Assessing Citizens' Participation at the Grassroots:
A Study of Two *Union Parishads* in Bangladesh

By

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Dedication:

Dedicated to

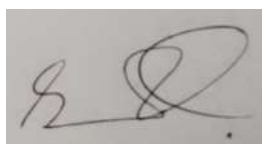My father, Mr. Saifur Rahman, is a Freedom Fighter

He would be delighted to see how far Bangladesh has come if he were still with us.

Declaration:

I certify that the thesis paper titled "Assessing Citizens' Participation at the Grassroots: A Study of Two *Union Parishads* in Bangladesh" is my original work.

I have used previous studies, expert writings from official websites, and other resources to conduct this research. Every effort has been made to acknowledge all sources appropriately. While I recognize potential human mistakes, I declare that no part of this thesis has been copied without proper citation.

The data from the study area has been analyzed and interpreted with the utmost sincerity.

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Abstract:

In the local governance structure of Bangladesh, the *Union Parishad (UP)* represents the most basic level, which, by its very nature, is run by a body of elected representatives. By way of representation, *Union Parishads* are meant to truly reflect local needs through the participation of the community people. However, such participation may not always have to be direct. However, in essence, it mandates local people's consent, often manifested by meaningful roles of standing committees in taking actions such as local-level planning, identifying local needs, and monitoring development projects. This organization possesses the ability to engage citizens in various committees and operations. In the context of regional governance in Bangladesh, the extent of citizen involvement can be effectively measured by their participation. This participation is crucial for upholding democratic processes and making effective decisions. For effective planning and development in the rural area, a strong *UP* with the active role of a standing committee is mandatory. This study is about a fresh look at citizens' participation in *UP* standing committees to ensure effective planning and development. The study's objective is to examine the level of community participation in the administrative functions of two *Union Parishads*. For this study, research questions are: To find out the answer to the objectives, the following questions should be addressed- What are the structural and institutional barriers in involving citizens' participation in the *Union Parishads*, and Why the standing committee is not functional?

Here participation means the participation of representatives jointly by the local people and citizens of that area. This study is expected to uncover findings of democratic processes at the grassroots level and identify potential areas for improvement to enhance citizen engagement. Understanding the citizens' involvement in local governance and assessing the effectiveness of the current mechanism for citizen participation are the two motivational aspects of undertaking the study. The methodology of the study is qualitative. This study seeks a Qualitative design to gain a deep, contextual understanding of citizens' behaviors, attitudes, and experiences at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. The method allows for flexibility

and exploration of complex, multifaceted issues from the participant's perspective. For this study, David Wilcox's (1994) five-stage ladder of participation (Information, Consultation, Deciding together, Acting together, and Supporting) theory has been used, which is related to the engagement of citizen participation in a government process. By analyzing the responses to the two questions, it is possible to derive valuable insights into the barriers and challenges of citizen participation and potential strategies to improve engagement and effectiveness in Bangladesh's *Union Parishads* Standing Committees. This study could help inform policies and empower local communities involved in the local governance process.

Key Words: *Citizens' participation, Local Governance, Union Parishad, Standing Committee, Community Engagement, Democratic process, Institutional Barriers, Decision making.*

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

Local governance, especially in the context of Union Parishad1 in Bangladesh, has evolved within a complex socio-political backdrop. The origin of this local government unit can be traced back to colonial times, and it is argued that it was established more as an administrative convenience rather than a local necessity. This colonial legacy has shaped the nature of local governance, often seen as an extension of the central government rather than an autonomous entity. Despite the evolution, these local units struggle with decentralization and citizen participation issues. The history and current practices suggest that these local government units serve more as a tool for the central government to extend its reach to the grassroots rather than empowering local communities and fostering bottom-up capacity building and participation. Members of Parliament (MPs) in Bangladesh significantly influence local governance, including *Union Parishads*. They often act as advisors, and their recommendations influence decision-making processes. This involvement can sometimes overshadow local leaders and affect grassroots participation.

In Bangladesh, local governance is divided into two primary categories: rural and urban. The rural areas are structured into three tiers: *Zilla Parishad, Upazila Parishad*, and *Union Parishad*. In contrast, the urban areas are organized into two levels: City Corporation and *Paurashava* (Hasina & Hasan, 2015). The concept of participation originates from the Latin word 'participation' (pars-in-action). It refers to being involved or engaging in joint or governmental activities (Kurnia, Susmiyati, & Hamzah, 2016). Participation can be categorized based on type as either direct or indirect, active or passive, symbolic or real, and complete or partial (Callahan, 2007; Dusseldorp, 1981; Richardson, 1983; Rothman, 1996). In *Union Parishad* of Bangladesh, direct participation involves the formation of a council through direct elections, participation in ward meetings, open budget meetings, participation in standing committees, and union development coordination committees by various groups of people in the society. Indirect participation includes making complaints and providing feedback on the service. A significant correlation exists between the participation of citizens and democracy (Michels & Graaf, 2017). Citizen participation

facilitates the identification of local needs and the rational distribution of limited resources. It also contributes to local-level planning and decision-making processes. Participation in the *Union Parishad* is not merely an opportunity for various individuals but also a tool for empowerment. The participatory notion of local governance is highly significant in Bangladesh, as it empowers citizens, promotes accountability, and facilitates sustainable development at the grassroots level. Effective participation by citizens takes place through their elected representatives and selected local citizens in standing committees. The main committee of *Union Parishad* is *the Union Development and Coordination Committee* (UDCC). Other gateways of citizens' participation in Union Parishad are the Standing Committee, ward meetings, and open budget meetings. My focus lies only on the Standing Committee (SC). This study aims to evaluate the character of citizen participation in the standing committee of Union Parishads, focusing on understanding how participation is operationalized and demonstrated in the local context.

1.2 Background of the study:

Article 11 of the Constitution of Bangladesh establishes the nation as a democracy that upholds fundamental human rights, freedoms, and the dignity of individuals. It also ensures that citizens actively participate in governance at all levels through their elected representatives. The *Union Parishad's* origins can be traced back to The Bengal Village *Chowkidari* Act of 1870, which aimed to maintain law and order and ensure village residents' security. The Bengal Village Self-Government Act of 1919 established the Union and District Board. Later, the Basic Democracy Order of 1959 created a four-tier system consisting of the Union Council at the union level, the Thana Council at the Thana level, the District Council at the district level, and the Divisional Council at the divisional level. The modern *Union Parishad* is an evolution of these local governance systems. The Local Government (*Union Parishad*) Act, 2009 now serves as the legal foundation for the *Union Parishad,* enhancing opportunities for public involvement in planning and executing development projects through Standing Committees (SCs). According to Section 45 of this act (Appendix A2 and A3), there is a provision for forming 13 SCs (extra SC may be formed with the permission of the Deputy

Commissioner). These SCs consist of 5-7 members with provisions for the co-option of one expert member, including elected members serving as president (a third of whom are women) and local citizens capable of contributing to the meetings. The *UP* Standing Committee is designed to support the activities of the *UP*. Without thorough verification, certain issues cannot be resolved solely by UP itself or the Union Development Coordination Committee (UDCC). In these situations, the *UP* Standing Committees conduct on-site inspections, gather public opinions, analyze the collected information, and present their findings to the *UP*. When matters are brought before the *UP* along with the committee's analysis and recommendations, it simplifies the implementation process.

 The *Union Parishad* Training Manual, published by the National Institute of Local Government (NILG, 1991), provides a thorough guide for *Union Parishads (UPs)*. It details essential rules and regulations for their effective operation. The sixth chapter, titled "Participatory Planning at the Local Level," highlights that genuine development is unachievable with a top-down approach, as it does not address the real needs of the people and excludes their involvement in decision-making. Consequently, the manual highlights the significance of participatory planning at both local and national levels (NILG, 2003:225). Different development strategies of Bangladesh have acknowledged the significance of robust *Union Parishad,* and engagement of the local people is necessary in delivering services, fostering better governance, and driving development in local government (National Rural Development Policy, 2001 and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2005).

A previous study (Pandey et al., 2011) claimed that the notion of 'citizen participation' is problematic in Bangladesh. It is a slippery concept, eye washing is not genuine, or it may shy from spontaneous and voluntary participation of people. Local governance in advanced countries has strong decision-making powers and financial resources. In contrast, Bangladesh is weaker and dependent on the higher-level government for funding and decision-making. This weakness is mainly due to historical, political, and institutional factors that have limited the devolution of power and resources to the local level. In legal terms, participation in terms of representation has been created,

and participation of women members has been made mandatory. This has extended the role of women in local-level councils, thereby making the role of women more visible. For agenda setting, the identification of local developmental needs more room for citizen participation. Citizens can be involved in the governance process through various methods, such as disseminating information, enabling participation in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation, and ensuring the equitable distribution of benefits. When we refer to effective grassroots participation, we imply people's engagement through the involvement of local members and citizens. Participation is essential for promoting transparency and accountability, resolving various issues, and planning and developing locally.

Citizen participation dates back to Plato's *Republic* and later evolved during the Roman era as a special republican right. The leaders of the French Revolution further reshaped it before fully emerging as a political concept in the 20th century. In modern democracies, citizen participation signifies individuals' direct and broader involvement in governance. Citizen participation is crucial in democratic governance for several reasons:

1. At the local level, it enhances the quality of life and improves government performance and accountability.
2. It enables local governments to understand and respond to citizens' preferences.
3. It contributes to the decision-making process by incorporating the collective wisdom of society into development initiatives.
4. It strengthens accountability by promoting justice and equality within the community.

1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study:

Citizen involvement drives development and democratic government, especially in rural regions. Active citizen participation ensures that development initiatives are responsive, enhancing their effectiveness and sustainability. In Bangladesh, *Union Parishad* Standing Committees are a key mechanism for promoting citizen participation at the local level. However, citizens' potential is often underutilized, and

there is a lack of comprehensive studies examining the reasons for this and how it can be addressed. There is a denial of involvement in local-level citizen participation. There is a kind of citizen deficit. People do not pay interest to participate. This study explores the underlying facts and issues related to the obstacles hindering citizen participation in *Union Parishads* SCs. Analyzing the current state of citizen participation in decision-making processes at the local level is critical for improving the responsiveness, accountability, and effectiveness of Bangladesh's decentralized governance system. There are many loopholes in terms of formation, finance, function, etc., in all tiers of local govt. in Bangladesh. That is why the interim government formed the "Local Government Reform Commission." Hence, this study is highly relevant from a governance perspective in the present context. This study holds significant potential for enhancing democratic governance at the grassroots level in Bangladesh and could serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and students.

1.4 Research Problem:

Standing committees are often inactive in the *Union Parishad* for various reasons (Tawfique et. al 2009). These committees play a crucial role in local governance yet often face awareness, institutional barriers, and leadership challenges. Understanding these issues is essential for enhancing citizen participation at the grassroots level. Standing committees (SCs) effectively represent citizens' interests by raising voices, setting agendas, and contributing to local development. This study proposal will identify the barriers to effective SC formation and examine citizen participation's critical role in rural development.

1.5 Objectives of the Study:

❑ To explore the major issues and causes for people's non-participation in *Union Parishad's* standing committees*.*

❑ To suggest ways of making standing committees more functional.

1.6 Research Questions:

To find out the answer to the objectives, the following questions should be addressed-

Q.1. What are the structural and institutional barriers to involving citizens' participation in the *Union Parishads standing committee?*

Q.2. What measures can make standing committees more functional?

1.7 Scope of the Study:

This study aims to contribute to the limited literature on the committee system of local government in Bangladesh. It explores how Bangladesh's policy framework can facilitate active community participation in the *Union Parishad's* decision-making process. The study also aims to broadly understand the committee's role in supporting the board or leadership team by addressing specific tasks or areas requiring concentrated attention at the lowest tier of local government.

1.8 Structure of the Study:

This study is structured into seven chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction, covering the study's background, rationale, and significance. It also outlines the research problem, objectives, research questions, scope, and the overall framework of the study. The second chapter outlines the introduction, literature review of the global context, literature review of Bangladesh context, issues generated from the literature review, identification of study problem and study gap, analytical framework, and concluding notes.

The third chapter focuses on the study design, research approaches, content analysis, principles of data collection, study site, sample selection, data collection techniques, data sources, methods of data analysis, as well as the reliability of data and the validity of inferences and limitations, and ethics.

The fourth chapter is divided into five sections, covering an introduction, *Union Parishad* at present, its responsibilities, an overview of the formation and functioning of *Union Parishad* standing committees, and concluding remarks.

The fifth chapter includes an introduction, data collection, and presentation from two selected *upazilas,* key insights from interviews, expert opinions from academicians and civil society members, public feedback, document summaries, and thematic and content analysis. The sixth chapter discusses data interpretation with theories.

The seventh chapter ties up the overall research findings, policy implications, and implications for future research and conclusion.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature and Analytical Framework

2.1 Introduction:

The literature on citizens' participation in governance highlights the critical role that grassroots engagement plays in democratic processes. Studies have shown that effective participation at the local level can enhance accountability and transparency within governmental structures. In Bangladesh, the concept of *Union Parishads* as local government bodies has been pivotal in fostering community involvement in decision-making. Previous research indicates that socioeconomic factors, political awareness, and cultural norms significantly influence participation rates among citizens. Furthermore, the effectiveness of participatory mechanisms often varies based on the socio-political context of different regions. Comparative studies of *Union Parishads* reveal disparities in citizens' engagement levels, raising questions about the underlying causes.

2.2 Literature Review: Global Context

From the latter part of the 1980s onwards, governance matters have been progressively at the forefront of the worldwide agenda for advancement. Governance quality has become increasingly important in tackling challenges and fostering socio-economic progress in lower-middle-income countries like Bangladesh. The active participation of people is essential for effective planning and development. Without the engagement of the community, development efforts may not fully address the needs and aspirations of the population. Involving citizens in decision-making ensures that plans are more inclusive, practical, and sustainable, leading to successful implementation and positive outcomes (Mira, r., & Hammadache, A.: 2017). Citizen participation entails actively involving citizens in every stage of political decision-making, ensuring their voices are heard during the formulation of policies. This involvement extends through the execution phase, where citizens help implement policies, and the assessment phase, where they evaluate the impact and effectiveness of these policies. By integrating citizens into these processes, governments can ensure that policies are more representative, equitable, and effective in addressing the community's needs (Dagnino, E., & Teixeira, A. C. C: 2014). In democratic societies,

involving citizens in local governance is crucial for maintaining accountability and transparency. This engagement ensures that public services are delivered effectively and meet the community's needs. By participating in governance, citizens help uphold democratic principles and contribute to better decision-making and outcomes (De Brito. L.: 2010).

Andrew Cornwall's (2000) collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Exchange (IDX) in Sussex concentrates on boosting citizen participation in decision-making and development initiatives. His research highlights how crucial active citizen involvement is in achieving sustainable development. By engaging citizens in decision-making, development projects become more aligned with local needs and priorities, thus enhancing their effectiveness. Cornwall's insights also underscore that effective governance relies heavily on community participation. His work provides a framework for integrating citizen engagement into development processes to ensure long-term success and accountability. In "The Applied Theatre Reader," Majed Rehnuma (2009) discusses citizen participation as a critical element of applied theater practices. He emphasizes the importance of engaging community members in the creative process, allowing them to express their voices and experiences. Rehnuma argues that citizen participation fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among individuals and enhances the relevance and impact of theatrical work in addressing social issues. By involving participants in the storytelling process, applied theater (Applied Theatre is an umbrella term for the use of theatre-based techniques to address social issues and engage communities) can become a powerful tool for reflection, dialogue, and change within communities (Prentki, T., & Preston, S.: 2009).

2.3 Literature Review: Bangladesh Context

Effective governance ensures that public resources are managed efficiently, minimizes corruption, and promotes transparency and accountability in policy implementation. Such governance practices build public trust and create a stable economic growth and development environment. According to Hasan et al. (2018), the quality of governance influences various aspects of development, including poverty reduction, education,

healthcare, and infrastructure improvement. As Bangladesh strives for higher economic status, enhancing governance quality is pivotal in overcoming barriers and achieving sustainable development goals. The study's results indicate that political complexities, institutional corruption, low levels of education, and general ignorance make it very difficult for the majority of rural residents to participate in the different avenues of the *Union Parishad* in Bangladesh (Ahmed, T., Rahman, A., & Akter, T.: 2022). Local representatives' involvement in decision-making within various standing committees is notably limited due to the inactivity of these committees. This inactivity results in few substantial meetings or engagements, diminishing the committees' overall effectiveness. Consequently, representatives are often disinterested in attending meetings, perceiving them as unproductive. The lack of involvement in financial matters, which are seen as critical and impactful, further reduces their motivation to participate. To enhance engagement, committees must be more active and involved in significant decision-making, including financial discussions (Islam, M. S., Bhuiyan, M. S., & Salam, M. F. 2019). *Union Parishad* has various strategies to guarantee citizen involvement in local governance. These strategies encompass people's direct involvement via elections, ward meetings, open budget discussions, various standing committees, etc. However, these strategies are not effectively operational in reality (Uddin, N.: 2019).

To expand the understanding of local government, they highlight the four indicators of good governance - public participation, leadership, transparency, and equality. However, the authors did not offer extensive recommendations to tackle the challenges of people's involvement in the *Union Parishad* (Panday, P. K., & Rabbani, M. G.: 2011). Engaging the community in the planning, execution, oversight, and evaluation processes ensures resource efficiency and fosters a sense of ownership among the people. Committees comprising *Union Parishad* representatives and community members effectively facilitate local development (Aminuzzaman, S.M.: 2010). Over the past thirty years, the government has faced significant challenges in achieving meaningful community participation in development initiatives. Despite these difficulties, fostering such participation remains a high priority. Ensuring effective community involvement is crucial for the success of development efforts

(Asaduzzaman, M.: 2008). Global empirical evidence highlights the significance of three critical factors - Functions, Finance, and Functionaries (the 3Fs) - for successful decentralization processes. Unfortunately, in the Bangladeshi context, an imbalance persists among these 3Fs, with Finance and Functionaries consistently posing challenges within the local government systems (Ahmed, Junaid: 2007). Achieving positive outcomes from citizen participation depends heavily on the actors involved and various contextual factors. While citizen participation is crucial, it remains underutilized in Bangladesh's local government. Political will, institutional support, and public awareness play significant roles in this scenario. Despite its potential to enhance governance and development, the engagement of the Bangladeshi people in local government processes is not yet sufficient. Consequently, there is a pressing need to address these issues to improve participation and realize its benefits ((Mahmud, S.: 2004). Active participation by the broader population significantly enhances local development. When community members are involved, development initiatives are more effective and aligned with local needs. Such engagement ensures that development efforts are sustainable and have a greater impact on improving local conditions (Rasyid, M. R.: 2003)

2.4 Identification of issues generated from the literature review:

From the provided literature review, several issues and themes can be identified:

- Community engagement in decision-making processes could often be hindered by the dominance of elites, which marginalizes the broader population and limits their participation.
- There is a significant gap in public awareness and understanding of local governance processes, such as open budget meetings and citizen involvement opportunities.
- Despite policy frameworks advocating for participatory development and good governance indicators, practical implementation remains challenging due to systemic issues within local governance structures.
- Decentralization efforts to enhance local governance and bring government closer to the people have produced inconsistent outcomes, highlighting barriers that must be addressed.

- Active citizen involvement is essential for the success and sustainability of development initiatives, but achieving meaningful participation requires overcoming institutional and cultural barriers.

- While strategies for citizen involvement exist, such as elections, ward meetings, and open budget discussions, they are not effectively implemented in practice.

- The literature highlights governance indicators but lacks extensive recommendations to address the challenges of enhancing public participation in the *Union Parishad*.

- Despite recognizing the importance of citizen participation for sustainable development, significant barriers remain, such as the imbalance among Functions, Finance, and Functionaries (the 3Fs).

- Political will, institutional support, and public awareness are insufficient, resulting in underutilized citizen participation in local governance processes.

- For development initiatives to be effective and sustainable active communities, involvement is crucial, yet achieving this remains challenging.

These issues highlight the multifaceted challenges in ensuring effective citizen participation and governance at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy reforms, enhanced public education, and active efforts to engage communities in governance processes.

2.5 Identification of study problem and study gap:

From the above literature, the following study problems and gaps were identified-

- ❑ There is a lack of comprehensive study of citizens' participation in the *Union Parishads* standing committee to enhance local-level planning in Bangladesh.

- ❑ The reasons behind the non-functionality of the standing committees and the reluctance of local representatives to participate in them need further exploration.

- ❑ To generalize or verify earlier findings, repeated study is needed to understand how to overcome the challenges hindering public engagement in standing committees, such as political complexities, institutional corruption, low education levels, and general ignorance.

❑ The effectiveness of standing committees comprising *Union Parishad* representatives and community members in facilitating local development must be studied more deeply.

In a broad sense, the above pieces of literature mention only the non-functionality of the standing committee but do not elaborate on the various reasons behind this and do not mention their role in local-level planning and decision-making properly. Furthermore, there were no marginal or peripheral area studies. Therefore, study/Research (Re+Search) = Repeated Search is needed, which could help to bridge the gap to some extent and enhance understanding of peoples' involvement in local governance. The study also endeavors to examine and verify the degree of accuracy of the conclusions drawn earlier.

2.6 Analytical framework:

David Wilcox (1994) introduced a five-stage ladder of participation (Information, Consultation, Deciding Together, Acting Together, and Supporting) to describe citizen engagement in government processes. Information and consultation are general stages, and the Deciding Together, Acting Together, and Supporting stages involve significant participation. This theory is centered around the idea of effective community involvement and empowerment. That is why this is the best model of citizen participation.

This theory is particularly relevant in Bangladesh, considering its socio-economic and political landscape. Bangladesh has seen excellent growth in the mid-1990s. Still, Bangladesh is fighting to ensure participation in local-level planning. Wilcox's citizen participation theory is suitable for Bangladesh as it highlights the need to redistribute power to ensure effective citizen participation. This aligns with the challenges faced by local governments, where central control weakens local capacity and participation. Therefore, efforts should be made to empower local governments and citizens and reduce central control to enhance bottom-up capacity building and participation.

```
        Supporting
            ▲
      Acting together          Substantial
            │                  participation
      Deciding together
            │
       Consultation
            ▼
       Information
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Degree of control
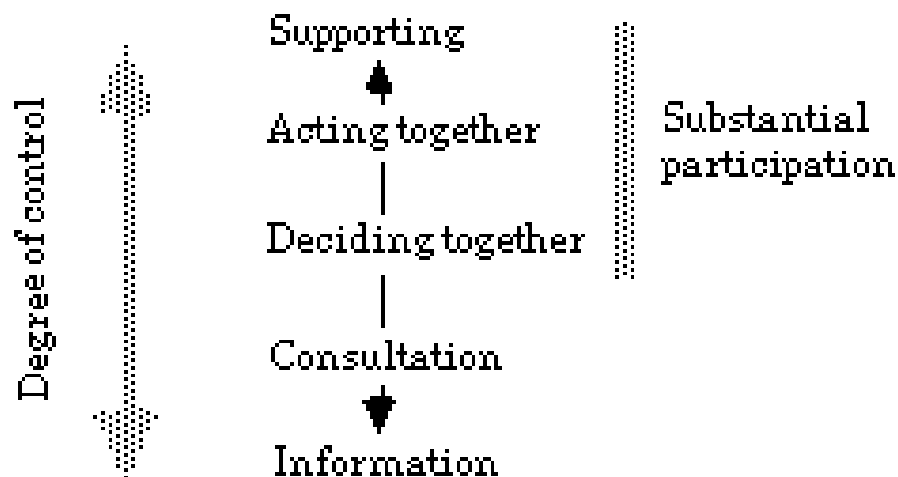
Fig 1: Wilcox's (1994) levels of citizen participation

The Wilcoxon test should be employed when the outcome variable is qualitative ordinal (freely distributable), and the samples are related to demonstrating differences between two groups, which is an essential component of participatory decision-making and development tools. At its core, a participatory method involves everyone with a stake in the intervention having a say, directly or through representation. This includes staff from the managing organization, members of the target demographic, community officials, interested individuals, and representatives from relevant agencies, schools, and other institutions. Everyone's involvement should be welcomed and valued, and the process should not be dominated by any individual or group or by a single perspective. This ideal approach consolidates the participatory method in rural development through local government efforts. However, in reality, this often differs. Some people may be reluctant to participate because they believe it is too time-consuming or lack the necessary skills. Others may feel excluded and disrespected if they are not invited to participate. Sometimes, the planning process may merely serve as a formality for pre-determined ideas. A participatory method can potentially create as many problems as excluding everyone. Community participation can be broadly defined as people in a community collaborating to address their issues.

Based on David Wilcox's five stages ladder of participation, **the conceptual or analytical framework** of the study could be structured as follows:

Stage	Definition	Analytical Framework
Information	This is the first stage of the ladder, and in this stage, citizens receive information about pre-existing plans or decisions made by the government.	In the study context, this involves gathering data on how information is disseminated at the grassroots level in the two *Union Parishads*. Assess the method used, the effectiveness of the technique, and the level of citizen awareness about local governance issues.
Consultation	This stage involves seeking the opinions of the citizens by the *Union Parishad*.	Analyze how the *Union Parishads* consult with citizens, the platforms used for consultation, and the inclusiveness of these consultations.
Deciding Together	This stage involves joint decision-making processes.	Investigate the systems established for citizen involvement in decision-making at the level of the *Union Parishad*, and assess the efficacy of these systems.
Acting Together	This stage involves participants jointly deciding and working collaboratively to implement plans.	Study instances where the *Union Parishads* and citizens have worked together to implement decisions and evaluate the success of these collaborations.
Supporting Together	This is the final stage of the ladder, where citizens initiate and direct actions, with the government in a supporting role. Here, citizens are the controllers, and power dynamics shift significantly toward citizens.	Investigate if this happens in the *Union Parishads* and how the government supports such initiatives.

Table 1: Analytical Framework

David Wilcox's five-stage ladder of participation theory is well suited for this research on citizen participation in *Union Parishads* because it provides a comprehensive framework to assess different levels of engagement. This theory helps identify where on the ladder citizens' participation currently stands, from being merely informed to taking charge in decision-making and implementation. It allows for analyzing the depth and quality of engagement, highlighting areas for improvement. By applying this framework, the study can effectively evaluate the potential and challenges in enhancing grassroots governance.

2.7 Concluding Notes:

The literature review offers a thorough foundation for the proposed study. It provides a deep insight into the subject matter, shedding light on the complexities of citizen participation. The review also delivers strong analytical underpinnings that help frame the research context. Methodological guidance is another key aspect that assists in shaping the study's approach. Additionally, it presents comparative perspectives that can enrich the exploration of grassroots-level citizen participation in Bangladesh.

Chapter Three: Methodology of the Study

3.1 Study Design:

The methodology for this study is qualitative. This study seeks a Qualitative design to gain a deep, contextual understanding of citizens' behaviors, attitudes, and experiences at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. The method also allows for flexibility and exploration of complex, multifaceted issues from the participant's perspective. The case study will be based on participant observations and utilize semi-structured, open-ended questions. This explorative research aims to discover patterns, themes, and insights within the data.

3.2 Research Approaches:

The research approaches encompass the motives and actions guiding a study, determining the transition from broad conceptual frameworks to specific data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods. These approaches involve multiple decisions, including inquiry procedures, research methods, and techniques for data handling (Creswell, 2009). This study follows an intensively qualitative approach, which is well-suited for exploring and understanding individuals' or groups' perspectives regarding social or human issues.

Qualitative research is increasingly used in policy-related studies, particularly education, information, and socio-cultural affairs. It benefits policymakers by contextualizing policies and determining their appropriateness. This approach involves data collection, analysis, and interpretation, focusing on the social world and human behaviors. Selecting appropriate methods based on the research objectives is crucial, as qualitative research is unsuitable for addressing every research question. However, qualitative methods are highly effective for in-depth exploration of specific phenomena. This approach enables direct engagement with respondents, allowing the researcher to capture their views and perspectives on the issue.

The study's methodology evolved gradually as deeper engagement in the research field led to new insights and data sources. In social science research, there is no rigid sequence for research design; rather, the study progresses as the researcher collects data and refines inquiry processes. This study aims to identify the barriers to citizen

participation in *Union Parishad* Standing Committees, adopting an inductive and qualitative constructivist perspective (Creswell, 2009). The researcher seeks to establish meaning based on participants' viewpoints, with research questions and procedures emerging throughout the study. Data collection and analysis follow an inductive approach, moving from specific details to broader generalizations. The study begins with in-depth interviews and document analysis to develop theories and derive findings. As Strauss (2008) asserts, qualitative research methods contribute to the broader generalization of collected data.

A semi-structured interview guide serves as a valuable tool for qualitative social research. According to Punch (2013), semi-structured interviews facilitate qualitative interviews and focus group discussions by allowing flexibility in participants' responses. This study's semi-structured interview guideline was essential for exploring the barriers to citizen participation in *Union Parishad* Standing Committees.

3.3 Principles of Data Collection:

Yin (2003, p. 85) highlights that no single data source has an inherent advantage over others. Instead, multiple sources complement each other, enhancing the depth and reliability of a case study. He identifies six essential sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. Furthermore, Yin (2003, p. 97) outlines three principles of data collection, which have been adhered to in this research:

1. **Use of Multiple Sources of Evidence:** To ensure data triangulation, this study incorporates various sources, including surveys, interviews, and secondary data.

2. **Creation of a Database:** The key insights from qualitative interviews have been systematically extracted and compiled in an Excel database for better organization and ease of analysis.

3. **Chain of Evidence:** A structured approach has been maintained by linking, sequencing, and cross-referencing evidence across different sections of the research to ensure coherence and credibility
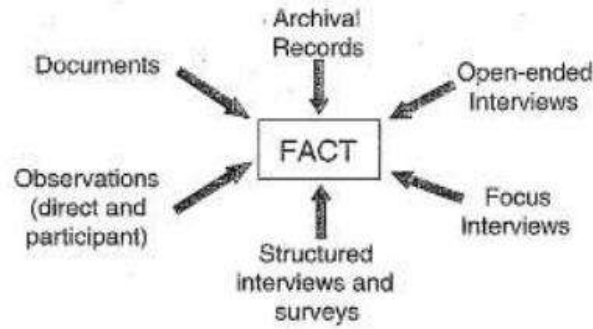
Figure 2: Principles of Data Collection (Source Yin, 2003)

3.4 Study Site: This study has been conducted in Birulia *UP* (located near the center of Bangladesh) of Savar Upazila in the Dhaka district and Chilmari *UP* (located in marginal areas in Bangladesh) of Chilmari *Upazila* in Kurigram District. Considering Dhaka's status as the capital of Bangladesh, its inhabitants have access to certain advantages compared to those residing in the Rangpur division, situated in the country's northeastern region. Though the two areas have diverse geographical and socio-economic comparisons, the study has provided a holistic understanding of citizen participation in *Union Parishad*. This study ensures that the findings are relevant and applicable to various contexts within the country. The time for data collection was one month from October to December 2024 of the recent interim government.

3.5 Sample and Data Collection Technique: The sample size has been 15*2 *Union Parishad* =30, where 20 are male and 10 are female, and the age group of the respondents is 25 to 60. Purposive sampling or judgmental sampling method has been used for selected respondents (Table). Moreover, the study has been enriched by the opinions of experts, academicians, and civil society.

Mode of Data Collection	Respondents	N 15*2= 30
Semi-structured questionnaire (Open-ended style)	Committee Members (10 M, 2 F)	12
	Political Leaders (2 M, 2 F)	4
	Govt. Officers (2 M, 2 F)	4
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Representative and Employees of *UP* (2 M, 2 F)	4
	Community leaders (2 M)	2
	People (2 M, 2 F)	4

Table 2: Categories of Respondents

3.6 Data Sources:

The study will be primarily based on raw data or firsthand information and will be corroborated by a literature review. Secondary sources like essential published articles, books, attendance, meeting minutes, proceedings of the standing committee, and review of related laws have been referred to validate the findings.

3.7 Data Analysis Method:

Creswell (2009) emphasizes that there is no single prescribed method for data analysis; rather, it is a selective and iterative process aimed at deriving meaning from collected data. In this study, the researcher has analyzed qualitative data by examining respondents' descriptions and relevant documents. Initially, raw data were transcribed systematically to ensure coherence and maintain the integrity of the evidence. According to Creswell (2009), data analysis requires continuous reflection, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into understanding, representation, and interpretation of the broader significance of the findings. In this study, written comments and verbal responses from respondents have been incorporated in the data presentation chapter in narrative form, ensuring a structured and comprehensive analysis.

3.8 Reliability of data and Validity of inferences:

Reliability and validity in data collection are crucial, as only credible data can support strong research findings. King et al. (1994) defines reliability as the consistency of results when the same procedure is repeated under identical conditions. Similarly, Yin (2003) argues that reliability aims to reduce errors and biases in a study. In this research, the interview followed a structured protocol, carefully recording details such as time, place, and date. The researcher documented respondents' answers during the interviews, ensuring that any external observer using the same procedure would likely obtain similar results. Before conducting interviews, a structured questionnaire was developed to align responses with the research objectives. Although multiple individuals were present during interviews, the researcher selected key informants from each category to ensure relevant and insightful data collection. To maintain consistency, the same set of questions was posed to all respondents, enhancing the reliability of the findings. On the other hand, *validity* refers to the trustworthiness and authenticity of

data, which is a key strength of qualitative research. To enhance validity, the study employed both interview and document analysis methods. Cross-checking data from these sources helped verify its accuracy and reliability. Therefore, it can be asserted that if another researcher used the same set of questions and interviewed the same respondents, they would likely obtain similar results, reinforcing the study's credibility.

7.9 Limitations of the Study:

❑ The study lacks proper documentation and institutional memory on citizen participation in standing committee

❑ The study has been applicable only in rural areas in Bangladesh, and this is not related to urban areas

❑ The study will not be able to capture long-term effects due to time constraints

❑ Cultural factors and local customs that influence citizen participation are fully accounted for in this study

❑ Limited resources have restricted the freedom of the study, such as the number of areas covered or the depth of the investigation

❑ The study methods used have their limitations. For example, face-to-face interviews are subject to response bias.

3.10 Ethical Issues:

In formulating the ethics statement, the following considerations should be addressed:

❑ **Informed Consent**: It obtained informed consent from participants, including Union Parishad members and other relevant stakeholders. Their voluntary participation was respected, and they had the right to withdraw at any stage.

❑ **Confidentiality and Anonymity**: Strict confidentiality must be maintained to protect privacy. All data collected (interviews, conversations, etc.) has to be anonymized.

❑ **Transparency**: It is transparent about their affiliations, funding sources, and any potential conflicts of interest. Full disclosure ensures trust and credibility.

❑ **Preventing Damage:** It was noticed to reduce harm to participants, encompassing physical, psychological, and social harm.

❑ **Beneficence**: The study's objective is to benefit the community and positively impact the local level of planning and development. It has to consider how findings can inform policy, improve practices, or enhance citizen participation.

❑ **Study Integrity**: It has conducted the study with integrity, honesty, and rigor. Data collection, analysis, and reporting are accurate and unbiased.

In summary, the ethics statement has emphasized respect, transparency, and the well-being of participants while advancing knowledge in the field of improved governance and citizen participation.

Chapter Four: Overview of the Act Related to *Union Parishad*

4.1 Introduction:

The Local Government (*Union Parishad*) Act, 2009, in Bangladesh, serves as a legislative framework that regulates the establishment and operations of *Union Parishads*, the lowest tier of local government. The act outlines the structure, powers, and responsibilities of *Union Parishads* and the standing committees, including their role in local administration, development activities, and service delivery to the community. It also provides guidelines for the election and tenure of *Union Parishad* members, ensuring democratic representation and accountability.

4.2 *Union Parishad* at present;

The Local Government (*Union Parishad*) Act of 2009 substantially changed the structure, powers, and functions of *Union Parishads* in Bangladesh. Over time, the framework of *Union Parishads* has evolved to meet public demand and political leadership, firmly grounding its legal foundation within the Constitution. The Constitution details local government institutions' formation, responsibilities, and functions in Sections 9, 10, 11, 59, and 60.

A *Union Parishad* comprises:

- One Chairman, elected directly by the Union's voters.
- Twelve members, including three reserved seats for women.
- Nine wards within each Union, with one member directly elected from each ward.
- Three reserved women members, elected by the voters of every three wards.
- Any female voter in the Union may vote for both the reserved seats and the general ward members.

The term of a *Union Parishad* is five years from its first meeting. However, if a new election is delayed, the existing UP continues to function until the next council convenes. The government provides remuneration for the chairman and members, but UPs primarily rely on government grants due to limited revenue sources.

Following the July-August 2024 revolution, Bangladesh experienced major political shifts. Nobel laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus now leads an interim government focusing on national stabilization. This has brought greater scrutiny to *Union Parishads*, emphasizing democratic governance, transparency, and citizen participation.

Key developments include:

- Increased accountability for *UP* chairmen to ensure transparency and public trust.
- Temporary appointments from the *upazila* administration in unions where elected chairmen are absent.
- Enhanced community engagement to rebuild trust in grassroots governance.
- Formation of the "Local Government Reform Commission" to propose improvements in local governance.

While the interim government operates within existing constitutional constraints, there is growing hope for meaningful reforms strengthening democratic participation and local governance. The situation remains fluid, with ongoing efforts to improve the effectiveness of *Union Parishads* in addressing local needs.

4.3 Responsibilities of *Union Parishad*:

The key functions outlined in Section 47(3) of the Local Government (*Union Parishad*) Act, 2009 underscore the extensive responsibilities of Union *Parishads (UPs)* in Bangladesh.

Summary of Key Functions of *Union Parishads*:

1. Administrative & Governance Responsibilities:

- General administration and establishment-related matters
- Assistance in law enforcement and maintaining public order
- Preventing crime, disorder, and smuggling

2. Development & Public Welfare Services:

- Implementing projects in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, livestock, education, health, and cottage industries.
- Managing irrigation, flood protection, and local economic development initiatives.
- Promoting family planning and conducting awareness campaigns.
- Encouraging the installation of sanitary latrines to improve public health.

3. Infrastructure & Resource Management:

- Developing and utilizing local resources.
- Protecting and maintaining public properties such as roads, bridges, embankments, telecommunications, and electricity lines.

4. Monitoring & Coordination with *Upazila Parishad*:

- Reviewing development projects of various government and non-government agencies at the union level.
- Submitting recommendations to the *Upazila Parishad* regarding their activities.

5. Civil Registration & Census Responsibilities:

- Registering births, deaths, blind individuals, beggars, and destitute persons.
- Conducting various censuses at the local level.

These responsibilities strengthen local governance by promoting citizen participation, service delivery, and rural development. Let me know if you need further elaboration!

4.4 Overview of formation of *Union Parishad* standing committee and functioning-
(1) As per Section 45 of the Act, the *Union Parishad* must establish Standing Committees to carry out its functions in the following areas efficiently:

(a) Finance and Administration

(b) Auditing and maintenance of accounts

(c) Assessment and collection of taxes

(d) Education, health, and family planning

(e) Agriculture, fisheries, livestock, and other economic development

(f) Development, preservation, and maintenance of rural infrastructure

(g) Law and order maintenance

(h) Birth and death registration

(i) Sanitation, water supply, and hygiene

(j) Social welfare and disaster management

(k) Environmental conservation, protection, and tree plantation

(l) Family dispute resolution, women and child welfare

(m) Culture and sports

(2) In addition to these Standing Committees, the *Union Parishad* has the authority to form additional committees with the approval of the Deputy Commissioner, as per the provisions of this Act.

(3) The chairman of each Standing Committee shall be selected from among the *Union Parishad* members, except for co-opted members. Additionally, at least one-third of the Standing Committees must be chaired by female members. However, the chairman of the *Union Parishad* will solely lead the law and order affairs committee.

(4) Each Standing Committee shall comprise five to seven members. An expert in the relevant field may be included as a co-opted member, though they will not have voting rights.

(5) Other committee members will be nominated from among residents who possess the expertise necessary to contribute to the respective committee's activities.

(6) Recommendations made by the Standing Committees will be reviewed in the subsequent *Union Parishad* meeting. If a recommendation is not accepted, the *Union Parishad* must formally communicate the reasons in writing to the committee.

(7) The decisions made by a Standing Committee will be finalized only after approval in the general meeting of the *Union Parishad.*

(8) A Standing Committee may be dissolved under the following circumstances:

      (a) If it fails to convene regular meetings as required

      (b) If it consistently fails to provide necessary guidance to the *Parishad*

      (c) If it engages in activities that violate this Act or any other relevant laws.

(9) Each Standing Committee must convene at least once every two months, with the option to hold additional meetings as needed.

(10) Regulations shall define the operational framework for the Standing Committees. Until such regulations are established, the *Union Parishad's* general meeting will determine their functions.

This section clearly shows that the Standing Committees are designed to assist the *Union Parishad* in fulfilling its responsibilities. Certain matters cannot be efficiently managed within the UP office without thorough verification. In such cases, Standing Committees conduct field visits, collect public opinions, analyze gathered data, and present their findings to the *Union Parishad* for consideration. This process facilitates more effective decision-making and implementation. Unfortunately, these Standing Committees are often not formed or do not function as intended, primarily due to a lack of awareness among local communities

4.5 Concluding remarks-

Bangladesh's Local Government (*Union Parishad*) Act, 2009, is pivotal in empowering local governance by decentralizing authority and fostering community participation. Its emphasis on transparency, accountability, and inclusive development aims to ensure a more responsive and efficient local government structure, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for citizens at the grassroots level.

Chapter Five: Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Introduction:

Understanding Citizen participation at the grassroots level is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of local governance. "Assessing Citizens' Participation at the Grassroots: A Study of Two *Union Parishad* Standing Committees in Bangladesh" employs qualitative data presentation and analysis to delve into the intricacies of citizen involvement in local governance. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, will be utilized to gather rich, detailed data. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing citizen participation, including socio-economic conditions, political dynamics, and institutional frameworks. The research aims to capture the community members' lived experiences, perceptions, and motivations by focusing on two Union Parishad standing committees.

5.2 Data collection from two selected *Union Parishad*:

5.2.1 Data Collection from Birulia *Union Parishad*:

There were three **semi-structured questions,** and respondents' remarks and responses have been recorded verbatim, which are given below-

1. Is there a regular standing committee meeting? Are you present there regularly?

Respondents uniformly reported that standing committee meetings are not held at the specified time. The provision is that meetings must be held every two months, which is not done uniformly. They remarked-

> *"Standing Committee meetings are not held every two months."*

Another emphasized that regularity could significantly enhance the committee's functionality:

> *"Although there is a provision for meeting after two months, it is not regular. Regular meetings will make the standing committee active."*

Attendance issues were also highlighted. A few members strive to attend regularly, while occasional absences are noted. Respondent said:

> *"I try to be present at standing committee meetings. One or two are absent."*

The standing committee includes women members, reflecting efforts towards gender representation. As one female respondent put it:

> "We know One-third of the standing committee chairmen are women. We try to present the meeting."

2. Is the standing committee active? If not, how can this committee be activated?

Notification of meetings seems informal and insufficiently systematic. Respondents pointed out that-

> "The secretary informs me about the Standing Committee meeting orally."

Respondents suggested that the secretary plays a crucial role in activating standing committees by emphasizing the importance of attendance:

> "The secretary has to be interested and tell us that this standing committee meeting is mandatory. Then we will be forced to come. This way, the meeting will be activated."

3. What can be done to improve citizen participation in the committees?

Respondents also highlighted hospitality and creating awareness as potential measures to boost participation. They stated that-

> "Citizen Participation can be increased by providing hospitality."

> "When there is awareness among the people, their participation will increase."

They also emphasized the importance of educating citizens on the benefits of participation:

> "People need to understand the benefits of participating. When they understand the many benefits, their participation will increase."

> "If committee members engage directly with citizens, participation will improve."

There were three **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** questions, and their remarks and responses have been recorded in verbatim which are given below-

1. Do you know about the *Union Parishad* Standing Committee?

Citizen participation remains minimal due to limited awareness and lack of information about their rights and participation opportunities. Respondents commented that-

> "We do not know if we can participate in the standing committee meeting."

Respondents highlighted a significant lack of awareness about the *Union Parishad* standing committees, their roles, and their leadership:

"We do not know anything about the 13 committees and who their chairmen are."

2. What are the main factors that hinder effective citizen participation in the *Union Parishads* Standing Committees?

Participants identified several barriers to effective citizen participation, including:

"One of the major barriers to participation in Union Parishad committees is the lack of interest among citizens, along with the absence of hospitality and honorarium."

"A key challenge to participation in Union Parishad committees is that meetings are held, but their decisions are not implemented, discouraging citizen involvement."

"The primary obstacle to citizen participation in Union Parishad committees is the lack of awareness about their existence and functions."

3. How *Union Parishad* standing committee could be activated?

Lack of awareness limits citizens' engagement and the committees' potential to mobilize community resources and insights effectively. Participants suggested that the inclusion of prominent community members could activate and lend credibility to standing committee meetings:

"If prominent people of the area were in the committee, they could activate the meeting."

"The secretary will ask our members, with the chairman's permission, to attend every meeting with 3/4 dignitaries before the meeting. Then they will activate the committee."

To increase participation, respondents suggested offering small incentives like honorariums and refreshments during meetings:

"If there is honorarium and refreshments in the meeting, the meeting will be active."

Additionally, recognizing and rewarding high-performing committee members was proposed as a motivational strategy:

"If the chairman/member of the committee who does good work can be rewarded, then that committee and other committees will start the competition. Thus, the committees will be active, and the quality of work will be increased."

Respondents identified the need for follow-up activities after committee meetings to involve citizens effectively. One respondent stated:

> "After the committee meeting, we will go to the ward and meet with the citizens. In this way, citizens can be involved."

To activate committees, respondents emphasized the importance of clear role definitions and responsibilities for committee members:

> "The committee will be active if everyone understands what their role and responsibility for the meeting is."

Some participants noted that decisions and opinions from standing committee meetings were forwarded to the main committee for consideration and, in some cases, implementation:

> "Our decisions and opinions come into the minutes of the committee, and few of them are implemented after going to the main committee."

5.2.2 Data Collection from Chilmari *Union Parishad*:

There were three **semi-structured questions,** and respondent remarks and responses have been recorded verbatim, which are given below-

1. Is there a regular standing committee meeting? Are you present there regularly?

Respondents highlighted that standing committee meetings are not held regularly as mandated. The bi-monthly schedule stipulated by the *Union Parishad* Act is not being followed:

> "Committee meetings are not conducted on a bi-monthly basis."
>
> "There is no fixed schedule. Sometimes, meetings are held without proper notice."
>
> "Meetings do happen occasionally, but participation is low."

2. Is the standing committee active? If not, how can this committee be activated?

According to the respondents, the secretary is key to engaging the standing committees by stressing the significance of attendance.

> "If the secretary emphasizes the importance and makes the standing committee meetings mandatory, attendance will be enforced. This will ensure that the meetings are productive."

"I actively participate and give my opinions, but not all members are equally involved."

"Engaging community members in the decision-making process will help activate the committee."

3. What can be done to improve citizen participation in the committees?

Respondents emphasized the role of hospitality, such as providing refreshments and honorariums, in encouraging participation:

"Providing honorarium and meal at the meeting will encourage active participation."
"Offering hospitality and rewarding for good work can enhance citizen participation."
"Providing incentives, such as food and travel allowances, will encourage attendance."

This suggests that small but tangible incentives could improve attendance and involvement in committee activities. Offering refreshments, or public recognition may serve as practical incentives to boost attendance and engagement.

Lack of awareness among citizens about the standing committees and their opportunities for participation emerged as a critical barrier:

"We are unaware of the opportunity to participate in the committee."

"Increasing awareness among the people will lead to greater participation."

The respondents highlighted the importance of educating citizens about the benefits of participation as a way to increase engagement:

"Educating people about the numerous benefits of participation will increase involvement."

This finding underscores the importance of community outreach and communication initiatives to inform citizens about their rights and roles in local governance.

There were three **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** questions, and respondents' remarks and responses have been recorded verbatim which are given below-

1. Do you know about the *Union Parishad* Standing Committee?

A significant issue was the lack of public knowledge about the standing committees and their leadership. Respondents expressed their limited awareness:

"We are unaware of the details regarding the 13 committees and the identities of their chairmen."

This lack of knowledge undermines the committees' ability to engage the community effectively. This suggests that awareness campaigns or targeted outreach programs could foster greater citizen interest and involvement.

2. What are the main factors that hinder effective citizen participation in the *Union Parishads* Standing Committees?

Several respondents pointed to insufficient hospitality and lack of honorariums as obstacles to active participation:

> *"The primary hindrances to citizen participation in Union Parishad committees are their lack of interest, insufficient hospitality, absence of honor."*
> *"The primary barrier to participation in Union Parishad committees is the lack of awareness among citizens about their existence."*

The lack of follow-up on meeting decisions was identified as a key deterrent to participation:

> *"The primary obstacles to participation in Union Parishad committees include meetings that are held but not implemented, which diminishes citizen involvement."*

This highlights the need for mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability in implementing committee decisions.

3. What can be done to improve citizen participation in the committees?

Respondents suggested that the inclusion of respected and influential individuals from the community could revitalize committee activities:

> *"If prominent people of the area were in the committee, they could activate the meeting."*

Such involvement may enhance credibility, accountability, and engagement within the committees.

5.3 The key points from the interviews: Here are the key points from the comments:

- **Irregular Meetings**: Committee meetings are not held every two months as stipulated for various reasons affecting committee activity.

- **Members Role**: The Chairman/member sometimes sits with the other members but needs to show more interest and insist on mandatory meetings to ensure attendance.

- **Committee Composition**: One-third of the committee members are women; in most cases, their opinions are not considered in the meeting.

- **Attendance**: Efforts are made to attend committee meetings, though one or two members are often absent.

- **Decision Implementation**: Decisions and opinions are recorded in the minutes, and the main committee implements few.

- **Lack of Information**: There is a lack of information from citizens about the 13 standing committees and their chairmen.

- **Citizen Involvement**: Post-meeting at ward visits can increase citizen participation.

- **Benefits and Awareness**: Citizens need to understand the benefits of participation. Awareness and understanding will drive their involvement.

- **Need for Regular Meetings**: Regular meetings are necessary to keep the committee active

- **Rewards**: Rewarding effective committee members can spur competition and improve the quality of work.

- **Activation Strategies**:
  - Involving prominent local figures.
  - Providing honorarium and refreshments at meetings.
  - Bringing dignitaries to meetings to encourage active participation.

- **Obstacles to Participation**:
  - Lack of awareness among citizens about the committees.
  - Disinterest, lack of hospitality, and honor.
  - Meetings are held but not always implemented, reducing participation.

5.4 The opinions of experts, academicians, and civil society:

Experts, academicians, and civil society (CSOs) in Bangladesh generally agree that citizen participation at the grassroots level is crucial for effective local governance. They emphasize the need for regular and inclusive meetings to ensure active involvement.

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) can be key players in mobilizing public engagement and community awareness, although their impact has been limited due to cultural and political barriers.

- NGOs have a great role in making the *Union* Members more active, assertive, and demanding, and they should be more enlightened about rural functions. Here, CSOs (NGOs) have a role in making a demand site.

- Education and awareness among citizens are highlighted as essential for increasing participation.

- Rewards and recognition for active participants can also drive engagement.

- Hospitality and honorarium during meetings can make them more attractive and encourage attendance.

- Citizen participation is linked to better decision-making and implementation of policies.

- Women members do not know their role, and she is not trained. Their enthusiasm is very high, but their shyness and preparedness are very low. They need some basic education, knowledge, basic role, and function.

- In most cases *Union Parishad* Chairman does not welcome the standing committee's decision. Naturally, there exists a power distance here. Prominent local figures can play a significant role in influencing, activating, and sustaining participation.

- Those who are opted, many of them come from the ruling party and are patronized by local power elites and, in some cases, it is alleged with the local MPs. They come here with some political views that are both positive and negative. By the way, *Union Parishad* failed to include real community members. Here, the standing committee loses inclusive character.

Standing Committee has significant potential, but over the years, it has been observed that they have not been made aware of and capacitated to engage the accountability issues of UP and represent the voice and demand of the people. Transparency and accountability in decision-making are crucial for building trust and encouraging citizen involvement.

5.5 Respondent feedback and opinion:

S. n.	*Union Parishad*	Suggestions	Occupation
1		Effective participation of the general public in Standing Committee meetings is crucial	Local elite
2		The activities of the Standing Committee should be regularly posted on the notice board	Govt.Officer
3	Birulia *Union Parishad***,** Savar, Dhaka	Standing Committee members require training	Govt. Officer
4		Standing Committees should publicly disclose their funding and expenditures	Community Leaders
5		Standing Committees should hold monthly meetings	Political leader
6		Standing Committee members should maintain regular office attendance	School teacher
7		Standing Committees should document the needs of the people during regular meetings and present them in *UP* meetings	*UP* Member
8		Committees should be assigned additional projects and provided with increased funding	Political leader
9		The number of committees should be reduced to 8 or 9	Employees of *UP*
10	Chilmari *Union Parishad*, Chilmari, Kurigram	Standing Committees should engage with the community to understand their needs and aspirations	*UP* member
11		Standing Committee members should receive an adequate honorarium for their time and efforts	Women member
12		The committees should aim to increase female representation	Women member
13		Interest and supervision of the chairman in standing committee meetings should be increased.	Community Leaders

Table 3: Respondent Feedback

5.6 The Summaries of Documents:

- There is no written notice of the meeting; it is communicated orally.

- Registers for some of the 13 committees have been found.

- Meetings are held every few months. Even in a few years, the meeting has not happened. Two *UP* have not arranged meetings since 5th August 2024, and in Birulia Union, Parishad Upazila, the women's affairs officer, instead of the chairman, is performing additional duties of his own.

- Most committees are not formed according to the Act

- The meeting is not signed by all members.

- The minutes of many meetings do not have the chairman's signature.

- Meeting decisions are general. For example, in " Agriculture, fisheries and livestock and other economic development works; standing committee," the meeting proceedings started by welcoming everyone to the meeting. The meeting ended with a request to all to work together for the betterment of the union".

- Some specific decisions and opinions come into the minutes of a few committees, and a few of them are implemented after going to the main committee.

5.7 Thematic analysis:

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data. Critical, researchable insights that relate to the study's objectives and research questions were identified through a close reading and critical review of the qualitative data generated in the interviews, focus group discussions, and public feedback.

Theme- Structural and institutional barriers to citizen participation: Irregularity of meetings of committees with frequent meetings not called by directives of *Union Parishad* is a recurring issue. This inconsistency negates the usefulness and success of the committees. In addition, meetings held without the benefit of formal written notices are without accountability, as people tend to orally 'arrange' to attend, which can be ineffective. The gap in institutional support is very much visible. Moreover, the

absence of a systematic process for the application of meeting decisions is an inhibitor of trust establishment among participants, thereby inhibiting participation for a sustained time period.

Theme- How to enhance citizen participation: Respondents pointed out the need for incentives, such as honorariums and hospitality at meetings, to encourage attendance and active involvement. It was found that there are practical measures that would recognize committee members who have contributed exceptionally and would make them experience competition and drive within the committees. Also, several prominent local figures were included on the committees to give them credibility and make other committee members more likely to sign on. In addition, post-meeting activities like ward visits to directly engage citizens were suggested as a bridging measure between *Union Parishad* standing committees and the community.

Theme- 'Citizen awareness and perception,' which was critical to the success of participation: A considerable informational deficit regarding the standing committees, including their existence, purpose, and functions, is manifested in the fact that many citizens are well aware of the various councils and committees, but not the standing ones. Beyond the ignorance about how participation matters, there exists a lack of awareness of the benefits that could come out of such participation, which further serves to lower their interest in attending to the governance processes at the local level. Specifically, the research calls for tailored awareness campaigns targeting citizens to enhance their understanding of their rights and roles in the committees. It assures the citizens of the rewards of contributing to participatory governance.

The final theme shows the effects of non-participation on governance outcomes. The issue of limited citizens' involvement in the standing committees of *Union Parishad* has significant outcomes with respect to the *Union Parishad* governance. This lack of participation does not facilitate the *Union Parishads* in framing inclusive and responsive policies, hence diminishing the effectiveness of grassroots governance. When citizens are not active, transparency and accountability that are necessary to create trust and legitimacy cannot be maintained.

Key to increasing citizen participation in *Union Parishad* standing committees is the thematic analysis, which focuses on removing the structural and institutional barriers, undertaking practical activation strategies, raising awareness, and ensuring transparent decision-making every time. The thematic analysis of this research showed some interconnected themes regarding challenges and opportunities for promoting citizen participation in *Union Parishad* Standing committees. The interplay of these findings underscores the need for far-reaching reforms that are inclusive and bonded to community participation to propel grassroots governance in Bangladesh.

5.8 Content Analysis:

Content analysis is a research method that systematically interprets and codes textual material to generate replicable and valid inferences (Krippendorff, 2004). Following Krippendorff's methodological framework, content analysis allowed for an objective review of textual materials, ensuring that primary data collected from respondents could be cross-verified against established research and official records.

This study employed content analysis to systematically interpret and analyze various textual materials concerning *Union Parishad* Standing Committees and citizen participation. The secondary data sources included government documents, policies, gazettes, and regulations related to the functioning mechanisms of local government institutions in Bangladesh. Learning about the broader institutional context within which *Union Parishads* operate and formal mechanisms for citizen participation in the Standing Committees was important.

Apart from these official documents, the study, on top of these official documents, considered theoretical research papers and academic articles and books, which offered theoretical insights regarding citizen participation in local governance. Fieldwork findings were contextualized using this literature as it added to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of improving *Union Parishad* Standing Committee citizen involvement.

It has been able to measure certain patterns and trends in the underlying functioning of these committees using analysis of meeting records, minutes, and other official documents. For example, another regularly encountered issue mentioned in the

document analysis was the consistency of committee meeting dates, as many of these committees did not follow the stipulated, bi-monthly schedule. It was identified as a major barrier to successful citizen participation, as meetings held not frequently unnecessarily lose momentum and enthusiasm. It also analyzed the content of recorded meeting minutes, showing that decisions were frequently generalized and not necessarily followed through, creating a sense of disillusionment among both citizens and committee members.

At the same time, the content analysis identified several systemic barriers to citizen participation, including a lack of awareness regarding the committees, citizen disinterest, and the lack of incentives, such as honorarium or other forms of recognition of committee members. The results of this analysis depict how structural, institutional, and cultural factors converge to limit the community's engagement with Standing Committees.

This research analyzed these documents by triangulating the results from the primary data (blending all interviews) with the secondary sources and existing literature and from the opinions of experts, academicians, and civil society organizations. It was able to get a comprehensive understanding of what is currently happening at the stage of citizen participation in *Union Parishads.* Results highlighted the importance of structural reforms for the way meetings were organized, for increasing awareness, and more needs incentives to encourage participation. Content analysis ultimately reveals constrained opportunities for meaningful citizen participation, driven partly by institutional and societal barriers, which must be addressed to create a more inclusive, functional *Union Parishad.*

5.9 Summary:

This chapter presents the collected data by evaluating research questions, problem statements, and the analytical framework. The data has been gathered through various methods, including questionnaires, interviews, content analysis, expert opinions, and observations. A qualitative analysis of citizen participation at the grassroots level, focusing on two *Union Parishad* standing committees in Bangladesh, has offered valuable insights into the complexities of local governance and community

involvement. Through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations, this study captures community members' diverse experiences and viewpoints. Building on this chapter, the next chapter will discuss the data interpretation method and its relationship to the theories and key findings and ultimately conclude the study.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 The way of data interpretation and Relationship to the theories:

Firstly, Review of primary and secondary data/information: Critical insights about the existing state of citizen participation in *Union Parishad* Standing Committees drawn from semi-structured interviews and FGDs conducted in Birulia and Chilmari *Union Parishads*. The semi-structured interviews yielded barriers to effective citizen participation that include irregular meetings, lack of awareness of the meetings, and low attendance of meetings. There were deeper insights from FGDs as participants underscored the importance of more awareness on committees, and there were incentives like honorariums or hospitality that would make people participate. To contextualize these findings, secondary data such as documents, government gazettes, and relevant literature were used to relate these findings to the larger governance framework of Bangladesh, especially concerning *Union Parishad*: a vehicle for local democracy and decision-making at the lowest level of governance in the country. However, these sources gave a meaningful understanding of what citizens experience and institutions that constrain the stakeholder commitment.

Secondly, Data interpretation from interviews and statements: Data interpretation of both areas showed that the main obstacle to citizen participation is the inflexibility of the Standing Committee meetings. In Birulia *Union*, for example, people tried to organize meetings, but the lack of a fixed schedule meant that attendance was low because several of the members were often absent. According to both Birulia and Chilmari respondents, the lack of communication between what roles and responsibilities committee members had limited their active participation. Members' statements also displayed a lack of engagement, including the demand to get known local figures and offer hospitality. In both *Union Parishads*, case studies suggest that while some meetings to talk to local dignitaries were taken, they did not always work, and there was often a disconnect between decisions and participation in making these decisions. It underscored the need for a better structured, more transparent approach to citizen participation.

Thirdly. Summarization and broad inferences regarding citizen participation: The data draw broad inferences to indicate a large degree of citizen participation in *Union Parishad* Standing Committees. Although many citizens showed interest in getting involved, there were many barriers to contributing. However, the most prominent of these were the irregularity of meetings and the absence of any constant communication by the *Union Parishads* regarding the opportunities for participation. The data showed that when meetings were scheduled, citizens were more likely to come to meetings if given clear information and given incentives such as hospitality and honorarium. Additionally, low awareness of the committees amongst citizens almost wholly declined participation. This result allows us to draw a broad inference that these structural and informational gaps, if addressed, can enhance citizen participation as per participatory governance theories that emphasize inclusivity, awareness, and incentives.

Fourthly, the participation between the two Ups will be reviewed: The comparison between Birulia and Chilmari *Union Parishads* indicated some exceptional differences regarding citizens' involvement in the development process; they also had similar problems in common. In Birulia, meetings were irregular, and there was no sustained engagement strategy; citizen participation was constrained. Some committee members tried to attend meetings, but others were absent, and decisions were seldom followed effectively. In the Chilmari *Union,* meetings were also irregular. However, while awareness was low in both *Union Parishads*, there was no clear communication over the committee's functions. This conformed to the view that local leadership and effective communication are important for promoting participation. These elements in both contexts need reinforcement to promote further citizen participation.

Finally. Assessing data/information in line with the theory: Theoretically, the data interpretation has considered against the framework of participatory governance, especially its theories **(**David Wilcox (1994) "five-stage ladder of participation" theory) of decentralization, citizen participation, and the levels of local institutions. In several key areas, the findings were aligned with the theory. First, The data shows that a lack

of communication and awareness and irregular meetings for some render citizen participation so undermined in these areas. Second, the suggestion to offer incentives such as honorarium and hospitality was compatible with how the theory emphasizes rewarding citizen participation. Finally, both *Union Parishads* showed the role of local leadership in promoting citizen participation, an issue repeatedly emphasized in governance theories arguing that good local leadership is essential for engaging grassroots democracy. The findings, overall, confirm the applicability of the Wilcox Participation theory to explain how citizen participation in *Union Parishads* is justified. It also suggests that structural reforms are needed to make participation more meaningful and inclusive.

Alignment with the stage and Analytical Framework	What I have found	Remarks
Information stage: In the study context, this involves gathering data on how information is disseminated at the grassroots level in the two *Union Parishads*. Assess the method used, the effectiveness of the method, and the level of citizen awareness about local governance issues.	Distribution of the findings based on the combination of Interviews and focus group discussions reveals a huge gap in the information of the 13 standing committees and their chairman. This lack of transparency eliminates a citizen's ability to participate effectively in the governance process due to the inability to know roles, responsibilities, and how these committees operate.	This is crucial to the alignment with Wilcox's first stage, Information, which is to have clear and easily accessible information available to the citizens all the time. The points of communicating the committees' objectives, activities, and contact details through notice boards, local media, and community meetings will be improved through publicity and the process of informed participation.

Alignment with the stage and Analytical Framework	What I have Found	Remarks
Consultation Stage: Analyze how the *Union Parishads* consult with citizens, the platforms used for consultation, and the inclusiveness of these consultations.	The second stage, Consultation, involves receiving feedback to inform citizens' decision-making. Although meetings are irregular when they occur, the authorities sometimes take consult with the citizens. There is also some informal consultation through post-meeting activities at ward visits.	Getting the secretary's role in organizing mandatory meetings and its importance in ensuring that committee members' feedback is actively sought and considered makes perfection within the consultative process impossible. Additionally, more formal occasions should be given to the citizens to voice their opinions to be heard and constitute a part of decision-making. The consultation process itself can be significantly bolstered by encouraging awareness about the significance of participation.
Deciding Together Stage: Investigate the systems established for citizen involvement in decision-making at the level of the *Union Parishad*, and assess the efficacy of these systems.	The findings of this research imply that when important local figures and dignitaries are involved and offer incentives like honorariums and refreshments during meetings, a more inclusive and collaborative decision-making environment can be brought in.	A positive step, such as having women represented in committees (one-third of members female), promotes inclusive decision-making; however, more efforts can and should be made to include diverse voices, especially voices of the marginalized, in the decision-making. It is a collective approach to deciding things, as citizens and committee members work together on key issues. This makes people more open to the issue and supports better governance.

Alignment with the stage and Analytical Framework	What I have Found	Remarks
Acting Together Stage: Study instances where the *Union Parishads* and citizens have worked together to implement decisions and evaluate the success of these collaborations.	Although people are committed to attending meetings and making decisions, the meetings are infrequent, and attendance is inconsistent, leading to ineffective or poor collaboration.	Committee members must attend meetings regularly and more consistently, and meetings held regularly must be successful for implementation. Whatever decisions are made, they should be actionable, and actions should be executed collaboratively. While there appears to be collectivity in recorded minutes and apparent implementation of decisions, leverage is in how and more frequently committees can meet and act as a collective body by making decisions to actualize for the community.
Supporting Together Stage: Investigate if this happens in the *Union Parishads* and how the government supports such initiatives.	Studies reveal that some decisions and opinions come into the minutes of a few committees, and few of them are implemented after going to the main committee. Results indicate the successes of rewards for committee members, hospitality, and greater overall awareness of the benefits of participation to enable continued engagement.	Recognition and incentives for good efforts will make the citizens feel better supported and motivated to continue participating in the association. Additionally, there are hurdles of dodging disinterest and lack of awareness that have to be overcome. With the sustained support provided that would enable citizens both institutionally and through community-based self-help schemes, citizens will be empowered. They will be encouraged to participate in future governance activities.

Table 4: Assessing data in line with the theory

Overall, the **findings suggest the partial application of Wilcox's Ladder, with certain stages not fully meeting** the ideal engagement levels outlined by the theory. The gaps and inconsistencies point to areas where effort is needed to advance toward more genuine and effective citizen participation.

Enhancing citizen participation in *Union Parishads* demands a whole approach that aligns with Wilcox's five-stage ladder of participation. In the Information stage, it is vital that transparency is maintained and that the committees provide clear and available details to the public. At the Consultation stage, actively soliciting citizen input and feedback will create a more responsive governance system. Inclusive decision-making, the promotion of strengthened by involving local influencers can enhance Deciding Together. Based on regular and consistent meetings with joint works, we can effectively implement decisions in the Acting Together stage. The Supporting stage focuses on giving various rewards, incentives, overcoming obstacles, and encouragement through a few implementations of citizens' decisions. By concentrating on these stages and addressing the barriers identified by the research, it is possible to improve citizen participation, making it more dynamic and more effective as a part of the governance at the grassroots level.

CHAPTER Seven: Significant Findings and Concluding Remarks

7.1 Introduction:

This chapter aims to conclude the study by presenting the findings in alignment with the analytical framework, research objectives, and research questions. In addition to interviews, experts' opinions, content analysis, thematic analysis, and case studies were employed to examine the state of participation at the local level. Through data interpretation, this study seeks to fulfill its research purpose and provide answers to the research questions. This study looks into how local government structural and institutional systems influence community members' participation in planning development initiatives and implementation locally.

7.2 Key Findings:

Qualitative research reveals patterns and themes in participants' experiences, providing rich, detailed descriptions that offer deep insights. It emphasizes the subjective nature of human perspectives, highlighting individual differences. The findings are closely tied to the specific context and circumstances in which the data is collected. This approach offers a holistic view, considering multiple dimensions of the research topic. It emphasizes the complexity and depth of human experiences, providing a comprehensive understanding. These elements combine to present a nuanced picture of the topic under investigation.

After examining the field data to the research questions, objectives, and analytical framework, the overall findings must be clearly outlined to highlight the significance of the study. Based on the thematic analysis provided, the findings can be summarized into several key points that relate to the challenges and opportunities for promoting citizen participation in *Union Parishad* Standing Committees:

Structural and Institutional Barriers:

- Inconsistent meeting schedules and lack of formal notices diminish the effectiveness and accountability of the committees.
- Insufficient institutional support and the absence of systematic processes for applying meeting decisions hinder sustained participation.

Enhancing Citizen Participation:

- Incentives such as honorariums and hospitality can encourage attendance and active involvement.

- Recognizing exceptional contributions and including prominent local figures can boost credibility and participation.

- Post-meeting activities, like ward visits, can bridge the gap between committees and the community.

Citizen Awareness and Perception:

- A significant informational deficit regarding standing committees' existence, purpose, and functions exists.

- Lack of awareness about the benefits of participation reduces interest and engagement in governance processes.

- Tailored awareness campaigns are needed to educate citizens about their rights and roles in the committees.

Effects of Non-Participation:

- Limited citizen involvement leads to disengagement and a lack of trust and legitimacy in governance.

- Non-participation hampers the *Union Parishads'* ability to frame inclusive and responsive policies, diminishing the effectiveness of grassroots governance.

7.3 Policy Implications-

The researcher sought recommendations from respondents, key informants, and relevant officials regarding enhancing citizen participation in *Union Parishad* standing committees. These recommendations, shaped by their insights and the researcher's experience as an administrator for over four years, are based on qualitative data and carry significant policy implications. Implementing these measures could help policymakers address the gaps in citizen engagement within *Union Parishad* committees.

a. Micro Level: Addressing Immediate Gaps in Citizen Participation

To improve grassroots participation, policies should focus on:

- Establishing a standardized budget to ensure committee members receive honorarium and hospitality.
- Providing adequate logistical support, such as a designated meeting space and awareness campaigns to inform citizens.
- Actively involving the community in the committee process as early as possible to foster engagement.

b. Medium Level: Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms

To ensure sustainable improvements, legislative measures should emphasize:

- Organizing training sessions and workshops on the roles and responsibilities of standing committee members.
- Setting up a dedicated monitoring cell to oversee committee activities and ensure proper functioning.
- Implementing a reporting mechanism that mandates regular updates to higher authorities on committee meetings and activities.

c. Macro Level: Establishing Long-Term Structural Reforms

For a long-term, sustainable approach to strengthening participation, policies should affirm:

- Creating a Local Government Commission with authoritative jurisdiction, as an advisory role alone is often ineffective.
- Allocating sufficient funds in the *Union Parishad* budget under a specific sub-head dedicated to supporting standing committee activities.

These recommendations aim to bridge existing participation gaps, ensure better local governance, and create a more effective and inclusive decision-making process in *Union Parishads.*

7.4 Implications for future research:

The empirical findings of this study highlight significant gaps in citizen participation in local governance, particularly within the *Union Parishad*, due to socio-cultural and

administrative barriers. These barriers have hindered the full realization of participatory practices in local governance. However, this study focuses only on the socio-cultural and administrative cultural factors as obstacles to citizen engagement. Future research could explore additional dimensions, such as political and economic factors, which may also serve as barriers to participation in *Union Parishad* standing committees.

The study was conducted within the context of two *Union Parishads*. While this provides valuable insights, it is important to recognize that each *Union Parishad* shares similar structural features. This enhances the authenticity and context-specific nature of the findings, providing a solid foundation for future research. Future studies can further investigate local governance trends and advancements in Bangladesh to expand on the subject matter. Additionally, there is a need for future research to explore the characteristics of open government principles and evaluate their impact on citizen participation. Such research would broaden the understanding of how public administrations dedicated to open government principles incorporate citizen participation into their decision-making processes. This type of theoretical-empirical study would be crucial for advancing knowledge in the evolving field of local governance and participatory democracy.

7.5 Concluding Remarks:

The various standing committees within *Union Parishads* play a crucial role in enabling citizen participation and contributing to effective governance. The effectiveness of these standing committees in fostering development relies on active citizen participation, institutional support, and collaborative efforts. When these components are present and functioning well, a bottom-up approach to implementation can be realized, leading to enhanced governance and better outcomes in rural development. The ultimate goal of this research is to answer the central research questions. Uncovering the factors that enable or hinder effective citizen engagement in the standing committee of *Union Parishad* is a key objective of this study.

Through a thorough review of official documents, including files, relevant records, and summaries, along with the analysis and comparison of information gathered from key respondents, the study has cross-checked and validated findings, addressing any gaps. The answers to two research questions were to learn about the structural and institutional barriers in involving citizens' participation in the *Union Parishads* standing committee and what kind of measures can be taken to make standing committees more functional. Based on the findings, it is evident that the issue of committees has not been perceived by many actors involved in the committees' operations. Ignorance and reluctance have been identified as impediments to committee effectiveness, and low member engagement in committee meetings indicates that constructive talks are not occurring. This is due to a lack of internalization of committee importance by the various actors involved in the committee process. As a result, the good operation of the committee may provide several benefits to the proper functioning of UP. First, committees allow for informal debate among members, which is necessary to form ties among individuals with differing political viewpoints. Effective distribution and utilization of resources are crucial for successfully executing participatory processes at the local level. This study aims to enhance understanding of how citizens engage with the various standing committees of the *Union Parishad* in decision-making. By investigating these dynamics, the research offers valuable insights into how *Union Parishad* standing committees can optimize citizen participation to improve governance and ensure more responsive service delivery at the grassroots level.

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Annexure A 1: The Legal Foundation of the Study

রেজিস্টার্ড নং ডি এ-১

বাংলাদেশ গেজেট

অতিরিক্ত সংখ্যা
কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত

বৃহস্পতিবার, অক্টোবর ১৫, ২০০৯

বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ

ঢাকা, ১৫ই অক্টোবর, ২০০৯/৩০শে আশ্বিন, ১৪১৬

সংসদ কর্তৃক গৃহীত নিম্নলিখিত আইনটি ১৫ই অক্টোবর, ২০০৯ (৩০শে আশ্বিন, ১৪১৬) তারিখে রাষ্ট্রপতির সম্মতি লাভ করিয়াছে এবং এতদ্বারা এই আইনটি সর্বসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য প্রকাশ করা যাইতেছে ঃ—

২০০৯ সনের ৬১ নং আইন

ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ সংক্রান্ত বিদ্যমান অধ্যাদেশ রহিত করিয়া একটি নূতন আইন প্রণয়নকল্পে প্রণীত আইন

যেহেতু, ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ সংক্রান্ত বিদ্যমান অধ্যাদেশ রহিত করিয়া একটি নূতন আইন প্রণয়ন করা সমীচীন ও প্রয়োজনীয়;

সেহেতু, এতদ্দ্বারা নিম্নরূপ আইন করা হইল ঃ—

প্রথম অধ্যায়

প্রারম্ভিক

১। **সংক্ষিপ্ত শিরোনাম, প্রয়োগ ও প্রবর্তন।**—(১) এই আইন স্থানীয় সরকার (ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ) আইন, ২০০৯ নামে অভিহিত হইবে।

(২) ইহা সমগ্র বাংলাদেশে প্রযোজ্য হইবে ঃ

তবে শর্ত থাকে যে, সরকার, সরকারি গেজেটে প্রজ্ঞাপন দ্বারা, কোন নির্দিষ্ট এলাকাকে এই আইন বা তদধীন প্রণীত বিধি বা প্রবিধানের সকল বা কোন বিধানের প্রয়োগ হইতে অব্যাহতি প্রদান করিতে পারিবে।

(৩) এই আইন অবিলম্বে কার্যকর হইবে।

(৭০০৩)
মূল্য ঃ টাকা ২৮.০০

Annexure A 2: The Legal Foundation of the Study

৪৩। পরিষদের সভায় সম্পাদনীয় কার্যতালিকা।—পরিষদের কোন মূলতবী সভা ব্যতীত পরিষদের অন্য প্রত্যেক সভায় সম্পাদনীয় কার্যাবলীর একটি তালিকা, উক্তরূপ সভার জন্য নির্ধারিত সময়ের অন্যূন ৭ (সাত) দিন পূর্বে পরিষদের প্রত্যেক সদস্যের নিকট প্রেরণ করিতে হইবে এবং সভায় উপস্থিত সদস্যগণের সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠের অনুমোদন ব্যতীত, উক্তরূপ তালিকা বহির্ভূত কোন বিষয় সভায় আলোচনার জন্য আনীত হইবে না বা সম্পাদিত হইবে না; তবে, যদি চেয়ারম্যান মনে করেন যে, এইরূপ পরিস্থিতির উদ্ভব হইয়াছে যাহার জন্য পরিষদের একটি জরুরি সভা আহবান করা সমীচীন, তাহা হইলে, তিনি সদস্যগণকে অন্যূন ৩ (তিন) দিনের নোটিশ প্রদানের পর এইরূপ একটি সভা আহ্বান করিতে পারিবেন এবং উক্তরূপ সভায় নির্ধারিত আলোচ্যসূচী ব্যতীত অন্য কোন বিষয় আলোচনা করা যাইবে না।

৪৪। পরিষদের কার্যাবলী নিষ্পন্ন।—(১) পরিষদের সকল কার্যাবলী বিধি দ্বারা নির্ধারিত সীমার মধ্যে ও পদ্ধতিতে পরিষদের সভায় অথবা স্থায়ী কমিটিসমূহের সভায় অথবা উহার চেয়ারম্যান, সদস্য, কর্মকর্তা বা কর্মচারী কর্তৃক নিষ্পন্ন হইবে।

(২) কোন পদ শূন্য থাকিলে বা পরিষদের গঠন প্রক্রিয়ায় কোন ক্রটি রহিয়াছে কিংবা পরিষদের বৈঠকে উপস্থিত হইবার বা ভোটদানে বা অন্য উপায়ে ইহার কার্যধারায় অংশগ্রহণে অধিকার না থাকা সত্ত্বেও কোন ব্যক্তি অনুরূপ কার্য করিয়াছেন কেবল এই কারণে পরিষদের কোন কার্য বা কার্যধারা অবৈধ হইবে না।

(৩) পরিষদের প্রত্যেক সভার কার্যবিবরণী এই উদ্দেশ্যে সংরক্ষিত একটি বইয়ে লিপিবদ্ধ করিতে হইবে।

(৪) সভার কার্যবিবরণী স্বাক্ষরিত হইবার পর যথাশীঘ্র সম্ভব পরিষদের সকল সিদ্ধান্ত উপজেলা নির্বাহী অফিসারের নিকট প্রেরণ করিয়া অনুলিপি ডেপুটি কমিশনারের নিকট প্রেরণ করিতে হইবে।

৪৫। স্থায়ী কমিটি গঠন ও উহার কার্যাবলী।—(১) পরিষদ উহার কার্যাবলী সুচারুরূপে সম্পাদন করিবার জন্য নিম্নবর্ণিত বিষয়াদির প্রত্যেকটি সম্পর্কে একটি করিয়া স্থায়ী কমিটি গঠন করিবে, যথা ঃ—

(ক) অর্থ ও সংস্থাপন;

(খ) হিসাব নিরীক্ষা ও হিসাব রক্ষণ;

(গ) কর নিরুপন ও আদায়;

(ঘ) শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার পরিকল্পনা;

(ঙ) কৃষি, মৎস্য ও পশু সম্পদ ও অন্যান্য অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নমূলক কাজ;

(চ) পল্লী অবকাঠামো উন্নয়ন, সংরক্ষণ, রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ, ইত্যাদি;

(ছ) আইন-শৃংখলা রক্ষা;

(জ) জন্ম-মৃত্যু নিবন্ধন;

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(ঝ) স্যানিটেশন, পানি সরবরাহ ও পয়ঃনিষ্কাশন;

(ঞ) সমাজকল্যাণ ও দুর্যোগ ব্যবস্থাপনা;

(ট) পরিবেশ উন্নয়ন, পরিবেশ সংরক্ষণ ও বৃক্ষরোপণ;

(ঠ) পারিবারিক বিরোধ নিরসন, নারী ও শিশু কল্যাণ (পার্বত্য চট্টগ্রামের অধিবাসীদের জন্য প্রযোজ্য হইবে না);

(ড) সংস্কৃতি ও খেলাধুলা।

(২) উপ-ধারা (১) এ উল্লিখিত স্থায়ী কমিটি ব্যতীত পরিষদ, এই আইনের বিধান সাপেক্ষে, প্রয়োজনে, ডেপুটি কমিশনারের অনুমোদনক্রমে, অতিরিক্ত স্থায়ী কমিটি গঠন করিতে পারিবে।

(৩) স্থায়ী কমিটির সভাপতি কো-অপট সদস্য ব্যতীত পরিষদের সদস্যগণের মধ্য হইতে নির্বাচিত হইবেন এবং মহিলাদের জন্য সংরক্ষিত আসন হইতে নির্বাচিত সদস্যগণ অন্যূন এক-তৃতীয়াংশ স্থায়ী কমিটির সভাপতি থাকিবেন ঃ

তবে শর্ত থাকে যে, ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের চেয়ারম্যান শুধুমাত্র আইন শৃংখলা বিষয়ক কমিটির সভাপতি থাকিবেন।

(৪) স্থায়ী কমিটি পাঁচ হইতে সাত সদস্য বিশিষ্ট হইবে এবং কমিটি প্রয়োজনে, সংশ্লিষ্ট বিষয়ে বিশেষজ্ঞ কোন একজন ব্যক্তিকে কমিটির সদস্য হিসাবে কো-অপট করিতে পারিবে, তবে কো-অপট সদস্যের কোন ভোটাধিকার থাকিবে না।

(৫) অন্যান্য সদস্যগণ স্থানীয় জনসাধারণের মধ্য হইতে সংশ্লিষ্ট কমিটিতে অবদান রাখিবার যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন ব্যক্তিদের মধ্য হইতে মনোনীত হইবেন।

(৬) স্থায়ী কমিটির সুপারিশ পরিষদের পরবর্তী সভায় বিবেচনার পর গৃহীত হইবে; তবে কোন সুপারিশ ইউনিয়ন পরিষদে গৃহীত না হইলে তাহার যথার্থতা ও কারণ লিখিতভাবে স্থায়ী কমিটিকে জানাইতে হইবে।

(৭) স্থায়ী কমিটির সকল কার্যধারা পরিষদের সাধারণ সভার অনুমোদন সাপেক্ষে চূড়ান্ত হইবে।

(৮) নিম্নলিখিত কারণে পরিষদ কোন স্থায়ী কমিটি ভাঙ্গিয়া দিতে পারিবে, যথা ঃ—

(ক) বিধি মোতাবেক নিয়মিত সভা আহ্বান করিতে না পারিলে;

(খ) নির্ধারিত ক্ষেত্রে ক্রমাগতভাবে পরিষদকে পরামর্শ প্রদানে ব্যর্থ হইলে; অথবা

(গ) এই আইন বা অন্য কোন আইনের বিধান বহির্ভূত কোন কাজ করিলে।

(৯) প্রত্যেক স্থায়ী কমিটি প্রতি দুইমাস অন্তর সভায় মিলিত হইবে, তবে প্রয়োজনে অতিরিক্ত সভা অনুষ্ঠান করিতে পারিবে।

(১০) স্থায়ী কমিটির কার্যাবলী প্রবিধান দ্বারা নির্ধারিত হইবে, তবে উক্তরূপ প্রবিধান প্রণীত না হওয়া পর্যন্ত পরিষদের সাধারণ সভায় স্থায়ী কমিটির কার্যাবলী নিরূপন করা যাইবে।

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(গ) পরিষদের সচিবের নিকট হইতে পরিষদের প্রশাসনিক বিষয় সংক্রান্ত যে কোন ক্লাসিফাইড রেকর্ড বা নথি লিখিতভাবে তলব করিতে এবং আইন ও নির্ধারিত পদ্ধতিতে আদেশ প্রদান করিতে পারিবেন; তবে তিনি এইরূপ কোন ক্লাসিফাইড রেকর্ড বা নথি তলব করিতে পারিবেন না, যাহা সম্পূর্ণরূপে সচিব বা সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্মকর্তার নিজস্ব তত্ত্বাবধানে থাকিবে;

(ঘ) এই আইন বা বিধি, প্রবিধান, ইত্যাদির পরিপন্থী এবং প্রশাসনিক বিশৃঙ্খলা সৃষ্টির কারণে ইউনিয়ন পর্যায়ে কর্মরত কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীসহ পরিষদের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন অন্যান্য কর্মচারীদের বিরুদ্ধে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের নিকট প্রয়োজনীয় আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য প্রতিবেদন প্রেরণ করিতে পারিবেন;

(ঙ) তাঁহার বিবেচনায় পরিষদের কোন সিদ্ধান্ত এই আইন বা অন্য কোন আইন বা বিধি-বিধানের পরিপন্থী হইলে, অথবা উক্তরূপ সিদ্ধান্ত বাস্তবায়িত হইলে উহা জনস্বাস্থ্য, জনস্বার্থ ও জননিরাপত্তা বিপন্ন করিবে বলিয়া বিবেচিত হইলে, তিনি উহা সরকারের নিকট প্রেরণ করিবেন।

(৬) পরিষদের নির্বাহী বা অন্য কোন কার্য পরিষদের নামে গৃহীত হইয়াছে বলিয়া প্রকাশ করা হইবে এবং উহা নির্ধারিত পদ্ধতিতে প্রমাণিকৃত হইতে হইবে।

(৭) পরিষদের দৈনন্দিন সেবা প্রদানমূলক দায়িত্ব ত্বরান্বিত করিবার লক্ষ্যে কর্মকর্তাদের মধ্যে নির্বাহী ক্ষমতা বিভাজনের প্রস্তাব পরিষদের সভায় অনুমোদিত হইতে হইবে এবং, প্রয়োজনবোধে, সময়ে সময়ে, ইহা সংশোধনের এখতিয়ার পরিষদের থাকিবে।

৪৭। পরিষদের কার্যাবলী ।—(১) পরিষদের প্রধান কার্যাবলী হইবে নিম্নরূপ, যথাঃ—

(ক) প্রশাসন ও সংস্থাপন বিষয়াদি;

(খ) জনশৃঙ্খলা রক্ষা;

(গ) জনকল্যাণমূলক কার্য সম্পর্কিত সেবা; এবং

(ঘ) স্থানীয় অর্থনৈতিক ও সামাজিক উন্নয়ন সম্পর্কিত পরিকল্পনা প্রণয়ন ও বাস্তবায়ন।

(২) উপ-ধারা (১) এ উল্লিখিত প্রধান কার্যাবলীর উপর ভিত্তি করিয়া পরিষদের কার্যাবলী দ্বিতীয় তফসিলে বর্ণিত হইল।

(৩) উপ-ধারা (১) ও (২) এ যাহাই থাকুক না কেন, বিশেষ করিয়া, এবং উক্তরূপ উপ-ধারাসমূহের সামগ্রিকতাকে ক্ষুণ্ন না করিয়া, সরকার সংরক্ষিত আসনের মহিলা সদস্যদের দায়িত্ব ও কর্তব্য বিধি দ্বারা নির্ধারণ করিতে পারিবে। তবে ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের উন্নয়ন প্রকল্পের (টি,আর,কাবিখা, থোক বরাদ্দ ও অন্যান্য) সংশ্লিষ্ট ওয়ার্ডের এক তৃতীয়াংশ উন্নয়ন প্রকল্প বাস্তবায়ন কমিটির চেয়ারম্যানের দায়িত্ব সংরক্ষিত মহিলা আসনের সদস্যকে অর্পণ করিতে হইবে।

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দ্বিতীয় তফসিল

(ধারা ৪৭ দ্রষ্টব্য)

ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের কার্যাবলী

১।   পাঁচশালা ও বিভিন্ন মেয়াদী উন্নয়ন পরিকল্পনা তৈরী।

২।   পল্লী অবকাঠামো উন্নয়ন, সংরক্ষণ ও রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ।

৩।   শিক্ষা এবং প্রাথমিক ও গণশিক্ষা কার্যক্রম সম্পর্কিত

৪।   স্বাস্থ্য, পরিবার পরিকল্পনা সম্পর্কিত কার্যক্রম বাস্তবায়ন।

৫।   কৃষি, মৎস্য ও পশুসম্পদ ও অন্যান্য অর্থনৈতিক উন্নয়নে প্রয়োজনীয় কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ।

৬।   মহামারী নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও দুর্যোগ ব্যবস্থাপনায় প্রয়োজনীয় কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ।

৭।   কর, ফি, টোল, ফিস ইত্যাদি ধার্যকরণ ও আদায়।

৮।   পারিবারিক বিরোধ নিরসন, নারী ও শিশু কল্যাণ সম্পর্কিত প্রয়োজীয় কার্যক্রম সম্পাদন।

৯।   খেলাধুলা, সামাজিক উন্নতি সংস্কৃতি ইত্যাদি কার্যক্রমে প্রয়োজনীয় উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ ও সহযোগিতা প্রদান।

১০।   পরিবেশ উন্নয়ন ও সংরক্ষণে প্রয়োজীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ।

১১।   আইন শৃংখলা রক্ষায় সরকারের অর্পিত দায়িত্ব পালন ও প্রয়োজনীয় কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ।

১২।   জন্ম-মৃত্যু নিবন্ধীকরণ।

১৩।   সরকারি স্থান, উন্মুক্ত জায়গা, উদ্যান ও খেলার মাঠের হেফাজত করা।

১৪।   ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের রাস্তায় ও সরকারি স্থানে বাতি জ্বালানো।

১৫।   বৃক্ষরোপণ ও সংরক্ষণ এবং বৃক্ষসম্পদ চুরি ও ধ্বংস প্রতিরোধ।

১৬।   কবরস্থান, শ্মশান, জনসাধারণের সভার স্থান ও অন্যান্য সরকারি সম্পত্তির রক্ষণাবেক্ষণ ও পরিচালনা।

১৭।   জনপথ, রাজপথ ও সরকারি স্থানে অনধিকার প্রবেশ রোধ এবং এইসব স্থানে উৎপাত ও তাহার কারণ বন্ধ করা।

১৮।   জনপথ ও রাজপথের ক্ষতি, বিনষ্ট বা ধ্বংস প্রতিরোধ করা।

১৯।   গোবর ও রাস্তার আবর্জনা সংগ্রহ, অপসারণ ও ব্যবস্থাপনা নিশ্চিত করা।

২০।   অপরাধমূলক ও বিপজ্জনক ব্যবসা নিয়ন্ত্রণ।

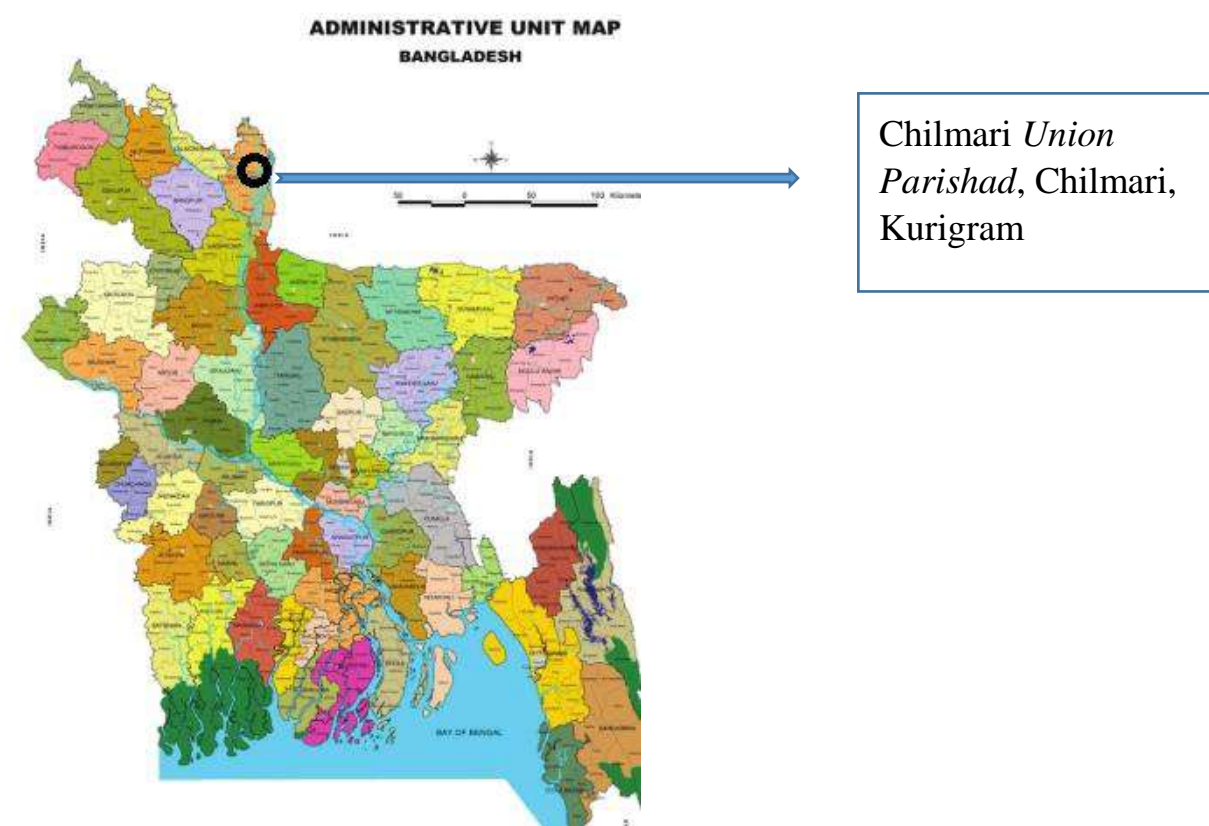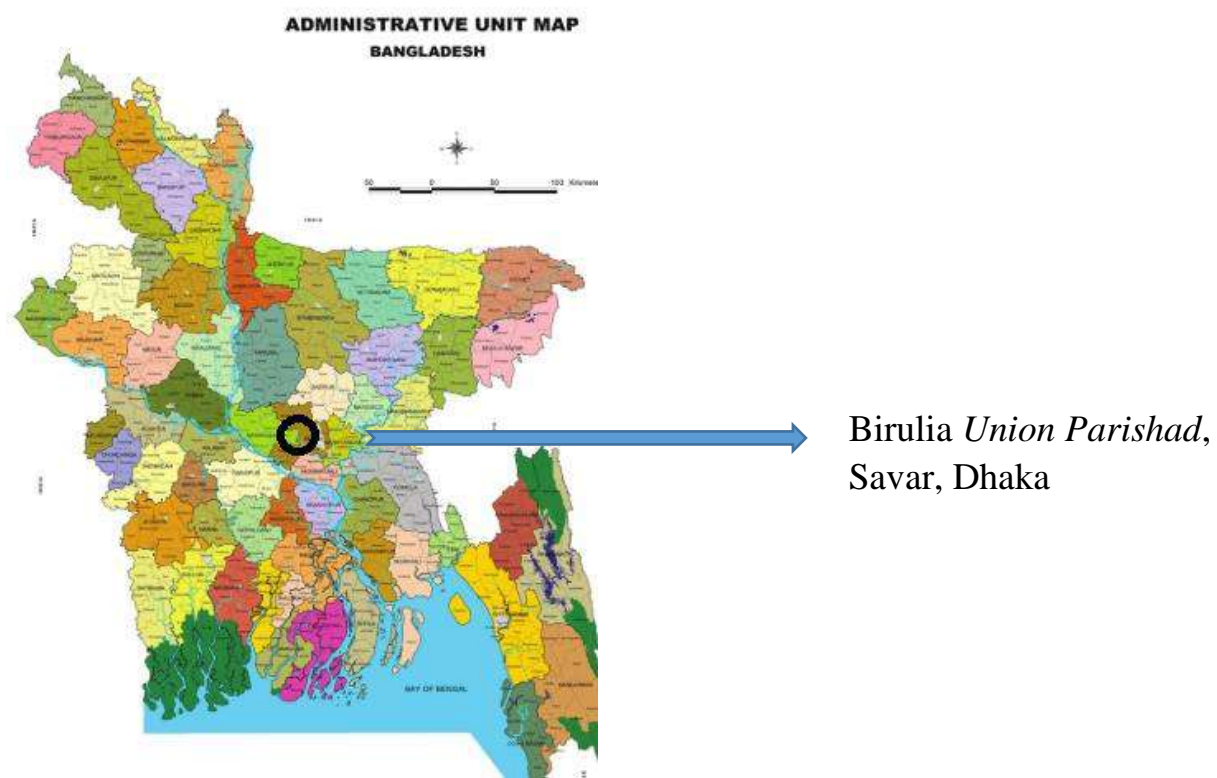২১।   মৃত পশুর দেহ অপসারণ ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ এবং পশু জবাই নিয়ন্ত্রণ।

Annexure A 6: The Legal Foundation of the Study

২২। ইউনিয়নে নতুন বাড়ি, দালান নির্মাণ ও পুনঃনির্মাণ এবং বিপজ্জনক দালান নিয়ন্ত্রণ।

২৩। কূয়া, পানি তোলার কল, জলাধার, পুকুর এবং পানি সরবরাহের অন্যান্য উৎসের ব্যবস্থাপনা ও সংরক্ষণ।

২৪। খাবার পানির উৎসের দূষণ রোধ এবং জনস্বাস্থ্যের জন্য ক্ষতিকর সন্দেহযুক্ত কূপ, পুকুর বা পানি সরবরাহের অন্যান্য স্থানের পানি ব্যবহার নিষিদ্ধ করা।

২৫। খাবার পানির জন্য সংরক্ষিত কূপ, পুকুর বা পানি সরবরাহের অন্যান্য স্থানে বা নিকটবর্তী স্থানে গোসল, কাপড় কাঁচা বা পশু গোসল করানো নিষিদ্ধ বা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা।

২৬। পুকুর বা পানি সরবরাহের অন্যান্য স্থানে বা নিকটবর্তী স্থানে শন, পাট বা অন্যান্য গাছ ভিজানো নিষিদ্ধ বা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা।

২৭। আবাসিক এলাকার মধ্যে চামড়া রং করা বা পাকা করা নিষিদ্ধ বা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা।

২৮। আবাসিক এলাকার মাটি খনন করিয়া পাথর বা অন্যান্য বস্তু উত্তোলন নিষিদ্ধ বা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা।

২৯। আবাসিক এলাকায় ইট, মাটির পাত্র বা অন্যান্য ভাটি নির্মাণ নিষিদ্ধ বা নিয়ন্ত্রণ করা।

৩০। অগ্নি, বন্যা, শিলাবৃষ্টিসহ ঝড়, ভূমিকম্প বা অন্যান্য প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগ মোকাবিলায় প্রয়োজনীয় তৎপরতা গ্রহণ ও সরকারকে সার্বক্ষণিক সহায়তা প্রদান।

৩১। বিধবা, এতিম, গরীব ও দুঃস্থ ব্যক্তিদের তালিকা সংরক্ষণ ও সাহায্য করা।

৩২। সমবায় আন্দোলন ও গ্রামীণ শিল্পের উন্নয়ন ও উৎসাহ প্রদান।

৩৩। বাড়তি খাদ্য উৎপাদনের ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ।

৩৪। গবাদিপশুর খোয়াড় নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও রক্ষণাবেক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করা।

৩৫। প্রাথমিক চিকিৎসা কেন্দ্রের ব্যবস্থা করা।

৩৬। ইউনিয়নের বাসিন্দাদের নিরাপত্তা, আরাম-আয়েশ বা সুযোগ সুবিধার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় অন্যান্য ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ।

৩৭। ই-গভর্ণেন্স চালু ও উৎসাহিতকরণ।

৩৮। ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের মত সদৃশ কাজে নিয়োজিত অন্যান্য সংস্থার সাথে সহযোগিতা সম্প্রসারণ।

৩৯। সরকার কর্তৃক সময়ে সময়ে আরোপিত দায়িত্বাবলী।

Annexure B: List of Maps

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT MAP
BANGLADESH

Birulia *Union Parishad*, Savar, Dhaka

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT MAP
BANGLADESH

Chilmari *Union Parishad*, Chilmari, Kurigram

Annexure C: Questionnaire

<u>**Title: Assessing Citizens' Participation at the Grassroots:**</u>
<u>**A Study of Two *Union Parishads* in Bangladesh**</u>

<u>**Research Questions:**</u>

Q. 1. What are the structural and institutional barriers to involving citizens' participation in the *Union Parishads standing committee?*

Q. 2 What measures can be taken to make standing committees more functional?

<u>**Research Strategy:**</u>

The methodology for this study is qualitative. The case study will be based on semi-structured questions and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The study will be primarily based on raw data or firsthand information and will be corroborated by a literature review. Review of documents like essential published articles, books, attendance, meeting minutes, policy documents, and the formation, functions, and proceedings of the standing committee of the *Union Parishad* will be referred to validate the findings.

<u>**Proposed Questionnaire:**</u>

To assess citizens' participation at the grassroots at the *Union Parishad* level (Standing Committee) in Bangladesh, the following questions are designed/formulated:

<u>**Semi-Structured Questionnaire:**</u>

1. Is there a regular standing committee meeting? Are you present there regularly?
2. Is the standing committee active? If not, how to activate this committee?
3. What can be done to improve citizen participation in the committees?

<u>**Focus Group Discussion (FGD-Discuss with a small group of people):**</u>

1. Do you know about the *Union Parishad* Standing Committee?
2. What are the main factors that hinder effective citizen participation in the Union Parishads Standing Committees?
3. How *Union Parishad* standing committee could be activated?

<u>**From the above questions what to be derived?**</u>

By analyzing the responses to these questions, it is possible to derive valuable insights into the barriers and challenges of citizen participation, as well as potential strategies to improve engagement and effectiveness in the *Union Parishads* Standing Committees in Bangladesh.

Annexure D: Approval of Research Protocol

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board/ Ethics Review Committee
(IRB/ERC)

ADM 625, Plot: 15, Block: B,
Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229,
Bangladesh.
PABX: +88-02-55668200, Ext: 6465

Memorandum
2024/OR-NSU/IRB/1003

Date: 14 October 2024

To: Sadequr Rahman
                   Student
                   Department of SIPG

                   Dr. M. Mahfuzul Haque [Supervisor]
                   Associate Professor
                   Department of SIPG

From: Dr. Dipak Kumar Mitra
                   Chairman
                   NSU Institutional Review Board/ Ethics Review Committee

Chairman
NSU Institutional Review Board/
Ethics Review Committee (IRB/ERC)

Subject: Approval of Research Protocol #2024/OR-NSU/IRB/1003

Dear Sadequr Rahman,

Thank you for your application requesting for approval of your research protocol #2024/OR-NSU/IRB/1003, titled "Assessing Citizens' Participation at the Grassroots: A Study of Two Union Parishads in Bangladesh". I am glad to inform you that the committee has approved your research protocol. You will be required to observe the following terms and conditions in implementing the research protocol:

1. As principal investigator, the ultimate responsibility for scientific and ethical conduct including the protection of the rights and welfare of study participants vest upon you. You shall also be responsible for ensuring competence, integrity, and ethical conduct of other investigators and staff directly involved in the research protocol.

2. You shall conduct the activity in accordance with the IRB-approved protocol and shall fully comply with any subsequent determinations by IRB.

3. You shall obtain prior approval from the IRB for any modification in the approved research protocol and/or approved consent form(s), except in case of emergency to safeguard/eliminate apparent immediate hazards to study participants. Such changes must immediately be reported to the IRB Chairman.

4. You shall recruit/enroll participants for the study strictly adhering to the criteria mentioned in the approved research protocol.

5. You shall obtain legally effective informed consent (i.e. consent should be free from coercion or undue influence) from the selected study participants or their legally responsible representative, as approved in the protocol, using the approved consent forms prior to their enrollment in the study. Before obtaining consent, all prospective study participants must be adequately informed about the purpose(s) of the study, its methods and procedures, and also what would be done if they agree and

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also if they do not agree to participate in the study. They must be informed that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they can withdraw their participation any time without prejudice. Used consent form should be preserved for a period of at least three years following official termination of the study.

6. You shall promptly report the occurrence of any Adverse Event or Serious Adverse Event or unanticipated problems of potential risk to the study participants or others to the ERC in writing within 24 hours of such occurrences.

7. Any significant new findings, developing during the course of this study that might affect the risks and benefits and thus influence either participation in the study or continuation of participation should be reported in writing to the participants and the IRB.

8. Data and/or samples should be collected, as specified in the IRB-approved protocol, and confidentiality must be maintained. Data/samples must be protected by reasonable security, safeguarding against risks as their loss or unauthorized access, destruction, used by others, and modification or disclosure of data. Data/samples should not be disclosed, made available to or use for purposes other than those specified in the protocol, and shall be preserved for a period, as specified under NSU policy/practices.

9. You shall promptly and fully comply with the decision of IRB to suspend or withdraw its approval for the research protocol.

10. You shall report progress of research to the IRB on annual basis.

I wish you success in running the above-mentioned study.

cc: 1. Recording Secretary, NSU IRB/ERC