# Capacity Assessment of Local Institutions
## for SHOUHARDO Program



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# *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

## *Background: Development as Institutional Capacity*

Effective and proactive participation of the common mass in all development activities requiring a vibrant, dynamic, transparent, and people centered local institutions may be considered as necessary precondition of sustainable development. The degree and form of inclusion of the common mass in development process varies because it does not only depend on decentralization of government but also on the capacity relevant local institutions. Local institutions are integral parts of the governance process at the local level. In recent years, these organizations in Bangladesh have been increasingly attracting more attentions in local level governance process.

Many institutions and organizations have initiated a number of different programs and projects for building community awareness, strengthening and capacity building of local institutions and policy advocacy for legal reform and decentralization. Recently CARE has undertaken a new project "Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities" **(SHOUHARDO)**: a five-year program covering periods from October 2004 to September 2009**.** The overall program goal is **"to sustainably reduce chronic and transitory food insecurity of 400,000 vulnerable households in 18 districts of Bangladesh, by 2009."** SHOUHARDO program activities are largely implementing in partnership with NGOs, CBOs, research institutions, university and private sector etc. As a consequence, the program involves the nation building departments (NBDs)/ Union Parishads, Govt. service providers, local NGOs, Village Development Committees (VDC), Paurashava (PS), City Corporation, Slum Development Committee (SDC). As a result one of the primary focuses of the program is to build and improve capacities of these institutions in various forms. The broader objective of the study is to develop a comprehensive baseline in terms of capacity of the relevant institutions in congruence with the Indicators Performance Tracking Table (IPTT), Performance Management Plan (PMP), and Management Scores Sheets (MSS).

## *Methodology*

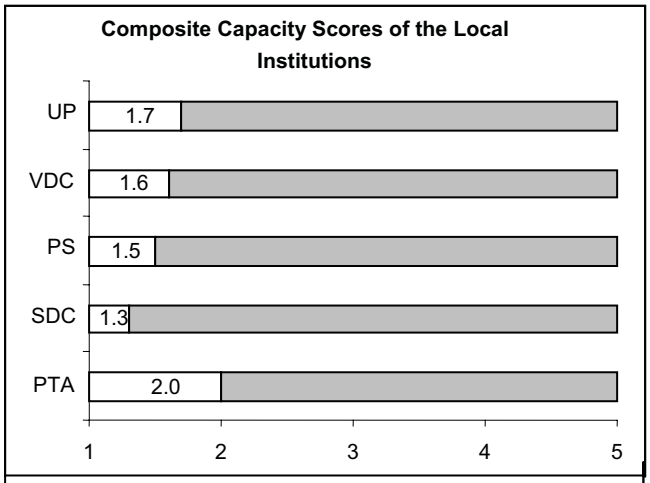
The study was designed to permit analysis of the baseline status of local government institutions in terms of their capacity regarding knowledge and practices of roles and functions of the Institutions concerned. The sample local institutions were selected using appropriate sampling procedure. For attaining the purpose the total study design has been split into two broad segments namely, quantitative survey and qualitative methods. Union was considered as PSU and the survey was conducted in 36 Union Parishad, 4 Paurashava, and 1 City Corporation which also included other local institutions like VDC, SDC, and PTA. Several types of service providers at local level were included in the quantitative/qualitative survey, but the principal focus was on elected representatives of local government institutions and secretary of UP/PS and office bearers of VDC/SDC. Eleven different types of data/information collection instruments/tools have been developed and used for generating multidimensional data/ information from various categories of respondents/participant. The methodology used to estimate the pre-project (baseline) capacity status of Union Parishad/ Paurashava/ City Corporation in terms of knowledge has been assessed using different numbers of components for different institute assigning equal weights to each component. Similarly, to assess the pre-project capacity of the VDC/SDC/PTA office bearers, efforts were given to collect the data/information as they possessed just after the formation of VDC/SDC/PTA without attending any training related to the program. Each respondent in the questionnaire survey was requested to assess capacity status based on knowledge indicators using a qualitative value scale. The scale was prepared considering the specificity

and nature of each indicator. The scale contained qualitative value labels (likert scale) and quantitative (numeric) interpretations for each of the labels. Value against each indicator was quantified in a scale of 1 through 5 with 1 representing lowest and 5 representing highest capacity score. The numeric interpretations were entered into the computer, and recalculated using a common base.

### *Key Findings*

Capacity status of the local Institutions as well as its elected members including the secretary is expressed through a single value (ranging from 1 and 5). This composite capacity score is estimated by analyzing the information on numbers of components of diverse utilities which varied Institute to Institute collected from different sample unions.

The **overall composite average capacity score** of the Union Parishads is 1.7, which indicates its closeness to level *'poor'* or unsatisfactory on the scale but not enough to say *'good'*. The component wise overall scores range between 1.2 and 2.7, (i.e. between *'very poor'* and nearly to '*good')*, which distinctly demonstrate a low capacity status of UP and not enough to run an institution like Union Parishad meaningfully and therefore is of great concern.




*Note*: Five point Likert scale, where lowest value is 1 and highest value is 5

The ***composite capacity score by agents*** varies between 1.5 (very poor) and 1.9 (poor) depending on agent category. Score of the UP Chairman is the highest stands at 1.9 (ranging between 1.4 and 3.1 by components) or in other words almost '*poor'.* Next to highest score is obtained by the Union Parishad Secretary, stands as 1.7 (ranging between 1.2 and 2.8), also close to '*poor'*. The Male UP member's average score is1.6 (ranging between 1.1 and 2.4). The least score is obtained by the UP Female members, 1.5 (ranging between 1.1 and 2.0) and literally to say close to '*very poor'.*

To illustrate the overall awareness of UP Chairman regarding the functions and committees of Union Parishad, it is observed that 20% of the sample chairman aware about all (10) the obligatory functions and nearly 7% about all (38) optional functions of UP. Likewise, 30% of the Chairman aware about all (13) standing committees and nearly 11% about 12 general committees. The awareness of other UP agents on functions and committees of UP is less than the UP Chair. It is lowest for the UP female member.

Of all 10 obligatory functions, the UP representatives and Secretaries are more aware of 3 functions namely *'maintenance of law and order*', '*adoption and implementation of development scheme*', and *'review development activities of all development agencies'* and are least aware of other 7 functions.

Out of 38 optional functions, the knowledge level of UP Chairmen, members and secretaries is higher on 2 functions '*the roads and other infrastructure support*' (59%), followed by '*help widow and orphans*' (55%). However, on 23 optional functions components their knowledge level is very low (below 10%).

Overall three-fourths (75%) of UP officials seem to be unaware of the UP **Standing Committees**. Their average score on this issue is 1.3. Except 'Law and order Committee' and 'Education and Mass Education Committee' their knowledge on other committees is very poor.

Most of them are also in dark about the number and existence of specific **General Committees**. The average knowledge score on General Committee is 1.4, implying very poor knowledge of UP officials about the functions of General Committees.

Their knowledge on ***all other capacity issues*** like (governance, human rights, woman human rights, community participation, development planning and management, ensuring community participation in preparation of UP annual development plan, participation of UP women members in development program, how UP can assist ultra poor, marginalized, distressed and indigenous people in the locality, functions of Village Court, preparation of inventory, importance of death and birth registration, local resource generation, essential factors of leadership, and Coordination with other departments), were found low for all the UP agents.

However, most of UP agents are aware of '*road construction and maintenance'*, 'S*halish',* '*birth registration*', '*relief distribution*', and '*maintenance of law and order situation*'. But they seldom differentiate between mandatory and optional functions. They confuse the standing and general committees with the committees on financial matters. Their knowledge about general committees is further disappointing.

The ***resource allocation for poor in union level*** is not enough accomplishing all activities of UP. Among poor who are vocal in the community were given humanitarian assistance in form of relief, VGD or VGF card.

For ***Standing Committee***, the overall composite capacity status of the Union Parishads in terms of ***practice or outcome*** based on 7 indicators is 12.5%, which can be labeled as *'very poor'* or unsatisfactory/low.

For ***General Committee***, the overall composite capacity of the Union Parishads in terms of ***practice or outcome*** based on 7 indicators is 10.7%, which indicates a *'very poor'* or unsatisfactory/low level.

The overall composite capacity score comprising of 14 components of the ***Village Development Committee (VDC)*** is 1.6 (Chairperson 1.6, Secretary 1.5), which suggests unsatisfactory states of VDC as regard to its competency. The component wise overall scores range between 1.1 and 2.2, indicating a low grade capacity status of VDC. The average knowledge score of VDC Chairpersons and Secretaries on the issues of UP Standing Committee is 1.4 and 1.3 respectively. For UP General Committee, the average knowledge score of VDC Chairpersons and Secretaries is 1.5 and 1.3 respectively.

For ***Village Development Committee***, the average overall composite capacity in terms of ***practice or outcome*** is 57%. In terms of 'committee headed by female members' the capacity is very low (14%).

The overall composite capacity score of the ***Paurashava*** is 1.5 in terms of 13 components of diverse utilities, which indicates its closeness to level *'very poor'* or unsatisfactory on the scale. The component wise overall scores range between 1.1 and 2.3. The average overall knowledge score for Secretary is the highest (1.7) followed by Chairperson (1.6), Female Commissioner (1.5) and Male Commissioner (1.4) respectively. All of them had very low score on 'functions of sub-committees' and 'ways to ensure participation of slum dwellers'. However, it has been observed that all the Chairmen, 66% of the Secretaries, and 50% of

the Male and Female Commissioners had some knowledge on slum dwellers related activities.

Among the 12 studied components, the overall composite capacity score of the ***Slum Development Committee (SDC)*** is 1.3 (range between 1.1 and 2.0), worse than VDC and suggests a 'very poor' status of SDC as regard to its functional capability. The composite score of Chairman and Secretary is also low (1.3 each). Against all the 9 knowledge based sub-components on ***Paurashava Sub-Committees***, the overall composite score of the key SDC agents on Paurashava Sub-Committees is found as 1.1 (SDC Chairman 1.1 and for SDC Secretary 1.0), which suggests a 'very poor' position.

The overall composite capacity score of the ***Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)*** in terms of its 24 indicators is 2.0, which indicates its closeness to level *'somehow functional'*. Their knowledge status should be uplifted through training for enhancing their capacity. As there is a mixture of different levels of education among the PTA members, training methods should be designed accordingly.

Under the ***Paurashava Committees and Sub-committees***, the overall composite capacity of the *Paurashava* in terms of practice or outcome of the Financial Sub-Committee, Administrative Sub-Committee, Bazar Sub-Committee and Arsenic Mitigation Committee the response was very poor, which indicates that these committees and sub-committees are either not formed or non-functional. Among other committees, the 'Tender Sub-committee' was found most functional.

Regarding capacity of ***City Corporation***, the composite indicator shows that the overall score is 1.5, 'very poor' on status of SDC as regard to its functional capability. Regarding standing committees of the City Corporations, on an average, the commissioners are familiar with 3 committees, namely 'finance and establishment'; 'health and sanitation'; and 'water and electricity'.

The overall **composite capacity score of the agents** of Union Parishads in terms of 5 indicators of ***knowledge on reason for participating in Upazilla coordination meetings*** is 1.7, which indicates an 'unsatisfactory' level with a knowledge gap of 3.3. The overall composite capacity score of the Union Parishads in terms of 8 indicators of ***knowledge on nation building organizations*** is 2.7, which still indicates an 'unsatisfactory' state with a knowledge gap of 2.3. In both of these the score of Chairman was the highest and Female UP Member the lowest.

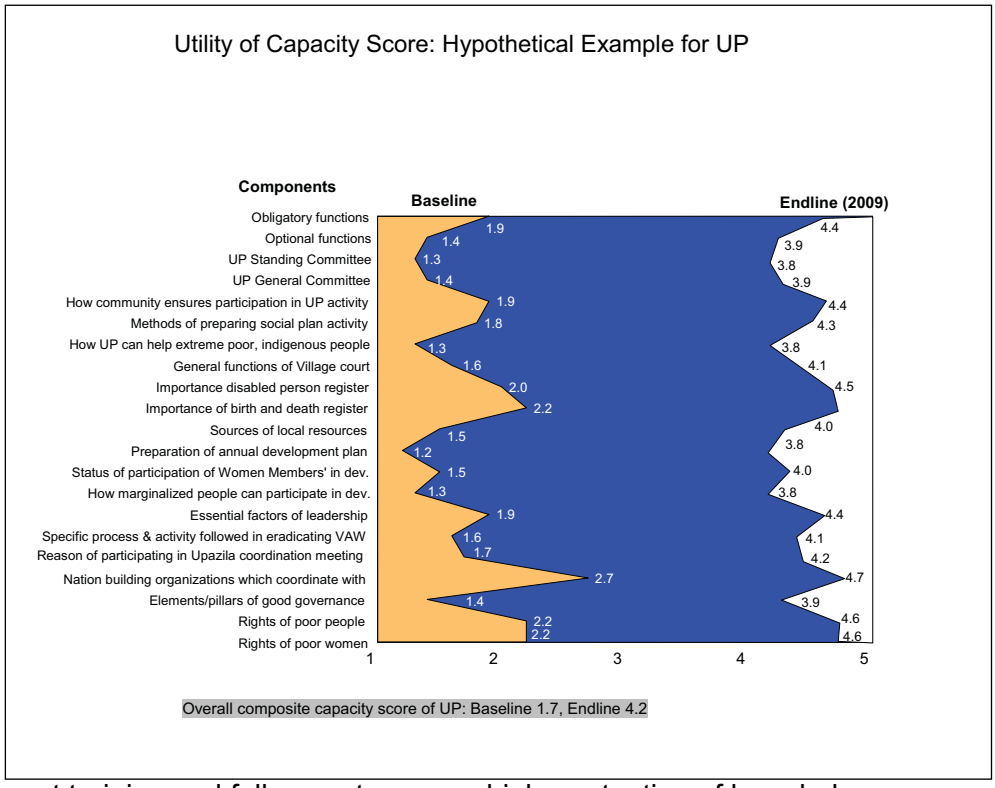
The ***obstacles/barriers faced*** in provision of service by the service provider are due to religious fanaticism, lack of education, belief in traditional culture and taboo, lack of timely supply of agricultural inputs, low level of economic solvency, lack of knowledge about right to bargain, problem in payment of loan to very poor, lack of manpower, lack of higher training, problem of communication, problem of shelter (in char area), and non-cooperation of UP. For Public Health the problem in site selection of tube-well was mentioned, which is done by Chairman and Members now.

Regarding ***receipt of training*** about the services which they are supposed to provide to most of the service providers from Social Welfare Department, BRDB, and Public Health mentioned that they didn't receive any such training worth-mentioning. Others received some training which they said is inadequate. Regarding ***co-operation from UP***, all service providers except those in the Livestock, Fisheries, and SAAO informed that they receive cooperation.

## *Suggestions and Recommendations*

Following are the specific suggestions and recommendations with the rationales regarding capacity development of various agents in the local government bodies.

1. The capacity score devised in the study will have high programmatic implication. The utility of capacity score is that the desired/expected outcome of project interventions can be measured effectively at the end of the project in one hand, and on the other, the extent of capacity enhancement can be assessed instantly by comparing with that of the baseline status. A hypothetical example of such relationship has been presented below in the form of an area graph for easy understanding and/ visual impression.




2. Repeat training and follow-up to ensure higher retention of knowledge.

3. Capacity building training for UP Chair on Standing Committees and General Committees in general and on how UP can help extreme poor, indigenous and marginalized people in the locality; how the marginalized people can be participated in development program, and how to enhance women member's participation in development projects in particular.

4. Capacity building training for other UP agents on obligatory functions especially on the following functions -- promotion of primary health care, conduction of census, death and birth registration, promotion of family planning, development of local resource and its utilization, and facilitate them to its practices.

5. All UP agents also need training about optional functions especially:

   - ✓ How UP can help extreme poor,
   - ✓ indigenous people, and marginalized people in the locality;
   - ✓ Preparation of annual development plan of UP;
   - ✓ Status of participation of Women Members' in development project;
   - ✓ How the marginalized people can participate in development program;
   - ✓ Specific process and activity followed in mitigating VAW in area; and
   - ✓ Elements/pillars of good governance through hands-on training.

6. Capacity building training for female UP members and female ward commissioners on General functions of Village court; Sources of local resources; and Reason of participating at Upazila coordination meetings with more emphasis in addition to other components UP/ Paurashava functions.

7. Knowledge building efforts towards mobilization of local resources should be undertaken for all the agents of UP, for promoting the development of Union through local funds.

8. Hand on training on 'Preparation of Annual Development Plan and its periodic monitoring' is another area that needs special attention.

9. Policy advocacy for more financial autonomy to UP is to be promoted strongly.

10. Open and painstaking systems of financial management, resource generation and its appropriate utilization, accounting and auditing are necessary to ensure accountability.

11. Exposure visits for UP agents and service providers to model UP should be arranged to enhance the performance of local elected representatives and service providers.

12. Effective training of VDC and SDC representatives should be promoted.

13. Training of *Paurashava* members on sustainable function of subcommittees.

14. The knowledge status of the PTA members should be uplifted through training to enhance their capacity. As there is a mixture of different levels of education among them, training methods should be designed accordingly.

15. Orientation training is needed for the PTA members on how to prevent drop out, techniques for resource mobilization, fund raising for school development.

16. Comprehensive training is needed to enhance quality of girls' education, monitoring mechanism to follow school attendance.

17. Community awareness raising activities through BCC regarding their roles and responsibilities in development, rights (e.g. to khas land/ waterbodies, health, water, sanitation, education) and roles-function of UP and Govt. organization.

18. CARE has an on-going project on Institutional Development of Human Rights in Bangladesh. The project aims to protect and safeguard human rights in the country and to strengthen national capacity to provide quick legal remedies to victims of human rights violations. Effective human rights training can be imparted to UP elected representatives, UP secretaries, VDC and SDC members and *Paurashava* through this project.

19. To ensure sustainability of SHOUHARDO capacity building efforts, pro-active linkage should be established between VDC and UP and Govt. and NGO service providers, as well as SDC and Paurashava and Govt. and NGO service providers.