

**CHALLENGES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY: A CASE STUDY**  
**OF PUNJAB**



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Public Policy

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**CERTIFICATE**

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## **Dedication**

I want to dedicate my reserch work to my Late Grandfather Syed Tuffail Hussain Shah. as he supported me a lot. and i miss his unconditional love and prayers . May his soul rest in heaven. Aameen

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to probe the challenges facing local bodies in Punjab with reference to service delivery. In this regard, data was collected on three dimensions of service delivery i.e. institutional capacities, decision space and accountability with the help of in-depth interviews from four groups of people namely local representatives, academia, journalists and development sector. Further, for this research two districts of Punjab i.e. Multan and Gujrat were selected. Findings of the research show that owing to the existing inadequate human and financial resources, local bodies could not perform efficiently. Again, overdue interference from upper tiers and inadequate political and financial empowerment has handicapped the performance of local bodies. The study focused on the correlation of the authority devolved to the grass root level and responsibility assigned to them for dispensation of public amenities. Further, it also envisaged the framework of checks and balances enabling public empowerment in its true sense. If the loopholes in the justice system are plugged, accountability can easily be ensured. In Pakistan, several systems were adopted for service delivery but none of them were allowed to develop. Discontinuity of democratic system at regular intervals may be taken as a reason for this but considering current developments in the country, one may hope that the things will turn out in nation's favor.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1. Background Of The Study**

The empire of democracy stands on the foundation of local government system. They are made with the aim of providing efficient service delivery to the masses. Local governments have the potential to respond more efficiently to the people's demand. That's why we see emergence of an efficient and autonomous system of devolved governance around the world, (Osborne, 1993). The purpose of decentralization is to transfer power to the grass root level in order to provide efficient service delivery to the general public. (Musgrave, 1459) Under a devolved system of governance, the elected representatives are mandated to have funds through taxes and inter-governmental transfers spend these funds on local services and development projects. Devolution of power to local bodies promotes accountability of the institutions and helps in the division of resources on efficient basis. The system ensures better delivery particularly in terms of health and education (Rhodes, 1994).

A functioning decentralization process necessitates an explicit and well defined institutional framework which assigns expenditure responsibilities to all tiers of government accompanied by budgetary autonomy for carrying out assigned responsibilities at each level of government (McLure, and Martinez, 2000). For realizing decentralization, sub national governments should have their "own" sources of revenue. Sub national governments can rarely enjoy fiscal autonomy in a system that lack independent and well- defined sources. As in the given scenario, they operate under the financial thumb and dictation of the central government. Musgrave indicate necessity of devolved policies to the sub national tiers of governments, when it comes to resource allocation for true reflection of the inclinations and aspirations of the residents of an area. Sub national governments are enabled to tailor schemes in accordance with the demands of their constituencies, with decentralization of taxes and spending powers. This leads to increase in efficiency as local governments can act more up to the needs of people given their access to better information on it (Tiebout, 2008).

Local governments in Pakistan have remained ineffective in the past because of limited devolution of fiscal and political power as well as due to strong control by central government. Local bodies are crucial grass roots tiers that perform administrative functions at the municipal,

district, sub-district and community level. Furthermore, a balanced division of power between national and sub-national levels is a pre-requisite for realizing the essence of successful democracy. In other words, the local government system must engage the mainstream political parties and give them a stake in supporting local democracy.(Oates, 1974)

As per the 1973 constitution of Pakistan, the country is liable for holding elections for local bodies. The first attempt to introduce local body system in Pakistan was made by General Ayub Khan's rule. His "Basic Democracy" was a veneering of a third tier of government. In 1979, almost on same pattern General Zia-ul-Haq introduced a "Local Body System". Later on, the "Local Government Plan" was introduced in 2001 while Musharraf was ruling. The devolution mechanism of this latest model comprised of District Government, Tehsil Government and the Union Government. Under the system, an easy access to the local councilors made the system beneficial to the masses at grass root level. But these bodies under the martial rule were particularly designed to legitimize the military reigns rather than devolution of real power to these tiers. (Cheema, etal.2006)

The 18<sup>th</sup> amendment aimed at ensuring devolution of authorities to lower tiers. As enunciated in Article 140A. ***"Every province shall establish a local government system. This LG will have elected officials through elections held by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority will then be devolved by the provinces to local government officials"***. Article 140A gives constitutional protection to local governments. The setting up of local governments is a constitutional requirement. Constitutionally, the provincial assemblies are free to enact their own local governance systems. The 18<sup>th</sup> amendment does not describe the type of local government that needs to be set up; that is left to the discretion of provinces. There is, therefore, a likelihood of four different systems of local government emerging in Pakistan.

Decentralization empowers people at the grass root level. It not only facilitates people but also provide them with opportunities that help in the smooth progress of the community. In addition, it keeps a check on the excessive powers of center. So, local governments perform a dual role of improving transparency and serving the needs of the general Public. Devolution of powers to the local tiers creates opportunities for locals to stay in the region and provide managerial technical and leadership skills. It bridges the urban rural differences by facilitating the latter at their door



steps. This also includes considerable fiscal decentralization which gives a framework for facilities and stimulates local developments in the region.

Through effective fiscal decentralization, communities can generate resources on their own and use technology and innovations for strengthening the local economy and ensuring efficient performance. Local bodies of Punjab are run under Provincial Local Government Act (PLGA) 2013. As per the new setup, a rural-urban divide exists in local bodies. Rural areas comprise of union councils and district councils whereas urban areas are categorized as union and municipal committees. Every district will comprise of its own distinct local council. The mode of election is a mix of direct vs indirect.

Though financial autonomy lies at the center of the concept of decentralization, the PLGA 2013 is not followed by a proper inter-governmental fiscal transfer formula for making these bodies autonomous. No appropriate fiscal transfer mechanism exists in the Act for running the local bodies expenditure. The functions of Union Councils, municipal committees and Metropolitan and Municipal Corporations have been elaborated in detail in the Act. Lack of fiscal powers is one of the primary problems facing these bodies. The functions of Local bodies include wide range of tasks yet two major spending responsibilities of local bodies i.e. Health and Education have been put under different specified authorities headed by government appointed technocrats. The functions of the local bodies have been restricted to functions like streets lighting, organizing markets and imposing penalties and fines. All the budgets are to be approved by the Provincial government and they retain the power to push the local bodies to review the budget. Development projects of Local bodies are subject to approval by Provincial government as per the Act and local governments have little say in it. Thus a dominant role of provincial governments could be sensed when it comes to fiscal decentralization. Provincial governments also enjoy excessive power of suspension of Mayors and Chairmen, which grant it a control over the local executives. Thus, under PLGA 2013, excessive role of provincial government and bureaucracy can be clearly traced. The local administrators can be ousted out of office on the scrutiny of LG commission which comprises largely of provincial ministers.

The power of the local governments in Pakistan had always been weak. A critical analysis of the current Act shows limited scope of devolution which can handicap efficient service delivery. Explicit asymmetric relations between the local and provincial governments exist. Lack of

independence and lack of autonomy are two primary causes of the mentioned limited scope. Furthermore, restrained distribution of functions as can be witnessed in cases of key social sector areas such as education and health, may be responsible for bleak prospects of these bodies (Awaz, 2016). Lack of fiscal autonomy along with missing institutional capacity is a major problem. Though the spending responsibilities of LG have been elaborated with detail in the Act yet they mean little in the absence of fiscal means and institutional capacity. In the absence of potential sources for rising own revenues, local governments are totally reliant on transfers from Provincial Government. Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) which recommends the resource distribution among local governments is headed by provincial finance minister. Local bodies thus lack means for plugging revenue-expenditure gap because of absence of any potential means for raising their own revenues.

Appropriate fiscal devolution is key to efficient service delivery. Partial and limited autonomy can be a major impediment for the evolution of these bodies. Ensuring sufficient resources, building capacity to deliver and granting authority to the third tiers will help in addressing the local challenges. So, the purpose of this study to pin point the challenges faced on these fronts and its implications with regard to local service delivery.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

LG in today's modern life is liable for delivering the basic services to its local people and communities in a faster, capable and easier manner. Under PLGA 2013, give the mandate to local governments to improve the service delivery but LG communities are still facing many difficulties to access the basic services. Achievements in public services are far behind the satisfaction level of public. Communities lack proper supply of basic services such as health, public utility, social welfare, town planning and infrastructure development. To assess the root cause, this research studies Punjab as the case study to investigate of challenges faced by the LG while striving for better service delivery. It will also examine the views of Local Government representative for overcoming these challenges and improving the service delivery to public.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study will aim to find answers of the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by the local representatives in terms of institutional and financial capacity?
2. What Decision space do the local representatives exercise to solve local issues?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study is to investigate the problems affecting the efficiency of service delivery to be provided by Local governments in selected districts of Punjab. With this aim, this study will explore:

- The challenges faced by Local bodies in terms of institutional and financial capacity which restricts their ability to provide local services to the communities
- The ability of local representatives to implement their priorities as per local needs and preferences

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Many studies have been conducted on assessing Local governments performance in the past. This study will add new realities unto existing literature on challenges related to service delivery will critically scrutinize the recently implemented Local Government Act, 2013 in the province of Punjab. The results of this study will bring to light problems faced by the local bodies while performing their functions.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2. Literature Review**

The study contains multiple sources of information including newspapers, journals, websites, articles, books and other means of information that add value to this research. Official documents have also been consulted for preparing this study. There has been plenty of literature that has been accessed to learn from the existing stock of knowledge and be able to contribute positively through this study.

Akramov et al. (2009) have explained in their study the disparities in the provision of the local service delivery between decentralized districts of Ghana and their impact on the local level as well. Geography does matter while ensuring the proper service delivery. The locals of Ghana expected the service delivery as per their aspirations. In their view the key factor in the Local Government is the geography and the factors relating to it. While ethnic disparity considered the basic challenge in the service delivery. It always casts negative impact of the LG services provision. There are issues including the provision of clean drinking water that is the main example in this context. This negative impact can easily be gauged in the rural areas. In the suburbs, this negativity has great issues while defining the slogan of LG services for all. It puts a question mark on the effectiveness of the LG system. It has also been observed that the increase in the literacy rate can minimize the negative impact.

Adeyemo (2005) in his study showed the contradictions in the management of the primary health care depend on the sustainability of the political culture and the proper issuance of funds in this regards. It is the basic issue in delivery system that the funds are not released in time hence causing issues for the betterment of the LG system around the world. The issuance of the funds holds key to the success of the LG system. The political stability is another vital factor. The countries where the democratic setups are not stable, do find it tough to ensure delivery to the masses. Leadership is the main concern in this regard. The leadership is the only factor that stands tall everywhere. The leaders find way to maintain the delivery of services. To ensure the healthcare services, one also requires having quality workers. If any government lacks in having professionals, then it also faces the same problems. The communication and transportation

services are also the key in this regard. All these factors have an accumulative impact of the LG system delivery.

Viet et al. (2009) writes in his research work that the service delivery structure mainly depends on the given circumstances that include almost all the impacts discussed in the above paragraphs. He is of the view that the development projects bring sustainability in the economy and that further results in provision of better facilities to the locals under LG system. He concludes that the situation in Vietnam is evident of the fact that the central institutions are responsible for the better delivery as the main elements including funding are dependent on them.

A study on delivery system in sectors including health, education, drinking water and employment programs showed the role of panchayat system and the issues regarding the implementation of the panchayat regulations in West Bengal and Kerala. Panchayat is the local version of the local government system and is working in various states of India. The panchayat system was considered as consistent while fulfilling their obligations. It was also observed that the legislation defining the role in service delivery mainly deals with the institutions that are concerned in this regard. The centrally sponsored schemes were failed as the issues pertaining the release of funds were the main hurdles (World Bank Report, 2000).

The study overall focused on the question if the LG system works best under the centralized institutions or if they are performed under the independent local government systems. It was found that the interference of the centralized institutions was negative in delivery system. The devolution system was introduced to make the dream of LG successful. It did work good in most of the areas in India. The legislation plays a key role in this regard. The legislation regarding the LG system ensured the delivery in some parts of India.

ADB report in 2004 elevated the local governance and service delivery to the poor in Bangladesh. The comparison shows that there is always a need for innovative arrangements for this purpose. The study concludes that the issues can be resolved by improving efficiency of SLGDP replicating approach more rapidly.

There are some key factors that also cause impact of local government system. These impacts include accountability, holding of free and fair LG elections and a complete check and balance in the assurance of transparency of funding for the LG delivery system. Zahid (2008) is of the view

that the policy makers must have a reach to the locals. Through this practice, they may be able to understand their needs and their interaction can enhance the effectiveness of the system. It is the most vital element. Before drafting the core issues and getting to their resolution, one must have an idea of how he should get start. Mainly, the core issues are defined by the experts without even consulting the main stakeholders. The people are the main stakeholders in this context. The access to the locals holds key to success. These are the people who are required to be consulted in this particular issue (Zahid, 2008)

Since the introduction of the devolution system, Pakistan has also stepped into modern culture of LG delivery system. Most of the key institutions have been devolved. This has further made the system of delivery more viable for the government. The provinces now hold the key to fulfill their obligation. The research further shows that the LG system is mainly focused on provision of basic infrastructure including roads, drinking water and sanitation, education and health. The prioritization of issues is another key factor (Zahid, 2008)

Navratna et al, (1989) has analyzed the Provincial Council System as the administrative machinery of government and the public service. The study includes the interviews, group discussions on this issue. The study focuses in the areas including Sri Lanka (Southern, North Western and Sabargamuwa provinces). His questionnaire focused on the success rate of LG system. He has discovered the positive outcomes of the LG delivery system. He is of the view that the devolution has cast positive impact of the delivery system. He is of the view that the LG system must be given freehand to perform. All the funds must be given to it to exercise full powers.

The key areas which hold main functions in delivery system are the reforms in the sectors including health, education and social welfare. People must be mobilized to accept the changes and they should be made comfortable by ensuring the maximum delivery (ADB, 2004).

Ekpo, (2008) highlighted the issue that the decentralization could have positive impacts including facilitating good governance by mobilizing the local communities. This allows the locals to have check and balance on the system. It also aides in improving service delivery. The key areas including health, education and social welfare are addressed in a good manner. It also helps in enhancing the competition for public goods and services.

All the above discussed factors hold key for the good governance. The study throws light on the impact of the local government delivery system. The main theme is that the local governments are formed to facilitate the locals hence they are meant to deliver for their betterment. However, there are hurdles in this context. The hurdles may range from the influence of central government, institutional capacity and ensuring the legislations for the better delivery. These issues were made more complex by given hype to the importance of the central institutions. However, the devolution of the certain institutions has brought about change in this field. Now the experiment of devolution is working positively in various countries. The successful models must be followed for ensuring the success of the LG system in our country as well.

The section sheds light on the issues regarding failure of LG system. The lack of coordination between central and LG representatives results into failure of LG system. Effective LG system can be obtained by keeping all the factors in view. Governments must set their priorities according to the needs of the locals. The local government representatives must have complete knowledge of the issues regarding the locals. Without having grip on the local issues, the representatives cannot turn LG system into fruitful one. Therefore, the current study will help in identifying issues in the context of Pakistan that possibly impede better local service delivery.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **3. Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on qualitative research method. Primary data has been collected from officials responsible for delivering local services to the people. These officials includes mayors, deputy mayors and Union council members.

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

There are certain advantages and disadvantages of the decentralization for the sake of service delivery. System can be made more effective by giving it a freehand. The local system must not be made dependent on the central institutions and they must be given powers to exercise. In this research, to assess the status of service delivery, a three-dimensional framework has been used. Effective service delivery is gauged by three dimensions namely (1) institutional capacity (2) Decision space and (3) Accountability; that is currently being exercised at the local level.

Institutional capacities here assessed the institutional machinery available at the local level, focusing primarily on the human resource used for running the institutions. This dimension also looked into its contribution for service delivery. Institutional capacities though not restricted to the human resource only rather is extended to capacities of institutions on multiple levels. In fact, a combination of many indicators has been assessed (that are at the disposal of local government representatives) such as technology available to staff, education, expertise, training of the executors (and aides), facilities and budgeting.

Decision space represents the authority of local representatives for taking the decisions. The purpose of using decision space is to assess the decision-making powers of the elected representatives for running their affairs. It also looked into the interference of upper tiers into their jurisdiction. For efficient service delivery, appropriate presence of decision space is very important.

Whereas last dimension i.e. accountability aims at a check and balance on the working place. It is a very significant factor for a fair and efficient operation of any organization. It looks into accurate position of the institution, that how efficiently they work and how do they overcome



institutional shortcomings, if any. This indicator aims at promotion of transparency, meeting with subordinates, and checks and balance on performance of the local representatives.

These three indicators has been used in this research for examining the service delivery status and for investigating the challenges faced (if any) in the performance of local service delivery.

The methodology basically is built upon Bossert and Mitchel (2011)

### **3.2 Research Method.**

The objective of this study is to explore the challenges impeding efficient performance of local bodies in the selected districts of Punjab. The purpose is to investigate these problems subjectively and therefore qualitative methods are used. Qualitative method being used to collect rich information on challenges facing local Government with the help of in-depth interviews. This qualitative study has help in highlighting the problems faced by elected officials responsible for delivering services to their respective communities. Semi structured interview schedule were developed for in-depth interview, mainly aimed at getting information on the items as elaborated in Table 1.

<b>Table 1: Theme of Questionnaire for In-depth Interviews</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
<b>Extent Of Local Government</b>	<b>Institutional capacities</b>	<u>Education and expertise</u> <u>Training of the Executors</u> <u>Facilities and Technology Available</u> <u>Budgeting\Finance</u>
	<b>Decision Space</b>	Liberty in decision Influence from poles
	<b>Accountability</b>	Transparency Meetings with subordinates Check and Balance of Performance

Qualitative methods are used for data processing and analysis. Information collected through interviews is carefully transcribed. Descriptive statistics are used to show the results of the study.

### **3.3 Study Area**

Punjab is selected as the study area for this research. PLGA, 2013 elaborates different tiers of the local government which consists of Municipal Corporation, Municipal Committee (at Tehsil Level) and Union Councils. Mayor and Deputy Mayors are responsible for running local affairs at the district level while Chairman and Vice Chairman are elected at the Tehsil level. As it is important to have information from both tiers of the government, Therefore, Multan<sup>1</sup> and Gujrat<sup>2</sup> are selected from Punjab to conduct interviews at the district and Tehsil level. Whereas Multan has been selected as it is a part of south Punjab and both the districts are entirely different culturally vocally and habitat is different.

### **3.4 Sample Frame**

Purposive sampling technique was used in this research. The desired sample size is 18 local government representatives, the details of which are elaborated in Table 2 below. Officials responsible for service delivery at district and tehsil level, were interviewed. Due to time constraint and accessibility issue, only two tehsils were selected from each district (to conduct in depth interviews of Chairman and Vice Chairman of Municipal Committee). People from Academia, Journalism and development sector were also be interviewed.

**(Table 2 provides the districts regarding sample)**

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<sup>1</sup>having a population of 1.872.. million

<sup>2</sup>having a population of 2.756..... million

<b>Table 2: List of Local Government Representatives from Each District</b>					
<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Designation of Respondent</b>		<b>Multan</b>	<b>Gujrat</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	Mayor		1	1	2
2	Personal Secretary Mayor		1	1	2
3	Deputy Mayor		1	1	2
4	Chairman District Council		1	1	2
5	Vice Chairman 1		1	1	2
6	Vice Chairman 2		1	1	2
7	Chief Officer		1	1	2
8	Academia	6			6
9	Journalists	5			5
10	Development Sector	5			5
	<b>Total</b>				<b>30</b>

### **3.5 Policy Relevance**

This study identified challenges handicapping the efficient performance of local governments. It informs the relevant authorities about the problems faced by the elected local officials in terms of delivering local services to the people as well as their perceptions on solution of these problems.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter takes an overview of the challenges facing “Local Government Service Delivery” on three dimensions namely, institutional capacities, Decision Space and Accountability. The purpose is to examine participants first hand experiences on the challenges faced in supervision of the Local Government system from the helm of affairs. Data has been collected from four groups namely LG representatives, Academia, Journalists and Development Sector.

#### **4.1- Interviews from LG Representatives**

##### **Institutional Capacities**

Local bodies can best reflect the challenges facing them, in the light of their experiences. Against the backdrop, a range of LG representatives were chosen from the selected case study(as shown in Table.2). Following paragraphs incorporates their views on selected research questions, put to them.

Majority of LG representatives were of the view that the system was facing challenges owing to the fact that it was still in its initial stages of learning. Due to the inexperience of local body representatives, most of the work was carried out with the advice of the senior bureaucrats. Though the top brass was not involved in the decision making, however they were of utmost help to keep things going in smooth manner. The council which the top representative was heading initially faced shortages of human resources; however measures were taken to overcome this issue. As the time passed by, the council had enough physical resources to carry out the derived plans for the people.

On technological constraints, the top LG representatives acknowledged the significance of technology usage in implementation of the service delivery mechanism. They were of the opinion, that it was an issue anticipated by the authorities. Hence, lots of workshops were convened to make the staff oblivious of the technology. However the results were not much favorable and usage of technology is a subject that still needs focused attention. So far most of

the work was carried out manually (however use of technology was not left out). Meanwhile, several programs were arranged with the help of the Information Technology experts, to make it easier for the staff to comprehend the job requirements. Once the staff becomes well-versed with modern technology, it would be easier to overcome the service provision challenges.

On issues surrounding budget, no precise response was given. However, it could be gathered from majority of opinions that the local bodies were not financially stronger as the act envisaged. One of the responded was of the opinion that the council was authorized to allocate funds for running its affairs; none the less budget allocation for various projects was compromised as the procedure was too much tedious. He said that theoretically, the system empowered LG for funding, but it will take time for the representatives to mobilize finances and seek avenues for economic empowerment. They however were aware about the basic rules regarding distribution of funds at the local government level. Another respondent said that the accounts of all the expenditures were kept in a manner similar to that of Accountant General of Pakistan. Provincial Director, Local Fund Audit of the Government maintains the accounts of the local governments. Besides, the accounts of the Union Councils, District Education and Health Authorities were also kept in almost similar manner.

Effective local governance delivery system unfortunately varies in almost all districts of the country. top level representative from Gujrat expressed his reservations on the existing LG system. The mayor criticized upper tiers for ignoring the significance of manpower and human resources. According to him, the existing MOP and MOF were transferred to their desired areas and were running the entire system without its senior officials. He declared it professional dishonesty on account of the said officials who did not even bother to give any replacement. Absence of these officials directly interrupted the implementation of his plans regarding sanitation, sewerage and encroachments. These officials could be of a great help to provide quality service delivery. He regretted that resolving these basic issues was his top priority but he failed to meet the expectations of the people.

As far as the question of having known how about the latest technology, responded said that the staff was well educated and they never faced any hindrance in this regard.

Describing the allocation and finalization of the budget, he said that the initial budget is made with the help of local concerned officials. The copy is then approved by the corporation under supervision of the Mayor. It is then moved to secretary LG for further approval.

Whereas, the another responded refused to give interview as he said that whatever the other top level representative said is accurate and we work together.

The another responded said, in his capacity was well aware of his duties. He knew the laws that he can utilize for ensuring service delivery. He was clear headed towards improvement in system delivery. He made it clear that despite wasting time in making the old lot aware of the technology, the younger lot must be deployed where use of technology is required. He said that the government can arrange workshops to make youth skillful.

He dragged our attention to the Prime Minister Youth Scheme. He was of the view that this program must be aimed at equipping youth in the fields that were required in local government system delivery. He told that the youth must be encouraged to perform their duty with the local government. He said that the certified youth is the only solution towards resolving most of the issues. However presence of well aware old lot is also imperative. The importance of the experienced lot cannot be neglected as they were the one who understood the system from its roots. He said that the institutions like education and health can only perform better if the expertise of the working lot is utilized to good effect. He said that the local government system provides much necessary workforce to the institutions at the local level which can be of great help in the future.

The close members of the top representative mentioned during the interview, they were well aware of the local government system delivery. They had ideas to share how the service delivery can be improved. Since they have experience of working with the bureaucracy in the past, they possessed all the skills to overcome challenges. They told us that the service delivery can only be improved by deploying youth and making them skilled with the latest technology. One of the member categorically told that the issues will not be resolved unless we get adapted to the technology. The arrangement of workshops was not enough in this regard. The youth must be given exposure. They must be given chance to visit various offices where technology is being used. For instance, the field of education, health and other basic public services needs revival. The entire world is utilizing technology for its benefit. We must take advantage of the

experiences of our brotherly countries. He said that the exchange of delegations can help in this regard.

They said that the use of budget is a sensitive issue. The allocated budget must be given to the local governments in full volume so that they can undertake their future plan. If the local governments get budget as per their plans, then there was an issue that the upper tiers make cut in those allocations. He said that the institutional capacities can only be enhanced by choosing right persons for right job. One of the responded said that all these issues needed to be revised to bring out some healthy results. In his opinion, the idea of local governments is good however it must be propagated properly so that the people may also know their responsibility towards it.

Another member from top hierarchy was performing his duties with utmost efficiency; he also regretted to have lack of human resources. He was of the view that it was very hard to educate the elected members under his supervision which included almost 15 female and three peasants. He told that though he successfully conducted the classes for training in various villages, but the improvement was not satisfactory.

Whereas he had mixed response to the questions There were areas which he thought he was pleased with but at the same time he had to state some grievances which he wanted the authorities to address accordingly. As having the authority his responsibilities were limited. He had to attend meetings concerning financial planning and was responsible for attestation of the papers.

Throwing light on his understanding of the issues, he said they have several challenges to overcome and like finance, establishing offices, equipment and educated human resource. He stated that he was not happy with the technology provided to him by the system. He gave an example that he did not have adequate machinery to dump the waste. As it was his responsibility to ensure cleanliness in the areas falling under his council. He told that lack of equipment was the foremost issue. Besides, he also regretted that absence of required manpower was also a major hurdle in failure of desired delivery system. He elaborated that if he had the required number of persons to perform the duty the state of affairs could have been different. As per the training of the staff is concerned, he said that he himself arranged training programs for workers and he was happy with the results. He said that he did believe that training programs would work

for the betterment of the staff. About having adequate funds, the chairman told that the finance officer was responsible for arrangement and planning of funds. He told that the union council gets 10.5 percent of the budget and that budget is never stopped. He was of the view that expenditure of this budget was calculated. Shortage of funds is the biggest issue and he wanted to get it resolved as early as possible. He told that he believed in progress that cannot be achieved in at least this given budget.

Another responded , in a sitting, told that his duties were to act as acting chairman district council. However his scope was limited to maintaining local *punchayats*. He said that his main duties were to maintain judicious system at the local level. He was the one responsible for attestations and most importantly collecting revenue from the farmers. He was the one who was responsible for maintaining *local funds*. He told that the funds allocated to him were generated through local revenue. He faced issues of service delivery at local levels. He told that the political interference somehow causes issues in his area but in the end he manages to cross all the hurdles by using the authority given to him under the rules.

Another responded drew our attention towards the issue that it was hard to find female members to work in the union council He was of the view that illiteracy of the local women and lack of interest by the educated women were the main issues. He told how he managed to somehow complete the numbers of women that agreed to work with him. The local women had no interest in becoming part of the local government but after much pursuance, they somehow agreed to become part of our team. The lack of scope for women is the basic issue that needs to be addressed. He said that besides giving financial scope, these women needed to be guided as how they can exercise their limited powers. A comprehensive campaign must be run to ask the women to join local government system as being the members themselves.

As we approached the one of the official, we came to know that he is the most important functionary of the local government, and we came to know that his job is worth appreciating. However the more appreciating factor was to acknowledge the fact that the way he was aware of his duties as per the laws. He told us that as per the rules of the local government act 2013, the official of the local government is considered as the Principal Accounts Officer. Duties of the chief officer include ensuring the coordination between the LG and the other local governments



in the District and the Government. The rules state that *“The Chief Officer shall be responsible for ensuring adherence by the local government to all laws, policies and oversight framework of the Government in the prescribed manner”*

The official who was responsible to provide official support for all the activities being performed at the helms. His issues though were not different from others. He was facing the same challenges. He however made it clear that it was only a matter of time when the local government system will take full effect. He was of the view that challenges and hurdles are only a matter of time. As the system will catch roots, its fruits will be evident everywhere.

### **Decision Space**

Coming to the second part of our theme which is a decision space, the high level representative were more open towards the issues that they faced in line of their duty. He told, that on paper, he was in charge of prioritizing the areas of development but in actual the situation was different. There were many political factors that hindered their performance. The political interference was in many ways. The federation has given charge to the local governments, but as a matter of fact the local government system is not fully mature to take its decision. This system must be given full authority to implement the plans that it forms for the local people. They told that generating revenue for the supporting expenditures was not an easy task. The local investors were involved in many projects but that too was not enough to meet the expenses. The provincial government provides adequate funds but at some times, the cost of the projects did exceed from the estimated cost. However, apart from few projects, large numbers of projects were completed. There is no full autonomy in service delivery, the mayor told categorically. The budget is approved at the provincial level and is then diverted back to local governments.

He concluded that the participation of lower tiers was necessary but to give it a final shape, the authority must be given to local government heads. He said that the local government’s heads must be given political space for making decisions. The responsibility makes the work more efficient.

Whereas the views of another higher representative was different from the other higher representative about the decision making space, he said that the LG act authorizes him with powers but he is quite handicapped in implementation of these decisions. Whenever he tries to

exert his power he is bound to face red-tapism. He was of the view that bureaucracy was of much needed help to his cause but to reach the desired official was a hectic job. However he was all praise to senior officials who always listened to his requests and extended much needed help in implementation of his orders for public welfare.

Summing up the discussion, the representative categorically narrated that he never faced any interference in making or planning development budget. Contrary to general public assumption, he never experienced any political pressure. He also denied facing pressure from general public. His only hunch was lack of having adequate manpower that was the main hurdle in his service delivery.

However he mentioned that if the powers mentioned in the LG act were given him practically and he was able to recruit officers of his choice, it could have been of much help to his cause. It will not only revive public confidence in local government system but will also yield positive results for the beloved country.

Another responded said that he partially faced issues when it came to prioritizing issues. He was hapless due to the existing political system which does not give him much leverage to exercise his power. He however hoped that with the passage of time, they will get much needed support from the system and will be able to exercise their skills at their own. The official said that political interference was too much to let him perform his duties. He said that if these hindrances are not addressed in time, the system will collapse which is not a healthy sign.

The other selected representative was on the view that he is the important organ of the district council . He was heading several rural villages and it was his duty to ensure the service delivery in the villages and council under him. He was of the view that the most important element was to get used to the hurdles he faced to make his plans implemented through a range of systematic hurdles. He said that his duties include running the business of district councils while strictly implementing the Laws. He was responsible for efficient, effective and transparent functioning of the District Council besides ensuring accomplishment of operational, developmental and financial objectives set by the District Council or the Government in accordance with provisions of this Act. He was also liable of presenting tax proposals to the district government. He was liable for presenting report on the performance of the local government to the District Council at least twice in a year. He had the authority to issue executive orders to the Chief Officer. He also

represented the district council at the local level functions. He told that that he was also responsible to guide and lead officers in achieving the goals and targets fixed by the District Council in an effective and efficient manner.

The views of another responded from district council were that as far as work space is concerned, he said that he never faced any political pressure. He was happy with the cooperation he was receiving from upper tiers. He thanked all those who not only supported him through thick and thin but also guided him to the right options. He told that it was a team work and he never believed in bypassing the system as it could ruin his performance.

### **Accountability**

The last theme of this study is Accountability and research approached the top representatives of both the districts and they responds that in both the districts there was proper system of accountability in checking all the projects. However, there were slight loopholes that needed to be fixed. they said that the judicial system is there and all the institutions face accountability. There is no question for one to escape these judicious systems. However the laws ought to be revised so that the process of accountability can be made stricter.

Another responded said that He thinks that the loopholes in the system must be plugged in so that the efficiency of the system could have been increased. He did not point out towards any specific area but to his knowledge, there were many issues that he faced in order to implement transparency. Being part of the machinery was his constraint. For our knowledge, he added that the *“local fund audit of the government pre-audit all the payments from the Local Fund of a local government other than the payments from the Local Fund of the Union Councils and accounts of the District Education and Health Authorities.”* He also told that union secretary pre-audits all the payments from the Local Fund of the Union Council. The Accountant General and the District Accounts Officer pre-audit all the payments from the Local Funds of the District Education Authority and District Health Authority.

About the accountability, Personal officials was clear that there are several ways to nab those found guilty of any misconduct of corruption. They told that the rules were very clear about zero tolerance towards corruption in any form. The help of local institutions can be sought in order to curb menace of corruption.

They drew our attention towards the rules of business where it is clearly mentioned that ***“Local government shall not withdraw or disburse money from the Local Fund unless it is pre-audited in the prescribed manner.”*** They clarified that the disbursement of funds is not that easy as it sounds to a common fellow. It has a proper procedure and it is also audited.

One of the responded quoted the rule ***“The Provincial Director, Local Fund Audit and the Accountant General shall, by fifteenth day of July, prepare an annual statement of receipts and expenditures of the accounts of local governments, District Education and Health Authorities for the preceding financial year and shall transmit the statement to the Government and the concerned local government.”*** This rule states that the basic service delivery is also being monitored through rules. So it leaves very less room for corruption.

Another rule that he quoted was ***“copy of the annual statement of accounts shall be displayed at a conspicuous place in the office of the local government for public inspection and all objections or suggestions concerning such accounts received from the public shall be considered by the local government and appropriate decision shall be taken.”*** He concluded that there are proper rules and regulations for nabbing the corrupt elements in the light of these rules. Another responded said that the accountability at the lower level can only be improved when the system is fully functional. He said that the allocation of resources was vital. Since the projects are very rare for the local areas and most of the attention was being given to the main cities, so this trend needed to be changed. Basic health and education reforms must be started from grass-root level. Since all the changes take time to reach at the lower level so it must be started from where it actually matters.

One of the representative said, that he is optimistic that the legislation will be made more strict. He said that a proper procedure is followed in the making and spending of budget but there are loopholes in the system that needed to be plugged. He said that he was hopeful to see strict legislation at lower level so that corrupt elements may be nabbed. But this time the mechanism of accountability is performance of the local representatives.

In official opinion, the rules of the local government define his limits. All the funds that he demands from the provincial government need a proper backing of strategy and planning. The funds are delivered to him in transparent manner and there is a proper system of auditing.

The official however did not rule out the possibility of corruption. He narrated the stories of old time smugglers who kept on operating till the governments did not plugged the lope holes. One the lope holes were plugged, the smugglers were forced to leave this dirty profession and had to look for other business to earn their money. He was of the view that it was the will of state only that can curb the menace of corruption.

## **Conclusion**

Above analysis reveals, that the institutions need to be strengthened within their domain as challenges were faced in all three stated areas. On institutional capacities, technological constrains were cited as major barrier in the way of efficient service delivery. On decision space, at one hand limitations of existing local bodies given their inexperience was acknowledged and at the same time limited interference for bureaucracy was stated. Again, financial constraints were indicated, and deviations on theoretical vs. practical aspects LG acts were mentioned.

## **4.2 –Interviews from Academia/Journalists/Social Sector Section**

### **4.3-Introduction**

This section will gauge views from academia journalists and social sector. It will depict their views on current local government system of Punjab. Analysis of opinions is revealed as follow.

#### **Institutional Capacities:**

On human resource potential, Majority of the respondents in the Academia sector were of the opinion that as Local bodies were in their initial stages and had limited resources, their inability to hire efficient human resource was a major obstacle. Almost all respondents indicated that the local bodies lacked efficient labor force for delivering services to public. One of the respondent, strongly argued that the centralized hierarchy of the existing local bodies was a major factor behind the unavailability of efficient human resource

Further, majority of respondents acknowledged the significance of efficient human resources, given their central role in local government councils. Few of them suggested that jobs must be allocated to the right people, holding required experience and know how pertaining to their role

in the system. Others held the opinion that jobs must not be given on basis of academic qualification alone rather the overall tilt of the serviceman must also be gauged.

On PLGA Act 2013, 40% of the respondents agreed that overall the document is comprehensive and do aim at strengthening of local bodies. Nevertheless things are different when it comes to practice. 60% of the participants identified the PLGA 2013 system as inefficient with multiple loopholes. According to them, the act failed in politically and financially empowering these bodies.

Coming to financial empowerment, Few respondents argued that reserving fix quota a mechanism such as PFC divisible pool in provincial resources, can financially empower local bodies adequately. Again, majority also held the opinion that local bodies shall be empowered to levy taxes. Others argued that local bodies can be empowered if they got all the rights as envisaged in the act. Further, as Under the current system local governments are required not to keep the locally generated funds and revert back to the provincial pool for redistribution. Most respondents criticized this system and it was suggested that local bodies should be allowed to retain such funds. In addition, the provincial governments should allocate more funds to the local bodies, for enabling them to serve people better. Majority of the participants also agreed that devolution of power to the lowest level has given an opportunity to the provinces to exercise their powers for utilizing provincial exchequer. The local bodies must be given share to start and complete their own projects at the local level. It will result into efficient usage of provincial exchequer. The resources owned by the provinces can be of great help to the local bodies for generating their own income.

Capacity deficit at the local level was another important area of concern for the experts. It was noted during interviews that local funds generation is expected to be a daunting task for the local governments. Under the current tax system (in accordance with the PLGA) finding new avenues for local taxes is not an easy task.

On the question pertaining to devolution of powers for delivery services to people, majority of the respondent said that financial constraints were a major impediment in this regard. Again, the local bodies are largely dependent on their respective party heads for the funds. Since, the

powers have been given to the councils and process was in early stages, so all the participants were well aware of the fact that financial independence may take time.

Above analysis hence reveals that majority of respondents do not see efficient delivery of services to people, largely owing to the existing inadequate human and financial resources. However, few also held the opinion that with the passage of time, these constraints will be gradually addressed.

### **Decision space:**

On the question related to interference from upper tiers, majority of respondents indicated that the elected local bodies are not independent in their work and interference from upper tiers to varying degrees exists. Additionally, 80 percent of the participants also expressed their concern on this undue interference which is primarily handicapping decision making of these local representatives. Few argued that the independence promised in the devolution document must be fully implemented. At the same time, 2 of the respondents did not see any interference from upper tiers.

On fiscal and political empowerment of local bodies, majority held the opinion that having no constitutional back up as well as fixed mechanisms of mobilizing resources, made these bodies vulnerable. Additionally, if the representative is from different party, then local bodies can significantly face difficulties in getting the funds for their constituency. The participants also criticized political parties for lack of cooperation. A renowned journalist indicated a solution that the devolution of power must be propagated at the mass level so people may know that their local representatives are responsible for their uplift. However the tug of war at the top level handicaps all the local bodies to exercise their powers. The local bodies are useless unless they are being given participation in working for their respective areas.

Above analysis thus reveals that, overdue interference from upper tiers and inadequate political and financial empowerment has handicapped the performance of local bodies. On the question of overcoming the challenges faced by local bodies, the participants gave diverse opinions such as removing concentration of all resources in few big cities, limiting interference from upper tiers, directly making the representatives accountable to people at grass root level and above all financial independence.

### **Accountability:**

On performance evaluation, majority of respondents held the opinion that voters should play key role in this regard. Additionally, it can be ensured through various portals. The public institutions can be formed to scrutinize the performance of the local government heads. However the use of technology is vital in this regard. The community may use applications devised under the local government to assess their performance.

On question related to checks and balances, majority of the respondents held the opinion that appropriate check and balance can be ensured with proper utilization of resources and public right to information. Whereas devolution must strengthen grass root level, making central desk for inter departmental collaboration to ensure judicious use of development projects.

Above analysis shows that most respondents indicated that as people bring representatives into power through their right to vote, ultimately they should be the ones to hold them accountable through their voting powers. Additionally, appropriate monitoring on devolved funds shall also be introduced by government.

### **Conclusion**

As the LGS is still in its evolutionary process, it needs time to be truly empowered. Nonetheless, measures shall be taken for efficient tax collection, minimizing upper tiers interference politicization in projects and financial independence of these grass-root level bodies.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

This study finds interesting conclusions of several aspects that were covered in this research. We are well aware of the fact that ours is a developing country. We are striving hard to cope up with certain challenges. These challenges include economic instability, deteriorated law and order and lack of consistency of the political system. These are the hurdles that cause damage to the service delivery. Among several issues that the LG system is facing, the prime one is that of not having adequate manpower. Our local representative are not trained to handle the system. There are several issues they face if they are given powers to execute plan. There is a strong need to train the brains that they have the power and they must exercise it for the benefit of their respective areas. Many who join the local government system are obsessed with the corrupt practices. They do not understand that there is a proper check and balance system which will sooner or later get them caught. There is strong need for educating such people that there are ways to earn livelihood through fair means. Plundering national exchequer will not do any good for them.

The transfer of power must be accepted by the top tiers. They must refrain themselves from interfering in the matters of local government unless their help is sought. The political interference is not a healthy exercise. It promotes nepotism and ultimately people lose their trust in the LG system.

Merit is not being practiced in many places. We do not need to mention that but it is very clear from outside that most of the allocations in the local government system are based on nepotism but not merit. It not only damages the authenticity of the system but also causes severe dent to the entire system. The members elected on the lower tiers such as farmers, women on general seats must go through proper scrutiny to judge if they are able to run a particular system or not.

Lack of know how about the technology is another main issue. The developed countries are utilizing technology to yield maximum benefits. If the local government representatives are aware of the importance of the use of technology, they will soon come up with good results. Applications can be made at local level to judge the performance of the representatives. However these practices will take time to get implemented. One may hope that time will come when we will see our nation rising in the line of the developed countries.

There are certain aspects that need revision. The local government representatives must be trained to implement their authority. They must learn how they can exercise their power. They complain about lack of support from the top tiers. This complaint must be addressed.

The local governments must be given funds and should be asked to ensure maximum utilization for the benefit of their area. As the local government system will take roots, the issues will start getting resolved. To stop corrupt practices, the action needs to be done on emergency grounds. The judicial system must be made vigilant to tackle cases regarding corruption in local government system. The loopholes in the system needed to be plugged in.

There is a strong belief that if the system is given time, it will not only revive public confidence on the authenticity of this system but will also generate good results. Once this system is made a household name in the region, people will start pinning their hopes on it. Unfortunately, our current political system seems insecure and they do not give much value to local government system but it is high time for them to understand that devolution of powers has brought about revolution in the entire world. It will not only change the fate of nation but will also provide people with ease to get their issues resolved at their doorstep.

There is no system in the world that can be termed as perfect. Only time tells which system had contributed to how much extent for the development of any society. There are countries which tried presidential form of government but failed to yield the desired results and there are countries which are prospering under the same system. There are countries where it is inculcated in the minds of the masses that the kingship will not do any good for them and they are told to vote for their government. However there are so many success stories of the countries where even in the modern era, the kings and queens are ruling and the masses are happy with them. The only thing that helps strengthen any system is time that is given to it. Expecting miraculous changes overnight are not the solution. This is the main recommendation in flourishing of the local government system that it needs time to take roots.

Since the local government act was passed in 2013 and devolution of powers has only seen five springs, it will be hard to expect any rapid change. There are several bureaucratic hurdles which are termed as red tapism. The procedural hurdles are the main constraints for those who want to

execute their plans for development. This system needs change. Since when the powers have been devolved, the autonomy must also be given to full extent.

The allocation of funds is yet another issue. The exchequer must be divided among them who are responsible for delivery. Having not much financial support is a curse for the local government system. The projects that are planned for the development of rural areas must be financially supported and that too in time so that the plans can be accomplished. It will not only improve the local government delivery system but will also revive people confidence in the authority of the system. It will stamp the authenticity and people will start believing in the powers given to the local government officials.

Political interference must be condemned. Most of the officers complained about the hurdles that political interference causes in their way. Since when the powers have been given to the local government officers, they must not be directed to fulfill the wishes of those sitting at the helm owing to the political stature. It has been observed that certain projects of public welfare are ignored due to certain political pressure. The ultimate sufferers are the masses who have nothing to do with the political affluent.

The most important point is accountability. The expenditures of the local government must be audited. The judicial system must act impartially to nab those responsible for corruption. If we study the local government act, we find that a comprehensive mechanism is there to counter corrupt practices. The exchequer is given to the local government representatives through proper channel. However the anti-corruption organizations must keep a strict check on the utilization of public money.

The selection of local government representatives is also a matter of concern. People are responsible for election of their representatives. They must take part in the voting system and must elect those who deserve this place. There are issues like favoring own tribesman that is nepotism and it causes damage to the effectiveness of the system. Then there are question marks on the selection of the general members. Only those general members must be given priority who have experience in the relevant field. Use of technology must be given preference. The modern era demands effective response in minimum time. It not only saves time but also increases the level of service delivery.

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