Understanding Social Accountability at Rural Local Governance in Bangladesh and the Way Forward: In the Case of Union Parishad

Miskat Jahan [a,b++#*]

[a] *Department of Political Science, University of Nevada, Reno, USA.*
[b] *Department of Public Administration, Comilla University, Cumilla–3506, Bangladesh.*

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Review Article

ABSTRACT

In the 21st Century social accountability has become one of the preconditions to create a more transparent and representative government and aid public institutions in meeting the expectations of the population through empowering citizens which is necessary for effective and sustainable development. Social accountability of the elected representatives at the rural level may help the government increase service quality, empower rural citizens, and promote good governance. At present Bangladesh, mostly known as the "Development Surprise", has leaped towards lower middle-income country status from a poor developing one within four decades of its decisive victory. In this stage of growth and development, the persistence of social accountability at the rural local government would ensure the attainment of sustainable development through ensuring demand-based service delivery. Against this backdrop, this paper intends to explore the present status of social accountability mechanisms at the Union Parishad which is the lowest tier of rural local

_____

++ *Ph. D. Student;*
# *Assistant Professor (on study leave);*
Corresponding author: Email: mishkat97jahan@gmail.com;

governance in Bangladesh. Based on the analysis, several recommendations for the way forward have been summarized. Secondary data analysis and empirical knowledge have been exerted which would refer to a clear view of the current status of social accountability at the grass root level. The first section mentions the importance of social accountability at the union level based on theoretical analysis. Existing mechanisms to ensure social accountability at Union Parishad have been delineated in the second section. The third section develops a compact understanding of the current status of social accountability at the Union Parishad level. The fourth section will share a discussion of the findings, recommendations, and conclusion. This study finds that the lack of interest among Union Parishad Functionaries, avoidance by citizens, irregularities in committee formation, irregular meetings, lack of resources, clientelism and Govt. supervision, etc. have made the social accountability mechanisms at the rural local government ineffective and fruitless. The political willingness of the Government, GO-NGO collaboration, allocation of resources to rural local government, awareness raising among citizens, educating citizens politically, and ensuring proper training for the officials in the Union Parishad can play an important role to revive social accountability through deliberative forums and committees in the rural local government.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the recent decade ensuring social accountability has become one of the indicators of good governance and one very important component of development assistance as well. Now citizens expect to be empowered through participating in the formulation, planning, and implementation of the development process. Social accountability is such a mechanism to make the authority accountable to the citizens and to ensure citizens' effective engagement in the development process. Social accountability is an evolving umbrella category that includes citizen monitoring and oversight of public and/or private sector performance, user-centered public information access/dissemination systems, public complaint, and grievance redress mechanisms, as well as citizen participation in actual resource allocation decision-making, such as participatory budgeting [1]. While corruption in public expenditure is rising rapidly, especially in developing countries, the urgency of social accountability is absolutely increasing. Bangladesh as a third-world country is not out of this condition. Hence, social accountability has a very important role to ensure good governance and to establish democracy as the state principle properly. Recently, scholars and practitioners have argued in favor of direct civic engagement in the State actor's activities, as more and more failures of the political accountability mechanisms are noted [2]. In the present crucial stage of growth and development, the persistence of social accountability at the rural local governance would ensure the attainment of sustainable development through providing demand-based service delivery. Against this backdrop, this paper intends to explore the present status of social accountability mechanisms at the Union Parishad which is the lowest tier of rural local governance in Bangladesh.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The main objective of this paper is to reveal the status of social accountability at the Union level as the lowest tier of rural local governance. Specific objectives of the study are:

i) To illustrate the urgency of social accountability at the local governance.
ii) To explain the existing mechanisms of social accountability at Union Parishad as the lowest tier of rural local governance in Bangladesh.
iii) To elicit the current status of social accountability at the Union level in Bangladesh.
iv) To refer compatible recommendations for making the existing mechanisms of social accountability at the Union level more effective and responsive.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study followed qualitative analysis of trends and patterns in documents depending on secondary sources. The urgency of social accountability at the local government to ensure good governance has been discussed based on the study of relevant literature such as journal articles, book chapters, research reports, newspaper reports, etc. In the next section,

existing mechanisms of social accountability at Union Parishad, the lowest tier of rural local governance in Bangladesh have been mentioned by studying relevant rules, laws, acts, and other literature. Analysis of the current status of social accountability mechanisms at the rural local governance in Bangladesh has been presented based on a literature review and empirical knowledge gathered from the field studies conducted by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Bangladesh. Key recommendations and the conclusion have been mentioned as the way forward in the next sections.

4. CONCEPTUALIZING THE URGENCY OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Recently local governance has become one of the potential sectors of development partners to work for ensuring deliberative democracy and empowering citizens through their active participation in local affairs. As the approach of decentralization ensures the transfer of authority, legislature, judiciary, or administrative mechanisms to local govt., local governance has immense scope to deliver demand-based public services, accelerate revenue generation, ensure democratization, and maintain law and order situation at the local level. Local government institutions have a key role to make the local governance process successful. The United Nations defines local self-government as "a political sub-division of a nation or state which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the power to impose taxes or exact labor for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected [3]. Local govt. is vested to ensure demand-based service delivery to the community members and to confirm the fair distribution of the resources. But the matter of fact is that often local govt. institutions become non-responsive to the demands and problems of the local people and involve various malpractices. Here comes the question of accountability of the local govt. institutions to the citizens and larger society.

Social accountability is recognized as a dynamic process where the citizens make the government officials or service providers accountable through both formal and informal mechanisms [4]. Active participation of the citizens in state affairs is the minimalist precondition of democracy which accelerate good governance by making the government responsible [5]. "Social accountability" refers to actions initiated by citizen groups to hold public officials, politicians, and service providers to account for their conduct and performance in terms of delivering services, improving people's welfare, and protecting people's rights [6]. An accountable government is one that proactively informs about and justifies its plans of action, behavior, and results and is sectioned accordingly for a complete discussion. As a new development strategy, this approach emphasizes the citizens' active participation in the development process and civic engagement in local affairs. Social accountability in the local governance process benefits the local-level institutions and the community members as it elicits citizens' demands and helps local govt. officials to provide demand-based services cost-effectively [7]. Through the practice of social accountability at the local level, community members become empowered and they get a platform to raise their demands and problems to the locally elected representatives as well as to the local govt. officials. Social accountability strategies try to improve institutional performance by bolstering both citizen engagement and the public responsiveness of states and corporations [8]. Insofar as social accountability builds citizen power vis-a`-vis the state, it is a political process – yet it is distinct from the political accountability of elected officials, where citizens' voice is usually delegated to representatives in between elections. This distinction makes social accountability an especially relevant approach for societies in which representative government is weak, unresponsive, or non-existent [1].

As social accountability seeks for citizens' engagement to monitor and oversee the performance of the public or private sector, so for better service delivery and for fair resource distribution it has become urgent to ensure social accountability at the local governance. Various malpractices like extortion, embezzlement, corruption, etc. at the local government level would be reduced for the continuous safeguard of the citizenry.

5. SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is largely recognized as the "development surprise" in the Global South which has passed fifty years of independence recently [9]. The fundamental principle of democracy included in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has retained citizens'

right to choose their representatives in a democratic way. However, although economic progress is taking gradually, political development is not visible in Bangladesh within the fifty years of independence [10]. To ensure checks and balances and horizontal accountability, parliamentary committees, regulatory bodies, and audit institutions have been established by the government through Public Accountability Management (PAM) [11]. Corruption is one of the major factors to impede the functionaries of these institutions which thwart the socio-political upheaval in Bangladesh [12]. Failure of the Public Accountability Management (PAM) has made the urgency of Social Accountability Mechanism (SAM) to reduce the poverty rate, and corruption and to make effective service delivery. As one of the mechanisms, civic engagement can incorporate citizens' demands for public service, expedite service delivery and reduce corruption in the service providers [7]. After the independence different NGOs as such BRAC; CARE, Bangladesh; Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Nijera Kori, etc. NGOs started to strengthen citizens' capacity for social mobilization and engagement in different activities [13]. Although several reform bodies such as The Local Government Commission recommended decentralizing the local government system and ensuring a participatory decision-making process, the local government system failed to involve the citizens in the policy-making cycle [14]. The limited scope of decentralization, clientelism, power politics, corruption, the unwillingness of the political representatives, and lack of resources have made the deliberative spaces for the citizens completely inactive [15]. International development partners such as World Bank, USAID, Democracy Watch, UKAID, etc. made the government understand the importance of institutionalizing social accountability mechanisms in the local government to strengthen the democratization process in the state [15]. The Government passed Union Parishad Act, 2009 to include the provision of public forums and committees at the rural local government as one of the mechanisms of social accountability to engage citizens as the watchdog of the public service delivery at Union Parishad [11].

6. EXISTING MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AT UNION PARISHAD, THE LOWEST TIER OF RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BANGLADESH

Article 59 of the Constitution of Bangladesh suggests establishing local govt. in every administrative unit of the Republic which shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with the law (The Constitution of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh) [9]. The present local govt. in Bangladesh is segregated into urban local govt. and rural local govt. The rural local govt. in Bangladesh does have three tiers while the urban local govt. has a two-tire special set of local govt. excluding the Cantonment Board [16]. The local government in rural areas represents a three-tier hierarchical system.

Union Parishad (UP), as the lowest and smallest tier of rural local governance in Bangladesh, is constituted under the Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance, 1983, and subsequent other rules. A Union Parishad consists of a chairman and twelve members including three members exclusively reserved for women. Each Union is made up of nine Wards which are considered as its jurisdiction.
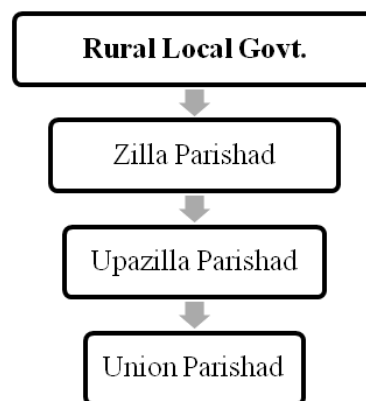

Fig. 1. Rural local govt. structure in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, even though the importance of the discourse of active citizenry in State actions was never denied, attempts to engage them in political activities were not always successful. People's engagement in the governing process was lost in power capture by the ruling elites and ineffective Public Accountability Mechanisms and Political Accountability Mechanisms [17]. For the failure of both the Public Accountability Mechanism and Political Accountability Mechanism, development agencies, practitioners, and academicians emphasized introducing Social Accountability Mechanism the Rural Local Governance. One of the core components of Local Govt. Support Program 2006 was the institutionalization of social accountability mechanisms in Union Parishad's administrative structures to ensure formal citizen engagement in the process of procurement, project formulation, project implementation, supervision, and monitoring [18].

Different deliberative forums, such as Ward Shava (WS), Open Budget Shava (OBS), etc., have been established at the Union Parishad to ensure social accountability through participatory planning and budgeting. In addition provision of citizen participation in various committees of Union Parishad, such as Ward Committee (WC), Scheme Supervision Committee (SSC), and Standing Committee (SC) has been kept for empowering citizenry with monitoring and supervising power and making civic engagement more viable [11].

In this case, Local Government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009 has the key role as the cornerstone to ensuring social accountability in Rural Local Governance in Bangladesh. However, existing mechanisms at Union Parishad to make the practice of social accountability viable are discussed below:

Considering citizen engagement and participation in local governance, the legal framework (UP act 2009) proposes two spaces: the Ward Shava (WS) and Open Budget Shava (OBS). These two are open forums where general people are directly involved in making policy decisions. According to the Union Parishad Act 2009, each Union Parishad organizes WS in each of its nine wards at least twice a year with at least 5% of the total voters. The respective ward member presides over the WS while the female ward member of the reserved seat acts as the advisor of the WS. The Union Parishad must make a public announcement at least seven days before the

Shava takes place. It was clearly stated that Union Parishad representatives shall disclose information on current development activities, financial affairs, and schemes in front of the participants during these Shava. Furthermore, Shava attendees can propose projects, prioritize schemes and development programs to be implemented, review Union Parishad reports, and identify shortcomings. The Union Parishad Act obliges Union Parishad members to consider WS decisions and as per the law, these recommendations are not alterable [19].

The Government (Union Parishad) Act 2009 elaborates on organizing an Open Budget Shava (OBS) in each Union of Bangladesh. After formulating its budget based on priorities identified in the ward meetings and recommendations of relevant Union Parishad standing committees, the UP is required to have the details of the budget approved in an open budget meeting, which has to be held at the Union Parishad's premises in the presence of the voters of the Union Parishad at least 60 days prior to the beginning of the financial year [11].

The Union Parishad Operational Manual 2012 introduces WC at Union Parishad. It is a seven-member committee where one-third of the members are women. Ward committees include two ward members, a school teacher, a female social worker, a male social worker, an NGO representative or civil society member, and a general citizen or freedom fighter. Ward committees are responsible for local-level planning based on the demands of WS participants. Committee members can implement and supervise ward-level schemes with budgets up to Taka five lakh. Ward committees are also responsible for construction worker recruitment, material procurement for construction per rules, and supplier liaison [19].

Union Parishad Operational Manual 2012 provides that there should be an SSC in every ward of Union Parishad. The committee is made of five male members and two female members which takes shape in the presence of the public and Union Parishad representatives at a WS meeting. Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO) nominates a technically skilled officer for scheme supervision. Neither Union Parishad representatives nor ward committee members can be SSC members. As per the manual, SSCs shall monitor project quality, timeframe, and the number of schemes at the time of implementation following the terms and conditions of each scheme [20].
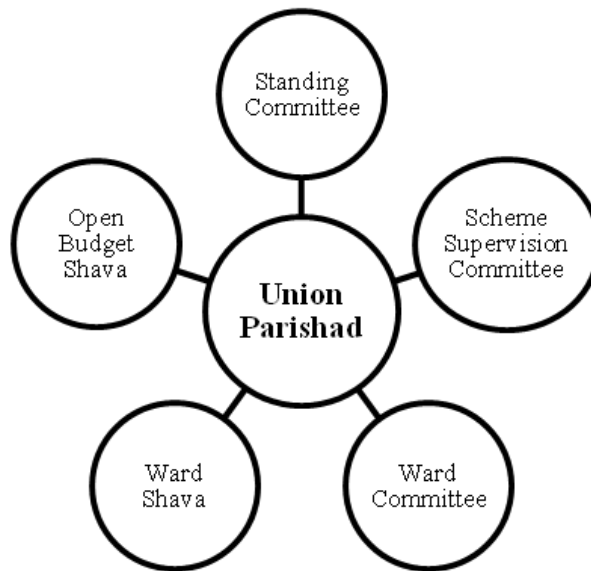
Fig. 2. Existing mechanisms at Union Parishad to ensure social accountability

According to Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983, the Union Parishad, constitutes Standing Committees at its first meeting each year or as soon as may be to deal with various important sectors like finance and establishment; education and mass education; health; audit and accounts; agriculture, etc. The number of members of a Standing Committee is determined by the Union Parishad itself. There is a provision for keeping general citizens as co-opted members in each standing committee [21].

7. CURRENT ABORTIVE STATUS OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AT THE RURAL LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

Though the provision of participatory deliberative forums and inclusive committees have been set at the Union Parishad as the mechanisms of ensuring social accountability at the grass root level, these are more rhetoric than reality. From the study of various related research reports, books, journal articles, and newspapers it has been found that these mechanisms are not working properly. Based on the relevant literature studies and empirical knowledge from the field study conducted by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), current abortive status of social accountability mechanisms at the Union Parishad in Bangladesh is discussed below:

Lack of Interest Among Union Parishad Functionaries: Though Union Parishad

Operational Manual 2012 has the provision to arrange WS twice a year and OBS once a year in each Union Parishad, the majority of the Union Parishad chairmen and members have no training or proper orientation for arranging these Shavas. They do not understand the importance of these deliberative forums and committees, which refrain them to arrange the Shavas properly. It has been found from the literature study that UP chairmen and members are not enough motivated to organize WS or OBS as there is nothing to get from the Shavas. Besides, the formation of WC, SSC, and SC does not follow the law in many cases. For political gain and personal achievement, the majority of UP functionaries are reluctant to form committees with the conscious citizenry. Instead, they are interested to keep their acquaintances in the committees. Domination by the UP leaders (especially by the Chairperson) and lack of awareness of committee members tend to limit the effectiveness of WC and SSC in holding UP Chairpersons and Ward Councilors accountable [18].

Avoidance by Citizens: Social accountability mechanisms have been introduced at the UP level to embed the practice of active citizen participation in the decision-making process. But when citizens find out that their presence in the WS or OBS has no output or their demands are not met up then they lose their interest to participate. Moreover, for the fear of missing daily income, the majority of the community members avoid participating in the deliberative spaces. Besides lack of enough awareness

among the citizenry is another factor behind their avoidance. There was no awareness-building program for general people to improve their access to the WS and OBS. Actually, people have no or minimum expectations from the UP [11]. In many cases citizens are found to be unaware of their memberships and even when they are aware, they are found to be ignorant of the committees' functions and their roles. These members remain inactive, rendering the committees dysfunctional as SA forums and allowing UP leaders to easily control and manipulate these forums [18]. Besides a lack of technical knowledge citizens cannot keep the proper role to supervise the development activities as the members of SSC.

Irregularities in Committee Formation: Union Parishad functionaries are not aware of the importance of including conscious citizens in the WC, SSC, and SC or do not opt to select non-partisan conscious citizens. The formation processes of these deliberative committees (WC and SSC) tend to deviate from the formal guidelines. Though these committees should be formed at WS with the consent of WS participants (general citizens), in most cases, UP Chairpersons and members themselves select their 'loyal supporters/followers' (relatives of the UP Chairperson, politically influential individuals, and people from UP Chairperson's and members' inner circle) as members of these committees [18]. These irregularities in committee formation support UP functionaries to safeguard their own interests. As a result, deliberative committees WC, SSC, and SC remain inactive or do not perform the vested functions to assure transparency as well as participatory budgeting and planning [20].

Patron-Client Relationship: Patron-client relationship as a mutual arrangement for personal gain has become embedded in the administrative and political culture of Bangladesh. Which makes unequal resource distribution and extends privileges to certain community members or groups. From the study of Chowdhury, it has found out that generally UP chairman members invite local elites and political leaders in the Shavas as guests and the Shavas turn to a political oration by leaders where general people do not get the scope to raise questions to UP functionaries [11]. Most UP functionaries perceive these deliberative forums to strengthen their political capital and patronage network. It is also alleged that ward Members, in their role as chairpersons of the WS, are able to

manipulate deliberations and decisions to reflect the mandate of the political party they represent, rather than the real needs and aspirations of the community [21]. Despite the provision in the UP operational manual, the majority of committee members in the deliberative committees are selected by their political identity or financial solvency. These forums considerably resemble the existing political dynamics and patron-client relationships at the local level. Political leaders also use these as strategically useful public gatherings to conduct their political public relations exercises [18].

Irregular Meeting: For the lack of interest, necessary training, and awareness among the committee members meetings are not held regularly. As in most cases, UP Chairpersons and members themselves select their 'loyal supporters/followers' (relatives of the UP Chairperson, politically influential individuals, and people from the UP Chairperson's and members' inner circle) as members of these committees, so they are not interested to arrange committee meeting et al. [18]. As a result, committees tend to become almost inactive which damages the participatory essence of the social accountability forum.

Absence of Involvement of the NGOs: In early-stage NGOs such as CARE, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), etc. worked in several areas of the state to train the UP functionaries and to orient them according to the law. Though NGOs' involvement may improve the situation, for lack of funding they are not working to ensure the practice of social accountability anymore. The scenario of committee governance changes substantially in UPs where NGOs work with the committees as a part of citizen members' capacity and awareness building [18]. NGOs performed catalyst roles in the planning and budgeting process of some UPs, but many UPs lack the involvement of NGO officials. As a result, those UPs do not get potential benefits including training on organizing WS and OBM, forming WC and SSC, social mapping, identifying and developing income sources of UPs, reporting procedure, etc. [11].

Lack of resources and govt. Supervision: Very often Union Parishad functionaries slander the resource constraint for not arranging the Shavas in time. A major disincentive for Union Parishad leaders in organizing Shavas and OBSs is the substantial costs associated with these meetings; as the central government does

not have any funding allocation for them, the costs fall on the Union Parishad leaders [18]. But in the case of NGOs' involvement in some areas Union Parishad functionaries are capable to arrange the Shavas regularly with funding from NGOs.

Lack of inclusiveness and representativeness : Though UP Operational Manual 2012 has the provision to keep women representatives in the deliberative committees, there is a clause about women's participation in the deliberative spaces. The scenario of the presence of women and poor at WS and OBS is different from region to region. In some cases where there has been NGO intervention, several women and poor community members remain present at the Shavas. But in the areas without NGO intervention, their presence remains lower. Another factor is the active participation of the poor and women to make the Shavas inclusive and representative. From the study by Chowdhury, it has found that in some UPs, although they were informed, 4.55% of females did not attend at WS due to inconvenient meeting time and their hesitation to speak at public meetings, while 6.82% of females did not attend due to their 'Purdah' system and societal norms [11].

8. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The predominant essence of SA is to make the authority accountable to society through citizens' active participation in the decision-making process and empowering citizens to monitor and supervise development works. Local Govt. (Union Parishad) Act, 2009 and the UP Operational Manual, 2012 have the rules to ensure participatory planning, and budgeting and to form WC, SSC, and SC with community members which will be inclusive. But for many reasons existing mechanisms of SA are not working properly. Summarized recommendations for the possible way forward are mentioned below:

Enhancing Political Willingness: Without political initiative, the mechanisms of social accountability would not be activated in Bangladesh. The political willingness of the Govt. should have to be increased to make the Union Parishad abide by the Local Govt. (Union Parishad) Act, 2009, and Union Parishad Operational Manual 2012.

GO-NGO Collaboration: With the technical support of NGOs and resource allocation from the Government social accountability forums can be run more effectively. As NGOs have the experience to work with the forums, Government may recruit NGO officials to train the citizens and Union Parishad officials. GO-NGO collaboration should be introduced to train the Union Parishad functionaries and the committee members.

Awareness Raising Programs: Awareness-building programs should be installed to make the citizens aware of their rights to ensure social accountability and paying revenue.

Transparency In Union Parishad's Activities: Transparency and inclusiveness in Shava's arrangement and committee formation should be ensured. Citizens from every corner of the rural areas should be included in the deliberative forums to raise their voices for their rights.

Accountability of the Union Parishad Functionaries: Union Parishad functionaries should be motivated to ensure their accountability to society and to lessen institutional corruption. Government should institutionalize the mechanism in the Union Parishad to make the elected political representatives accountable to the citizens.

Effective Training: Effective training for the Union Parishad officials should be arranged by the Government to promote their skills and capacity to activate the public forums in the Union Parishad. It would be the investment of the Government in rural local governance to institutionalize the social accountability mechanisms.

Planning and Budgeting: Equal resource distribution to the Union Parishad based on their demands will make the officials arrange the deliberative programs regularly. Inclusive as well as participatory development planning and budgeting should have to be ensured for activating the social forums.

9. CONCLUSION

In a country where most of the citizens are not enough literate to be aware of their rights to take part in decision-making and to make the authority accountable, ensuring social accountability is a tough job there. Moreover, in Bangladesh, an asymmetric social stratification is prevailing based on income, religion, education, political views, etc. [11]. Besides, political leadership is not serious about the participatory and

democratic local government system in Bangladesh [2]. In these circumstances, deliberative spaces and forums would be an inclusive platform for the citizens to raise their demands and to take part in the decision-making process at the rural local governance. By ensuring social accountability it would be possible to establish tangible decentralization by empowering local citizens which would ensure better demand-based service delivery and more revenue generation. SDG 17.17 has the target to "encourage and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships". From the broader aspect ensuring social accountability would promote civic engagement in rural local governance which would help the Govt. to fulfill the targets of SDG 17.17. So, Govt. should take necessary steps to revive the deliberative forums and spaces to ensure social accountability in rural local governance and to make the network between citizens and local govt. institutions stronger with the views of scholars, practitioners, and development partners [22]. The timely practice of social accountability at the rural level would be instrumental to protecting the democratization process in Bangladesh as the mechanisms of social accountability are closely connected with citizens' deliberative participation in the policy-making cycle which is an important factor behind overall democratization in the state.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Fox JA. Social accountability: what does the evidence really say? World Dev. 2015;72:346-61.
   DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.03.011
2. Elias Sarker AE. The illusion of decentralization: evidence from Bangladesh. Int J Public Sect Manag. 2003;16(7):523-48.
   DOI: 10.1108/09513550310500391
3. Tonwe DA. Conceptualizing local government from a multidimensional perspective. Higher Educ Soc Sci. 2011;1(1):66-71.
4. Camargo CB, Jacobs E. Social Accountability and its Conceptual Challenges: An analytical framework [working paper]. Basel Institute on Governance; 2013.
5. Arnstein SR. A ladder of citizen participation. J Am Inst Plann. 1969;35(4):216-24.
   DOI: 10.1080/01944366908977225.
6. ANSA-EAP. What is social accountability?; 2008.
   Available: http://www.ansa-eap.net/about-us/who-we-are/
7. Malena C, Forster R, Singh J. Social accountability an introduction to the concept and emerging practice [working paper]. Social Development Department of the World Bank; 2004.
8. Joshi A, Houtzager PP. Widgets or Watchdogs?: Conceptual explorations in social accountability. Public Manag Rev. 2012;14(2):145-62.
   DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2012.657837.
9. Sarkar SK, Dutta A. Democratic accountability in local governance institutions. PRIA Global Partnership; 2011.
10. Ahmad R. Governance, social accountability and the civil society. Gov Soc Acc Civ Soc JOAAG. 2008;3(1).
11. Chowdhury S. Public forums for social accountability: A study of Ward Shava and open budget system of 06 (six) union Parishads of Bangladesh. Asian J Dev Gov (AJDG). 2016;2(2):20-46.
12. Rahman K, Jenkins M. Social accountability initiatives and civil society contribution to anti-corruption efforts in Bangladesh. Brief. 2018;U4.
13. Kabeer N, Kabir AH. Citizenship narratives in the absence of good governance: voices of the working poor in Bangladesh. IDS Working Pap. 2009;331:01-65.
   DOI: 10.1111/j.2040-0209.2009.00331_2.x
14. Ahmed S. Local government in Bangladesh: a review of reform efforts from 1972 to 2006. Soc Change. 2007;1(4).
15. Sarker AE, Rahman MH. The role of social accountability in poverty alleviation programs in developing countries: An analysis with reference to Bangladesh. Public Organ Rev. 2015;15(2):317-33.
   DOI: 10.1007/s11115-014-0275-x
16. Talukdar MRI. Rural Local Government in Bangladesh. Dhaka: Osder Publications; 2009.
17. Monem M, Baniamin HM. Public service ethics and corruption in Bangladesh. In: Public administration in South Asian India,

Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Routledge. 2013;237-56.

18. Hassan M. State of social accountability and deliberative democracy in Bangladesh (2018). Bangladesh: Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Brac University; 2019.

19. Ahmed T. Ward Sobha under union Parishads: challenges and prospects [researchreport]. Available:https://tofailahmed.files.wordpres s.com/2016/09/ward-shobha-report_30-march-2016_final.pdf; 2016

20. Hossen MS, Obaidullah M. Citizens' participation in rural local government in Bangladesh: through the Lens of Sherry Arnstein. Business Standard. Available:https://www.tbsnews.net/thought s/citizens-participation-rural-local-government-bangladesh-through-lens-sherry-arnstein; 2022, December 17.

21. Ahmed T, Rashid HO, Ahmmed KN, Razzaque F. Social accountability mechanisms: A study on the union Parishads in Bangladesh. BRAC institute of governance and development (BIGD); 2016.

22. Ackerman JM. Social accountability in the public sector: A conceptual discussion. World Bank. 2005;35733.

Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/96595