



The local government system in Bangladesh

Local government information correct as of 2009



Key facts

POPULATION (Census 2001): 124,355,263

AREA: 143,998 sq km

CAPITAL: Dhaka

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION TO GDP: -

CURRENCY: taka (BDT)

HEAD OF STATE: President Zillur Rahman

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: democratic republic

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: unicameral

STATE STRUCTURE: unitary

LANGUAGES: Bangla (official)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS: last: 2009; turnout: 74.9%;

next: 2014

LOCAL ELECTIONS: upazila parishad last: 2009;

turnout: - next: 2014

municipal and city last: 2008; turnout: -

next: 2013

2.2 Main legislative texts:

The main legislation on local government is:

- The Hill District Local Government Parishad Act 1989
- The Zila Parishad Act 2000
- The Local Government (Pourashava) Ordinance 2008
- The Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 2008
- The Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Ordinance 2008
- The Local Government (City Corporation) Ordinance 2008.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state:

Bangladesh has 64 administrative districts and below this a tiered system of local government comprising rural councils, or parishads, and urban municipalities.

3.2 Ministerial oversight:

The Local Government Division (LGD) within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and Cooperatives (MLGRDC) is responsible for development and implementation of legislation regulating local government, with the exception of the Hill District Local Government Parishad Act 1989, which is administered by the Ministry of Hill Tract Affairs.

3.3 Council types:

Local government is divided into rural, urban and hill districts which have more or less similar functions. Urban authorities are single-tier and include six city corporations and a number of town pourashavas. Rural local government has three tiers: 61 zila (district) parishads, 469 upazila (sub-district) parishads, and 4,484 union parishads. There are also three hill district parishads.

The six city corporations are: Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet. Other towns are governed by pourashavas, which provide services to towns with populations of at least 15,000. The zila parishads are the largest rural authorities with average populations of 1,997,150. The largest zila parishad is Dhaka district with a population of 8.57 million, and the smallest is Meherpur with a population of 579,531. Upazila parishads and union parishads

SUMMARY

Bangladesh is a democratic republic with two spheres of government: national and local. Local government is enshrined in the constitution and the main legislative texts include several 2008 local government Ordinances, the Zila Parishad Act 2000 and the Hill District Local Government Parishad Act 1989. The Local Government Division within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and Cooperatives is responsible for local government, with the exception of the hill district parishads, which are under the Ministry of Hill Tract Affairs. There are 64 administrative districts and below this a tiered system of local government comprising single-tier urban authorities comprising six city corporations and a number of town pourashavas; and three tiered rural local government comprising 61 zila (district) parishads, 469 upazila (sub-district) parishads, 4,484 union parishads, and three hill district parishads. All local governments have the power to levy taxes and rates and the range of functions for which each type of authority is responsible varies widely from amongst many other things public health and hospitals, education and social welfare for city

corporations and pourashavas to implementation of development projects, public libraries and roads for Upazila and union parishads.

1. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Bangladesh is a democratic republic with a unicameral parliament called Jatiya Sangsad. The head of state is the president, who is indirectly elected by members of the parliament for a maximum of two five-year terms. The 345 members of parliament are directly elected by universal adult suffrage, and include 45 seats reserved for women. The president appoints the leader of the majority party as prime minister and head of government. On the advice of the prime minister the president appoints the cabinet, which currently has 45 members.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions:

Local government is enshrined in the constitution of Bangladesh as follows: 'Local government in every administrative unit of the republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law.' (...) 'Parliament shall, by law, confer powers on the local government bodies to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds.'

Table 2. Budget for Dhaka City Corporation (2007/2008)

Revenue (2007/2008)	DTbn	Expenditure (2007/2008)	BDTbn
Government transfers	9.6	Administrative and operational	n/a
Local tax	23	Service delivery	n/a
Rents	10	-	-
Sales	2.4	-	-
Other	0.9	-	-
TOTAL	47.8	TOTAL	23.9

Source: Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives

are intermediate levels with average populations of 264,841 and 27,463 respectively. Twenty-three per cent of the population lives in urban areas.

3.3.1 Urban councils: The heads of city corporations and pourashavas are called mayors. Members are called councillors, and mayors and all councillors are directly elected every five years. There are specific numbers of reserved seats for women, who are elected directly.

3.3.2 Zila parishads: The law stipulates that there shall be a council for each district except the three hill districts. A zila parishad will consist of a chairman, 15 open seats and five additional women's reserved seats. The chairman and the members are elected by an electoral college.

3.3.3 Upazila and union parishads: The chairman and all the members – including women members holding reserved seats – are directly elected. The chairmen and members work full-time and receive an honorarium, which is fixed by the government. According to existing legislation the upazila parishad councils must consist of a directly elected chairman, representative members, women members in reserved seats, and official members. The representative members are the upazila parishad chairmen and pourashava chairmen of each upazila. All heads of government departments working in the upazila are ex-officio members without voting rights.

Table 1. Distribution of local authorities and population:

No information has been provided for this section of this edition.

4. ELECTIONS

No information has been provided for this section of this edition.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

No information has been provided for this section of this edition.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There are three main associations of local government: the Association of Union Parishads, the Association of Upazila Chairmen and the Association of Pourashava Mayors. These give support to the chairmen of union parishads, upazila parishads and pourashavas on their rights, privileges and welfare. Membership is voluntary. Legislation does not provide for any formal establishment of associations.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The MLGRDC promotes intergovernmental relations.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

There are a number of bodies that provide scrutiny of local governments, including auditors and inspectors responsible for local government.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Locally raised revenue:

All local governments have the power to levy taxes and rates. There are no aggregate figures available; however, the main sources of local government revenue are as follows:

- Income from taxes, rates, tolls, fees and other charges
- Rents and profits from property
- Grants made by the government
- Profits from investments.

9.2 Transfers:

No information has been provided for this edition.

9.3 Local authority staff:

In the upper tiers of local government each council recruits its own senior staff. The government recruits the staff in lower tiers of local government. Powers of disciplining and dismissal remain with the original recruiting authority. From time to time central government staff are seconded to local government to fill senior positions such as the chief executive.

The larger authorities are required to have a

chief executive, secretary and chief finance officer. The districts must also have an engineer. The head of the paid service is normally referred to as the chief executive officer. Local authorities may propose their own internal organisation but the Ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives must give approval.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

10.1 City corporations and pourashavas:

The main functions of the city corporations and pourashavas are:

- Water, sanitation and drainage
- Refuse collection and disposal
- Registration of births, deaths and marriages
- Public health, hospitals, health centres and medical aid
- Bathing and washing places, dhobi ghats
- Fisheries, milk processing and markets
- Slaughter-houses
- Animal husbandry, livestock, stray and dangerous animals, animal homes and farms
- Buildings control and regulation, development plans and community development projects
- Public streets
- Traffic control
- Civil defence, floods, famine and fire service
- Burial and burning places
- Arboriculture, gardens, open spaces and forests
- Education
- Culture
- Libraries
- Fairs and shows
- Social welfare.

10.2 Zila parishads and hill district parishads:

The main statutory functions are:

- Implementation of development projects
- Public libraries
- Roads, culverts and bridges not covered by upazila parishads, pourashavas or the central government
- Gardens, playgrounds, open places and trees



in public areas

- Ferry ghats which are not maintained by upazila parishads, pourashavas or the central government
- Rest-houses and inns
- Encouraging and assisting upazila parishads
- Implementing the development plan assigned by the central government.

Discretionary services include:

- Education and culture
- Social welfare
- Financial welfare
- Public health
- Public works.

10.3 Upazila and union parishads are responsible for:

- Developing agriculture, forests, fisheries, livestock, education, health, cottage industries, communication, irrigation and flood protection
- Family planning promotion
- Developing local resources
- Public property such as roads, bridges, canals, embankments, telephones and electricity lines
- Reviewing the development activities of other agencies
- Encouraging sanitation
- Registration of births, deaths, blind people, beggars and destitute people
- Administering the Census.

The union parishads also have responsibility for:

- Law and order
- Prevention of crime, disorder and smuggling
- Maintaining the civil status register.

References and useful websites

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www.bbs.gov.bd
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www.hdr.undp.org
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8. UN: human settlements country paper: Bangladesh
www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/country/bangladesh/bangladesh.html
9. Bangladesh local democracy website
www.local-democracy.org
10. Bangladesh Electoral Commission
www.ecs.gov.bd/English



Annex A. Summary of service provision in different spheres of government

Service	Delivering authority						Remarks
	Central Government	Zila Parishad	Upazila Parishad	Union Parishad	Gram Sarkar	City Corp Pourashava	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION							
Police	■			■			
Fire protection	■						
Civil protection	■						
Criminal justice	■			■			
Civil status register				■	■		
Statistical office	■						
Electoral register	■						
EDUCATION							
Pre-school		■	■	■		■	
Primary	■	■	■	■		■	
Secondary	■	■					
Vocational and technical	■						
Higher education	■						
Adult education	■	■	■	■	■	■	
SOCIAL WELFARE							
Kindergarten and nursery		■	■	■		■	
Family welfare services	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Welfare homes	■						
Social security	■						
PUBLIC HEALTH							
Primary care	■	■	■	■		■	
Hospitals	■	■				■	
Health Protection		■	■	■		■	
HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING							
Housing	■						
Town planning	■					■	
Agriculture Land planning	■						
TRANSPORT							
Roads	■	■	■	■		■	
Transport	■	■	■	■		■	
Urban roads	■						
Urban Public Transport	■						
Ports	■						
Airports	■						
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION							
Water and sanitation	■	■	■	■		■	
Refuse collection and disposal		■	■	■		■	
Street management						■	
Slaughterhouses		■	■	■		■	
Cemeteries and crematoria							
Environmental protection	■	■	■	■		■	
Consumer protection	■	■					
CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS							
Theatre and concerts	■	■	■	■		■	
Museums and libraries	■	■	■	■		■	
Parks and open spaces	■	■	■	■		■	
Sports and leisure	■	■	■	■		■	
Religious facilities	■	■	■	■		■	
UTILITIES							
Gas services	■						
District heating							
Water supply	■	■	■	■			
Electricity	■						
ECONOMIC							
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	■	■	■	■			
Economic promotion	■	■	■	■	■		
Trade and industry	■						
Tourism	■	■	■	■		■	
Other economic services	■	■	■	■		■	