

# Decentralization Experiences of Bangladesh



**Hossain Zillur Rahman**  
Power and Participation Research Centre

# Formative Experiences

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- Institutional inheritance
- Comilla: rural change from below
- 'Basic democracy': rural change from above
- Famine of 1974 and the anti-poverty imperative

# Contextual Highlights

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- The 'permitted' space for reform
  - jurisdictional rigidity, functional pragmatism
  - local function, central action
  
- A multi-agent reality
  - local governments, central agencies, NGOs, private sector, political parties, community capacities, support institutions
  
- Expanding economic choices, low political leverage

# Local Government: Institutional Architecture

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- ❑ Continuity of elected parishad at union (gram panchayat) level
- ❑ Reserved seats for women from 1997
- ❑ Political impasse on elected parishad at upazila (block) level
- ❑ Despite weaknesses, expanding social profile of union parishads

# Local government: UP Fiscal Reality

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Resources	Annual Average per UP (Taka)
<i>Fiscal transfers</i>	632,700
<i>Targeted programmes</i>	879,103 + 99 tons of foodgrains
<i>Own revenues</i>	160, 108

# Five Experiential Highlights

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- LGED and feeder roads
- VGD cards and safety nets
- Primary education
- Sanitation
- Union block grants

# Strategic Lessons

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- ❑ Big bang vs strategic incrementalism
- ❑ Four challenges on grass-root institutional building:
  - *building organizations of the poor*
  - *building leadership pools*
  - *building capacities of local governments*
  - *promoting a linkage approach to institutional strategy*
- ❑ Unexploited frontier: promoting local economies