

Local Government System
Situation Analysis

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PREFACE

The new local government system has been in place for eight years now and several studies have been undertaken to evaluate its impact. This survey based study conducts an objective Situation Analysis while considering the Local Government Ordinance 2001 as a benchmark. The study concludes that political decentralization i.e. direct access of public to their representatives has been achieved and the process has been inclusive in its approach. Budget making process has been streamlined and overall it has remained transparent though power relationships between the district and the province have influenced ultimate outcomes. Similarly development process has been largely politicized with participatory development through Citizens Community Board being no exception. Monitoring committees and grievance redress systems have largely remained dysfunctional. The study concludes that to outlast the current wave of political uncertainty, the new system does not need more politics, but the less of it thus giving itself freedom to address people's development needs more proactively and more inclusively. SAP-PK hopes that the findings of this study will serve as food for thought for our partner organizations and networks. This will also assist political parties in marking their priorities.

Mohammad Tahseen
Executive Director

1. SITUATION ANALYSIS

1.1. Introduction

Local government system brings structural changes within state institutions and promises both political devolution and efficient service delivery for the masses. Under the current Local Government Ordinance 2001, this system has now been in place for almost eight years. Several attempts have been made to evaluate the performance of the system and one wonders what this new attempt is all about? While almost all studies rely on the perceptions of either respondents or the researcher thus bringing subjectivity, this is a survey based on mostly objective data. Thus the results portray actual picture on the ground and then the conclusions are drawn explaining the deviations of existing situation from the ideal one. Future course of action can be suggested after an objective analysis of situation has been carried out.

Theoretically, such an analysis is used in strategic planning. In strategic planning, the first and foremost step is scanning of supportive and obstructive factors both inside and outside an organization. These factors can be historical, based on the organization past record; or can be environmental, based on the factors outside the organizational realm. It is important to consider both positive and negative forces, so that coalitions can be built and resilience can be developed. More formally, we call this process “Situation Analysis” and define as:

“A process internal to the overall organizational strategic planning process. Involves research and analysis of both internal and external environmental factors, consideration of organizational successes and failures, and the impact of the organization's past and present abilities to reach its goals.¹”

¹ <http://64.85.16.230/educate/content/elements/lexicon/Situationanalysis.html>

1.2. Importance and Rationale

Situation Analysis is also considered as the first step in plan formulation in development context. It helps in gauging a realistic overall picture before formalization of a strategic plan and thus at least expected and intended consequences can be both identified and phased. In any strategic formulation, identification of supportive and obstructive forces is critical, which can help in predicting the speed at which a strategic plan will be executed.

1.3. Process

Situation Analysis is based on objective data collected from multiple sources mainly through a close-ended structured questionnaire. The close-ended questions help in gathering precise information, and the construction of the questions facilitate getting objective data. The information is obtained from multiple sources, which helps in verification of data. For example information obtained from a government official may be contradicted with a civil society representative and thus multiple sourcing of information ensures verification of data.

2. THE BENCHMARK FOR SITUATION ANALYSIS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORDINANCE 2001

Situation Analysis is generally conducted to compare an existing situation with the standard or the norm. Thus deviations from the norm are noted and analyzed accordingly. The reference to a standard or a norm helps in keeping the Situation analysis within a disciplinary paradigm otherwise deviations from an ideal type can be countless.

In the case of Situation Analysis of local government system, the norm or the standard is based on the Local Government Ordinances 2001 (LGO 2001) issued by each provincial government. These ordinances clearly stipulate the objectives and expected outcomes of devolution system. They also specify the organizational structure and explain roles and inter-relationships amongst the elements of the structure. Therefore before we describe the framework of Situation Analysis of the Local Government, it seems logical to understand the benchmarks derived from the LGO 2001.

According to National Reconstruction Bureau which is the epic federal body overseeing the matters concerning local governments:

“The new system... reorients administrative system to allow public participation in decision-making. The essence of this system is that the local governments are accountable to citizens for all their decisions. It enables the proactive elements of society to participate in community work and development related activities. It has also removed rural-urban divide.²”

As far as the administrative structure of the local government system, the new system...

“... provides three-tier local government structure in which there is only one line of authority in the district and district bureaucracy is responsible to the elected representatives. More operational autonomy is ensured to the district level

² www.nrb.gov.pk

offices. Administrative and financial powers of the defunct divisional offices have been, by & large, delegated to the District level³.”

2.1. Political Decentralization

Analysts consider two distinctive components of the new system: political decentralization and technical efficiency. Political decentralization implies transfer of power to the lowest tier of the government. It means that common people can have a greater and quicker access to their elected representatives as compared with the erstwhile system of provincial assembly and national assembly. The access also means greater accountability, as the representatives at this level are likely to remain under the public eye as compared with the provincial or national level representatives, who are likely to be at least significantly stationed at the provincial or national capitals respectively.

2.2. Technical Efficiency and Service Delivery

The second-technical efficiency- is equally important. It refers to the service delivery structure and efficiency in delivering the services. Again, as the local governments are more sensitive to the needs of the area, they are likely to respond to any demands quickly and public pressure for the same is also imminent. The district and tehsil governments receive proportionate funding to address to local infrastructure needs as well as education and health facilities.

2.3. Ownership of Public

The new system introduces Citizens Community Board, which is a mechanism to directly engage public in development process. 25% of funds for each local government are earmarked for Citizens Community Boards. A group of 25 people, who should not be either elected or government officials, can register an organization, contribute 20% of funds for any developmental project upfront, and can ask the local government to contribute remaining 80% of the funds.

³ Ibid.

2.4. Representation of Women and Minorities

The new system is also adamant on giving greater representation to women and minorities. It has reserved 33% seats for women and also reserved seats for minorities. Though the women ration was reduced to 25% following the number of vacant seats in run up to the last local bodies elections held in 2006, the new system is sensitive to gender mainstreaming issues.

2.5. Accountability and Transparency

The new local government system also provides for adequate systematic arrangements for monitoring of performance of the elected representatives and the local governments through monitoring committees. These committees comprise elected members of the district and tehsil assemblies and replicate the parliamentary committees established as watchdog agencies for monitoring the performance of the government.

The system emphasizes on transparency particularly in budget making by informing all the council members in advance. It also lays down procedures of properly advertising before awarding any tenders. The system provides for periodical internal auditing so that the public funds are utilized judiciously.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the actual situation after promulgation of the LGO 2001. One such study conducted jointly by the UK Department for International Development, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank concluded that as a result of the new devolution plan, the citizens have greater access to their representatives. The report has also noted improvements in selected service delivery for citizens. The study has noted considerable degree of lack of coordination among officials and elected representatives. An international agency Community Information, Empowerment and Transparency conducted an exhaustive survey of 50,000 households reporting their perceptions about the quality of service delivery in the aftermath of devolution. Although these aspects of service delivery do not come directly under the Situation Analysis, these findings reflect some of outcomes of devolution. Some of the major findings of the study were:

- In 2004, 73 percent of parents of children in a government school were satisfied with the school. There was no change in the level of parental satisfaction with regards to government schools during 2002-04.
- There was a reported increase (from 23 percent in 2002 to 27 percent in 2004) in households' satisfaction with health services in all provinces except in NWFP.
- The proportion of households who usually use government health facilities decreased during 2001-04 (from 29 percent to 24 percent).
- During 2004, 69 percent of government health service users were found to be satisfied with facilities compared with 65 percent users in 2001/2.
- Only 8 percent of households were satisfied with garbage disposal services in 2004, which has remained unchanged from the proportion in 2002.

- More households were satisfied with sewerage services in 2004, (20 percent) than in 2002 (13 percent).
- In 2004, households in all provinces except in Balochistan were more likely to have a water supply within the homestead (82 percent) than in 2001/2 (79 percent).
- Across the country, more people were satisfied with the condition of roads in 2004 (38 percent) than in 2002 (31 percent), except in NWFP where there was no change.
- Overall, there was no change in the level of satisfaction with public transport in 2002 and 2004 (59 percent).

Just after the second election of Local Bodies in August 2005, The Urban Institute, Washington conducted a study for USAID in December 2005. The report concludes:

“Yet, four and a half years into devolution, political decentralization has not been followed by adequate administrative and fiscal decentralization to ensure quality service delivery to the public. Citizens recognize this incapacity and mistrust the government’s ability to improve the quality of their lives. Citizens’ participation in local government activities and decision making is very low, despite the fact that the Government of Pakistan’s (GoP) approach to devolution is marked by a very strong role assigned to citizen organizations and governmental accountability to them.”

For the purpose of our research, the study which came more close for the purpose of benchmarking is the recently released survey by Social and Policy Development Center (SPDC 2008) titled “Satisfaction or Frustration: A Survey of Selected District Governments.” This survey collected opinions of district nazims from diverse political background as well as government officials. Major findings of this study are:

1. The access of public to administration has increased tremendously when compared with the Deputy Commissioner based system. In contrast to the

erstwhile Deputy Commissioner, since Nazim belongs to the same area, he/she is always more accessible and thus a source of timely help for the general public. It means that the objectives associated with political decentralization have largely been achieved.

2. The process of identification of local development needs, developmental planning and monitoring of projects has improved considerably. It implies that the concerned bodies, councils and citizens' led organizations are working in the right direction.
3. On negative side, most Nazimeen would still complain of stifling relationships with the district government officials, provincial governments as well as members of provincial and national assemblies. This destructive nature of leadership negatively affects the performance of local government.
4. The budget making process is also riddled with the political confrontationist mindset basically between the DCO and Zila Nazim. The ultimate control over the direction and priorities of the budget is determined by the nature of political relationship between Zila Nazim and the chief minister of the province. Thus while the tehsil or district councils might be meeting regularly, the whole budget passing exercise is more like a façade.
5. Regarding utilization of CCB funds, most respondents have expressed satisfaction over its efficient utilization however some recorded their dissent in terms of procedural delays, corruption and absence of monitoring. It implies that the drive to engage citizens in development process has largely been received positively.

The foregoing analysis shows that most of the empirical work has been based on perceptions of various stakeholders and objective data has, if anywhere, been used rarely. These studies have certainly provided good insights into how people generally feel over the achievements or failures of the local government system, but they do not point out to

an overall objective situation or ground realities. This gap makes an objective study such as the current Situation Analysis all the more relevant and helpful. It is hoped that the information about ground realities emerging from the current study would be able to compliment the existing literature on devolution plan.

At the outset though, we should also admit a limitation of current study: in order to get only objectively verifiable information, we could not investigate more subtle issues, which can only be understood with an in-depth study. The situation analysis only delineates on key ground realities and focuses on what is working and what is not working. It does not answer whys and hows. With this limitation, we now present analysis of data.

4. METHODOLOGY

A close-ended and structured questionnaire was used. All the questions were in YES/NO form or asked for a specific number from the respondent. All the questionnaires were identical and the purpose of sending them to different respondents was verification of data and collection of diverse views to gauge the overall situation.

The questionnaire included 30 questions. After coding and tabulation, it was found that it will be of interest for the general reader to get knowledge of the overall situation instead of district wise details. Therefore all data was organized in a way to portray the situation on the ground with respect to specific factor by analyzing relevant indicator. For example, for the issue of organizational efficiency, the number of times the council met and number of days for which the council met has been considered. In this instance, the individual situation of a district did not reveal major variation, and hence analysis was not much revealing. However, when the complete information was tabulated, variations across board become more apparent creating room for analysis. Several questions which generated almost same response were discarded.

It is a common observation that the view of a Nazim is likely to be different from an opposition member. These views vary a great deal when it comes to perceptions. However, objective questions, such as the number of days of sessions, number of annual development plans, etc. are likely to solicit verifiable information. Even in this case, multiple responses coming from a variety of political spectrum will ensure that biased views from any side do not negatively affect the data analysis.

The key components of the questionnaire are:

Factors	Indicators
Organizational efficiency	Number of meetings and duration of sessions
Inclusion and representation	Status of special seats for women, minorities peasants and workers
Financial transparency	Process of budget making

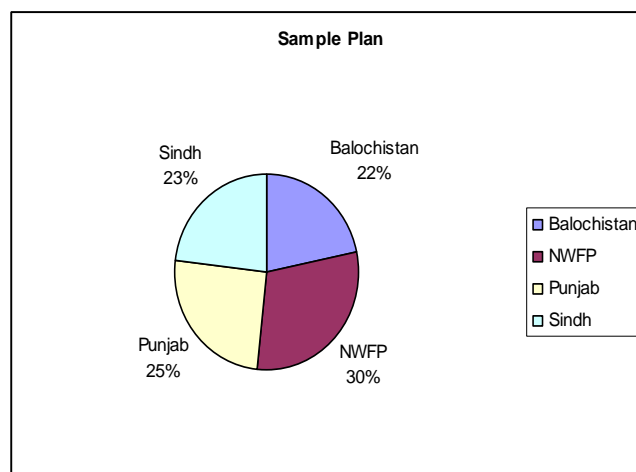
Factors	Indicators
Resource Allocation	Annual Development Plans
Participatory Development and ownership by people	Citizens Community Boards
Accountability	Monitoring Committees
Grievance Redress system	Complaints Cell

4.1. Sample Design

The districts included in our survey mostly belong to the relatively backward districts which are the focus districts in the SAP-PK project “Strengthening Democratic Governance in Pakistan”. These focus districts are:

Provincial Representation			
Balochistan	NWFP	Punjab	Sindh
Gwadar	Charsadda	Faisalabad	Badin
Kallat	D.I. Khan	Layyah	Larkana
Turbat	Hari Pur	Lodhran	Nawabshah
Zhob	Lower Dir	Mianwali	Sanghar
Mardan		Toba Tek Singh	

Provincial Sample Plan			
	District Council	Tehsil Council	Total
Balochistan	30	30	60
NWFP	42	42	84
Punjab	35	35	70
Sindh	32	32	64
Total	139	139	278



The respondents included:

1. Nazim
2. Naib Nazim
3. Secretary

4. Minority Representative
5. General Councilor (2 questionnaires)
6. Women Councilor (2 questionnaires)
7. Peasants-Workers Councilor

Nine questionnaires were sent to each of district and tehsil government, thus making a total of eighteen questionnaires. In sum, we received 295 questionnaires from 36 district and tehsil governments, making an overall response rate of 80%. After sorting all the questionnaires, 17 questionnaires were discarded because of minimum information, and hence 278 questionnaires were used in analysis.

5. ANALYSIS

Organizational Efficiency: Sessions

Q 1.1 How many sessions were organized in the given year?

		District Council				Tehsil Council			
		0	1-10	More than 10	No Response	0	1-10	More than 10	No Response
Number		10	32	97	0	13	35	91	0
Percentage		7%	23%	70%	0%	9%	25%	65%	0%

This table gives information about the overall situation in terms of regularity and frequency of council meetings. Greater number of council sessions in a given time period signify both responsiveness of elected representatives as well as opportunity to debate developmental issues of the area. Overall, an overwhelming majority i.e. 70% said that the district council met more than 10 times in a year, which translates into one session almost every month. In the case of tehsil councils, a lesser proportion i.e. 65% respondents said the same. Although comparable, district councils appear somewhat more active than their tehsil counterparts.

Organizational Efficiency: Duration of Sessions

Q 1.3 What was total duration of session? (No. of days)

		District Council				Tehsil Council			
		0 days	1-25 days	More than 25 days	No Response	0 days	1-25 days	More than 25 days	No Response
Number		10	89	39	1	12	95	31	1
Percentage		7%	64%	28%	1%	9%	68%	22%	1%

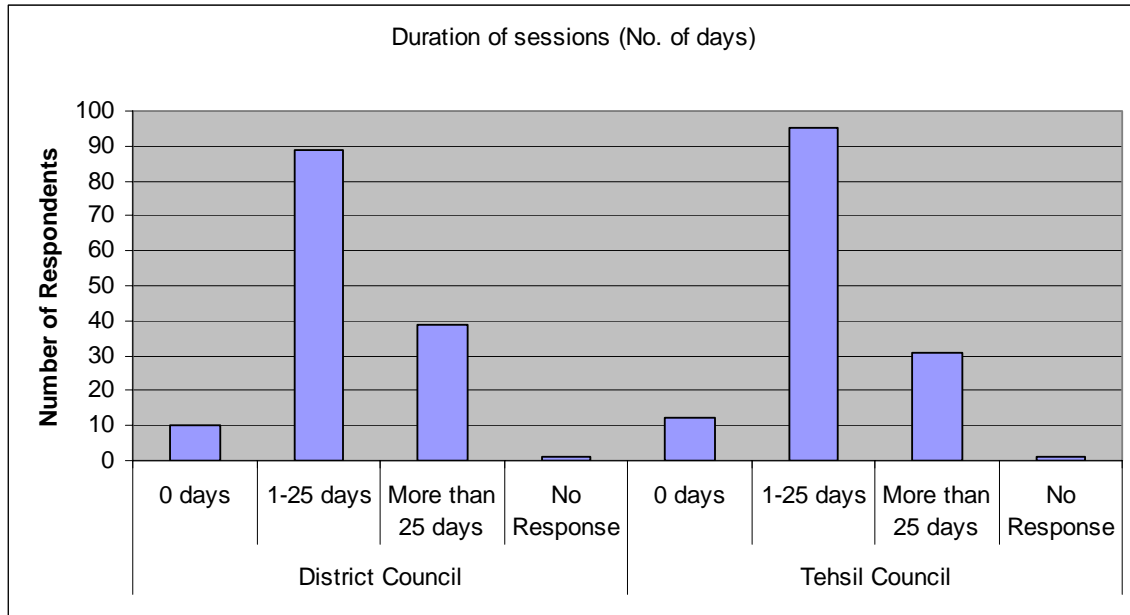


Figure: 1

The above table gives information about total days for which the elected councils met in the form of number of days. The response varied somewhat. In the case of district council, majority i.e. 64% of respondents opined that the council met for 1-25 days, whereas 10 respondents (7%) were of the view that the district council did not meet all. In the case of tehsil council, this number is a bit higher, as 12 respondents said that the council did not meet even for a single day. When compared with the Q 1.3, this information is corroborated as almost similar number of respondents had said that there was no session of the councils organized during last year.

Political Representation and Inclusion

Q 2.1 Are women seats completely filled?

		District Council			Tehsil Council		
		Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number		138	1	0	138	1	0
Percentage		99%	1%	0%	99%	1%	0%

Q 2.3 Did women participate in meetings?

		District Council			Tehsil Council		
		Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number		139	0	0	139	0	0
Percentage		100%			100%		

Q 2.4 Are the labour/peasants seats filled?

		District Council			Tehsil Council		
		Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number		139	0	0	139	0	0
Percentage		100%			100%		

Q 2.5 Is there representation of minority members?

		District Council			Tehsil Council		
		Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number		139	0	0	139	0	0
Percentage		100%			100%		

Above set of questions have been merged because of similarity of purpose: they all point out to some aspect of political representation and the inclusive approach of local government system under devolution plan. It is quite apparent that a predominant majority of respondents have taken the view that the tehsil and district councils are fulfilling their responsibility of better political representation. Thus the present system has given the vulnerable groups-women, peasants, labour and minorities-a better and stronger platform. However, as noted earlier in the discussion of methodology, this typology is rather superficial: it does portray a number but does not provide any insight into the real dynamics of participation by women, peasants and minorities.

Financial Transparency

Q 3.1 Was any committee constituted to prepare budget?

	District Council			Tehsil Council		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number	124	15	0	118	21	0
Percentage	89%	11%	0%	85%	15%	0%

Q 3.3 Were copies of the budget provided to members before the budget session?

	District Council			Tehsil Council		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number	124	14	1	118	13	2
Percentage	89%	10%	1%	89%	10%	2%

Q 3.4 Was the budget passed during the session?

	District Council			Tehsil Council		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number	139	0	0	139	0	0
Percentage	100%			100%		

Q 3.6 Are tenders adequately advertised?

	District Council			Tehsil Council		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number	126	13	0	121	18	0
Percentage	91%	9%	0%	87%	13%	0%

The above set of questions refers to the financial transparency at tehsil and district levels. 89% of respondents have maintained that a budget committee was formed before passing the budget and a similar response has been received confirming receiving the budget. An overwhelming 100% of respondents have maintained that the budget was passed in a regular council session, which again confirms our stance on transparency which exists at district and tehsil levels. In the case of awarding tenders too, some voices of dissent are noticed.

Development Planning

Q 4.1 How many development plans were approved?

	District Council				Tehsil Council			
	0	1-100	More than 100	No Response	0	1-100	More than 100	No Response
Number	53	34	42	10	60	34	35	10
Percentage	38%	24%	30%	7%	43%	24%	25%	7%

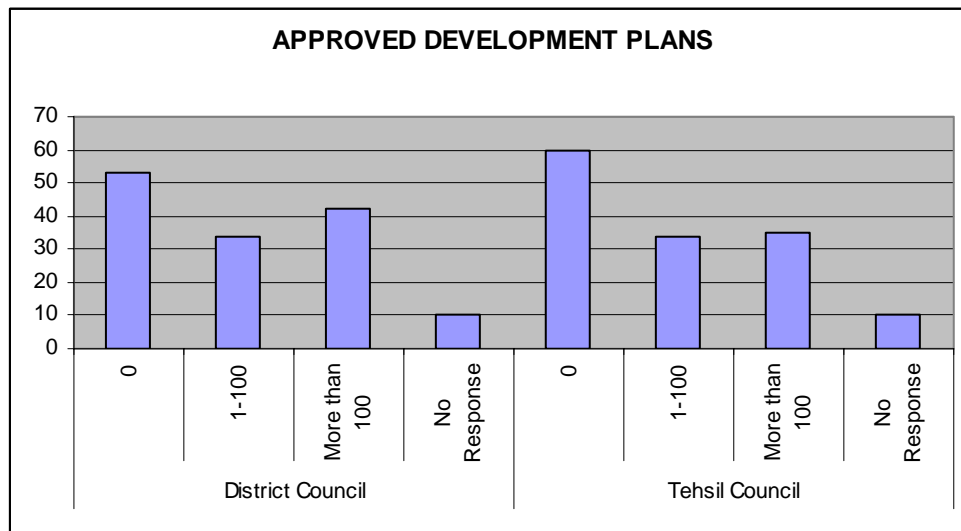


Figure: 2

One of the major aims of devolution system is development planning and projects according to local needs in an efficient and responsive manner. Therefore the number of development plans and the response of stakeholders approved indicate both the degree of development focus and ownership of elected representatives for this process. In this context, a highly varied response would mean that the elected representatives either for not agree with the development agenda or, what is worse, they are simply unaware of it. As the above table indicates, as many as 38% of respondents in the district council and 43% respondents in tehsil councils completely disown the development process or at least, show their ignorance of the same.

Citizens Community Boards: Ownership

Q 5.1 How many CCB plans were presented in the given year?

		District Council				Tehsil Council			
		0	1-50	More than 50	No Response	0	1-50	More than 50	No Response
Number		40	35	44	20	67	59	6	7
Percentage		34%	29%	37%	17%	48%	42%	4%	5%

Q 5.2 How many CCB plans were approved?

		District Council				Tehsil Council			
		0	1-50	More than 50	No Response	0	1-50	More than 50	No Response
Number		46	61	32	0	66	64	7	2
Percentage		33%	44%	23%	0%	47%	46%	5%	1%

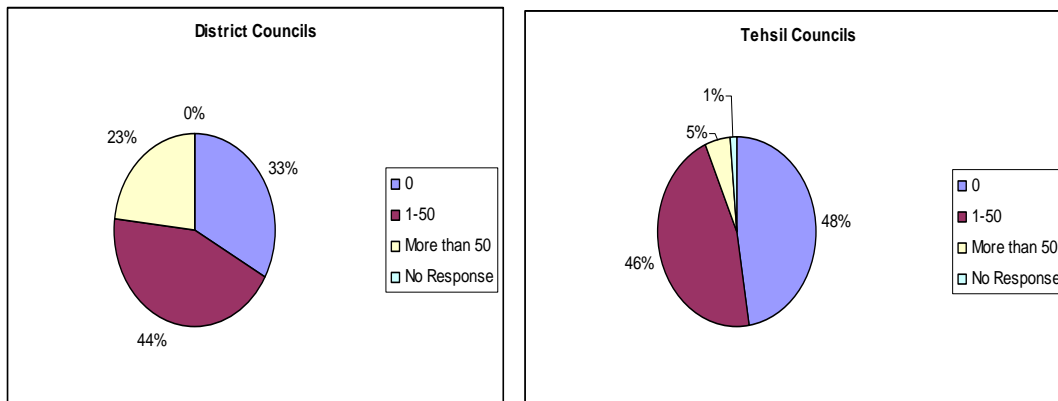


Figure 3: Approved Projects of CCBs

The ownership and engagement of people in development projects is at the heart of participatory development. The devolution system institutionalizes participatory development by allocating funds for citizens' led CCBs. Thus the number of CCB projects approved indicates the degree of participatory development in the aftermath of devolution. Q 5.1 reveals total number of CCB projects presented in the given year. Accordingly, almost 37% respondents at district council level indicate presentation of more than 50 projects, whereas at tehsil council, this percentage shrinks to only 4%. Once again, the degree of variation in the knowledge and ownership of CCBs across the political divide is notable. Almost one third of respondents at district council level and astonishingly half of the respondents at tehsil level do not acknowledge the activity of

CCBs. When it comes to actual approval of CCBs as opposed to just presentations, then the figures drop further.

Citizens Community Boards: Funds Utilization

Q.5.4 How much CCB funds were unutilized (%age)?

	District Council				Tehsil Council			
	0	1-50	51-100	No Response	0	1-50	51-100	No Response
Number	84	16	16	23	94	25	17	3
Percentage	60%	12%	12%	17%	68%	18%	12%	2%

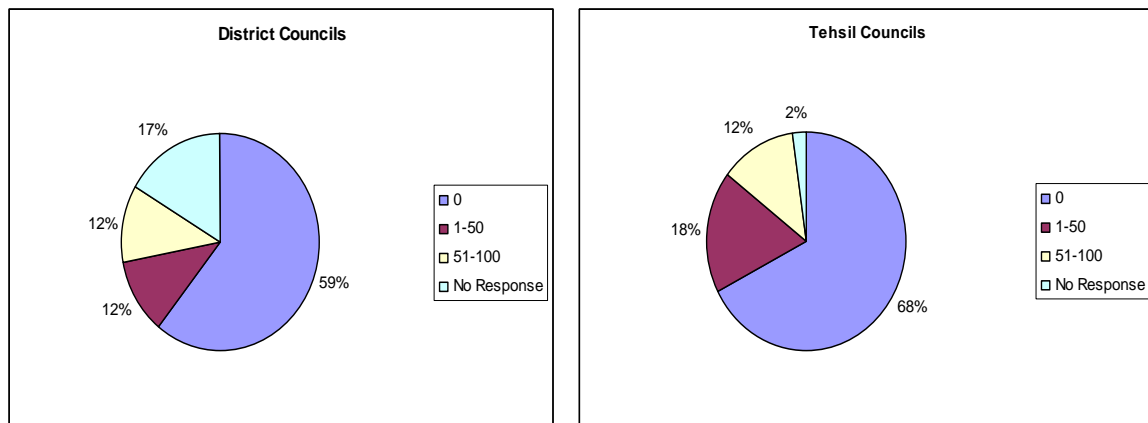


Figure 4: Funds Utilization under CCBs

An important rationale of CCBs is the public oversight of projects which results in efficient allocation of funds. When asked, how much funds were unutilized, a clear majority (84% and 94% in district and tehsil councils respectively), maintains that almost every penny allocated for approved CCBs was spent. This may apparently contradict our earlier argument about the inactivity or rather invisibility of CCBs. But since the latter question concerned only approved CCBs, as opposed to the block 25% allocation, the contradiction is resolved. It is indeed plausible that the projects proposed and managed by local communities are more likely to quickly exhaust their budgets.

Accountability: Monitoring Committees

Q 6.1 Were elections of monitoring committees held?

	District Council			Tehsil Council		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number	138	1	0	138	1	0
Percentage	99%	1%	0%	99%	1%	0%

Q 6.2 If yes, then how many monitoring committees were formed?

	District Council				Tehsil Council			
	1	1-5	More than 5	No Response	1	1-5	More than 5	No Response
Number	8	24	107	0	11	26	102	0
Percentage	6%	17%	77%	0%	8%	19%	73%	0%

Q 6.3 Are the meetings of monitoring committees held?

	District Council			Tehsil Council		
	Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number	50	55	29	86	51	2
Percentage	37%	41%	22%	62%	37%	1%

Monitoring of district government performance by the elected representatives is fundamental for functioning democracy. The devolution system creates the structure of monitoring committees for this purpose, which comprise elected representatives. As the response to Q 6.1 shows, an overwhelming 99% of respondents in both district and tehsil councils confirm formation of monitoring committees in the reported districts. A considerable majority i.e. more than 70% confirmed formation of more than five monitoring committees at district and tehsil levels. However when it comes to actual functioning and regular meetings, only one third in the case of district councils and an encouraging 86% in the case of tehsil councils would readily admit.

Grievance Redress System: Complaints Cell

Q 7.1 Has the council established Complaints Cell?

		District Council			Tehsil Council		
		Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
Number		31	74	34	57	68	14
Percentage		22%	53%	24%	41%	49%	10%

While the devolution system has given maximum powers to elected representatives, it has not shied away from systematically accommodating citizens' voice. The system mandates formation of Complaints Cell under each tehsil and district council. The situation in this regards is not very encouraging as almost half of the respondents said, there is no Complaints Cell. In the case of district council, only 22% respondents acknowledged formation of the Cell, while this figure was 41% in case of tehsil councils.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

Our premise rests on five major components of the new local government system viz. 1) Political Decentralization; 2) Technical Efficiency; 3) Ownership of Public; 4) Representation of Women and Minorities; and 5) Accountability through Monitoring Committees. The foregoing data analysis has thrown some light on the overall situation from these aspects. Subsequently, we find that:

1. Political decentralization to a fair degree has been achieved. It is evident from the district and tehsil councils which remained active through out the year deliberating upon political as well as developmental issues. Moreover, there does not appear any significant difference between district and tehsil councils from this aspect. Political decentralization should be inclusive i.e. it should accommodate the under-represented and relatively vulnerable sections of the society for example, women, minorities and poor. The new local government system has sanctioned reserved seats for these segments of population and the responses received showed that almost all district and tehsil councils included in the sample have given fair representation to minorities, women and the poor. Moreover, moving beyond simple representation, the new system has also encouraged allocation of development budgets for these vulnerable segments of the society.
2. Technical Efficiency refers to the capacity of local government system to efficiently deliver the services required by the citizens. Although the questionnaire did not focus as such on the service delivery aspects, some insights can be obtained by looking at annual development plans. Our data reveal that development projects have become a kind of political controversy as overall more than one third of the elected representatives refused to acknowledge the approval of new development projects, whereas the majority gave a number of projects running into hundreds. This kind of difference of opinion does not bode well for the internal harmony of the devolution system and indicate continuation of political confrontations at all levels. It also means that projects approval process is

- largely driven by politics, which leads to misallocation of resources. Politically motivated projects can allocate district funds in directions, which might extend advantage to selected groups within the society thus causing a general alienation from development process.
3. Like development projects, CCBs also seem to be influenced by local politics not bearing well for the collective benefits of the community. As reported above, anywhere from one third to one half of the respondents refuse to acknowledge formation of CCBs in their area. This is corroborated from a general observation, according to which the CCBs enjoying the support of Nazim get approved rather quickly and CCBs coming from the other side of the political divide is subject to stringent bureaucratic criteria thus slowing down the process of participatory development.
 4. Accountability through monitoring committees has been institutionalized but largely these committees remain dysfunctional. In sum, reported districts have formed 644 monitoring committees. The local governments of Sindh seem to lead this in which 268 monitoring committees have been formed in the reported districts. In NWFP, 168 monitoring committees have been formed, where as 161 and 65 committees have been formed in Punjab and Balochistan respectively. However, the performance and activities of these committees is rather mixed as many district and tehsil councils reported that these monitoring committees are dysfunctional. It shows that the real spirit of accountability from elected council members is rather absent from the system.
 5. Budget making process at local government has been largely streamlined. The responses from various aspects of budget making were unanimously positive. Almost all respondents reported that the budget was passed in a regular council session and a budget committee was also formed. Similarly, a formal budget document was also prepared. This improved process does indicate the positive

impact of capacity building initiatives by civil society organizations, governments and multi-lateral donor agencies.

6. Although the local government system has certainly resulted into devolution of political powers, the financial powers have been re-centralized. The abolishment of Octroi Tax is a case in point, which deprived the local governments from their major source of income. The districts have been given 2.5% share from General Sales Tax collection in the form of provincial funds transfer, but this has certainly increased the dependency of local governments on the provincial governments, which is against the spirit of devolution. The LGO 2001 allows the local governments to levy many new taxes, but this remains only a superficial power. The local governments do not have the capacity to enforce taxes and hence they avoid imposing them, as cost of collection can be too high to justify a small tax amount. For example, only Charsadda and Turbat reported imposition of new taxes, which shows the overall dependence of local governments. In the absence of financial autonomy, political decentralization remains, at best, a façade.

7. Grievance administration is considered as an important aspect of accountability through public oversight. In this respect, only 7 districts have established Complaints Cell out of the 18 reported. Even in those districts, the complaints redress system is largely viewed ineffective. This shows two facts: first, the lack of organizational capacity in the local governments to effectively respond to redress the complaints, and second, lack of trust by the people in any such system.

7. THE WAY AHEAD

When the Local Government Ordinance 2001 was promulgated, its authors wrote in the preface that ‘what follows is the structure of the new local bodies structure; its philosophy and spirit would be announced later.’ True to its iron-clad vision of expanding systems and sub-systems, the devolution system has delivered just that and has fallen short of whatever was going to be achieved later. From an overview of the situation it is apparent that almost all structural requirements of the new system have been successfully met, however the spirit of the system has not been in sight yet. The representation of the masses, which was envisioned through the new political order, was replaced by replication of the conventional political order, resulting into appearance of new faces with the old mindset.

This study has partially upheld findings of some previous studies. The achievement of political decentralization and greater and easier access of public to their elected representatives is a common finding in all the studies including this one. The conflicts at inter-governmental and intra-governmental levels have negatively affected the developmental outcomes, as indicated in the study by SPDC in 2008. These conflicts have been highlighted in divergent responses to the development exercise in the current study as well. Previous studies have shown satisfaction over the trend of participatory development through Citizens Community Boards but this study shows that it is too not independent of local power relationships.

The dream of a locally sensitive need identification of development process has been replaced with the development process caught into intricacies of local power politics. The public at large—the real intended beneficiaries of development—still remain unsatisfied. Participatory development through CCBs was a great idea but that idea too has been made a hostage of political groupings at local level. Monitoring by elected representatives and grievance procedure from citizens have been given formal space in the system, but both these institutions have largely remained dysfunctional at the best.

The environment for local government system is largely conducive for continuation as demonstrated in the aftermath of general elections earlier this year. All political parties have in principle shown their commitment to further evolve and support the third tier of the government; however forms and conditions are likely to change. This should be taken as a supportive factor

and the proponents of the devolution system should build up strategic coalitions to develop safeguards for the system.

Situation analysis of local governments has revealed that access to politicians may not result into real accountability and transparency. While the locally elected representatives are certainly more representative and accessible, this has not translated into a well-functioning, transparent mechanism of resource allocation. The monitoring system in the district and tehsil councils needs to be fully activated and mandated to ensure spreading of development across political divide.

The system should focus on representation as it has done so far, but not at the cost of performance and service delivery. The political patronage should not influence the choice of the projects or that of district administration. Ironically, what the devolution system needs for outlasting the current wave of political uncertainty is not more politics, but the less of it. Only a non-partisan approach to development ensuring equitable resource allocation can give the ultimate guarantee of systemic growth of devolution plan.

ANNEXURE: QUESTIONNAIRE

Local Government Situation Analysis 2006-07

Date-----

Province-----

District-----

Name of the Respondent-----

Position-----

1. Meetings

1.1. How many sessions of your District Council (DC)/Tehsil Council (TC) have taken place during the fiscal year 2006-2007? -----

1.2. Were the members duly notified for attending the DC/TC sessions? Yes No

1.3. What was the average duration of the DC/TC sessions (number of days)? -----

1.4. Were minutes of the DC/TC sessions prepared? Yes No

2. Reserved Seats for Women and Religious Minorities

2.1. Are reserved seat for women in your DC/TC completely filled? Yes No

2.2. If no, how many seats are still vacant? -----

2.3. Did women representatives participate in the DC/TC sessions? Yes No

2.4. Are reserved seats for peasants and workers completely filled in your DC/TC? Yes No

2.5. Do religious minorities have due number of their representatives in your DC/TC? Yes No

3. Budget

3.1. Has any committee been formed in your DC/TC for preparation of budget 2006-2007? Yes No

- 3.2. Has any budget document been prepared? Yes No
- 3.3. Were the representatives of your DC/TC given copies of the budget to the members before holding of the budget session? Yes No
- 3.4. Was the budget 2006-2007 passed during the session of your DC/TC? Yes No
- 3.5. How many new taxes were levied in the new budget? -----
- 3.6. Does your DC/TC advertise before inviting tenders? Yes No
- 3.7. Did your DC/TC have audit of the 2006-2007 done? Yes No
- 3.8. Did your DC/TC have the audit report of 2006-2007 developed? Yes No

4. Annual Development Plans

- 4.1. How many development plans your DC/TC approved in 2006-2007? -----
- 4.2. Were any women/peasants/workers/religious minorities' specific projects approved? Yes No
- 4.3. If yes, to what extent? Not at all
 Some
 Most of the projects
- 4.4. Has your DT/TC developed any comprehensive single document of the projects of 2006-2007? Yes No

5. Citizen Community Boards (CCBs)

- 5.1. How many proposals were submitted by CCBs during 2006-2007? Yes No
- 5.2. How many projects were approved? -----
- 5.3. Were the funds allocated for CCBs were fully consumed during 2006-2007? Yes No
- 5.4. How many funds were left in the budget head of CCBs (percentage)? -----

6. Monitoring Committees

6.1. Were the elections for monitoring committees held during 2006-2007? Yes No

6.2. If yes, how many committees were formed? -----

6.3. Names of the committees -----

6.4. Do monitoring committees of your DC/TC hold meetings? Yes No

7. Complaint Cell

7.1. Has your DC/TC established complaint cell in the council? Yes No

7.2. How many complaints were recorded during 2006-2007? Yes No

7.3. Were those complaints addressed? Yes No

Observation of the Surveyor -----
