement, better primary health care and empowerment of poor women living in urban slums (Huq 2006:22). As a consequence, UPPR intervention can be seen as part of a chain of programmes and projects which have been working in Bangladesh for a long time aimed at reducing urban poverty. UPPR is the only urban based programme in Bangladesh which has attempted a holistic approach to slum improvement and poverty reduction on any scale (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2006). Nonetheless, it appears that there is no independent, in-depth, empirical research focusing on the outcomes of the project. There are two official evaluations highlighting LPUPAP's overall performance. The final evaluation report on LPUPAP states, " ... the Evaluation Team is impressed with the significant achievement of the LPUPAP" (GHK International 2006:65). According to the report, through the city-level representation, exchange and networking the project community organisations have gained a legitimate profile within the urban governance process and are exercising significant influence on community and political leaders. The reports also claim that the project intervention has been

designed and devised appropriately to address the physical environment, social organisation and economic livelihood in order to address urban poverty (GHK International 2006). Nevertheless, according to my previous research experience (Huq 2006) on the project, the reports seem to be less critical in assessing the impact and effectiveness of various components and activities of the project and have failed to consider the interplay of various actors and factors active in the overall community participation and empowerment process. Such inadequacy can be best understood in the words of Long (2001):

> It is seldom the case that evaluations question the whole idea of planned intervention and the rationality of planning, it is usually the farmers, environmental factors or the mysteries of distant commodity markets that are blamed for failure, not the package or the activities of the agency itself. In this way evaluation comes to play a useful role in confirming the self-fulfilling prophecy that interventionist policies are indeed viable and ideologically sound ... (Long 2001:30)

He also adds,

> … most of the time evaluations are conditioned more by the social interests of those involved in manufacturing, promoting, selling and utilizing a particular commodity than by the functions it is assumed to fulfil in the intervention model. (Long 2001:30)

Therefore, there was a pressing need to continue in-depth empirical study on UPPR. By choosing the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) and four project communities within the RCC jurisdiction as units of analysis this study tries to contribute to the contemporary participatory governance discourse by providing important policy lessons in the urban context of Bangladesh. This research explores the practical implications of UPPR-like programmes aimed at poverty alleviation through promoting participatory local governance and empowering local communities in Bangladesh. These implications may also be relevant to other developing countries.

1.8. Chapter Outline

Chapter one sets the background of the research and, thus, also contains the research objectives and research questions, the statement of the problem and the rationale of the research.

Chapter two describes and analyses the research problem in light of the current literature and finally develops an analytical framework of the research.

Chapter three firstly describes the origin, evolution, constitutional basis and functions of the urban municipal bodies in Bangladesh with special focus on the RCC and then moves on to the detailed information on the project.

Chapter four describes in detail the research methodology, research design, data collection and data analysis process, with a detailed description of the study sites (Rajshahi City and the study communities) where fieldwork was carried out.

Chapter five firstly describes and analyses the political-economy in designing the local government system in Bangladesh with special focus on the RCC as an urban local government institution. Thereafter, the chapter describes and analyses the policy-making process of the RCC to identify the actors and important factors in the local governance process with special reference to the forms, scopes and levels of local people's participation in the local governance process.

Chapter six develops an understanding of the socio-economic and political contexts of the study communities by focusing on the processes, actors and important factors that influence people's participation in the community level governance process.

Chapter seven focuses on the project's intervention at the community level. To examine the process of community people's participation in the local development process, the chapter more specifically answers three questions: who participates? why do they participate? and lastly, how do community people participate?

Chapter eight examines what factors influence participants' ability to exercise power and control. In doing so, the chapter explores how members' participation in community groups has influenced the acquisition of socio-economic resources and the changing of socio-political relationships.

Chapter nine draws the conclusion by summarising the research findings followed by discussion on the implications at the societal as well as policy level. The chapter also presents implications for further research.

CHAPTER 2:

PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT-

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Participation essentially concerns the exercise of popular agency in relations to development ... (Hickey and Mohan 2004:3)

2.1. Introduction

UPPR aims to reduce urban poverty in some of the major towns and cities in Bangladesh through promoting community participation and empowering the poor community people within the local governance sphere. Keeping this in mind, the main objective of the study is to explore whether the intervention is contributing to the development of participatory urban local governance practices in the context of Bangladesh. In the preceding chapter I presented the main research problem. The discussion on the research problem indicated that the concepts of participation and empowerment were context specific. Furthermore, the outcomes of the intervention tended to be influenced by the activities of the state/or international development groups, the actions of different interest bodies and, thus, by the overall socio-economic, institutional, cultural and political environment.

My aim in this chapter is to develop a conceptual framework for analysing the issues related to the research questions. Here I introduce and discuss various key concepts and outline the particular perspectives to understand and analyse the shift towards participatory local governance in the study area. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section I commences with a brief retrospective on the ways in which the notions of community participation have been used within the development theories and practices. This includes mostly the historical literature. Following this more

descriptive section of the chapter, I move on to Section II to discuss various key concepts and adopt particular perspectives and analytical frameworks that I use to understand and analyse the project intervention. In Section III, I introduce the reader to the theoretical underpinning of the study that is best suited to understanding and analysing the issues identified in the first two sections.

Section I: Understanding the Subject Matter

This research is about participatory local governance. The discussion in the previous chapter shows that a number of development projects are in progress or have already been completed that are directly or indirectly linked to the promotion of participatory local governance practices in Bangladesh. This section introduces the reader to how the current participatory development thinking and practices have been intertwined with the local governance process. This sets the overall background upon which the main research objective and questions have been drawn. The section starts off the discussion on the evolution of the approaches and forms of participation. It is followed by the discussion on how the new approaches of community participation have given rise to a new form of citizens' involvement in the governance process and the creation of new participation spaces. Afterwards, it sheds light on how the new participatory approaches have been captured in recent development practices in the form of Community-Driven Development (CDD).

2.2. Participation in Development

Participation in development has a longer historical legacy than is sometimes thought (Binswanger-Mkhize, Aiyar *et al*. 2010:27-71). The ideas and practices of participatory development have been generated and re-generated and thus evolved based on different schools of thought, institutional agenda and changing political

circumstances (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:14; Hickey and Mohan 2004:5-6). According to Hickey and Mohan (2004:5-9) different approaches to participation can be best characterised and compared by examining (a) the locus and level of engagement that the participatory approaches focus on e.g. individual/institution, micro/macro; (b) the ideological underpinnings and political motives of different approaches to participation; (c) forms of citizenship ideas that have been promoted through different approaches—whether they try to promote liberal forms of citizenship or communitarian forms, and whether the emphasis is on participation as a right (alternative development) or as an obligation of citizenship (community development); and (d) links to development theory. In the following discussion the evolution of participatory approaches and the development of participatory practices have been discussed in light of the above four factors.

Community development movement in third world countries during the 1940s-1970s was the first ancestor of the notion of community participation seen in the present day's participatory development practices. Missionaries and colonial officers first proposed the introduction of community development in the British colonies during the 1920s-1930s (Smyth 2004). By referring to Mayo (1975), Midgley (1986) describes the context and interests of the colonial administration in which community development took place. Community development initiatives were used on the one hand to 'civilise' indigenous people, and on the other hand to exert control and exploit resources in the name of self-help. Thus, in response to the missionaries' efforts to promote education in Africa, the report on Mass Education in the Colonies of the Advisory Committee on Native Education, formed in 1923, by the Colonial Office in London, emphasised self-help to promote various services like education, health, agriculture and so on. The British government implemented

several recommendations of the report and established community development programmes in many African countries (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:17-18). As Bhattacharyya (1970) observes (referred by Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:18), the inspiration for establishing a community development programme also came from indigenous sources as well; for example, the utopian experiment of Rabindronath Tagore (1861-1941) and the Gandhian (1869-1948) notion of village self-reliance and small-scale development in India during the 1920s (Mansuri and Rao 2004:4; Rahman 2006).

Drawing upon the experience of British community development initiatives in Africa and India, the United Nations (UN) and US governments modified and reinvigorated community development programmes, spreading to more than sixty countries, mostly in the newly independent post-colonial countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, including Bangladesh. The UN's policy documents during the 1950s and 1960s actively supported the promotion of community development activities in the third world countries. The post-war development thinking and practices were very much influenced by the modernisation theories which treated people as objects of various development programmes. Therefore, participation meant people's contribution only in the form of labour or cash in kind. Moreover, the US aid programme was predominantly aimed at continuing subversive influences in the newly independent countries in order to resist the rise of the communist movement (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:18; Nelson and Wright 1997:2-3; Mansuri and Rao 2004:4). As such, the notion and spirit of those community development initiatives were pretty much aligned with the traditional state-led, top-down models of development where citizenship was viewed in communitarian forms and participation as an obligation of citizenship.

In line with the global trend, during the 1950s the community development programme in the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was supported under the auspices of the Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (V-AID) which was strongly backed by UN and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Ahmed 1986; Hussain 1996). As an aid-dependent programme it was abandoned in 1961 when the USA withdrew its support. It is worthwhile mentioning here that during the years 1956 to 1958 East Pakistan had to face a great food-shortage which turned into serious famine. In 1958 when Field Marshal Ayub Khan became president of Pakistan by imposing Marshal Law, he tried to obtain his legitimacy through increased food production and employment, and took up reforming the local self-government system[8] with all seriousness. He was fortunate enough to get food help from the USA under PL 480[9] to rescue the nation from the invading famine conditions. As such, a new community development programme named the Rural Works Programme (RWP) was introduced in the early 1960s with complete dependence on PL 480. The programme was politically motivated in that it sought to benefit the regime in power as well as the donors. Helping the farm labourers with employment was meant to bring them into the fold of the government's political patronage network. Moreover, construction of physical infrastructures through local committees meant distribution of favours among the local political elites who would support the political slogans and programmes of the military government (Ahmed 1986).

Despite the rapid growth and interest in community development among international development agencies, cynicism with its achievement began to grow in

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[8] The reform initiatives are discussed in sub-section 3.2.2 in chapter three.
[9] This is a US government food assistance programme. US support for overseas food aid was formalised in the Agricultural Trade Development and assistance Act of 1954. It is also known as Public Law 480 (PL 480) or Food for Peace.

the early 1970s (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:18). This cynicism has been a factor in the Bangladesh experience of development as well. Community development programmes started to shut down for many reasons (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:18-19; Mansuri and Rao 2004:4). First, at that time literature on development policy became very influenced by the works of Olson (1965) and Hardin (1968). Olson (2002) argued:

> ... unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests. (Olson 2002:2)

He was also concerned with the 'exploitation of the great by the small' (Olson 2002:3). Hardin (1968) described a dilemma in which multiple individuals acting independently in their own self-interest could ultimately destroy a shared limited resource, even when it was clear that it was not in anyone's long term interest for this to happen. Like Hardin (1968), Demsetz (1970) and North (1990) argued that without state regulation and control, common property resources could be overexploited. All these ideas greatly influenced the policy of various development agencies regarding the non-viability of local collective action in provisioning public goods and created a strong drive for the state-led provision of public goods, centrally managed and regulated common-pool resources, and an emphasis on development of private property rights. Second, many governments in the third world countries failed to provide financial support to community development programmes as donors' funding for these programmes mostly dried up in the early 1960s because of their loss of interest. This was also a cause for the abandonment of the V-AID programme in the former East Pakistan. Third, people gradually recognised these programmes as mere slogans which brought them minimal benefits. Fourth, civil servants in many

aid recipient countries started to consider community development programmes to be an unimportant field of public services. Fifth, these programmes were associated with widespread corruption and mismanagement. A 1977 study reported that the Food-for-Work Programme, a variant of the Rural Works Programme (RWP), in Bangladesh was distinguished by the misappropriation of grain, misuse of funds, false reporting of works, the creation of a new class of profiteer, poor quality construction etc. (cited in Ahmed 1986:89). As a consequence, the first wave of participatory development in the form of community development programme faded away by the 1970s, both in theory and practice.

However, by the early 1980s critiques against state-led, top-down models of development started to rise up, because many of the large scale government-led development programmes were seen to be ineffective and inefficient because of the alienation of beneficiaries. Being inspired by the theory of neighbourhood democracy, populist notions and to some extent anarchism (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:15-16), many development thinkers and practitioners, like Chambers (1983), Escobar (1995) and Scott (1998) (cited in Mansuri and Rao 2004:5), began to argue for self-sufficiency instead of depending on top-down provisioning of services by the state. There had been an argument for people not to be dependent on the state but through Participatory Action Research (PAR) to define their own development. During the 1970s many international NGO-led programmes attempted to bring self-sufficiency through income-generating projects, though many also failed to bring about the expected results (Nelson and Wright 1997:3).

The emphasis on popular participation in UN thinking was formalised with the publication of two major UN policy documents: Popular Participation in

Development (1971) and Popular Participation in Decision Making for Development (1975) which offered a formal definition of the concept with reference to its implementation. The publication of those reports was followed by major research in popular participation by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva. Later on resolutions adopted at the World Conference on Women (1975) further reinforced the idea of popular participation (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986:22).

Gradually the notion of popular participation started to diffuse into more specific conceptions of community level involvement. The Declaration on Primary Health Care adopted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1977 emphasised community participation in health service provisioning. During the 1970s, the idea of popular participation also attracted attention from those engaged in housing and urban development, and, thus, the WB revised its housing policy in 1975 towards more self-help based community level engagement (Midgley, Hall *et al*. 1986). Upon the failure of the WB's Structural Adjustment Programme in most of the third world countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the 1980s, demand for popular participation started to come from various southern grass-roots organisations, leading personalities from the third world and academics (Nelson and Wright 1997:3-4). At that time development thinking was much influenced by the participatory movement led by Chambers (1983) and the work of Hirschman (1970, 1984), Cernea (1985), Ostrom (1990), Escober (1995) and Scott (1998), who argued for the active participation of beneficiaries at all stages of development programmes through locally managed collective action. Sen's 'Capability Approach', which emphasises the importance of

freedom of choice, individual heterogeneity and the multi-dimensional nature of welfare, also deeply influenced development thought (Mansuri and Rao 2012:2).

Consequently, various development agencies, like Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), German Agency for Development Co-operation (GTZ) and WB started to produce and adopt specific definitions, approaches and guidelines for participatory development. By 1990, all the bilateral agencies had policies on participation (Nelson and Wright 1997:4-5). The WB's World Development Report (2000/2001) put empowerment of the poor as the central aim of development policy. All these together have led to the rise of community-based participatory development efforts among the international development agencies. In this form, the locus and engagement of participation primarily focuses on the micro and individual level with a view to promoting a liberal form of citizenship where participation has been considered as a right. The second wave of participatory development, which gained momentum in the 1990s, tends to be informed by social transformation (Hickey and Mohan 2004). Table 1 summarises the above discussion drawn from the work of Hickey and Mohan (2004).

To sum up, different approaches and forms of participation can be best understood on the basis of four criteria: locus and level of engagement; ideological underpinnings and political motives; forms of citizenship; and links to development theories. The first wave of interests and practices of participation and self-help stemmed from the promoters' interests in exerting control, exploiting resources and attaining the contribution of the local people in the form of labour and cash in kind. The interest faded away in the 1970s for a number of reasons, ranging from changes

in development theories to programme mismanagement. The second wave of interest in participatory development which gained momentum in the 1990s through a long trajectory of changes both in the development theories and practices has placed empowerment and the promotion of a liberal form of citizenship at the centre. Hence, this new approach to participation has been informed with the notion of social transformation. This meant situating participation within the wider sphere of local governance (Ledwith and Springett 2010:90-93). In this context, the main objective of the study is to explore whether the UPPR intervention has been contributing to the development of the participatory urban local governance process in the Bangladeshi context.

Table 1: Participation in Development Theory and Practice: A Selective History

Era	Approach	Institutional and intellectual influence	Development Theory: approach to immanent processes and imminent interventions	Approach to citizenship	Locus/ level of engagement
1940s-1950s	Community development	United Kingdom Colonial Office 1944 Report on Mass Education in Africa	*Immanent* (Re)production stable rural communities to counteract processes of urbanization and socio-political change, including radical nationalist and leftist movements *Imminent* Development requires participation and self-reliance; cost-sharing. *Animation rurale*, adult literacy and extension education, institution-building, leadership training, development projects.	Participation as an obligation of citizenship; citizenship formed in homogeneous communities	Community
1960s-1970s	Community development (post-colonial)	Post-colonial governments (social welfare or specialized departments)	*Immanent* As above; also development of state hegemony, moral economy of state penetration Imminent As above; also health, education		
1960s	Political participation	North American political science	*Immanent* Political development dimension of modernization theory. Participation as securing stability, legitimacy for new states and strengthening the political system. *Imminent* Voter education; support for political parties	Participation (e.g. voting, campaigning, political party membership) as a right and an obligation of citizenship	Political system and constituent parts; citizens

1960s-1970s	Emancipatory participation (EP)	Radical 'southern' educationalists. Freire, Fals Borda, Rahman	*Immanent* Analyse and confront 'structures of oppression' within existing forms of economic development, state formation, political rule and social differentiation	Participation as a right of citizenship; participatory citizenship as a means of challenging subordination and marginalization	Economic and civic spheres; communities; citizens
	Liberation theology (LT)	2nd Vatican Council, Latin American Catholic priests. Gutierrez, Sobrino	*Imminent* EP: Participatory action research, conscientization, popular education, support for popular organizations LT: Form base Christian communities, training for transformation, popular education		
1970s-1990s	'Alternative development'	Dag Hammarskjold Conference 1974. Development Dialogue, IFAD Dossier. Nerfin, Friedmann	*Immanent* Critique of 'mainstream' development as exclusionary, impoverishing and homogenizing; proposal of alternatives based around territorialism, cultural pluralism and sustainability *Imminent* Popular education; strengthen social movements and self-help groups	Participation as a right of citizenship; citizenship as a key objective of alternative development, to be realized in multi-level political communities	Initially focused on communities and civic society, latterly the state through 'inclusive governance'
1980s-present	Populist/ Participation in development	Development professionals, NGOs (e.g. MYRADA, IIED, World Bank Participation Learning Group, UN Agencies. Chambers	*Immanent* Little direct engagement; implicit critique of modernization *Imminent* Failure of top-down projects and planning; participation required to empower people, capture indigenous people's knowledge, ensure sustainability and efficiency of interventions. Participatory rural/urban appraisal, learning and action, monitoring and evaluation; NGDO projects.	Focus on participation in projects rather than in broader political communities	Development professionals and agencies; local participants
Mid-1990s-present	Social Capital	World Bank Social Capital and Civil Society Working Group. Putnam, Bourdieu, Narayan	*Immanent* Social capital promoted as a basis for economic growth *Imminent* Local institution building, support participation in networks and associations	Participation as a right and obligation of citizenship	Civic associations
Late 1990s-present	Participatory governance and citizenship	Participatory Research and Action (Delhi), Institute for Development Studies, Brighton (Participation Group)	*Immanent* Development requires liberal or social democracy, with a responsive state and strong civil society. Some focus on social justice *Imminent* Convergence of 'social' and 'political' participation, scaling-up of participatory methods, state-civic partnerships, decentralization, participatory budgeting, citizens' hearings, participatory poverty assessments, PRSP consultations	Participation as primarily a right of citizenship	Citizens, civil society, state agencies and institutions

Source: Hickey and Mohan (2004:6-8)

2.3. The Recent Interest in Participatory Local Governance

Harries, Stokke, *et al.* (2004) convincingly outline how the current approaches of participatory development are intertwined with and favourable to the process of globalisation and the changing political circumstance since the 1990s. The complex process of globalisation has been reinforcing the transformation of state power and politics in such a way that localisation of politics has become an integral part of restructuring of nation states. Globalisation has integrated many of the nation states into global networks, flows and the global market. Global market forces together with the pressure of neo-liberal discourses have forced many nation states to undergo the processes of 'de-statisation' (e.g. market liberalisation) and 'de-nationalisaton' (e.g. decentralisation, devolution and privatisation). As a result of these processes, the primacy of local level politics has increased. The process of de-concentration of state power to local levels is reasonably favoured by many supra-national institutions like the WB. This is partly due to the WB's recognition that the Structural Adjustment Policy in third world countries during the 1980s failed because of poor governance. Consequently, the 'good governance' agenda is now supported and promoted by most of the international donors and development agencies for securing transparency and accountability in the governance process. It is claimed that one of the effective ways of attaining transparency and accountability is by bringing the state closer to people (Harriss, Stokke *et al.* 2004:1-8).

By referring to a number of studies, for example, Clark and Stewart (1998), Commonwealth Foundation's Voices of the Poor (1999), the WB's World Development Report 2000/01, and the work of some scholars, for example, Skocpol (2003) and Fung and Wright (2001), Gaventa (2004:25-28) states that the gap between ordinary people and state institutions has been growing not only in the south

but also in many northern countries. This indicates the ineffectiveness of liberal democratic mechanisms in many of those countries. The political representation system of electoral democracy seems to fail there in accomplishing some central ideas of democratic politics, like the active political participation of citizens, building consensus through dialogue, bringing equity and so on (Fung and Wright 2003:3). Therefore, focus has turned to participatory mechanisms that are represented as extending and going beyond the limits of representative, electoral democracy (Harriss, Stokke *et al.* 2004:7).

The discussion on the evolution of participatory approaches in theory and practice in the preceding sub-point 2.2 indicated that though the concept of participation was not new in the development discourse and practice, it was relatively recently that the concept was increasingly being related to the right of citizenship and democratic governance (Tesoriero 2010; Taylor 2011). Since the 1990s, there has been growing interest around the world in involving citizens more directly in the governance process (Cornwall 2002:49). This interest has given rise to new spaces for participation as well as new frames of participation under the concepts of 'participatory governance', 'citizenship participation' or 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung and Wright 2003:5; Gaventa 2003:4). This new form of participation calls for a reconfiguration of relationships and responsibilities between the citizens and state through participation in the newly created spaces (Cornwall 2002:50).

The above discussion points out that globalisation together with the process of 'de-statisation' and 'de-nationalisation' are two of the major factors that have brought forward the importance of creating participatory spaces to minimise the gap between

ordinary people and state institutions. UPPR is such an endeavour within the Bangladesh context which is trying to promote community participation in local governance by creating new intermediary spaces.

2.4. New Spaces for Participation

The notion of citizen participation spaces is born out of the tendency in the development discourse to use spatial metaphors when addressing participation in development. According to Cornwall:

> Efforts to engage participation can be thought of as creating spaces where there were previously none, about making room for different opinions to be heard where there were previously none, (or where) there were very limited opportunities for public involvement, and about enabling people to occupy spaces that were previously denied to them. (Cornwall 2002:2)

A classification of citizen participation spaces has been developed by the Institute of Development Studies' (IDS) Participation, Power and Social Change Group based on who creates them and why they are created. This classification suggests a continuum of spaces (Gutierrez 2006:15-16), which includes:

Closed Spaces: Closed spaces are those (official/unofficial) where decisions are made behind closed doors by only few people or interest groups. One of the examples of this type of space is local decisions made by the local authorities in a highly centralised governance system.

Invited Spaces: These are the spaces (formal/informal) which are mainly created by various developmental agents, e.g. government, donor or NGOs, and people are being invited to participate in the decision-making process. Community groups formed under the auspices of UPPR is one of the examples of such invited spaces.

Claimed Spaces: These spaces (formal/informal) are spontaneously created by the people themselves who seek greater power and influence. Cornwall (2003) refers to these spaces as 'organic' spaces which emerge 'out of sets of common concerns' (referred by Gutierrez 2006:16). Various professional associations are one type of claimed spaces.

According to Cornwall (2002), participation spaces are not neutral, rather the internal and surrounding power relations shape the boundary of participation spaces and thus determine 'what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests' (Gaventa 2004:34). Using this understanding of power and space, Gaventa (2004) suggests that in order to assess the transformative possibility of political space we need to have a closer look at three differing continuums of power: how spaces are created; the places and levels of engagement; and the degree of visibility of power within them.

The first thing, according to Gaventa (2004), is to examine the space in terms of its origin. For example, who has created the space, under what circumstances, in whose interest, and with what terms of engagement? However, investigations are not limited only to these; rather it is equally important to examine the dynamic relationships among various spaces. In the words of Gaventa:

> … spaces exist in dynamic relationship to one another, and are constantly opening and closing through struggles for legitimacy and resistance, cooptation and transformation. Closed spaces may seek to restore legitimacy by creating invited spaces; similarly, invited spaces may be created from the other direction, as more autonomous people's movements attempt to use their own for engagement with the state. Similarly, power gained in one space, through new skills, capacity and experiences, can be used to enter and affect other spaces…the transformative potential of spaces for participatory governance must always be assessed in relationship to the other spaces which surround them. (Gaventa 2004:34)

The places and levels of engagement are concerned with how and by whom the spaces for participation are shaped and how they intersect, as well with debates on the places, or arenas, where critical social, political and economic power reside (Gaventa 2004:36). That means it is important to analyse the interrelationship between local, national and global levels. These levels and arenas of engagement are constantly shifting in relation to each other as they are dynamic and interwoven. For instance, local actors may use global fora as areas of action (e.g. Narmada Dam; Chiapas) and *vice-versa*.

The third important issue to address while examining the transformative possibility of a space is analysing the dynamics of power that gives meaning to participation. Here the 'three dimensions of power'[10] is worthwhile considering (Gaventa 2004:37):

- more pluralist approaches to power, in which contests over interests are assumed to be visible in public spaces, which in turn are presumed to be relatively open;

- a second dimension of power, in which the entry of certain interests and actors into public spaces is privileged over others through a prevailing 'mobilisation of bias' or rule of the game; and

- a third dimension of power, in which visible conflict is hidden through internalisation of dominating ideologies, values and forms of behaviour.

Therefore, the three types of participatory spaces, e.g. closed, invited and claimed are differently featured by power dynamics. Consequently, to assess the transformative possibility of political spaces created under UPPR intervention, it is important to examine how the community-based organisations/groups have been created; the

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[10] The three dimensions of power are discussed in detail in Section II of this chapter.

places and levels of engagement of the participants, as the occupants of the spaces, to other spaces; and the interplay of different forms of power, such as visible, hidden and invisible within the spaces.

2.5. Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation

Participation, for some, is a transformative concept where the purpose is collective action for social change (Ledwith and Springett 2010:14-15; Osei-Hwedie and Osei-Hwedie 2010). Despite the great potential of participation as a means of combating many of the social and political problems like social exclusion, political apathy and uneven distribution of resources, the second wave of participatory development practices have also been criticised severely during the last two decades. Many have portrayed participatory development—the way it has been managed—as tyranny. Some of such tyrannies have been highlighted by Cooke and Kothari (2001), and Miller and Rein (2011). According to Hicky and Mohan (2004:11), the backlash against participatory development generally has four lines of arguments: first, failing to relate local issues with the broader structure; second, inadequate understanding of power relations; third, limited understanding of the role of structure and agency in social change; finally, treating participation as a technical method rather than as a political methodology of empowerment. However, Hickey and Mohan (2004) and Ledwith and Springett (2010) indicate that certain approaches of participation, located within the immanent process of development, possess the potential of transformation.

'Transformation' in this context means transformation of traditional development practices (top-down or the old generation community development) and, more radically, changes in social relations, institutional practices and minimisation of

capacity gaps which cause social exclusion (Hickey and Mohan 2004:13). From this perspective, it might seem that transformation is meant to be a radical power reversal in social relations. But, the writings of Williams (2004), Masaki (2004), Cornwall (2004) and Ledwith and Springett (2010) signify such a narrow understanding of 'transformation' might detain us from understanding the subtle process of 'transformation'; because 'transformation' does not necessarily involve a radical reversal of power relations but a strengthening of the bargaining power of the disadvantaged within the relations.

To be transformative as Hickey and Mohan (2004:12) argue, firstly, participation must be based on clear ideological exposure and sound theoretical background and secondly, it must be involved in changing both institutions and structures. It is becoming evident that deepening democratic governance needs to work both sides of the equation: strengthening the process of citizen participation through mobilisation and building the political capabilities of the participants, and on the other hand, changing institutional designs to make public institutions more responsive to citizens' demands (Gaventa 2003:2). Thus,

> ... the transformative potential of localized participatory approaches are conditional to broader political change … [that] reach beyond the local, involving multi-scaled strategies that are operationalized at all levels—individual, structural and institutional—and are linked to a radical development project. (Hickey and Mohan 2004:14-15)

Here we find that although the practices of participation in development have been criticised severely, a few of the authors claim that participatory spaces can be transformative when participation is coincided with changes in the capabilities of the participants and also in institutions conducive to democratic governance.

2.6. Community Driven Development (CDD): A Pathway to Transformation?

At the operational level, the new approaches of participation have been adopted through CDD. CDD is a new type of community-based development (CBD)[11] approach through which beneficiaries are given more direct control over project decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes. It supports collective action, community empowerment, and demand-driven local service delivery. Thus, it is concurrent with the globalisation induced 'de-statisation' and 'de-nationalisation' processes discussed in the earlier subsection 2.3. In recent times, this is one of the most popular mechanisms among donor communities for channelling development resources to developing countries (Mansuri and Rao 2012).

The proponents of the CDD approach claim that it is a response to the failure of previous CBD approaches, for example, Community Development, Integrated Rural Development (World Bank 2000:5) and Area Development Programmes (Binswanger-Mkhize, de Regt *et al*. 2009:1), and also the recognition of the fact that poverty is not only a lack of income, but also a combination of many other factors of human life. The World Development Report 2000 (Attacking Poverty) admits that poverty also results from lack of voice, lack of empowerment and lack of good governance. The report highlights the importance of having broader approaches to poverty reduction initiatives. CDD, as generally claimed by its promoters, is such an approach which embraces multi-prong strategies in addressing local development issues.

The CDD approach in local development obtained consolidation and wide

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[11] CBD is an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of projects that actively include beneficiaries in their design, management and implementation.

recognition in the Local Development Conference in 2004 (Binswanger-Mkhize, de Regt *et al*. 2009:1). According to Dongier, Domelen *et al*. (2002), CDD is an approach that confers upon community groups better control over planning, decisions and investment resources for local development projects. The most operative and distinguishing words here are 'approach' and 'control over planning, decision and resources', which make CDD different from the other versions of community-based participatory projects. Nonetheless, this definition requires some explanation to delineate the differences between the older generation of CBD and CDD projects.

The first difference is that CDD is an approach and a process—'not a project' (Binswanger-Mkhize, de Regt *et al*. 2009:3)—which can be applied to various socio-economic contexts to revitalise democratic local governance and participation (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 2004:2). Secondly, it gives community groups more authority and control over resources to enrich social capital and strengthen the accountability of all actors in local development. Often the community groups work in partnership with other actors in local development, e.g. local government, national or regional government agencies, NGOs and the private sector (Dahl-Ostergaard, Moore *et al*. 2003:1), where local communities and local governments remain in the driving seat in the overall development process and are bestowed a new set of powers, rights and obligations. These include (Binswanger and Nguyen 2005:2):

- the right to be treated as people with capabilities, not as objects of pity;
- the power to plan, implement and maintain projects to serve their self-identified needs;
- the right to hold politicians and officials accountable;

- the power to command local bureaucrats instead of being supplicants;
- the power to hire, pay and discipline those who provide frontline services;
- the right to a share of central government revenue;
- the power to levy user charges and local taxes;
- the obligation to enable women, ethnic minorities, the poorest and other excluded groups to participate in economic development;
- the obligation to be accountable to local people, not just central governments or donors.

Consequently, Binswanger-Mkhize, de Regt *et al*. (2009:3) observe:

> Bringing about local and community-driven development is not a project; it entails a deep transformation of political and administrative structures that aims to empower communities and local governments with powers and with resources and the authority to use these flexibly and sustainably, thus enabling them to take control of their development.

Since local development is a co-production of communities, local governments, and supportive sector institutions, with collaboration from the private sector and non-government organisations (Binswanger-Mkhize, de Regt *et al*. 2009:1), CDD emphasises community empowerment, enabling the local governments and synergy among government and non-government efforts (including NGOs and the private sector) in local development to make the local development process self-sustaining (Kumar 2003:5). Consequently, CDD integrates four alternative approaches to local development: Decentralised Sectoral, Local Government, Civil Society/private Sector Development and Direct Community Support (Binswanger and Nguyen 2005:2; Binswanger-Mkhize, de Regt *et al*. 2009:2). The theoretical underpinnings of CDD come from three theoretical propositions in the development literature: decentralisation, democratisation and collective action (Beard and Dasgupta 2006).

Since the mid-1990s the CDD approach has emerged as one of the fastest growing

investments by NGOs, aid organisations and multilateral developments banks (Mansuri and Rao 2004; Platteau 2004; Dasgupta and Beard 2007). The WB's lending for such projects increased from US$325 million in 1996 to $2 billion in 2003 (Mansuri and Rao 2004:2). During the years 2000-2005, approximately 190 projects worth up to $9.3 billion US dollars have been supported by the Bank (Tanaka, Singh *et al*. 2006). The scale of some CDD projects, for example, Kecamatan Development Program (KDP) in Indonesia, the KALAHI project in the Philippines, and the Northern Mountains Poverty Reduction Program (NMPRP) in Vietnam are especially notable. The success of many of these projects has been described on the WB's official website[12]. As with the global trend, the WB's engagement in CDD in Bangladesh began with the Social Investment Program Project (SIPP) in 2003. According to the WB, the project demonstrated that a CDD approach was an effective mechanism for enhancing poor people's voices and improving local governance in Bangladesh. It is also claimed that the experience of CDD operations in Bangladesh demonstrated a high development impact on participatory planning and monitoring that also helped to reduce corruption at the local level (World Bank 2010). The Bank has been continuing to support SIPP-II in a larger number of districts in Bangladesh. Besides the WB, it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter that various international development agencies, for example, Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), Asian Development Bank (ADB), UK Department for International Development (DFID) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are sponsoring a number of CDD projects including UPPR in Bangladesh.

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[12]http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/EASTASIAPACIFICEXT/EXTEA PREGTOPSOCDEV/0,,contentMDK:20327355~menuPK:746774~pagePK:34004173~piPK:3400370 7~theSitePK:502940,00.html (last accessed on 15 June 2012).

The above discussion on CDD shows that this particular approach to participatory development seems to be informed by changes in relationships between the participants and the state institutions. Therefore, it holds the promise of transformative participation where the participants become 'makers and shapers' instead of being the mere object of development. However, a number of studies (for example, Cooke and Kothari 2001; Platteau and Gaspart 2003; Mansuri and Rao 2004; Platteau 2004; Dasgupta and Beard 2007; Dill 2009) suggest that many of the large scale CDD projects are indulged with lack of organisational capacity at the community level as well as lack of ownership of the projects by the beneficiaries. Projects are susceptible to elite capture because participants come from unequal positions of power. The contemporary development literature suggests that local elites may distort the outcomes of participatory processes by biasing local decisions and resources toward their own self-interested preferences (Labonne and Chase 2009). Despite the inherent potential for elite domination, a number of studies (for example, Owen and Domelen 1998; Domelen 2002; Dasgupta and Beard 2007), however, show that a large majority of social fund/CDD projects succeeded in addressing at least one of the pressing local needs and were distinguished by high levels of beneficiary satisfaction. While most analyses define elite domination as inherently pernicious to community participation, Dasgupta and Beard's study (2007) calls to distinguish between 'elite capture' (project decisions, planning and resources are monopolised by the elites—total control) and 'elite control' (where the project planning and decisions are controlled by the elites but are participatory and democratic. The elites remain accountable to the beneficiaries. This could be termed as 'benevolent control'). By considering the fact that elite domination is frequent in CDD projects, Fritzen (2007) argues that greater attention needs to be paid to learn

what mechanisms may raise the likelihood that elites will play constructive roles in CDD.

To conclude, CDD has become a well-practiced development approach in recent times. It is claimed, especially in theory, that this particular approach is favourable to address the transformative aspect of participation. However, the above discussion, drawn on existing literature lucidly points out the complexities of the CDD approach in achieving the desired development outcomes in practice. Various research findings presented above warrant the importance of having closer and more subtle analysis of the various socio-political and cultural factors and concepts in addressing the research questions in relation to the UPPR project intervention.

Section II: Discussion on the Key Concepts

The discussion of this thesis so far has brought forward a number of key issues concerning the research topic that should be precisely understood in order to answer the research questions. Therefore, the aim of this section is to discuss some important concepts and define their implications for this study, for example, community, community participation, gender and participation, participatory local governance and empowerment.

2.7. Community

Within the CDD approach, community is one of the focal units of intervention. In development practices, community is often perceived as synonymous with neighbourhood, and as a 'natural' social unit. As Yuval-Davis (1994:181) observes 'the notion of "the community" as an organic wholeness. The community is perceived as a "natural" social unit. It is "out there" where one can either belong to or not'.

This limited view of community might lead to the failure of development interventions (Guijt and Shah 1998:7-8). In reality, rural as well as urban communities, bounded by definite geographical areas, are a complex arena of interaction, where various groups (men, women, youth, children, poor, rich, landowners, landless, permanent residents, renters, etc.) co-operate or compete with each other as a strategy of their livelihood. By referring to Smith (1990), Abbott (1995:164) notes that the notion of a community is always something of a myth. A community implies a coherent entity with a clear identity and a commonality of purpose. The reality is that communities, more often than not, are made up of an agglomeration of factions and interest groups often locked in competitive relationships.

Nevertheless, many geographically identified communities have some distinguishing characteristics in terms of everyday practices, religion, place of origin, occupation and the economic condition of their inhabitants. In any case, that is the assumption in many projects such as UPPR, which assumes that geographically defined communities are also communities in a social sense. These community specific characteristics usually make a sense of belongingness and obligation of a member to a certain community. For this study, these distinguishable features among communities are important to consider. In a broader context, these community specific characteristics determine the level of co-operation, competition, or cohesion within the community which, in turn, again influences the functioning of collective action taken by the members of the community. In this study I define community to mean geographically bounded areas in accordance with the project specific jurisdiction.

2.8. Community Participation

The research is about community participation in relation to local governance, and thus, it is one of the central themes of this thesis. Generally, community participation is a process wherein people in the community have access to decision-making, implementation and benefit sharing. But, the concept of community participation is contested, and there is no clear and commonly agreed definition. The confusion is more about 'when' and 'how' to achieve it, rather than why participation is necessary (Mukhopadhyay 1993:341). Accordingly, Hickey and Mohan (2004:4) opine that the locus of discussion on participation has shifted more on the mainstreaming of participatory approaches to development than arguing for or against participatory approaches in contestation with top-down, technocratic, blueprint planning of state-led modernisation approaches. And more recently, as Ledwith (2010:13) asserts, 'participation is a way of life, a way of seeing the world and a way of being in the world'.

For Moser (1983), it is important to see whether the notion of participation is a 'means' to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of a project by incorporating local knowledge and resources, or an 'end' where participation itself is counted as a goal, so that a community could have greater control over resources and regulative institutions in a given social situation which ultimately requires redistribution of power. There is a recent great impetus all over the world to seek participation as an end in itself (Miller and Rein 2011:90). Nonetheless, the practical application of such normative differentiation is rather difficult. Therefore, in reality, as Moser (1983) notes, it is not the evaluation of participation either as a means or as an end which is important, but the identification of the process whereby participation as a means has the capacity to develop into participation as an end.

Rifkin (1990:VII) proposes three questions to determine participation: 'why participate?', 'who participates?' and 'how do people participate?'. These are the three crucial questions to answer in order to understand the community participation process. Community people should have incentives to participate. The individual goal behind participation could be either complementary to the common wellbeing of the community, for narrow self-interest or for both. The next crucial question is about participants—do they represent (in terms of inclusion) the whole community, or only the privileged groups? In many studies it was found that certain socio-economic factors affected the level of community participation in the political sphere. For example, research by Milbraith (1965) Almond and Verba (1963), Hausknect (1962) and Lee (1998) indicated that low socio-economic status as measured by income, education and occupation was associated with a low level of participation (referred by Awortwi 1998). Finally, it is important to see the intensity of participation and power dynamics, which is described by Arnstein's (1969) classic 'ladder of participation'. There are a few other authors, i.e. Connor (1988), Choguill (1996) and Rocha (1997), who have provided some modified versions, but inspired by and complimentary to the Arnstein's ladder. Although her original article is quite old, still it possesses great appeal to a wide range of audiences interested in issues of community participation because of its simplistic ladder metaphor. A graded movement upwards through eight steps (rungs) encapsulates the different ways through which communities can be involved in the decision-making process. Arnstein's paper emerged from her work experience in participatory urban planning supported by various publicly funded programmes, which is the case for UPPR as well, in the USA during the 1960s.

The eight rungs in the Arnstein's ladder of participation are: manipulation, therapy, information, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. These eight rungs are again subdivided into three categories. The first two rungs at the bottom (manipulation and therapy) are categorised as 'non-participatory', where beneficiaries do not have any real participation in planning and implementation. People are generally placed in rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards to seek their support. The next three rungs are categorised as 'degree of tokenism' (informing, consultation and placation). Here beneficiaries have the scope to be informed and have their voice heard in the decision-making process. However, the ultimate decision-making power remains in the hands of the powerful. Finally, the top three rungs are categorised as 'degrees of citizen's power' (partnership, delegated power and citizen control). In partnership, people have the scope to share power with power holders through negotiations. In the case of 'delegated power' and 'citizen control', beneficiaries hold the power to decide and influence the direction of changes (Arnstein 1969). This category of community participation is closely related to the process of community empowerment. When participation is considered an 'end', it is meant to be empowering. In view of that, in the case of CDD intervention it is expected that beneficiaries will acquire or exercise some kind of power for negotiations, influencing decisions or making decisions.

Finally, political participation requires the creation of effective political organisations (Miller and Rein 2011:86). For community participation that is empowering, there is a need to build viable organisations at the community level which mobilise diverse sections of the community to put forward community needs. According to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS) (1988), community participation requires a community organisation that has firm

roots in the settlement's population, which represents the various segments of the population including minority groups, which functions as an open channel for the exchange of information and opinions between actors and beneficiaries. Community organisations that are empowering provide members with a structure to gain control over their lives, participate in decision-making and provide opportunities for shared responsibility and leadership (Ohmer 2004). But Desai (1995) opines that in most urban low income communities the only people who can afford to be active as leaders in community organisations are the richer among the poor. Consequently, as he asserts, community organisation leaders are often not representative of the members or the community people, but rather represent particular interest groups. Desai (1995) again states that there are two important mechanisms used by those in power to gain support from these community organisations and leaders: co-optation[13] and clientelism.[14]

Again, a wide array of literature suggests that sustainability of community-based self-help groups is a major concern in the current development practices (Lyon 2003; Fahamu 2004; Adhikari and Risal 2006; Datta 2007; Syme 2007; Adhikari and Goldey 2010). Community-based organisations' sustainability can be viewed as a stage of organisational empowerment where members are capable of planning and implementing their development initiatives independently. Hence achieving organisational sustainability may mean the graduation of invited spaces to claimed spaces of participation. Sustainability of a community organisation primarily depends on the power that lies within it (Datta 2007). A number of writers (for example, Lyon 2003; Datta 2007) have tried to understand the factors that influence

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[13] Co-optation describes the situation where an informal, loosely structured group is led by its leaders to formally affiliate with a supra local institution (Eckstein 1977, referred by Desai 1995:60).
[14] Clientelism will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

the sustainability of community groups. By referring to Narayan (1999) and based on his own research findings in Bangladesh, Datta (2007) claims that when community organisations (invited spaces) are created and supported by external agencies, organisational sustainability becomes far reaching. The two different assumptions of inevitable co-operation (the benefits from working in groups will inevitably lead to the creation and sustainability of groups) and individual maximisation (assumption of individual short-term self-maximising behaviour that undermines co-operation) both fail to explain the existence or lack of collective action (Lyon 2003). Datta (2007) claims that the sustainability of community-based organisations is a complex subject and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' type solution.

To summarise, community participation is an intricate issue which is associated with a number of conflicting aspects, for example, socio-economic factors, community organisation, leadership and organisational sustainability. Since in reality the normative differentiation between 'means' and 'end' of participation is rather difficult to distinguish, the above discussion on community participation illuminates the importance for this study to explore whether the UPPR induced participatory process possesses the potential to be developed as 'end' in itself. In order to understand the intensity of participation and organisational sustainability, answering the questions: who participates? why participate? and how participate? is particularly important. Answering these questions would also be helpful to understand the participation spaces, surrounding power relations and, therefore, any transformative potential.

2.9. Gender and Community Participation

One of the important tenets of CDD is to ensure broad-based social inclusion and so

gender remains a major concern. There is a profound influence of gender in shaping the practice of participation in community development efforts. Women's participation is generally constrained by the gendered social constructions within a community and in a given society at large. For example, 'social division of labour' determines how women and men will participate in a community development project—women would be expected to participate in those which are considered to be 'women's tasks', just as men are expected to engage in 'men's tasks'. Therefore, women's involvement is largely found in the reproductive sphere (Akello 1994:19). Women's participation can also be limited by many other factors, namely: the discriminatory attitudes of male project staff; non-co-operation of male community members; men's control over the activities of their wives and daughters; the male dominated traditional community leadership and so on (Desai 1995:68). It is also important to consider that women, as a heterogeneous category, have different gender interests based on their class, race, ethnicity, religion, age and other socio-economic status (Akello 1994:19).

As a result, working with women is different and rather complicated, because the presence of women in community organisations—alongside men—does not necessarily mean that women and their issues are being included. In contrast, attempts to work separately with women might not be able to work forward to reintegrate them with the mainstream decision-making process within the community, and thereby have little chance to change the social relations (Guijt and Shah 1998:3). Hence, it is important to have appropriate tools to work with women in community development activities. It is not possible to simply take tools and methods which have been developed in the past for men and use them with women (Desai 1995:65).

Therefore, it is important to know what type of strategies the UPPR project has employed in dealing with gender issues and what is the outcome.

2.10. Participatory Local Governance

According to Smith (2004), the term governance by default implies wider participation in decision-making by accepting a wide range of actors other than the state. Consequently, governance may be described as more or less participatory depending on the level of influence of the non-state actors. The degree and type of involvement of different actors in governance, therefore, particularly depends upon the relationships among them, as well as on the role and attitudes of each actor. But when we talk about a well-designed participatory local governance system, it combines a true representative democratic system at the local level as well as the scope for direct citizen participation in the decision-making and implementation process related to the local issues for making local government more responsive and more effective in service delivery. It has been mentioned in the earlier discussion of this chapter that various authors have termed this new form of participation under different concepts, for example, 'citizenship participation', 'empowered participation', 'direct democracy' or 'community participation' (Fung and Wright 2003; Gaventa 2003; Kluvers and Pillay 2009).

Participatory governance is about re-adjusting the traditional boundaries and building a new relationship between the state and citizen by creating intermediary spaces—new forms of social and political associations—where participants from both sides can interact in a new way. Participatory governance refers to an approach toward citizen participation beyond the electoral process and which draws on community participation in identifying local priorities, planning and implementing programmes

whereby citizens become 'makers and shapers' (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). However, evidence shows that participation in the newly created democratic spaces is neither straight forward nor easy—participation should be carefully organised, facilitated, even cultivated and nurtured (Hordijk 2005:220-221).

According to Hordijk (2005:221), when governance is understood as:

> … the institutions and processes, both formal and informal, which provide for the interaction of the state with a range of other agents or stakeholders affected by the activities of government

it can be called 'participatory governance' only if it meets the following criteria (Hordijk 2005:221):

- government engages with groups with a shared interest that goes beyond individual interests; at some point sense of group identity and interest is important, and this forms a starting point for negotiation and collaboration; and

- the arena of action with regard to policy or practice has to go beyond a specific neighbourhood or single development, and not be too limited in scope, scale and place.

One of the main focuses of participatory governance is the inclusion of poor and marginalised people. In this way, it is different from good governance where participation in decision-making is an element among others to run government businesses (Satterthwaite, Boonyabancha *et al*. 2005). For Schneider (1999) participatory governance in the context of poverty reduction means to empower the poor. Participatory governance, thus, aims for greater, broader and deeper participation. It does mean that the increased relationship between governments and citizens goes beyond the participation within a specific project, neighbourhood and

policy. Participation in a specific project or neighbourhood—even though in such practices government officials or elected local representatives and citizens are tied in the decision-making process—could be a sign of good governance, but not participatory governance. As such, it is about to change the conventional way of top-down governing system to both directions—upwards and downwards (Satterthwaite, Boonyabancha *et al.* 2005). Bishop and Davis (2002:27) identify the elements of participation in a participatory governance process:

- a measure of citizen involvement in decisions that might otherwise be the sole prerogative of executive government or elected representatives

- a commitment to seek the views of those affected by a decision

- some transfer of authority from government to citizens

- a transparent process which ensures citizens are informed about policy processes.

By participatory governance here I mean the participation of community people in the public policy process within the realm of municipal governance. In accordance with the above discussion, I focus not only on the participatory mechanisms within the UPPR intervention, but also on the overall municipal governance processes that include both formal and informal modes of governance. Existing literature suggests that focusing on informal governance besides the formal is particularly important in the context of Bangladesh.

Rahman and Islam (2002) observe the literature on governance[15] in Bangladesh is heavily skewed towards presenting idealistic modes of solutions towards goals without considering the complexities of the ground level realities of the governance

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[15] Discussion on governance conflates three dimensions of the issue: governance as space, governance as goal, and governance as instrumentality (Rahman and Islam 2002).

spaces. By considering the conflicting nature of the state-society relations in Bangladesh, they have termed the relationship as 'jurisdictional aggression' of the state to the society. On the one hand the state is jurisdictionally aggressive to the society due to the colonial legacy; on the other hand the state is functionally inattentive to the needs of the society. Due to the state's functional inattentiveness to societal needs, the idea of governance spaces beyond the state, or what may be called informal governance, is also very important to re-think besides the formal governance spaces. The informal governance systems are based on implicit and unwritten understandings. They reflect socio-cultural norms and routines, and underlying patterns of interaction among socio-economic classes and groups (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002). Consequently, this study focuses both on the formal and informal spaces and practices of governance.

2.11. Trust and Social Networks

One of the focuses of CDD project is to enrich social capital at the local level in terms of building trust and networks. Trust and social networks are two of the attributes of the two dimensions of social capital: 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (Putnam 2000). A number of studies show that the endowment of social capital, which is often defined as trust, norms and networks (Putnam 1993), plays a critical role in the success or failure of managing collective action (Uphoff, Esman *et al*. 1998; Krishna, Uphoff *et al*. 1999; Pretty 2002; Bebbington, Dharmawan *et al*. 2004; Bebbington, Dharmawan *et al*. 2006).

Trust is the presence of a condition in which an actor chooses to believe in the good will of another whilst having no reliable knowledge that (s)he will behave in the way that is expected. Accordingly, the actor is exposed to the risk of opportunistic

behaviour on the part of the other (Bhuiyan 2004). Cross-country studies show that people's capacity for collective action (for example, the level of trust) in a community is not just a matter of historical endowment, but can be constructed (Harriss 2001, cited in Bhuiyan 2004) . While trust is important to work together on common projects, it is also a by-product of successful collective action (Leana and Van Buren 1999).

Besides trust, networking is another aspect of social capital. Several studies (e.g. Burt 1997) explain the importance of network as a source of social capital (Bhuiyan 2004). Some authors (e.g. Putnam 1993; Ostrom 1994; Evans 1996) have termed social network simply as informal, face-to-face interaction or membership in civic associations or social clubs. Dongier, Domelen *et al*. (2002) claim that CDD projects are a great way of developing social capital by providing individuals with the ability to secure benefits as a result of membership in a social network. In this way, it is expected that besides influencing the level of trust, the UPPR intervention may also widen the social networks of the project's participants.

In this study, I am interested in understanding how the UPPR group activities have influenced the level of horizontal trust—social trust between individuals. According to network theorists, social capital should be analysed in terms of the quality and configuration of network ties (Adler and Kwon 2002, cited in Bhuiyan 2004). It suggests that the endowment of trust and network in the UPPR context is needed to be analysed in terms of the quality and configuration of network ties.

2.12. Participation as Empowerment

Section I of this chapter points out that empowement remains at the heart of the CDD approach, as it is also the case for UPPR. Community participation in its

transformative aspect is meant to be empowering community people to enable them to participate in the wider local governance sphere. There were three major influential documents, produced by three big multi-lateral development agencies, which put empowerment at the centre of anti-poverty strategies: UNDP's Poverty Report 2000, entitled "Overcoming Human Poverty"; the WB's World Development Report 2000/2001, named "Attacking Poverty"; and IFAD's (International Fund for Agricultural Development) Rural Poverty Report 2001, titled "The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty". Presenting details of those reports falls outside the interest of this discussion, since the ultimate aim of this sub-section is to adopt a framework through which the issue of empowerment will be discussed and analysed in this study. After providing a brief overview on how power and empowerment have been articulated in the social science theories and also in the current development policies and practices, the succeeding discussion attempts to develop a community empowerment framework for this study, building on the notions of community participation discussed earlier.

2.12.1. Power: The Root Concept of Empowerment

The Oxford English Dictionary defines empowerment as 'the action of empowering; the state of being empowered', and was first used in 1849 (Lincoln, Travers *et al*. 2002:272). Thus, Lincoln, Travers *et al* (2002:273) note 'empowerment is not "power itself", but a process by which the latter is only bestowed to an end or for a purpose'. Nevertheless, power, being the root word of empowerment (Rowlands 1997:9), is intertwined with the concept of empowerment. Since empowerment is closely related to changing power—gaining, expending, diminishing, and losing—power remains an essential component of any interpretation of empowerment (Lincoln, Travers *et al*. 2002; Alsop and Heinsohn 2005:230; Hur 2006:524). The

possibility of empowerment depends on two assumptions about power: firstly, power can change; and secondly, power can expand (Page and Czuba 1999:1). Therefore, Rowlands (1997:9) remarks, 'if we want to know more about empowerment we need to examine its root-concept: power'. The following discussion introduces two different perspectives of explaining power: 'conflictual' and 'consensual'/'shared'.

Though the concept of power in social sciences is complex, heavily theorised, multi-dimensional and contested (Nelson and Wright 1997:7; Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan 1998:452; Water 2000:18), the foundation of understanding and explaining power lies in the work of Marx and Weber (Salinus 2006:71). Marx's concept of power is implicit in his understanding of human history as a struggle over resources and his interpretations of emancipation (Salinus 2006:71; Davis 2007:6). Weber (1947) conceptualises power as the probability that a person in a social relationship will be able to accomplish his will despite resistance, and regardless of the bases upon which this probability rests.

Weber's understanding of power recognises that power exists in social relationships and does not exist in isolation, nor is it inherent in individuals. It implies that since power is inherent in social relationships, power relations, and thus, power can be changed (Page and Czuba 1999:2). In this way, empowerment is possible. But, the understandings of power by both Marx and Weber (1947) are as zero-sum, and it can only be achieved at the expense of others. This means that power will remain in the hands of the powerful until they give it up. When this is the case, empowerment may be possible mainly through resistance and conflict. Therefore, Marx and Weber's theories are inherently conflictual by nature (Page and Czuba 1999; Sadan 2004; Alsop, Bertelsen *et al.* 2006). Apart from Marx and Weber (1947), Dahl (1961),

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and Lukes (1974) are three other influential theorists on the subject of power.

Dahl (1961), Bachrach and Baratz (1962), and Lukes's (1974) works are built upon one another by providing insights into different dimensions of power. Their works on power have been widely known as the 'three-dimensional power debate'[16] (Alsop, Bertelsen *et al.* 2006:231). Dahl (1961) argues that for analysing power it is important to consider that (a) power is not possessed, but a thing to utilise, (b) power is not equivalent to resources, rather only a potential source of influence, and (c) power is not equivalent to rewards and deprivation. Building upon Weber's (1947) definition of power, within Dahl's (1961) framework, as described by Haugaard (2002:6)[17]: 'A has power over B to the extent to which A can get B to do something which B would not otherwise do'. As a pluralist, according to Dahl, power prevails in decision-making through observable conflict resulting in concrete decisions. He considers everyone to be aware of their grievances and to be able to participate in decision-making to bring out favourable decisions. However, since power is not equated with power resources, he argues that power resources may or may not be mobilised in decision-making. This is the first dimension—often called a 'pluralist' view of power (Lukes 1974:11)—of the 'three-dimensional power debate'. This form of power is known as decision-making (Lukes 1974:18).

Bachrach and Baratz's (1962) analysis of power starts with a criticism of Dahl's concept of power that everyone is free to participate in the decision-making and, accordingly, non-participation resembles satisfaction and consensus. However, by

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[16] I refer back here to the discussion on power and space in sub-section 2.4 of this chapter.
[17] In his original work, Dahl did not use the analogy of 'A' and 'B'. Here I am adopting Haugaard's (2002) construction of Dahl's notion of power for the convenience of the reader because Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and Lukes (1974) used such analogy.

accepting some aspects of Dahl's perspective, they argue that it is also important to

consider 'mobilisation of bias' while analysing power. As Bachrach and Baratz

(1962:948) point out:

> Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making
> of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A
> devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and
> political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of
> the political process to public consideration of only those issues
> which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A
> succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes,
> from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their
> resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences.

Consequently, they add the second dimension of power to Dahl's concept by

considering the situation where issues important to B are deliberately left off the

agenda by A and for this reason conflicts do not arise through official channels. This

form of power is known as non-decision-making (Lukes 1974:18).

A third dimension of power is added by Lukes (1974) who examined power in terms

of interest instead of just focusing on the behavioural aspects of decision-making

coined by Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz. Within this framework: ' … A exercises

power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests' (Lukes

1974:34). Lukes' (1974) dimension has two aspects (Haugaard 2002:38). The first

aspect takes into consideration non-behavioural biases. Biases are not necessarily

reducible to individuals' actions or deliberate non-actions but are inherited from the

past in the form of the structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups. The

second aspect of Lukes' conceptualisation of power is his focus on the relationship

between power and knowledge. He considers the less powerful not to be aware of

their 'real interests'. Being influenced by Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' Lukes

proposes that power distorts knowledge or truth in a direction that is beneficial to the

specific interests of the powerful. It also suggests that consensus and social order are

bound up in a conspiracy of the powerful in which the 'truth' is hidden from the powerless. Thus, Lukes significantly highlights the importance of the relationship between the construction of knowledge and power (Haugaard 2002:38-40; Alsop, Bertelsen *et al*. 2006:234).

While power as zero-sum (Giddens 1984:15) is one way of conceiving power, there is another perspective of experiencing power that is not necessarily 'conflictual', but 'shared'. Power can be understood as 'shared' by acknowledging the fact that it occurs in relationships and can be strengthened by collaborating and sharing with others (Kreisberg 1992; Page and Czuba 1999:2; Hur 2006:524). This aspect of power has been termed differently by different authors, for example, 'relational power' (Lappe and Dubois 1994, referred by Page and Czuba 1999) 'generative power' (Korten 1987), 'integrative power' and 'power with' (Kreisberg 1992), but is largely influenced by the post-structuralist notion of power notably advanced by scholars like Foucault (1979, 1980, 1996; cited in Sadan 2004:37) and Giddens (1984).

Foucault (1980) and Giddens (1984) argue that power is constituted by both conflict and consensus. These theorists' frameworks are the most nuanced and the most complex of the main power theories (Alsop, Bertelsen *et al*. 2006:235). By always residing in the post-structuralist/post-modernist thinking strand (Sadan 2004:54), Foucault criticises the idea about the relationship between power and the truth advanced by Lukes' third dimension of power that power distorts the truth (Alsop, Bertelsen *et al*. 2006:235). Foucault builds his idea on the grounds that the world is not 'out there' and thus there is no 'objective' truth. Foucault believes that all knowledge is created by society and thus cannot be objective (Haugaard 2002:181-

187). The Foucaultian concept of power goes forward around the thought that it is imperative to examine the relationship between power and consciousness. He argues that power does not reside or belong to any particular place, institution or group. Rather, power is created or grows out of relationships and networks among subjects who are free to act and thereby power is not constant but relative by nature, and exists only when it is exercised (Sadan 2004:53-67; Alsop, Bertelsen *et al*. 2006:235). For Foucault, the essence of power is not domination, coercion or violence (Lemke 2000:5). Violence takes place when the limits of power are reached. Foucault argues that conflict and war presuppose an absence of a shared truth and defines power as the setting up of shared truths in order to avoid war (Alsop, Bertelsen *et al*. 2006:235).

Giddens (1984) is also a theorist of power relations and he considers every individual (agent) as possessing knowledge and even consciousness and able to make independent choices that generate power; but at the same time, individual's choices are determined by the sets of societal rules (social structure). His analysis of power is based on his theory of structuration (Giddens 1984). According to structuration the relationship between social structure and agents is *vice-versa*. This means that social structures exist in the moment that they are reproduced by agents, and that agents define themselves as agents by reproducing social structures. Giddens argues that social structures give people a capacity for action as agents. Without the existence of social structures created by society, agents would not have the ability to act (Giddens 1984). Giddens' theory of power argues that power is intrinsic to human agency. People are never completely governed by social forces—they have agency. All forms of dependence offer some resources to the subordinate agents by which they can influence the activities of their superiors. Such acts have been termed by Giddens

(1984:16) as a 'dialectic of control' in the social system.

To conclude, there are two main perspectives to understand and explain power: 'conflictual' and 'consensual'. Lukes' (1974) understanding of power is a classic work on power and contrasts views on whether power is conflictual or consensual. Foucault (1980) and Giddens (1984) consider power to be both 'conflictual' and 'consensual' (shared). Both structuralists and post-structuralists consider that power resides in relationships among the subjects, not a personal attribute; power can be experienced when it is exercised; and knowledge (consciousness) is important to exercise power. The 'three-dimensional power debate' asserts that power analysis in the context of participatory spaces, for example, in UPPR, should include visible (Dahl), hidden (Bachrach and Baratz) and invisible (Lukes) forms of power. The post-structuralist analysis of power provides avenues to analyse the nuanced process of power dynamics that work within and among the spaces. Foucault and Giddens' understandings of power provide alternative avenues to analyse the subtle process of social transformation beside the radical notion of power reversal. Besides this, Giddens' theory of structuration provides a more concrete framework to analyse power dynamics through bridging social structure and agency.

2.12.2. Community Empowerment

The sub-point first draws the meaning of empowerment and then community empowerment in relation to the discussion on power presented above. The meaning of empowerment has come in the development field from a wide variety of sources, including feminist scholarship, the Christian right, New Age self-help manuals and business management (Rossi 2004:1; Cornwall and Brock 2005:1046). Furthermore, the meaning of empowerment varies in different socio-cultural and political contexts

(Narayan 2002:13). However, in general, empowerment can be understood as a process of increasing people's control over their lives (Lyons, Smuts *et al*. 2001:1234), which means more freedom of choice and action (Narayan 2002:14). Edwards and Hulme (1992:24) define empowerment as:

> … the process of assisting disadvantaged individuals and groups to gain greater control than they presently have over local and national decision-making and resources, and of their ability and right to define collective goals, make decisions and learn from experience.

In this definition, it is implied that someone can act in favour of others to make them empowered. It also concedes that empowerment is relevant both at individual (for example, personal assets and capabilities) and collective levels (for example, voice, organisation, representation), and closely related to power relations that call for actions to change unequal institutional relationships. Institutional relationships could be both formal and informal. Formal institutions, for example, include formal rules, laws and regulations imposed by or embedded in the state, the private sector, NGOs, etc. On the other hand, informal institutions include, for instance, the existence of patron-client relationships, expectations of bribes, gender relations, networks of kin, friends and neighbours, etc. (Narayan 2002:16).

By acknowledging the fact that 'powerlessness' is embedded in a culture of unequal institutional relations (Narayan 2005:5), the World Bank defines empowerment as ' … the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives' (Narayan 2005:5). Though the definitions presented so far are more general and do not limit empowerment either at the local or community level, the term empowerment is closely coupled with community—small, local and spatially-

defined—in the multilateral development agencies' policy papers and practices (Moore 2001:322).

According to Lyons, Smuts *et al* (2001:1245), community empowerment is a process through which communities achieve greater control over their own affairs. This meant, firstly, an increase of the collective ability to negotiate with external agents; and secondly, an increase in the ability to manage internal affairs. Therefore, community empowerment entails both individual and collective human development (Partridge 2008:161). In this connection, Uphoff (2005:231) states:

> While one can think of 'empowering communities and localities' as a distinct process, our specific concern is how the empowerment of individuals and households classified as poor can be enhanced at community or other local levels.

In the political context, empowerment is a combination of power and authority. Political empowerment of communities drives from two kinds of changes for the citizen: one is the development of citizens' capacities (power resources) for exercising power and the second is acquiring the rights (delegation of authority) to exercise power (Smith 2008:4). Enhancing citizens' capacity, both at the individual and group levels, entails acquiring some basic knowledge and skills, like: developing negotiating skills and the ability to co-operate, listening, assertiveness, exploiting expertise, dealing with difficult people, enabling newcomers to get involved, broadening the basis of involvement, creating well-accepted representative organisations, accumulating knowledge, consensus raising, the demystification of political power and so on. To utilise these capacities in public affairs, people need to have the authority (rights) to take part in the formal decision-making process (Smith 2008:4-5).

Therefore, we can summarise the process of empowerment into four models: 'power within', 'power to', 'power with' and 'power over' (Nelson and Wright 1997; Stewart 2001; Sabhlok 2007). Empowerment is a process of building self-confidence and self-worth at the individual level—'power within'. It is also a process of increasing the capability to make decisions and solve problems at the collective level, which can be termed as 'power to' and 'power with'. Finally empowerment again entails a process of gaining access to political decision-making and control over resources, often in the public forum, which can be termed as 'power over'.

2.12.3. Participation and Empowerment: The Analytical Framework

As with participation, whether it is a 'means' or 'end', there are debates over whether empowerment is a 'process' or an 'outcome'; an 'end' or a 'means'. If we analyse the definition given by the WB presented in the previous sub-point, empowerment has been equated with acquiring the means of empowerment (in other words: power resources). Hence, measuring empowerment refers to measuring the changes in individual's or groups' assets bases and capacity. However, Uphoff (2005) argues that empowerment can only be validated by its results. Since results are associated with various complex processes, the simplified causal links between the means of empowerment and its outcomes become undeterminable. By acknowledging empowerment both as a process and outcome, Hur (2006) opines that the process can be more instructive than the outcome, as the process is more specific and analytic than outcomes. Nonetheless, according to Carr (2003) it is impossible to measure empowerment at a particular time because empowerment—as a process—is a continuous variable.

Consequently, in practice, understanding empowerment should involve looking both

at the processes and the outcomes. In other words 'empowerment is a process of enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes' (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005:5). In accordance with Giddens (1984), Alsop, Bertelsen *et al* (2006) point out that an individual's or groups' capacity is primarily influenced by two sets of interrelated factors: opportunity structure and agency. Opportunity structure denotes the social, economical, political and institutional context—formal or informal—within which actors or agents operate. Opportunity structure comprises these institutions that govern people's behaviour and that influence the success or failure of the choices that they make. Formal institutions include the set(s) of rules, laws, and regulatory frameworks that govern the operation of political processes, public services, private organisations, and markets. Informal institutions include the 'unofficial' rules that structure incentives and govern relationships within organisations such as bureaucracies, firms or industries, as well as the informal cultural practices, value systems and norms of behaviour which operate in households or among social groups or communities. In practice, changes, such as shifting power relations involve an interaction between formal and informal institutions. On the other hand, agency refers to an actor's (agent) ability to envisage various options and make a purposive choice. It is a combination of a range of assets and human capabilities that increase human wellbeing and security, as well as their self-confidence to envisage any change (Narayan 2002). A person or group's agency can be largely predicted by their asset endowment (Alsop, Bertelsen *et al*. 2006). Alsop, Bertelsen *et al* (2006) have identified six types of assets that require analysis to understand the level of asset endowment: psychological assets, informational assets, organisational assets, material assets, financial assets and human assets. According to the analytical

framework for empowerment given by Alsop, Bertelsen *et al* (2006), the degree of empowerment is understood through the presence of choice (which is bounded by opportunity structure), making of choice (agency) and achievement of choice (the state of being empowered). The framework also identifies three different domains (state, market and society) and levels (macro, intermediary and local).

This study focuses on state and society domains at the local level (city and community). Here, agents are the study community people in relation to the local governance process, and agency refers to their capacity both at individual and group levels. Hence, it is important to understand whether the opportunity of making the choice of participation in the local governance process exists; whether community people are making the choice of participation in that process; and whether community people's participation in the local governance process brings desired results. Given that participatory local governance goes beyond the participation within a specific project, neighbourhood or policy, the analysis of opportunity structure comprises opportunity structure both at city and community levels. In the same way, it also includes opportunity structure within the project and outside the project. For understanding the level of agency of the community people, the study includes six types of asset endowment: psychological, informational, organisational, material, financial and human.

Assets can be individual or collective. Material and financial assets like lands, housing, livestock, savings and jewellery enable people to withstand shocks and expand their horizon of choices. Human assets include good health, education and production and other life-enhancing skills. These are the examples of individual assets. At the same time, some of the assets are collective in nature. Organisational

assets include membership to local organisations and social capital, the norms and networks, which enable collective action to solve common problems. The relationship between the individual and collective assets is reciprocal (Narayan 2002; Alsop, Bertelsen et al. 2006). Table 2 summarises the analytical framework.

Table 2: Participation and Empowerment: An Analytical Framework

Variables	Aspect	Factors of Analysis	
		Given context	**UPPR context**
Opportunity structure	**Macro Spaces** (National/ City level: comprised of closed, invited and claimed spaces)	• Institutional design of the local government bodies. • The process, actors and factors in the local governance process. • Activities of various societal actors, for example, civil society organisations.	• UPPR project design. • UPPR project management.
Opportunity structure	**Community Spaces** (comprised of closed, invited and claimed spaces)	• Social relations, e.g. gender relations. • Community power-structure. • Community level governance process. • Activities of various NGOs.	• UPPR project operation at the community level. • UPPR community groups.
Agency	**Psychological assets**	• Capacity to envisage change.	
Agency	**Informational assets**	• Availability of information.	
Agency	**Organisational Assets**	• Memberships in community organisations. • Collective initiatives. • Social trust and networks.	
Agency	**Material Assets**	• Infrastructural development. • Acquiring own/group property (Land/house etc.).	
Agency	**Financial Assets**	• Savings and Credit. • Income generation.	
Agency	**Human Assets**	• Improvement of knowledge. • Improvement of skills.	

The framework is broadly divided into two variables: opportunity structure and agency, which are mutually dependent. Vertically the opportunity structure of participation and empowerment has two levels (aspects) in terms of special

metaphor: macro spaces (national/city level) and community spaces. These levels are inter-dependent. Horizontally, each level is mutually divided into two contexts: given context and UPPR context. The level of agency has been understood in terms of asset endowment.

Section III: Theoretical Underpinnings

The study employs a two dimensional theoretical approach drawing upon institutional theory and patron-clientelism.

2.13.1. Institutional Theory

Institutions comprise a wide variety of social/cultural, economic, political and formal or informal relationships. Institutions denote some sort of routinisation, stability and predictability that persists over time in people's interactions and co-operation. Formal institutions have well-defined organisational patterns, rules and regulations which shape the behaviour of groups. On the other hand, informal institutions consist of more diffuse patterns of norms and behaviour about which there is social consensus. However, formal institutions also contain some informal behaviour as well. For Scott (1995:32):

> Institutions consist of cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Institutions are transported by various carrier-cultures, structures and routines—and they operate at multiple levels of Jurisdiction.

The term institution has different connotations for different authors. At the same time the focus varies from discipline to discipline, for example, sociologists are interested in both formal and informal institutions, whereas political scientists are more interested in formal institutions. These differences are reflected in today's four major strands of new institutionalism (Sangmpam 2007:202): Sociological, Economic,

Historical and Rational. According to DiMaggio and Powell (cited in Selznick 1996:273):

> The new institutionalism in organization theory and sociology comprises a rejection of rational-actor models, an interest in institutions as independent variables, a turn towards cognitive and cultural explanations, and an interest in properties of supraindividual units of analysis that cannot be reduced to aggregations or direct consequences of individuals' attributes or motives.

Since institutions include social interaction at the community level as well as interactions found in development and social assistance organisations, it is important to consider both formal and informal institutions in the present study.

Although institutional theorists differ among themselves on many aspects, they seem to agree on two fundamental points (Putnam 1993:7-8):

Institutions shape politics: The rules and standard operating procedures that make up institutions affect political outcomes and behaviour. Institutions affect outcomes because they shape actors' identities, power and strategies.

Institutions are a product of history: History tells us about the extent and degree to which rules and standard operating procedures are institutionalised in organisations. The more these are ingrained in institutions, the more we can explain institutional behaviour and performance on the basis of these aspects.

Based on the two points, it can be said that stability, continuity and the historical development of institutions (rules, standard operating procedure and routines) are vital for institutional performance. Institutional performance in this study refers to the roles of the UPPR induced community-based organisations, the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) and other formal organisations active in the urban local

governance sphere that influence community participation and empowerment. Besides this, the informal institutions that shape everyday people's interactions in the governance sphere also need to be considered.

However, Sangmpam (2007) gives a new outlook to adopt institutional analysis by claiming that both old institutionalism and new institutionalism fail to subordinate formal political institutions to society-rooted politics. He puts society-rooted politics as the primer in shaping the third world's political institutions. Therefore, in order to analyse institutional outcomes, we need to look at politics first. In his words:

> Political institutions cannot be dismissed as irrelevant in political analysis. Institutional variations do affect outcomes in different countries, and the state plays a role in generating socio-economic outcomes. However, because institutions and the states are outcomes of society-rooted politics, institutions can shape social outcomes only secondarily. Society-rooted politics is the primary determinant of outcomes. (Sangmpam 2007:220)

In this regard, my aim is to analyse empirically how urban local bodies (*Pauroshava*/ City Corporation) as specialised organs of local government in Bangladesh, evolved over the years in respect of people's participation. To what extent have the rules, procedures, structure and functions been ingrained in order to ensure community participation? At the same time, I would explore the development of local government in Bangladesh in order to understand the history of people's participation in urban local government bodies.

On the other hand, to understand the informal politics at the local level this study adopts another theoretical paradigm: patron-clientelism.

2.13.2. Patron-Clientelism

In social sciences, the patron-client relationship is one of many types of interpersonal

relationships. Scholarship on the patron-client relationship has been expanded for more than five decades and has witnessed a recent revival with political studies' increasing focus on informal institutions (Auyero, Lapegna *et al.* 2009:2). Various recent writings reveal the existence of patron-client relationships both in the northern and southern societies, and both in urban and rural settings (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Auyero, Lapegna *et al.* 2009; Cox 2009; Esguerra and Villanueva 2009). Though patron-clentelism lost its value with the rise of social capital, Leonard, Brass *et al.* (2010:476) remind us that the fashionable analytic concept social capital can obscure the continuities and changing nature of patronage. They point out that:

> … it is not that 'social capital' and research on it are not useful but that political patronage may have a form and endurance in rural areas that are independent of social capital's presence. (Leonard, Brass et al. 2010:476)

Sorauf (1960) defined patronage as 'an incentive system—a political currency with which to "purchase" political activity and political responses' (cited in Bearfield 2009:65). Patronage is:

> ... the informal, personal and face-to-face relationships between actors of unequal status and power that persists over time and involve the exchange of valued resources. (De Wit and Berner 2009:931)

This type of relationship between patron and client features mutual intimacy, moral and emotional obligation, trust and empathy, the sharing of common 'pure' basic values, and sometimes hierarchical differences. According to Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984), the characteristics of such relationships are (referred by Dwianto 1999:163; Auyero, Lapegna *et al.* 2009:4):

- Particularistic: In this relationship, actors are involved in terms of their respective personal properties and not in terms of general universal

categories.

- Personal: Such a relationship is basically based on interpersonal obligation manifested by personal loyalty, reciprocity and attachment between patrons and clients.

- Voluntary: A person can enter into, or abandon a patron-client relation voluntarily.

- Institutionalised: Since the relationship is basically established on an informal understanding between two parties, it is not fully legal or contractual. However, this type of relationship is institutionalised in ritual terms.

Being highly selective, particularistic, hierarchical, diffuse and possessing bonds of dependence and control, these types of relations exchange two different types of resources and services (Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. 2009:4): 'instrumental' (e.g. economic and political) and 'sociational' or 'expressive' (e.g. promises of loyalty and solidarity). Therefore, the patronage network is conflicting with a participatory development programme because clientelism is opposed to the ethos of participatory governance (Cox 2009:964).

Many, for example, Chandra (2007) and Kitscheld and Wilkinson (2007), perceive many of the relatively established democracies in the south as 'patronage democracies'. Chandra (2007) defines a 'patronage democracy' as a system:

> ... in which the state has a relative monopoly on jobs and services and in which elected officials enjoy significant discretion in the implementation of laws allocating the jobs and services at the disposal of the state. (cited in De Wit and Berner 2009:932-33)

In such a situation politics is critical for the survival of the poor since politics is the effective channel, other than the administrative ones, for obtaining scarce resource

and services. De Wit and Berner (2009) argue that the urban poor are predominantly dependent on patronage-like relations which has severe implications in organising the poor and making them capable for collective action.

The scope for patronage and brokerage is a function of a lack of resource or services; access problems to agencies and institutions; and a lack of enforced impersonal rules for the allocation of resources. In urban poor slums, patronage is a case for obtaining public as well as private goods. This is the main strategy for obtaining scarce resource and services. The poor usually like and have faith in contacting intermediaries and politicians other than organising rallies to voice their demands or collective projects to meet their needs themselves (De Wit and Berner 2009). This also comes from the tradition or culture—to contact a chief, leader, trusted person or authority may just be the common thing to do. This is the subjective life, mentioned by Bourdieu, in the dispositions it inculcates in some of its actors, which reproduces the arrangement (Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. 2009). According to Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. (2009:5), this is a routine work and, therefore, is not limited to material problem solving. Since the poor live in 'destructive uncertainty' they need to rely on the vertical patronage relationship. Cutting off a patronage relationship is dangerous for future survival of the poor (De Wit and Berner 2009).

However, academics and development practitioners usually ignore the influence of patron–client relationships on formal political systems as well as on the reception of and participation in development programmes. 'Community-development programmes tend to be seen as altruistic, while distribution of resources by politicians is seen as self-serving and venal' (Cox 2009:979). Cox (2009) argues that clientelism influences peoples' very ability to engage with participatory processes

and, thus, shapes the participation spaces in terms of accessibility and peoples' expectations of particularistic returns. According to De Wit and Berner (2009), in most cases the issue of enhancing the poor peoples' voice in the governance process through building horizontal relationships does not work and it works less well the poorer and more dependent people are. They point out some issues to scrutiny while assessing the role of community-based organisations (CBOs) in representing a community: who are actually the members and do they include all ethnic, gender, political and religious groups in a community? The community organisations' leadership should also be examined to see if it is more self-interested (patron or broker) than community welfare oriented (genuine grass-root leadership) (De Wit and Berner 2009).

Contemporary literature makes it clear that the patronage relationship is still valid both in rich and poor countries, but is taking a different shape (Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. 2009; De Wit and Berner 2009; Leonard, Brass *et al*. 2010; O'Reilly 2010): Firstly, instability in the relationship between the patron and client(s). This is mainly because of the competition among today's potential patrons, who mainly provide supplementary services in contrast to the survival services provided by historical patrons to their clients. Secondly, patronage relationships in poorer countries are gradually taking the form of brokerage. Because the relationship between patron and client is gradually becoming fluid and flexible, giving way to an army of brokers and intermediaries who cater to the needs of anyone who contracts them for a fee. According to De Wit and Berner (2009:932), such 'mediating can be done on an incidental basis, but more often, regular patterns develop, depending on locality, price, loyalty and perceived efficacy, which is often related to political affiliation.' Thus, permanency in brokerage may develop. Thirdly, globalisation has offered

today's patron-client relationships an international dimension. Fourthly, benefits are now more collective in nature, frequently directed toward the village, kinship unit or specific community, than towards the individual. Fifthly, many of the development agencies and NGOs have appeared as patrons.

By considering these new shapes, an array of new scholarship has developed. For example, Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. (2009) points out that in contrast to the traditional view of the patron-client relationship which is contradictory to contentious collective action, clientelist and contentious politics might connect with each other, sometimes overtly, sometimes in a more hidden way and put forward the importance of paying more attention to the impact of collective action on clientelist arrangements.

In the context of Bangladesh, Devine (2006) argues that the development literature often ignores the fact that clientelism continues to reproduce and consolidate itself. Bangladesh's patron-client hierarchy has meant that clientelistic relationships have personalised the nature of politics. The use of personal contacts with politicians or officials, for example, is often a more successful solution to grievance resolution than formal complaint channels, particularly in service delivery (World Bank 2002, referred by Banks 2006). In this way, poor people even might appreciate the relationship instead of challenging (Devine 2006). In her study on Dhaka City, Banks (2006) describes the role of *mastaans* (muscle men) in making connections between slums and political leaders, in which vote-banks mobilised by *mastaans* are exchanged with elected officials for improved services or other benefits.

The above discussion makes it clear that the patron-clientelisic relationship is one of the appropriate theoretical lenses that might help to understand the informal politics in the study area.

2.14. Summary

The prime aim of this chapter was to revisit the existing body of knowledge to develop a conceptual and theoretical framework to analyse the UPPR intervention for addressing the research questions presented in the first chapter.

The first section of this chapter introduced the readers to the trajectory of participatory approaches in development thinking and practice. A thorough discussion on the issue indicates that participation in development practices began with the commencement of self-help based community development programmes initiated by the British governments, mainly in the colonies during the 1920s to 1930s. Since its inception, although the participatory approaches in practice have evolved based on different schools of thought, institutional agenda and changing political circumstances, until the 1990s the underpinning theoretical assumptions and programme logics were largely driven by the modernisation theories. The promoters' motivation for community development initiatives rested arguably in the political intention of using and controlling local energy and resources, and thus, participation was passive in form. But, due to the advent of new political circumstances in the 1990s, coinciding with the massive globalisation process, participation has gradually been tagged with the notion of active citizenship and democratic governance. This has given rise to the importance of creating new forms of intermediary spaces between the state's political institutions and its citizens. However, existing literature suggests that various types of participatory spaces—closed spaces, invited spaces and claimed spaces—are diversified by origin, levels of engagement and the internal and surrounding power dynamics, and thus may produce different outcomes. It is believed that genuine participation should be transformative in terms of reconfiguring institutional relationships which would allow public institutions to be

more responsive to citizens' demands. Hence, CDD has appeared as one of the fastest growing preferences for international development agencies in channelling development assistance that best fits with the current hegemonic theoretical assumptions as well as the notion of globalisation. However, the existing empirical knowledge shows that the outcomes of CDD approach are bounded by various socio-political, cultural and institutional factors.

Being induced by the discussion of the first chapter and the first section of this chapter, I attempted to understand some of those key issues and factors that are closely associated with my research problems and questions. The aim of section II was to discuss, operationalise and draw particular implications from some of the important concepts for this study. In this way, for this study by community I mean geographically bounded areas in accordance with UPPR specific jurisdiction. But the research is well aware of the issue that geographically defined communities are complex arenas of co-operation as well as contestation by the residents over resources. Therefore, when we think of community participation from a transformative perspective, it becomes more important to understand the process of participation. The discussion on the issue indicates that the intensity of participation and community-based organisational sustainability are complex. Besides these, addressing gender issues in community participation is equally important but tricky to handle. One of the main challenges of participatory development projects is to include women as a disadvantaged group. All of these issues become more complicated when we think of tagging community participation with the broader local governance sphere, which requires broad-based participation and transformation in institutional relationships. In this study, participatory governance has been understood as the participation of the community people in the public

policy process within the realm of municipal governance. When we think of community participation within the wider local governance context, the importance of building trust and social networks becomes important. Available literature suggests that while trust and widening social networking is important for collective action, it is important to analyse the quality of relationship based on trust and network ties. Finally the section discussed in detail the issue of empowerment, and developed an empowerment framework for this study based on the contemporary explanations of power and empowerment. The Framework is drawn on Gidden's (1984) theory of 'structuration', and thus opportunity structure and agency are the two main variables within which various factors of analysis have been integrated.

The third and final section of the chapter introduced the reader to the two theoretical approaches that this study employs: institutional theory and patron-clientelism, and their implication for this study.

In the next chapter I turn the discussion to some practical issues related to the urban governance system in Bangladesh and the UPPR project intervention.

CHAPTER 3:
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

*The Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction project (UPPR)
will support the implementation of strategies that respond to the
challenges of urban poverty reduction in the context of
Bangladesh's rapid urbanization. (Urban Partnerships for
Poverty Reduction 2012)*

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I introduce, firstly, the municipal governance context in Bangladesh
and secondly, the UPPR project intervention by providing information on some
practical issues. Research on participatory local governance generally requires
discussion on local government institutions and an understanding of how they
operate. According to the empowerment framework presented in the previous
chapter it is one of the factors of analysis that constitute opportunity structure within
the macro spaces. The discussion of the previous chapter (sub-point 2.13.1) points
out: firstly, institutional rules and standard operating procedures produce outcomes
by shaping the actor's identities, power and strategies; and secondly, institutional
rules, procedures and standard operating procedures (institutional design) are the
product of history. Therefore, one of the aims of this chapter is to shed light on the
local government institutions in Bangladesh with a special focus on Rajshahi City
Corporation (RCC). Exploring the historical genesis and institutional design is
important in order to understand and analyse the governance process, identifying the
actors and factors which will be addressed in chapter five. The discussion of chapter
two also pointed out some key issues, for example: participation spaces and power
dynamics as crucial to the analysis of community participation and empowerment. In
this context, the second important aim of this chapter is to introduce a detailed

discussion of the UPPR intervention to see what type of participation spaces it has drawn and with what terms of engagement with other spaces. According to the empowerment framework presented in chapter two, it is a factor of analysis (project specific context) that constitutes opportunity structure comprised of both the macro and community level spaces. It is important to mention here that this description will portray the normative context presented mainly in various UPPR policy documents. The practical implications will be addressed in the analysis chapters of this thesis.

Section I: Urban Local Governance in Bangladesh

This section deals with local governance issues in Bangladesh. It begins with some general information on the urban local governance system in Bangladesh and moves on to describe its historical genesis and constitutional basis. Afterwards, the section describes the urban local governance system with a special focus on RCC to provide the reader with a clear idea about the institutional context within which the project intervention has been implemented.

3.2. A Brief Description of Municipal Governance

The urban governance institutions in Bangladesh can be classified into four broad categories: municipal government, special development bodies, special purpose authorities and special government bodies (Khan 1997). Municipal government includes City Corporations (municipal corporations) and *Pourashava* (municipalities). Municipal institutions constitute a vital part of the political and administrative system which prevails at the local level in urban areas of the country. In fact, these municipal institutions have been in operation in various forms and names in Bangladesh since ancient times. The growth and development of these urban government institutions is closely related to the local governments in ancient

Indian, British-Indian and Pakistani periods. Although the basis and responsibilities of the local government bodies in Bangladesh are outlined in the constitutional provisions, their autonomy is limited by the central government's intervention in their affairs. The urban local government bodies are under the administrative control of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (MLGRD&C). The Local Government Division under the MLGRD&C deals with administrative matters of the 277 *Pourashavas* and the 10 City Corporations[18] (Murtaza 2004; Siddiqui 2005; Staff Reporter 2011).

3.2.1. The Origin and Development of Urban Local Government

According to Khan (1997) and Siddiqui (2005), the development of urban municipal institutions in Bangladesh can be traced back to the Mughal period (1526-1757). During the Mughal period each town consisted of a number of *Mohallas*, which were represented by a designated person known as *Mir Mahalla*. At the town level, a person known as *Kotwal* acted as the chief executive officer. Though there were two other persons known as *Kazi* (judicial official) and *Mohatasib* (magistrate) to assist him, the *Kotwal* possessed the utmost authority and power regarding magisterial, police and fiscal matters. Drawing on the work of Siddiqui (1994), Khan (1997:9) describes it as not a representative system. There was no scope for consultation through the council system rather it was simply a top-down administration consisting of the extension of a central authority into local areas.

The British approach towards the development of urban local government system was marked by careful and steady progress (Khan 1997; Panday 2004). According to

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[18]Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), Khulna City Corporation (KCC), Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC), Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), Barisal City Corporation (BCC), Rangpur City Corporation, Gazipur City Corporation (Proposed), Narayanganj City Corporation, and Comilla City Corporation.

Khan (1997), between 1687-1870 a number of actions were taken that included the establishment of municipal administration in the three presidency towns of Madras, Mumbai and Calcutta; the extension of municipal administration to district towns; and making municipal committees responsible for sanitation, street lighting and water supply. But during this time (1687-1870) all the urban municipal bodies were dominated either directly by British officials or their nominated representatives. In effect, the majority of the Indian people had no say in the activities of these bodies (Khan 1997:9). However, during the next eighty years (1871-1947) the British government passed a number of laws to make municipal bodies more representative of the populace by adopting the mechanism of elections. But the chairmen and vice-chairmen of municipalities continued to be elected by the commissioners themselves. Although the Bengal Municipal Act of 1932 widened and clarified powers of municipalities in levying rates and taxes and in the utilisation of funds, the Act provided the government and local officers enormous power to inspect, supervise and control municipal affairs (Khan 1997; Siddiqui 2005). By referring to a number of studies on urban local government bodies in Dhaka, Khan (1997:9) states that the British experiment with elections was held under restricted franchise. The electorate was only 9% of the total population of the city, since voting rights depended on possession of property, income and qualification. Consequently, he further states:

> Voting when it took place was guided more by such considerations as kinship, group interests or communal affiliations than general wellbeing of city dwellers. Elections turned into a contest of wealthy, ambitious and selfish individuals whose interest lay in enhancing their self-interest often using thugs and musclemen to that end. As a result, internal dispute, jealousy, enmity, revenge and personal aggrandisement came to be synonymous with the municipality. (Khan 1997:9-10)

By referring to Khanum's (1991) study, Khan (1997:10-11) and Panday (2004:37) argue that the politics of the Dhaka municipality between the 1920s and 1940s centred around local patronage and the maintenance of a traditional power structure. Municipal commissioners lacked the vision to develop and provide basic amenities to all citizens.

During the first 10 years the Pakistani Government (1947-1971) continued the same urban local government system that was existent in British-India. The then provincial government in East-Pakistan (now Bangladesh) brought some important changes to a number of laws relating to local government (both urban and rural) bodies in the province: the enfranchisement of all adults over 21 years of age, the abolition of the nomination system and the stipulation of symbols in the voting system by secret ballots (Siddiqui 2005:54). The urban municipal bodies were given a new shape when the Municipal Administration Ordinance of 1960 was promulgated, which was called Basic Democracy System[19] introduced by Field Marshal Ayub Khan. Municipal committees, town committees, union committees and ward committees were constituted to become components of the new urban government system, but suffered from representative characters since the chairmen and half of the members were appointed government officials. The exact nature of the responsibilities of union committees was not clear, whereas the ward committees were entrusted with a few ordinary functions. The sources of finance of these bodies including governmental grants were not specified (Khan 1997).

Since the independence in 1971, as mentioned in chapter one, a number of attempts have been made to experiment with the urban-local government system in

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[19] Here I refer to the discussion of sub-point 2.2 of chapter two.

Bangladesh. After independence, President's Order 7 issued in 1972 by the ruling Awami League government headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dissolved all existing local government bodies, and the government appointed certain committees for performing the functions of these defunct bodies. For its first 20 years (1971-1990) Bangladesh did not experience much change to the structure and functions of the urban municipal bodies, except the promulgation of the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977 (Municipal Ordinance) and awarding the four municipalities—Dhaka (1978), Chittagong (1982), Khulna (1984) and Rajshahi (1987)—the status of City Corporations under four different Presidential Orders. However, by analysing the Pourashava Ordinance, 1977 with the preceding statutes, that is, the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932 and the Municipal Administration Ordinance, 1960, Khandaker (1990:5) argued that the responsibilities of urban local government towards the provision of utility and municipal services had not changed at all.

The above discussion on the historical development of the local government system in Bangladesh until 1990 evidently demonstrates that, from its inception during the Mughal period, it had been designed to maintain control through a top-down approach. In the subsequent periods (British-Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi), the approach of employing top-down dominance remained prominent in designing the system and involving local people in the local government system never received serious attention. Since the political-economy of the urban local government system in RCC is one of the major focuses of this study, the development of the urban municipal bodies, from the 1990s onward, has been discussed and analysed in reference to RCC. This material is pertinent also in the subsequent discussion of this chapter as well as in chapter five.

3.2.2. The Constitutional Basis of Local Governance

The constitution of Bangladesh (as modified up to 17 May 2004) spells out the legal

basis and responsibilities of local government. Articles 59 and 60 state that:

> (1) Local Government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law.
>
> (2) Everybody such as is referred to in clause (1) shall, subject to this Constitution and any other law, perform within the appropriate administrative unit such functions as shall be prescribed by Act of Parliament, which may include functions relating to-
> 1. administration and the work of public officers;
> 2. the maintenance of public order;
> 3. the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development.

Also, with regards to the power of local government bodies, Article 60 of the

Constitution states:

> For the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of article 59 Parliament shall, by law, confer powers on the local government bodies referred to in that article, including power to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds.

Thus, the Constitution adequately provides for the establishment of local bodies of

governments in terms of their composition, administrative domains and financial

arrangements. However, Khan (1997:12) argues that in a country like Bangladesh

where the Constitution is amended and suspended at will, even elaborate

Constitutional guarantees are not enough to institutionalise a governance system at

the grass-roots level. Now I will turn the focus on RCC.

3.3. Rajshahi City Corporation

3.3.1. The Historical Development of the RCC

Rajshahi Municipality began its journey in 1 April, 1876. The municipal activities

were run by the town committee which was comprised of seven members. The

chairman and the members of the committee were nominated by the central government. The district magistrate, sub-divisional officer and medical officer were ex-officio members of the committee. Later on, the election of chairman, vice-chairman and most of the commissioners by tax payers was introduced (Rajshahi City Corporation 2012). Upon the enactment of Municipal Act 1884, a committee comprising 21 commissioners was formed. Among them 14 were elected and the rest were nominated by the government. In 1930, eight separate urban committees were formed to operate and monitor various municipal functions and services, i.e., finance, public works, street lighting, water supply, health and sanitation, education, appeal and the Sadar (city) Hospital. At that time, the municipal area was divided into seven wards (Panday 2004). Upon the promulgation of Basic Democracy in 1959, the municipal committee was dissolved and the Municipal Board comprised of government nominated members started its activities as the Municipal Committee. The government appointed an administrator for Rajshahi Municipality. Until 18 February 1974, government officials acted as administrators of the municipality (Ana 2007).

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the first ever elected chairman took charge of the municipality on 18 February, 1974. As a result of the growing population and municipality area, Rajshahi Municipality was upgraded to the RCC on 3 August, 1987. However, its people had to wait until 1994 to get an elected mayor through a City Corporation election, held on 30 January, 1994. The City Corporation election has been irregular and the last election was held in 4 August, 2008 and 1 mayor, 30 ward councillors (WCs) and 10 women ward councillors (WWCs) against the reserved seats were elected by the direct vote of the city people. At present the RCC is divided into 30 wards, though these are not ascribed as

separate administrative regions. RCC runs its activities centrally. But 30 WCs and 10 WWCs against the reserved seats have their separate offices in their specific wards. Activities of birth registration, providing citizenship etc. are done from these offices (Panday 2004; Ana 2007; Rajshahi City Corporation 2012).

It is clear from the above discussion that local people did not have active representation in the municipal governance process for most of the history of Rajshahi municipality. From its inception, the central government always placed its heavy hand and control upon the local governance process through the appointment of nominated representatives. Even people's voting rights were not recognised and properly exercised due to the absence of voting rights, irregular election and electoral politics. These issues will be discussed in detail in chapter five. For a better understanding of the scope and nature of people's participation in the local governance process, we need to get a clear picture of the legal framework, composition, structure and functions of the RCC.

3.3.2. Legal Framework, Composition and Structure of the RCC

Until the promulgation of the Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance in 2008, the legal framework of the RCC was provided by the Rajshahi City Corporation Ordinance, 1987 and subsequent amendments, other rules, by-laws, regulations and standing orders were issued by the government at various times. Over the years, four main criticisms have been made regarding the City Corporation's legal framework. First, most of the rules, regulations and by-laws came into force a long time ago, and hence many of these have lost their operational value with the passage of time. In framing either the main law or the rules under it, the government undertook no meaningful consultation with either the respective City

Corporations or outside experts. Second, some of these, with political overtones, have been subject to frequent amendments for political convenience. Third, there were six different ordinances for the six City Corporations in Bangladesh. Fourth, the existing legal framework was unable to ensure the City Corporation's accountability, efficiency and participation of its people in the local governance process.

Upon realising these facts, the interim military backed caretaker-government (January 2007-January 2009) first created a statutory local government commission under the Local Government Commission Ordinance, 2008 to make local government bodies dynamic, accountable and strong. The government also promulgated a new umbrella ordinance for all the City Corporations in Bangladesh where the commission was given an advisory and oversight role over the City Corporations. Under the new Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance, 2008, a few new provisions and instruments were introduced in order to reduce political influence and enhance transparency and people's participation in City Corporation activities. For example, there were provisions which forgo any kind of political party position of the elected councillors and mayors, publish a citizen's charter, using upgraded information technology, and make information available to citizens. However, no instrument or provision was made to ensure people's direct participation in the city corporation activities. After the general election held in December 2008, the present democratically elected government enacted new Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 with a few changes, for example, dissolving the Local Government Commission, and withdrawing the provision forgoing political party positions of the elected councillors and mayors. However, no

new provision or instrument has been introduced to ensure people's direct participation in City Corporation activities.

According to the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009, RCC is divided into 30 wards. The Corporation Parishad consists of an elected mayor, 30 elected WCs from 30 wards and 10 elected WWCs in the reserved seats, with one for every three wards for five years. Wards constitute the most localised level of municipal governance, with each ward governed by a democratically elected WC. WCs manage municipal affairs and carry out development works in their respective wards. As the closest representatives of the city dwellers, they play a crucial role in city governance (Banks 2006). As the head of the corporation, all power rests with the mayor. A detailed analysis of the RCC's power structure will be presented in chapter five.

Clause 50 (1) in the 7th Chapter of Part II of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009, dictates that RCC is required to form these 14 standing committees: (i) Finance and Establishment (ii) Solid Waste Management (iii) Education, Health, Family Planning and Sanitation (iv) City Planning and Improvement (v) Audits and Accounts (vi) City Infrastructure Building and Maintenance (vii) Water and Electricity (viii) Social Welfare and Community Centres (ix) Environment Improvement (x) Sports and Culture (xi) Birth-Death Registration (xii) Transportation (xiii) Market Price Observation, Monitoring and Control, and (xiv) Disaster Management.

Besides these, according to the other sub-clauses of clause 50, the RCC can form additional standing committees for other purposes upon the decision of a Corporation Parishad meeting. The numbers of members of a standing committee is decided by

the RCC and the chairman and the vice-chairmen are elected among the councillors in a Corporation Parishad meeting. However, no councillor is allowed to be a member of more than two standing committees. The mayor is an ex-officio member of all the standing committees. Standing committees are allowed to consult with specialised persons, but this is not mandatory. The Corporation Parishad is obliged to hold a meeting at least once a month. No business can be done unless there is a quorum which consists of one third of the total members present in the meeting, and all decisions must carry the support of the majority of members present in the meeting. All members have one vote and only in the case of a tie can the chairman exercise his casting vote. The RCC is divided into six administrative departments: works, conservancy, public health, revenue, accounts and secretariat. Under every department there are also various sections.

3.3.3. Functions of the RCC

The detailed functions of the RCC are described in Part III of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009. However, there are hardly any major changes compared to previous ordinances. The functions of the RCC have been categorised as 'compulsory' and 'optional', but the functions have not been listed under the heading of each category. In order to distinguish such functions, the use of the term 'shall' and for some functions 'may' in the Act may be taken as a criterion. The compulsory functions of the RCC are as follows:

(i) Construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and culverts (ii) removal, collection and disposal of refuse, wastes and rubbish (iii) provision and maintenance of street lighting (iv) maintenance of public streets and provision of watering them (v) provision and regulation of water supply (vi) construction and maintenance of

shopping centres (vii) plantation of trees on roadsides (viii) regulation of unsanitary buildings (viii) prevention of infectious diseases and epidemics (ix) registration of births, deaths and marriage (x) provision and maintenance of slaughterhouses (xi) provision and maintenance of drainage (xii) control over erection and re-erection of buildings (xiii) provision and maintenance of graveyards and cremation grounds, and (xiv) control over traffic and public vehicles.

The important optional functions are as follows:

(i) Checking adulteration of food and drinks (ii) control over private markets and shopping centres (iii) maintenance of educational institutions and provision of stipends to meritorious students (iv) provision of disaster management (v) provision and maintenance of parks, gardens and playgrounds (vi) establishment of welfare homes and orphanages, and prevention of beggary (vii) establishment of public dispensaries and provision of public toilets (viii) establishment of veterinary hospitals, registration of cattle sales and improvement of livestock (ix) celebration of national holidays (x) reception of distinguished visitors/persons (xi) establishment of public libraries and reading rooms (xii) formulation and implementation of development planning and projects (xiii) naming of roads and numbering of houses, and (xiv) formulation of city planning and land development.

Although the RCC is entrusted with a wide range of municipal and civic functions, due to acute paucity of funds, shortage of manpower, poor and irregular collection of taxes, complicated bureaucratic procedures, duplication of responsibilities with other central government agencies and lack of autonomy, in practice it performs mainly the following functions (Panday 2004:54-55):

(i) Construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and culverts; (ii) removal, collection and disposal of refuse, wastes and rubbish (iii) provision and maintenance of street lighting (iv) maintenance of public streets and provision of water to them (v) provision and regulation of water supply (vi) construction and maintenance of shopping centres (vii) provision and maintenance of graveyards and cremation grounds (viii) eradication of mosquitoes (ix) registration of births, deaths and marriages (x) maintenance of slaughterhouses (xi) Control over private shopping centres (xii) provision and maintenance of parks and gardens (xiii) naming of roads and numbering of houses, and (xiv) provision of public toilets.

To summarise: the present legal framework, composition and structure of the RCC are provided by the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009. As with the two preceding Ordinances of 1987 and 2008, the present umbrella Act of 2009 also provides a narrow scope for people's active participation in the RCC managed local governance process. According to the Act, RCC is responsible for providing a wide range of municipal and civic services. However, in practice, due to a number of reasons, the RCC provides only fourteen municipal and civic services.

Section II: Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR)

This second section of the chapter introduces the readers to the background of the UPPR project, the programme logic and project components, and the institutional arrangement. This discussion is set against the CDD approach discussed in chapter two.

3.4. The Logic and Project Components

The UPPR (2007-2015) project document (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008) clearly states that the project intervention builds upon the experience and the

community-centered approach which was adopted by the UNDP supported LPUPAP (2000-2007). The developmental objective of LPUPAP intervention, as stated in project documents, was:

> ... to alleviate poverty in the selected urban areas of Bangladesh through the empowerment of poor urban communities and capacity building of local governments. Promotion of local partnerships, community participation in all aspects of the development process and increasing responsiveness of the local government to the needs of the urban poor are key approaches in achieving the development objective. (LPUPAP 2007:1)

Accordingly, the UPPR's development objective is aligned with the CDD approach where participation, empowerment, capacity building of the local government, promotion of partnerships are key principles. The UPPR intervention intends to enable poor communities to have equitable access to some of the basic necessities of human life. Notable among them, for example, are status/welfare (a range of services such as health, education etc.), environment (quality of the locations in which people live and work), security (safety and performance of residence), voice (the right to speak and be heard) and wealth (income). Many of these are 'public-goods' and a primary function of local government, generally referred to as 'urban service delivery'. However, in the previous section we found that the RCC was unable to provide many of the services, for example, health, education and voice, due to resources scarcity and other structural shortcomings. Under the circumstances, the underlying assumption of the intervention is that community participation in the local governance process can lead to equitable access to these urban services. For ensuring sustainable and effective community participation in the local governance process, the intervention primarily uses empowerment and partnership as the means (UNDP, UN-HABITAT et al. 2002).

The UPPR project has three main components: (i) providing grants for the construction of basic services and physical improvements; (ii) providing support for livelihood development programmes in the communities through community contract system[20]; and (iii) capacity building of local government to address the needs of the urban poor. The project has adopted a community-based, demand-driven approach with a strong belief in partnerships building among urban poor communities, local government, NGOs and the private sector, which are drawn from the CDD approach. In addition to the eleven former LPUPAP towns, UPPR has included nineteen new towns and cities. In addition to the components and activities included in LPUPAP, UPPR has espoused additional outputs and activities based on the experience of the first phase and elsewhere in Asia. For example: support for access to affordable health facilities, reaching the extreme poor, addressing community social problems, urban and peri-urban food production, improvement of educational opportunities for women and girls, and preparing town/city-wide poverty reduction strategies on a regular basis (GHK International 2006; Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2006-8).

3.5. Institutional Arrangements

A four-tier implementation structure—community, ward, *Pourashava*/city and national level—has been developed to support the fundamental principle of the project that decision-making will take place at the community level (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008:4). In accordance with the CDD approach discussed in the previous chapter, this is an endeavour to create new community organisations (participation spaces) at the local level. The detailed institutional

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[20] Community contract is a process whereby common amenities are built by the community as a contractor.

arrangement and the management of the UPPR project is described in the LPUPAP implementation guideline (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2001) and the UPPR project document (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008).

At the community[21] level, there are two types of groups: Primary Group (PG) and Community Development Committee (CDC). A PG is composed of a group of persons in the community that wants to address a development issue of common interest (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2001:15). The maximum number of PGs in a community is about 20, and they are generally composed of 15 to 20 members. If a PG starts a savings and credit operation, it is known as Savings and Credit Group. Every group has a group leader and secretary who are supposed to be elected by the group members for two years. Group funds are managed jointly by the group leaders and secretary. PGs are supposed to meet regularly to discuss various issues and work out plans to address those issues. On the other hand, a CDC is comprised of the group leaders and secretaries of the PGs in a community and represents 200-300 families. CDC chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer are elected as office bearers (OBs)[22] for two years by the members of the CDC. Every CDC has a constitution of its own and needs to receive accreditation from the local authority (*Pourashava*/City Corporation). CDCs are the focal point for carrying out all the development activities and addressing the common development issues faced by the entire community. The three main responsibilities of the CDC are: (i) maintaining bank accounts (ii) formulating

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[21] The idea of community in the project is very similar to the idea of neighborhood. The project identifies communities mainly on the basis of geographical boundaries. The minimum number of households in a community is 30.

[22] Either the chairperson or vice-chairperson must be a female member. This is strategic policy to ensure more females in the leadership position. Here I refer to the discussion on participation and gender in chapter two.

community action plans, and (iii) developing proposals for and managing community-contracts (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2009). In accordance with the discussion on CDD in chapter two, these can be seen as an attempt to attach community people with the broader sphere of local governance process.

At the ward level there is the Project Implementation Committee, which is comprised of the concerned WC, woman ward councillor (WWC), community development worker (CDW) and representatives from various local government bodies and NGOs. The committee is responsible for programming, co-ordinating and monitoring project activities. At the same time, at the cluster level there is a CDC-cluster. A CDC-cluster is composed of 6 to 10 CDCs, and is responsible for forming PGs and CDCs in new communities, conducting community surveys, and giving instruction and directions in the implementation of community contracts (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2009). A CDC-cluster is comprised of the CDC office bearers. They themselves elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson[23], secretary and treasurer for two years. These cluster committees have no formal responsibility in the management of project resources or in decision-making. However, they do have a very important function in the monitoring and nurturing of their peers (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2001; Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008).

At the *Pourashava*/City Corporation level, there are three local bodies: CDC Federation, Town Outcome Board and Town Project Board. CDC Federation is comprised of the CDC-clusters. Once CDC-clusters become mature and are

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[23] Male members can be selected only for the post of vice-chairperson.

sufficient in numbers, they may form a federation at the city/town level[24]. CDC Federations have the same four OB positions as CDC-clusters and CDCs (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2009). As with the CDC-clusters, the CDC Federation does not have a specific role over project resources and CDC level decision-making process (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2001). The Town Outcome Board is formed with the aim of monitoring the progress of implementation and co-ordinating various activities. The chairman/ mayor of the concerned *Pourashava*/ City Corporation is the chairperson of the committee. This committee is entrusted with a number of important activities, for example: establishing an accreditation system for CDCs, approving community contracts and providing a fund for the physical development of the communities, taking necessary steps to resolve land problems and so on. The other body is known as Town Project Board (Executive Group). The members are City Corporation/ *Pourashava*'s senior engineer, chief executive officer, or other senior local government officers and the project town manager (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2001; Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008). Besides these three bodies, the local UPPR project office works as the linking agent between CDCs and the Town Outcome Board, which is mainly responsible for supporting the initiatives taken by CDCs, co-ordinating activities and keeping close contact with national level bodies (Huq 2006).

At the national level, there are two different management/co-ordinating bodies: the Project Management Board and the Project Outcome Board/Project Steering Committee. The Project Management Board is comprised of the national project director (the chair), the project manager and the UNDP's cluster co-ordinator. The

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[24] There was no federation in the study area.

board is supposed to hold a meeting once a month. The board is responsible for taking managerial, financial and technical assistance decisions. The Project Outcome Board is the highest level committee for UPPR. The board is chaired by the secretary of the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (MLGRDC). The members include representatives from External Resource Division (ERD); Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED); Planning Commission; the chief engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED); the national project director; the project manager; and representatives from UNDP, UN-Habitat and DFID; elected members of the *Pourashavas* and City Corporations, and project partner communities. The board is required to meet twice a year, and is responsible for reviewing the progress of the project, identifying implementation constraints and recommending policy (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008).

3.5.1. Community Mobilisation Process

The UPPR project document says that the community mobilisation process is the same as with LPUPAP (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008). In describing the community mobilisation process the LPUPAP implementation guidelines stated that, 'Social mobilisation will be initiated by Community Development Workers with the assistance of the Ward Commissioners' (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2001:28). The LPUPAP implementation guideline also describes the entire mobilisation process as follows:

- Community development workers (CDWs) should establish a good rapport with the community through regular visits and informal discussions
- CDWs should assist the community to hold a general meeting and make them

realise the need to organise for collective action

- Facilitate small group discussions dealing with specific issues

- Assist in the formation of PGs and to establish the rules of association

- Assist in the formulation of the constitution for the CDC

- The CDC may assume a name to give it identity and recognition

- Assist in the accreditation of the CDC with the local authority.

3.5.2. Group Savings and Credit Programme

A savings and credit programme is one of the most important activities undertaken by the community groups. The project considers a savings and credit programme as part of the process of building trust among community members and developing a sense of mutual support. Usually group members make 10 BDT (approximately Aus $ 0.12) of weekly savings. The regularity of a savings and credit programme is one of the criteria for accessing project benefits. The project provides the savings and credit groups with technical assistance on operational guidelines and accounting methods through organising various training programmes and workshops. Besides these, the project office closely monitors the operation. Savings group members have access to loans from their own group savings. It is important to mention that the project does not, however, provide the savings and credit groups with direct funding. Group members are entitled to draw loans upon the approval of the group leaders and office bearers (OBs) of the respective CDCs. Generally there is no upper/lower ceiling of the loans. But no one is allowed to borrow more until his/her current loan has been repaid. Borrowers are required to repay loans with 11 monthly instalments and at an interest rate of 15%. After the end of every financial year, the group earnings from the interest is supposed to be distributed as follows: 9% among group

members, 1% among OBs as remuneration, 3% among PG leaders, 1% to the group welfare fund and 1% as official cost.

3.5.3. Community Contracts

At the local level, the issue of building partnerships among local government bodies, the private sector and communities has been realised through community contracts in the form of written agreements. Before getting any contract, every CDC is required to acquire accreditation from the RCC through which the RCC recognises the CDCs as registered entities who are conferred with the power to implement various development activities on behalf of the community people within the UPPR project arena. After accreditation and the fulfilling of other criteria, CDCs become eligible for community contracts. Community contracts are considered to be the reflection of what community people want to improve their lives, because the initiatives taken under contracts are identified through Community Action Planning (CAP) (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2008). Ideally, the community groups themselves identify their own needs, prioritise these needs and apply to the RCC for the necessary resources to fulfil those needs. After approving the contracts, RCC channels the necessary funds directly to the community groups. This has been envisaged by the project as a form of partnership building between the local government and communities where the RCC has financial and other technical resources to offer to the communities. Community people also have a better knowledge of their needs and how to fulfil those needs. Here the UPPR local project office works as a linking agent which assists both parties to make this partnership work. Project documents considered the community contracting process as an effective mechanism for community capacity-building by providing a focus for community action and empowering community people, especially women, in the

processes of decision-making, planning and contract management (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2006).

There are two types of community contract: Settlement Improvement Fund (SIF) and Socio-economic Fund (SEF). SIF finances all physical investments in the project communities. It supports five types of services: i) improved water supply and hygiene; ii) sanitation; iii) access and environmental improvements; iv) sheltered space; and v) urban food production infrastructure (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2009). SEF espouses four main programmes: apprenticeships grants, business start-up grants, education grants, and social-development activities grants (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2009).

3.6. Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the pattern of municipal government bodies in Bangladesh with special focus on the RCC. It was found that the existing local government structure of Bangladesh has its origin in the colonial British rule and remains almost the same, with only a few changes incorporated into its structure. Within the context, in accordance with the CDD approach, UPPR intervention has adopted a community demand-driven implementation strategy to ensure people's participation in the local governance process. The project has introduced four-tier community organisations: PGs, CDCs, CDC-cluster and CDC Federation. Alongside these community organisations are some other managerial bodies at different levels, for example, Project Implementation Committee at the ward level, Town Outcome Board and Town Project Board at the town/city level, and Project Outcome Board and Project Management Board at the national level. At the local level CDCs are the focal point for carrying out all development activities and addressing the common

development issues faced by the entire community. Thus, CDCs are responsible for

running savings and credit programmes and implementing community contracts.

CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND

RESEARCH PROCESS

"Knowing what you want to find out leads inexorably to the question of how you will get that information." (Miles and Huberman 1994:42)

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes in detail the research methodology, research design, data collection, data analysis process and the research site. The purpose of this study is to understand the processes and impacts of a specific type of community development intervention. In the previous chapters I have described how development interventions are largely influenced by local social, political and institutional factors. Thus, the study entails an examination of how various local organisations function, their activities and also understanding the local context within which the intervention has been implemented. In accordance with the nature of the inquiry and also my philosophical assumptions about understanding reality, I have chosen a case study method within the framework of a qualitative research approach.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section describes the research methodology and the rationale for choosing the case study method, followed by a detailed discussion about data collection methods, selection of study area, data analysis process, ethical considerations and also the study's limitations. In the second section I have described the research sites in detail.

Section I: Research Design

In this section I first describe the research methodology and the rationale for choosing the case study method. Afterwards I draw on a detailed discussion about data collection methods, selection of study area, data analysis process and ethical considerations. The section ends with describing the study's limitations.

4.2. Research Methodology

In social inquiry, researchers generally start a research process with some philosophical assumptions or 'knowledge claims' (Creswell 2003), from which they derive research methodologies (Neuman 2003). The essence is that research method(s) are directed by the underpinning assumptions regarding what is knowledge (Ontology)? how we can know it and what we can know (Epistemology) (Creswell 2003; Gray 2005; Crotty 2010). More specifically, these issues are related to perceiving realities by researchers from different philosophical perspectives. There are at least three different epistemological propositions (objectivism, constructivism and subjectivism) embodied in a number of theoretical perspectives (positivism, interpretivism, critical inquiry, feminism, postmodernism etc.) that inform a range of methodologies. In this way, constructivism is linked to interpretivism (Crotty 2010). This version of epistemological perspective claims that truth and meaning (reality) do not exist out there, rather those are perceived and created by the subject's interactions with the world—'meaning is not discovered but constructed' (Crotty 2010:42). My epistemological stance for doing this social inquiry follows this line of world view.

This research aims to explore how the UPPR intervention is contributing (if so) to the development of participatory urban local governance practices in the context of

Bangladesh. Therefore, the study focuses not only on the immediate outputs of the project, but also the processes and outcomes in relation to the overall socio-economic, institutional, cultural and political background of Bangladesh. Thus, this research has both explorative and descriptive purposes (Babbie 2007). It has an explorative purpose, because this research is about understanding the political, social and institutional contexts at the local levels. It is also descriptive, because this research is also about describing the functioning of the development intervention as well as that of a few other organisations, e.g. the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) and various civil society organisations, within the given context. From the discussion of the previous chapters it becomes apparent that many of the key concepts of this research, for instance, participation and empowerment incur different meanings depending on the context in which they are applied. Therefore, a precise understanding of participation and the underlying processes of empowerment requires a critical analysis of the spaces within which they take place. It is not about discovering the truth which is equally shared by various actors involved in the process (community people, local elites, local elected representatives and project officials etc.); rather this is a process of identifying and understanding those actors (because some are apparently hidden actors), their roles and their context specific realities (partial truth). This is also about compiling and comparing those realities by blending with my subjective experience in the way of constructing a whole picture among many. Thus, this research follows the symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics which are two varieties of the interpretive theoretical perspective (Neuman 2003; Gray 2005).

The essential tenets of symbolic interactionism are:

> People interpret the meaning of objects and actions in the world and then act upon those interpretations; meanings arise from the process of social interaction; meanings are handled in, and are modified by, an interactive process used by people in dealing with the phenomena that are encountered. (Gray 2005:21)

Hermeneutics emphasises:

> ... a detailed reading or examination of text including written words, or pictures. A researcher conducts 'a reading' to discover meaning embedded within the text. In doing so each reader in fact brings his or her subjective experience to a text. When studying the text, the researcher/reader tries to absorb or get inside the viewpoint it presents as a whole, and then develop a deep understanding of how its parts relate to the whole. (Neuman 2003:76)

According to Neuman (2003), the interpretive approach is closely related with the qualitative method of research. Creswell (2003) considers this as a qualitative approach of doing social research. When combined with some type of research methods (e.g. ethnography, case study, grounded theory etc.), the qualitative research approach enables social researchers to study social and cultural phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Berg 2009). The same notion is echoed by Creswell (1998:15), who says that this approach builds ' ... a complex, holistic picture, analysis words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.'

Adopting this approach has enabled me to understand and also construct meanings of the lived realities of participatory local governance out of the experiences described by the research participants. As it is already argued that reality can never be fully comprehended, only approximated (Guba 1990, referred by Asaduzzaman 2008), researchers in using the qualitative research approach use participant responses as the starting point for building broader analytical categories, relationships and

assumptions (Basit 2003:143). According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984:7), qualitative methods:

> ... are designed to ensure a close fit between data and what people actually say and do. By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is on their minds, and looking at the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains first-hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions and rating scales.

Hence, the qualitative approach is often seen to have an advantage over quantitative research in understanding the socially constructed nature of realities. The particular social and institutional context is seen differently when textual data are quantified, as argued by Kaplan and Maxwell (1994). Central to good qualitative research is whether 'the participants' subjective meanings, actions and social contexts, as understood by them are illuminated' (Fossey et. al 2002, cited in Muli 2008:110). Since social realities are constructed and thus sometimes contested, the qualitative research approach has enabled me to understand those different realities in the way they are perceived by different actors and groups involved in the urban local governance process in the study area.

Another reason for using the qualitative approach in this study is 'flexibility'. Since researchers are not restricted by rigid 'predetermined categories of analysis', it offers researchers possibilities for exploring and understanding new ideas, events and phenomena which could be considered more important by the research participants. Therefore, this approach freed me of the 'boxed idea' and enabled me to have better understanding of the situations during field study. I went to the field with a broader and relatively open theoretical framework and research flexibility which helped me to consider research participants as the prime knowledge holders about their own realities.

4.3. Case Study Research Method

Berg (2009:317) defines the case study method as 'a method involving systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions.' The character of this study requires a detailed case study for a deeper understanding of the research questions. When a researcher is required to study a situation in great depth, where cases are information-rich[25] and typical, employing the case study method is useful (Patton 2002:230; Yin 2003:41). Furthermore, Yin (2003) describes the importance of using the case study method in situations where researchers deliberately want to cover contextual conditions— which may be highly pertinent to their phenomenon of studies (Yin 2003:13).

The research problem is associated with the local governance process in Bangladesh. It requires an understanding of the relationships among different actors and factors involved in the UPPR project intervention in the Bangladeshi context. Therefore, this study requires in-depth inquiry. Furthermore, this project has been implemented for more than ten years in most of the large cities and towns in Bangladesh. In comparison to other CDD projects which are also in operation in Bangladesh, it is the oldest and largest in terms of area coverage, number of beneficiaries and the size of available funds. Besides this, the project is also typical of many other development interventions which are also being implemented, not only in Bangladesh but also throughout the developing countries, under the auspices of various international development agencies. Since the issues of local governance, empowerment and participation, which are the key issues addressed in this study, are

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[25] Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry.

cross-cutting, multi-dimensional and context specific, this study demands a careful in-depth consideration of the context.

Despite the many obvious benefits of the case study method (more broadly with the qualitative research approach as a whole), one of its major drawbacks is the accusation of limited 'generalisability' (Bryman 1989). Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss this problem under the heading of 'the only generalization is: there is no generalization' (cited in Flick 2009:407). For many, the question is not even necessary to ask (Berg 2009:330) given that case studies are not sampled research. One of the main criteria of selecting a case is from which most can be learnt. Learning potential is more important here than ensuring representation (Stake 1995).

This study is about understanding how CDD projects may contribute to the development of a participatory local governance process in a given context. The selection of the UPPR project as a case can be classified as 'instrumental case study' (Stake 2000, cited in Silverman 2005:127). This type of case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to revise a generalisation. My prime concern is to gain insight. Here I adopt a more radical approach to deal with the issue of 'generalisability'. According to this approach:

> Since the basic structures of social order are to be found anywhere, it does not matter where we begin our research. Look at any case and you will find the same order. (Silverman 2005:134)

When case studies are properly undertaken, they should not only fit the specific individual, group or event studied, but also generally provide understanding about similar individuals, group, and events (Berg 2009). To ensure research quality as well as to increase the 'transferability' (Lincoln and Guba 1985, cited in Flick 2009:407) of my research findings to another context, the rigor of 'methodological

awareness'[26] (Seale 1999 cited in Silverman 2005:209) issues have been followed throughout the research.

Like quantitative research, generalisation in qualitative research draws on issues of the reliability and validity of research data. I have followed 'data triangulation', where necessary, by attempting to get a 'true fix' on an issue by utilising different sources (methodological triangulation) of data (interviews, observation and participant observation, and secondary documents) and also among different categories of respondents (sources of information) on important issues (Mathison 1988; Patton 2002). But the use of data triangulation is obviously limited in the rigor of analysis by considering the goal and theoretical assumptions of my research project (Willis 2007). According to Willis (2007):

> Triangulation is best used in qualitative studies that follow the postpositivist search for generalizations—for laws and truth. If that is your (researcher's) purpose, then triangulating is a conservative way of preventing you from unsupported conclusions from your data. It is a way of dealing with the issue of validity. But what if the goal of your research is understanding, not discovering laws? In that case triangulation may not be desirable. (Willis 2007:219)

Instead, I mainly relied on gaining 'extended experience in the environment' during my field study as another way of building research confidence (Willis 2007).

4.4. Selection of the Research Sites and Data Sources

4.4.1. The Selection of Rajshahi City Corporation Area

When research studies take place in natural or field settings, choosing a site for a study is probably one of the hardest parts of doing any research study (qualitative and quantitative) as the site finally chosen must be willing for the researcher to

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[26] "Methodological awareness involves a commitment to showing as much as possible to the audience of research studies … the procedures and evidence that have led to particular conclusions, always open to the possibility that conclusions may need to be revised in the light of new evidence" (Seale 1999, cited in Silvernan 2005:209).

intrude on its territory (Tutty, Rothery *et al*. 1996). According to Marshall and Rossman (1995:51), the ideal site is one:

> Where (1) entry is possible; (2) there is a high probability that a mix of the process, people, programme, interactions, and structures of interest is present; (3) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants of the study; and (4) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured.

For this research the selection of RCC area as the research site is based on the above guidelines. RCC is one of the oldest UPPR project towns. In Rajshahi City, the project office started its journey in January, 2000. Most of the project components are well established and are mature enough to conduct field investigation on the process and impacts of the intervention.

The UPPR operation in RCC area is officially considered to be one of the high performing project towns. In the evaluation report, the cordial support of RCC officials (mainly the former mayor of RCC) had been mentioned as one of the important factors for successful project operation in contrast to the municipal officials' non-cooperation with the project operations in some low performing project towns (GHK International 2006). Nevertheless, my previous study (Huq 2006) in the RCC area indicated that RCC officials' support for project operation was strategic in building a political support base. The RCC's local election was held in 2008 before the commencement of my field work in 2009. The elected officials were new to their offices, and many of them, including the present mayor, were in the RCC for the first time. All these contextual factors indicated a high probability that a mix of the process, interactions and structure of interest were present.

Furthermore, I have been living in the RCC area for about 14 years and I have an established network of interaction with different types and classes of organisations

and people. I know the city and I have a great deal of familiarity with the people and local culture. Therefore, it was easier for me to use my experiences and networks during my field work which eventually made it possible to finish my field work within a reasonable time-frame and cost. For example, reaching and interviewing some categories of respondents to my satisfaction (e.g. RCC officials, political leaders and parliament members) was generally impossible without an established communication network. Moreover, insider/outsider related issues were not only limited to access to specific categories of respondents, but were also very helpful in the development of my understanding about the context from an 'emic' perspective[27] (Patton 2002; Willis 2007).

4.4.2. Selection of the Study CDCs

The selection of the four study communities[28]—Alampur (CDC 1), Salampur (CDC 2), Jogotpur (CDC 3) and Sripur (CDC 4)—was purposive. The selection of the CDCs began with my discussion with local project officials regarding the content and purpose of the study. I informed the officials that I was interested in studying CDCs where there was a high probability that a mix of the process, people and interactions were present. Limiting the number of CDCs to four seemed sufficiently manageable by considering the research questions, budget and the research time-frame without compromising the quality of field inquiry. The final selection was based on the following criteria: firstly, in all communities selected, the project had been working for more than five years; secondly, all the project components had been introduced in all the CDCs; thirdly, expected interesting variations in group

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[27] Emic and etic refer to two contrasting ways of approaching the study of culture. The emic approach looks at things through the eyes of members of the culture being studied. The etic approach uses structures or criteria developed outside the culture as a framework for studying that culture. In accordance with my theoretical perspective for this research (interactionism and hermeneutics), I have followed the first approach during field observation but in combination with the second during data analysis (Patton 2002; Willis 2007).

[28] The names of the study communities (CDCs) representing them are pseudonyms.

activities; and fourthly, variation in group composition in terms of gender. The criteria also followed the tenet of 'generalisability' as a whole—'typicality'. Besides this, the last two criteria derived also from the theoretical assumptions presented in chapter two, termed 'theoretical sampling' by Silverman (2005), to identify context specific influencing actor and factors in the participation process. The details of these selected CDCs will be discussed in the second section of this chapter as well as in chapter six.

Besides selecting four study CDCs, I also chose three civil society organisations as data sources—Manobata (CSO 1), Rokkha (CSO 2) and Sushashon (CSO 3)[29]—which were active in the local governance process in the RCC area. The necessity for choosing civil society organisations as data sources stems from considering the fact that governance is a multi-stakeholder phenomenon. Therefore, to understand the dynamics of participatory local governance, it is imperative that light be shed upon the activities and functions of the various actors and their relationships. The selection of these three civil society organisations was purposive based on certain criteria: firstly, the level of activeness and influence in the local governance process especially in the RCC managed affairs; secondly, differences in origin, agenda and working procedures; thirdly, whether the organisations directly or indirectly encourage people's participation in the local governance process; and finally, my accessibility as a researcher. The detailed discussion about these three selected civil society organisations will be presented in chapter five.

4.5. Research Participants Selection Process

The main objective of the research is to understand the ways in which the

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[29] The names of the civil society organisations representing them are pseudonyms.

intervention has been contributing (or not) to the development of participatory urban local governance practices in the context of Bangladesh. According to the conceptual framework presented in chapter two, participatory local governance is characterised by interactions between different kinds of public, semi-public and private actors (ranging from civil society to individual) within several societal domains and at different levels. Therefore, data have been collected from eight different categories of respondents. The first category includes the project participants (office bearers, primary group leaders and general group members) who are members of the study community groups. The second category includes non-participant community residents to get their views regarding the project activities. The third category includes both local and national level project officials who are directly involved in managing the project. The fourth category of respondents is the RCC's elected representatives, i.e., the ward councillors and the mayor who are some of the key important actors at the project implementation level and also in the local governance process. The fifth category includes a local government expert who is not an actor in that sense, but provided useful information regarding the local governance system in Bangladesh. The sixth category comprises civil society activists chosen from the three civil society organisations, who are also important actors in the local governance process. The seventh category includes local political leaders who provided important insight regarding the actual local governance process. The last category includes national parliament members. The following Table 3 shows the types and number of respondents by category.

Silverman (2005:130) reminds us that 'sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal.' According to Guba and Lincoln (1995:199), 'all sampling is done with some purpose in mind.' Again, Patton (2002) notes that the

sampling strategy must be selected to fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints being faced. By considering these points, I used purposive sampling to select the respondents. The logic and power of purposive sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. Purposive sampling focuses on selecting information-rich respondents, the study of whom will illuminate the area in question (Patton 2002). Employing purposive sampling allowed me to do two things: firstly, to select unique information-rich respondents for in-depth investigation; and secondly, it enabled me to select easily accessible respondents who are generally identified as 'difficult-to-reach-specialised population' (for example, political leaders, parliament members, or local government expert).

Table 3: List of Respondents

Category of Respondents		Total
CDC members	Alampur (Study CDC 1)	06
	Salampur (Study CDC 2)	05
	Jogotpur (Study CDC 3)	05
	Sripur (Study CDC 4)	04
Non Participant Community Residents		05
Project officials		04
RCC Elected Representatives		02
Local Government Expert		01
Civil Society Activist		03
Local Political Leaders		03
Parliament Members		02
Total		**40**

A purposeful criterion and snowball/chain sampling method was followed for selecting the research participants from the project participants, non-participant community residents, local government experts, civil society activists, local political leaders and parliament members categories. In the case of the project participants' category the selected participants were drawn from three sub-categories: office

bearers, primary group leaders and general primary group members. For selecting research participants from this category, the criterion of being a member of the concerned CDC for at least two years had been followed so that the research participants could provide detailed information about the project and could assert his/her perception with regard to participation in local governance. In order to identify other respondents, I often asked the attending interviewees as to whom they thought would be suitable interviewees. This helped me to identify information-rich respondents. Again, for selecting non-participating community residents as respondents, a minimum of two years living in the concerned community was used as a criterion. For selecting local political leaders as research participants, attachment with the different political parties and having the experience of being involved in the local governance process was used as a selecting criterion. The concerned project officials (local project coordinator, local programme officer and the concerned community development workers of the study CDCs) and RCC elected representatives were selected as respondents on the basis of their affiliation with the project.

4.6. Field Visit and Data Collection Process

4.6.1. Initial Contact and Gaining Access

The field study in Bangladesh lasted about five months from the first week of October 2009 to the second week of February 2010. Before leaving Adelaide, I communicated with the project director in Dhaka and the project town manager in Rajshahi over the telephone and through email to inform them about my research project, and I received their preliminary consent regarding my field study in Rajshahi. Subsequently, upon my arrival in Dhaka at the end of September 2009, I first made a courtesy visit to the project director's office in Dhaka and lodged a

formal application for his approval. During my short stay in Dhaka, I began talking informally with the project officials in Dhaka to understand the context and identify potential respondents and important research issues.

When I reached Rajshahi, the local project town manager advised me to apply for further approval from the mayor of RCC. The process of getting approval was lengthy due to the unavailability and busy schedule of the mayor which delayed the commencement of field work. However, in the mean time I began discussion about my research project with the local project officials. I received cordial assistance from them throughout my field visit in Rajshahi. I started my data collection interviews with mock interviews in a non-study CDC. These interview sessions helped me a great extent in devising my field work strategies. Upon selecting the four study CDCs, the concerned community development workers introduced me to the group members and I was able to explain my research project to them. Before commencing formal data collection, I started visiting the CDCs regularly. I started roaming in and around the study communities, talking with people by standing at road sides or in tea-stalls. In the Bangladeshi context, for a person, not known to local people, roaming inside a locality is always suspicious to local residents. Each time I had to explain to the people the reason for my presence in their locality. I faced the hardest experience in Sripur (Study CDC 4). A few local folks were very sceptical about my presence and I cannot restrain myself from sharing one of my experiences. One day when I was waiting in a tea stall for meeting the chairperson of Sripur CDC (Study CDC 4), a couple of young chaps suddenly started questioning me. After a while one of them took me to one side and asked me in hushed tones whether I needed drugs or a woman and gave his assurance that he was a genuine supplier. When I tried to convince him by rejecting his offer, he became suspicious about my motives. Those

young men kept a close eye on me until the end of my field work in that community, as I believe they were convinced that I was an undercover policeman. To avoid a repeat of such a situation, from then on I always took the help of any of the community-group members during my movements inside the locality.

4.6.2. Data Collection Methods

I employed two types of qualitative methods to collect primary data during my field work: in-depth interview, and direct observation and participant observation that suit best with my ontological and epistemological positions in this research. Besides this, I have also used document analysis method for secondary data.

4.6.2.1. In-depth Interview

The in-depth interview was selected as the most appropriate method for gathering primary data from individual participants. Interviews were aimed at exploring individual beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and opinions using questionnaires specifically designed for different categories of respondents (See Appendices VII-XIII). The questionnaires were semi-structured. This means that rather than having pre-set, specific close-ended questions, the interviews were guided by mainly open-ended questions arranged by thematic order: for example, group membership, developmental benefits, formal/informal institutional relationships, policy environment and urban local governance issues. Some of the themes were common to all categories of respondent. The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that the participants were asked a sequence of questions but with the flexibility for adjustment in response to its development—questions could be altered and additional questions could be added when necessary (May 1997). All the interviews were conducted in the local language, Bengali. For this reason I had to translate the questionnaires from English to Bengali. Interview sessions lasted from an hour to a

maximum of two hours depending mostly on the category of the respondent.

All the interview sessions were recorded using an electronic voice recorder. At the beginning of every interview session I informed the interviewees that the session was going to be recorded and they had to sign participant consent forms beforehand. After completing a couple of interviews, I started transcribing the interviews into Microsoft Word documents in Bengali while listening to the recorded conversations. Though I offered the participants the opportunity to review the transcription of the session before giving their final consent to use them in my research, none took up the offer. A second round of review of the transcriptions by listening to the interviews was done after coming back to Adelaide, Australia.

Interviewing community members was more challenging than other categories of respondents for some practical reasons. Firstly, despite giving them an in-depth introduction regarding my research project, I noticed that many of the participants initially thought that I had at least some kind of connection with the project head office, and that I was interviewing them with some kind of hidden intention other than my stated purpose. This false perception created two potential problems. Some started to think that I could solve many of their problems and started to respond in that direction, rather than focusing on the thematic questions. On the other hand, I also observed that some interviewees became reluctant to share information out of some kind of fear that revealing sensitive information might create personal problems. In most cases I was able to manage their false perceptions regarding my research purpose by explaining more about me and my research project. However, it did extend the interview time. Secondly, in the given social setting sometimes it was very difficult to interview a participant alone. In a few cases people besides the main

interviewees were present during the interview sessions, and in many occasions they were also participating in the discussions. In extreme cases it happened that the other participants were more vocal than the main participants. In such cases I had to allow them to speak up in a manageable way by considering this an opportunity for gathering diversified information. In the forthcoming analysis chapters I have used some of their comments as research data. Additional related information has been provided in those instances.

4.6.2.2. Direct Observation and Participant Observation

Observation means seeing with purpose. It is a close look or view of situations with some definite purpose. It does not end with mere seeing, but calls for the recording of data as noticed by the observer. However, observing human activities is not straight-forward. There is an ongoing tension between 'overt' and 'covert' observations. People may behave quite differently when they know they are being observed (overt observation) compared with how they behave naturally when they do not think they are being observed (covert observation) (Patton 2002; Flick 2009). By considering the ethical tensions around 'covert' observation, I followed the 'overt' observation method (where applicable) being aware of some of the potential effects (for example, the number of participants in group meetings which were observed). Some of such potential effects were further reviewed during interview sessions.

Participating and observing research participants' activities provided me with a great understanding of the context. As a researcher, I participated in a few of the group events in all of the study CDCs which gave an in-depth idea about the groups' activities. Besides this, participating in group meetings[30] provided me with an

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[30] Three meetings in total in three study CDCs: Alampur (study CDC 1), Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3). In Sripur (Study CDC 4) I did not have any such scope since the CDC

opportunity to build close relationships with study participants through which I could manage many of the problems I had to face during interview sessions. Miles and Crush (1993:89) remind us the 'insider rapport and personal involvement are essential, indeed unavoidable elements of the interview.'

Besides participating in community level group meetings (three in total), I participated in a few other events, for example, observing community development workers' (CDWs') conversations in person and sometimes over the phone with the study CDCs' group members; accompanying the project town manager during his official visit to a non-study community; accompanying study CDC members while they were visiting another non-study CDC for auditing; and Friday prayers with a mass gathering in community mosques. I also participated in one of the street procession programmes demanding the implementation of the proposed Northern Irrigation Project in that region which was organised by Rokkha (CSO 2). This provided me with a deep understanding of the functions and ways of work.

I followed three methods of data documentation, such as: maintaining a field journal where I noted important events and observation by dates; note taking during participating as observer and during interview sessions; and using a digital camera for taking photos.

4.6.2.3. Document Analysis of Secondary Sources

The documentary analysis method has been used to analyse secondary data. This method was seen as appropriate because it offered quick and inexpensive data which would answer many of my questions during the research project. Document analysis

activities have been held-off for the last few years (these issues will be discussed in the following chapters). However, in Sripur (Study CDC 4), I had an opportunity to be present as an observer when the concerned CDW organised an informal discussion with the members to weigh up opportunities for resuming the CDC activities.

was one of the great data sources in understanding the local governance context in Rajshahi City area in connection with the nation-wide governance practices. Besides this, secondary data has been used for the purpose of 'data triangulation'.

Data sources in this study are:

- Paper-based and electronic sources. These include: books, academic journal papers, newspapers, research reports and conference papers.

- Official documents. These include: a number of Bangladeshi government official publications (e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), The Constitutions of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and various policy documents), UPPR project reports and other publications, and civil society organisations' own publications and reports.

Manual techniques were used for organising secondary data. Secondary data were organised in order to identify patterns so that the research questions posed in the study could be answered. Secondary data complimented by primary data have been used extensively, especially in chapter five.

4.7. Analysis of the Primary Data

Nvivo 8 qualitative software package was used to organise and manage primary data gathered through semi-structured interviews. Since the interviews' discussions did not follow a unified thematic structure, Nvivo offered a great comfort in organising and identifying data patterns through coding. After finishing categorical coding (about 78 categories), data were organised to be thematically consistent with the research questions. Once the coding was completed, the coded information was printed, the content of the data was reviewed, and important quotations from interviews were translated into English for use during report writing.

4.8. Ethical Issues

Ethical tensions are not restricted to fieldwork, but refer to all stages in the research process. In this study, a normative ethical standard has been followed. This is an approved project of the Flinders University's Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. The project received final ethics approval on 11 August 2009 (See Appendices I and II). Ethical issues elements, such as consent, confidentiality and trust have been followed during field study (Ryen 2004).

Before conducting interview sessions, the participants were informed about the research objectives and purpose of the sessions. Participants were also supplied with an information sheet containing a brief description of the project, contact addresses of the researcher and the academic research supervisors, and the academic institution (See Appendix IV). It was stated earlier that all interviews were conducted after obtaining the formal consent of the interviewees (See Appendix V). It is worth mentioning that a good number of respondents, especially from the 'community members' category, were not able to read or write except for signatures or thumb marks. In such circumstances, I read out the information sheet and the contents of the consent form. I also offered them the opportunity for discussions with their family members or friends before signing the consent forms.

I have been committed to retaining the respondents' anonymity in the sharing of any given information even after finishing the research project. There were a few interview sessions (from the community member category) where others were around. In such cases, the interviewees were not very concerned with confidentiality. But many others, especially those who talked about many sensitive issues freely and frankly (for example, corruption, mismanagement of project resources, coercion,

control and so on), were very concerned with maintaining their anonymity and the confidentiality of the data sources.

I have already described in the previous sub-point that the overt observation method was followed to avoid non-ethical research practices. Again, I have been very careful all through this thesis to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. The names of the study communities and the civil society organisations representing them are pseudonyms. Furthermore, for quoting respondents, I have used alpha-numeric code names. In addition, no such photograph is shared with the readers of this thesis, where any of the respondents is identifiable.

4.9. Limitations

This study has two major limitations. The first limitation is related to the method of data collection where Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was left off. Primary data collected from individual respondents could be more validated through FGD especially with the respondents from the project participant category which was planned before going to field study. However, by considering the power distance between the group leaders and general group members, and also the sensitivity of many of the relevant issues, for example, corruption, money embezzlement and coercion, the plan was left off. The second limitation pertains to sampling. The contractors (the third party hired/sub-contracted by the communities or by the project office) were not included as research participants. Therefore, the voices of those people and their views on partnership issue remain silent in my study. Now I move on to describe the research sites in detail.

Section II: The Research Site

4.10. A Brief Description of Rajshahi City

Rajshahi City is the headquarters of Rajshahi division comprising the 16 north-western districts of Bangladesh. The present city of Rajshahi has been developed out of the two villages Rampur and Boalia where silk and other industries were established by the Dutch, French and English. The town was developed with the establishment of many educational institutions, government offices, civil and criminal courts, revenue offices and in their wake due to the arrival of a large number of persons as officers, clerks, teachers and merchants, it gradually flourished as a centre of learning. The RCC covers an area of approximately 96.72 square kilometres bounded on the east, north and west by Paba Thana (Sub-division of a District) and on the south by the river Padma (Rajshahi City Corporation 2012). The locations of Rajshahi district and RCC are shown in Map 3.

The city has grown from a small city population of only about 40,000 in 1951 into the fourth largest city in Bangladesh behind to Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna.[31] Its legal and administrative status has changed over the years, paralleling its growth in population and importance in the national urban hierarchy. During the 1950s Rajshahi University was set up, followed by an engineering college (now Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology) in the 1960s and later a medical college. Rajshahi University served as a great impetus for the growth of Rajshahi City and the engineering university and medical college added to this force. Although agricultural activities have grown substantially in the hinterland, the growth in industrial and commercial activities has been very limited (Jobair 2006). Therefore,

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[31] Dhaka is the largest city followed by Chittagong, Khulan and Rajshahi. Dhaka is approximately three times larger than Chittagong, Chittagong is three times larger than Khulna and Khulna is three times larger than Rajshahi.

Rajshahi City can be characterised as administrative and educational in an agricultural setting with trading and some industries. The service sector is the most important single employment generator. In the private sector, trade and transportation are the most important economic activities, while in the suburbs the agricultural sector plays an important role. The industrial sector has a minor role (Rajshahi City Corporation 2010).

Map 3: Location Map of Rajshahi District and Rajshahi City
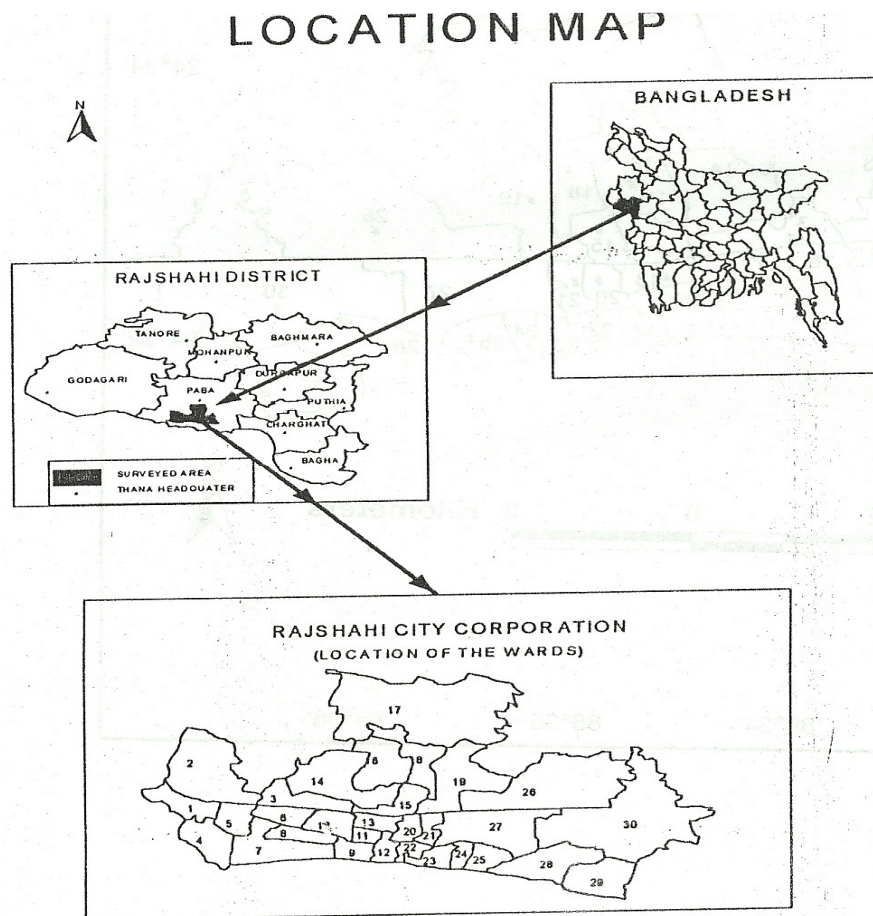
Source: Rajshahi City Corporation.

According to census data, the population has grown at about 6.4% per annum over the past decade, which is higher than the average national rate. At present, according

to data provided by the RCC, population figures were 0.5 million in 2001 and had risen to 0.8 million by 2005 (Rajshahi City Corporation 2012) with a population density of 4001 per square kilometre. (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2005). This is quite low compared to Bangladesh's other three densely populated cities (Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna). Migration from rural to Rajshahi City is a regular feature. According to RCC sources, it has been estimated that 52% of the households of Rajshahi City have an income below the poverty line. Rajshahi City suffers from the effects of the rapidly widening gap between the requirements for essential services and the level of resources capable of being mobilised to avoid the further deterioration and to achieve marginal improvement (Rajshahi City Corporation 2010).

Map 4: Rajshahi City Corporation Wards
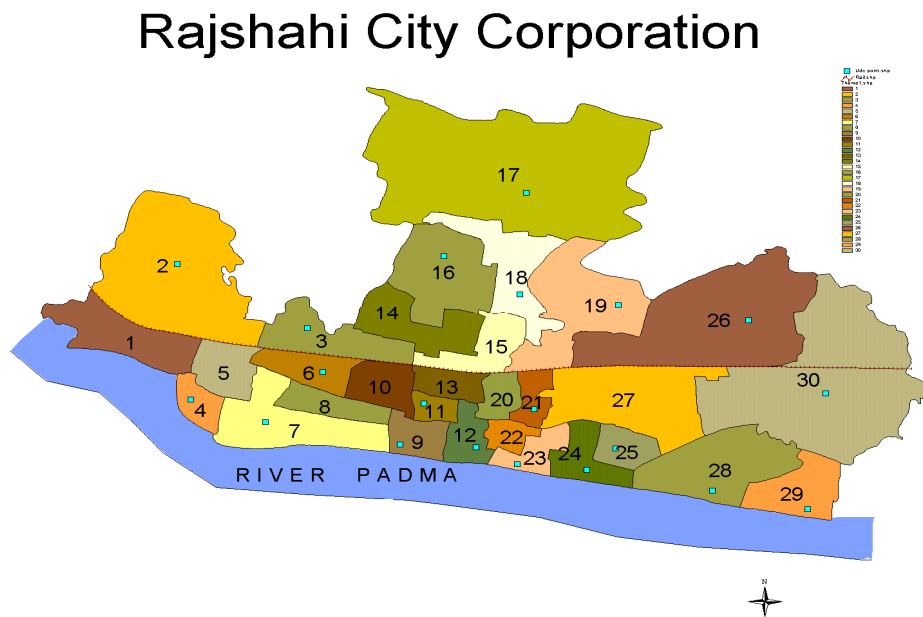
Source: Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction, Rajshahi Office.

4.11. A Brief Description of the Study Communities

It has been mentioned earlier that a total of four project communities within the RCC area were selected as research sites: Alampur (Study CDC 1), Salampur (Study CDC 2), Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4). The study communities are situated within the wards number 4 (Jogotpur), 7 (Sripur) and 18 (Alampur and Salampur) shown in Map 4. The subsequent description of the study CDCs presents mainly a brief account of the geographical and demographical features. The socio-economic profile of the populace of the CDCs has been discussed in the forthcoming chapter six.

4.11.1. Alampur (Study CDC 1)

The CDC was first established in the year 2000. Alampur (Study CDC 1) is situated within ward no. 18, which is on the northern part of the city. The total area of the CDC is 250,000 sq. meters. The number of total households was 400, and the total population was 2367 (male 775, female 1225 and children 367). At the time of data collection there were two government primary schools, two mosques, twenty retail shops, two bazaars, one Islamic school (*madrasha*) and one club in the neighbourhood within which the CDC is situated. During my fieldwork there were seven primary groups under the CDC with a total of 120 female group members.

4.11.2. Salampur (Study CDC 2)

Salampur CDC (Study CDC 2) is also situated within the ward no. 18. The CDC was established in the year 2001. The total area of the CDC is 1,000,000 sq. meters. There were a total number of 365 households consisting of 1534 population (762 male and 772 female). Therefore, it might seem that Salampur (Study CDC 2) is less densely populated than Alampur (Study CDC 1). However, a huge portion of the area in Salampur is agricultural land and also occupied by various factories and

offices. The neighbourhood, within which the CDC is situated, had one primary school that was run by a NGO named BRAC, one mosque, fifty grocery shops, three Islamic schools and three clubs. There were a total of nine primary groups (one male and eight female groups)

4.11.3. Jogotpur (Study CDC 3)

Jogotpur CDC is situated in ward no. 4 adjacent to ward no. 7. The CDC is situated on the south-west part of Rajshahi City alongside the river Padma. It was established in 2001. The total households numbered 500, and the total population was 2000 (the ratio of men to women was 49:51). There was one NGO-run informal school, one mosque, ten grocery shops, and one Islamic school in the neighbourhood. There were 12 primary groups of 340 female members.

4.11.4. Sripur (Study CDC 4)

Sripur (Study CDC 4) is situated in ward no. 7 which is on the southern side of the city on the bank of the river Padma. It comprises the whole Sripur neighbourhood. The CDC was established in 2001. The total area of the CDC is about 40,000 sq. meters. The total number of households was 300 and the total population was 2500. There was one mosque, one temple, seven grocery shops, two hotels and two Islamic schools in the neighbourhood. The total number of primary groups was six (one male and two female groups).

4.12. Summary

This chapter has described the rationale for the methodology used in this research. It is argued that qualitative approach was most appropriate to the in-depth mode of inquiry required for this study. Using the case study method is suitable with the research problem and research questions. Data collection methods used in the study

are best fit with the central research inquiry. The data analysis and the rigour of the data have been discussed. The second section of the chapter presented a brief discussion of the research sites. This sets the geographical and demographical contexts of the research sites.

CHAPTER 5:

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION -

THE PROCESS, ACTORS AND FACTORS

Traditionally it is seen in various times that local government in Bangladesh has been used as a corner stone for consolidating political power ... (LGE-01)

5.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the first research question: what processes, actors and important factors influence people's participation in the local governance process? According to the conceptual framework presented in chapter two, participatory local governance is about re-adjusting traditional boundaries and building new relationships between citizens and local government institutions by creating new intermediary participation spaces. The newly created community groups under the auspices of UPPR are these type of new spaces where participants from both sides (state and community) interact in a new way. Furthermore, when participatory local governance is understood as participation beyond a specific project, neighbourhood or policy (Schneider 1999), it refers to the participants' (beneficiaries) engagement in and influence over the wider local governance process that goes beyond the UPPR sphere.

In this chapter I first focus on understanding the city-wide local governance process in order to identify the important actors, factors and analyse their activities and roles in the process. According to the empowerment framework presented in chapter two, all of these together constitute macro spaces by which people's participation in the RCC managed local governance process is influenced. Again, according to the

framework, macro spaces and community spaces mutually influences each other. Therefore, understanding the city level local governance process and identifying the actors and factors are important to relate community level socio-economic and political issues (both structural and agency factors) to the broader arena of the RCC managed local governance process, which is comprised of both the macro and community spaces. By understanding the local governance process, I then endeavour to develop an understanding of the scopes, forms and levels of local people's participation in the local governance process situated within the macro spaces.

The current scholarship on governance and decentralisation in Bangladesh whilst rich, tends to have a rural focus. The Local Consultative Group's (LCG), bibliography[32] of key publications on governance in Bangladesh which lists around 50 key publications in this field, is indicative of this richness. Furthermore, I reviewed more than 50 other publications addressing governance, decentralisation and people's participation in the local governance process in Bangladesh and most of them predominantly address rural local governance. Among the limited number of works that focus on urban governance issues, there are only two authors who specifically focus on the RCC: Panday and Hossain. Hossain (2007) does not address the policy-making process of RCC, while Panday (2004) ignores some of the important actors and factors and their roles in the RCC policy-making process. Furthermore, neither of the works primarily focuses on people's participation issues in the city-wide local governance process. Therefore, by answering the first research question, this chapter will fill the gap in the knowledge. This chapter is primarily draws on interview data collected from a range of respondents categorised as local government experts (LGE), parliament members (PM), local political leaders (LPL),

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[32] http://lcgbangladesh.org/ (last visited 20 January 2012).

civil society activists (CSA), elected representatives (ER) and UPPR community group members (e.g. general primary group members, primary group leaders, and office bearers), and non-participant community members (NPCM). During analysis, interview data have been triangulated with data collected through field observations, academic literature and newspaper contents. Data from different sources have also been used with an interest to grasp diverse perspectives.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section I first analyses the political economy in designing the local government system in Bangladesh with a special focus on the RCC. Thereafter, the section describes and analyses the policy-making process of the RCC to identify the actors and important factors in the local governance process. Section II focuses on the forms, scopes and levels of local people's participation in the local governance process.

Section I: The Process, Actors and Factors

In chapter three we observed how the institutional design of the local government system in Bangladesh until 1990 was entrenched in the historical legacy of the British period. It reflected the general notion of 'institutionalism' that local government institutions (structure, composition, related laws and policies) were the products of history and the institutions then shaped outcomes (for example, limited citizens' participation). However, in chapter two I discussed how the predominance of institutions as a self-explanatory variable had been challenged by Sangmpam (2007). Accordingly, in this section I put a special focus on understanding the nature of politics that have shaped the design of the local government institutions from the 1990s to present; and then how the local government institutions have been

producing the outcomes in relation to the governance process which in turn has impacted on the roles of various actors and factors in it.

5.2. The Primacy of Politics

The rise of democratic governance in the 1990s is a corner stone in the country's political history in many respects. For example, in order to ensure free and fair elections, the provision of a caretaker government was established through constitutional amendments. As a way of consolidating representative democracy, a parliamentary form of government was reintroduced by refuting the previous presidential type. These two moves can be seen as a denial of the colonial legacy in political institutions. In this respect, this sub-section will attempt to unveil the impacts of such pro-democratic changes in the case of local government institutions with a special focus on the RCC.

Making comment on the local government reforms in Bangladesh since 1991, the local government expert interviewee expressed his opinion in this way:

> With every change of government at the centre, there are invariably some changes in the local government rules and regulations. This simply means that those who hold power in the central government opt for suitable cosmetic changes in the local level in favour of their own interests. People at the central government are reluctant to establish a transparent, accountable and participatory local governance system due to the fear of losing control and power. (LGE-01)

The above respondent talks about frequent changes in the local government rules and regulations, which are directed towards consolidating political power structure by exerting control rather than sharing power. This corresponds with the concept of power as zero-sum, discussed in chapter two, where power can be achieved only at the expense of others. Furthermore, following the Marxian notion of power, this type of power relation is about struggle over resources (Salinus 2006; Davis 2007). In this

respect, it would be pertinent to quote one of the veteran politician's opinions expressed during a discussion session on 'The role of elected representatives in the local government system in Bangladesh':

> Government needs to share power, not relief … No government wants to strengthen local government. Government wants to capture power because power is related to resources. And by using the resources government wants to be re-elected in elections. (*The Daily Amader Shomoy*, 24 September, 2011)

History reveals the government's intention to consolidate political power through the local government system. Since the 1990s, the country has observed four democratic regimes led by the two major political parties and their allies who are historically rivals and hostile to each other: Bangladesh Nationalist Party (1991-1996 and 2001-2006) and Awami League (1996-2001 and 2009-onwards). However, from 2007 to 2008, the nation experienced the rule of a military backed non-elected interim government. Since 1991, a number of local government reform commissions were formed to introduce a more pro-democratic, functional and development oriented local government system. Nevertheless, very few of those recommendations were implemented (Siddiqui 2005). Successive regimes added further 'cosmetic changes' (in the words of the previous interviewee) in the local government system. For example, Bangladesh Nationalist Party abolished the Upazila system immediate after coming to power in 1991, which was first introduced by Lt. General Hussain Mohammed Ershad (1982-1990) in 1982. It was reintroduced in 1998 during the Awami League regime. During this regime (1996-2001) the Awami League government introduced a four-tier rural local government system, whereas the successive Bangladesh Nationalist Party government (2001-2006) followed the four-tier system but changed the name of the lowest tier from 'Village Parishad' to 'Gram Sarkar' (selected body). Except for these minor changes, there were no major

changes conducive to enhancing people's participation in local development, or making the local government bodies more functional and financially autonomous. In the words of Siddiqui (2005:110):

> ... though the change was minimal in "content", in "form", the local government system of the country witnessed many instances of "about turns" and "starting everything from square one."

Thörlind (2001) further explains the reason for such changes by stating that each government tries to capture the electoral base through the participation of their own supporters in the system of local government. Since rural government bodies cover a major portion of the total population in Bangladesh, the changes were more frequent in the case of the rural local government system than in urban government bodies i.e., City Corporations.

By reviewing the Rajshahi City Corporation Ordinance, 1987, Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008, and Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, I found that the politics of consolidating political power has been a key factor in shaping the rules, regulations, functions and authority structure of City Corporations. The biggest difference is that Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008, made with its preceding ordinances and the successor Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 was putting an independent local government commission as an advisory and overseeing agency of the local government bodies. Besides the provision of the commission, the 2008 Ordinance also introduced more measures to make local government bodies accountable, transparent and free from political influence. For example, provision was made for candidates to resign from any formal political position after being elected as City Corporation officials. The Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008

was introduced by the military backed interim caretaker government (2007-2009). The government claimed that those changes were the reflection of a long cherished demand of various international development partners and civil society groups who were in favour of a strong and functional local government system.

Nevertheless, two of the respondents (CSA-04 and LGE-01) reflected different perspectives by considering those changes as aimed towards consolidating the undemocratic military backed caretaker government's[33] local power base. One of the respondents, from the civil society activist category, presented his opinion by stating:

> … the military backed interim government had a hidden political aspiration of holding the government power as long as they can. For this reason they wanted to reorganise local government bodies in the name of strengthening them. You know, they wanted to conduct local government election prior to the national election. And if they could make it, I am afraid that they could remain in power for more years than they were in power. (CSA-04)

Further support in favour of the previous perspective came from the opinion expressed by the local government expert:

> Traditionally it is seen in various times that local government in Bangladesh has been used as a corner stone for consolidating political power. Especially it is true during the military regimes. Again, when political government come in power, they use to think more in political line, and always bypass local government institutions. They try to centralise political and administrative power and authorities. When a party chief becomes the head of the government, the executive power also belongs to the head of the government. Thus, they never go forward to establish locally decentralised power structures. (LGE-01)

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[33] The military takeover was the outcome of the violence and chaos perpetrated by rival political parties leading to the declaration of emergency and postponement of the ninth parliamentary elections in the country. The government had banned all political activities, forcing the political parties to the sidelines. Hundreds of national and local politicians, including the recent past mayor of RCC, were arrested on charges of corruption. The government also attempted to neutralise the power of two major parties, Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), by declaring a policy that came to be known as the 'Minus Two Formula', which meant sending AL chief, Sheikh Hasina (the present Prime Minister) and BNP chief Khaleda Zia (the immediate past Prime Minister) into exile. The government ordered the arrest of Hasina and Khaleda in June and September 2007 respectively on charges of corruption.

The above quote presents two contrasting processes. While the military governments try to consolidate power by using local government institutions, democratically elected political governments try to bypass them. However, the common outcome of these endeavours is centralisation of power into the hands of the central government.

Using local governments for consolidating the local power base of military governments can be traced back to the decentralisation policy—Upazila system—adopted by Lieutenant General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who was in state power from 1982 to 1990. Critics claim that since General Ershad did not have strong political organisations at the grass-root levels, it was easier for him to consolidate his power base through the manipulation of the few elected chairmen of the Upazilas, and using the Upazila level field administration which was managed by central government agencies (Ali 1986; Ahmed 1993; Siddiqui 2005).

On the other hand, since the two major political parties, Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party, have strong political organisation at the grass-root levels, they try to impede the development of a vibrant, transparent and participatory local government system. The political parties' intention to bypass local government is evident in the abolition of the Upazila system in 1991. This was mainly because many of the Upzila Parishad chairmen were from opposition parties (Paul and Goel 2010). Though the system was reintroduced in 1998 by the Awami League government, the local Upazila election was not held until the introduction of the Upazila Parishad (Reintroduction of the Repealed Act and Amendment) Act 2009 to reinstate the Upazila Parishad Act 1998, allowing the local parliament members broad control over this crucial tier of the rural local government system. In this respect, the editorial of *The Daily Star*, a well circulated English newspaper in

Bangladesh, commented that:

> After 18 years of confusion, debate, discussion and argument in favour of or against the upazila system, a law has now been made to address the issues of local level planning, rural development and socio-economic emancipation ... but the upazila chairmen and vice-chairmen feel that they have been made subordinates of the concerned member of Parliament. Recommendations of the concerned MP [Member of the Parliament] should be considered as mandatory and obligatory. Upazila Parishad chairmen shall not have the right even to refer a matter to the government without the approval and consent of the MP ... Strengthening local government is the primary objective of the upazila system. Thus, agriculture, land administration, health and family planning, primary education, rural electrification, poultry, fisheries, live stocks, horticulture, social forestry, milk production, cooperatives marketing, etc. should be transferred to the Upazila Parishad. But this time, the central government has retained many subjects. There should be, in fact, more devolution of power and delegation of authority to the Upazila Parishad. (Nath 2009)

One of the major reasons for allowing parliament members broad control over the rural local government bodies is grounded in the government's intention to centralise the political power structure. In parliamentary form of government, since the majority of the parliament members belongs to the party in power and remains in close touch with the central government, it is convenient for the government to maintain political power down to the local level through these members. The motive of political parties to engineer the local government system is well described by one of the respondents who is a parliamentarian in the current national parliament:

> When the issue of power and authority comes, we do not want to share. This is our traditional culture, a feature of a patrimonial society. The people who are in central power are reluctant to share power with local levels from a misconception that they will lose control … as a parliamentarian I never ever heard any serious parliamentary discussion on the issue of decentralisation. Irrespective of political affiliation most of the parliamentarians are in favour of centralisation of power. (PM-02)

In accordance with the political motives of the current central government, the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 does not recognise the existence of the

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local government commission which was introduced by the military backed interim government. The present Act has also withdrawn the provision forgoing political party positions of the elected representatives. These initiatives were severely criticised by various pro-decentralisation civil society forums and by the print media. But no resistance came from the rival Bangladesh Nationalist Party and their allies. Accordingly, when we look at the City Corporation related ordinances and Acts, it is apparent that the changes are potentially driven by the central government's intention to consolidate local political power in favour of themselves. Therefore, contrary to rhetoric, no meaningful attempts have been taken to involve local people in the urban local governance process to build it into a transparent and accountable mechanism devoted to local development.

The central government's intention to consolidate its local political power base through the mayors is visible within the City Corporations' internal power and authority structure and the central-local government relations. In describing the problems of the urban local government system, the local government expert highlights this issue:

> The main problem in our total local government system is the centralisation of power within the local government structure. The ultimate power is concentrated in the hands of the mayor. The councillors system is not working here. The councillors are elected for their respective wards. But the mayor is elected for the whole City Corporation area. This is the presidential system but our central government system is based on parliamentary democracy. It clearly violates the parliamentary principle. If it followed the parliamentary system, after being elected by the direct vote of the people, mayor will be elected from the elected councillors and the executive power will be shared by both mayor and councillors. But under the present system, as he/she is elected by the total electorates and vested with full executive power, he/she can easily get away by acting in an authoritarian manner and flouting democratic norms and the councillors. (LGE-01)

When the Rajshahi City Corporation Ordinance 1987 was promulgated, it basically reflected the presidential national government system of that time. As the above respondent argues however, no government has acted to change the urban local government system to cohere with the present parliamentary form of government. It is easy to consolidate local power by managing one person who is vested with enormous power and authority—the mayor. Within the Corporation's power structure, the mayor is virtually all-in-all. There is a wide disparity in powers, functions and status between the mayor and councillors (Siddiqui 2005). It is entirely up to the mayor to decide how much of what they will delegate to the lower level (Panday 2004).

Thus, in the case of Upazila Parishad (rural government body) parliament members, and for City Corporations, the mayors have been treated as the prime local agents of the central government. The central government defines the overall opportunity structure within which the mayors as the local people's representatives act. In relation to the central government, the mayor and the corporation have very little authority and independence, despite being directly elected (Siddiqui 2005). According to the Act of 2009, the final weapon of the central government is to remove the mayor by issuing an executive order. Therefore, due to the structural implications, the local people's representatives have become primarily the agents of the central government.

Finally, we find that the pro-democratic moves in 1991 to build people-centred political institutions have not been reflected in decentralising political power down to the local levels. As with the colonial legacy, irrespective of type (democratic or military), governments in the last two decades brought about minimal changes in the

local government system with an aim to either capturing the electoral base or consolidating a local power base in order to secure their regimes. Thus, the issue of building an autonomous, accountable and participatory local government system has always been bypassed by the central governments. The trend is obviously not conducive to the successful implementation of the UPPR-like CDD project. The political motive for centralising local power structures is also reflected within the RCC's internal power structure. As such the mayor of the RCC is vested with vast power and authority which could easily defy the democratic ideals. Sangmpam (2007) puts it that the politics of centralising political power has driven the design of local government institutions in Bangladesh.

5.3. The Policy-Making and the Policy Sub-system of the RCC

In order to understand the process, actors and factors of local governance in the study area, it is important to understand the RCC's policy-making process and the policy sub-system. This sub-section will describe the policy formulation process of the RCC and then identify the various actors and factors, and their roles in the policy process.

5.3.1. The Policy Making Process of the RCC

According to the 2009 Act, all the policies of the RCC are passed in the Corporation Parishad that consists of mayor, thirty elected councillors and ten elected women councillors. In 2009 the RCC formulated a comprehensive 10 year multi-purpose development plan for the first time, called Vision 2018 (LPL-02; the official website of the RCC[34]). Besides this, the RCC usually makes decisions about various projects undertaken by its various departments. During the latter part of every financial year,

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[34] http://www.erajshahi.gov.bd/cc_service/cc_service.php?cmd=list&id=23 (last visited 15 January 2012)

councillors are asked to place their demands with the concerned departments. Every concerned department then compiles the demands and gives those to the concerned standing committee. After being considered and recommended by the standing committees, they are placed before the Corporation Parishad for final approval. However, the RCC is obliged to send copies of their decisions to the local government ministry, and the ministry finally determines if the decisions are valid to carry on. After receiving the final approval of the local government ministry, concerned RCC departments take the necessary steps to implement these decisions or projects. The RCC makes three types of project decisions: self-funded projects, national government annual development programme funded projects, and foreign donor funded projects (ER-01; ER-02; LPL-03; Panday, 2004).

5.3.2. The Policy Subsystem—the Actors and Factors

Policies are made through policy sub-systems comprised of a variety of actors—some are state and some are societal civil actors (Howlett and Ramesh 1995). The influence and involvement of these actors varies—some are intimately involved in the policy process while some are marginal. During their interaction with other actors, they often give up or modify their objectives in return for concessions from other members of the sub-system. These interactions, however, occur in the context of various institutional arrangements surrounding the policy process and affect how the actors pursue their interests and ideas and the extent to which their efforts succeed (Howlett and Ramesh 1995).

Actors in the policy process may be either individuals or groups. There is, however, an almost infinite variety of actors who may be members of policy sub-systems and participate in the policy process, which makes the task of preparing a comprehensive catalogue virtually impossible (Howlett and Ramesh 1995). Howlett and Ramash

(1995) divided the policy actors into three broad categories: organisation of the society, organisation of the state and organisation of the international system.

In line with the above discussion and based on my research data the two most important state actors in the RCC policy sub-system are: the central government and Corporation Parishad. The societal actors can be divided into two categories: the various civil society groups active at the local level, and the various national and local business elites.

5.3.2.1. Central Government

The central government is one of the most influential actors within the RCC policy sub-system. Not only because of the RCC's basic features (for example: territorial jurisdiction, the functions it can perform and the taxes it can impose), but because its activities are also guided and supervised by the central government's departments (Siddiqui 2005). The central government's control over the RCC's policy-making process is well depicted by the comment made by one of the former mayors of the RCC:

> Decisions made by Corporation Parishad need to be sent to the local government ministry. The ministry determines the RCC's functional boundary by analysing those decisions. In many cases the ministry does not approve many of the RCC's important decisions which are made in the people's best interests. This is the difference between our local government system and the system in developed countries. The RCC is always operating amid an adverse legal framework. For example, the RCC is responsible for arranging drainage as well as establishing parks for civic recreation. Nevertheless, in order to acquire land, the RCC is required to get approval from the land ministry, which can sometimes take 10-12 years. Sometimes foreign investors or development partners are interested in investing but due to the government's non-cooperation many of such attempts become futile. During my time, one of the foreign investors was very much interested in establishing a 100% export oriented, fully automatic slaughter house in Rajshahi. We estimated that this investment would have had a very positive impact on the local economy, but the ministry did not approve the proposal. I can tell you hundreds

of such circumstances during my time in office at the RCC. As a representative of the people, we are bound to be accountable to the city's people. But the RCC is not independent enough to reflect local people's expectations. The RCC is run by the government ministries and bureaucrats and not by the people's representatives. (LPL-03)

According to the above quote central government exerts control over the RCC as the final approving authority for the decisions and policies made by RCC. Thus, in most cases, the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 define the authority and functions of the RCC by citing a provision of 'upon approval', or 'upon consultation' with central government agencies or departments.

Furthermore, the RCC is not independent enough to undertake programmes and policies due to financial dependence on the central government. The RCC's own sources—taxes, fees, tolls, rents and other income from its own property, etc—are only enough to meet the capital and recurrent costs. The RCC is heavily dependent on external sources for providing services like health and education, and undertaking various development initiatives. Grants from external sources may come either from government, donors or both. Government grants come mainly under the Annual Development Programme, Octroi compensatory grants, and special development grants (block grant in nature). Donors' grants or funds are channelled through government. Local governments are not allowed to negotiate directly. According to various respondents (LPL-01; LPL-03; CSA-01; CSA-03), external grants are not a stable source of revenue. According to a pro-Awami League local political leader:

The central government resource allocation for local government bodies is politically biased. If the political affiliation of the mayor differs from the party in power in the central government, the allocation of government grants and funds dries up. This is the reality of our country. (LPL-01)

He further added:

> Since Awami League is in power and our present mayor [who belongs to Awami League] and is a familiar face in the national political arena as the son of late Md. Kamruzzama [an eminent political leader], is trying his best to undertake and approve various local development schemes. In the meantime by dint of his personal endeavours he has been successful in getting government approval to establish a power plant under public-private partnership … (LPL-01)

The same notion was echoed by one of the past mayors of the RCC who talked about his deeds under the Bangladesh Nationalist Party regime:

> I think the present mayor and councillors are in great financial crisis. In my time the crisis was not so acute. I was very active in collecting government funds, foreign donations and raising funds through my personal influence … (LPL-03)

The first comment above describes the central government's politics in providing financial support to RCC as predominantly following party political interests. Again, the last two above statements show that political loyalty, personal influence and the mayor's connections are keys to the accumulation of external funds.

Besides the legal and financial instruments, central government also influences the policy process indirectly as well, for example, through the political party line-up and by influencing the mayor. In the words of Panday (2004:56), '… government sometimes tries to get things done through the mayor.' On the one hand, the central government tries to influence the mayor; on the other hand, the mayor controls the policy process by influencing the other members of Corporation Parishad.

Therefore, we find that central government exerts controls over the RCC in a number of ways. The RCC is dependent on the central government for making legal, developmental and investment decisions. Furthermore, the central government also influences the policy process through financial allocations, which are predominantly based on party political interests. At the same time, mayoral influence, political loyalty and the mayor's personal connections are also important for accumulating

external resources. The other way through which the central government controls the RCC, is by influencing the mayor through the political party line-up. Thus, instead of sharing power, a patron-client relationship has been developed between the central government and the RCC as a local government institution (Kochanek 2000; Islam 2005; As-Saber and Rabbi 2009; Ahmed 2010).

5.3.2.2. Corporation Parishad

As a state actor, Corporation Parishad also plays an important role within the RCC policy sub-system since the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 confers upon it absolute authority. According to the law, every matter related to the development of the RCC has to be approved by the parishad. In reality, the parishad's decisions are heavily influenced by the mayor. The local government expert explained one of the reasons for the extra-ordinary mayoral influence:

> Since a mayor is directly elected by the people, he becomes more powerful than the elected councillors all together. In Dhaka city the mayoral electoral constituency covers 18 to 19 national parliamentary constituencies. When a mayor is equal to 18 or 19 members of the parliament, he or she is even more powerful than the president of the state. Within the City Corporation's jurisdiction, there is no one who is equal to the mayor. (LGE-01)

One of the local political leaders pointed out another reason of strong mayoral dominance over the decision-making process:

> According to the laws, councillors cannot impeach the mayor, and thus the mayor becomes authoritarian. He preserves virtually the ultimate authority for the finalising of any decision [within the City Corporation]. (LPL-02)

One of the respondents from the civil society activist category (CSA-04) pointed to the mayor's strong political base as another important factor in mayoral influence over Corporation Parishad. In Bangladesh, unlike councillors, mayoral candidates in practice are unofficially nominated by political parties and they run for election

under the respective political party's banner. Therefore, an elected mayor is usually a party person (unless an independent candidate wins, which has never occurred in the history of the RCC) and generally holds an important position within that party. As a result, due to the political influence of the mayor, especially when the mayor belongs to the party in state power, councillors are unable to stand against mayoral wishes. This was the case for one of the past mayors of the RCC who belonged to Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Panday 2004), and as well as being valid for the present mayor, who belongs to the ruling Awami League. In such cases, it is seen that the majority of councillors also belong to the same political party as that of the mayor (see Table 4).

Table 4: Political Affiliation of the Ward Councillors

Election Years	Political Parties	No. of WCs
Election 2002. The mayor belonged to BNP.	AL	06
	BNP	17
	JP	1
	JIB	02
	Independent	04
	Total	**30**
Election 2008. The mayor belongs to AL.	AL	22*
	BNP	15
	JIB	01
	Independent	02
	Total	**40**

A number of councillors joined AL by changing their political affiliation after being elected.
Note: AL=Awamil League, BNP=Bangladesh Nationalist Party, JP=Jatio Party, JIB=Jamat-e-Islami Bangladesh.
Source: *The Daily Star*, 26th April, 2002 and Field Data (2009/10)

In the absence of a definite policy framework and, since the mayor's influence and effective lobbying is the key in getting development funds and grants from the central government agencies, the political influence and the pioneer role of mayor in receiving external funds make the mayor the singularly dominant actor in the

distribution of RCC resources among the wards. Like the national government allocation, the RCC does not have well followed guidelines in allocating development resources and services among the wards. The discrepancy among the wards in the distribution of RCC resources was described by one of the parliament members:

> Ward councillors cannot represent their wards in the RCC because of the absolute power and influence of the mayor. This time the RCC is allocating budget for streets. It is seen that some wards are receiving an allocation worth up to one million, but many are getting nothing. Those councillors are helpless and are coming to me for lobbying. The main problem here is the people's representatives are unable to use their power. Here the personal relationship between the mayor and councillors plays the key role. (PM-02)

The power relationship between mayor and councillors mainly follows the political party line-up. As a result of this, changing party affiliations among the elected representatives has become a culture at the local level. The following news item was published in a national daily newspaper:

12 RCC councillors including 7 from BNP join AL

Staff Correspondent, Rajshahi

Twelve councillors of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC), including seven from the BNP, have joined the ruling Awami League with a pledge to 'accelerate development of the city'. With their joining the AL [Awami League] on Saturday night, now 22 of the total 30 councillors of the RCC belong to the ruling party.

The councillors include panel mayor Shariful Islam Babu, once a member of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), and four women councillors -- Farzana Haque, Sufia Islam, Kohinur Chowdhury and Anwara Begum.

Seven others Meraj Uddin, Siraj Uddin Ahmed Manik, Abul Hasnat, Nizam-ul Azim, Zahangir Alam Alamgir, Akbar Hossain and Zaher Hossain Suja had been adherents of BNP.
Earlier on October 12, RCC councillor Rabiul Islam Toju joined the AL along with over a hundred of his followers.

Rajshahi mayor and AL leader AHM Khairuzzaman Liton greeted them at a function held at Bhubon Mohon Park in the city where the councillors presented floral wreathes to him. (Source: *The Daily Star*, 19 October 2009)

Therefore, it seems that ward councillors (WCs) who are in good relationship with the mayor may get more resources for their respective wards. In this way a culture of patronage has developed within the RCC, where the councillors are virtually connected to the national level politics through the mayor. This is an inducement of the nation-wide patronage politics (Kochanek 2000; Wohab and Akhter 2004; Rahman 2005; Rahman 2010), where the councillors' (agents) capacity to act is shaped by the opportunity structure featured by a patron-clientelistic relationship. As a result, Corporation Parishad is reduced to playing the role of a rubber stamp body.

5.3.2.3. Civil Society Groups

When describing the role of civil society organisations in the RCC policy process Panday (2004:56) commented,

> Society does not have any influence in the policy-making process of RCC … In Rajshahi, the trend of emerging civil society organisation is poor.

According to the data collected through interviews (CSA-01; CSA-02; CSA-03; CSA-04) since then, a few of civil society groups, for example: Manobata (CSO 1), Rokkha (CSO 2) and Sushashon (CSO 3), have become active on local governance issues through policy advocacy, lobbying, protesting and many other various types of programmes and activities. According to one of the respondents (CSA-03), due to the absence of formal recognition in the RCC's local governance process, the influence of civil society groups mainly depends on individual personal connections with the Corporation Parishad members—especially with the mayor. Again, another respondent (LPL-03) opined that most of these organisations suffer from partisan political bias, and thus are not free from party political interests. These issues will be

discussed in detail later in this chapter.

5.3.2.4. Local Business Elites

Various national and local business elites are the other societal actors in the RCC policy sub-system. Although Panday (2004) did not recognise the indirect but very influential role of these national and local business elites, it is well documented by the print media. The business elites usually exert influence via patronage politics. According to Zafarullah and Siddiquee (2001) patronage often explains why the process of awarding major contracts bypasses competitive norms, and instead, is governed by the criterion of personal linkage with key decision makers in government departments.

While addressing a public meeting in September 2011, as reported in a national English daily newspaper, the mayor of RCC said:

> Three years ago, we received a fund-less, corrupt city corporation. Civic services disappeared due to politicisation and corruption and 80 per cent of the development funds were plundered. (*The Independent*, 4 September, 2011)

Here, the mayor was referring to the official term of his predecessor in the RCC. But reports published in various local and national newspapers illustrate the persistence of the previous legacy of patronage politics. This is an excerpt of a story published in a leading national English daily newspaper:

> Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) plans to let an Awami League (AL) lawmaker's real-estate company implement two multi-storeyed commercial building projects worth Tk 150 crore on corporation land. The RCC does not have any rules or regulations that allow private real-estate companies to make commercial developments on RCC land, according to officials concerned. The RCC rules also do not allow it to follow instances or rules of other city corporations under any circumstances, they said. However, RCC Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton has already publicly spoken about

> awarding the projects to Ena Properties, owned by AL
> lawmaker Enamul Haque of Rajshahi-4 (Bagmara)
> constituency, way before any tender in this regard was floated
> … Since Mayor Liton spoke in several public meetings about
> awarding the projects to Ena Properties, many city dwellers fear
> that both the projects will be given, somehow, to the MP's firm.
> (*The Daily Star*, 19 May 2009)

According to other news published in another leading daily *The Daily Prothom Alo,* the contracts were awarded to Ena Properties (*The Daily Prothom Alo*, 1 October, 2009). In accordance with the above news story many interviewees recognised the influential role of these business elites in the RCC policy process (CSA-01, CSA-04; PM-01; PO-01 and PO-02). According to one of the respondents from the civil society activists' category:

> The majority of the councillors are somehow involved in
> contracting business. These councillors and the other local
> business elites have formed syndicates for tendering business.
> In frequent cases, the RCC authority bends the formal rules and
> regulations when awarding tenders to the nominated person(s).
> (CSA-01)

The respondents mentioned above described the occurrence of rampant corruption in the RCC, from the delivery of basic civic services to the awarding of major contracts. By analysing the answers given by the respondents and also the data presented above from secondary sources, it appears that business elites are tied (informally) with the RCC policy sub-system through the political line-up as well as through economic incentives. By citing the early studies of Rajbangshi (1986) and Khan (1997) on the Dhaka City Corporation, Banks (2006) says that a lack of participation by the general public allowed Dhaka City Corporation to reach a state wherein the role of interest groups and the ruling party became dominant over and above the public interest in decision-making. Thus, the influence of business elites seems stronger than the civil society groups which are still emerging in the RCC policy-making process. The existence of the four actors and their influences in the

policy sub-system has been illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Policy Subsystem of RCC
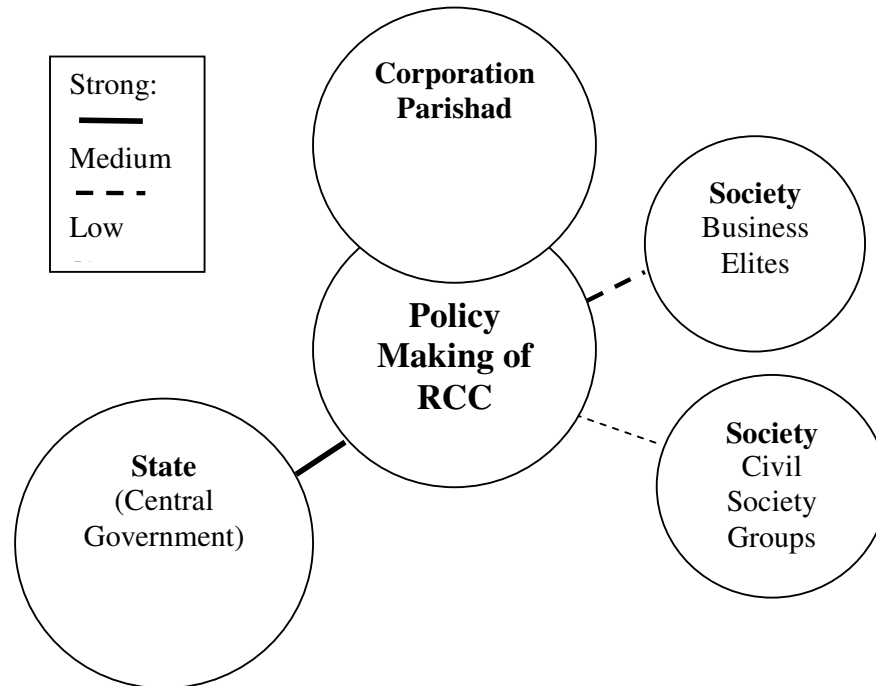
The above discussion on the actors and their roles illustrates the dominant role played by the central government in the RCC policy-making process. In fact, the overarching role of central government in directing and controlling RCC activities has developed a patron-clientelistic relationship between the two. Again, within the RCC, mayoral influence and authority has placed the mayor as a single authority with whom the WCs are tied in a patron-clientelistic relationship. On the other hand, two of the societal actors, business elites and civil society groups, play indirect roles in the policy-making process, but the influence of the business elites is greater than civil society groups.

The above findings on the actors and their roles in the RCC policy-making process can be explained by the radical elite theory of local government. The proponents of

the theory, Mills, Domhoff and Nordlinger (cited in Siddiqui 2005), argue that national elites (political and business) absorb local political energy through the local governments while masking the effective centralisation of power. National elites build local support bases of local elites through networks of patronage and clientelism. These local elites are allowed to control local governments, exploiting local interests and incumbency to mobilise very diverse kinds of political support for national elites. In return, national elites channel public funding and economic development to ensure that the local elites have the resources to maintain their political role effectively (Siddiqui 2005). This very typical political-economy and institutional setup in the study area limits non-elite citizens' participation in the local governance process. This will be discussed in the next section.

Section II: Participation Spaces and Local Governance

The aim of this section is to analyse the forms, scopes and levels of people's participation in the local governance process within the present institutional and political context discussed in section I of this chapter. The discussion of this section is divided into three sub-sections: participation through formal spaces; participation through informal spaces; and participation through spaces created by civil society organisations.

5.4. Formal Spaces: Scope, Forms and Nature

The formal spaces of participation are created and recognised by the state. According to the conceptual framework presented in chapter two, these spaces can be called invited spaces. The present Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009 provides the three most important spaces for citizen participation in the RCC governance

process: standing committees, Corporation Parishad meetings and local government elections.

5.4.1. Standing Committees

In chapter three it has already been discussed how the RCC is required to form at least 14 different standing committees. Besides these, RCC can also form additional committees for other purposes upon the decision of the Corporation Parishad meeting. The member numbers of a standing committee is decided by the RCC. The chairmen and the vice-chairmen are elected from the councillors in a corporation meeting. According to the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, standing committees are allowed, but not mandatory, to consult with specialised persons. Thus, the law has granted scope for people's participation in the RCC decision-making process.

In this regard, one of the former mayors of RCC posed his views in this way:

> In my time I put various specialised and eminent persons in various RCC committees. And thus I ensured people's engagement in the RCC activities. I do not have any idea how the present mayor is addressing the issue of people's participation. But I do feel that without the collective endeavour of the whole society, it is impossible to keep our city liveable. (LPL-03)

However, the view posed by one of the local political leaders is substantially different from the claim made by the former mayor:

> The present local government Act as well as the previous ordinances of the RCC never restricted the participation of general and specialised persons in the standing committees. However, in the past we never saw that the RCC was using that opportunity provided by the laws. In the past, the people who were in the office were more politically driven rather than being driven by the people's interests. They used the RCC as a means for consolidating political power. Therefore, they were not courageous enough to allow people to participate in the formal decision-making process. But our present mayor's vision and

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> approach is different. He is committed to involving people in the RCC decision-making process, so that the RCC can reflect the local people's aspirations. (LPL-01)

These two contradicting opinions regarding specialised persons' presence in various standing committees possibly follows the political culture of blaming political opponents and claiming one's own success and goodness over an agenda. Nonetheless, the second quote indicates that the scope for involving local specialised or eminent persons in various standing committees could be used as an instrument for consolidating the mayoral political power base. Though contradictory, both statements reveal two important aspects: first, that the scope for citizen participation in the RCC's formal bodies has long been recognised in laws and second, elected representatives are aware of the importance of citizens' engagement in the local governance process. When the local political leader (LPL-01) criticised past elected representatives for not ensuring people's participation through standing committees, the former mayor claimed that the issue was addressed in his time. Again, while the past mayor is not aware of the present mayor's initiatives, the local political leader declaimed the present mayor's willingness to engage citizens in the RCC's decision-making. But the present mayor's willingness in practice is again perhaps limited by putting some people in standing committees which was revealed by the comment made by one of the respondents from the civil society category:

> He [the mayor] once told me that he wishes to put some expert members in various standing committees. They would not have voting rights but would give their opinions ... In every standing committee there are names but the RCC never ever invites us. (CSA-03)

This statement suggests that the inclusion of various non-elected specialised persons in various standing committees is tokenistic. The underlying motive for including various non-elected persons in RCC bodies was described by one of the members of

the parliament who played the role (role playing) of the mayor of RCC while speaking and expressed his opinion in this way:

> I would say in the case of local government, people could only participate in 5% of local government activities. One of the reasons for this situation is putting those people in important positions who are loyal to me. This is to keep my leadership unthreatened by restricting the bubbling up of different views against me. I always place my people at every stage. On the surface, they seem to represent the people, but in reality they are my representatives. (PM-01)

This statement describes a process by which the inclusion of specialised persons in various standing committees can be used as a means for securing the political power bases of RCC office holders.

5.4.2. Corporation Parishad Meetings

Another opportunity that the 2009 Act provides which is similar to its preceding ordinances is the scope for people's right to attend Corporation Parishad meetings if they are not declared by the majority of councillors as private. This provision is not new and was also under previous ordinances as well. However, the Act limits the scope of people's participation by stating, 'Corporation can control the entrance of the public in its meeting by its decision'. Moreover, the scope of people's participation in the Corporation Parishad meetings is also limited by a number of other reasons, for instance: irregular meetings and frequent changes of dates and time due to busyness of the mayor.

According to the Act, Corporation Parishad must sit for meetings at least once a month. The Act also mentions a list of government officials who will be present in those meetings upon being invited by the RCC and are allowed to actively participate in the Corporation Parishad meetings, but do not have voting rights in decision-making. During discussion, one of the elected representatives informed me that the

Parishad meetings were not regular in the past. He described the scenario in this way:

> In the past there are precedents that there was no Corporation
> Parishad meeting even during a six month period. (ER-02)

He went further, stating that due to the busyness of mayor, the meetings frequently took place at short notice, and the dates and times changed frequently. Therefore, the RCC officials did not get enough time to invite government officials. On the other hand, due to the busy schedule and short notice, they also could not manage time to participate in meetings. Another councillor (ER-01) informed me that in many cases, decisions which are taken in meetings with the presence of few councillors get signed by more councillors who did not attend those meetings by altering the dates. Thus, data and discussion suggest that Corporation Parishad meetings have merely become a rubber stamp forum, rather than being a decision-making space where citizens can participate and forward their views on various issues.

5.4.3. Local Government Election

> During elections they [election candidates] promise to give this
> or that. Afterwards, they give a few of the things they promised,
> but not all. This electricity pole has been given by Mr. T [the
> current WC]. To win the election, he [the WC] should work in
> favour of the people. He needs to come to us during the next
> election time. If he remains beside us, we will vote him next
> time, otherwise not ... (S-NP01)

> Our ward councillor had been working in favour of us since
> before our locality came under the RCC's jurisdiction. He used
> to stand beside us when necessary. When the election came we
> realised that we should vote him since he had been working in
> our favour. (ZN-PGM01)

The above quotes reveal how two of the respondents perceived local elections as important for making elected local representatives accountable to the people. According to Banks (2006), election is the most conventional form of political participation for the urban poor in Bangladesh. Furthermore, Siddiqui *et al* (2004) argue that participation by the general public has been limited to simply voting in

municipal elections (referred by Banks 2006). Thus, local elections are the predominant form of local people's participation in the local governance process. It is desirable that in a representative local democratic system people would elect their own representatives by exercising their voting rights. But in reality, people in the study area cannot exercise their voting rights in a meaningful way due to two major reasons: irregular local government elections and vote politics.

In chapter three we found that after the formation of the RCC in 1987, there was no election until January, 1994 and the RCC was run by mayors nominated by the central government. After the first election in 1994, people have exercised their voting right only twice: in 2002 and 2008 City Corporation elections.[35] Apart from irregular elections, the vote politics is another dominant factor in restricting the reflection of people's desire to choose their representatives in the RCC. Interview data (LGE-01; CSA-01; CSA-04; LPL-01; PM-01) indicate that securing vote banks is one of the key issues in local politics. What will be allocated and how much for the ward level development work is not needs-based, and is instead influenced by vote politics. In the local political arena, a politician is more powerful the more he/she can secure a pool of followers as a secured vote bank. In many instances the poor do not exercise their voting rights, instead choosing to sell their votes.

During elections, candidates try to be close with local people and go to the communities with lucrative offers. Most of the cases, as I found from interviews with community people (for example, S-NP01; SH-NP01; ZN-PGL02; SR-PGL02), involve promises and offers made by the candidates during the pre-election voting

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[35] The scheduled 1999 RCC election was postponed due to a court case determining the City Corporation area. In the 2002 election, the previous mayor was re-elected. However, the opposition candidate brought serious vote rigging allegations against the elected mayor. In 2007 when the military backed caretaker government arrested the elected mayor, the RCC was run by a government nominated mayor from 11 June 2007 to 14 September 2008.

campaign. These are tangible, materialistic and sometimes collective in nature. In many cases, these are the community's basic civic entitlements; for example, electricity distribution poles, provision of pipe water, building foot-paths and the establishment of temples or mosques. Asaduzzaman (2008) has called this 'soft democracy' (*votetontro*). In her study on Dhaka city in Bangladesh, Banks (2006) found that 'soft democracy' is very important to the urban poor because this is the only time when the poor feel politically empowered. However, local people—especially the poor—cannot be judicious voters due to candidates' offers of various gifts, cash money and sometimes coercion. One of the community people in Sripur (Study CDC 4) described her experience in this way:

> Those who are rich can win the election by buying votes within a night. Candidates manage one or two influential persons from every community, give them money and promise to provide them with many other facilities if the candidate wins. In return, those people manage community people by giving promises, various gifts and money and sometimes through coercion. (SR-NP01)

After having conversations with many of the interviewees in the four study communities (for example, S-NP01; SH-NP01; ZN-PGL02; SR-PGL02), I found that these interviewees, who were in general poor, believe that after the election they will never see those politicians until the next election. Asaduzzaman (2008) has termed this as 'hard democracy'. By referring to Banks' similar findings (2006), Asaduzzaman (2008:150) describes the situation as:

> Hard democracy starts soon after the election has ended. This is termed 'Dolotontro' (party oriented democracy). The elected officials change their minds and attitudes immediate after taking over their positions, and try to be closer to the visible and invisible powerful actors of the locality.

Under such circumstances, the poor find taking direct, in-hand benefits to be more lucrative than depending on the promises that the candidates make before election. Besides these, vote rigging, muscle power, securing votes through taming minority

groups (like Hindu and indigenous people) detain the poor from becoming thoughtful in exercising voting rights (Akram and Das 2008; Husain 2008; Eicher, Alam *et al*. 2010). Consequently, local elections do not necessarily ensure people's participation in the local governance process.

To sum up, we find that citizens' participation through formal spaces, were the only tokenistic (Arnstein 1969) form of participation possible. Participation in standing committees of RCC and Corporation Parishad meetings is more rhetoric than reality. The inclusion of specialised persons in various standing committees is mainly tokenistic and sometimes used to secure the political power bases of the office holders. Similarly, citizens' participation through Corporation Parishad meetings is also delimited by laws and practices. On the other hand, local government elections—as a formal space of citizen's participation—are jeopardised by the irregularity of the elections and also by local vote politics.

5.5. Informal Spaces: Scope, Forms and Nature

Apart from the formal mechanisms discussed above, there are informal mechanisms for people's participation in the local governance process. Due to the absence of precisely defined duties and responsibilities, elected representatives are left to perform their responsibilities according to their individual initiative and commitments. Thus, role perception is basically 'personalised' (Ahmed 2009). Due to the absence of a precisely defined formal interaction mechanism between the constituency and elected representatives, informal means have become an important way for people to participate in the local governance process. These informal spaces are discussed in this sub-section.

5.5.1. Elected Representatives' Visit to Communities

Elected representatives' visit to the constituency is a part of showing their electoral commitment and closeness to the people. Both of the elected councillors I interviewed during my field work confirmed that they regularly visited their constituencies. According to them, they considered this to be a part of their duties and responsibilities as councillors. Both of the WCs claimed that during their visits, they meet people by visiting their homes and listening to them. Many interviewees from the Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) communities confirmed the regular visits of their councillors. But one of the respondents in Alampur (Study CDC 1) strongly refuted the claim that the present councillor visits their area.

> I cannot remember when the present councillor visited our locality last time. But the past councillor was very kind and used to visit our locality regularly. We do not think the present councillor is our councillor. He is biased towards his own living area. (S-PGL01)

The two WCs I interviewed during my field visit resided in the neighbourhoods within which Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) belonged. But the previous councillor (mentioned in the above quote) of Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2) resided in the Alampur (Study CDC 1) area. Therefore, it is plausible that the people of Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) experienced more visits than the people in Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Sripur (Study CDC 4). If it is the case, I infer that people who get councillors from their own neighbourhoods for their wards, might experience more frequent visits from those councillors.

During their visits elected representatives and electoral candidates give many

popular promises and speeches. However, a view of the ineffectiveness of such informal visits and promises became apparent in the following statement of one of the civil society activists:

> Before the election, the mayor visited a number of wards and promised that if he won the election, he would not increase local taxes and rates. Later on, when he visited wards before the RCC annual budget, he reiterated his pre-election promise of not increasing taxes. However, before announcing the final budget, the RCC increased the taxes in some cases up to 100%. We think this is a mockery of the people. (CSA-01)

The above statement well portrays the already mentioned 'hard democracy' where the elected representatives change their mind and attitudes immediately after taking over their positions.

5.5.2. Community People's Visits to the Elected Representatives

Another informal mechanism of communication is people's visits to elected representatives at their offices and homes. This is the most common way for community people to obtain services from elected representatives during 'hard democracy'. During my visits, I found hundreds of people gathering every day either at the mayor's residence or his local political office (Field notes recorded on 17 December and 18 December 2009). People came up with a variety of problems from police cases to job recommendations. During my waiting period at the mayor's local political office in Rajshahi on 18 December 2009, I saw the mayor's political advisor talking to the local police station on the phone and chastising the concerned officer for arresting a pro-Awami League activist. During my wait at the office to fix an interview time with the mayor, I observed that people who politically identified as pro-Awami League came alone. But in most cases, people with low profiles came with someone who was well known to the mayor or to the political advisor. Thus, the opportunity to meet the mayor and have things done by him is selective in nature.

The same situation persists at the ward level in the case of meeting local councillors. General people sometimes need the assistance of middle-men, as it was described by two of the respondents (S-PGM03; S-PGL01). Local people's access to councillors is also limited by voting behaviour and political identities. In this respect, one of the respondents from the civil society activist category stated:

> Only party people have access to the mayor ... many do not go to their councillors, thinking that since they did not vote for the councillors, the councillor would not work for them. Because at the ward level it is identifiable who supported whom during election. (CSA-03)

The above statement gives an indication how people's representatives can become patrons predominantly of their own political party activists or followers after being elected.

Thus, the informal mechanisms of citizens' participation through elected representatives' visits to communities and community people's visits to elected representatives is manifested by 'hard democracy' and patronage.

5.5.3. Spaces Created by Various Civil Society Groups

The three civil society organisations included in this study, Manobata (CSO 1), Rokkha (CSO 2) and Sushashon (CSO 3), differ by origin, agenda and in working procedures. Manobata (CSO 1) is an initiative of an international NGO; Sushashon (CSO 3) is the local body of a national civil society organisation; and Rokkha (CSO 2) is a locally originated civil society group. However, all these groups work on local and regional governance issues. Each group has their own agenda, but they sometimes work together on common issues; for example, by observing various national and international special days. Despite the fact that both Manobata (CSA 1) and Sushashon (CSA 3) are the local bodies of international/national civil society

groups, they sometimes enjoy freedom in taking local initiatives and programmes.

One of the members of Manabota (CSA 1) said:

> We have enough freedom to determine our working procedure and programmes according to our local context. A few programmes come from the head office and we implement them. But besides these, we also prepare programme proposals and submit them to head office for approval. Again, we take many other initiatives by ourselves. For example, last year on 21 February [International Mother Language Day] our youth volunteers decided to conduct a survey on the Bengali written signboards and hoardings in the city area to determine how many spelling mistakes there were. Our youth volunteers did it very efficiently and we made a report in local media. (CSA-03)

A respondent from Sushashon (CSO 3), however, stated:

> What we do are generally the initiatives taken by the centre. For example, they ask the local committee to organise a seminar on a specific issue. They provide the guidelines and required budget. In doing so, the local committee misses the opportunity for being creative in most cases. We are allowed to organise and take our own initiative locally, but unavailability of funding is the main problem. We work as volunteers and do not get any financial benefit. But we cannot expect people to pay out of their pocket to volunteer. (CSA-04)

Of the three organisations, only Manobata (CSA 1) has specific programs related to the RCC. The other two groups do not have such specific programmes though, and in many instances work in co-operation with Manobata (CSA 1). On many occasions these civil society groups, through their activities, provide spaces where elected local representatives and citizens can get together. By referring to the open budget sessions at the ward level and the various seminars organised by them, the convener of Manobata (CSA 1) claimed that people gained opportunities to question the elected representatives and answers face-to-face (CSA-03).

The common task of the three civil society groups is 'naming and shaming' of the RCC's activities. In most cases they use seminars, processions, human chains and media reporting as their way of communicating between people and the RCC. In

explaining the role of Rokkha (CSO 2), one of the respondents said:

> RCC is involved in the local governance process and plays a key role as a local government institution. In this respect, Rokkha plays the role of a hammer. If RCC becomes involved in corruption, a forum is needed to put pressure on them. Rokkha is just such a forum which tries to prevent those irregularities. (CSA-01)

Sushashon (CSA 3) is also active in local issues, but is not specific to the RCC. However, the RCC is a concern of their overall agenda. It tries to highlight various local issues to the concerned authorities. On the other hand, Manobata (CSA 1) addresses the RCC directly through their programmes like citizen report cards, service delivery satisfaction surveys and RCC open budget sessions at the ward level.

How are local people attached to the activities of these civil society groups? In addressing this question, all respondents from the civil society panel unequivocally claimed that their respective organisation represented the people from every stratum of society. In commenting on the participants of Rokkha's (CSA 2) programmes, one of the interviewees firmly stated:

> We are currently working on the Northern Irrigation Project. And if you look at the participants of our programmes, you will find hundreds of farmers participating in processions, human chains and mass gatherings. (CSA-01)

The same types of claim were also made by other civil society group members. In this respect, the respondent from Manobata (CSA 1) boldly affirmed that many of their programmes were quite successful in involving people at the grass-root level, for example in open budget sessions at the ward level.

> When we organised an open budget session at the ward level, our youth volunteers invited community people by going from house to house. The presence of community people at open budget sessions was encouraging. We found a higher level of participation from relatively under developed wards. People came up with demands for streets, electric poles, drains, health

services, schools and so on. The mayor and the concerned councillors had to hear them and general people could express their opinions without fear. The mayor collected the draft budget from every ward and gave his word that the final budget will be prepared in light of those draft budgets receiving from the open budget sessions. This year's RCC budget was the first ever which had been announced publicly in the presence of thousands of people. (CSA-03)

The above two statements illustrate the scope and nature of people's participation in civil society activities.

Photo 1: Human Chain Organised by Rokkha (CSO 2).

However, the presence of common people is still limited in other activities. Firstly, by reviewing the members' profiles presented in various publications (for example, one of the souvenirs of Rokkha), various official documents collected during my field work (for example, a list of the members of Manobata and Sushashon) of the respective civil society organisations, I found that the membership of these civil society groups was mainly limited to people who enjoyed better positions in society. For example: doctors, engineers, teachers, journalists, local politicians and other professionals. The key positions of these groups were cross-cutting and common, and were occupied by the dominant sections of the society. For example, the

convener of Manobata (CSO 1) was a professor in a public university who had also direct political affiliation with one of the leading political parties in Bangladesh. The convener of Rokkha (CSO 2) was the editor of a well circulated local daily newspaper. The convener of Sushashon (CSO 3) was the sub-editor of the above mentioned newspaper. Secondly, in programmes like seminars, symposiums, and discussion and meeting sessions with RCC authorities, the attachment of common people was limited.

In commenting on the impact of civil society group activities, all respondents expressed optimism. Rokkha (CSO 2) is the most successful in respect of achievements as expressed by the respondents. It began successful movements by opposing the central government decision to close down the Bangladesh Railway (West) offices from Rajshahi in 1997/98, followed by demanding a city protection dam along the river Padma, Rajshahi airport and Rajshahi Television sub-station. However, regarding issues related to the RCC, the picture is not so clear. In the words of an executive body member of Rokkha (CSO 2):

> When Mr. "Q" was mayor, we moved against the RCC's decision to increase holding tax and we became successful in revising the decision …When the present mayor came into power, we met with him. He gave his word that he would not increase taxes. He also showed his firm stand against any kind of RCC irregularity and corruption. He promised us that he would open the city building [RCC's office building] for common people for open discussions. Unfortunately, we have not seen any meaningful progress so far. (CSA-01)

The respondent from Manobata (CSO 1) was rather optimistic about the desired changes. By mentioning the various successful initiatives of his organisation, he opined that bringing about change is not easy. According to him, up until the time that the field work was conducted, Manobata was successful in installing a complaint box at the RCC building, putting continuous pressure on the RCC authority to update

the citizens' charter, starting 'one stop service facilities', making the annual budget process more open and participatory by organising seminars and discussion sessions and publishing various reports. He expressed his optimism in this way:

> When people become aware, these issues will certainly be important during local government elections. This time when the mayor met people face to face, he could escape by saying that he is new in power and asking for time to address people's aspirations. But next year, he will be bound to answer the people. People will get more scope to point fingers at the mayor and draw attention to his faults. In this way, people's participation in the governance process will increase. This practice will not develop in a day. (CSA-03)

Nevertheless, the activities and motives of various civil society groups raise the suspicion of some respondents. One of the parliament members expressed his opinion regarding these civil society groups in the following way:

> I do not believe that there is the existence of civil society groups in Bangladesh. They are also politically divided. The existence of civil society could be true for Australia, Canada or America. But in our country they all are politically motivated … The main problem in our country is that all are politically polluted. From village people to top state authority, no one is neutral. (PM-01)

The same notion is found in the words of the respondent from Manobata (CSO 1):

> … almost all these [who are working in Rajshahi] groups have individualistic hidden agenda. And for this reason, they are not gaining the acceptance of the general people. Personal identities are becoming more vital than the organisations. (CSA-03)

The above findings and analysis present a contesting scenario of citizens' participation in the RCC governance process through spaces created by various civil society organisations. While some of the initiatives and programmes taken by these groups remain conducive to citizens' participation in the local governance process, other findings indicate the issue of co-optation possibly by the dominant and privileged sections of the society.

5.6. Summary

The chapter explored the institutional and political context of the local governance system in the study area. In doing so, the chapter sheds light on the processes and attempted to identify the various actors and factors and their roles in the local governance process. It explored the nature of people's participation in the local governance process. Throughout the chapter I have discussed the issue on the basis of my information gathered by means of in-depth interviews, field observations and extractions from various secondary sources, i.e., books, organisational publications, academic journal papers, academic research reports and newspapers.

In chapter two I discussed two different perspectives on the formation of institutions and their outcomes. From the mainstream perspective, institutions are the products of history, and institutions shape politics. On the other hand, as Sangmpan (2007) argues for the primacy of society rooted politics over the formation of institutions in the third world countries. Throughout this chapter it has been revealed how the urban local governance process in the study area has plausibly stemmed from the central governments' interest in consolidating political power by using local government.

Thus, it is more about consolidating a local political power base thorough the local government system than sharing power. The initial pro-democratic national spirit in the 1990s for denying colonial legacy (given that institutions are the products of history) in building political institutions is virtually lost in the design of the local government system in Bangladesh. The designing of the RCC as an urban local government institution, therefore, plausibly follows the colonial legacy and reflects the ruling elites' political agenda of centralising the political power structure which impregnate the whole system. There is a clear patron-client relationship between the

national government and the local government. This patron-client relationship is again reflected within the RCC power structure. Within the RCC a culture of patronage has developed where the councillors are connected to the national level politics through the mayor.

Within such a patron-clientelistic socio-political and institutional environment, the scope for citizen participation through various formal mechanisms, for example, the RCC's standing committees and Corporation Parishad meetings, is limited. This is partly due to the fluidity of laws and also because of the office holders' lack of commitment to ensuring people's participation. Local government elections, the other formal mechanism, are the predominant form of people's participation in the local governance process. Local people, especially the poor, get an opportunity to exercise bargaining power during the election time. Thus, elections are important for making elected representatives accountable to the local people. However, evidence shows that irregularities in election and local vote politics deter the process of people's participation through election.

As such, informal means of participation have been important in the study area. Apart from election time, the informal mechanisms of citizens' participation through elected representatives' visits to communities and community people's visits to their elected representatives is the most practised form of participation. During the elected representatives' visits to the communities, local people get an opportunity to be heard regarding local issues. Local people can also enjoy the option of visiting elected representatives on their own initiative. However, data show that the scope for participation through informal means is largely manifested by 'hard democracy' and a culture of patronage politics.

Citizens' participation through spaces created by various civil society organisations is a contested terrain. Some of the initiatives and programmes, for example, citizen report cards, household surveys, and open budget sessions at the ward level, put forward the promise of citizens' participation in the local governance process. By presenting some successful endeavours, data indicate the growing influence of civil society groups in the local governance process. Nonetheless, by considering the fact that membership of these civil society groups is largely limited to the privileged sections of the society, local people's participation cannot be fully realised through 'naming and shaming' type of activities (the most practised form of civil society activism in the study area) of these civil society groups. Data and analysis indicate the possibility of co-optation by local interest groups.

In summary, two of the state actors, the central government and the elected officials, are the two most dominant actors in the process of centralising political power. The RCC's elected officials (local political elites) are tied with the central government (national elites) through patronage politics. Thus, a politics of patronage is one of the important factors in shaping the city wide local governance process, *vis-a-vis*, the macro level opportunity structure within which the participation of the common local people (non-elites) is nominal or tokenistic in general. Consequently, the findings of this chapter reconfirm Sangmpan's (2007) idea of the primacy of society-rooted politics in shaping the political institutions where the RCC has only secondarily shaped social and political outcomes. While the radical elite theory explains the dominant actors' role and influence in the mainstream policy making process, the research findings also show how local people try to influence decisions sometimes by their own endeavours and sometimes through the spaces created by various civil society groups. Local people's participation through informal means and through the

spaces created by various civil society groups is gaining momentum and is believed to have a substantial impact on local decisions, although it has not been able to involve a cross-section of people.

CHAPTER 6:

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY

CONTEXT

*The notion of community is highly problematic anywhere, and
no less in the urban context. (Wood and Slway 2000:676)*

6.1. Introduction

In chapters one and two I discussed how development interventions were socially
constructed and negotiated as on-going processes, and thus, why the UPPR
intervention was needed to be examined in relation to the overall socio-economic,
institutional, cultural and political milieu of the Bangladeshi society. Chapter five
focused on the process, actors and factors that were involved in shaping the nature of
local governance in regard to participation spaces at the city level as well as at the
ward level in general. This chapter further tries to understand the processes, actors
and important factors that influence people's participation in the community level
governance process. According to the empowerment framework presented in chapter
two, this is about understanding and analysing community level participation spaces.
Therefore, this chapter again addresses the first research question in the context of
the study communities: what processes, actors and important factors influence
people's participation in the local governance process? Before understanding and
analysing participation process in the study communities—induced by the UPPR
intervention—it is imperative to have a prior understanding of the community level
structural and agency factors in terms of the complex modes and practices of social,
political and economic relationships and interaction with various organisations and
institutions (both formal and informal). Hence, this chapter aims to develop an

understanding of the socio-economic and political contexts of the selected communities within which the UPPR is being implemented.

The chapter firstly discusses the historical developments of the study communities and presents the overall socio-economic attainments of the residents in light of the data collected during the fieldwork. These lay down the foundation of understanding and analysing community-specific power structure(s) and the ward level governance process. Afterwards, the chapter discusses the nature of community people's interaction with various NGOs as a service provider to the communities. The nature of the community level power structures and community people's interactions (social, political and economic) with various formal and informal institutions and organisations altogether form the community spaces (which also influence the community people's levels of agency). Within these spaces community people's endeavours towards participating in the spaces created by the UPPR intervention are encouraged.

6.2. Historical Development of the Neighbourhoods

From the historical institutionalism perspective discussed in chapter two, a variety of social, cultural, economic and political (formal or informal) relationships are the products of history. Hence, it is important to understand the historical development of the study communities. History may be able to explain the extent and degree to which various socio-economic and political rules and standard operating procedures, which are mostly informal in this context, are institutionalised in these communities as one kind of social organisation. Data collected through in-depth interviews, discussion with community people and recorded field observations indicate that the

development of the four study areas as neighbourhoods varies in terms of time-span of settlement, types of settlers and processes of settlement.

One elderly man,[36] who had been living in Alampur (Study CDC 1) for more than 60 years, narrated the historical development of the neighbourhood (within which the CDC is situated). The early settlement in this area began more than 100 years ago. According to the speaker, the early settlers migrated from Assam (a province of today's India). The colonial British government allocated land for 13 such families as refugees. At that time the whole area was very high uneven land and full of jungles. Those 13 families occupied as much land as they could avail themselves of by making lands liveable and cultivable. Afterwards when the families expanded, a large portion of the area came into their possession. In 1947, when British India was divided into two countries, India and Pakistan, more people started to come into this area from different parts of the former British-India and also during the India-Pakistan war in 1965. During the 1980s people from different parts of the country started to settle here on a large scale, especially due to the low price of land. At the time of the fieldwork only 250-300 people out the total population of about 2500 were known to be descendants of those 13 original families.

Salampur (Study CDC 2) visibly comprised two types of residents. The Eastern side was largely populated by an ethnic minority locally known as Santal[37] and the

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[36] When I asked one of the respondents (S-OB02) to describe the historical development of human settlement in Alampur (study CDC 1) area, she invited this elderly person as a resource person to facilitate the interview session. The person was aware of the purpose of the interview session, as well as the fact that the session was recorded.

[37] The Santal are the largest tribal community in India. There is also a significant Santal minority in Bangladesh, and a small population in Nepal. The Santali language is part of the Austro-Asiatic family, distantly related to Vietnamese and Khmer. Unlike many other tribal groups of the Indian subcontinent, Santal have preserved their native language despite waves of migrations and invasions such as Aryan, Hun, Mughals, Europeans and others. Santal cultural practices and religion are different from the Bengalis.

Western side was populated by Bengalis[38] (Field journal note recorded on 2 November, 2010). Santals were the early settlers in this area. The history of their settlement began about 150 years ago when their ancestors migrated from Birvum (a district of today's India). According to an elderly man and a woman[39] who claimed to be the oldest persons of the community, the first generation of Santal people started to settle in this area with the informal authorisation of the local 'Jamidar' (landlord who were locally called kings). In 1947 when the British rule came to an end the land they had been occupying became Khas Land[40] (government land) because they had no legal papers over the land they occupied. Since then many of them had been struggling to gain land rights and most of the Santal residents did not have legal papers. They had to face the threat of eviction from various local elites who claimed that the land belonged to them by law, and sometimes also by various government agencies as Khas land. On the other hand, the majority of the Bengalis were low income migrants from different parts of the country. They had been settling here over the last 50 years as was described by one of the office bearers (OBs) of the CDC, who had been living in this neighbourhood since birth (SH-OB01). According to her, for the last fifteen years, this locality had been experiencing large scale settlement due to the expansion of urbanisation in this part of Rajshahi City. Generally the Bengalis living in this neighbourhood did not have difficulties over land ownership issues.

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[38] The Bengali people are an ethnic community native to the historic region of Bengal (now divided between Bangladesh and India). Bengali people comprise 98% of the population in Bangladesh.

[39] During the interview session with SH-PGM01, a number of santal people were observing and listening, and many of them spoke spontaneously beside the interviewee. The conversation was recorded and during transcription speakers were identified accordingly.

[40] 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). Khas also refers to social accretion, that is, land in excess of the ceiling for private ownership, hereditary or otherwise (Barket, Zaman, and Raaihan, 2001:20).

Jogotpur CDC (Study CDC 3) was also divided into two parts in terms of types of resident. The front portion was resided by those who claimed themselves as local and had been living there for last two or three generations on legally occupied land (ZN-OB02; ZN-PGM01). The back portion was a new settlement, locally known as Notun Para (new settlement), started in the 1990s on government land alongside the river Padma. The majority of local people residing in the front portion were closely tied by blood relations. On the contrary, the new settlers were migrants from different parts of the country with diversified background and social orientation. Since the new settlers lived on government land, they frequently faced the threat of eviction from government departments (ZN-PGL 02; ZN-NP 01).

Unlike the other three neighbourhoods, Sripur CDC (Study CDC 4) was comprised of people migrated from different parts of former greater Rajshahi district as well as the country. According to one of the OBs from the CDC (SR-OB01), the early settlement alongside the river started during the 1960s. According to him, during the 1970s the occupants had to face a long standing struggle with outsiders over the land ownership issue. The early settlers gained their land rights after a prolonged legal struggle with government departments in the 1980s. But the new settlers were treated as illegal occupants and lived under the threat of eviction. At the time of my field visit, a major portion of the settlement was apprehending a large scale eviction by RCC for the establishment of a recreation park (SR-OB01; SR-PGL02).

The above narratives about the historical development of the study communities highlight the issues of internal distinction between the early settlers and new settlers in Alampur (Study CDC 1), Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3). Again, except for Alampur (Study CDC 1), in all the other three study communities a

good number of residents did not have ownership over the lands they were living on. We get two contrasting pictures from the above discussion. While in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4) the early settlers largely had land ownership, the early settlers in Salampur (Study CDC 2) did not. The findings of the above discussion remind us that communities, bounded by definite geographical areas, are complex arenas of interactions, where various groups co-operate or compete with each other as strategies of their livelihood (Huq 2006).

The local and new settler, and land owner and landless differentiation could appear as influencing factors in exercising community people's agency in participating in self-help groups-based local development initiatives with regard to the local governance process. In his study on self-help-based urban solid waste management initiatives in Dhaka and Chittagong City Corporation areas in Bangladesh, Bhuiyan (2004) found that local people who ancestrally live in a particular locality over the years were better linked with their neighbours in terms of family and kin ties. This suggests that the social basis of area-based organisations in such contexts is favourably anchored with kin relationship. The literature, again, suggests that the land ownership issue is closely linked with people's level of agency (Alsop, Bertelsen *et al*. 2006). As such, how these factors influence the participation process in the study communities induced by the UPPR intervention will be explored in detail in chapter seven.

6.3. The Socio-economic Condition of the Residents

According to Participatory Identification of Poor (PIP, 2010/11) prepared by the UPPR local office, these four study communities were mainly occupied by poor people. According to the PIP, 66% of the households residing in these communities

were extreme poor, 27% were poor and 7% were non-poor. But the magnitude of poverty varied from community to community, and even within the community. By reviewing PIP and also the household income, housing type (*pucca*, semi-*pucca* or *kacha*)[41] and sanitation facilities of the group members it is seen that the Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Sripur (Study CDC 4) CDCs were occupied by more well-off people than Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3). Table 5 presents the PIP's estimation of poverty in the study communities.

Table 5: PIP Estimation of Poverty in the Study Communities

	% of Extreme Poor (HH)	% Poor (HH)	% Non-poor (HH)
Alampur (Study CDC 1)	47	38.5	14.5
Salampur (Study CDC 2)	50	45.5	4.5
Jogotpur (Study CDC 3)	93.5	6	.5
Sripur (Study CDC 4)	74	17.5	8.5

Source: Participatory Identification of the Poor, UPPR (2010/11).

PIP identifies 47%, 38.5% and 14.5% of the total families living in Alampur (Study CDC 1) as extreme poor, poor and non-poor, respectively. According to some of the respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGM01), the new settlers were more well-off than the early settlers who resided mainly in the Eastern side of the CDC's jurisdiction. One of the primary group (PG) members (S-PGM01) described that area as the poorest site of the community. The relatively higher socio-economic status of the new settlers, who resided mainly in the Western side of the CDC's jurisdiction,

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[41] *Pucca*: the structure which has its roof and wall made of bricks and mortar; *Semi-pucca*: it is a structure of normal height and has walls made of bricks. The roof is made of any material other than cement/concrete; *kacha*: it 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.

became visible to me by observing the house types (mostly *pucca*) (Field Journal note, 20 October 2010).

Photo 2: Semi-*pucca* and *kacha* Houses on the Eastern Side of Alampur.

When this part of Rajshahi town came under the RCC's jurisdiction in the 1980s, the area became attractive to outsiders for living. Due to high demand, the land price went up and became affordable only to relatively well-off people. As such, the new settlers understandably belonged to the higher socio-economic strata as compared to the early settlers. This explanation was given by a few community people during my field visit (Field Journal note, 21 October 2010).

The early settlers in Alampur (Study CDC 1) were mainly involved in the informal sector[42] as petty vegetable vendors, rikshaw pullers, petty traders, and very few were service holders as office peons, sweepers and cleaning workers. But the new settlers'

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[42] The informal sector consists of all economic activities outside the formal institutional framework which are mainly characterised by low technology and activities which are labour intensive, dominated by unskilled labour, easy entry and easy exit where entry is usually for economic survival other than business growth. The informal sector can be seen on streets, sidewalks and back alleys of cities and includes petty traders, street vendors, coolies and porters, small-scale artisans, barbers and shoeshine boys.

occupations were diverse, ranging from mid-level businessmen, shopkeepers, mid-level office employees to petty traders and grocery-men (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGM01; S-PGL01; S-PGM01; S-PGM02; PGM03; S-NPCM01).

Photo 3: *Pucca* houses on the western side of Alampur (Study CDC 1).

In Salampur (Study CDC 2), as the PIP (2010/11) figures out, 50% of the residents are extreme poor followed by 45.5% poor and 4.5% non-poor. The field study findings suggest that among the Bengalis, the recent settlers were economically more solvent in general than the early settlers. As a result of rapid urbanisation, the land price in this area had been soaring for the last few years; and it had been affordable largely to well-off people in recent years. It was reported by two of the respondents (SH-OB02; SH-NPCM01) that many early settlers were selling their land at a high price and moving elsewhere onto cheap land. A number of respondents (SH-OB01; SH-OB02; SH-PGM01; ER01) mentioned that the socio-economic condition of the Santal people was much lower compared to the Bengalis. The WC (ER-01), who established an adult literacy school in this area, mentioned that educational attainment rate was severely poor among the Santal people. Most of the elderly

persons as well as almost half of the new generation could not read or write, and a few could only sign their names. The scenario was worst in the case of women. It was described by various respondents (SH-PGM01; SH-NPCM01) and local people (who participated in the interview session with SH-PGM01) that Santal people were mainly involved as daily labourers, agricultural workers, and construction workers.

Besides men, many women in both the CDCs were directly or indirectly involved in income generating activities. The working women in Alampur (Study CDC 1) and the Santal women in Salampur (Study CDC 2) mainly worked as day labourers, vegetable vendors and tailors. Thus, both men and women were mainly involved in the informal sector's economic activities. There were a few families where husbands did not work at all and depended on wives' earnings as was informed by two of the respondents (S-PGM01; SH-PGM01).

Photo 4: Semi-*pucca* houses of Santals in Salampur (Study CDC 2).

In Jogotpur (Study CDC 3), according to PIP (2010/11), 93.5% are extreme poor, 6% are poor and 0.5% are non-poor. Therefore, it is very difficult to differentiate the

socio-economic attainment among the people. However, it was described by some of respondents (ZN-OB02; PGL02; PGM01) that the early settlers were relatively well-off and most of them had *pucca* houses for living; whereas the new settlers who lived at the back portion of the settlement lived in *kaccha* houses in general. But the description does not necessarily resemble the differentiation in economic condition between local and new settlers. Because I came to know by interviewing two of the respondents (ZN-PGL02; ZN-NPCM01) from the new settlement that one of the reasons for not building permanent *pucca* houses was the lack of land ownership and also the possibility of being evicted. Wood and Salway (2000) also found that the constant threat of eviction (from government re-zoning or re-claiming land) reduced the incentives for community members to self-invest for housing. Interview data say, like the residents of Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2), that the residents of Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) were also mostly involved in informal sector activities. However, a few, who were mainly from the early settlers, had strong economic bases, for example, the chairperson and the secretary of the CDC, and the secretary of one of the PGs.

In Sripur (Study CDC 4) it can be seen from the PIP (2010/11) that the socio-economic attainment of the residents is almost identical. But the official profiles of the group members and interview data indicate that their occupations were more diversified, involved in both formal and informal sectors than those of the other three neighbourhoods. During my field work I was informed by a number of respondents (SR-OB01; SR-OB02; SR-PGL01) and by a few local people (Field Journal note, 13 December 2009) that a good number of local residents were involved in smuggling through the India-Bangladesh border. A number of the smugglers were also involved

in narcotics trading. Sripur (Study CDC 4) was one of the city hubs well-known for the availability of narcotics.

Photo 5: *Kacha* houses in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) Notun Para (back portion).

I was informed by some respondents (for example, SR-OB01; SR-OB02) that the educational attainment rate was poor among the residents and this was worst in the case of women, as it was in the three other study communities. Most of the residents who lived on legal land had *pucca* houses. On the contrary, people who did not have land ownership usually lived in *Kacha* houses.

Finally, we find two contrasting pictures from the above discussion and analysis. The new settlers in Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2) were relatively well-off compared with the early settlers. On the other hand, in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4) the early settlers were better-off than the new settlers mainly because of the different historical development processes of the neighbourhoods. Here it comes out that the issue depends more on the respective communities' historical development processes inducing socio-economic and

political factors, for example, land entitlement. The land entitlement issue was closely linked with the construction of the local and new settler (non-local) distinction at the community level. Accordingly, the early settlers in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) projected an image that generally coincided with a self-proclaimed higher level of belonging and authority within the community, whereas this was not the case for the early settlers in Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2).

Photo 6: Houses in Sripur (Study CDC 4).

Distinctions among the people living in these four study communities was not only limited to local and new settler, or land-owner and landless issues, but they were also differentiated in terms of few other socio-economic attainments, for example, income level, employment and housing arrangement. Therefore, the levels of agency (asset endowments) would be expected to vary among the groups of people (local, new settlers, land owner, landless, extreme poor, poor and non-poor). These factors are important to consider in understanding the community context in relation to participatory local governance. In the conceptual framework in chapter two I discussed certain socio-economic factors as being measured by income, education

and occupation affecting the level of community participation in the political sphere. Hence, the existing literature suggests that these factors may have influence on the UPPR induced community participation process in the study area.

6.4. The Community Power Structure

The aim of this sub-point is to develop an understanding of the community power structures in the study CDCs. The discussion in chapter two indicated that the process of participation is largely influenced by local power structures. Accordingly, the existing literature shows how CDD projects could be co-opted by local power elites and, thus, influence the community empowerment process (Platteau 2004; Dasgupta and Beard 2007; Fritzen 2007). Therefore, understanding community specific power structures in terms of identifying the local elites, their roles and levels of influence and their power resources will be helpful to analyse the forms and levels of community people's participation in the community level governance process. Hence, we should be aware of the issue that it will sketch out one dimension of the community level opportunity structure within which the UPPR intervention has been implemented. During the interviews with community people, respondents were asked to name who they consider powerful person(s) in their community (identifying local elites) and, why and how these people are powerful (level of influence and power resources).

6.4.1. Alampur (Study CDC 1)

To describe the community power structure, the elderly man, who narrated the historical development of the human settlement in Alampur (Study CDC 1) area, said:

> Mr. 'X', Mr. 'Y' [two of the first generation settlers] and some
> of their family members were prominent in this community. But

> when outsiders started to settle here by purchasing lands from
> the old settlers, they gradually started to lose their land as well
> as their power. The old generation used to live by selling their
> lands … they also used to employ coercive power to grab Khas
> lands in this area … they could make it because they had good
> knowledge over land issues and also because of their
> attachment to the ruling political party at that time … (A local
> resident)

This statement reflects three types of power sources: wealth, knowledge over land issues and attachment to the ruling party politics. The above speaker opined that traditionally the power was in the hands of the 13 families (the early settlers) for a long time because of their huge land property which they occupied at the initial stage of the development of human settlement in this area. At that time land property was the main source of personal and family wealth. A few of the early settlers (for example, Mr. 'X' and Mr. 'Y' mentioned in the above quote), furthered their wealth base afterwards by occupying disputed lands or Khas lands and selling them to new settlers. In doing so they gained help from two other sources of power: knowledge over local land issues and political attachment. Until the 1980s, the above speaker again reported, their role was vital in addressing various community level disputes and local issues. When the early settlers and their family members started selling their own land properties to outsiders on a large scale, the internal power structure started to take a new shape, largely because of the changes in demographics. During the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s the power shifted gradually from old to new settlers.

When the respondents from Alampur (Study CDC 1) were asked to identify the most powerful people in this community, only 6 or 7 names (all were male), including the names of the present and former WCs (the former WC resided in this neighbourhood), were mentioned repeatedly by the respondents. Except for one, all the names which came out were people who were new settlers. According to one of

the respondents (S-NPCM01), the former WC was not very influential after being defeated in the last local election by the present WC. Nevertheless, since the current WC resided in another neighbourhood, his presence was not frequent in community specific issues. In such cases a few other local elites used to handle various social and political issues on behalf of the WC. Beside the present and the former WCs, the interviewees identified some other persons as influential in community level issues.

The local power elites' role in community affairs was mentioned by some of the respondents. For example, one of the respondents (S-OB01) stated:

> Community people listen to my husband. People of this area come to my husband to resolve their problems. If there is any dispute, my husband reconciles it. Since he is local and involved in politics, community people value his role. A few days ago, there was a quarrel between a married couple. My husband mediated the issue. (S-OB01)

The above statement illuminates two aspects of being powerful: being local[43] and having a political connection. The quote also points out the issue that local elites were important in settling community matters. Another respondent (S-NPCM01), who lived beside the above respondent's (S-OB01) residence, also mentioned the same name as one of the powerful figures within the community. However, that person was not considered as powerful by another respondent (S-PGL01). She suggested some other persons who were influential in addressing local issues.

> There are a few people, like Mr. 'A', Mr.' B', Mr. 'C' and their group who mainly mediate community issues. (S-PGL01)

Another respondent (S-PGM02) identified another person as powerful:

> Mr. 'D' is my uncle. If we get into trouble we inform him. He has good connections with the WC. If he says something, things get done. (S-PGM02)

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[43] In the Bangladeshi context, in order to be considered as local, someone has to be born and brought up in a locality or at least living there for a long time. But this could not be sufficient in many respects until the person has a permanent establishment, for example, land or houses.

The above three quotes bring out the issue that people's views when considering someone to be powerful or not, largely depended on their personal experiences in dealing with those whom they might consider powerful or not. In this way, the identification of the powerful persons by the respondents was contested.

When respondents were asked further to explain why these people were powerful, two common answers came up: economic solvency and attachment with political parties (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGL01; S-PGM03; NPCM01). Two of the respondents (S-PGM02; S-PGM03) opined that a good relationship with the WC was the source of power for some local power elites. Besides these, according to three of the respondents (S-PGL01; PGM03; S-NP01) another new instrument that helped to legitimise and consolidate the power base of a few of the local elites was their membership in Community Police Forums.[44]

According to one of the respondents:

> If there are disputes, clashes or fights within the community and if people go to police, they advise people to go to the Community Police Forum to settle the issues. In the cases of petty disputes, the forum settles the issues, even penalises offenders. (S-NPCM01)

To summarise, community level power in Alampur (Study CDC 1) was enjoyed by a few local power elites instead of one single person. We also find that the local elites' role was not only limited to mediating community specific social issues, but also acting as linking agents to the WC. Since one of the important power sources of the local power elites was political attachment, it was logical that the magnitude of power of the local elites depended on the political regime in accordance with their

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[44] Bangladesh police have been implementing a community policing system, which is very much similar to that of the western style of community policing forum. Community policing promotes equal partnership between the police and the community. Bangladesh police have taken up the wards as the basic units to implement community policing. The Community Policing Forums set up at the ward level have been performing the core functions of the community policing system in Bangladesh.

affiliation.

6.4.2. Salampur (Study CDC 2)

In Salampur (Study CDC 2), because of the small population size, lack of land entitlement, lower socio-economic attainment and different cultural and religious practices, the Santal people were generally marginalised in respect to social and political entitlements. During the interview, one of the respondents said with grief, which was reflected in her tone while speaking:

> We are not Santal. However, if other people recognise us as Santal what we can do? Is it encrypted on our skin? We do not mind either. (S-NPCM01)

The above statement suggests that helplessness of the Santal people as a minority group in the respective community. Two people in total (SH-NPCM01; SH-PGM01) were interviewed from the Santal people and both of them informed me that they participated in street processions during the last local election in favour of the WC. When they were asked to participate, they did so partly because of their moral obligation to the WC, who had been kind and supportive to them for a long time. They also abided by the words of other local powerful people. In the words of one of the respondents:

> ... Mr. 'S' and Mr. 'T' [all are Bengalis] who are followers of the ruling party are also powerful. To live in this area peacefully we need to listen to them. (SH-NP01)

During the discussion session one of the local residents,[45] who was listening to the conversation, supported the respondent by saying:

> Mr. 'S' and the WC are the most powerful people in this locality. (One of the local residents)

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[45] The conversation was recorded since the interview session was recorded with the permission of the respondents.

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However, it seems that Santal people did not fully rely on these local power elites in preserving their own interests. It was discussed earlier that lack of land ownership was one of the major problems for the Santal people. In this respect, when I asked one of the respondents whether they were interested in asking the above mentioned powerful people to act in their favour, she replied:

> If we go to them it might happen that they themselves will grab
> our lands or help those who have money. (SH-PGM 01)

The above presented data show that Santal people were linked with the local power elites through an informal relationship marked by unequal status and power, and which was involved in the exchange of valued resources. In another way, the relationship can be termed as a patron-client relationship (Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. 2009:4).

Thus, due to the lower socio-economic and political entitlements of the Santal people, the Bengalis have relative dominance over them. The power structure that prevailed within the Bengalis symbolised the overall power structure system for Salampur (Study CDC 2) as a whole. Like the local power elites in Alampur (Study CDC 1), the local power elites in Salampur (Study CDC 2) were also vital in settling community specific disputes and deciding upon various social issues. Generally, the early settlers (Santals) were not in a position to speak against Bengalis. The discussion on power in chapter two suggested that the situation could be seen as the second dimension of power described by Bachrach and Baratz (1962). Not everyone in this community, especially the Santal people, was free to participate in decision-making, and therefore, non-participation resembled satisfaction and consensus.

When respondents among the Bengalis were asked 'who are the most powerful

within this community?', only a few of the above mentioned common names (all male) came out. The most common was the WC who resided in this neighbourhood (SH-OB01; SH-OB02; SH-PGL02; SH-PGM01; SH-NPCM01). The degree of the WC's influence over the community became noticeable by a comment made by one of the respondents:

> ... there are a few other powerful persons in this community,
> but the WC's words are final. (SH-OB 01)

When the respondents were further asked: 'why are they powerful?' responses listed the following examples: having a good relationship with the WC (SH-OB01), being an elder (SH-OB02; SH-PGL01, SH-PGL02), being highly educated (SH-PGL01), being a *mastaan* (local strong man) (SH-PGL02), being Bengali (SH-PGM01) and having a connection with local police station (SH-OB02). The two most common answers given by the respondents were having economic solvency and political connections (SH-OB01; SH-OB02; SH-NPCM01; SH-PGL02; SH-PGM01).

The above discussion suggests that besides the WC, there were a few local elites in Salampur (Study CDC 2). However, as the elected representative of the RCC and as a man from the respective neighbourhood, the WC's power was more consolidated than others.

6.4.3. Jogotpur (Study CDC 3)

The new settlers in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) were socially and politically marginalised, mainly because of lack of land ownership. The absence of land entitlement was related to the absence of basic urban services. Since the settlement was an illegal occupancy situated on government land, there was no electricity connection or piped water supply. The WC, who had been an elected representative for this locality for the last fifteen years, resided in this neighbourhood and was a

man from the early settlers (residents of the front portion). Interview data show that he was the most influential person within the neighbourhood. He was the person who actively supported the new settlers to be settled on government land and gave them protection while eviction threats came up. In his words:

> I found many homeless extreme poor people had been living on the dam sporadically. At that time this area was outside the RCC's jurisdiction. When this area came under the RCC's jurisdiction, I personally talked with one of the former mayors to settle those people alongside the river. With his consent [informal], I started settling them on that land ... (EP02)

The RCC does not have legal authority to give permission to anyone to live on government land. The above mentioned statement shows the abuse of political power in settling establishments on government land which belongs to the central government departments. In return, the new settlers basically acted as followers and a power-base for the WC. The relationship probably followed the logic of patron-clientelism (Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. 2009; De Wit and Berner 2009). According to Wood and Salway (2000) the threat of eviction reinforces the loyalty of the residents to local patrons. Discussing the influence of the WC over the local people, one of the respondents said:

> I do not find anyone else [powerful] except the WC. (ZN-PGL01)

He had been one of the closest persons to the mayors of the RCC.[46] He used to act as the mayor of the RCC in the absence of the elected mayors from the office. The other local power elites in this neighbourhood were unable to take initiative by bypassing the WC and were virtually bound to abide by his words. The other few local power elites were powerful in connection with the WC. In describing the role of other local

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[46] During my interviews with project officials, it became apparent that he was one of the people who changed their political affiliation to the ruling party after being elected. Thus, he has been in a close relationship with the ruling political parties in both the past and present regimes.

power elites in settling community disputes, another respondent said:

> When any severe dispute occurs, for example, a quarrel
> between husband and wife, dispute over land or offences done
> by young people, we mainly inform the WC. There are some
> other people who also get involved in settling the dispute. But
> they always take the consent of the WC. (ZN-PGL02)

Therefore, it appears that either the WC had a strong popular local support base, or an effective control mechanism (or both), which helped him to be elected in the last three consecutive local elections. At the same time, his close attachment with the mayors of the RCC helped him to consolidate his power network above the ward level. Finally he emerged as the most influential person within the community.

6.4.4. Sripur (Study CDC 4)

In Sripur (Study CDC 4), as has been discussed in the earlier sub-point, the backgrounds of the residents were more diverse than those who resided in the other three study communities. As a relatively recent settlement, there was virtually no single specific group who could claim themselves as belonging to this neighbourhood more than any other. Political affiliation was pivotal in determining the magnitude of power of the local elites.

> During the past government regime Mr. 'E' and Mr.'F' were
> premier in settling community issues ... These days people also
> go to Mr. 'G'. He is a political person and attached to the ruling
> party. (SR-OB 02)

The names (all male) that came out during the interview sessions as powerful persons of the community were directly involved in politics and were in important political positions in their respective political parties. The presence of political rivalry within the community became apparent through the comment of one of the respondents:

> Mr. 'F' is a BNP [Bangladesh Nationalist Party] person. He was

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> a candidate in the last local election and also asked us to work in favour of BNP in the last parliament election (national election). We told him that we supported AL [Awami League] and that we would work for AL. For this reason there was a severe clash between us. He will never help if we have troubles. For example, if there is a police case, he will never come up to help us. (SR-PGL 02)

The above statement points out another important issue regarding the role of local power elites in community people's life. Community people needed the help of these local elites during crises as linking agents with various service providers, for example, the police. In this respect, another respondent said:

> Once I met Mr. 'G' and asked him to find me a job. At that time I was unemployed. Again, we need to go to Mr. 'F' for many services. For example, a few days ago my father-in-law's motor-cycle was seized by traffic police. I informed him and he solved the problem. Again, once my younger brother was charged by police in a burglary case and police arrested him. When I informed him, he got him free. (SR-OB02)

Unlike Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3), there was no single local strong man in this community. The magnitude of the political party's influence and, therefore, the power of the local elites depended on national and local regimes. Again, under the same regime, the power of local elites varied from time to time, corresponding to changes in the RCC power structure, or changes of power structure within the party in power at the local and national levels. Under the circumstances, the local elites' interests and access to power resources were more competitive than the other three communities. The power was enjoyed by a number of local political leaders (local elites).

From the above findings on the four study communities, it appears that the local and 'new settler' distinction and the socio-economic differentiation of the residents greatly influenced the construction of community specific power structure in these communities. These factors were closely related to the typical historical development

processes of the communities. We find that the new settlers in Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2) had more influence in the overall community level power structures. On the other hand, in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4) the early settlers were more dominant and had more access to the community level power structure. As local people's representatives, the WCs had important positions in the community power structure. However, the level of influence of the WCs was also affected by some other factors, for example, where the WCs lived, the level of political connection of the WCs above the ward level, and the presence of other influential elites in a community and their political profiles. Therefore, as a whole, we find that among a range of factors, political affiliation and the level of political connection were two of the most important power resources for the local elites at the community level. The local power elites were not only important in settling community level disputes and conflicts but also acted as linking agents to various service providers. Moreover, in the case of Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) we see that the WC appeared as a patron in times of crisis, like eviction threats. In this way, community people were tied with the local power elites more in a patron-clientelistic relationship than being in a dyadic relationship.

6.5. The Ward Level Governance and People's Participation

WCs manage municipal affairs and carry out development works in their ward. However, available literature suggests that with no fully-defined framework of duties and responsibilities, WCs are left to perform their responsibilities according to their initiative and commitment (Banks 2006). There is no committee at the ward level that represents the community people. Whatever little power exists rests with the WC alone (Siddiqui 2005). As people's representatives, WCs solely preserve the legitimate authority to decide how and for whom resources and services will be

distributed at the ward level. Accordingly, fieldwork data suggest that ward level governance process generally featured the existence of power distance between the elected representatives and community people. The process was also influenced by the nature of community specific power structures discussed in the previous sub-point. In this context, this sub-point develops an understanding of the ward level governance process with a special focus on the scopes for community people's participation.

By conceding the importance of people's participation in the ward level governance process, one of the WCs stated that:

> In my ward the scope for people's participation exists. As per one of my election commitments, I have ensured people's participation in every activity ... One of the popular demands of my ward was building a drain [alongside the main road]. According to their demand, I made the decision after having several rounds of discussion with the community people. (ER-01)

He further added:

> I invite people at my residence for tea and try to bring them together for discussion. (ER-01)

However, during the interviews in response to my question, does the WC consult with community people before making any decision regarding your community? none of the 13 respondents in total from the concerned ward mentioned a single occasion where they were invited or joined in a discussion session. According to the WC, community people get invited to participate in the local decision-making. On the other hand, interview data collected from the concerned community people indicate that they did not participate in such discussions. Now the question arises regarding who participates, and how participation is interpreted.

According to one of the respondents:

> When decisions are made, only rich businessmen or powerful
> people receive invitations. (SH-PGL02)

The other respondents were ignorant about such discussion sessions and the participants. However, in describing the types of participants, the above mentioned WC claimed that it encompasses people from every stratum of the ward. Thus, in identifying the type of participants, we get two competing scenarios. On the extreme axis the participation in the ward level decision-making process is limited to the rich and powerful, and on the other axis the participants might include both the rich, dominant, poor and disadvantaged people. However, the fact that many of the respondents did not even know about such discussion sessions indicates that in such an invited space the process of participation was limited to a small section of the community people and thus it was possibly inaccessible to the larger section of the society.

Apart from the type of participants, as the available literature suggested in chapter two, another important issue of participation is to analyse whether participants can influence the decisions. While getting a chance to participate is one aspect of participation, influencing the decisions is equally important. In this respect, another statement of the concerned WC makes it clear that the ultimate decision-making authority rested with him, not with the participants.

> I personally think and decide what should be prioritised and
> what things are needed to be done first. For example, the Social
> Welfare Department provides a senior allowance through the
> Ward Councillor office. The demand in my ward is for 300 but
> I am receiving only three for distribution. Whom will I give? ...
> In fact, demands for services are unlimited. In such cases I
> determine the most urgent needs by consulting with the
> community people … (ER- 01)

As such, consultation is a form of participation, but according to Arnstein's 'ladder of participation' perspective this type of participation can be categorised as a 'degree

of tokenism' (Arnstein 1969). Here beneficiaries have the scope to be informed but have little voice in decision-making. However, the ultimate decision-making power remains in the hands of the powerful. This notion was also echoed by another respondent in making a comment on the annual development planning process at the ward level:

> We really do not know about the planning process. We go to the WC and inform him about our needs, for example, tube-wells or footpaths. On some occasions he addresses our demands … My husband [who is one of the influential persons in that community] sometimes gets some rough ideas about the annual plan, but not in detail. He [the WC] does not discuss the details before finalising annual plan. We are only informed when something is being allocated by him. (S-OB01)

Interview data suggest that such discussion sessions were also available at the ward level within which Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) was situated. According to one of the respondents from the CDC:

> It [discussion] occurs in the WC's office. Since we are women we do not participate. But we come to be informed of the decisions by word of mouth … for example, I have heard that our houses will be connected with pipe water after the Eid-ul-Fitre [one of the religious festivals]. (ZN-OB02)

On the other hand, the WC of the concerned ward emphasised regular visits to the community as a means of ensuring local people's participation. In his words:

> I inspect personally. It is my everyday routine to visit communities. I observe which street is broken, where water is logged. Besides this, people come up with demands for drains, electricity poles and so on. I note these down and give them priority since they are public demands. (ER- 02)

The occasions of the WCs' visits to the communities were also mentioned by a few respondents from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Salampur (Study CDC 2):

> We made a written petition to the WC asking for a culvert in our locality. The WC visited the place and allocated the culvert. (ZN-OB02)

> When this street [the main street of the neighbourhood] was built, the WC came to the spot and called on the eminent

> persons of this community and asked them to give ideas
> regarding various aspects of implementation … He probably
> thought that it was a great occasion of meeting community
> people as he was giving something to the community. (SH-PGL02)

Another respondent from Salampur (Study CDC 2) mentioned the importance of WC's visit to the communities:

> We place our demands for streets, footpaths and electricity
> poles when the WC visits our area ... (SH-OB02)

But in communities where the WCs did not visit regularly, people might get less of an opportunity to place their demands with the WCs. In communities like Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Sripur (Study CDC 4), where the concerned WCs were from different neighbourhoods, people experienced a different reality. One of the respondents from Alampur (Study CDC 1) boldly said that:

> I cannot remember the last time the present WC visited our
> locality. But the past WC was very kind and used to visit our
> locality regularly. We do not think the present councillor is
> ours. He is biased toward his own area of living. (S-PGL01)

The past WC of Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2) resided in their neighbourhood (within which the CDCs were situated). It appears that people with a WC from their own neighbourhood might experience more visits from the WCs, and, thus, gain more access to them. In the absence of institutionalised formal channels for people's participation in the decision-making process and standardised procedures of resource distribution, the possibility of fulfilment of the community people's demand for services was much more dependent on the personal judgement of the WCs. The power to decide was a prerogative of the WCs and they were not necessarily bound to comply with popular demands.

According to a respondent from Alampur (Study CDC 1):

> … they [WCs] should work with the consent of the people. But

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in reality they do not act in that manner. (S-PGL01)

Furthermore, the usual mode of the ward level governance process provided the scope for production of local middlemen, in frequent cases they were the local power elites, who used to help community people, especially the poor, in making links with WCs.

A respondent from Sripur (Study CDC 4) said:

> General people do not have scope for participation [in the decision-making]. Sometimes they contact local community leaders regarding their demands. The seldom go directly to the WC … sometimes this works and sometimes not. (SR-OB01)

The existence of such middlemen was also confirmed by other respondents from Alampur (Study CDC 1):

> Mr. 'Z' [one of the local elites] enlisted people to select senior allowance recipients from this community … He has a good connection with the WC. I never saw the WC's officials visiting this community to collect those names. He [Mr.' Z'] is local and he knows better who is needy. (S-PGM03)

> Once we demanded an electricity pole at our side of this locality. But we did not receive the pole. Finally we contributed money and fixed the pole by ourselves because it was urgent. But if influential people do *tadbir* (lobbying), things may happen. (S-PGL01)

These statements from the study communities describe the role of middlemen in the ward level governance process. Thus, besides the WCs, some of the local elites' role as middlemen was important in the local resource distribution process. The influential role of middlemen in the process of urban service delivery in Dhaka city is noted by Cavill and Sohil (2004). The above finding suggests that the role of middlemen was also vital in getting urban services in the study communities as well.

In summary, we find that the ward level governance space was not a rigid closed space where community people did not have access. But a large feature of the

governance process was the power distance between the WCs and community people, where the ultimate decision-making authority was held by the concerned WCs. However, community people used to try to influence the WCs' decisions by placing their demands in a number of ways (mostly informal); sometimes in person and sometimes by using middlemen. The findings indicate that there is considerable scope to support community people's participation in the community level governance process through empowering the community people, especially the poor and marginalised people.

6.6. NGOs and the Community People

In all four study communities a good number of national and local NGOs were running service delivery programmes. The most common were, for example, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Association for Social Advancement, Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha, Grameen Bank, Uddipan, Sondipon, Shakti and Tilottama. Most of the NGO-run programmes were limited to group-based savings and credit schemes. Besides these NGOs, a number of micro-insurance-based financial institutions were also operating savings and credit programmes. Most of the group members were female, but there were also male savings and credit groups, or mixed groups. Out of the 25 interviewees from the four study communities, I found no-one who had not participated in NGOs-run savings-credit programme, at least had a family member who had. Indeed, many were members of more than one NGO groups (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGL01; SH-OB01; ZN-PGL01; SR-PGL01).

Commenting on the NGO-run savings and credit group activities, one of the respondents from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3), who was also a group leader of a NGO called Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, said:

> We generally do not sit together as we do for UPPR groups. As a group leader my duty is to collect savings and credit instalments from the group members, so that the officer can collect the money easily. Sometimes I help officers to recover dues. (SR- PGM01)

Another respondent from Salampur (Study CDC 2) described her experience in this way:

> I was responsible for collecting instalments and savings and credit books for the officers. (S-NP 02)

It appears that various NGO-run community savings and credit groups were limited to running programmes smoothly instead of encouraging group-based activities leading to socio-economic development. Put another way: membership in NGOs-led savings and credit groups might not encourage pro-poor collective action for community people.

The experiences of the respondents from all four study communities suggest that dealing with credit giving organisations has become a part of the poor community people's everyday life. A number of respondents described their experiences, as seen below:

> At first I drew 4000 BDT [from one of the NGOs] as a loan [approximately AUS $ 57] and I started rice trading. I made good progress in my business … I re-drew another 8000 BDT to make up the shortage of money during building my brick-built house … before I had to live in a house made of straw … When I first started building a *pucca* house, I took the loan, then gradually I accumulated more money from the savings on our everyday costs and from my own business. One after another I started buying cement, bricks, silt, etc … (ZN- PGM01)

> … have drawn loans…we did not have houses to live…we had nothing to do except making loans and drew 20000/30000 BDT as loans and built our house … (SR- PGL02)

> … my husband drew a loan from a NGO to invest in his hardware business … he made a good profit from that investment … we are still repaying that loan on instalments. (S-OB02)

> … community people are making progress since we have access to credit because of these NGOs. For example, while I was building my house, I drew 12,000 BDT as a loan and purchased bricks. Next year I drew another 11,000 BDT from another NGO while I was building the roof of my house and purchased cement … If they (NGOs) were not here to provide credit, no one in this village could make progress. My next door neighbour has a job in a university as a cleaner. His family also took a loan. There is another couple who works in the university too but also took a loan. (SR- PGL01)

The above quotes suggest that for poor community people micro-credit was not only important for survival, but also instrumental for improving their socio-economic condition. Respondents took loans not only for starting small business and housing, but also to pay for their children's education (ZN-OB01), the cost of a daughter's marriage, buying livestock (ZN-NP01; SH-OB02) or buying household and personal belongings, for example: television (SR- PGL01; S-OB02) or mobile phone (SR-OB02). Micro-credit was very popular among the respondents because of easy accessibility without collateral and the opportunity for paying loans in instalments as savings.

> Yes I'm paying loans in instalments [with interests] by saving money from the amounts given by my husband for daily expenditure … I do not feel that there is a problem repaying loans. (SR-PGL01)

The same attitude was expressed by other respondents. Some respondents (for example, SR- PGL01) put it in the form of a common expression in Bengali: a handful of rice kept aside each day does not leave a family hungry, instead those handfuls fill the table at the end of the week.

However, the picture was not all positive. The savings and credit experience became harsh when borrowers turned into defaulters for some reason or lost their investments. Loan takers were bound to pay instalments regularly by any means. In the words of one of the loan takers:

> I had to pay instalment sometimes by selling household furniture like chairs and tables. Whatever happens, we are bound to the regular payment of instalments. Until this time I had to sell my ceiling fan, ornaments, bronze made glass and plates and tin from my roof to give instalments on time. (SR-PGL02)

When a borrower could not pay instalments, substantial pressure was sometimes applied, as a respondent who was the group leader of a NGO-run savings and credit group in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) said:

> One of my group members missed a few instalments in a row due to severe economic crisis. The concerned field officer started to put pressure on her. One day the officer, along with a few other people, came to her house and started to pull off roof's tin. Finally after a negotiation they took two of her goats on the condition that she will get back the goats upon paying the due instalments. (ZN- PGL01)

Other interview data suggest that similar incidents had happened in the study communities in the past. Despite these bad experiences, the poor continued to take loans from these NGOs and other organisations and have been repaying them as well. One of the interviewees from Sripur (Study CDC 4) described their dealings with NGOs for loans as a survival strategy of their livelihood.

> This time I have drawn 17,000 BDT as a loan from one NGO, and 10,000 BDT from another. With this money I have purchased *Kher* (Paddy straw) and also have cultivated lentils in two acres of land.[47] I will get back at least 100,000 BDT … I do not feel tension. I have been dealing with NGOs for the last twenty years. (SR- PGL02)

The findings of this sub-point illuminate the importance of micro-credit and savings especially for the poor for survival and also for graduating to a higher socio-economic stratum. At the same time, the findings also bring forward the issue that community people, especially the women, were experienced and capable enough in maintaining institutional relationships and dealing with service providing

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[47] These lands are government Khas lands alongside the river Padma. When the water level goes down, people who live nearby, cultivate the lands while the land remains available.

organisations. From the agency's perspective, this is one kind of important human asset crucial to organise and run self-help based group activities.

6.8. Summary

The aim of this chapter was to develop an understanding of the socio-economic and political context of the study communities to identify the process, actors and factors that are important to understand before analysing the UPPR induced community participation process in the study CDCs. Throughout the chapter I have tried to understand the context by using the information gathered through in-depth interviews, discussions with community people, and field observations.

It was found that the historical development processes of the study communities influenced the socio-economic differentiation within the residents firstly on the basis of local/early settlers and new settlers, and land owner and landless. These factors were again associated with two contrasting findings. In Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2), the new settlers were better off than the early settlers. On the other hand, the early settlers in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4) were better off than the new settlers. Such socio-economic differentiation again influenced the construction of community level power structures. In accordance with the higher socio-economic attainment, the new settlers in Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2), and the early settlers in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4) had a relatively greater influence on the overall community level power structure. Existing literature suggests that these socio-economic differential factors influence the community participation process. Therefore, these factors will be important to consider when analysing the findings on the project intervention in chapters seven and eight.

The community power structure was not only influenced by these factors. As the local people's representatives, WCs held important positions in the community power structure. In addition, there were others also exercising power within the community besides the WCs. The community level power structure was also influenced by some other factors: place of living of the concerned WCs; level of political connection of the WCs above the ward level; and the presence of other influential local elites in a community and their political profiles. Thus, political affiliation and the level of political influence were two of the important power resources for the local elite at the community level. In many respects, community people were connected with the local power elites according to the logic of the patron-clientelistic relationship. The findings and analysis of the community power structures imply that it might influence UPPR induced participation as well as the empowerment process at the community level.

The ward level governance process in general was marked by the power distance between the WCs and community people. In the absence of formal channels of participation, community people were able to influence the WCs' decisions through various informal means, sometimes in person and sometimes through middlemen. Therefore, we find that the ward level governance process was not a closed space, and thus there was scope to support community people's participation in the local governance process by empowering them. The findings of this chapter also show that community people were already experienced and capable in dealing with external service providers, for example, NGOs. This is one kind of important human asset for the community people in organising and continuing self-help group activities, and thus participating in the local governance process.

In the next chapter I will focus on the UPPR induced community participation process.

CHAPTER 7:

SITUATING PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROCESS

Space is a social product … it is not simply 'there', a neutral container waiting to be filled, but a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control and hence of domination, of power. (Lefebvre 1991:24, cited in Cornwall 2004:80)

7.1. Introduction

As a CDD intervention, UPPR aims to provide spaces for community people to participate in the local governance process. According to the conceptual framework presented in chapter two, this can be understood as 'invited spaces' where people receive invitations to participate in local decision-making. This is significant in terms of degrees of participation and power, because those in power choose who to invite, set the limits and rules of participation. At the community level, the creation of participatory spaces has been realised through forming the primary groups (PGs) and Community Development Committees (CDCs). Here, the people living inside the CDC jurisdiction are the primary agents of local development. On the other hand, the local project office, which has been working in close ties with the RCC, is an external change agent, facilitator and provider. In this way, UPPR has been supporting community participation in the local governance process. In accordance with the empowerment framework presented in chapter two, the project objectives, guidelines and rules (the project context)—being infused with the local socio-economic, political and institutional factors (the outer project context)—have shaped the newly created participation spaces. Chapter six sets the community context in terms of the opportunity structure (social relations and local power structure) and agency (assets endowment in terms of socio-economic and political attainment) of

the community people within which the UPPR intervention endeavours to bring about change. This chapter focuses on the intervention process at the community level to find out how the opportunity structure and agency interact with each other within the spaces to shape participation. Hence, this chapter addresses the second research question: how does the project facilitate community participation in the local governance process?

The discussion on community participation in the local development process in chapters one and two acknowledges that people's engagement in participation spaces can be a process of empowerment through which participants have greater control over resources and regulative institutions that affect their lives. However, community participation can also be a process of legitimising the decisions which are already made by the powerful. Again, the process could follow the process of exclusion of the disadvantaged groups. Participation spaces are not neutral; rather the internal and surrounding power relations shape the boundaries of participation spaces and determine who may enter, with which identities and interests, and what is possible within them. In this context, this chapter answers three interrelated questions posed by Rifkin (1990; 2003): who participated? why did they participate? and how did the community people participate?

7.2. The Agents in Participation: Who Participates?

> We do not have group members from every family [within the CDC's jurisdiction]. Still many families are left off. There are many who want to join but until the office [the project office] asks to form new groups, we cannot include them. There are participants from both well-off and poor families. Members of well-off families generally do not want to be members of the project groups. Besides this, there is official restriction on including members of well-off families in project groups. (S-OB01)

This quote is characteristic of the general pattern of group participation in all the four study communities. Though the official guidelines literally discourage the membership of well-off families, the community groups were comprised of members from both well-off and poor families. At the same time, the quote also reveals the issue that the project groups were not necessarily representative of the communities and people who were left-off were willing to participate. Hence, the group formation process was an important factor in shaping the pattern of participation. The discussion of chapter two, and the findings and analyses in chapters five and six suggested that the process of organising community people into self-help groups was likely to be influenced by project rules (both formal and informal), implementation guidelines and local power relations (opportunity structure) in combination with agents' socio-economic and political realities (agency). Consequently, analysing the group formation process is crucial to understand: who participated? and who did not?

This sub-point is primarily based on the responses gathered from UPPR group members. It was not possible to gather the views of the concerned community development workers (CDWs), due to the timing of my study. Similarly, the views of the concerned WCs are mostly absent, because the initial group formation process in the study CDCs was initiated and organised during the term of former WCs (except in Jogotpur CDC). In all the study communities the initial group formation process started during 2000-2002 under LPUPAP (the first phase of the project). Though the group formation process was primarily dominated by the WCs and their nominated persons, the means of involvement and the level of influence varied across the study CDCs.

To describe the group formation process, one of the office bearers (OBs) in Alampur

(Study CDC 1) stated:

> One day the personal assistant of the former WC along with two project officials came to my residence. They informed me that I had been nominated as treasurer of the CDC. At first, I refused the offer on the ground that I would not be able move freely since I had a young child. But they convinced me by saying that I would not need to move around too much … I did not know anything about the project. Afterwards the CDW asked me to form project groups. (S-OB02)

The influence of the WCs in identifying community contact person(s) was evident elsewhere. One of the OBs from Salampur (Study CDC 2) described her experience in this way:

> I was well known to the WC. One day he sent the CDW to me. He informed me that the WC had advised him that if he comes to me, I can assist him in forming groups because community people respected me and listened to me … After meeting me, he was wondering whether community people would come when I asked. I assured him that they would. (SH-OB01)

There were, however, variations in how directive this process was. One of the OBs from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) said:

> In fact we knew nothing. One day the WC, who is my uncle, called on three of us [the OBs] along with some local women to come to the WC's office. He explained the project to us and asked my aunty and me to join as OBs on the ground that everyone was not suitable for leading the groups. People in the leadership positions were needed giving time and going outside the home. (ZN-OB02)

In contrast, the influence of the WC in the initial group formation process was not evident in Sripur (Study CDC 4). One of the respondents from the CDC described the process:

> One day I was standing alongside the dam in front of my house. Suddenly a person [the CDW] came and asked my permission to discuss something with me. He introduced discussion on the project and asked me to communicate with other residents of the neighbourhood. I communicated with other people and sat for meetings for several times. Gradually we formed groups. He [the CDW] advised me to be treasurer of the CDC, but since I was not good at accounting, I asked someone else to be treasurer. (SR-PGL01)

The above quotes present the fact that in Alampur (Study CDC 1), Salampur (Study

CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) the process of organising community people into project groups started either by contacting WCs' nominated persons by the concerned CDW, or the concerned WC actively initiated the process. In accordance with the logic of the local power structure and the factors that affected the level of influence of the local elites over the communities, as discussed and identified in the preceding chapter six, it could be said that the influence of the WCs in Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) was more intensive because the WCs at that time were residents of those neighbourhoods. In the case of Salampur (Study CDC 2) the influence was less intensive and this could be because of the fact that the WC resided in a different neighbourhood. On the other hand, the reason for the absence of any direct role of the concerned WC in Sripur (Study CDC 4) can again also be explained by the community power structure. In chapter six we found that there were a number of local power elites in this community. Their interests and access to power resources were more competing than the other three communities. Therefore, it is understandable that the influence of the former WC of Sripur (Study CDC 4), who resided in another neighbourhood, might not be intensive enough over the community to guide the group formation process.

Consequently, except in Sripur (Study CDC 4), the group formation process was more or less influenced and guided either by the WCs or by their nominated persons. Here I am referring to the nominees as key persons. They were forerunners in the group formation process by communicating with community people, informing them about the project and inviting them to join pre-group formation meetings and discussion sessions. By reviewing the socio-economic profiles of the key persons it comes out that many of them came from the privileged section of the respective communities and most of them were women. A few were the wives or relatives of

the local power elites, for example, the chairpersons and treasures of Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) CDCs. Even in the case of Sripur (Study CDC 4), though the group formation process did not start with the involvement of the concerned WC, many of the local elites eventually found their way to guiding the group formation process as well as obtaining group membership and leadership. The chairperson (male) of Sripur (Study CDC 4) was identified as one of the local power elites by some respondents (SR-OB02; SR-PGL01; SR-PGM01; SR-NPCM01). Again, the former treasurer of the CDC was the wife of another member of the local power elite who competed in the last local election[48]. The group formation process, therefore, started largely by co-opting the key persons into institutionalised roles in forming community groups. The findings here reflect the assertion of the existing literature discussed in chapter two that elite capture/dominance is frequent in CDD projects.

The WCs and the key persons' roles were crucial for giving credibility to the group formation initiatives undertaken by the local project office. In a society like Bangladesh where people's lives and properties are not properly protected by the impersonal and objective application of the existing laws, people usually suffer from the insecurity of being cheated by others. As a result, a feature of these societies is generally a low level of interpersonal trust (Rahman 2000; Huq 2006). Such mistrust becomes higher when outsiders are included. Here two of such quotes that highlight the issue of mistrust regarding outsiders:

> When they [the project officials] approached us we did not believe them. I left the group owing to the fear that they might run away with our savings … we know that many NGOs do so. (S-OB01)

> Initially we had a fear that our savings might get lost … in

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[48] In Bangladesh, electoral candidates usually need to have influence and money.

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> many places frauds over savings occur [referring to some of the NGOs]. (S-PGM03)

In this context, for the community people the WCs and the key persons were a source of confidence and trust for building faith in the project intervention. This comes out of the tradition of the subjective side of community life (Auyero, Lapegna *et al.* 2009): contracting a chief, leader or trusted person for problem solving (De Wit and Berner 2009).

> We did not believe them [the project officials] until we heard that the RCC and the WC were involved. (SR-PGL02)

> People did not believe us [the key persons] at the outset. It was hard to convince people to become group members. At that time my uncle (WC) helped us a lot. When people were informed that the WC was involved in the project, they started believing. Besides this, community people listen to my aunty [one of the OBs] and me. People also gained confidence because of our involvement. (ZN-OB02)

> I did not know that much. They [key persons] were close to me. When they informed me that the WC had informed them that there would be a cooperative [the CDC] and the members would receive various benefits, I decided to join. (ZN-PGM01)

The above comments further highlight the importance of the WCs and key persons' involvement in building trust among the community people in externally initiated development interventions. In doing so, the key persons played active roles in communication, information sharing and forming PGs as well as CDCs. A number of respondents told me that they first heard about the project from these key persons. For example, in response to the question: how did you come to know about the project? one of the interviewees from Alampur (Study CDC 1) responded:

> Mrs. 'N' [an OB] convinced us by contacting each house … She is the person whom informed me about the project. (S-PGM03)

Another respondent from Salampur (Study CDC 2) repeated this concurrence:

> Mrs. 'M' and Mrs. 'S' [two of the OBs] came to my residence ... (SH-PGL01)

A total number of 11 respondents from all the four study CDCs (S-NPCM01; S-PGM03; S-PGL01; S-PGM02; S-PGM03; SH-PGL01; SH-PGL02; SH-PGM01; ZN-PGL 01; ZN-PGL02; ZN-PGM01) pointed out the role of the key persons, who first informed people and invited them to join. Data also indicate that the key persons were the prime source of information for the community people regarding the intervention. Alternatively, it is understandable that those who were not informed and approached by the key persons might miss the opportunity for getting involved. During the informal discussions with a few community people, it appeared that there were a number of community people who could not join because of not being informed by anyone (Field Note, dated 1 November 2009; 30 January 2010).

Hence, research data presented here so far suggest that there was information asymmetry among the community people. I did not find any data on official endeavours for using alternative mass-communication strategies to disseminate project information among the community people before the identification of the potential group members. Though there was an inception workshop that was held at every community before the groups were formally formed, the participants in that session were contacted by those key persons. Thus, the key persons virtually appeared in the role of gate-keepers by influencing the information flow, which in turn affected community people's membership accessibility.

Inter-personal relationships with the key persons also influenced people's decisions regarding group membership. One of the respondents (S-NPCM01) from the non-participant category (out of five non-participating respondents in total) reported that she was not participating due to a poor relationship with one of the key persons (who was one of the OBs in the CDC). When I brought up the issue for discussion during

the interview with one of the key persons (SH-OB01), she explained that not everyone was trusted in the community. Since a savings and credit programme was an important part of the project intervention, it was risky to involve persons who were not trustworthy and dependable. Thus, the inter-personal relationships and key persons' own perception about someone's trustworthiness influenced the community people's access to the groups.

Gender was another important influencing factor in the group formation process. The project is especially designed to improve the socio-economic and political status of the urban poor with special focus on women as a more disadvantaged group compared to men. Special emphasis was given by the local project office to ensure the presence of more women than men as members and leaders in the groups. As a result of this, most of the PGs consisted of women members only. According to one of the project officials (PO-02), though the initial planning was to form mixed groups, only two separate male groups were formed in Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Sripur (Study CDC 4). As a result of this, the project groups in the study CDCs became women's domains. Thus, the project provided a legitimised public space for women to act on behalf of the communities.

Besides gender, access to participation spaces was also influenced by some other factors related to the community people's level of asset endowments (agency factors), such as length of residence (which was often related to the land ownership issue) and ability to save. At the time of interviews, none of the respondents had been living in the respective community for less than ten years. Bias towards older residents in project groups might stem from the issue of reciprocity and dependability. According to one of the OBs (SH-OB01), during the group formation

process, temporary residents were purposely bypassed, since giving credit to them was a bit risky. Again, according to another respondent (SR-OB01), there was a verbal instruction from the project officials to put off those who do not live in their own houses. Because, at the implementation level, having one's own house was one of the eligibility criteria for receiving a number of services from the project, for example, tube-wells and sanitary latrines. I found only one respondent (among the 20 respondents from the group member category) who lived in a rented house in Alampur (Study CDC 1). In her words:

> I have been living in this area for fifteen years. Although I do
> not have my own house, I am well known in this community.
> People treat me as a local. (S-PGL01)

Thus, length of residence and having one's own house in the respective communities were two of the influencing factors that affected membership opportunity in the project groups.

Ability to save was another aspect that also influenced group membership. I found two of the respondents (out of five) who did not participate due to economic hardship.

> We did not have enough income to make savings. Again, I
> heard that people needed to pay a good amount of money to get
> a sanitary latrine or tube-well. We cannot afford these things.
> (SH-NPCM01)

The other respondent, who was a former group member, reported that:

> I had to deposit 10 BDT as weekly savings. Suddenly I had to
> arrange my younger daughter's marriage. At that time I was in
> severe economic hardship. Until that time my savings was
> worth 600 BDT ... a group loan was not available at that time.
> Therefore, I withdrew the savings [as well as group
> membership] to spend on my daughter's marriage. (ZN-NP01)

To conclude, access to participatory spaces (the project groups) was influenced by both structural and agency factors. Firstly, the project implementation guidelines

outlined who could participate and who could not. Besides this, at the implementation level the concerned WC and the key persons' role was also vital in structuring the group formation process. The local power structure and social relationships influenced community people's accessibility to the groups. At the same time, some agency factors, for example, length of residence in the respective community and economic condition, were also two important factors that influenced membership accessibility. We can sketch the situation in this way: when a resident was a male, not in a good relationship with the key persons, not a permanent resident of a community and with lower level of economic attainment, the chances to become a group member in the study CDCs was less than a woman who was in a good relationship with the key person(s), a permanent resident and with a higher level of economic attainment.

One of the noteworthy findings of this sub-section is that the involvement of the WCs and key persons (local elites) was found to be important in building trust among the community people in externally initiated development intervention. This particular finding widens the current knowledge base (discussed in the conceptual framework in chapter two) on the role of elites in CDD projects by denoting that the elites' involvement is essential and often desirable for initiating community-based collective action. Accordingly, it furthers the need to pay greater attention to learn what mechanisms may raise the likelihood that elites will play constructive roles in CDD, instead of being more inclined to bypass them. Here data and analysis precisely prescribe that using multi-channel information sharing strategies may be helpful. These issues will come up in the subsequent discussion of this chapter as well as in chapter eight.

7.3. Members' Motivation for Participation: Why Choose to Participate?

Getting access to participation spaces is one aspect, and choosing to participate in that space is another. We find in the preceding sub-point that having access to participatory spaces refers to the interplay of opportunity structure and agency factors; on the other hand, choosing to participate is an expression of exercising agency. As discussed in the conceptual framework, one way of understanding is to ask: why do people choose to participate? Such an attempt at understanding participation spaces and explaining participation requires looking at the agents' own explanation for their choice. Therefore, this sub-point seeks the answer as to why people are participating in UPPR groups.

A total of 16 out of the 20 respondents from the four study CDCs talked about the motivational factors behind their participation in groups. According to data, the reasons for participation can be divided into four categories: economic incentive, becoming self-dependent, skill development and self-esteem. All the respondents referred to economic incentives, including receiving infrastructural benefits (for example: sanitary latrines, drains or tube-wells), as one of the motivating factors for joining the groups. Besides this, there were many who emphasised savings and credit facilities (for example, S-OB01; S-PGL01; SH-PGM01; ZN-PGM01).

Here are a few of the responses:

> Many are participating to make savings. Every member saves 50 BDT a month. In this way we can save 3000 BDT [as group savings every month]. By these savings [after distributing as small loans] one can do something. (S-OB01)

> I joined the group to make savings. We are poor, so if we can make some group savings, we would be able to distribute loans from our own savings. In this way we could make our development. We do not even need to go to various NGOs.

(ZN-PGM01)

> There are many who have become members only to make savings. For example, those who are non-permanent residents or rich [relatively well-off] will not get any other benefit from the project except getting the scope for savings and credit. By making small savings, people can do something when the total amount becomes big. (S-PGL01)

The above-mentioned responses show the importance of small savings and credit in local people's lives. Poor people consider savings not only as a means of securing a future livelihood, but as important for developing their socio-economic condition. But their income is not enough to save large amounts. Moreover, their income is not regular. Therefore, commercial banks are not accessible to them. Even the savings and credit programmes run by various NGOs are inconvenient to them since members need to make deposits on fixed dates (as discussed in chapter six).

Besides mentioning savings and credit facilities, there were also a few respondents who considered participation as a source of extra income.

> Micro-credit and savings is important for me. At the same time we are also receiving tube-wells, sanitary latrines, drain and footpaths. Again, I make some extra income through group activities … for example, when contracts come in, the office provides us monetary incentives. (S-OB01)

Another respondent from Salampur (Study CDC 2) said:

> I have joined the group with an interest in making some extra income beside my husband. (SH-OB02)

Another respondent (S-OB02) also opined that engagement in the project activities provided her earning opportunity. In this way, we see that for some members (especially for the OBs), participation in group activities offered them part-time employment.

Apart from economic incentives, one of the respondents (SH-PGL01) valued the skill development trainings and internship programmes as a way to develop their

socio-economic condition. Besides these, there were a few (mainly OBs and PG leaders) who considered the participation as a means of social engagement and developing self-esteem. Here are some responses:

> I'm participating for the development of our locality. If the CDC [referring to the project operation] becomes closed, the development process of this locality will be stopped. This is my main objective. When our neighbourhood looks good, it will give us pleasure in our minds. (S-OB01)

> I have been interested in the wellbeing of the common people. People of this area love me, give me Salam (saying hi) and also respect me. When someone says that she is going outside with me, no one restricts his wife. Again, if I stay in hospital for days to help others, none of my family members will say anything. (SH-OB01)

> My objective is to work for the wellbeing of the poor and destitute people. (SH-PGL01)

> I have joined in the group for my self-development as well as helping the poor in this community. (ZN-PGL01)

The quotes above illustrate that the community groups were comprised of members (male and female) who came together primarily with a common interest in receiving economic incentives. But there were also others who were interested in the common wellbeing of the communities, as well as being conscious about self-esteem.

Therefore, we find that the group members' motivation for participation was diverse; ranging from economic incentives to self-esteem and community building. Rifkin (1990) opines that community people generally need to have an incentive to participate. It implies that community-based-organisations (CBOs) should be able to provide various incentives that are valued by the members. By referring to Clark and Wilson (1961), Sabhlok (2007) states that organisations provide three types of incentives to individuals in order to induce them to participate: material, solidary and purposive. Material incentives are tangible rewards that can be easily translated into monetary value. Solidary incentives are intangible in that they derive from the act of

associating in the activities of organisation, for instance, socialising, congeniality, group membership and identification, improved status resulting from membership and so on. Purposive incentives are also intangible and are derived from the stated goal(s) and objective(s) of the organisation (Sabhlok 2007). Thus, it is implied that the incentive system in the project arena needs to be coherent with the members' motivational factors in participating in the community groups. I will return to these in chapter eight.

7.4. The Process of Participation: How do People Participate?

The manner in which participation takes place can be understood from the various practices of participation. The preceding two sub-points were devoted to exploring who was participating and why (with what interests) they were participating (Rifkin 1990). In other words, I have examined the participation space in terms of its origin (at the community level), for example, who created the space and under what circumstances (Gaventa 2004). This sub-point is an attempt to understand how people participate (Rifkin 1990) and with what terms of engagement (within the groups) (Gaventa 2004). This entails an understanding of power dynamics within the spaces (groups).

7.4.1. Project Awareness among the Members

The available literature suggests that CDD is an approach and a process—not a project—which can be applied in various socio-economic contexts to revitalise democratic local governance and participation (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia 2004:2). It gives community groups more authority and control over resources to enrich social capital and strengthen the accountability of all actors in local development. To achieve these objectives it is desirable that group members

are informed participants. However, interview data suggest that many of the group members were not aware of many of the issues related to the project intervention.

Many respondents did not know the exact name of the project. Many PG members recognised the project as 'latrine society', 'drain society' or sometimes by the name of the chairperson of the concerned CDC. On the contrary, all the OBs could say the name of the project exactly as it is. Knowing or not knowing the name of the project might signify the differences in the attachment of the members with the project activities. The issue will be apparent in the subsequent discussion of this chapter.

When the interviewees were asked to describe the project objectives and the long-term development goals, four of the project participants immediately responded that they knew very little about these (S-PGM02; SH-PGL01; SH-PGM01; ZN-PGL01). A few others mentioned the immediate objectives of the project. For example, according to one of the OBs of Alampur (Study CDC 1):

> This project is for alleviating poverty. For example, if a poor person stays at home being unemployed, he or she might be given thousands of Taka so that he/she can do something with the money. To mitigate the problem of unemployment many people have received training as motor mechanics, garments workers and handicraftsman. The project is contributing to the development of this community by providing tube-wells, latrines and drains … (S-OB01)

The same notion was also echoed by a few other OBs and PG leaders (S-OB02; S-PGL01; SH-OB01; SH-OB02; ZN-OB02). However, one of the PG leaders from Salampur (Study CDC 2) described the project objectives in a different way:

> I think that the main objective of the project is different. In the past when United Nations' funds were given to WCs, they used to steal the money. It never reached the poor. This time they have employed officers and those officers are organising us and giving us money in our hands so that the money reaches the poor … Besides this, another objective is to save us from the death-traps of micro-credit giving NGOs like ASA, BRAC and so on. They do business with our money, but if someone cannot

repay loans on time they even pull the tins off their roofs. Now we are managing our own savings and credit programme. We are now free from their death-traps. (SH-PGL02)

This is the only respondent who perceived the project logic differently. Few of the PG leaders and OBs were aware of the immediate objectives of the project. On the other hand, all the six general PG members understood the project objectives in terms of the tangible benefits that they were receiving from the project.

The above discussion, derived from interview data, illustrates the usual pattern that group members, including the PG leaders and OBs, were not aware of the underlying logic and long-term developmental goals of the project intervention. We can make some assumptions regarding the reasons for such a lack of awareness of the participants. It could be the case that participants did not have the required basic human capacity to know and reflect because many of them were illiterate. Alternatively it could be because they were not interested to know and understand. Whatever the case, these factors were related to the agency of the group members. Again, it could be because of some of the structural factors that came into play, for example, project rules, the group management process, the group decision-making and implementation processes, the group resource distribution process and so on.

Whatever the reason(s), informed participation is important in many respects. When self-help-groups are considered to be a mechanism for inducing co-operation and involving people to work with each other rather than just bringing them together (Sabhlok 2011), informed participation is warranted. Informed participation is imperative for achieving 'purposive incentive' induced by community organisation through collective endeavour. By referring to the works of Kelly, Ryan, Altman, and Stelzner, (2000), Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) and Zimmerman (2000), Ohmer

(2008) states that there is a relationship between members' perceptions of organisational processes and outcomes and their involvement in and perceived benefits from participation in community organisations. From the empowerment perspective, through their group membership, individuals could become more active, counterbalancing and shifting power in their favour. But in that case participants need a self-conscious ideology as a motivation and organisation as a resource (Desai 1995). Otherwise, at one extreme, community organisations, in this case the UPPR community groups, may comprise a rather loose assembly of people whose functions are unclear beyond a general wish to improve the settlement. Group leaders might become co-opted by the existing asymmetric local power structure, where the other group members might simply attend meetings and elect, or are coerced to elect the OBs and PG leaders. These issues will be addressed in the subsequent discussion of this chapter as well as in chapter eight.

7.4.2. Group Leadership

In the conceptual framework I have discussed, empowering organisations provide members with a structure to gain control over their lives, participate in decision-making and provide opportunities for shared responsibility and leadership (Ohmer 2004). While this is one dimension, the other is community organisations that could be used as mechanisms of co-optation and clientelism. In the context of these two contesting scenarios this sub-point deals with the leadership selection and management process of the study's community groups.

According to the project implementation guidelines, all the OBs, such as, chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers, of the CDCs and the PG leaders (group leaders and secretaries) are selected by the members for two years.

The PG members first select the group leaders and secretaries for the respective PGs. Afterwards all the group leaders and secretaries together select the OBs for the respective CDCs using secret ballots. However, field data suggest that at the implementation level the actual practices were significantly different.

To describe the initial leadership selection process, one of the OBs from Alampur (Study CDC 1) said:

> Our CDC was first formed in the year 2000 … At that time the community development worker (CDW) used to visit our community regularly. She used to sit for meetings with us… One day in a group meeting she declared Mrs.'J', Mrs. 'P', Mrs. 'N' and me to be the OBs of the CDC … Afterwards I left the group…but in 2006 when the CDC was reorganised the WC asked me to compete in the election for the position of chairperson. The project officials also encouraged me to join in the CDC as chairperson, so that the CDC runs smoothly … (S-OB01)

Another OB from the same CDC said, as quoted earlier but pertinent here as well:

> One day the office secretary of the former WC along with two project officials came to my residence. They informed me that I had been nominated as treasurer of the CDC … they knew if I held the position, fraud over funds would not occur. (S-OB02)

The above statements describe when the CDC was formed for the first time in 2000, the OBs were chosen and nominated by the concerned WC and CDW. However, in 2006 when the CDC was reorganised, the OBs were elected by the members. But, one of the respondents (S-PGL01) explained how the election result was influenced by the WC and CDW. Before the election, they advised the PG leaders to vote for their preferred candidates.

One of the OBs of Salampur (Study CDC 2) described the process of leadership selection:

> … we ourselves [the key persons] selected the group leaders and secretaries [PG leaders]. Thus, we got eight group leaders and secretaries…then they were asked to say who they want as chairperson of the CDC. Everyone supported me as chairperson

… (SH-OB01)

One of the PG members from the CDC further said:

> When the groups [the PGs] were formed, they [the key persons]
> advised us [the PG leaders] regarding whom we will select as
> OBs … yes, they were elected though … (SH-PGM01)

The two statements above reveal that although the OBs in Salampur (Study CDC 2) were selected by the leaders of the PG leaders, there was no election using secret ballots. Various respondents (SH-OB01; SH-PGL01; SH-PGM01) described the selection as being made upon consultation among the group members. When someone's name was proposed, members were asked to give their opinion. Selecting leaders publicly, by raising hands or by saying yes or no, is qualitatively different from electing leaders using secret ballots. This selection process by raising hands or by giving opinion publicly could narrow the scope for freely expressing choice (agency) of the less powerful members since their affiliation can be seen.

In the previous discussion, we found the concerned WC himself chose the OBs of Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) CDC. They afterwards identified potential PG leaders and advised them to form PGs. One of the PG leaders from the CDC described her experience:

> I knew nothing … They [key persons] suddenly informed
> me that I have been offered the position of group leader.
> (ZN-PGL01)

After accepting the offer, the respondent above selected the secretary of the group herself. In her words:

> Yes, I approached her to become secretary because she can read
> and write. I adore her as my younger sister … she is still the
> secretary. (ZN-PGL01)

Similarly, in the case of Sripur (Study CDC 4) there was also no election using secret ballots as well for selecting the OBs. According to one of the OBs (one of the local

elites) of the CDC:

> I knew nothing when the group activities started in 2001. At that time a person named Mr.' H' [the former CDW] used to come and sit for meetings with people. They were in search for someone as the chairperson of the CDC who was vocal and was valued by people. When they did not find any suitable person among the members, they approached me to join as the chairperson of the CDC. (SR-OB01)

Another OB of the CDC described the selection process as below:

> I heard that the usual procedure for becoming OBs was by election. But it did not happen. People who were vocal and educated were offered the positions. (SR-OB02)

Thus, from the above quotes describing the leadership selection process in Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4), it appears that the leadership selection process both at the PG and CDC levels was in fact a process of nomination by the powerful actors and privileging the educated. In addition, two other group members (SH-PGL01; SH-PGL02) mentioned the unavailability of competent persons who could serve as leaders of the CDC. Leadership generally requires, as mentioned by the respondents, some level of human capability and skills (human assets), for example, ability to read, write and numerical knowledge and more importantly some kind of influence over the members. One of the OBs (SR-OB02) said in his interview that he had been approached by the CDW on the grounds that he was highly educated (graduated in accountancy). Accordingly, data also suggest the chairperson of Sripur (Study CDC 4) was nominated not only because he was educated, but also because he possessed some kind of influence over the community people. This comes out of the subjective side of social life which has already been discussed in chapter six while analysing the community power structure in the study CDCs. Therefore, the selection of the leaders in Sripur (Study CDC 4) was influenced by both some of the agency factors as well as by community power structure—structural factors.

It is evident from the interview data that none of the leadership positions in the study CDCs were changed by following the due process of elections that were supposed to be held every two years. At the time of my field visit in 2009-2010, most of the OBs were in the same positions since the formation of the CDCs in 2000-2002. A few changes occurred only due to special circumstances, for example, in two of the CDCs there were changes in some leadership positions due to the alleged embezzlement of group savings by some of the former OBs.

I found that some of the group members (for example, S-PGL01; S-PGM03) were unfamiliar with the project guidelines about leadership management. In response to the question 'Do you think there should be scope for changes in group leadership positions?' One of the OBs responded:

> Yes. But the office [the local project office] should ask us do so, or we need to ask the office to do it … It is true, why I am in the leadership position for so long. (S-OB02)

The same kind of opinion was also expressed by another respondent:

> … there is no demand from the office, nor from the group members collectively [for changing leadership positions]. No one can raise their voice for such change alone. If it were a compulsion of the office [referring the local project office], it would happen. (S- PGL01)

Thus, these two group members demanded a greater role of the project office in bringing democratic practices to group leadership management. In this respect the local project officials said:

> According to the project implementation manual the OBs are needed to be elected by the PG leaders by using secret ballots. We could manage the process in a few CDCs, but in most of the CDCs we failed. (PO-01)

Data suggest that though group members were interested, they depended on the local project office for introducing democratic practices. On the other hand, the project office was not able to ensure regular elections in most of the CDCs. But these

findings point out another crucial issue related to the group members' level of collective agency. When community-based organisations are thought of as agents of social change, such dependability on external agents for bringing about democratic practices within the community organisation makes optimism for social change dubious. When group members cannot raise their voices within the community organisations, it becomes logical to raise the question: what kinds of actions are possible for the group members to take to bring about changes in the broader sphere? Such a question then allows pursuit of deeper insight and a nuanced analysis of the process of participation.

Interview data clearly point out that the reasons for no change in the leadership positions were not simply limited to group members' non-demand and voicelessness or the project office's inability to conduct regular elections. There were a few more reasons embedded in the processes which made the members non-demanding and voiceless which can be explained using the framework for power analysis discussed in chapter two.

According to one of the project officials, where regular elections were held, changes did not occur because of the unwillingness of the members. In her words:

> … there was no change in leadership in most cases. In some CDCs we organised regular elections, but there was no change. May be the members were reluctant to make change. They do not think seriously about whether the leaders serve them or not. They are happy with whatever they receive. (PO-02)

But the reasons for the group members' unwillingness to bring changes in leadership positions and the lack of awareness of their rights for receiving various services do not stand on their own rights. Previous findings and discussion suggest that these might be the reproduction of some other factors. For example, where the group

members were mostly unaware of the project's goals, objectives and benefits due to various agency and structural factors, it is very likely that group members remained unresponsive with the *status quo*. Again, where alternative leadership options were limited due to a lack of competent people suitable for leadership positions, regularity of elections would not bring about change.

Furthermore, some of the dominant actors' interests were also involved in the process of maintaining the *status quo* in leadership. According to one of the local project officials, opposition from the concerned WCs was one of the barriers in organising elections as well as bringing about changes in leadership. He also accepted the fact that even in cases where elections were held, changes did not occur. In response to the question, why? The project official responded:

> ... because of the WCs. They determine who will be OBs or
> who will compete in the CDC elections. If someone cannot
> compete in the election, how people will vote for him/her … in
> some cases election dramas were organised in my presence and
> at that time I could not understand the truth that everything was
> pre-planned. (PO-01)

Now we see here the reproduction of the existing power structure; it confirms the interplay of the second dimension of power where the entry of certain interests and actors into public spaces is privileged over others through a prevailing 'mobilisation of bias' or rules of game (Bachrach and Baratz 1962).

And finally, the project officials as a group were one of the important actors who were more concerned about ensuring operational stability, and were more or less comfortable with the *status quo*. In this respect one of the national level project officials opined:

> It is true that there have been very limited practices of changes
> in leadership. We are in fear that in order to bring democratic
> practice the whole organisation could slide down … (PO-04)

The above opinion was also reiterated by a local project official:

> If changes in leadership happen in every two years we do not know what circumstance will arise in running group activities. For example, if Mrs. 'R' in X CDC goes out of office, the whole activities of that CDC might fall into crisis. My other colleagues are in fear that we would not be able to tackle the situation if frequent changes happen in leadership positions. But personally I feel that there should be free and fair elections every two years. And let us see who comes in leadership positions. Why we will assume too much instead of giving them the chance. (PO-01)

The danger of not practising democratic processes was also described by a national level project official:

> Yes it is true (due to the absence of democratic practice) power has been concentrated in the hands of a few. Therefore, we are now trying to make PGs more empowered, so that they can raise strong voices. (PO-04)

These statements given by the project officials clearly portray one of the dilemmas of community organisations as an invited space. While the absence of democratic practices contributes to the concentration of power in the hands of a few members, introducing democratic practices might contribute to the decline of the whole organisation.

To conclude, the CDC leadership selection process was primarily influenced by the initial group mobilisation process. The OB selection process was virtually a process of nomination by the WCs and CDWs through which the key persons, who steered as well as rowed the group mobilisation process, found their ways into various leadership positions, even in the cases where elections were held as per the project implementation guidelines. It emerges that many respondents, ranging from group members to project officials, considered free and fair elections to mean inevitable changes in leadership in many CDCs. In a few instances group members were interested in changes but the *status-quo* persisted because of the 'rule of game'

stemming from both agency and structural factors. Finally, we get an indication that the leadership selection and management of the groups might follow co-optation and patron-clientelistic logic. While the WCs' nominated persons occupied the key leadership positions in the CDCs, the OBs' nominated persons occupied the PGs' leadership positions. In this way, the community leadership might become a part of the RCC's city wide patron-clientelistic network.

7.4.3. Group Meetings

From Paulo Freire's 'conscientization' and 'dialogical education' perspectives, community level group meetings hold great potential for changing the oppression based social order (Blackburn 2000). At the most basic, 'conscientization' is a process by which the capacity of the oppressed for critical thinking and taking action against the sources of oppression can be expanded. In this respect the group meeting holds great potential to provide an environment for 'dialogical education'.

Interview data show that except for Sripur (Study CDC 4), group meetings were held in all the other study CDCs. According to the project implementation guidelines, the PG and CDC members need to sit in meetings twice a month. The PGs and CDCs in the study communities had fixed days for monthly meetings. In addition to these, according to some of the respondents (S-OB02; SH-OB01; SH-PGL01; ZN-OB02), sometimes CDC meetings were held more frequently when new contracts came in or were asked by the project office on special occasions. Besides these, the chairpersons and secretaries of the CDCs had to join monthly meetings at the cluster level.

However, data show that PGs' meetings were less regular than CDC meetings. According to one of the OBs from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3):

> These days the meetings are less regular. Before (during LPUPAP), it was regular. But when UPPR started many new

> people came in the positions of the old officials. Our new CDW
> does not put that much stress on PG meetings. (ZN-OB01)

A similar situation persisted in other CDCs as well. For example, the irregularity of the PG meetings was well illustrated by another respondent from Alampur (Study CDC 1):

> … we cannot sit in PG meetings regularly. But, CDC meetings
> take place regularly. PG meetings were held once a month or
> once in two months. Members do not attend regularly. (S-
> OB01)

Some of the respondents from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) (for example, SH-PGL01; SH-PGM01; ZN-PGL01) attributed members' preoccupation with domestic work and economic activities as the most important reasons for not attending meetings regularly. OBs and the PG leaders were more regular than the general members in attending meetings. In this respect two of the respondents talked about the importance of their attendance in the meetings:

> I call on the members for meetings myself, and I attend all of
> the meetings, because I [as a group leader] must know about the
> discussions and decisions of those meetings. (SH-OB02)

> Yes, I am regular in attending the meetings, because I call on
> the members for meetings. Since the group members value my
> opinion, my presence is very important. (SH-PGL02)

Therefore, it is quite understandable that members' motivation for attending group meetings depended on the importance of their presence. Hence, it is important to understand the nature of group meetings in terms of the issues of discussion, the level of involvement of the participants and the type of decisions that were made in those meetings. In the way of understanding the nature of group meetings, the following statement from one of the PG leaders from Salampur (Study CDC 2) is informative:

> In the PG meetings we discuss the amount of cash we need to draw
> for distributing group loans. When members ask for loans, I write
> down the names and the asking amount. Sometimes, if the asking

amounts appear higher than our capacity, I try to convince the members to ask for smaller amounts. Apart from distributing loans and collecting savings, we also discuss our social, family and personal issues. Again, when I go to CDC meetings, we discuss community contracts and group activities. When new work or responsibilities are assigned by the office we discuss those as well. Since all the PG leaders attend CDC meetings, we discuss needs and demands for services of the groups … (SH-PGL02)

Another respondent from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) described her experience in this way:

When, for example, latrine or tube-wells [new contract] comes in, we sit in meetings and discuss the group's demands for the services … sometimes when members do not deposit savings regularly, we try to encourage them for savings through discussion … (ZN-OB02)

Thus, the two quotes above cited by the two group leaders portray group meetings as a place where decisions regarding resource distribution were made. Furthermore, interview data also indicate that group meetings were also an occasion where members discussed their social and personal problems. Statements made by some of the female group members during the interviews suggested that PG meetings characterised the potentiality of becoming an important forum of 'dialogical education' for the group members in dealing with their everyday lives:

There were discussions on uses of sanitary latrines, tube-wells, child rearing, child education and personal hygiene. (S-PGM02)

If someone severely scolds or beats his wife, we discuss the issue in our meetings. We received legal aid training and discussed this as well. Sometimes we arranged Gomvira or Zari[49] … we had a group discussion, for example, on the importance of tree planting, the importance of washing hands before eating meals, the importance of using a sanitary latrine, etc. (SH-OB01)

… for example, when someone becomes sick, we go to see her. Sometimes, we visit members' houses to see why someone is not attending group meetings. When necessary we consult with the members and give suggestions. (SH-OB02)

However, interview data (ZN-OB01) also indicate that the regularity of group

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[49] Gomvira and Zari are local songs.

meetings depended more on the concerned CDW's support and monitoring effort. This was considered by the group members to be fulfilling the official requirement, rather than organising and attending the meetings as 'conscientization' process. From the interview data it is evident that PG meetings were more irregular than CDC meetings; and the general primary group members were less regular in attending meetings than the group leaders. Modernisation theories give an explanation about the level of activeness of members in group activities by providing the insight that lower socio-economic attainment is generally associated with lower levels of participation. Due to the different focus of this study, it is not possible to make a serious comment on whether this was also an issue in this context. However, it was found in the previous discussion that the group leaders generally belonged to a relatively higher socio-economic rung in comparison to the general group members. Besides this, we also found that group members' motivation for participating in group meetings was also influenced by their own perception about the importance of their presence which could be understood in terms of the issues of discussion, the levels of involvement and the types of decision that were made in the meetings. These issues will be addressed in the subsequent discussion of this chapter.

7.4.4. Group Decision-Making

Cohen (2011) states that the ability to share leadership (referring the leadership that is facilitative and dynamic) makes a community-based organisation (CBO) a learning organisation. Again, in the preceding sub-point we found that when group members find that their presence in groups is valued, the motivation for participation may become higher. Group decision-making is one of the important factors by which members of a group can understand whether their presence and pro-activeness is important or not. To understand the decision-making, this sub-point looks at the

questions: what were the decisions about? who participated in decision-making and how? and who finally made decisions and upon what basis?

In the previous sub-point we noticed that group discussions included a number of issues, for example, determining the recipients of various services (e.g. latrine, tube-well, money package for the extreme poor, footpaths and drains, etc.), distributing loans and collecting savings and discussions on various social and personal issues. However, previous discussion derived from interview data also pointed out that group discussion left off a few other important issues. For example, selection of group leadership, selection of members for attending various workshops and training programmes organised by the project office and management of group accounts, implementation of subcontracts and so on. These issues were equally important, because those were directly linked to resource distribution and, therefore, to local politics. According to the project implementation guidelines, PG leaders and OBs received an additional 2% and 1%, respectively, of the total interest paid by the borrowers as remuneration. OBs also received 5% of every sub-contract's total value as management fees. Besides these, according to one of the respondents (S-PGL01) from Alampur (Study CDC 1), the OBs unofficially made more money by minimising the official estimated implementation cost. Thus, group leadership positions were a source of both legal and illegal earning for the incumbents. Moreover, the project office used to provide cash allowances and various gifts (training and workshop related goods and materials, for example, livestock, building materials or swing materials) to the trainees and workshop participants.

Amid these limited issues of group discussion presented above, it is now important to ask who participated in the decision-making process and with what engagement?

Group members generally came to know about the new community contracts or other kind of official allocations by the OBs and PG Leaders. All of the OBs and some of the general group members I interviewed claimed that the group decision-making process was participatory. For example, a group member from Alampur (Study CDC 1) opined: 'We (including OBs) make decisions together' (S-PGM 01). The same was also argued by some other group members (S-PGM02; SH-PGL01; ZN-PGL01). Nevertheless, the analysis of the group decision-making process indicates something else.

One of the OBs of Salampur (Study CDC 2) described the group decision-making in this way:

> When the office asks for a list of the proposed recipients [of various services], I inform all the eight PG leaders and ask them to identify the members from their groups. They select members after inspecting who needs what. Besides this, we [OBs] also visit our locality regularly. After receiving the names of the selected members from every group, I personally visit the nominees' houses to verify. Finally we [OBs] finalise the list of recipients together. (SH-OB01)

Similarly, three of the OBs from three of the study CDCs described the group decision-making as consensual. However, in practice the participation of the PG leaders in the group decision-making seemed irrelevant since the final selection was always made by the OBs, which is apparent in the above quote. The OBs' final selection was more crucial when demand for services remained greater than the official allocation of various services; this was a regular occurrence. It was well accepted by one of the OBs in Salampur (Study CDC 2):

> … for example, last time the office approved 12 latrines and 5 tube-wells. Our demands for latrines were 25. In situations like this after reviewing everyone's situation in meetings, we [referring OBs] determine who has urgency...we try to convince non-recipient members through discussion in CDC meeting…our WC is a good person and he also helps to convince people if someone makes a complaint against us. (SH-

OB02)

But in CDC meetings only the PG leaders could participate and the other members

did not have access unless the OBs called upon all the members at a general meeting,

which has not happened in the recent past. Furthermore, the tokenistic role of the PG

leaders in the group decision-making-process is well illustrated in the following

quote:

> When something become available from the office (i.e. latrines, tube-wells, etc.), they [OBs] select the recipients. Decisions should be made by having a discussion with every member, but it never happens … many times we cannot speak against the chairperson … for instance, we selected ten members for a service, but due to a shortage of supply, there may be only three members who could be offered the service. In this situation, all the PG leaders should make a final selection of those three persons together. This never happens. They [OBs] select the members by themselves … I am telling you [referring the researcher] because it might help you. But if I could tell the CDW, it would be beneficial for us. But we cannot speak up for the deprived members every time. I do not get a personal benefit as a member of the group. Who is going to make quarrel with the others? It will only create useless disputes within the group. (S-PGL01)

The above respondent went further by stating that:

> If we make complaint against the chairperson or the treasurer, the officials advise us to attend to our own job by saying that it is their duty to look after what the OBs do. Thus, we cannot say anything else. We do not know what the reason is, they [project officials] know better. (S-PGL01)

As the three quotes above suggest, the OBs' dominant role in the group decision-

making process is reinforced by the actions (or inactions) of the two other actors, i.e.,

the WC and project officials.

One of the statements of a PG leader is very persuasive to understand how group

leaders used to convince the general group members regarding the OBs' decisions.

> Sometimes I use my own techniques to convince non-recipient members. I find out who has what weaknesses. I tell them that they have not been considered because, for example, someone is a new member or someone did not

> pay savings or loan premium regularly. Again for old
> members I might say, someone else has asked before you.
> In this way I technically convince the people. (SH-PGL02)

Beside this, in many cases the OBs and PG leaders did not even discuss some issues

with general group members.

> We did not discuss with the members [with the general group
> members for selecting names for the extreme poor allowance].
> If we do so, everyone will pursue. Whom we will give it to and
> whom not? A chaotic situation will arise. Therefore, we have
> selected names with secrecy. Many members are upset though.
> Under this circumstance, we are trying to convince them by
> saying that they will be considered next time. (SH-OB02)

In addition to revealing the issue that OBs were the prime decision-makers, the

above quote also suggested that a lack of resources was one of the factors that

influenced them to behave in this autocratic manner. The situation can be explained

by the idea of 'street level bureaucrat' developed by Lipsky (1980), who claims that

street-level bureaucrats act as gate keepers for public benefits, since they hold the

key to determining the eligibility of citizens' benefits. Because of the limited

resources, they favour some clients at the expense of others. Here we see that the

group leaders (including the OBs) were also reducing the number of clients by

blocking information.

Under the circumstances, OBs appeared to be the sole authority when making group

decisions. The comment made by one of the PG members from Salampur (Study

CDC 2) is pertinent to cite in this respect:

> Our leader is Mrs. 'N' [one of the OBs]. She decides what we
> will do; how we will do it … we will not do anything without
> her consent. (S-PGM03)

Now, when we relate the findings of this sub-point with the findings of the previous

discussion, we find that a long duration of leadership, having a good relationship

with the WCs and CDWs, the absence of democratic practices in decision-making,

the absence of multi-channel information sharing and, more importantly, a scarcity of various resources and services all together made the OBs the most dominant actor within the groups in the community level group decision-making process. Hence, both the agency and structural factors influenced the process. And finally, the pervasive role of the OBs was influencing the reinforcement of patron-clientelistic logic in the relationship between the members and the OBs.

7.4.5. Training and Workshop Programme Participants

Training and skill development of the community group members is one of the major components of the project. Various project documents which were collected during the fieldwork from the local UPPR office show that a number of workshops and training programmes were organised by the local project office. Many of those were specific to the OBs and the PG leaders, for example, savings and credit management training, training for CDC office bearers on group management, training on gender and leadership, Socio-Economic Fund (SEF) management training for OBs and so on. Besides these, there were also a few training programmes and workshops that were open to all group members, for instance, the training programmes on adolescent girls, hygiene, livestock farming, home grown vegetable cultivation, legal aid, etc. Interview data as well as official programme participants' lists confirm that the OBs (and in some cases some of the PG leaders) were the sole participants in these training and workshop sessions. While the OBs from Alampur (Study CDC 1), Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) participated in an average 7-10 of such training or workshop sessions, general PG members attended maximum 1-2 sessions.

When the project office organised training programmes, the concerned OBs of the

CDCs were asked to provide the names of the prospective participants beforehand. Interview data suggest in many cases that they put their names down without consulting with other members of the CDC. Other members usually did not even know what the sessions were for, what they were about and for whom they were run.

In describing the situation, one of the local project officials said:

> After joining this office, I noticed that the training and workshop sessions had become personalised. Only a few group members used to attend in various training programmes repeatedly; whereas the same types of trainings were organised on a regular basis. On various occasions I even forbade some of those members to attend some training sessions. (PO-01)

In describing the reason, he further added:

> They [the participating OBs] are very interested in attending such training sessions, because they receive on an average 300 to 350 BDT for a single training programme. It is impossible for me to know everyone in person ... In these days I am trying to control their access by imposing some selection criteria … however, many members take chances by saying they were not informed or something else. On many occasions I had to allow them for the sake of the circumstances … (PO-01)

Another project official described the trade-off in her own words:

> Sometimes we need to overlook many things like this. We cannot run the project smoothly without their [OBs] co-operation. OBs work hard and in most of the cases they are not paid for. If we block such opportunities, they would not be interested in working for the group. Every time they try to say that they are working for nothing [money] … (PO-02)

Therefore, when we find that group members were repeatedly attending the same type of training and skill development programmes organised by the project office, we could assume that for some of the group members, financial benefits were more important than the contents of the training or workshop programmes. On the downside, the situation offered the OBs the scope for becoming masters of everything and led to develop a group management style where they played a dominant role. Indeed, participation was bound up with issues regarding power, privilege and resources. Group leaders who were considered to be more educated and

technically competent tended to dominate decision-making (Bowen 2007). Under the circumstances, ordinary group members were needed to get appropriate training and support so that they became more knowledgeable and competent as decision-makers.

7.4.6. Accounts Management and Community Contracts

The group accounts and sub-contract implementation were explicitly managed by the OBs of the CDCs. There were four types of bank accounts maintained and managed by every CDC: savings and credit accounts, maintenance account, sub-contracts accounts, and SAF accounts. Interview data indicate that general group members usually were not aware of the accounts management system. For example, the recipients of tube-wells and sanitary latrines needed to pay 10% of the estimated cost. The money was deposited in the maintenance account of the concerned CDC. This information was more often than not known by the general group members. In the words of one of the respondents:

> I do not know about the accounts and the balances. They [OBs]
> never inform us. If we ask, they try to avoid the issue. It is true
> that they never responded clearly. (S-PGL01)

When I asked the interviewees about the current balances of group savings and loans, except for the chairperson and treasures of the respective CDCs, general group members and even many of the PG leaders could not respond. Many members did not even know what the balance of their own savings was (S-PGM01; SH-PGM01). In response to the further question, one of the two respondents replied (SH- PGM01) that she believed the OBs. She was one among many of the group members who could not read and write. These members had nothing to do, but were keeping faith in the group leaders. However, data evidently show that on many instances some of the group leaders exploited group members by misusing group savings and other resources provided under community contracts.

There was no separate implementation committee at the CDC level for managing community contracts. After being approved by the concerned authorities, community contract funds were transferred to the CDCs' bank accounts. The chairperson and treasurer of the concerned CDCs were the only persons authorised to draw money by cheques counter signed by the concerned WCs. By convention, the concerned OBs carried out all of the activities during implementation. While describing the implementation process, one of the OBs stated:

> When the office organises training sessions for us, we realise that new contracts will get approved. As soon as we get confirmed, we contact with construction workers. Afterwards, we identify the construction sites. When cheques become available, we [the chairperson and treasurer] collect the cheque and draw money from the bank account. We go together to stores for purchasing construction materials … (S-OB02)

The above quote illustrates the chairpersons and treasurers as being among the four OBs of the CDC playing central role in the community contract implementation process. Sometimes, the other two OBs (the vice-chairperson and secretary) remained bypassed. For example, one of the OBs of Alampur (Study CDC 1) said:

> ... the former chairperson used to work alone. For instance, she herself used to decide about the sites for construction and collected money [recipients' contribution]. I was never been noticed…the office approved up to 466,000 BDT worth of contracts in her time. She handled the whole implementation process alone. When it was needed she just used to come to take my signatures. (S-OB01)

A PG leader from the CDC echoed the same notion:

> … the chairperson and the treasurer are the main driving force. They do everything by themselves. Most of the time they do not inform us about what they are doing, so we cannot question them … (S-PGL01)

The leading role of the chairpersons and treasurers were also confirmed by many other respondents from the other three CDCs. For example, one of the PG leaders told:

> The chairperson and treasurer do everything. They arrange

everything from contacting plumbers to purchasing construction materials. The recipients need nothing to do except providing supplementary supports if necessary, for example, supplying water or ladders during construction work. (SH- PGL01)

The above quotes reveal the fact that the community contract implementation process was by and large led by the concerned chairpersons and treasurers of the CDCs. Interview data further suggest that because of such centralised management practices, undesirable outcomes occur. From the group members' perspective, the consequences of such a centralised group management system were many-fold. The three most visible consequences were: embezzlement of group savings by some of the OBs in two of the study CDCs, poor quality of the construction work and corrupt practices.

Group members deposited their weekly savings with the respective group leaders. According to the official instruction, as stated by two of the project officials (PO-02; PO-03), group leaders must have received money by signing the members' account books. After collecting savings from the members, the group leaders deposited the total amount to the treasurer of the concerned CDC. The treasurers of the CDCs maintained only group specific accounts, but not the member specific accounts. After receiving savings from all the PGs of a CDC, it was the treasurers' responsibility to deposit the total balance into the CDC's bank account. The same process was also followed for service recipients' contribution (10% of the estimated cost). The money had to be deposited in the CDC's maintenance bank accounts. Here group members did not have the immediate opportunity to know whether the respective group leaders were depositing the actual total amount with the treasurers of the CDCs. Again, the PG leaders and general members were unable to know immediately whether the treasurers of the CDC were depositing the actual total collection to the

bank accounts.

Alampur (Study CDC 1) went through severe trouble over the embezzlement of savings by the former chairperson and treasurer of the CDC. In the words of one of the interviewees:

> They did not deposit the actual amount in the bank…in the early stages we received contracts mostly for building sanitary latrines. For sanitary latrines the recipients' contribution is relatively higher. At that time it was 700 BDT per latrine. There was a separate bank account called maintenance account to deposit that money. But the treasurer and chairperson did not deposit the whole amount. Still a big amount of money is held by the former chairperson. (S- OB01)

Besides this, the former chairperson and treasurer of the CDC also made irregularities in distributing group loans. Conventionally, a member was not allowed to draw a second loan until his/her previous loan had been paid. On several occasions, they used other members' names to draw loans for themselves. One of the PG members described her own experience in this way:

> When the accounts were reviewed by the office, they found that there was a loan worth to 4000 BDT against my name. After knowing this, I asked the former chairperson about it. She informed me that she did not know who had drawn the loan by using my name. I told her, you were the chairman of the CDC, and you were responsible for this. There was your signature, and you should repay the loan. I do not care whether you or the treasurer did it … (S-PGL01)

After revealing the money embezzlement issue, most of the group members wanted to get back their savings, and eventually the CDC activities became stagnant. In practice, according to the interviews (S-OB02; SH-OB01; ZN-OB02), the total savings of a CDC always revolved as loans among the group members. Therefore, if the savings and credit programme stopped all of a sudden, it was impossible to pay back the savings to the group members, because in many cases a borrower's loan amount stood two or three times higher than his or her own savings. Beside this,

there were many who only made savings but did not draw loans. According to two of the interviewees (S-OB02; S-PGL01) the situation became complex, since the accounts were mismanaged both at the PG and CDC levels. Firstly, some of the PG leaders did not deposit actual collections with the CDC treasurer. Secondly, at the CDC level the treasurer did not deposit the whole amount in the bank. After two years of turmoil, the CDC started a fresh journey with new people in the OB positions.

A similar situation occurred in Sripur (Study CDC 4). At the time of my field study, all kinds of group activities in this CDC had been stopped for the last four years due to the misappropriation of group savings by some of the former OBs and PG leaders. According to one of the present OBs (SR-OB02), a total of 24,000 BDT was held by the former treasurer. According to him:

> When the former CDW requested me to join the group as treasurer, I found that a huge amount of savings was missing. When the members became aware of the issue they immediately asked for their savings back. The account balance was not enough to pay back all of them. Again, a large amount of the total savings remained in the hands of some group members as loans, and they stopped repaying loans. (SR-OB02)

Field data indicate that irregularities in maintaining group accounts had been occurring in Salampur (Study CDC 2) as well. The mismanagement of group loans became apparent to me while I was interviewing one of the OBs (SH-PGL02) in this CDC. During the interview session, one of the group members suddenly came in and started to question my interviewee why he had drawn a loan against that member's name. The leader was trying to convince him by saying that he had drawn the loan, and it was his responsibility to repay. He advised the member, not to be worried about this. However, the member was not convinced and tried to say that it was not fair (Field Journal Note, dated 18.11.09).

The local project officials were aware of the issues, and when I explored this with them one of the project officials responded as follows:

> Except for a few, in all the other CDCs [throughout the city] such incidents have been occurring. It is not possible to monitor all the group activities. We do not have such manpower and time. Under the circumstances, we have introduced a cluster based monitoring system. Under the system, OBs from one CDC audit another CDC's accounts on a monthly basis. After introducing this system, the situation is getting better. However, the most important thing is that the members need to be more responsible. I always advise group members that they should get update their account books when depositing savings with the leaders. But they do not follow the advice all time. And after a while when a member claims money, it might happen that the leader denies it. Under this situation it becomes difficult to sort out who is right—the member or the leader? We face hundreds of such incidents regularly … (PO-02)

One of the group members elaborately described the complexities:

> Group members cannot put savings on a fixed date, because many do not have regular incomes. Suppose someone goes to the group leader to deposit savings in the evening or afternoon while the leader takes a nap. May be either the member or the leader is in a hurry at that time and saying that they will update the account books later. Afterwards both could forget the issue. Meanwhile the leader could spend the money by thinking that (s)he will reimburse it later on. May be in the meantime the date for putting group savings to the treasurer might be due. And the leader could deposit a fraction of the amount to the treasurer of the CDC. The treasurer might think this is the actual balance for this term. It is not possible to know without seeing detailed accounts to sort out whether the group leader deposited the actual amount, which is impossible to do every time because the treasurer deals with all the PGs in a CDC. And finally it is also not possible for members to know if the treasurer deposits the actual amount in the bank unless they have been told by the treasurer themselves. Accounts management is very complex at the CDC level, since all the savings become available for loans for the group members. The bigger the savings of a CDC, the more complicated the account management is. (S-PGL01)

Beside the irregularities with group savings and credit programme, many respondents brought allegations against a few of the OBs who siphoned and embezzled money out of the available funds for community contracts. This can be understood by one of the OBs' statements as below:

> ... the former chairperson used to work alone. For instance, she

> used to decide herself about the sites for construction and collected money [recipients' contribution]. I was never been notified…the office approved 466,000 BDT worth of contracts in her time. She handled the whole implementation process alone. When needed she just used to come to get my signature. At first, I was not aware of the issue that there is scope for making money... (S-OB01)

When I asked the respondents to explain some of the irregularities mentioned by the interviewees, one of the respondents from this same site answered in this way:

> Recipients of sanitary latrines or tube-wells do not know about the details of the construction work and the official specifications. Where, for example, four bags of cements are required, they put three bags. Construction contractors are their people. Mr. 'Z' [one of the local project officials] demolished a few of these latrines' walls after finding that the construction work was poor in quality. This time the office is more conscious. But still such malpractices are in place. Where ten pieces of steel bars are needed for strengthening roofs, they may be are putting six to eight bars. People cannot talk in front of them ... (S-PGL01)

Another interviewee (SH-PGM01) from Salampur (Study CDC 2) brought the same allegations by saying that the quality of materials (ring and slabs of latrines) was very poor. The OBs saved money by making slabs and rings by themselves, but the recipients had to pay the fixed amount of money (10% of the estimated cost). The same type of responses were also given by some other respondents (for example, SR-OB01; SR-PGL02) from Jogotpur (study CDCs 3) and Sripur (Study CDC 4). According to one of the PG leaders:

> We are foolish! For a tube-well they [the OBs] asked 1,300 BDT and for a sanitary latrine 800-1000 BDT as a deposit. But what was the actual cost of constructing those was never told to us. If we ask, there will be a severe dispute. The government gives them money for us but they save money out of that fund and distribute it among themselves [the OBs]. (SR- PGL02)

In this way, it seemed that the implementation process of the community contracts resembled the corrupt practices associated with the Rajshahi City Corporation's (RCC's) other contract works (discussed in chapter five), and eventually it was

decentralising the web of corruption to the community level. Corruption in community contracts was an open secret within the project arena. One of the OBs from Sripur (study CDC 4) described the process:

> The office always over estimates the cost of construction. Therefore the officials usually know where there will be left over money in the hands of the concerned OBs. After finishing the works, the final bill needs to be approved by the concerned RCC engineer who generally claims 5% of the total contract money. Again, project officials receive a fixed amount from the total allocation. Originally a plumber gets 500 BDT for constructing a sanitary latrine, but the office forcefully compels us to pay 1200 BDT. The rest goes in the pockets of the officials. The money is distributed among the project officials— from CDWs to the RCC engineers. Besides this, WCs also ask for money for signing the bills. Furthermore, in most of the cases, OBs are encouraged to purchase construction materials from a few prescribed providers who again give a percentage to the office. And finally, many of the OBs put aside a portion of the total allocation for themselves. (SR-OB01)

The respondent further described what happens when CDCs did not follow the convention:

> When I could manage building sanitary latrines with concrete roofs within the allocated estimate, our project town manager came and asked everyone to follow my example. Thus I became a common enemy to other officials and OBs of other CDCs. It took eight months for the approval of the final bill. (SR-OB01)

One of the local project officials also acknowledged the incident of such corrupt practices. He mentioned that there was an RCC official, who never signed fund disbursement papers without bribes. The ground level reality brings the truth to the forefront that community contracts were helping to decentralise the web of corruption instead of building partnerships conducive to minimising transaction costs at the local level.

While the literature suggests that CDD might help in reducing misappropriation of resources and corrupt practices at the local level, research data suggest that group accounts and fund management were full of corrupt practices for a number of

reasons. The salient factors were: lower educational attainment of many of the members, centralised group fund management, the complex nature of the group accounts management, opportunist behaviour of some of the PG leaders and the OBs and weak monitoring efforts of the local project office. These in turn are consistent with the dominant historical practices of power relations.

7.5. Summary

The findings and discussion of this chapter are related to the second research question: how does the project facilitate community participation in the local governance process? By considering the fact that development interventions are socially constructed and negotiated on-going processes which are always situated within the broader framework of the activities of the state and actions of different interest groups, I was interested to explore how the interplay of structural and agency factors shaped the participation space at the community level. This chapter explored three interrelated questions: who participated? why did they participate? and how did community people participate?

The agents who participated could only do so when both the structural and agency factors converged. Agents' access to the participation space was available through inclusion or selection in the group mobilisation process. Here the official rules and guidelines (both formal and informal) set the rules of entry, and the number and size of the community groups, but equally important were local power relations. As an invited space, the local project office embarked on the group mobilisation initiative. The mobilisation effort was started, in general, through identifying key persons in the respective communities by the project officials (mainly by the CDWs) with the involvement of the concerned WCs. The key persons, who were closely linked with

the local power structure, were forerunners in organising community people into groups. Even in the situation where the concerned WC's involvement in initial mobilisation process was absent, the local power elites ultimately found their ways to shape the process. The key persons' interpersonal relationship with and perceptions of community members influenced the inclusion and selection of group members. Besides these, agency factors like length of residence in the respective community and the agents' ability to pay influenced their inclusion and selection.

Getting access to economic incentives provided by the project was the common reason for participation in the community groups. Besides this, getting access to savings and credit facilities run by the CDCs was another important motivational factor for group members. For many OBs, the project engagement was some sort of part-time employment through which they could make some extra income for their family. At the same time for a few of the group leaders (OBs and PG leaders), participation in groups was a means of social engagement and valuable for developing their self-esteem.

The practices of participation were shaped by the internal and surrounding power relations of the groups and the socio-economic and political realities of the agents. In general the project participants perceived the project objectives in terms of the tangible benefits but were seldom aware of the underlying logics and long term development goals of the project. Leadership of the groups was in the hands of the few who were better linked with the existing local power structure. Due to the powerful actors' interests, the democratic process was virtually absent in the leadership management process. While group meetings showed the sign of becoming a forum for 'dialogical education' for the members, the centralised decision-making

process directed by the OBs undermined the process of 'conscientization'. The group decision-making process was actually dominated by the OBs. Consequently, the other members' role in the community contract implementation process and benefit sharing was nominal as compared to the OBs. The centralised group management system coincided with fraud practices which enforced the existing patron-clientelistic local power structure.

In the next chapter I will focus on the impact of community participation in relation to the opportunity structure and agency.

CHAPTER 8:

PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN
THE STUDY COMMUNITIES

Empowerment is commonly understood as the condition of having power, and being able to exercise it and obtain the benefits thereof. (Uphoff 2005:219)

8.1. Introduction

Participatory local governance refers to an approach of citizen participation beyond the electoral process and draws on community participation in identifying local priorities, planning and implementing programmes whereby citizens become 'makers and shapers' (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). Thus, it demands direct citizen participation in decision-making and implementation process related to the local issues. One of the centres of attention as well as challenges of participatory local governance is the inclusion of poor and marginalised people in the participation process. Therefore, participatory governance in a poverty alleviation context means empowering the poor (Narayan 2002). Within the analytical framework presented in chapter two, this means the expansion of assets and capabilities of the poor to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives. When empowerment is understood in this way, one of the prime objectives of participation in a CDD intervention like UPPR is to entrust the participants with control leading to social transformation. Power, achieved through acquiring various power resources (asset endowment), in its different manifestation, then, has to be converted into forms of economic, social and political power that can lead to social transformation conducive to a pro-poor development. Effective and genuine participation has to empower. As such, participation in its transformative

aspect has to be able to produce outcomes in a manner that overcomes existing unequal institutional power relations (economical, social and political). In reference to participatory local governance, this chapter addresses the third research question: what factors affect participants' ability to acquire and exercise power and control? in the study area.

In chapter seven I discussed how agency and structural factors shaped the participation spaces. This chapter examines how members' participation in community groups (as invited spaces) has influenced their agency (asset endowment) and structural factors (socio-economic and political relationships). In doing so, the chapter first reports and analyses the perceived impacts of the group savings and credit programme and community contracts with reference to changes in their asset endowments and how that has influenced their choices. Afterwards, the chapter moves on to focus on the issues related to opportunity structure in terms of changing the socio-economic and political relationships. The chapter then addresses issues regarding community groups' ownership and control over local planning and the related official decision-making process, followed by discussion on social and political relationships between the community groups (as representatives of the community) and local government institutions, e.g. the RCC and WCs. Next, the chapter addresses social relations in terms of the perceived influence on changing gender relations, social capital and other social issues. And finally, it tries to develop insight into the sustainability issue to see whether these community groups hold the promise to convert an 'invited space' into a 'claimed space' to continue participation in the local governance process.

8.2. Empowerment and the Savings and Credit Programme

Savings and credit programmes, as a collective asset, were one of the important activities undertaken by the community groups. In chapter seven it was found that getting access to savings and credit facilities was one of the important motivating factors for community people in joining the groups. This indicates that the CDCs, as community-based organisations, were providing an incentive that the members valued. Various UPPR documents considered the savings and credit programme not only as a pathway of economic development but also as an instrument of building social trust among the community people and thus developing a sense of mutual support. Usually group members made 10 BDT (approximately AUD $ 0.12) of weekly savings. The regularity of the savings and credit programme was one of the criteria for accessing various project benefits for the group members, as it was explained by one of the project officials (PO-01).

It has already been discussed in chapter seven that the experiences of the savings and credit programme in each of the four study CDCs were different. The programme was more stable in Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) than it was in the other two communities. In Alampur (Study CDC 1) the savings and credit operation went through a great setback when a few of the office bearers (OBs) mismanaged group savings. However, when the second phase of the project (UPPR) came into operation, the CDC could manage to settle down the issue and made a fresh start. Although Sripur (Study CDC 4) encountered a similar situation, it could not resolve the problem and all kinds of group activities stopped in 2006. Nevertheless, by considering the socio-economic realities of the group members in the context of Bangladesh it can be said that the total amount of group savings and loans money was significant. Until February 2010 only Salampur (Study CDC 2)

could manage to distribute a dividend among the members, and this CDC had been considered as a role model of savings and credit operation within the local project office arena. The total savings and credits balances until January 2010 are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Group Loans

Name of the CDC	No. of Savings Members	Total Savings (BDT)	Total Loan Distributed (BDT)	Loan Recovery Rate	Number of Loans Distributed
Alampur (Study CDC 1)	120	125,000	248000	80%	45
Salampur (Study CDC 2)	176	824,149	6647000	100%	116
Jogotpur (Study CDC 3)	340	845,731	2950000	98.70%	177
Sripur (Study CDC 4)	90	133,340	241,000	operation on halt	76

Source: Field Data 2010-2011.

Interview data show that among the 20 respondents, all except two (S-PGM03; SR-PGM01), drew loans for various purposes. A number of group members, eight in total, took loans more than once. The maximum frequency was four drawn by one of the members (SH-PGL02) worth 20,000 BDT each time. The lowest loan amount drawn at one time was 3000 BDT, and the highest was 50,000 BDT drawn by a member (SH-OB01) from Salalmpur (Study CDC 2). The respondents used the loans for a number of purposes. We can divide the purposes into two broad categories: investment and withstanding crisis. Four of the respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; SH-PGL02; ZN-PGL01) handed over the money to their husbands for investing in their business. According to the interviewees, those were worthy investments to increase their family income. Four borrowers (SH-OB01; SH-OB02; ZN-PGM01; ZN-OB02) used the loans for building *pucca* houses. Two of them considered it as an

investment for additional income by renting out extra rooms. According to one of the female respondents:

> I have built a concrete roof over the first floor of my house. I built the walls five years ago. But I could not manage enough money to complete the roof due to a financial crisis. My husband is a petty employee and it is very difficult for him to bear even the living costs and educational expenses of my children. I could manage to go ahead due to my involvement in the project. For example, I have borrowed 50,000 BDT and have built the roof. It has increased my income by renting out the first floor. This month I will receive 1800 BDT as rent. (SH-OB01)

Three of the borrowers invested loans to start their own small businesses (SH-PGM02; SH-PGL01; ZN-PGM01): tailoring, vegetable selling and rice retailing. All three respondents said that they could make a profit out of their investments. Two of the borrowers (ZN-OB02; SR-PGL01) spent the money for schooling of their children. Six of the borrowers spent loans for a few other purposes: buying a sewing machine (S-PGL01), spending on medical treatment for their family members (S-PGM01), buying a mobile phone (SR-OB02), spending on a daughter's wedding ceremony (SR-PGL02), purchasing cows for farming (SH-PGM01; SH-OB02) and paying debt (ZN-OB01).

Whatever the purposes of the loans, data presented above show that the availability of group loans provided group members with the opportunity to either increase financial and material assets base or to withstand crisis. Thus, they were in the process of gaining power in determining the life pathway that they valued. The following response helps to understand the process:

> I built a *pucca* house after drawing a loan from the CDC. Before I had tin shed-house [semi-*pucca*]... Seven or eight years ago I purchased a cow by taking out my first loan from the CDC and began farming by myself. After a couple of years when the number of cows grew, I put them with someone else

> on share basis. A few months ago I sold four of the cows together. At the same time I borrowed again from the CDC and with all the money I have purchased a piece of land...but the starting was with the first loan drawn from the CDC. (SH-OB02)

By considering the fact that there were other sources of loans, what were the specific reasons that made group members interested in borrowing from CDCs? In this respect one of the local project officials said:

> When a person goes to a credit giving NGO, (s)he usually has setbacks, because the net interest rate is very high.[50] Again, the rules for repayment are very rigid. If something goes differently, the NGO people do not hesitate to take away the borrowers' belongings. Furthermore, the interest that the borrowers pay goes to the NGOs. Whereas the interests paid by the borrowers from CDCs remain within the group members. (PO-01)

An example of the rigidness of NGOs loans was described by another local project official:

> If someone takes a loan from BRAC, for example, for a poultry farm, the borrowers are bound to purchase chicks, feed and other necessary equipment from them. Thus, the borrowers cannot be familiar with the market. (PO-03)

Again, another respondent (SH-PGL01) mentioned that taking a loan was a prerequisite to make savings with some NGOs. Under the circumstances, a few respondents opined that taking a loan from CDC was their first preference. Many of them especially mentioned flexibility of repayment as one of the important factors (ZN-PGL01; SH-OB01; SH-PGL02; ZN-PGM01). At the same time, some members valued the issue of their ownership over the fund. In this respect, for instance, one of the respondents stated:

> ... the other objective [of UPPR] is to save us from the death-traps of micro-credit giving NGOs like ASA, BRAC and so on. They do business with our money but if someone cannot repay loans in due time they even pull the tin off of their roof. Now we are managing our own saving-credit programme. We are now free from their death-traps. (SH-PGL02)

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[50] Sometimes the net interest rate can be around 100%.

Accordingly some of the respondents, especially from Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3), where the savings and credit programme had been running smoothly, reported many group members were leaving some of the NGOs' membership (S-OB01; SH-OB02; SH-PGM01; ZN-PGL01; ZN-PGL02; ZN-PGM01).

Some of the respondents, mainly a few of the OBs, talked about their future plans and dreams with group savings. One of the OBs (SH-OB01) from Salampur (Study CDC 2) said that at the cluster level they had decided to start a group business. She also talked about her own dream of buying buses for a group business. Another OB (ZN-OB02) from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) talked about their group's plan to start a business of some kind. Therefore, the group savings and credit programme was not only contributing to increasing economical and material assets, but was also developing some participants' capability to envisage change—a psychological asset.

Nonetheless, in Sripur (Study CDC 4) where the CDC programme had been stopped for the last few years group members experienced a different reality. According to one of the OBs of the CDC (SR-OB02), many members lost their savings, because there were many who did not draw loans. There were many who drew loans of 2000 BDT against, for example, a saving of 500 BDT, and they were not interested in repaying the loans (SR-OB02). Therefore, there was a group of members who gained at the expense of a few other members, which was against the spirit of collective action. While in the other three CDCs, some UPPR group members were leaving the memberships of other credit giving NGOs, in Sripur (Study CDC 4), according to some of the respondents (SR-PGM01; SR-PGL01; SR-PGL02), people were relying more on the credit facilities provided by those NGOs, despite the fact that people in

this neighbourhood had had a number of bad experiences in dealing with those external service providers. Thus, instead of expanding agents' choices, the mismanagement of savings and credit programme in Sripur (Study CDC 4) squeezed members' choices and reinforced members' dependence on external service providers.

From the above findings, it is seen that except for Sripur (Study CDC 4), the group savings and credit programme had been an alternative source of credit for the group members. In this way, the savings and credit programme provided an opportunity for the members to influence the opportunity structure in their favour. Credit was important for group members for capital as well as for withstanding crises. Loans provided under CDC management were characterised by flexibility and a sense of ownership by the members. It was not only important to enrich their material and financial asset base, but it also helped to develop psychological assets for some of the members (mainly group leaders) to increase their capacity to envisage change. From Sen's (1999) 'Development as Freedom'[51] perspective, the group savings and credit programme expanded the group members' capabilities in terms of increasing their access and opportunity to do things that they valued. However, while the group savings and credit programme in Alampur (Study CDC 1), Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) espoused such positive outcomes leading to empowerment, in the case of Sripur (Study CDC 4) the failure of the collective action led to the opposite.

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[51] "the expansion of the 'capabilities' of people to lead the kind of lives they value—and have reason to value" (Sen 1999:18).

8.3. Empowerment and the Community Contracts

Urban poor communities not only suffer from low income, but also the lack of access to basic services, especially potable water, hygienic sanitation and drainage. Limited access to a healthy living environment resulted in reproducing poverty by incurring extra medical treatment costs related to various sanitation related diseases and loss of work time (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction 2006). Community contract was one of the key project strategies towards physical improvement, increased income and the assets of the poor. Beside this, at the local level, the issue of building partnerships among local government bodies, private sector and communities was realised through community contracts. In chapter three I discussed two types of community contract: Settlement Improvement Funds (SIF) and Socio-Economic Funds (SEF).

8.3.1. Settlement Improvement Fund (SIF)

Table 7 illustrates community contracts implemented by the four study communities up to February 2011.

Table 7: Settlement Improvement Funds (SIF) Community Contracts

Name of the CDC	SIF Contract	Cost	Work			
			Latrine	Tubewells	Drains	Foothpaths
Alampur (Study CDC 1)	Contract 1	564710	52	05	-	-
	Contract 2	165000	07	03	-	-
	Contract 3	351413	19	04	-	-
	TOTAL		78	12	-	-
Salampur (Study CDC 2)	Contract 1	586454	53	05	-	-
	Contract 2	365833	-	-	-	663 mt.
	Contract 3	278963	12	05	-	-
	TOTAL		65	10	-	663 mt.
Jogotpur (Study CDC 3)	Contract 1	66023	76	-	-	-
	Contract 2	38657	10	10	-	100 mt.
	Contract 3	26197	-	-	-	300 mt.
	TOTAL		86	10	-	400 mt.
Sripur (Study CDC 4)	Contract 1	617496	68	07	-	-
	Contract 2	507313	12	05	168 mt.	168 mt.
	TOTAL		**80**	**12**	**168 mt.**	**168 mt.**

Source: Field Work 2009-10.

From the table above we find that a total of 309 latrines, 44 tube-wells, 168.55 meters of drain and 468.55 meters of footpath were constructed in the study communities. According to the project estimation, a total number of 927 households were the beneficiaries of shared latrines and 880 households for tube-wells. Community assets, such as footpaths and drains were considered to benefit the whole community and thus benefited 1565 households in total. Interview data indicate that the services provided through the community contracts outweighed the services that had been provided by the RCC in those communities in terms of quantity and number of beneficiaries. From the discussion in chapters five and six we found that the RCC was the main service provider in infrastructure development, for example, footpaths, drains and tube-wells, within the City Corporation area. However, the responses of the interviewees from all four study communities reveal the reality that there was a huge gap between community demands and the services provided by the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC).

All of the respondents (including respondents who were not group members) highly valued the project's contribution in infrastructure development. A total of seven respondents (S-PGL01; S-NPCM02; SH-PGM01; ZN-OB02; ZN-PGL01; ZN-PGM 01; SR-OB02) from the study CDCs reported that the sanitation facilities were very poor in general before the project came into operation. People made latrines by digging holes with temporary fences around them, or building bamboo platforms over the ponds or river. Beside these, a huge number of people used open spaces (drains, river banks and bushes). According to one of the respondents (ZN-PGM01), building a sanitary latrine required 5000-7000 BDT which was not affordable for a day labourer like her. Due to the group activities, the poor people managed to have sanitary latrines by paying only 750-1000 BDT. According to two of the respondents

(S-NPCM01; ZN-PGL01), this brought a fair improvement in public health conditions by reducing water borne and seasonal diseases like dysentery, cholera and diarrhoea.

In the same way, installing deep tube-wells, building footpaths and drains improved the living condition of the community people. According to two of the respondents (S-OB01; SH-OB02) from Alampur (Study CDC 1) and Salampur (Study CDC 2), most of the tube-wells in their respective communities could not pump out water during the dry seasons (3-4 months every year), and people needed to go far way to collect water for domestic use. Moreover, during the rainy season (1-2 months every year), those tube-wells remained under water and were useless. But the newly installed deep tube-wells have ensured the availability of pure water throughout the year. Furthermore, they have reduced travelling and waiting time.

Footpaths and drains built by the community groups made various parts of Salampur (Study CDC 2), Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) and Srirpur (Study CDC 3) easily accessible especially during rainy season. According to one of the OBs in Salampur (Study CDC 2):

> You would not be able to imagine how bad the footpaths were in the Santal people's area. In the rainy season you had to go through a thick layer of mud ... these days the situation has improved a lot ... (SH-OB01)

Another OB from Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) asserted the same notion:

> During the rainy season we never thought of going to Notun Para (back portion of the community) unless there was a dire necessity ... (ZN-OB02)

Making a comment on the overall development, one of the respondents from Salampur (Study CDC 2) said:

> ... once the WC told us that he could have been able to construct

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> a few footpaths in this neighbourhood by sanctioning the RCC's
> funds, but that he was not able to provide sanitary latrines and
> tube-wells which had been provided by the CDC ... the fact is if
> these were to come through the WC, the process of tendering,
> procurement and implementation could take such a long time
> that only God could say when it might had been available.
> Again, the WCs usually remain busy with their own area of
> living. It might not be possible to have footpaths or drains in
> many backward parts of the neighbourhood. (SH-PGL02)

Therefore, it is obvious that the project (as a structure) enabled local people to play a crucial role (agency) in developing a healthy environment through infrastructural development. Many poor people gained access to sanitary latrines, which improved their health conditions. Installing deep tube-wells ensured the availability of safe water for domestic use. Furthermore, building footpaths and drains provided easy accessibility and reduced water logging problems in the respective communities. Thus, the community groups' activities had been contributing to the increased material and financial assets of the members and the community people as a whole. This goes beyond acquiring assets (power resources) because people were participating actively in the local development management process which was previously an official domain of RCC personnel.

8.3.2. Socio-Economic Funds (SEF)

In describing the programmes in Rajshahi, one of the local project officials said:

> There is an apprenticeship programme under which the
> recipient group members or their nominated family members
> receive training in their chosen trade, for example, in motor
> garages, block and batik workshops, aluminium and plastic
> factories, in beauty parlours or medical clinics. After
> completing their traineeship, the trainees can continue working
> in that organisation. Again, we provide non-refundable, one
> time block grants to some of the extreme poor members so that
> they can start small businesses. Many such beneficiaries have
> started vending various handmade food items, cloths or
> vegetables by using the money as start-up capital. This year we
> provided block grants to drop-out children so that they can
> restart schooling. Besides these, we organise awareness
> building workshops and training sessions on health, legal and

cultural issues, and on some trades like packaging and farming
so that they can stand on their own feet. (PO-01)

According to the official documents, the project envisaged that the partnership will
grow in more concrete forms through Socio-Economic Fund community contracts
where community groups were tied to private sector service providers, for example,
under the apprenticeship programme, group members or their family members
received on-the-job type vocational training. The following table presents the usage
of funds in the four study CDCs up to February 2012.

Table 8: Socio-Economic Fund (SEF) Community Contracts

Name of the CDC	Contract	Cost (BDT)	Amount Per Person (BDT)	No. of Beneficiaries
Alampur (Study CDC 1)	Apprenticeship Programme	113,413	9000	15
	Education supports to attend school	45000	4500	10
	Business start-up grants	45000	4500	10
	TOTAL	**203413**	**-**	**35**
Salampur (Study CDC 2)	Apprenticeship	198,770	9000	22
	Education supports to attend school	45000	4500	10
	Extreme Poor	54000	4500	12
	TOTAL	**297770**	**-**	**44**
Jogotpur (Study CDC 3)	Apprenticeship	179550	9000	20
	Education supports to attend school	90,000	4500	20
	Extreme Poor Allowance	30,000	4500	06
	TOTAL	**299550**	**-**	**46**
Sripur (Study CDC 4)	No SEF contract			

Source: Field Data 2009-10.

The above table shows that, except for Sripur (Study CDC 4), all the other study
CDCs have received three types of Socio-Economic Fund contracts through which a
total of 125 members from Alampur (Study CDC 1), Salampur (Study CDC 2) and
Jogotpur (Study CDC 3) benefited. A total number of two out of the twenty

interviewees received apprenticeship programme benefits. One of the beneficiaries (SH-PGL01) received on-the-job training in tapestry and batik printing in a small factory. However, she could not continue the related job after finishing her traineeship. In her words:

> I continued working in that factory after finishing the training period. But the payment was very low. They offered me 500-600 BDT per month. The payment was not even enough to cover travel cost from my home. Therefore, I did not continue working there. (SH-PGL01)

The other respondent (SH-PGL02) received on-the-job training in making silver pots in a small factory. She also did not continue working after finishing her training due to a bad work environment. The above two experiences suggest that group members' ability to increase their assets (skills) was dependant more on the labour market situation which was outside the control of the community groups, as well as the project management.

In addition to this, one of the local project officials indicated a number of irregularities in the apprenticeship programme.

> In running the apprenticeship programme in Rajshahi, I explored various types of corrupt practices. We provide a 1500 BDT monthly allowance to the trainees for six months. In many cases, trainees establish an unwritten agreement with the owners of the workshops or factories so that the recipients can continue withdrawing a monthly allowance without getting training in the nominated trades...[the reasons] may be that group leaders are selecting the wrong people just to benefit their favourite members. In many cases I found that the nominated trainees were already working elsewhere, but in the papers, the OBs were showing that nominated persons were continuing their training. I spotted a few such cases...in many occasions I could not do anything because of the pressure from the concerned WCs. For these reasons, these days we are making them bound to undertake some specific trade courses offered by our nominated institutions. There is disagreement among us over the issue. However, we are doing it without consulting with the head office. (PO-01)

The statement above reveals the fact that in many instances, internship beneficiaries placed more value in the monthly cash allowances than in receiving training and acquiring new skills. Some of the OBs were selecting beneficiaries on the basis of personal relationships and in doing so, they were even manipulating official records. Therefore, community contracts also helped in developing favouritism and corrupt practices. Under the circumstances, while the project officials were deciding and determining the types of training courses, the group was losing control over the decision-making, meaning it was limiting members' active agency.

None of my respondents were the recipients of education support and extreme poor grants. Therefore, due to the unavailability of data I am not able to engage in any in-depth discussion on these two components. However, two of the respondents (S-OB01; SH-OB02) mentioned that many of the extreme poor grant recipients purchased livestock for farming.

A number of respondents mentioned the positive impacts of workshop and training sessions which helped to increase their knowledge on various social, political and legal issues. One of the female respondents from Alampur (Study CDC 1) said:

> I am now more conscious. I did not have an understanding about legal laws before. Now I know what a woman needs to do if she is abused by her husband. Now I know the telephone number of BLAST [a legal service providing NGO] to get their help and to get lawyers. Now I know if we go to police station, they should protect us. I did not have such kind of awareness before. (S-OB01)

Similar responses were also echoed by other respondents. Table 9 summarises the responses of the respondents. Data presented in the table show that group members acquired valuable knowledge about various social, political, legal and income generating skills. Nonetheless, if we look at the table we can see that except for two

(SH-PGM01; S-PGM01), all the other respondents were either OBs or primary group leaders (PG leaders). This reflects the findings of chapter seven where it was found that training and workshop sessions were mainly participated in by the OBs and PG leaders.

Table 9: Impact of Trainings and Workshops

Issues	Respondents	Effects
Gender relation, legal aid, domestic violence, dowry	S-OB01, S-OB02, S-PGL01, SH-OB01, SH-PGL01, SH-PGL02, ZN-OB02, ZN-PGL01, ZN-PGM01, SR-OB01 and SR-OB02.	Many respondents personally and collectively protested domestic violence against women. A male respondent (SR-OB02) from Sripur (Study CDC 4) said after attending a workshop on dowry he decided not to ask for dowry.
Governance issues	S-OB02, S-PGL01, SH-OB01, SH-OB02, SH-PGL02.	Many respondents reported that they talked with the WC asking for various services like electricity poles, street lighting and culverts.
Health and hygiene	S-PGL01, S-PGM01, S-PGM03, SH-PGM01, ZN-OB02.	Many respondents reported that they are now more aware of health and hygiene issues in everyday life.
Rights as a citizen	S-PGM02, SH-OB01	-
Livestock farming	ZN-OB02, ZN-PGL01, ZN-PGL02.	-
Home grown agriculture	ZN-PGL01, ZN-PGL02.	-

Source: Interview Data, 2009/2010.

The Socio-Economic Fund was an opportunity for the group members to acquire income generating skills and develop knowledge about various socio-economic and political issues. However, a few of the experiences showed that the ultimate outcomes depended more on the labour market situation and the proper use of the opportunities by members. It was found that the abuses of active agency by some of the members delimited the groups' control over use of the fund according to the members' own choices. On the other hand, the benefits of participating in various training and workshop sessions were mainly limited to the group leaders—more specifically, the OBs.

8.4. Participation and Control in Local Planning

The promoters of CDD projects advocate that local people should take greater control of the project activities from planning to implementation and benefit sharing. Data and analysis presented in the preceding sub-point show that group members were participating in the implementation and benefit sharing and, therefore, in the local governance process. However, it is also important to see whether the participants had substantial control over local planning. The discussion on community participation in chapter two pointed out some important questions to answer while judging the intensity of participation: whether participation was limited to being used only as a means of enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of a project by incorporating local knowledge and resources, or whether participation as a process was entrusted with the possibility of gaining power and control over decisions and resources (categorised as 'degree of citizen's power' in the Arnstein's ladder of participation). In view of this, I will bring back here three important questions: who participated? why did they participate? and how did they participate? in the local development planning process.

Participating in community action planning sessions was the preliminary means for the group members to get involved in the local planning process. Immediately after forming the project groups, community action planning sessions were organised in the study CDCs. The sessions were five days long and participants were asked to identify their community needs, priority and implementation strategies by following Participatory Research Appraisal (PRA). Project documents stated that a community action plan (CAP) would be reviewed and updated by the CDCs on an annual basis. But such planning sessions were further held in the study communities during the years 2008 and 2009 for the second time. Therefore, group members had only two

occasions for preparing their own activity plan. So, it is clear that there was an inconsistency between the guidelines stated in the project documents and the project implementation reality.

One of the respondents from Salampur (Study CDC 2) described the CAP activities in this way:

> During the five day long CAP seminar, we drew community maps and discussed many issues related to our community. We identified who lived where, who was poor and who was relatively well-off, who had sanitary latrines and who did not and who had water sources near to their houses, etc. After identifying our problems and needs, we made plans for fulfilling those needs. We basically identified what we would do in which years. (SH-OB01)

The above statement describes the active involvement of group members in community planning, which is very encouraging from an empowerment point of view. But when we think from the participants' selection process perspective, this romantic picture falls into trouble. The discussion in chapter seven clearly showed that the group members were chosen and hand-picked by the key persons who were actively involved in the initial group mobilisation process. When I asked the respondents if (s)he participated in the CAP sessions, many replied that they (S-PGL01; SH-PGL02; ZN-PGM01) were not invited by the group leaders (key persons). 'Social Categorisation' was one of the most important driving forces in determining the participants, where group leaders identified some members who might be able to provide important inputs as knowledgeable and intelligent and some who were not identified as such. Here, we also find the interplay of structural and agency factors. Group leaders were the gate-keepers who finally determined who would participate and who would not. Therefore, active agency of the OBs delimited the access of certain groups of members in the local planning process.

Gender was another important criterion in selecting participants of the CAP sessions, where male members were left off consciously even in communities like Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Srirpur (Study CDC 4), where separate male and female groups co-existed. According to one of the OBs in Salampur (Study CDC 2), leaving male members off from participating in CAP sessions was an official instruction. It is understandable that the project had a very clear focus on addressing the needs of women by saying that CAP would fully reflect the needs of women and children. However, putting off male members from the decision-making sphere did not necessarily mean women and their issues were being included. According to Guijt and Shan (1998), attempts to work separately with women might not be able to work forward to reintegrate them with the mainstream decision-making process within the community, and thereby little chance to change the social relations.

In addition to these, research data further suggest that the preparation of CAP was in fact a structuring process of community people's needs and demands, which could be again explained by the second dimension of power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). By reviewing the concerned CAPs and having discussions with the interviewees it became clear that only a few common infrastructural and social issues had been identified in the plan, for example, demands for latrines, tube-wells, footpaths, the addressing of unemployment problems and related issues. On the other hand, many other important issues did not receive priority, such as: unavailability of dustbins, need for establishing schools, tackling the issue of drug use, land ownership settlement, electricity connection, connection of piped water, etc. Unavailability of these services in the study communities was mentioned as important to be addressed by various respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGM02; S-NPCM02; ZN-OB02; ZN-PGL01; ZN-PGM01; SR-OB02; SR-PGL02; SR-PGM01). The issues identified in

the CAP, clearly reflected the projects' pre-determined preferences; what the project would and would not provide. This was also acknowledged by one of the local project officials. According to him:

> These days they do not ask for services which the project cannot provide. By working with the project for many years they now have better ideas about what they can get and what not. (PO-01)

From the above findings, we see that group members could only participate in the CAP process on two occasions in the last ten years. In this way, the community groups as well as the project has failed to institutionalise the local planning process as a regular event of local planning. Again, access to the planning sessions is influenced by OBs. Furthermore, due to the official instruction, male group members were left off from the sessions. Although it ensured women's participation in the planning sessions, the available literature suggests that working separately with women might not be helpful to reintegrate them with the mainstream decision-making process. Finally, CAP was rather a restructuring process of community demands within the project preferences.

8.5. Community Groups and the Project Decisions

Available literature discussed in chapter two suggests that CDD projects entrust community people with more direct control over project decision-making, implementation and investment resources and, thus, strengthen accountability of all actors involved in the local development process. However, research data indicated that community groups' control and access to official decisions as well as investment resources was limited in a number of ways.

Community groups did not have access to the strategic decisions related to the project resource distribution beyond the community. In chapter seven, we found that the community level group decisions were mainly limited to determining the recipients and the loan amounts, identifying the recipients and sites of various services provided by the project (e.g. latrine, tube-well, money package for the extreme poor, construction of footpaths and drains, etc.). The project documents clearly outlined project implementation guidelines by mentioning the possible services, types of recipients and resource allocation criteria and so on. Community groups did not have access to the project related operative and strategic decision-making. Interviews with two of the project officials (PO-01; PO-02) revealed that group members did not even have a clear idea about those guiding rules, procedures and resource distribution criteria. These were exogenous to them.

By preparing CAPs group members developed their own action plan. But in practice they did not have control over the implementation of those plans. Interview data (S-OB02; SH-OB01; ZN-OB02) suggest that community people did not have control over official resources until it became available to their bank accounts. This was absolutely official domain where the project's top management possessed full control in deciding when the resources would be available to the community groups and for what purposes. CDCs had representation at the ward and city levels project committees. Unfortunately, none of these bodies were actually a place, especially in practice, for making strategic decisions. There was no such evidence that these bodies took extra-ordinary initiatives or made recommendations for the betterment of the CDCs.

In this way, the number and types of beneficiaries and the amount of allocations were primarily determined on the basis of the project guidelines and decisions made by the project's top management, and even the local project officials had little to say. As such, when we look at the community contracts that had already been implemented by the study CDCs, we found the items were identical and mainly limited to some common items. On the other hand, for Socio-Economic Funds the services were also common to all communities. This could be seen as the reflection of the community demands restructuring process which was enforced primarily through CAP. Hence, the collective agency of the groups was limited by the official control.

Many of the strategic and operative decisions taken by the project's top management in the Dhaka office were conflicting with the ground level realities. For example, the project followed strict guidelines for resource distribution based on the number of families of the respective communities irrespective of the extent of needs. As a result, a community with more well-off families received more project resources than a community with more extreme poor families, but fewer families in total. Commenting on this issue, one of the local project officials said:

> We have nothing to do except to follow the decisions of the top management. There are many CDCs where the groups are working very well in terms of utilising project resources and managing other activities. But we cannot provide more resources according to their needs because of the maximum ceiling of distributing project funds. (PO 01)

The above interviewee further pointed out a number of anomalies in the project guidelines. He informed me that many communities had already exceeded the possible maximum allocation for a specific type of service, but the actual need had not been fulfilled. In such cases the local project office was providing those CDCs

resources for other items—for example, providing resources for footpaths instead of latrines. The interviewee was even disappointed with some of the project guidelines. For instance, officially one sanitary latrine must be allocated for four families as a shared property. When the question of sharing came, some difficulties arose at the implementation level. According to the interviewee, people generally considered toilets as a personal issue and had very strong feelings against shared use. Furthermore, no one was really willing to provide land for something shared with others. Therefore, at the implementation level, when a latrine was allocated, it was virtually built for a single family to use, but officially it was recorded as shared. As a result of this, it was practically impossible to meet the actual needs of a community for sanitary latrines.

Again, all construction works, for example, latrine, tube-well and footpaths, had to follow an identical design prescribed by the project top management. If something was different from the prescribed design, that was considered not following the official standards, irrespective of counting the merit. In this respect, the experience of Sripur (Study CDC 4) is worthy of discussion here. The officially approved design for sanitary latrines consisted of brick-built walls and a tin roof. The problem with tin is that it breaks down within a few years. Under this circumstance, one of the OBs of Sripur (Study CDC 4) took an extra-ordinary initiative by collecting extra money from the beneficiaries to make a concrete roof on the top. In his language:

> I realised that since the estimated cost of making a tin rooved made latrine is more than the actual cost, the extra amount goes into the pocket of non-beneficiaries. I thought if we can properly utilise the project allocated funds and if the recipients personally provide only 100 BDT extra, it will be quite possible to build a concrete roof. According to my thinking, I took the initiative and my CDC was the first where we built such a sanitary latrine. But the initial reaction from the project office was not very pleasant. It took about one year to receive the final disbursement of the allocated funds. (SR-OB 01)

This quote indicates the active and creative resistance of the group members against the dominant actors through mobilising local resources. It also demonstrates that local knowledge was superior in producing better and more sustainable outcomes. However, the quote also reveals that the revising of official guidelines needed a great struggle. In this respect, one of the local project officials said that it was he who personally supported the initiative and therefore it had been made possible. Though this was an exceptional example, it showed the strength of collective agency.

To sum up, with some exceptions, in most of the cases group members had become the mere implementers of the project's already made decisions instead of shaping the decisions. This is against the spirit of CDD approach. However, the extra ordinary effort made by the members of Sripur (Study CDC 4) in building concrete-roof latrines shows that enforcing collective agency was important in influencing the official decision-making process.

8.6. Community Groups and the Ward Level Governance

Participatory local governance is about a process of re-adjusting traditional boundaries and building a new relationship between the state and citizen by creating intermediary spaces (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). The discussion in chapter two also indicated that creating spaces is not enough to change pre-existing asymmetrical relationships among the actors involved in the local governance process. Changing relationships call for actions to change unequal institutional relationships and, thus, closely related with power relations. In this context, this sub-point explores how the group members' collective agency interacted with the ward level governance process.

Interview data evidently show that the concerned WCs influenced the functioning of the community groups in a number of ways. In chapter six we found that elected WCs were one of the most powerful actors within the ward level governance process. However, the level of influence of the WCs in community affairs varied from community to community. Accordingly, we saw that different roles were played by the concerned WCs in the group mobilisation process. Except in Sripur (Study CDC 4), the group mobilisation process was primarily initiated and guided by them. As one of the most powerful actors within the community and also as one of the authorising authorities of the group decisions, WCs influenced the group decisions and activities to a great extent.

In the words of an OB from Salampur (Study CDC 2):

> When group leaders give a list of the prospective recipients of any project benefit or when I make the list, I first inform the WC so that he cannot raise any objection ... (SH-OB 01)

Where group members disagreed with WCs' wishes, severe clashes occurred. In this respect one of the local project officials described her experience in this way:

> In one of the CDCs a serious conflict arose when OBs refused to allocate a tube-well to the WC's office secretary who was not a group member. The concerned WC did not sign the community contract papers until the mayor personally requested for him to resolve the matter. (PO-02)

Another local project official identified the roles of many of the WCs as impediments to the proper functioning of many of the community groups. In many CDCs in Rajshahi City some of the PG leaders and OBs were not giving back group money that they had siphoned. They could do this since they were in a good relationship with the concerned WCs, and the project officials were unable to take any action against them. One of the local project officials described his own experience in this way:

> When OBs get involved in embezzling group resources, we first inform the concerned WCs. We try to resolve the problem through their direct mediation. But in many cases WCs do not take any fruitful steps to recover group resources. Practically we have nothing to do in dealing with such issues. If I try to do something extra-ordinary, the WCs might act against me by saying that I am not competent. They might bring allegations against me to the top management. And in the end I might lose my job. (PO-01)

Thus, the above quote points out that the concerned WCs were a source of power for a few of the group members in influencing the group activities in undue manners where the majority of the group members as well as the local project office had little to do. This resembled the continuation of the existing asymmetrical relationships among the actors involved in the local governance process.

However, this was one side of the coin. Interview data illustrate that in many instances, the group members could exercise their influence on the WCs as well. One of the local project officials shared one of these experiences with me:

> There was a dispute over leadership in a CDC. The concerned WC wanted to replace the chairperson of the CDC. On the other hand the chairperson wanted to continue. Amid this, the WC arranged a CDC election and selected a new chairperson without informing either the project office, or the group members who were in support of the chairperson. When they heard the news, they came to the mayor and our office and were demanding justice. At last the mayor decided to split the CDC into two. (PO-02)

Although the incident was not related to any of the study CDCs, it showed one of the examples of community groups' resistance—exercising agency—against WCs' undue power exercised over the groups. There were some other examples of protest against the undue behaviour of the WC's. One of the local project officials shared one of these incidents:

> After the last local election, we [the project office] arranged a workshop with the newly elected councillors and group members [OBs]. In the course of discussion when the issue of

> corruption came up, one of the group members stood up
> suddenly and said that they [group members] could not reach
> the councillors for weeks for getting papers signed. Again they
> [the councillors) put pressure on us to complete construction
> work with low quality materials ... (PO-01)

The above two incidents, though not related to the study communities, show that exercising collective agency could lead to the acquisition of 'power over' the WCs in minimising the abusive power exercised by them. Here we observe the interplay of 'conflictual' power discussed in chapter two.

In chapter six I discussed the nature of ward level governance. Due to the absence of the formal mechanism of direct citizens' participation in the ward level governance process, informal means of participation were the only ways for the local people to interact with the WCs. In this context, the project intervention opened a formal avenue for the group members to interact with the WCs. This enabled some of the group members to be in close touch with the WCs.

> We are gaining knowledge [about local governance issues] ...
> We do not work without the WC. Suppose we have decided to
> work in a certain way, but the councillor might sort out a new
> way of doing the work. Our knowledge is widening in this way.
> For example, when we propose a name for the apprenticeship
> programme, the councillor might suggest that we find someone
> else. (S-OB02)

> ... he [the WC] knows me. Now I can ask for something or
> inform him about our problems, for example, about streets,
> footpaths, street lighting, etc. We have gained the courage to
> speak up. (S-PGL01)

The same type of attitudes were expressed by a number of respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; SH-OB01; SH-OB02; ZN-OB01; ZN-PGM02). Furthermore, all of those respondents opined that they were more aware of various local development issues than before because of their participation in group activities.

Some of the project activities, for example, community contracts, indeed provided the groups with the opportunity for taking part in the ward level decision-making on a consensus basis. One of the respondents (SH-OB02) from Salampur (Study CDC 2) shared one of her experiences. She reported that the main walk way to Santal area was already included in the annual development programme of the RCC, but it was uncertain when the RCC's tendering process would take place. Under the circumstances, considering the urgency, the street was constructed by her CDC upon the recommendation of the WC. The respondent (SH-OB02) talked about another incident that showed how the community groups were becoming an influencing actor in the ward level governance process:

> One of the footpaths which belonged to a rich people's area within this CDC was not paved. Those people could not go to the WC. One day some people from that part met with our chairperson and requested that their walkway be built. She informed them that we were only allowed to build footpaths for the poor people's area. Later on, they requested us to convey their appeal to the WC. We felt good seeing that highly educated and rich people were also coming to us ... (SH-OB02)

Here we observe the presence of 'consensual' power in changing the existing asymmetrical political relationship.

Nevertheless, we can see that it was predominantly the OBs who were exercising 'power over', or sharing 'power with' the WCs. General group members were connected with the WCs through the PG leaders and OBs. This phenomenon became apparent by the comments made by two of the general primary group members (S-PGM03; SH-PGM01), who reported that when they needed help of the WC, they first contacted the chairpersons of the concerned CDCs because they were intimate with the WCs. The issue denotes two different perspectives. Firstly, this can be seen as the enhancement of the collective agency of the group members through which

group members enjoyed better access to the WCs. Secondly, on the contrary, when we consider the fact that power was hardly shared within the group, this could be seen as the reproduction of the pre-existing patron-clientelistic relationship, where some of the group members, mainly the OBs, appeared as agents of the WCs and acted as middlemen between the general primary group members and WCs.

Therefore, data and the analysis presented above render two contesting pictures. As one of the most powerful local actors, some of the WCs tried to influence group activities in their favour by co-opting a few of the members, mainly the OBs. However, in many instances group members' collective agency prevailed over the structure through resisting the WCs' undue dealings. Through participating in community groups, members enjoyed better access to the WC in general. However, power asymmetry among the group members exposed the possibilities of reproducing the pre-existing patron-clientelistic relationship.

8.7. Participation, Empowerment and Social Change

According to the empowerment framework presented in chapter two, people may acquire various kinds of asset endowments (e.g. psychological, informational, organisational, material, financial and human assets) through participating in community groups. These asset endowments (power resources) may not improve the state of empowerment on their own until they are used to bring about desired outcomes favourable to bringing changes in asymmetrical social relationships. This sub-point addresses the effects of participation in social relationships in terms of gender relations, trust and social networks and group members' involvement in various social affairs.

8.7.1. Gender Relations

In chapter six we found that women's participation in economic activities was well practised in all the four study communities. However, their presence in various social and political organisations was limited by gender biased social norms and practices. In this context, UPPR group membership provided the women members with legitimate roles and positions in managing local development issues. Within a patriarchal context, women's ability to acquire social power (collectively or individually) is dependent on their ability to exercise some form of legitimate power, or gain 'power within' or 'power with' through improved status, assertion of identity and changes in traditionally defined gender roles at the local level. The structural framework of UPPR and the group activities provided women members with the opportunity to acquire collective power which could lead to women acting against domination and improving their subordinate status. Again, at the individual level, women need to gain two forms of power: positional and personal (Stamm and Ryff 1984, cited in Sabhlok 2007:212-13). Positional power stems from specific positions and roles in a society. It is formal authority delegated to the holders of the positions. On the other hand, personal power is related to the potential of individuals to exert influence and control which is sanctioned implicitly through the acceptance of an individual's right to make decisions about a particular aspect of social life. UPPR aims to change the positional power of women through group membership and assigned roles (through forms of 'power with', 'power over' or 'power to'), and personal power through self-confidence and self-awareness ('power within').

The changing role of women in society was well acknowledged by the respondents. In the context of Bangladeshi society, husbands' consent and co-operation was crucial for the female members' participation in group activities. All the female

group members (interviewees), except one (S-PGM01), mentioned that their family members (including husbands) were co-operative and appreciative of their involvement and activities in the groups. A number of respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGL01; S-PGM02; S-PGM03; SH-OB01; SH-PGL01; SH-PGM01; ZN-0B01; ZN-PGL01) considered the co-operation of their husbands meant getting recognition of their work by their families. Group membership was a source of self-esteem, building self-confidence and self-awareness. A number of respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGL01; S-PGM02; S-PGM03; SH-PGL01; SH-PGM01; ZN-OB01; ZN-PGL01) talked about their good feelings in terms of positive changes in their identity. At the same time they also valued group activities for gaining personal experiences. For example, one of the respondents said:

> I feel good as a woman. I am doing group work simultaneously with domestic work, interacting with other members and sharing feelings. This is good experience. (S-OB01)

Another respondent said:

> I feel good from inside, I feel proud ... I could not even talk with others before, could not go outside. I had to stay inside the house. This time I go outside, can interact with people. It makes me feeling good. (SH-OB02)

Women's involvement in group activities was also found to be conducive to changing the traditional gender biased norms and practices. Some of the respondents (S-PGM03; SH-OB02; SH-PGL01) mentioned that the resistance that came from the surrounding environment. For example:

> Many people talk against us because, being women, we go to the project office and interact with men ... I try to convince them by saying that if we remain inside the house, we cannot make progress. This project has provided us with an opportunity to establish women's rights. At the same time we can earn money beside our husbands. Thus we can be helpful to our husbands. We could contribute to the wellbeing of our families ... Many become convinced, but a few are not ... (SH-OB02)

Another respondent said:

> I have convinced my son and husband by saying that we are not doing anything bad. Initially my husband used to scold me for taking part in group activities. Now he is convinced and does not mind either. (SH-PGL01)

Thus, some women members appeared as change agents in the process of changing gender biased social views. Many respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGL01; S-PGM02; SH-OB01; ZN-OB01) mentioned that as women they did not face any resistance from community people. This was a sign of societal acceptance of women's roles in local development process. Such societal acceptance carries significant value from a women's empowerment view point. In general, in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, women are considered to be less knowledgeable and capable than men. This view was echoed by a few of the respondents (SH-PGL02; ZN-PGL01; ZN-NP01; SR-OB02), among them two were males and two were females.

According to one of the male respondents:

> It is difficult to work under a woman because men are more knowledgeable than women. However, since UNDP prefers women, I am working with them ... (SH-PGL02)

One of the female respondents said:

> Women are good at women's work. This work is male work. But women are doing a male's job. This is an issue of being ashamed. I think this work should be carried out by men ... (ZN-PGL01)

The above two quotes represent the usual views of the society concerning the traditional gender division of labour. At the same time, this also reveals the disposal of positional power through which the above mentioned respondents accepted, though with caution, women's roles in the local development process. In accordance with this, a number of respondents (S-OB01; S-OB02; S-PGL01; S-PGM02; S-

PGM03; SH-PGL01; ZN-OB01) treated the presence of males in community groups positively by saying that males were willing to work with or under female leadership.

To conclude, we find that participation in group activities was conducive to build participants' psychological assets, for example, self-esteem, self-confidence and awareness ('power to'). This was also contributing to the process of changing the traditional gender biased societal norms and practices. Through acquiring positional and personal power, some of the group members (individually and collectively) were able to exercise the two other forms of power: 'power over' and 'power with'. The issue will come up in the subsequent discussion of this chapter.

8.7.2. Building Trust and Social Networks

According to the conceptual framework presented in chapter two, trust and social networks are important factors in collective action. These are also by-products of successful collective action. Therefore, these two are placed as two of the important asset endowments (organisation assets) in the empowerment framework. This sub-point first focuses on the issue of trust followed by networks.

8.7.2.1. Building Trust

Some of the respondents (SH-PGM01; ZN-OB02; ZN-PGM01) expressed their strong opinion in favour of the positive impact in heightening the level of social trust among the group members in Alampur (Study CDC 1), Salampur (Study CDC 2) and Jogotpur (Study CDC 3). Here are excerpts from some of the quotes:

> ... we convinced them [the community people] by saying that the savings will not go anywhere. The office will not take away our money. The money will remain within us. My home is here, I would not run away with money. In this way I developed trust among them and influenced them to save with me. We believe

each other. In this way, trust and mutual co-operation are developing ... (S-OB01)

Initially people did not trust us. But later on when people observed that the group work was going well, people were receiving benefits, the level of trust among people increased. (SH-OB02)

Yes, they believe us more than before. More people are joining as group members. (SH-PGL01)

They [general group members] now trust that it will be good if they come with me as group members. Initially they had a fear of being cheated. Now they can rely on the group. (ZN-PGL01)

We trusted to each other for a long time. But after being involved in group activities, we trusted each other more than ever ... we are making savings out of trust in each other. Again, when we receive other benefits from the project, the level of trust rises ...When we hand over money [to the group leaders], we say we are giving money by seeing 'you' [the leaders]. If something goes wrong, you will be responsible ... (ZN-PGM01)

The statements above show that trust building was a long process. The main driving force of trust building was establishing good practices. Interview data further indicated that people became encouraged to trust each other by seeing successful collective action. However, the nature of trust was fragile and conditional, which became evident by the statement of one of the respondents:

Since we are working in groups for a long time, a trusting relationship has developed. Now I am known to many people. Many people come to me with the belief that I can solve many of their problems ... when someone gets benefits, for example, a sanitary latrine, a good relation builds up between us. But it is not possible to make everyone happy by providing services. In such cases people become dissatisfied and angry ... (S-OB01)

The quote above points out that benefit sharing was one of the important factors in the trust building process. When members received benefits through collective action, inter-personal trust developed among the group members. On the contrary, trustworthiness declined when members missed services provided by the groups. But it was the fact that the demand for group resources usually remained higher than

supply. Therefore, the decision-making of resource distribution had to be more participatory and transparent so that all the group members were able to have the scope to take part in the process as informed participants. This would enable the members to know who is getting what and on what basis.

In contrast, the experience of Sripur (Study CDC 4) shows how the failure of collective action caused mistrust among the group members. In this respect one of the respondents said:

> When the CDC was functioning well, everyone was happy. But afterwards when the members discovered the mismanagement of group funds, they became angry. Once people used to encourage me to compete in the local election for WC, but afterwards they wanted to sue me. This is usual public sentiment. When something good happens, people appreciate it. On the other hand when people are cheated, they become angry. If I could recover the money, I would be able to regain the lost honour. Many are angry with me thinking that I am not doing anything for recovering the embezzled money. Most of them do not try to understand that I cannot do it alone. (SR-OB02)

Another respondent from the CDC said:

> Mistrust among us has developed ... our interpersonal relationships have worsened because of the CDC. (SR-PGL02)

To conclude, people began to trust and co-operate each other by seeing the successful outcomes of collective action. Data indicated that trust building was a slow process, where having the chance for benefit sharing was an important factor. However, group resources were not enough to benefit all the members equally. This warrants that the group decision-making process in resource distribution needs to be participatory and transparent. This will avoid the detrimental effects on trust stemming from the unavailability of sufficient resources to share.

8.7.2.2. Building Social Networks

Social networks influence an actor's social capital both through the actor's direct and indirect ties afforded them by virtue of the overall structure of the broader network within which they are embedded. UPPR group members were directly tied to each other in groups within a CDC. At the same time they were also tied with the wider network (cluster level and city level) mainly through the OBs. Therefore, the level of social network gain was different for general group members, PG leaders and OBs. While the OBs talked about various types of people ranging from various levels of project officials, WCs of different wards, RCC officials and members from different CDCs, those with whom they were closely tied and interacted frequently, the general primary group members talked about mainly the concerned community development workers (CDWs) and the few other people who occasionally visited the CDCs. But in commenting on the consequences of such acquaintances with new people, one of the general group members said:

> Many people visited our community since the starting of the CDC. They were not familiar to us. When they visited we saw their faces. Afterwards, we forgot them. (SH-PGM01)

On the contrary, OBs were closely tied with a number of people through their networks. Here are some of the quotes:

> I never saw the mayor of RCC before. Now I know him, I talked with him on various occasions. (ZN-OB02)
>
> I was never familiar with outsiders. Now I know many people ranging from project officials, WCs, the mayor and also members of other CDCs ... all together around 100 people whom I did not know before. (S-OB02)
>
> Although I knew the WC, he did not know me. By joining this CDC, the WC now knows me. A number of highly ranked RCC officials and LGED engineers know me personally because of this CDC. This has benefited me ... I can talk to them. (SH-PGL02)

In making a comment on the network gained by the group members, one of the local project officials said:

> The level of mobility between the OBs and general group members is different. A general group member is only making savings. They are staying at that level. OBs are going to banks, the City Corporation, the project office, shops, various organisations and are also taking part in various programmes. The more the mobility of the OBs, the greater the size of their networks. (PO-03)

Thus, we find that the size of the social network of group members increased as a whole where the general primary group members were tied with the broader network through the OBs. As a result of group activities, OBs were actively linked with a range of influential persons beyond the communities, for instance, the mayor of RCC, project officials, officials of other government departments and members of other CDCs. When we consider network building as a source of power and influence, the OBs and thus, the community groups, acquired power resources. On the downside, by considering the fact that power was concentrated in the hands of a few OBs and was not generally shared within the group members, the network gained through group activities become more of a personal attribute than a group attribute.

8.7.3. Involvement in Non-project Community Affairs

The findings and analysis in the above sub-point on the two aspects of social capital reveal that community groups (except in Sripur) provided a common platform for its members which was favourable to enriching their collective social and political power resources through increased interpersonal trust and widened social networks. In this respect, one of the statements might be worthy to put here:

> Before, everyone used to do things individually. But now we do things collectively. For example, when we decide to organise a cultural programme in our CDC, we get together and then decide how we will organise, who will do what and how ... this

> CDC has helped us to organise collective action. For example, if a woman is abused by her husband, mother-in-law or sister-in-law and I ask my members to protest their acts, everyone will come forward. (SH-OB01)

When we consider empowerment as a process through which communities achieve greater control over their own affairs (Lyons, Smuts *et al.* 2001), it entails that power resources should also be converted into social and political actions. There were some good examples where a community group actively took part in resolving various social problems, for example, family conflict, dealing with local police and so on.

> We took an initiative with the former WC to diminish alcoholism and other crimes in this community. Due to our request, the community police patrols this area during the night time and crimes have reduced. (S-PGM02)

> Once we went to the local police station from our CDC to prohibit drinking and selling alcohol in Salampur. Santal people do not trade alcohol now. (SH-OB01)

> One of my neighbours used to beat up his wife regularly. One day I saw he was beating his wife with a wooden stick. After seeing it, I along with our CDC chairperson and a few other members went to their house and warned him that he would be sued. He never beat up his wife after that incident. (SH-OB02)

After sharing a similar type of experience, one of the respondents (SH-PGL01) from Salampur (Study CDC 2) reported that in many instances people came to them to settle petty disputes.

The above quotes show that the collective ability to negotiate with external agents and to manage internal affairs was gained by some of the community groups and its' members. Consequently the group members, except in Sripur (Study CDC 4), gained some kind of collective power which they converted into social and political actions to solve various social problems.

8.8. Sustainability of the Community Groups

The discussion on community participation in the conceptual framework in chapter two demonstrates that the sustainability of community organisation is important especially when we consider the transformative aspect of participation which could turn 'invited spaces' into 'claimed spaces'. The creation of UPPR community groups was, in fact, invited space situated within the broader community space which was again connected to the greater macro (national/city level) space. To be able to transform such invited spaces into claimed spaces (bringing change within the opportunity structure) meant to apply the group members' agency through the newly acquired assets/resources. However, as the empowerment framework suggests, applying collective agency is again a factor of the overall opportunity structure that prevails in the study area. The discussion below will highlight the sustainability issue of the UPPR community groups.

A number of respondents (S-PGM02; S-PGL01; SH-PGL01; SH-PGM01; PO-02) were sceptical regarding the continuation of group activities including the savings and credit programme after the completion of the project. Two of the respondents (S-PGM02; S-PGL01) stated their concerns regarding the possibility of misappropriation of group funds by the leaders.

> Truly speaking, if the present situation continues, the CDC will not run. Not everyone is happy with the present chairperson and treasurer. But no one can say anything ... I am 100% sure that this CDC will not run without the project office. (S-PGL01)

> It will be problematic if the office leaves the full control of the groups on us. No one will hand over money to the group leaders. So long as the office is involved, everyone can keep the faith. It is not possible to continue activities by ourselves, there should be something which should guide us ... group members are in good relation to each other because of the project office. If the office goes off, members will not trust each other. (S-PGM02)

In this respect, one of the respondents (SH-PGM01) shared her bad experience of UNICEF supported Urban Basic Service Delivery Project (UBSDP, 1997-2001) groups where some of the group leaders did not give back the group members' savings when the project was phased out.

Furthermore, one of the respondents (SH-PGL02) showed his concern about the potential dysfunctional role of the WCs. He opined that if the project withdraws its direct involvement, WCs might co-opt the groups by exerting more influence. Datta (2007) in his Bangladeshi study found that political manipulation was one of the major hindering factors for community groups' sustainability. Local political leaders often consider community groups to be important vote banks.

To comment on the issue of sustainability, one of the local project officials said:

> It would have been easier to comment if the project were off for at least one year in some project towns. It has not happened yet ... at this moment I would express two different opinions. For example, within my project area there are a few good CDCs, for instance, 'B' and 'G'. I assume these CDCs will continue activities even if the project stops working there right now. But there are many other CDCs where civil war could occur because a huge amount of savings is in the hands of the powerful members. Until the project office continues support, no one is speaking up. But when the project phases out, every other member will raise their voices to get back their money and a severe clash will ensue. (PO-01)

Similar views were also expressed by two other local project officials (PO-02; PO-03). Thus, we find two contrasting scenarios of group sustainability which were also put forward by many other respondents.

A number of respondents (SH-OB01; S-OB01; SH-OB02; SH-PGL01; ZN-OB02; ZN-PGM01) showed their confidence in continuing the group activities after the completion of the project. All of them considered savings and credit to be the main

strength and driving force in the future. Datta (2007) found that when external support was withdrawn, group members joined other credit giving NGOs and the self-managed community groups gradually became inactive.

Many respondents (S-OB01; SH-OB01; ZN-PGL01; ZN-PGL02; PO-01) stressed the importance of the co-operation of the WCs. They opined that if the concerned WCs remained with the groups, members would continue their faith in the group leaders. Besides this, a few of the respondents (SH-OB01; ZN-OB02; PO-01; PO-03) talked about the necessity for formal registration of the CDCs as co-operatives or societies, so that the CDCs could continue their activities as independent entities. In commenting on such a possibility, one of the local project officials said:

> I do not know exactly. We discussed the issue in a few of our official meetings. I heard that the CDC structure and activities are not compatible with the existing co-operatives laws. Though I heard that some clusters in other towns have received registration ... (PO-01)

At the same time, several respondents (S-OB02; S-PGM02; S-PGM03; PO-04; ER-01; ER-02) thought that the RCC should provide the necessary support to keep the community groups alive and functional. According to one of the national project officials:

> Groups do exist because of the group activities ... If the municipalities contract out some of their services to the community groups, the groups will remain functional. To keep community groups active, they must have some economic activities. (PO-04)

However, municipal support of the community groups has been contingent upon the political interests of the power holders. This became evident by a comment made by one of the WCs:

> He [the mayor] got the wrong impression that community group leaders generally belong to different political platforms and that

they will not listen to him. From this idea many provoked him not to support the project. But we made him understand that he should not lose the support of these people ... (ER-02)

Besides this, the central government's approval would also be crucial in this respect.

In describing the experience of UBSDP, one of the formal mayors of the RCC said:

> That is our bad luck. That project was running very well with the help of donors. I took all the initiatives to take over the project, even we allocated a budget. But the ministry did not approve our plan ... even though I tried to continue that project by providing a special budget allocation ... later on when I got out of the RCC for political reasons, I heard that the RCC had abandoned the project. (LPL03)

Above all, finalising the exit strategy of the project would be very important in this respect. Group members and even the project officials did not have any idea about the continuation of the UPPR intervention in future. One of the national level officials (PO-04) said that they were still to decide the timeline of withdrawal of the project support from various towns. One of the local project officials opined that, as an exit strategy, the huge flow of project money to the community groups should be reduced gradually. He considered the huge flow of money to be detrimental to developing the sense of group ownership among the members. According to him:

> This project has been providing a huge amount of money to the beneficiaries. Personally I am not in favour of running the project by spending such a huge amount of money. For example, this year 10 million BDT has been allocated for Rajshahi City. The head office has provided full guidelines for how the fund should be spent ... we [local project officials] got an easy way to spend money by giving business allowances. My personal opinion is that when a project provides excessive amounts of money, the groups might shut down as soon as the project finishes. (PO-01)

The above opinion supports the research findings of Lyon (2003) regarding incentives. He claims that while it is true that groups will not work unless there are good incentives and individuals are convinced that they will get benefits personally, attempts by external agents to promote collective action by giving incentives are

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rarely sustainable since members often feel that there is no reason to remain in the groups once the incentive is removed.

The above discussion highlights some of the factors related to the group sustainability which are predominantly external to the group members' affairs. Beside these, various respondents talked about a few other factors which were internal to the community groups. Quality of leadership and acceptability to the members are vital factors according to many of the respondents (SH-PGM01; ZN-OB02; PO-01; PO-02; PO-03). For example, one of the respondents from Salampur (Study CDC 2) (SH-PGM01) had complete confidence in the present chairperson and vice-chairperson and claimed that if these two persons continued in the office, the groups would continue. In contrast, a respondent (SR-OB02) from Sripur (Study CDC 4) claimed that unless the present leadership changed, the groups would not be functional. Several respondents (S-PGL01; SR-OB02; PO-04) emphasised developing democratic practices within the groups. According to them, it would help to ensure the transparency and accountability of the group leaders. At the same time it would enhance the scope for developing alternative leadership. According to the local project officials (PO-01; PO-02; PO-03) the qualities of the leaders was the main driving force behind the performance and sustainability of the community groups. They identified a few qualities of a good leader: benevolent, responsible and trustworthy. Co-operation among the OBs was another important factor mentioned by a project official (PO-01).

To sum up, the above findings and discussion identify some factors which were detrimental to group sustainability, for example, non-confidence in the current leadership, fragile trust relationships among the group members, and possible

political co-optation by the WCs. On the other hand, it appears that group savings and credit programmes could be pivotal in sustaining group activities in the future. But a few fundamentals should be ensured beforehand: the co-operation of the concerned WCs, support from the RCC and proper exit strategies for the project. Again, if we connect these factors with the findings and analysis of the previous subsections of this chapter, we would find that there are also some factors that are internal to the project groups: practising democratic ideals which may allow changes in leadership positions, leadership quality and co-operation among OBs. Therefore, the issue of community groups' sustainability is a product of the interplay of both the structural and agency factors.

8.9. Summary

The prime aim of this chapter was to explore whether the community group members exercised or acquired any form of power and control in managing local affairs. This was a valid query to address in this chapter in relation to the findings of chapter seven, where we found that participation in an invited space like UPPR community groups was shaped both by structural and agency factors. More specifically, getting access to the community groups and acting as members as well as access to various group resources and services was influenced by a number of factors. In this context, the 'participation as empowerment' perspective meant examining how the members' participation evolved in terms of economic, social and political power conducive to change various institutional relationships. I have primarily explored the process of acquiring personal and collective assets endowment of the group members. However, by considering the fact that empowerment can be validated only by its results (Uphoff 2005), I have also focused on the outcomes. In addressing the question of whether the group members exercised or acquired any form of power and

control in managing local affairs, we do not get any straight forward answers like 'yes' or 'no', rather the answers are bounded by a number of conditions.

It was found that the group savings and credit programme, in general, was conducive to acquiring the personal and collective assets of the group members. Group loans were important for the poor, not for only investment capital, but also for withstanding crises. Thus, we found that some of the group members could convert personal and group assets (savings and loans) into economic power through investing in income generating activities or withstanding crises or through spending for something that they valued. Moreover, in the communities where the savings and credit programme was operating smoothly, group members' choices in deciding the sources of loans expanded. The group savings and credit programme was not only important to enrich the material and financial asset base, but also to develop psychological assets for some of the members (mainly of the group leaders) to increase the capacity of envisaging changes. All of these together meant that a savings and credit programme was conducive to increasing some of the members' power and control over their own lives, as well as changing institutional relationships, for example, leaving NGO memberships. However, one of the study CDCs showed that failure of collective action could bring about more adverse consequences in terms of disempowering the group members.

As with the savings and credit programmes, group members in the study CDCs supported a healthy environment, as well as developing income generating skills and building awareness of various socio-economic issues through community contracts. While group members, as well as community people as a whole, were enjoying better sanitation, safe water and footpath facilities, it could be assumed that it was

also contributing to increasing their other material and financial assets through reducing lost work hours, travel time and waiting periods. However, the experiences of using a Socio-Economic Fund for employment creation through internship programmes showed that the ultimate outcomes depended more on the labour market situation and the judicious use of the members' agency. When we consider that participation in various workshops and seminars was conducive to increasing participants' asset endowments by increasing knowledge and awareness of various social, political, economical and health issues, the benefits were largely enjoyed by some of the group members—more specifically the OBs.

As a whole, the group members benefited by participating in the community groups, and acquired power through having better control over local planning, more access to WCs, getting social acceptance and gaining self-confidence, self-esteem, personal experience, trust building relationships and social networks. As a result of these I found that some of the group members were sharing power with the concerned WCs. Many of the women members appeared as change agents in the process of changing the traditional gender biased views of the society. Group members were connected more to each other through the building of trust and networks, and they had better control over community affairs. The collective ability to negotiate with external agents and to manage internal affairs was gained by some of the community groups. Consequently the group members acquired some kind of collective and personal power which they could convert into social and political actions to solve various social problems.

However, if we measure the level of power and control in terms of acquired assets endowed through the membership of the groups, we will find that there is a great

discrepancy between general members and OBs. It came out that community groups' participation in the UPPR's official decision-making process was virtually absent, manifesting the characteristics of an invited space where the project's top management possessed the authority to set the rules of participation and structured the community demands. However, within that limited possibility, the participation space was again shaped by the active agency of some of the OBs, who decided who would participate or not in CAP sessions as well as in various workshops and training sessions organised by the project office. Thus, the level of asset endowment was not the same among the group members, and in the end the empowerment effect was more visible in the actions of some of the OBs in the study CDCs. The downside of this situation was that in many occasions I found indications that OBs had been co-opted by the existing local power structure and were producing the existing patron-clientelistic relationship instead of becoming agents of change for institutional relations.

Accordingly, the findings and discussion on community group sustainability identify some factors which were detrimental to group sustainability, for example, non-confidence in the current leadership, fragile trust relationships among the group members, and possible political motives of the WCs. On the other hand, it appeared that a group savings and credit programme could be pivotal in sustaining the group activities in future. But a few fundamentals should be ensured beforehand: the co-operation of the concerned WCs, active support of the RCC and proper exit strategies for the project. Besides these there were also some factors internal to the project groups: flourishing democratic practices which will allow changes in leadership positions, leadership quality and co-operation among OBs.

CHAPTER 9:

PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE
AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

> *Specific intervention process must therefore be viewed in relation to collective and individual memories (what Bourdieu 1981:305-06 has called 'objectified' and 'embodied' history) of state-civic society relations, local initiatives and inter-institutional struggles. (Long 2001:33)*

9.1. Introduction

This study is related to participatory local governance within the framework of CDD intervention. More specifically the study is about exploring whether UPPR, being a CDD intervention, has been contributing to the development of a process of participatory urban local governance practices in the context of Bangladesh. It was a valid query, considering that the problem of the research clearly indicated that such a development intervention would be judged within the broader framework of the country's socio-political and institutional context. Therefore, I focused on both the intervention and the context. This was not evaluating the intervention on its own; rather it was an endeavour to understand the context specific socio-political and institutional realities by putting the specific intervention within the broader immanent process of development. To address the main research objective, I posed three interrelated research questions: what processes, actors and important factors influence people's participation in the local governance process? how does the project facilitate community participation in the local governance process? and what factors affect participants' ability to acquire and exercise power and control?

The contemporary scholarship on governance espouses the importance of participatory local governance in the local development process to overcome some of

the shortcomings of liberal representative democracy, for example, lower levels of political participation of citizens, absence of building consensus through dialogue, lack of equity and so on. Accordingly, there has been growing interest in involving citizens more directly in the governance process through the creation of new participation spaces between citizens and the political institutions that affect their lives. Thus, the concept of participation has been related to democratic governance. This new form of participation, as claimed by its promoters who range from academics to various development agencies, is informed by changing power relations, and thus it is considered to be transformative. Hence, the issue of empowerment has been intertwined with this transformative aspect of participation. Being informed by the transformative potential of participation, many of the current development interventions, which are generally espoused by various international development agencies and are aimed at poverty alleviation, have largely become more concerned about giving beneficiaries more direct control over project decision-making, implementation, benefit sharing and evaluation. Here, participation is not limited to being a 'means' of enhancing efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability, rather it is also considered to be an 'end', where participation itself is coined as a goal leading towards community empowerment.

However, the current literature vividly indicates the complexities and dilemmas in projecting participation and empowerment in practice leading to participatory local governance. Participation, empowerment and many other related concepts are value laden terms and incur different meanings depending on the users, purposes and contexts within which they are applied. Therefore, at the beginning of the thesis in chapter two I developed a conceptual framework. I also developed an analytical framework for analysing the issue of empowerment followed by the adoption of two

theoretical perspectives (institutionalism and patron-clientelism) that I employed to address the research questions. The framework guided the structure for reporting the findings as well as the analysis throughout the thesis. Before becoming engaged in reporting and analysing research findings, at the outset of chapter four I made it clear that my epistemological stance for doing the research follows a 'constructivism' proposition. This considers that truth and meaning (reality) do not exist out there, and instead are perceived and created by the subjects' interactions with the world. Therefore, the research was a process of compiling and comparing different realities perceived by different actors involved in the local governance process, as well as blending those discovered realities with my subjective experiences in the way of constructing a whole picture—perhaps among many.

9.2. A Brief Review of the Findings

The first two findings and analysis chapters, five and six, addressed the first research question to understand and identify governance processes, actors, factors and the nature of participation spaces both at the city and community levels. In chapter five, it was found that the institutional design of the RCC, as with the other local government institutions in Bangladesh, was predominantly a product of society-rooted patronage politics. The central government and the local elected officials were the two most dominant actors in the process of centralising political power towards the central government by using local government institutions. In that process, the RCC's elected officials (local political elites) were mainly tied to the central government (national elites) through patronage politics. Thus, politics of patronage was one of the important factors in shaping the city-wide local governance process in relation to the macro level opportunity structure within which the participation of the common local people (non-elites) through formal channels is either nominal or

tokenistic in general. However, the research findings also showed how local people sometimes tried to influence decisions by their own endeavours using informal means or sometimes through the spaces created by various civil society groups. Local people's participation through informal means and the spaces created by various civil society groups had been gaining momentum and was believed to have a substantial impact on local decisions, although it had not been able to involve a cross-section of people.

After identifying and understanding the city level governance processes, the influencing actors and factors that affected participation spaces, I endeavoured to identify and understand the same at the community level. Chapter six's aim was to develop an understanding of the socio-economic and political context of the study communities to identify the processes, actors and factors that were important to understand before analysing the UPPR induced community participation process in the study CDCs. The pattern of local people's participation at the ward level governance process was by and large a reflection of the city level governance process, where the informal means of participation was prominent because of the absence of formal mechanisms. It was found that each of the four study communities was comprised of heterogeneous groups based on gender, socio-economic attainment, interests and power, and thus was a complex arena of interactions. The historical development processes of the study communities were one of the influential factors in building such differentiation. Accordingly, the residents were firstly differentiated on the basis of local and new settlers, and land owner and landless issues. These factors were again associated with the differences in income and education levels of the residents. Such socio-economic differentiations influenced the construction of community level power-structures. Although the

concerned WCs, as the local people's representatives, held important positions in the respective community's overall power structure, there were a few local people who also exercised power besides the WCs. The level of respective WCs' influence over communities was influenced by some factors: the concerned WCs' place of residence, the level of political connection of the WCs above the ward level, and the presence of other influential local elites in the community and their political profiles. Thus, besides these factors, political affiliation and the level of political influence were two of the important power resources for the local elites (including the WCs) at the community level. In many respects, community people were connected with the local power elites within the logic of the patron-clientelistic relationship. In the absence of formal channels of participation, community people had been trying to influence local decisions through various informal means, sometimes in person and sometimes through middlemen within the patron-clientelistic relationships. Therefore, we find that the ward level governance process was not a closed space, and thus there was scope to support community people's participation in the local governance process by empowering them.

The findings and discussion of chapter seven were related to the second research question: how does the project facilitate community participation in the local governance process? Development interventions are on-going, socially constructed and negotiated processes which are always situated within the broader framework of the activities of the state and actions of different interest groups identified in chapters five and six. In chapter seven, I was specifically exploring how the interplay of structural and agency factors shaped the UPPR initiated participation space by asking three interrelated questions as a tool: who participated? why did they participate? and how did the community people participate?

It was found that community people could participate when both the structural and agency factors converged. At first, the official rules and guidelines of the project (both formal and informal), which set the rules of entry, the types of members and number and size of the community groups, were important, but equally important were local power relations. The concerned WCs, CDWs and their nominated persons who I termed as key persons were forerunners in organising community people into groups. One of the noteworthy findings is that the local elites' involvement was found necessary to initiate community-based collective action. The community people's interpersonal relationships with them, as well as their perceptions about the community people, influenced the inclusion and selection of the group members. On the other hand, some of the agency factors, like length of residence in the respective community and people's ability to save, also influenced the inclusion and selection.

The research findings identified a number of motivational factors of participation in the community groups. Receiving the benefits of various economic incentives provided by the project was the most common reason for community people joining the groups. Group membership provided the community people with the opportunity for getting various infrastructural services provided by the project, for example: latrines, tube-wells, streets, footpaths and drains. Group membership also allowed the community people to have access to various types of cash allowances, training programmes and other benefits. Besides these, getting access to a savings and credit facility run by the CDCs was another important motivational factor for the members. For many OBs, the project engagement was some sort of part-time employment through which they were able to make some extra income for their families. Some of the group members considered various skill development training provided under the auspices of the project helpful to becoming self-sufficient. At the same time, for a

few of the group leaders (OBs and PG leaders), participation in groups was a means of social engagement and valuable for developing their self-esteem.

How the members participated in the group decision-making, implementation and benefit sharing process was intricately linked to their socio-economic and political realities, along with the development realities that the project aimed to create. In this way, the process of participation at the group level was considerably different from the picture portrayed by the project's rules and guidelines. The group decision-making, implementation and management processes were characterised by uninformed participation, absence of democratic practices in the leadership selection process, centralised decision-making, dominance of a small section of members in group activities and corrupt practices. These factors were conducive to reproducing the existing patron-clientelistic relationship within the groups and between the groups and local power elites. According to the traditional view of the patron-client relationship, such a relationship is contradictory to collective action (Auyero, Lapegna *et al*. 2009). Cox (2009) argues that it further narrows poor people's ability to engage with participatory processes.

In chapter eight my prime quest was to explore whether the community group members—individually and collectively—exercised or acquired any form of power and control over their lives and local affairs. Subject to the successful functioning of the group savings and credit programme, some of the members benefited through the acquisition of psychological, material and financial assets. However, the research findings also showed how the failure of collective action could bring adverse consequences in terms of disempowering the group members. With the savings and credit programme, group members in the study CDCs were getting access to a

healthy environment as well as the opportunity to develop income-generating skills and build awareness of various socio-economic issues through community contracts. However, the experiences of using a Socio-Economic Fund (SEF) for employment creation through internship programmes highlighted the issue that the ultimate outcomes depended largely on the labour market situation and the judicious use of the members' agency. While it was found that participating in various workshops and seminars was conducive to increasing participants' informational, psychological, organisational, financial and human asset endowments, the benefits were largely enjoyed by only some of the group members—more specifically the OBs.

Participation in community groups benefited the members by providing them with better control over local planning, more access to WCs, societal acceptance of their roles in local development, self-confidence, self-esteem, personal experience, trusted relationships and social networks. These asset endowments helped some of the group members in sharing power with the concerned WCs and with other local power elites. The collective ability to negotiate with external agents and to manage internal affairs was also gained by some of the community groups members. By engaging in and influencing various community affairs, some of the group members emerged as change agents in altering the traditional gender-biased views of the society. Consequently, the community group members acquired some kind of collective and personal power which they could convert into social and political actions by solving various community level social problems. However, if we measure the level of power and control in terms of asset endowments acquired through the membership of the groups, we will find that there was a great discrepancy between the general group members and the OBs. Research findings indicated that community groups' participation in the UPPR's official decision-making process was virtually absent.

This manifested the characteristics of an invited space where the project's top management possessed the authority to set the rules of participation and structured community demands. Nonetheless, within that limited possibility, the participation space was again structured by the active agency of the OBs. For a number of reasons, the OBs appeared as the prime decision-makers in determining who would participate in (or be excluded from) CAP sessions as well as various workshops and training sessions organised by the project office. Thus, the level of asset endowment was unequal among group members, and, therefore, the empowerment effect was more visible in the actions of some of the OBs in the study CDCs. The downside of this situation was that on many occasions, I found indications that OBs had been co-opted (Eckstein 1977, referred by Desai 1995:60) by the existing local power structure and were reproducing the existing patron-clientelistic relationship instead of becoming an agent of changing institutional relations.

The findings and discussions of community group sustainability identified a number of factors, which can be divided broadly into two types: those which were internal to the groups and communities, and those which were external. Some of the factors were found to be possibly detrimental to group sustainability, for example: non-confidence in leadership, centralised group management practices, fragile trust relationships among the group members, and possible political motives of the WCs. These are the internal factors. Two of the major factors identified as external were the huge flow of project money to the community groups and uncertainty over the continuation of the project in future. On the contrary, it appeared that the group savings and credit programmes could be pivotal in sustaining group activities in the long run. However, a few fundamentals should be ensured beforehand: the co-operation of the concerned WCs, the active support of the RCC and proper exit

strategies for the project, democratic practices in leadership selection, quality leadership and co-operation among the OBs.

9.3. Implications in the Societal Arena

This study has focused on two levels of power relationships. Firstly, power relationships between the communities and various governing agencies, e.g. the RCC and UPPR; secondly, power relationships among the actors residing within the community. This study highlights the issue that the present local governance system in Bangladesh reflects the logic of a patron-clientelistic relationship which flows in a cascade manner from the top (national) level to down to the community level (local). The traditional society-rooted patron-clientelistic relationship has evolved into a new shape primarily based on political alignment. The study findings reconfirm that local communities are sites that are neither sealed-off from relational and trans-local linkages (broader networks), nor are they homogeneous. Communities are often sites of power struggle, featuring a culture of patron-clientelistic relationships that are embedded in social networks and governance institutions whose nature and outcomes affect the community level power structure. Therefore, when the intervention offers a chance for the community people to reconfigure this power relationship, in practice, due to a number of reasons, ranging from the projects' operational practices to local politics, the prevailing power-structure is more or less reproduced.

However, due to the intervention a new layer has been formalised in the system (at least during the project's lifetime). It is found that the development intervention has induced a new form of patron-clientelistic relationship outside the political loyalty-based hierarchy. But the good thing about this new relationship is that the rise of new

actors as patrons helps to make the prevailing system more fluid and flexible and thus, accessible to more marginalised people. Politics in Bangladesh has generally been captured by a very small, relatively homogeneous elite who share a common education, culture and ethos (Kochanek 2000). In this respect adding new people to the power-pyramid has been empowering those who did not occupy those positions previously. In societies like Bangladesh where there is acute scarcity of resources exemplified by the sheer competition for access to those resources and services, poverty in terms of people ('poor in people') has been an important aspect of poverty (White 1992). Because people (relationships) are important to the poor for obtaining public goods and services, which also derives from the tradition and culture (Devine 2006; De Wit and Berner 2009). According to Devine (2006), in the Bangladeshi context the notion of '*Amar keu ney*' (I have no-one) is more devastating and expresses a more profound sense of helplessness than '*Amar kisu ney*' (I have nothing). When we see that power resides within a relationship, adding a new group of people who are closer to the community people, into a patron-clientelistic chain as patrons results in the sharing of power by more people. From the Foucaultian perspective, this is one kind of empowerment process for local people. Because, the reality is that clientelistic practices in Bangladesh are far more enduring but flexible than is assumed, and these practices are capable of accommodating a variety of situations and activities (Devine 2006).

This study, as discussed in chapter one, does not totally agree with either Wood's (2000) 'prison' analogy or Sobhan's (2000) notion that the hierarchical societal-system is flexible and fluid enough to espouse challenges from below. The research findings evidently indicate that as invited spaces, the community groups' potential to be transformed into claimed spaces is seemingly minimal. The existing patron-

clientelistic relationship at the local level is enduring, but flexible and fluid enough for new patrons as well as clients to enter the system. However, this relationship is strong enough to resist the challenge of changes in institutional relationships from a radical transformation perspective—especially from below.

9.4. Policy Implications

The research findings clearly indicate that the UPPR intervention provides formal intermediary spaces between the community and local governance institutions for local people, but the space has failed to reconfigure relationships from the transformative perspective which could enable citizens to become 'makers and shapers'. By considering the socio-economic and political realities, expecting this type of immense social transformation could be over-ambitious within such a short time period and with only the help of a single development intervention. However, at the implementation level, the project could take some measures which are conducive to more pro-democratic changes in the local governance arena. Some of the research findings are self-explanatory and imply certain policy implications. In accordance with many of the previous research findings (for example, Akello 1994; Desai 1995; Awortwi 1998; Datta 2007; Adhikari and Goldey 2010), this study also reconfirms that community based self-help groups are not a magic-bullet for promoting pro-poor and pro-democratic changes at the local level. Instead, the functioning of community-based self-help groups is associated with a number of tensions over certain issues, like inclusion of disadvantaged people, participatory group decision-making, power sharing among the members, ensuring equity in group resource sharing, sustainability and so on. Some of these issues are internal to the community organisations, some are external or they can be both.

One of the allegations against the CDD type project is that it seldom looks at the power dynamics within a community (Bebbington, Dharmawan *et al*. 2004:188). This is evident in this study. Community people in the study area were differentiated in terms of socio-economic and political attainment. The UPPR's project designers and policy formulators paid special attention to including disadvantaged people in community groups by taking certain measures, for example, gender specific policies, making group-savings optional, discouraging well-off people from being group members, etc. However, at the implementation level, these measures were not sufficient due to various socio-economic and political factors and their interplay. Furthermore, when we talk about representation and inclusion, it generally implies that participants should have the opportunity to speak-up. Nevertheless, at the implementation level we found the dominance of a few people over the management of the groups; whereas the other members were rather passive receivers. Therefore, this type of development intervention needs to be actively aware of various context specific issues, i.e. local, new settlers, land owner and landless, when dealing with the issue of inclusion. One of the noteworthy findings is that elites' involvement is essential and often desirable for initiating community-based collective action in CDD intervention. Accordingly, it is more important to learn what mechanism may increase the likelihood that elites will play constructive roles in CDD, instead of being more likely to bypass them.

While UPPR was working in close ties with the RCC and channelling development resources and services directly to the communities, it was genuinely a step forward towards decentralised governance. Bebbington *et al* (2004) show quite clearly that the final effect of decentralisation depends considerably on the power structures into which resources and roles are being devolved. CDD interventions are also about

bringing democratic practices into the local governance process, whereas the management of community groups was wanting for the practice of democratic values and norms. The reasons were not only limited to implementation factors. The reality was that there were a good number of participants who lacked some basic human capabilities and skills, like literacy and numeracy, and thus were not in a position to participate actively. It implies that providing facilities for basic literacy and numeracy for members should be a part of CDD type projects. Furthermore, their education should also be aimed at knowledge building around various poverty and governance issues. The participants should know what poverty alleviation means and how it requires changing relationships. This suggests that for enabling the invited space to be transformative, interventions should be ideologically clear in exposure and involved in changing both institutions and structure (Hickey and Mohan 2004:12). By creating new structures at the local level, the intervention raises the hope for changing institutional relationships. But in practice, changes in social and political institutions are a long process.

As CDD project participants, the community people were supposed to be bestowed with a new set of powers, rights and obligations, for example, the power to plan, implement and maintain projects of their own, the right to hold politicians and officials accountable, the power to command local bureaucrats instead of being supplicants and so on (Binswanger and Nguyen 2005:2). Therefore, information flow is crucial. This calls for a new form of communication strategy between the community groups and the project office to reduce the information asymmetry between the two, as well as within the group members. This could be particularly useful to make local elites more pro-developmental and accountable to the members. The project needs to adopt a multi-channel information system (alternative sources

of information). In this respect it is important to empower the community through information availability. The participants must have the right to know about and participate in the project's decision-making, and as well as having the power to challenge the decisions.

In accordance with the available literature discussed in chapter two, the way in which the intervention has been implemented in the study area has meant that the projects have become a type of patron for the study communities. There was no competition for getting resources from the project. Rather the project itself devised the rules of resource distribution. Since there was no competition, there was no self-initiative from the groups for generating their own resources. It is not necessary for a project to provide all types of resources in meeting all the community needs. But if CDD is to empower communities by changing institutional relationships, the project should try to motivate group members to make collective demands of other service providers on their own initiatives, for example, the RCC, various government agencies, the private sector and NGOs. In this case, the project could act as a facilitator instead of merely a direct provider of services. This is particularly important for the development of the participation process as an end unto itself.

Research data show that local people still consider the WC's role as important in their lives. When the local people consider the WC as a source of confidence and trust this means that representative democracy has not fully lost its value, rather the problem lies in the relationship—the way citizens and elected representatives are connected. Hence the necessity for practising participatory local governance comes up. But bringing about participatory local governance requires working both sides of the equation (Gaventa 2003:2). While we found that community group members

were interested in taking part in the local governance process, the power structure of formal institutions, like the RCC, remained the same without any institutional change conducive to participatory local governance arrangement. The research findings, instead, clearly show that the political-economy of the local governance system is centred around monopolising political power as a means of exerting maximum control over local resources. For political parties, resources are important to win elections. Therefore, it is unlikely that national political elites and their agents at the local level would act in favour of more participatory governance systems. This study shows that although civil society organisations are gaining momentum in the study area, those organisations are also affected by the society rooted politics, where grass-root people's attachment is questionable. Consequently, the possibility of building popular demand from below for institutionalising participation in the local governance process is still a long way off.

9.5. Conclusion and the Way Forward

Although the CDD intervention has not been a magic-bullet, this study does not negate the applicability of the approach in the promotion of active citizenship at the local level. Even in a society where local government institutions as well as institutional relationships are largely marked by society-rooted patronage politics, such interventions might induce or propel the subtle process of social transformation upon the adoption of context-specific sensible programme strategies and practices. However, by inducing participation at the local level, CDD interventions may not be able to invigorate the popular demand from below for a more decentralised participatory local governance system. Political decentralisation accompanied by fiscal and administrative decentralisation may sometimes require changes in legislation and the constitution, and hence, it demands strong political will at the top

of the government. This implies that CDD development interventions should put equal emphasis on pursuing pro-democratic institutional changes at the national and sub-national levels.

It would be particularly useful for future study to give more focus to finding out how the national political elites could be interested in bringing about more pro-participatory local governance policy reform in Bangladesh.

APPENDIX I

Flinders University and Southern Adelaide Health Service

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Room B1, Union Building, Flinders University,
GPO Box 2100, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Phone: (08) 8201 3116
Email: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Principal Researcher:	Mr Parvaz Azharul Huq
Address:	12/2 Ayliffes Road St Marys. SA. 5042
Project Title:	From Project to a Process of Participatory Local Governance? A Case Study on Urban Partnership Based Development Intervention in Bangladesh

Project No.:	4452	Approval Expiry Date:	1 June 2011

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

For projects where approval has also been sought from another Human Research Ethics Committee, please provide a copy the ethics approval notice to the Committee on receipt.

In accordance with the undertaking you provided in your application for ethics approval for the project, please inform the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You are also required to report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol. Such matters include;

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
- proposed changes in the protocol (modifications); and
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In order to comply with monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress and/or final report must be submitted. A copy of the pro forma is available from http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/ info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm. Your first report is due on **7 August 2010** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.* If an extension of time is required, please email a request for an extension of time, to a date you specify, to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au before the expiry date.

Andrea Jacobs
Acting Secretary
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
11 August 2009

cc: Dr Noore Alam Siddiquee, Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management
Dr Jo Baulderstone, Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management

NB: *If you are a scholarship holder and you receive funding for your research through the National Health & Medical Research Council please forward a copy of this letter to the Head, Higher Degree Administration and Scholarships Office, for forwarding to the NHMRC.*

APPENDIX II

Flinders University and Southern Area Health Service

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Research Services Office, Union Building, Flinders
University
GPO Box 2100, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Phone: (08) 8201 3116
Email: human.researchethics @flinders.edu.au

MODIFICATION APPROVAL NOTICE

Principal Researcher:	Mr Parvaz Azharul Huq

Email:	parvaz.huq@flinders.edu.au

Address:	12/2 Ayliffes Road St Marys SA 5042

Project Title:	From Project to a Process of Participatory Local Governance? A Case Study on Urban Partnership Based Development Intervention in Bangladesh

Project No.:	**4452**	Modification Approval Date:	23 May 2011	Approval Expiry Date:	**30 September 2012**

I refer to your application for a modification of the above project that has been approved previously. I am pleased to inform you that the Executive Officer has approved your request for an extension of time as outlined below:

✓	Approved Modification(s)	Details of approved modification(s)			
✓	Extension of Time:	From:	1/6/11	To:	30/9/12

Reminder: The next annual progress or final report to the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee is due on **7 August 2012** or when the project is completed, whichever is the soonest. If you require an extension of time, please send a request for an extension of time, to a date you specify, to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au before the expiry date listed above.

Andrea Mather
Executive Officer
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
23 May 2011

APPENDIX III

Assoc Prof Jo Baulderstone

Director

Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management

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/baulderstone.php

This letter is to introduce Mr. Parvaz Azharul Huq who is a PhD student at the Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management (FIPPM), Flinders University. He will produce his student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of his identity.

Parvaz is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis entitled "From Project to a Process of Participatory Local Governance? A Case Study on Urban Partnership Based Development Intervention in Bangladesh". This study will examine the role and significance of a donor supported project—LPUPAP/UPPR—in promoting participatory urban governance in Bangladesh. I would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this study, by granting an interview or joining the Focus Group Discussions that cover certain aspects of this topic.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular question(s).

Since he intends to make a tape recording of the interview, he will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed, and to make the recording available to other researchers on the same conditions (or that the recording will not be made available to nay other person). It may be necessary to make the recording available to secretarial assistants for transcription, in which case you may be assured that such persons will be advised of the requirement that your name or identity not be revealed and that the confidentiality of the material is respected and maintained.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on (+61 8) 8201 2878, fax (+61 8) 8201 5111 or e-mail jo.baulderstone@flinders.edu.au

Thank you for your attention and assistance

Yours sincerely,

Assoc. Prof. Jo Baulderstone
Supervisor Graduate Program in Public Administration

inspiring achievement

APPENDIX IV

Participant Information Sheet

I am a PhD student in the Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management (FIPPM), Flinders University. I am undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis on the subject of *"From Project to a Process of Participatory Local Governance? A Case Study on Urban Partnership Based Development Intervention in Bangladesh"*

I aim to study an on-going donor-funded development intervention in Bangladesh namely "Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project" (LPUPAP)—the first phase and "Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction" (UPPR)—the second phase; and to find out if it has increased community participation and empowerment in moving towards participatory local governance in Bangladesh.

I would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project, by granting an interview/ a focus group discussion which covers certain aspects of this topic. The interview/focus group discussion will last between one and one and a half hours. The discussion may be recorded with your consent. The location of interview will be arranged according to your willingness and consent, but may occur in a public place, if you prefer. Your information will be used only for my PhD research with the utmost confidentiality. I assure you that I will not use your name or any other identifiable personal details. Instead, I will use code numbers to ensure your anonymity. You will have to sign on a consent form provided by Flinders University.

You can withdraw from the interview/ Focus Group Discussion session at any stage. You have full rights and opportunity to withdraw your consent at any time during or after the interview. You can also decline to answer any specific question.

You can, if you wish, be given the transcript of your interview. The idea here is that I will give you the opportunity to read the transcription of your interview and make any changes that you might suggest—for example, removal of certain information, correcting the accuracy of certain statements etc. I hope that you will allow me to use these transcripts for my research.

Thanks for your cordial help and patience

Best Regards

Parvaz Azharul Huq

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APPENDIX V

Consent Form for Participation in Research
(Interview / Focus Group)

I …..…...................................

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the 'Letter of Introduction' and 'Information Sheet' for the research project on *"From Project to a Process of Participatory Local Governance? A Case Study on Urban Partnership Based Development Intervention in Bangladesh"*

1. I have read the information provided.

2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.

3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.

4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent

    Form for future reference.

5. I understand that:

    • I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.

    • I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.

    • While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.

    • I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

6. I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.

Participant's signature…………………………………Date…………………...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name…………Parvaz Azharul Huq…..................

Researcher's signature……………………………..Date……………………
NB: *Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may*

    then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.

7. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of

    my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature…………………………………Date…………………...

APPENDIX VI

Government of The Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh
Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction Project
Local Government Engineering Department
RDEC Bhaban, Level-08
Agargoan, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Dhaka-1207.

Memo no.LGED/PD(UPPRP)/G-16/2008/1938   Date: 14/12/2009

To
Mr.Parvaz Azharul Huq
Doctoral Fellow
Institute of Public Policy and Management
School of Political and International Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
Flinders University of South Australia
Adelaide, Australia
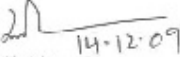
Subject: **Access to UPPRP documents for case study.**

Reference: Your letter dated 10/12/2009.

Dear Mr. Huq ,

In reference to the captioned subject and memo under reference, I am pleased to inform that you are allowed to access UPPRP documents for the case study. You are requested to make sure that these documents are to be used only for your research work.

Thanking you.

14-12-09
(Ali Ahmed)
National Project Director

Copy to:
1. Member Secretary , Town Project Board ,UPPRP , Rajshahi City Corporation, Rajshahi.
2. Town Manager ,UPPRP , Rajshahi City Corporation, Rajshahi.

APPENDIX VII

Interview Guide for Primary Group (PG) and Community Development Committee (CDC) Members (2009)

Name of the CDC: Code name of the respondent:
Age: Sex: Male/Female
Date: Time at Start: Time at End:

1. Group Membership

    I. How long have you been in this settlement (years):
       A. <5   B. 6-10   C. 11-15   D. 15>

    II. How long are you a member of LPUPAP/UPPR group?

    III. How did you come to know about LPUPAP/UPPR for the first time?
       A. Project Worker B. Neighbour C. LPUPAP members D. Community leader E. Others…

    IV. Indicate your membership status in the following groups:

Group	Yes	No	Membership Status	Period
PG				
CDC				
CDC Cluster				
Federation				

    V. How is membership or leadership of groups determined?

    VI. (This question is only for CDC Office Bearers) Were you a leader of any other organisation prior to joining LPUPAP/UPPR group?

    VII. Except LPUPAP/UPPR, of how many other groups are you or any one in your household a member?

    VIII. Why have you joined in the LPUPAP/UPPR group?

    IX. How would you describe the objectives of the project?

    X. Who do you feel represent the UPPR groups?

2. Group Activities and Participation

    I. What are the main activities performed by the LPUPAP/UPPR groups in which you are a member?

    II. How frequently groups meetings occur?

Group	Meeting Frequency
PG	
CDC	
CDC Cluster	
CDC Federation	

III. How many group meetings have you attended in the last six months? Can you discuss briefly about some major issues discussed in the meetings?

IV. Can you tell me about the group decision making process on various important issues? (Issues, way of discussion, role of group members and leaders, information sharing and influences of other actors etc.)

V. As a member of the LPUPAP/UPPR groups, did you take part in the Community Action Plan (CAP) or Town Poverty Reduction Action Planning process?

VI. If yes, tell me something about how those worked. If No, why didn't you participate?

VII. How many workshops/training programs have you attended under the project activities? How have you and your community benefited from these activities?

VIII. Tell me about the most recent sub-project that was implemented by the groups?

3. Developmental Benefits

I. Have you personally benefited from the project?   A. Yes   B. No

II. If yes, what are the benefits? (Answer could be more than one)
A. Latrine   B. PAF selection C. Tube-well near to my house D. Drain connecting my house E. Road connecting/on the way of my house F. Loan G. Others…

III. Tell me about the effect of these services (mentioned in the previous answer) on you as well as your family wellbeing?

IV. Other than LPUPAP /UPPR project, do you have other access to resources for development in your community?

V. Do you think your community, as a whole, has been benefited from the project and group activities? If yes, give details (e.g. access to health facilities, improved housing condition, better service provisioning, securing land tenure, better sanitation facilities etc.), if not why?

VI. What are the major problems in your community?

VII. Do you think that the development schemes undertaken in your settlement under the LPUPAP/UPPR corresponded with the needs and priorities of the community people?

4. Project's Impact on Community Capacity

I. Has the project contributed to community capacity? (Network, trust, cooperation etc).

II. As a group, do you think you are now in a better position to act collectively to solve community problems? If yes, please tell in detail.

III. Do you think the group activities have made the members more conscious politically and of their rights? Please give details.

IV. Have you gained knowledge about various socio-economic, political and developmental issues since joining the group (e.g. gender issue/city corporation's functions and role in local development/ Commissioner's role)?

V. (This question is only for CDC office bearers) How many demands has this CDC presented to the City Corporation and other urban service providers?

5. **Formal/Informal Institutional Relationship**

I. Do you consider yourself or any of your family members politically active?

II. If yes, do you think your or your family members affiliation to party has affected your LPUPAP/UPPR group activities?

III. Who are the influential people in your community? How they are influential?

IV. Do you have any close relations with any of them?

V. Have you met anyone of them to solve any of your problems in recent years?

VI. Do you think the elected political leaders (both national and local) put community interest above their own interest? A. Yes (go to question 8) B. No (go to question 7)

VII. How is it possible to keep them more accountable to people?

VIII. What types of services does the City Corporation usually provide to your community?

IX. Do ordinary people have any scope to participate in the decision-making process or projects undertaken by City Corporation (i.e., preparing Annual Development Plan concerning your community, building infrastructure, relief distribution)?

X. If no, to what extent do you feel that your membership has given you the chance to participate in the community and City Corporation's decision making process?

XI. Does the Ward Commissioner consult with community people before making any decision regarding your community? (Record in detail how, with whom?)

XII. How do the community people usually make their demands known to the City Corporation and other service providers?

XIII. How would you comment on the quality of the following service provided by your City Corporation?

Services	Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Road Maintenance				
Drainage System				

Street Lighting				
Waste Management				
Primary Health Care				

XIV. How can the LPUPAP/UPPR groups participate in future local development activities undertaken by the City Corporation and NGOs ?

6. Partnership

I. (This question is only for CDC Office Bearers) What are the rights and roles of the Community Development Committee (CDC) as a registered group with City Corporation? And how the CDCs practice those?

II. What are the other voluntary organisations working in this settlement?

III. If any, do you coordinate with the voluntary organisations?

7. Policy Environment

I. Do you think that decentralisation leading to devolution and participatory local governance system should be a major policy issue in Bangladesh?

II. Who are the main actors for promoting pro-participatory policy agenda in Bangladesh? (Choose three and rank)

Choices	Actors	Rank
	Political parities	
	Local civil society groups	
	National NGOs	
	Donors	
	Others………	

8. Gender Specific Questions

Questions for Female members:

I. As a woman, how do you feel about your role in managing community affairs?

II. How do your family members treat your activities?

III. How do your male counterparts treat your role and activities?

IV. As a woman, do you face any problem in participating group activities?

V. Do you think male members are willing to participate in groups under women leadership?

Questions for Male members:

I. How do you feel about women's role in community affairs?

II. Do you have any problems working under women leadership?

III. How effective have the women's group activities?

9. Background information of the Respondents and the Settlement

    I. Educational Qualification:
    A. Illiterate   B. Can Sign   C. Primary   D. Secondary   E. Higher Secondary F. GraduateF. Post-Graduate

    II. Marital Status: Single/married/widow/divorced

    III. Occupation:

    IV. Family's main wage earner's occupation:

    V. Household Monthly Income (in Bangladesh Currency):
    a.   <TK. 1000 B. TK. 1001-2000 C. TK. 2001-3000 D. TK. 3001-4000 E. TK. 4001-5000 F. TK. 5000>

    VI. Housing Status:
    A. Rental   B. Owned   C. Others……

    VII. Housing Characteristics:
    A. *Pucca*   B. *Semi-Pucca*   C. *Kacha*   D. Others…………

    VIII. In your economic crises, what are the sources of credits available to you and which sources do you prefer?

APPENDIX VIII

Interview Guide for Non-participant Community Members (2009)

Name of the CDC: Code name of the respondent:
Age: Sex: Male/Female
Date: Time at Start: Time at End:

1. Economic Status of the Respondent

    I. How long have you been in this settlement (years):
     A. <5   B. 6-10   C. 11-15   D. 15>

    II.   Educational Qualification:
     A. Illiterate B. Can Sign C. Primary D. Secondary E. Higher Secondary F. Graduate
     F. Post-Graduate

    III.   Marital Status: Single/married/widow/divorced

    IV.   Occupation:

    V.   Family's main wage earner's occupation:

    VI.   Household Monthly Income (in Bangladesh Currency):
     A. <TK. 1000 B. TK. 1001-2000 C. TK. 2001-3000 D. TK. 3001-4000 E. TK.
     4001-5000 F. TK. 5000>

    VII.   Housing Status:
     A. Rental   B. Owned   C. Others……

    VIII.   Housing Characteristics:
     A. *Pucca*   B. *Semi-Pucca*   C. *Kacha*   D. Others…………

2.   Formal/Informal Institutional Relationship

    I.   Do you consider yourself or any of your family members politically active?

    II.   Who are the influential people in your community? How they are influential?

    III.   Do you have any close relations with any of them?

    IV.Have you met anyone of them to solve any of your problems in recent years?

    V.   Do you think the elected political leaders (both national and local) put community
     interest above their own interest?   A. Yes (go to question 8)   B. No (go
     to question 7)

    VI.   If No, how is it possible to keep them more people centric to people?

    VII.   What types of services does the City Corporation usually provide to your
     community?

VIII. Do ordinary people have any scope to participate in the service and development related decision making process or in the implementation process undertaken by City Corporation (i.e., preparing Annual Development Plan concerning your community, building infrastructure, relief distribution)?

IX. Does the Ward Commissioner consult with community people before making any decision regarding your community? (in detail how, with whom?)

X. How do the community people usually make their demands known to the City Corporation and other service providers?

XI. How would you comment on the quality of the following service provided by your City Corporation?

Services	Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Road Maintenance				
Drainage System				
Street Lighting				
Waste Management				
Primary Health Care				

3. Groups, Network, Trust and Solidarity

I. I would like to start by asking you about the groups or organisations, networks, associations to which you or any member of your house hold belong. These could be formally organised groups or just groups of people who get together regularly to do an activity or talk about things. Of how many such groups are you or any one in your household a member?

II. What are the voluntary organisations working in this settlement?

III. About how many close friends do you have these days? These are people you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help

IV. In your economic crises, what are the sources of credits available to you and which sources do you prefer?

V. Generally speaking, would you say that most people in this community can be trusted?

VI. Do you think most people in this community are willing to help if you need it?

VII. In the past 12 months did you or any one in your household participate in any communal activities, in which people came together to do some work for the benefit of the community?

4. Perception about UPPR Project

I. What are the major problems in your community?

II. Have you ever heard about the LPUPAP project which is now being implemented in your community? (if No, go to question VII)

III. How you have come to know about LPUPAP project?

IV. Do you think the whole community has benefited or only some people from the project and group activities? If yes, give details (e.g. access to health facilities, improved housing condition, better service provisioning, securing land tenure, better sanitation facilities etc.), if not why and who?

V. Do you think that everyone of this community have an equal opportunity to participate in group?

VI. Why you are not participating in the group?

VII. How do you feel about the women's active role in the community affairs?

5. Policy Environment:

I. What is your idea about local government, decentralisation and participatory local governance?

II. Do you think that decentralisation leading to devolution and participatory local governance system should be a major policy issue in Bangladesh?

III. Who are the main actors for promoting pro-participatory policy agenda in Bangladesh? (Choose three and rank)

Choices	Actors	Rank
	Political parities	
	Local civil society groups	
	National NGOs	
	Donors	
	Others………	

APPENDIX IX

Interview Guide for Project Officials (National and Local), 2009

Code name of the respondent: Position:

Date: Time at Start: Time at End:

Part I: About Project Activities

1. How long have you been working with LPUPAP/UPPR project?

2. Can you briefly describe your role in LPUPAP/UPPR project activities?

3. (This question is for local project officials) Can you tell me briefly about the Community Action Plan (CAP) or Town Poverty Reduction Action Planning process (who participated, when and how)?

4. One of the main objectives of the project is to empower the poor. How far has the objective been achieved? Can you explain with examples?

5. Another important objective of the project is to build partnership among poor communities, urban local bodies, NGOs and private sector. How far has the objective been achieved? Can you explain with examples?

6. What are the other effects of the project activities on the participants and the communities as a whole?

7. On what basis do the CDCs receive project resources and services?

8. How important is the role of elected representatives of local government in the successful operation of the LPUPAP/UPPR project activities?

9. (This question is for local project officials) How do local elite interact with the community groups?

10. What are the reasons for forming separate male and female primary groups (instead of mixed groups) under the project?

11. Do you think the group activities could be continued after withdrawal of the project support?
    A. Yes   B. No

12. What would need to happen to enable them to sustain their activities?

13. What type of policy actions have been taken under the project both at the local and national levels for bringing pro-poor policy reform?

Part II: Urban Governance Issues

1. What are the major problems the City Corporation faces in providing standard services to the city population?

2. Do you think people's direct participation in the City Corporation's decision-making, implementation and evaluation process can solve some of those problems?

3. If yes, what are the areas, where people can participate directly? And how?

4. Who are the main actors in pushing forward pro-participatory policy agenda in Bangladesh? (Choose three and rank)

Choices	Actors	Rank
	Political parities	
	Local civil society groups	
	National NGOs	
	Donors	
	Others………	

APPENDIX X

Interview Guide for City Corporation's Officials (Mayors/Ward Commissioners/Non-elected permanent officials), 2009

Code name of the respondent: Date:

Time at Start: Time at End:

Part I: About Project Activities

1. How long are you involved with LPUPAP/UPPR project?

2. Indicate the type of your involvement:

Types of Involvement	Yes	No	Period (Year)
Member of the Project implementation Committee			
Member of the Project Co-ordination Committee			
Other involvement …………..			

3. Can you briefly describe your role in LPUPAP/UPPR project activities?

4. (If member any of the committees) What are the main activities undertaken by the committees of which you are a member?

5. How frequently committee meetings occur?

Committees	Meeting Frequency
Project Implementation Committee	
Project Co-ordination Committee	

6. How many group meetings have you attended in the last six months?

7. How many workshops/training programmes have you attended under the project activities? How, if at all, have you and the City Corporation benefited from these activities?

8. How do you evaluate the LPUPAP/UPPR group activities in terms of participatory urban governance?

9. Do you think the LPUPAP/UPPR group activities could be continued after the project support is withdrawn?

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10. Is there any other development programme in the City Corporation area that involves direct citizen involvement?

11. Do you think these groups can be involved in city corporation's future development initiatives? If yes, how?

Part II: Urban Governance Issues:

1. Does the City Corporation have any role in services (e.g. health, education, electricity etc.) being provided by various line agencies of the national government?

2. Does City Corporation work in partnership/collaboration with civil society organisations?

3. What are the major problems the City Corporation faces in providing standard services to the city population?

4. Do you think people's active participation in the City Corporation's decision-making, implementation and evaluation process can solve some of those problems?

5. If yes, what are the areas, where people can participate actively? And how?

6. Do you think the present urban local governance system allows meaningful citizens' participation?

7. Can you give me some idea about the budget preparation and annual development planning process of the City Corporation?

8. How do you communicate with community people regarding their needs and demands?

9. Is there any plan to introduce participatory budgeting/planning process or any such participatory processes in your City Corporation? If yes, how; if no, why?

10. Do you think decentralisation leading to devolution should a major policy issue in Bangladesh?

11. Do you think the City Corporation, as a unit of local government, enjoys sufficient power and authority to administer local issues?

12. Which levels of government do you think should be responsible for providing services like, health, education, sports, and cultural matters?

13. What is your opinion regarding the last non-democratic caretaker government's (2007-2008) policy initiatives towards strengthening

decentralised local government system in Bangladesh and the democratically elected present government's response to those initiatives?

14. Who are the main actors in pushing forward pro-participatory policy agenda in Bangladesh? (Choose three and rank)

Choices	Actors	Rank
	Political parities	
	Local civil society groups	
	National NGOs	
	Donors	
	Civil Service	
	Others………	

15. Have you ever read/heard discussion on the importance of devolution and participatory local governance in the media?
   A. Yes   B. No

16. If yes, where? (Choose the most frequent three and rank):

Ticks	Media	Rank
	Radio	
	Local Television Channels	
	Foreign Television Channels	
	Local printed Media (Newspapers/Magazines)	
	Seminars/Conferences/Workshops	

APPENDIX XI

Interview Guide for Local Government Experts, 2009

Code name of the respondent: Date:

Time at Start: Time at End:

1. How would you portray the current status of decentralised urban local government system in Bangladesh in respect of its roles, functions, authority and constrains?

2. In your opinion, who are the main actors and what are their roles in shaping the decentralisation policy in Bangladesh?

3. What is your opinion regarding the last non-democratic caretaker government's (2007-2008) policy initiatives towards strengthening decentralised local government system in Bangladesh and the democratically elected present government's response to those initiatives?

4. Which levels of government do you think should be responsible for providing services like, health, education, sports, and cultural matters etc.?

5. What are the major problems City Corporation faces in providing standard services to the city population?

6. What would be the impact of involving beneficiaries in decision-making about services they receive?

7. What are the areas, where people can participate directly? And how?

8. Now-a-days a number of donor funded projects are in operation aiming at enhancing people's direct participation in the local governance process as well as strengthening the capacity of local government bodies. How would you evaluate the impact of these development interventions in strengthening the local governance process?

9. In most of the cases, community mobilization in the form of self-help group is an integral part of such intervention (for example, LPUPAP/UPPR) through which community people participate in local planning process). Can these community groups play an important role in the local governance process even after the withdrawal of project support?

10. How far is it possible to introduce participatory urban local governance system in Bangladesh within the existing institutional setup?

11. What types of institutional changes are necessary to introduce participatory urban local governance system in Bangladesh?

12. What should be the roles of various non-state policy actors (civil society/ donors/ private sector) in bringing pro-participatory local government reform?

APPENDIX XII

Interview Guide for Local/National NGO Officials (2009)

Name of the organization: Date:

Code name of the respondent: Position:

Time at Start: Time at End:

Part I: Organisational Goals and Objectives

1. What type of programmes is your organisation implementing for the betterment of the urban poor? Can you give me some details about those programme objectives, implementation process and impacts?

2. Does your organisation work in partnership/collaboration with local government bodies/government agencies/other civil society organisations?

Part II: Urban Governance Issues

1. What are the major problems City Corporation faces in providing standard services to the city population?
2. Do you think people's direct participation in the City Corporation's decision making, implementation and evaluation process can solve some of those problems?

3. If yes, what are the areas, where people can participate directly? And how?

4. Do you think that decentralisation leading to devolution and participatory local governance system should be a major policy issue in Bangladesh?

5. Which levels of government do you think should be responsible for providing services like, health, education, sports, and cultural matters?

6. Who are the main actors in pushing forward pro-participatory policy agenda in Bangladesh? (Choose three and rank)

Choices	Actors	Rank
	Political parities	
	Local civil society groups	
	National NGOs	
	Donors	
	Others………	

7. Have you ever read/heard discussion on the importance of devolution and participatory local governance in media?

     A. Yes   B. No

8. If yes, where? (Choose the most frequent three and rank):

Ticks	Media	Rank
	Radio	
	Local Television Channels	
	Foreign Television Channels	
	Local printed Media (Newspapers/Magazines)	
	Seminars/Conferences/Workshops	
	Others………..	

9. Has your organisation ever taken any type of policy action either at local or national level for bringing pro-decentralisation/pro-participatory policy reform? If yes, can you tell me about them in details?

10. What is your opinion regarding the last non-democratic caretaker government's (2007-2008) policy initiatives towards strengthening decentralized local government system in Bangladesh and the democratically elected present government's response to those initiatives?

APPENDIX XIII

Interview Guide for Political Leaders (Local/National), 2009

Code name of the respondent: Political affiliation:

Position: Date:

Time at Start: Time at End:

Part I: Urban Governance Issues

1. What are the major problems the City Corporation faces in providing   standard services to the city population?

2. Do you think people's direct participation in the local government in matters of decision making, implementation and evaluation process can solve some of those problems?

3. If yes, what are the areas, where people can participate directly? And how?

4. Which levels of government do you think should be responsible for providing services like, health, education, sports, and cultural matters etc.?

5. Do you think that decentralization leading to devolution and participatory local governance system should be a major policy issue in Bangladesh?

6. Who are the main actors in pushing forward pro-participatory policy agenda in Bangladesh? (Choose three and rank)

Choices	Actors	Rank
	Political parities	
	Local civil society groups	
	National NGOs	
	Donors	
	Others………	

7. Have you ever had discussions with your local fellow politicians regarding the importance of devolution and participatory local governance??

8. Have you ever had discussions with national level politicians regarding the importance of devolution and participatory local governance?

9. Have you ever read/heard discussions on the importance of devolution and participatory local governance in the media?   A. Yes   B. No

10. If yes, where? (Choose the most frequent three and rank):

Ticks	Media	Rank
	Radio	
	Local Television Channels	
	Foreign Television Channels	
	Local printed Media (Newspapers/Magazines)	
	Seminars/Conferences/Workshops	

11. What should be the best policy actions to bring about pro-participatory local governance policy reform in Bangladesh? (Choose best three and rank):

Show Card

Choice	Policy Action	Rank
	Lobbying within party	
	Proposing agenda for discussion within party	
	Participating in Parliament discussion	
	Lobbying in parliament	
	Participating in national level conference, seminar	
	Participating in TV/Radio debate/talk shows	
	Others…..	

12. Have you ever taken part in any of those activities? Give details.

13. If no, do you intend to do so? Give details.

14. What is your opinion regarding the last non-democratic caretaker government's (2007-2008) policy initiatives towards strengthening decentralized local government system in Bangladesh and the democratically elected present government's response to those initiatives?

Part II: About LPUPAP/UPPR Activities

1. Have you ever hard the name of Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project/ Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction project?
   A. Yes   B. No (Ending of the interview)

2. If yes, can you tell me in details, how, when and about your personal involvement (if any)?

3. Do you have any idea about how the project works (e.g. community groups, group's development activities and other project activities)? A. Yes   B. No

4. If Yes, How do you evaluate the LPUPAP/UPPR group activities in terms of participatory urban governance?

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