

## Female Representatives in Local Government System of Bangladesh: Role and Reality

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**Abstract:** *In order to strengthen the local government and uplift women's status in the society every government has been trying to take initiatives in every area of development including participation of women in the local government. This trial starts from just after the liberation of Bangladesh and continues. Involvement of women in activities of government has been emphasized and time befitting changes have been made in the ordinances with a view to have vital role to be played by this group. Government thinks the voice of vast women folks will be transmitted to every key position through these groups. Government policy and related rules and regulations are everywhere to support this group. However, it is a question whether they can play a positive role to achieve the goals the government wants. This paper has an attempt to identify the real situation in the workplace and reasons behind why they can not play desired role. This article critically analyzes the reason of present poor situation of elected female representatives on the basis of first-hand data collected from the field. The authors try to match between the theories and practical situation of elected female representatives at the lowest tier of local government.*

### Introduction:

Theoretically local government started its journey in 1870 by enacting law in order to strengthen the administrative, economic, political and colonial authority. However, this sector becomes precedent and the center

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This article has been developed on the basis of a regional dialogue on "Empowerment of Women: The Role of the MPs" held on 11 February 2006 at Hotel Agrabad, Chittagong organized by the Strengthening of Parliamentary Democracy (SPD) Project, Bangladesh Institute of Parliamentary Studies (BIPS), Minister's Hostel, Shere-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207. This dialogue provides a vast scope of interaction among Women MPs of National Parliament, Local government female representatives and representatives of civil society with an objective of identifying alternative ways of reducing gender imbalance prevailing in different spheres of national life, in the political area in particular. Authors pick up local government Issue Union Parishad and status of female representatives.

*Authors acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Nizam Uddin Ahmed, Professor of Public Administration of Chittagong University.*

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of all development activities as the part of national development emerging it as the democratic institution with the wrong practice of democracy (Faizullah, 1987; GoB, 1997:p1; Khanam et al, 1996; Siddiqui, 2005:p6, Shamim & Kumari, 2002). Over the period of years, there has been a radical change in the development arenas including local government in terms of volume and complexity. According to the need of the era and time local government institutions move to the democratic entity with the provisions of elected representatives where the female representative are the edition of recent past. Although there was no provision of women representatives to be elected as the representative in any stages of four tiers, the participation was very minimal, elected female representatives have now become an important agenda as the indicator of empowerment of women and democracy.

In line with the changing nature of work, advancement of global competition, are female representatives really in position to play their role in the local development? This paper attempts to analyze the realities and reasons of present condition of this group.

## **2.0 Methodology**

This article has been developed on the basis of opinions made by the local government representatives in a regional dialogue held at Hotel Agrabad organized by Strengthening of Parliamentary Democracy (SPD) project. There were more than eighty participants attended the workshop including women MPs, female representatives of local government, university teachers, NGO workers, media personnel and government official as well. However, more than fifty percent were from local government particularly women members. Though it was a regional dialogue, the methodology was combination of seminar and workshop with presentation of paper followed by floor discussion, working in group on some issues, question & answer session and feedback. A group of rapporteurs compiled ongoing procedures and a submitted report on the issue. The participating people were requested to make comments or question on the local government issue and role of women. However, the dialogue proceeded towards female representatives and their roles. Everybody emphasized on the second tier of local government and UP members particularly female UP members. This is a limitation of the dialogue and the article as well. This article describes the role of women members in the Union level and their sufferings they face. However, it



depicts real life experience and sharing of lower level public representatives that indicates the miserable condition of women in a political environment where they came to raise voice in favour women's empowerment and advancement.

In order to make the article more realistic, data are also collected from the field. A good number of female representatives of Sarail Upazilla of Brahmanbaria District were interviewed. Authors conduct four FGD (two with women members, one with members and one with the family members of FRs) for collecting data. This first-hand data help to analyse the fact and internalize the situation.

### **3.0 Local Government and Female Representatives**

#### **3.1 Constitutional obligations**

Local Government and Female Representatives - these two issues are significantly emphasized in the constitution of Bangladesh. In the article no. 9 of second part of the constitution it is said that 'the state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women'. In this connection participation of women in every sphere of national life must be ensured by taking steps. These two articles (article 9 & 10) are directly involved in improving 'material and cultural standard of living of people' of the country with view of securing basic human needs (GOB, 1997; Maslow, 1970). In order to meet up these common necessity the constitution has states some directions in the article 16 which says ' the State shall adopt effective measures to bring about radical transition in the rural areas through the promotion of an agricultural revolution, the provision of rural electrification, the development of cottage and other industries, and the improvement of education, communications and public health, in those areas, so as progressively to remove the disparity in the standards of living between the urban and the rural areas'.

#### **3.2 Provisions of women in the local government issues:**

From British regime to Bangladesh regime before 1976, there was no provision of women in the local government to be selected or elected. According to the Local Government Ordinance 1983, the formation of Gram Parishad was twelve member team consisting nine general members and three women members (Haque, 2003; Khan, 2011, Khan

and Ara, 2006). This parishad would be headed by the ward member of concern ward. However, this Gram Sarker has been omitted by enacting the ordinance named the Gram Sarker (Omission) Ordinance, 2008 (Saikat, 2007). In the Local Government Ordinance, 1976 there was provision of nine members to be elected by the voters, with a provision of selection of two women and two farmer members. In the Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance, 1983, there is an increase of three women member in stead of two and the selection of two farmer members has been omitted (Chowdhury, 1987; GOB, 1983; GOB, 1997; Mahbubuzzaman, 2008; Saha, 1997; Siddiqui, 1995; Siddiqui, 2005). In the Thana/Upazilla level, there was no provision of women to be elected or selected before 1982. As the Union Parishad Chairmen would be the ex-officio member of Thana Parishad in 1976, if there was any woman chairman, she should be the member of thana Parishad. However, the Local Government Ordinance (Upazilla Parishad and Upazilla Administration Restructuring), 1982 opened a window for women for taking part in the direct election. The Upzilla parishad Act, 1998 (amended upto 30<sup>th</sup> Jnne, 2008) provides vast scope of development and active participation (GoB, 2008). This ordinances provides more opportunity to talk with general people and make them more confident since they are elected by the direct vote of people. At present there is a provision of woman vice-chairman in the Upazilla level and Pourshava level (Sidduqi, 2008, Taleb, 2004). At District level there is a provision of representative member, selected member, women member and officer members to form the Zila Parishad according to the Local Government (Zila Parishad) Act, 1988. Before then, there was no provision of women member at this level of local government. However, this level is running on paid employees where a deputy secretary is as the Chief Executive Officer and a Senior Assistant is serving as the secretary.

### **3.3 Functions performed by the Female Representatives**

Although a series of functions is assigned for local government representatives, there is no specific responsibility for female representatives defined in any tier of local government. So it can deemed that the regular functions of the local government stage are the functions to be performed by the both male and female representatives or the distribution of tasks depends mostly on the team leader of the concerned tier of local government. At the Gram Parishad level three women



members help performing the various types functions<sup>1</sup> that related to social and economic development, social safety and national development (GOB, 1997; Haque, 2003, Islam, 2003; Unus, 2003). These functions are supervised by the concerned member acting as the convener of seven permanent committees i.e. a) Law and order, b) Health and Family Planning, c) Agriculture, Irrigation and Environment, d) Education, Social welfare, women and child development, e) Sports, culture and youth development, f) Fisheries and Livestock, and g) others. Here woman members of Union Parishad can play a vital role. There are eleven specified functions<sup>2</sup> of Union Parishad relating to overall development of the union (GOB, 1983; GOB, 1997; Saha, 1997; Siddiqui, 2005). These functions are broader than that of Gram Parishad. Women member can help the Union Parishad in performing the functions smoothly. They can be convener of any permanent committees of Union Parishad. Upazilla is the third tier of local government which started with a good reputation of development activities. At this level, elected body including woman vice chairman involves in coordination of functions<sup>3</sup> taken by respective unions (Ahmed, 1993; Ahmed, 2000; Hussain, 1993; Siddiqui, 2005). However, these functions are very important for

1 Functions of Gram Parishad: 1) Preparing report on the basis of socio-economic Survey of Household; 2) Sending vital statistics on birth and death registration, marriage registration to the Union Parishad; 3) Supervising laws related to divorce, dowry and ... 4) Preparing plan to use natural resources in order to increase productivity and develop the utilization; 5) Supervising Primary, Madrasa, Maktab and motivate guardians to send their children to school; 6) Awareness building on primary healthcare, family planning and supervising health workers; 7) Helping to create secured society by protecting Nari nirjatton, terrorism, stealing, bulgery etc. ; 8) Assisting the local and national programmes by ensuring the participation of local people; 9) Encouraging people to establish cooperatives in order to increase economic growth and assisting NGOs for social development. 10) Building small road, culverts, bamboo-made bridge with the local help; 11) Assisting people for deep pump for irrigation, assisting Union Parishad about the fertilizer, insecticides; encouraging people to use cow dung; 12) Assisting various programmes taken institutions; 13) Encouraging Plantation in the bare land or beside the road; 14) Encouraging villagers to cultivate fish in the pond or ditch 15) Motivating local people to participate in development activities through cooperatives and NGOs.

2 There are thirteen specified functions which are 1) Agriculture, 2) Fisheries, 3) Livestock, 4) Health, 5) Family Planning 6) Education, 7) Irrigation, 8) Cottage Industry, 9) Infrastructure, 10) Poverty Alleviation and 11) Development Projects related (GOB, 1997).

3 Functions of Upazilla Parishad: 1) Preparing five-year plan for Upazilla integrating five-year plans of all unions; 2) Implementing various programmes of government institution in the Upazilla; 3) Taking initiatives for most utilization of surface water ; 4) Establishing sewerage system, sanitation, pure drinking water in order to ensure good health of general people; 5) Making, repairing and maintaining connected roads interconnected to all unions of the Upazilla; 6) Encouraging and motivating people for education and monitoring secondary and madrasa education; 7) Taking initiatives for establishing and spreading the small and cottage industries; 8) Coordinating the activities of NGOs and cooperatives; 9) Assisting and implementing programmes taken on women, children, social welfare, sports and culture; 10) Monitoring and Implementing programmes on agriculture, livestock, fisheries and environment; 11) Helping the Police department in order to maintain the law and order situation of the Upazilla; 12) Taking initiatives of poverty reduction and self-employment; 13) Monitoring, assisting and coordinating all activities of Union Parishad.

sustainable development of union parishad and national development. Zila Parishad is the highest tier of local government where the main functions<sup>4</sup> are coordination and communication between the Zila Parishad and different ministries in terms of local and national development (Ahmed, 2000; GOB, 1988; Siddhui, 1995). There is a provision of one-third women members to be elected who can play important role at this level. It is noted that no elected body has served at this level. These functions are performed by the government employees. Although these functions are not gender or person specific, female representatives are taking part in performing some tasks assigned by the chairman or some other tasks are being supervised by them. They are extending their area of activities making them involved in different activities of every tier of local government. Their involvement in local government indicates the gender mainstreaming which helps to establishing gender parity and gender friendly society and assist government to take development initiatives for sustainability.

### **3.4 Female representatives of Local Government: Reality at home, at work and in the society and reasons of different types of sufferings they face**

Mainstreaming women through gender specific policies is considered as the precondition of the development in developing country like Bangladesh and that has been identified as the important agenda in the local government reforms. Women are encouraged to have their access in every initiative taken by the government. For the better output and wholehearted involvement of women folks, government of Bangladesh over the last few years have been trying to engage them in the local government initiatives. However, their performance at work, at home and in the society is in question whether they can perform very well. Their state and status are affected by so many factors.

#### **3.4.1 Huge workload and vast jurisdiction**

At the union level, at the lower tier of union parishad, there is a provision of the female representatives to be elected in the three wards, whereas nine male representatives are elected from the whole union, i.e. the area

4 Functions of Zilla Parishad: 1) Preparing development plan on the basis of need and prospect; 2) Monitoring activities of Upazilla Parishad; 3) Monitoring and supervising government hospitals, family planning clinics; 4) Monitoring schools and colleges; 5) Assisting central government on different issues and establishing linkage between Zilla Parishad and different ministries; 6) Taking initiatives for spreading industry and trade; 7) Supervising activities of police and recommending to stop terrorism in order to develop law and order situation of the district.



of three male representatives is as same as the female representative. Democratically she is more powerful as she is elected by as many as voters. Simultaneously she has to work harder than any male representatives. Here comes the reality whether she enjoys the power what she really is supposed to get. She receives the same honorarium like male colleagues receive. She is more responsibility to the inhabitants of that area. About 11 types of tasks are to be performed where female representatives do more. At Upazilla parishad, City Corporations, all female representatives have to work more than any male representatives. Beauty Haque (an elected chairperson of a union of Brahmanbaria district) informs that a female representative is elected from an area where three male representatives are elected. In that case we have to work harder during the election period and after the election. Here development works are also remarkably a lot which are addressed with the same limited resources allotted for both. She recommends minimizing this discrimination.

### **3.4.2 Harassment by the male representatives and male secretaries**

Female representatives (FR) are supposed to be evaluated like their male counterparts in terms of job responsibilities and sharing responsibilities with the cordial support from all corners of the area. However, the fact is FRs do not get support from the chairman, members as well as secretaries. Most of the FRs complaint about this. Rather they face discrimination from the other colleagues even harassment (Reza, 2006). This harassment is both verbal and physical which undoubtedly illegal and punishable offence. As the chairman, in most cases, are male they support their male colleagues. In some areas female members are harassed by the secretaries which is never expected to happen. FRs in their workplace face problem from all corners with a 360-degree dimension i.e. from the top level representatives, peers/colleagues both elected or paid employees, general people who are against of gender mainstreaming and family.

Different types of harassment they face at the time of performing their responsibilities. These all sorts of harassments are categorized on the basis of responses made by the female representative attended in the workshop.

- Misbehave with female representatives which comes from chairman, or male counterparts or even paid employees. However, this mostly happens from the chairman.

- Verbal abuse that can be termed as the use of slang words practiced by man in official periphery as well as in society where a group of people who actually are against of women's advancement do it. They use these languages as the instrument of demotivation.
- Physical torture is likely to happen where female members are in very vulnerable condition. Though nobody cites the real life experience due to fear to be harassed again, one female emotionally exposed this issue which needs to be examined as the possible occurrence to happen.
- Exclusion from the development activities. FRs are elected from a wide area comparing to the area of male counterpart which is almost three times than any male representative. This indicates females are likely to be engaged more with the development activities. However, the fact is that they are deprived of allocation of activities so that they are thought workless in the society. This creates another harassment in society that female representatives can not bring benefits for the people (Reza, 2006).
- FRs are kept excluded from the decision making process. Other colleagues take decision without the involvement of female counterparts. This happens due to some reasons. MRs think that FRs are honest, want to do the welfare of the society, which may go against those corrupt persons. Another reasons these women are to serve two jobs in the official capacity as well as in the family for house keeping which may keep them away from the official work. Interesting finding is that male personnel try to take decisions sitting in meeting at around evening when women are busy with household works and are unable to attend the meeting. This also happens as the women are most cases not well educated where they have to depend on others.
- Making forced signature without assigning any tasks is also one kind of harassment and mental torture. This is one of significant issues raised by the women that they are generally ignored in the decision making process or implementing any development activity. However, as there is a condition to make involved every member including female members, male colleagues distribute their development works among themselves and later they



request or create force the female representatives to sign so that authority can think that everything is done properly. FRs alleged sometimes some corrupt chairmen with other male person do corruption. But they want to keep upto date in papers where they may need to have signature from the FRs. In this case, they are threatened to put signature. While collecting information from the field, this is found proved.

- Women members are still thought that they should be engaged themselves in household works and child rearing. They are not capable of doing any administrative or political work. Male colleagues think that they are not capable of doing these all activities which supposed to do at Union level. Some chairmen and members underestimate FRs in working area before the office staff or mass people.
- This is natural and proved that female are less corrupt and more responsible in workplace. Local government representatives are always blamed for doing illegal things where it becomes difficult to make involved FRs in doing so. So some corrupt chairmen and members create psychological pressure in doing illegal activities and pressurize them to help in illegal issues.
- One of the female representatives working as member of a union expresses her deep concern that her male colleague who abused verbally and tried to harass sexually. This indicates women in the local government are really in vulnerable condition and are not away from the cruel paws of male counterparts.

### 3.4.3 Non Cooperation

Although Local Government started long ago, there has not been remarkable involvement of women in every sphere. And this rate is increasing. However, the relation between man and woman is not cooperative, mutual sharing particularly in doing work together for the nation building. It is like proverb that women are not cooperated by their male colleagues. This non-cooperation is in various dimension in the workplace of local government

Dimensions of non-cooperation:

This begins from the male chairman with a series of items of non-cooperation including assigning less work, less sanction

of development activities, avoiding in decision making process, undermining in proposals. As the main decision makers, chairman along with his other male colleagues can do on his own ways (Ahmed, 1993). Three female representatives said that they performed their responsibilities well. However sometimes they are not provided expected support from members and chairman. It was argued that sometimes chairman want to involve in all activities, they are excluded for the pressure of male members.

- ✓ Male members try to avoid FRs and do not want to include in every sphere of day-to-day activities so that they can take benefit without creating scope of involvement of FRs.
- ✓ If the chairman does not cooperate with the FRs, other male representatives, the secretary who is bound to assist everybody do the same thing. The secretary moves also on the same way of other male representatives. He does not inform FRs time to time about the tasks or sanctions, or roles, or activities. He tries to hide in order to pick the advantage from the unseen benefit.
- ✓ FRs are also facing non-cooperation from the male members in their families. From sociological viewpoint this is not new dimension, in the modern era is still happening in the society. Husbands or sons ( not in all cases) do not help them in performing their responsibilities. In some cases where the poverty level remains FRs face problem with their day-to-day activities to be performed. They have to give share of the development activities or financial service which hinders them to do their jobs smoothly.
- ✓ Although there male members do not to cooperate with the female representatives in all sorts of activities of local government issues, some of them expressed their happiness regarding the cooperation received from their family members. Some argued that they are encouraged to compete in the election and won with the great help of their kith and keen. Family heritage in politics also sometime encouraged them to feel to work for the betterment of people and nation building.



### **Types of non-cooperation:**

This non-cooperation comes from horizontal point where male members, family members of FRs and societal issue are involved. In the vertical line UP chairman, UP secretaries are dominating factors. Many types of non-cooperation are normally faced by the female representatives.

One of the most significant dimension of non-cooperation is not to inform FRs to attend the meeting where important decisions are taken. They are not provided sufficient allocation of fund or food (used for work) according to the need of the area. Sometime real information regarding development activities or official works are provided to the FR, even sometimes no information is given to them if they are illiterate women. Generally women are not made involved in assigning any job on social or national issue. Another dimension is not creating woman friendly environment in order to perform the job whereas creating artificial crisis so that women can not perform the task efficiently. Sometimes they are asked to be busy with household works. Some clever members show the legal limitation or misinterpret the law so that they are afraid of taking any challenge or risks. With the help of secretaries meetings sometimes are conducted in odd times, suppose at night or in the morning so that FRs can not join there. Female representatives are sometimes shown the threats of local politics. These issues of non-cooperation were also found at the time of talking with female representatives in the field.

- > Not informing FRs to attend the meeting where important decisions are taken
- > Not sanctioning sufficient allocation for work or what their right and need
- > Not providing real information
- > Not involving them in assigning any job on financial
- > Not creating woman friendly environment in order to perform the job whereas creating artificial crisis so that women can not perform the task efficiently.
- > Making them busy with household works or telling them by the chairman and members to do so. Indirect pressure
- > Showing the legal limitation or misinterpreting the law so that they are afraid of taking any challenge or risks
- > Not involving in the most of the development work and implementing project

- > Conducting meeting in odd times, suppose at night or in the morning so that FRs can not join there.
- > Threatening by of local politicians.

#### 3.4.4 Social Issues

As the patriarchal society, people are comfortable to work with male than female. Everybody in the family, society wants to dominate female. So they are dominated from the every corner, such as family members i.e. husband, sons; social elites i.e. Imams, guardians, aged people, Moulanas etc.; Local Government representatives i.e. chairman, members, secretaries even from the general people as whole. Woman members have to perform duties in an adverse environment struggling daily with the life, family responsibilities, official responsibilities as well as negative opinion from the general mass people.

#### 3.4.5 The other side of the coin

FM can hardly play vital role in decision making process of the local government due to many social, economic and practical reasons. In most cases, female representatives are elected with the practical and financial support of family members, particularly husbands and sons. A very few women come to compete in the election from their own choice rather they are passively involved in preparing them for election (**Hakim, 2000**). Decision comes from the family and very specifically from the family head and sometimes from the society. Since it is a guided decision women come forward with the help of family members and can not move beyond the family decision. Some FR and male representatives acknowledge that FR sometime consult or have to consult with the family members that creates hurdle in taking proper decision. As FR are elected with the financial help of family members and relatives it guides them to work for them and voice is low for any kind of mishandling by the nears and dears. Even sometimes they have to take convinces from their husbands for which they have to take decision on the basis of demand of male counterparts in their houses. Women who compete in local government election are comparatively less educated than the male representatives. This creates great weakness for them to raise voice against any type of decisions because of unaware of circular, rules and regulations etc. Since they are less educated, they hardly know their responsibilities, code of conduct, and official procedures. FR have to play dual role in performing



responsibilities in activities of local government i.e. official duties and in maintaining family activities (Karim & Bhowmik, 2007). Male representative can easily utilize their more time for official work even in the evening. For the strong social structure women have to emphasize working in the family than the official work. This increases absence in the official work that provides instrument of male representative for taking decisions in favour of them ignoring role of female representatives. Male persons of the family take also advantage from this position of female.

The society is circled with so many complex factors which lead to complex decision making process. Naturally women are honest and simple and less tactful. These positive factors of women are misused by the chairmen and members. Issues of village and national politics are also against of female representatives. It is very difficult to accept any decision by male members. This is power politics of the rural society where women are dominated. Women can not overcome these limitations.

It is found that women members (with few exceptions) are less qualified or educated even less experienced in the politics which serve as the negative point for them. Since they are not well educated they can not understand ordinances, rules and regulations and for that reason there is a scope of taking decision bypassing them.

Women, particularly local women, by nature are considerate minded and want to avoid hassle and even afraid of taking challenges. When the counter part try to take advantage from the allocation of funds, development activities, FR want to settle the matter quickly without any counter argument even compromising with legal issues. This serves sometime as difficult task to manage some members with vested interest who want to take advantage, they try to make FR convinced them showing the critical issue of rules and regulations. If FRs would be well educated, fully aware of official procedures they could handle this issue well.

Women empowerment is associated with four dimensions of empowerment i.e. cognitive, psychological, economic and political (Mahtab (time not found), <http://www.cfsr-uk.com/Nasmunnesa%20Mahtab.pdf>). Due to many factors local female representatives are not fully aware of subordination, are less confident to interaction with male counterparts, are not independent in controlling economic resources and to some extent unable to organize, mobile the

social changes which lead them to contribute less in the local government either for the development of women in the society or performing their duties for local development.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

A good number of recommendations were made by the participants attended in the workshop. Some important issues are stated below which are matched in the workplace and also recommended by the scholars of local government. These recommendations are the most important issues mentioned by the female representatives and urgent need for strengthening the local government.

- 4.1 As a condition of fulfillment of local government female representatives elected from a specific territory in order to ensure women's participation in democratic institutions. At Union level a female representative has to work harder than other male counterparts from election campaign to regular tasks. It is practically impossible for a women to perform there three times responsibilities than any other male representative. In other words there is mismanagement of allocation of development activities. Most of the FRs opine that area should be reallocated which may be as same as the male counter parts enjoy. Alternatively, there is another recommendation is that each Female Member should get three times more honorarium than that of male members in Union level.
- 4.2 Some UP Chairmen and members acknowledge that they are sometimes ignored in decision making process due to female as well as to be illiterate or not being well-educated. They recommend that there should be minimum qualification for being elected as the member/FR in local government. This may be a long term policy initiative which will take time. However for the short period, all LG representatives with a special emphasize to female should be trained on structured and well designed training on local government issues. This training will certainly guide them to move forward not only for their development but also help capacity building of the local government (Sultana and Khalid, 2003a; Sultana and Khalid, 2003b).
- 4.3 All chairmen and members suggest that information should be circulated though print and electronic media so that people can



know what is going on in the local government and what is their rights. Besides, awareness about women involvement can also be developed in order to create positive changes in mindset which will create a women friendly society. If the activities of local government and rights of general people are circulated through media, accountability and transparency will be ensured.

- 4.4 There is no close relationship between lower tier of local government and parliament. Members of Parliament seldom visit their unions. So people move to union level representative to demand their rights to be fulfilled or ask them to meet up election manifesto of national government. Lower level representatives are in pressure which can be solved by frequent visit or having discussion with the local people by the MPs. Woman MPs can take initiatives to discuss with the female representatives and listen their problems and sufferings and send suggestions to the central government. Most of the representatives recommended frequent visit and discussion of local MP with the local government representative and general people as well.
- 4.5 Local government representatives are paid an honorarium which should be increased according to the need of present price hike of necessary articles.
- 4.6 Woman members of local government recommended not only for their own development but also raised some issues related to national development. They suggest to emphasize on increasing female education, stopping child marriage, early marriage, allowance for divorced women, allowance for old people, stopping woman and child trafficking. They also requested the authority to submit their appeal to the central government on identifying the great women who has great contribution in the society. Those women should be honored duly.
- 4.7 All rules and regulations, ordinances regarding local government are published in English which is difficult to understand by the LG representatives who are mostly below SSC. These circulars, gazettes, notifications should be supplied in Bangla version for clear understanding and proper utilization of resources.
- 4.8 In the training curriculum for elected representatives and working employee, gender issue should be incorporated in order

to sensitize this issue among men. A specific module on gender issue incorporating recent issues can be developed to impart training to the LG representatives and working employees (Siddiui, 1995).

- 4.9 Women are the half of the total population. No development will be sustainable keeping them unutilized, unskilled and overall empowerment of women is also precondition of development. This goal can be achieved through active participation of women in the power structure of local government (Ranu, 2008). In order to establish a strong local government institute to provide better services to the people women in everywhere should be emphasized. This is to meet the constitutional obligation as well as to meet social need for establishing a gender neutral harmonious society. This gender equity can be ensured by setting provision of equal number of male and female representative to be elected which is more justified comparing with the ratio of men and women in the society. This recommendation is also supported by the social scientists (Siddui, 2008)
- 4.10 Although female representatives have the three-times area with huge development activities, they do not have additional allotment for doing these activities. Even the existing allotment which is provided is not sufficient. In order to build the capacity of local government and empower female representatives, allotment should be increased (Sultana and Khalid, 2003a; Sultana and Khalid, 2003b).



## 5.0 Conclusion

Local government is the connecting bridge between the political government and the general mass in order to accelerate the national development of the country. If the state and status of lower level women is not changed, it would not be possible to solve hunger, poverty and malnutrition problem prevailing in the society where the starting point can be strengthening the capacity of female representative through whom initiatives can be implemented (Hossain, 2006; Majumdar, 2008; Uddin, 2008). In order to do so, there should be regular meeting, paying attention to them, listening to them and take actions immediately. If female representatives can not play their role in the local government institutions, there will be negative impact in the society as a whole which impact may be multifaceted. As the consequence of this negative results, local government will be weaker governmental institutions, role of female representatives will be fruitless, womenkind may be demoralized due to be underestimated by the male counterparts. On other hand, this potential group can be utilized in a country by developing avenues where local government can be important one. Not only the government interventions but also societal interventions are necessarily important.

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