



PAKISTAN



In the General's shadow

Political structure

Federal parliamentary democracy (since October 2002), although the military retains a controlling role. Effectively, a quasi-dictatorship. The prime minister heads the cabinet, but the president chairs the powerful National Security Council, which comprises military chiefs and cabinet members. The president can also dismiss the prime minister, the cabinet and parliament. The National Assembly (the lower house of parliament) was elected in October 2002 for a five-year term, but has been frequently adjourned as a result of challenges by the opposition regarding the legality of General Musharraf's changes to the political system. An election to the Senate (the upper house), where the four provinces have equal representation, was held in February 2003. Provinces are represented in the National Assembly in proportion to the size of their populations.

Local government system

Under the current system (which took effect following the enactment of Local Government Ordinance, 2001 discussed below), Pakistan has a three-tier local government structure in which there is only one line of authority in the district, and the district bureaucracy is responsible to the elected representatives. More operational autonomy is ensured to the district level offices. Administrative and financial powers of the defunct divisional offices have been, by and large, delegated to the District level. At the top tier, the District, there is a single integrated local



General Pervez Musharraf, the president and chief of army staff, continues to dominate the political scene although his position is becoming more insecure. General Musharraf, who came to power in a military coup in 1999, retains the ability to dismiss parliament and the prime minister (and thereby impose full military rule) in his capacity as chairman of the National Security Council. His firm control over the army remains his ultimate guarantor of power. The opposition is severely critical of his rule, and has been aggressively campaigning for a return to full democracy. Despite being weak, the opposition is gaining popularity. The government's support for the US-led "war on terror" has raised political tensions within Pakistan, and militant groups in Waziristan and Baluchistan will continue to try to undermine federal rule.

government called District Government. The district government consists of the Zila Nazim¹ (District Coordinator) and the District Administration. The District Administration comprises district offices including sub-offices at tehsil² (county) level. The

¹ Nazim is the title in Urdu of the chief elected official of a local government in Pakistan, such as a District, Tehsil, Union Council, or Village Council. The "Chief Nazim" a.k.a District Nazim is elected by the Nazims of Union Councils, Union Councillors and by Tehsil Nazims, who themselves are elected directly by the public.

² A *tehsil* or county consists of a city or town that serves as its *headquarters*, possibly additional towns, and a number of villages. As an entity of local government, it exercises certain fiscal and administrative power over the villages and municipalities within its jurisdiction.

Provincial Government departments decentralized to the District Government, are responsible to the District Coordinator.

The middle tier, the City/Town, has a Municipal administrative body headed by the City/Town Coordinator. In a City District, the administrative body is organized more or less along the same lines as its counterpart in a common District.

At the lower tier, the Union Administration, covers the rural as well as urban areas across the whole district. It is administered by the Union Coordinator, the Deputy Union Coordinator and three Union Secretaries.

Legislative framework for local government and local participation

Local government is not formally embodied in the Constitution, but exists under the supervision of various provincial governments that have merely delegated some of their functions and responsibilities through the promulgation of ordinances.

The most recent of such ordinances is the Local Government Ordinance, 2001 (LGO 2001). In October 1999, the government of President Musharraf promulgated LGO 2001 and initiated a devolution plan to transfer authority and administration from the province to the district, city/town and union levels through phased elections which were completed in August 14, 2001. General elections were held in October 2002 and a government installed. Since then, local governments have completed their four-year terms and a second phase of local elections has taken place, installing new district, city/town and union councils in the autumn of 2005.

By disallowing any amendments to the LGO in the eight years that it has been in effect, the President of Pakistan has in a sense provided a measure of stability to the new local government system. The current term of the President is expected to end in 2009, and by then, jurisdiction over the LGO will be transferred to the provinces. It is therefore critical that, in these years of transition, the system gains legitimacy with provincial governments. Already, however, changes have been incorporated into the LGO which empower provincial leaders to remove District Coordinators under certain circumstances. These changes became operational after the new local governments were installed in September 2005.

The Devolution of Power Plan introduced by the government in 2000 and 2001 is based on five fundamentals, popularly known in Pakistan as the 5 Ds:

- ▶ Devolution of political power (three-tier elected leadership having its own Vision, Mission and Goals);
- ▶ Decentralization of administrative authority (more operational autonomy to the District level departments);
- ▶ Distribution of resources to local government (power to raise taxes; fiscal transfers from higher tiers of government to lower tiers);
- ▶ De-concentration of management functions (performance based appraisal system; specialization vs. generalization; meritocracy; recognition and rewards);
- ▶ Diffusion of the power-authority nexus (monitoring by citizens and elected representatives; civil society's involvement in development work; effective checks and balances).

The new local government system attempts to ensure the empowerment of all segments of society by way of creating and institutionalizing several new mechanisms.

Citizen Community Boards

One of the most important of these is the Citizen Community Board (CCB). CCBs are voluntary, non-profit associations of local people that act as a channel for mobilizing local communities to participate in their own development activities. The main purpose of these bodies is to encourage community participation in local government to ensure that planning and development are carried out in accordance with local needs, and to provide citizens with a chance to monitor service delivery and promote transparency and accountability.

Projects may include:

- ▶ Developing, installing, managing, owning and maintaining public facilities;
- ▶ Identifying development needs and mobilizing resources;
- ▶ Helping the handicapped, destitute, widows and families in extreme poverty;
- ▶ Establishing farming, marketing and consumers' cooperatives;
- ▶ Forming stakeholder associations (e.g., parent-teacher associations) for community involvement in the im-

- ▶ Reinforcing the capacity of monitoring committees.

To be eligible for funding, a CCB must first prepare a project proposal. For each project proposed, CCBs contribute 20% of the total project funds. The remaining 80% is to be provided by local governments, which are required to reserve 25% of development funds for CCB projects. This allocation cannot be diverted to any other use.

Any group of at least 25 individuals can form a CCB, and it may appoint members without elections. The CCB must be registered with the Executive District Officer responsible for Community Development (EDO CD). There is no limit to the number of CCBs that can register in a single district. Local government officers are expected to provide assistance in the preparation of project proposals, and in particular in the preparation of cost estimates.

CCBs submit their project proposals to the EDO CD, the City/Town Officer (Planning), or the Union Secretary. Local government officers rank the proposals (according to published CCB Guidelines) and incorporate them into the Annual Development Plan. The projects are then submitted to the council for approval. Once approved, the local government and the CCB sign an agreement for the implementation of the project. The CCB has to submit satisfactory progress reports in order to receive subsequent funding installments. Monitoring is carried out by the CCB, council monitoring committees and local government offices dealing with CCBs. A final report must be submitted on project completion.

As with the new local government system, there have been a number of difficulties with both the concept and the operation of CCBs:

1. There is widespread lack of awareness or knowledge among the population about the concept of CCBs and how they work.
2. Some CCBs have been set up to serve special interest groups rather than the needs of the population as a whole, or to achieve real development objectives.
3. There is a lack of capacity within communities and within existing CCBs for management, conceptualization and planning of good development projects and for project implementation.
4. There is resentment among some local elected officials

that a significant proportion of the local development budget is being channeled through CCBs.

5. Systems and procedures within local government for receiving, assessing and approving CCB proposals and for disbursing funds to them are lacking. Officials do not have the necessary experience or capacity to make these systems function properly.

People power lights up Rawalpindi

The City District of Rawalpindi consists of eight towns. These towns (Potohar, Rawal, Murree, Kahuta, Kalar Syedan, Kotli Sattian, Gujar Khan and Taxila towns) are mostly underdeveloped, arid and naturally eroded, and sparsely populated.



Lack of basic municipal ser-

vices, especially electricity, used to be a big problem in the District, and was therefore one of the first things on the agenda of the Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) organized in the area.

Prior to the enactment of the Local Government Ordinance of 2001, rural electrification was a Federal Government concern. Elected representatives in the National Assembly and the Senate, who were responsible for allocating money for such schemes, tended to prioritize highly populated areas as these brought in more votes. Rawalpindi District, with its low population, was therefore frequently bypassed in the planning of power projects. Following devolution, the Community Development Department (CDD) at the District Level and the communities, through the CCBs, got together to undertake 208 small projects. These were for rural electrification, road and drainage construction, and water supply schemes, among others.

Of all these projects, however, those on rural electrification were the most successful. The Union Council Coordinators supported the CCB initiatives and related projects were submitted to the District Council for approval. The District Council approved the projects and the local government's share of the funding (20%) was released in time.

All in all, the Local Government has spent more than 52 million Pak Rupees on the electrification project. Meanwhile, the community beneficiaries have contributed counterpart funds amounting to 13 million Pak rupees, consisting mostly of local donations.

The community and the local government jointly monitored the project at all levels, i.e. survey, planning, implementation and execution, with both partners showing great determination and will to see the project through.

Challenges in project implementation

1. Delay in execution/completion of projects

The Technical Staff of the Local Government and Rural Development Department were overloaded, having to work on the CCB projects besides their other assignments. Thus, they could not devote as much time to the projects, causing a few delays in the release of installments.

2. Inadequate technical preparation among the CCBs

Most of the CCBs do not have any training in developing proposals and reporting. Thus, they found the documentation requirements very demanding.

In other cases, some CCB members would submit development projects which require lots of technical and professional inputs. However, the same CCB members could not come up with the required technical and professional resources/capacities

to assist in the execution of these "mega" projects. Moreover, many in the the CCB office could not comply with the provisions of Rough Cost Estimates and eventually change the scope of work during the implementation period. As a result, submitted schemes are revised which also added to the delays in completion of the projects within the stipulated period.

Recommendations

1. Pre-approval evaluation of CCB projects

In order to ensure proper execution of the schemes, a system of pre-approval evaluation/need assessment of identified/proposed projects costing more than 30 million Pak rupees should be set up.

2. Awareness creation/capacity building

While implementing the CCB programme it has been observed that due attention towards the creation of awareness among the masses has not been prioritized. As a result, the desired results have not been attained. Similarly, no steps have been taken for capacity building of office bearers of CCBs who have to execute the projects and utilize the public money. Due to lack of such skills and capacity, a number of CCBs could not follow the procedural requirements of the projects, such as records/accounts keeping. It is proposed that local governments may be allowed to utilize 3% of the budget allocated for the CCB project for holding Seminars/Workshops and developing printed materials for this purpose.

Sources

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