

Decentralization, and the Role & Functions of Union Parishad in Bangladesh

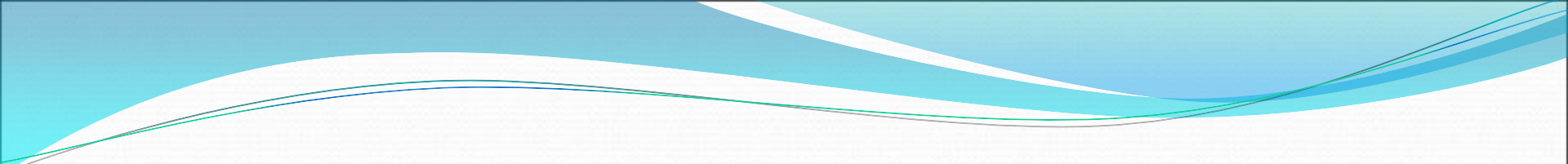
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The Concept of Decentralization

There are different types of decentralization. These are political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralization. Political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralization can appear in different forms and combinations across countries, within countries and even with in sectors. Political decentralization is the transfer of authority to a sub national body.

Political decentralization aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision making. It is often associated with pluralistic and representative government, but it can also support democratization by giving citizens, or their representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies

Decentralization has been defined by various scholars of public administration as transference of authority from a higher level of government to a lower, delegation of decision making, placement of authority with responsibility, allowing greatest number of actions to be taken where most of the people reside, removal of functions from the center to the periphery, a mode of operations involving wider participation of people in the whole range of decision making beginning from plan formulation to implementation



As we know decentralization means transfer of power and authority from the central government to local or sub national units of the government for the meeting of grass root peoples demand.

The term has been more used to mean institutionalization of local government for unburdening the central government, facilitating local decision-making for local problem-solving, and encouraging popular participation as a democracy-enriching device. World Bank also referred to the increasing demand for decentralization in many developing countries in the world.

In most South Asian countries, local authorities are characterized by a weak institutional capacity to deliver public services and promote local development. In Bangladesh, the functions and role of rural administration have remained limited from the time of its establishment. However, rural administration in India is empowered relative to other South Asian countries.

Table. Comparison of Rural Administrative Units in Bangladesh and India

Countries	Lowest-tier	Middle-tier	Upper-tier
Bangladesh	Union Parishad	Upazila/Thana Parishad	Zila Parishad
India	Gram Panchayet	Pachayet Samittee	District Council

Above table compares the rural administrative units in Bangladesh and India. This table indicates that in both countries rural government administration is divided into three levels: lower, middle and upper. It has been said that, as the lowest level local administration is the level of government closest to the citizens, it is best placed to serve the population. Gram Panchayat (GP) is the lowest level administration in India, and has been playing a significant role in rural development. However, Union Parishad (UP) in Bangladesh faces serious problems in performing their roles and functions.



The Roles and Functions of Union Parishad

Basic Information

Union Parishad has a long history in the rural government administration in Bangladesh. There are total 4484 Unions, and each Union comprises about 10-20 villages. However, there is no administrative organization at the village level.

The size of the Union varies substantially in terms of geographical area, number of villages and population. Every UP has a Chairman and twelve elected Members. Among the twelve, three members are reserved for women (one each from the three wards, to be directly elected). The term of a UP elected members are five years.

The Local Government Ordinance of 1983 indicates that UP has a wide range of functions. Of these, the following 10 functions are compulsory :

- 1.Maintenance of law and order.**
- 2.Adoption of measures for preventing crime, disorder and smuggling.**
- 3.Adoption and implementation of development schemes in the field of agriculture, forest, fisheries, livestock, education, health, irrigation and flood protection.**
- 4.Promotion of family planning.**
- 5.Development of local resources.**
- 6.Protection and maintenance of public properties.**
- 7.Review of the development activities.**
- 8.Motivation of the people to install sanitary latrines, and to maintain cleanliness.**
- 9.Registration of births, deaths, blinds and beggars.**
- 10.Conducting all kinds of census.**

The Local Government Ordinance 1983 also authorizes UP to perform 38 optional functions covering various aspects of rural life. These relate primarily to provision, maintenance and upgrade of public places including parks, meeting places, public access ways and streets, management and protection of sources of potable water and other public services.

The Functions of Union Parishad

A large number of functions have been prescribed in the UP law. In practice, however, Union Parishad functions are usually confined to the following 14 areas:

1. Assessing and collecting taxes.
2. Maintaining law and order through the village police.
3. Maintaining birth and death register.
4. Constructing and maintaining roads, bridges, culverts, etc.
5. Constructing and maintaining ponds.
6. Maintaining *haats* and *bazzars*.
7. Issuing various kinds of certificate and licenses.
8. Providing road lighting.
9. Setting rural petty disputes.
10. Promoting cottage industries.
11. Maintaining UP information and records.
12. Motivating people to adopt family planning methods.
13. Conduction relief works.
14. Celebrating national days.

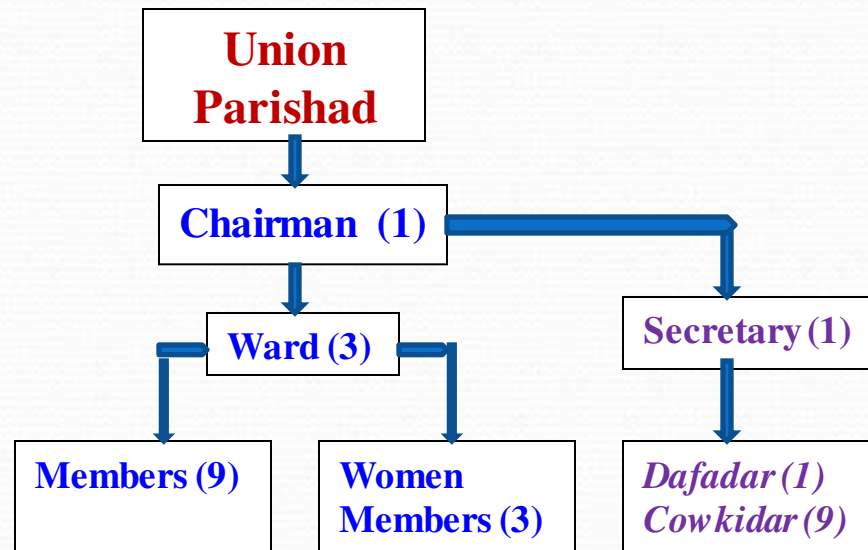


Figure . Administrative Structure of Union Parishad

Table 2. Major Roles of UP Elected Members

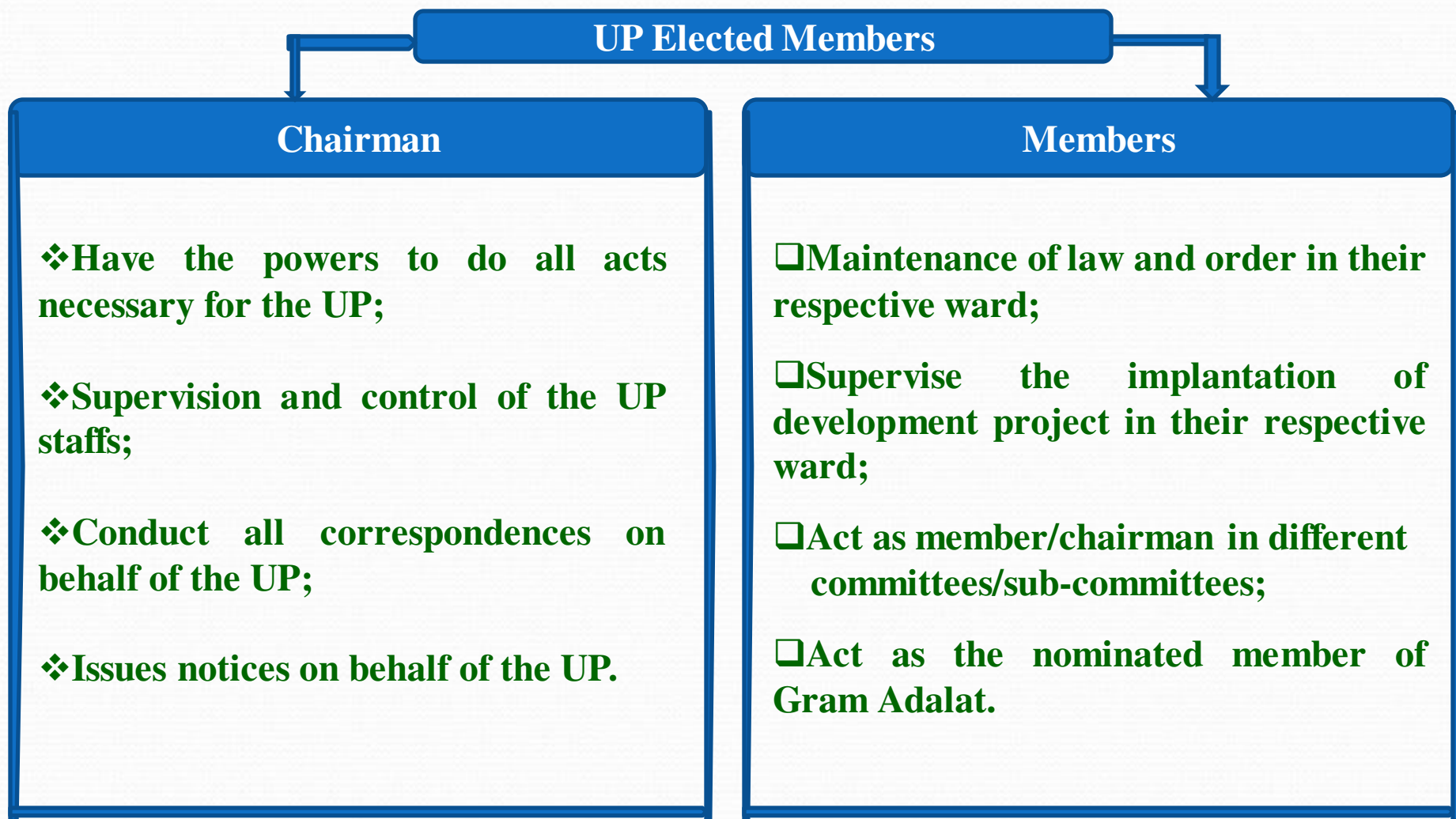


Table 2.1. Major Roles of UP Staffs

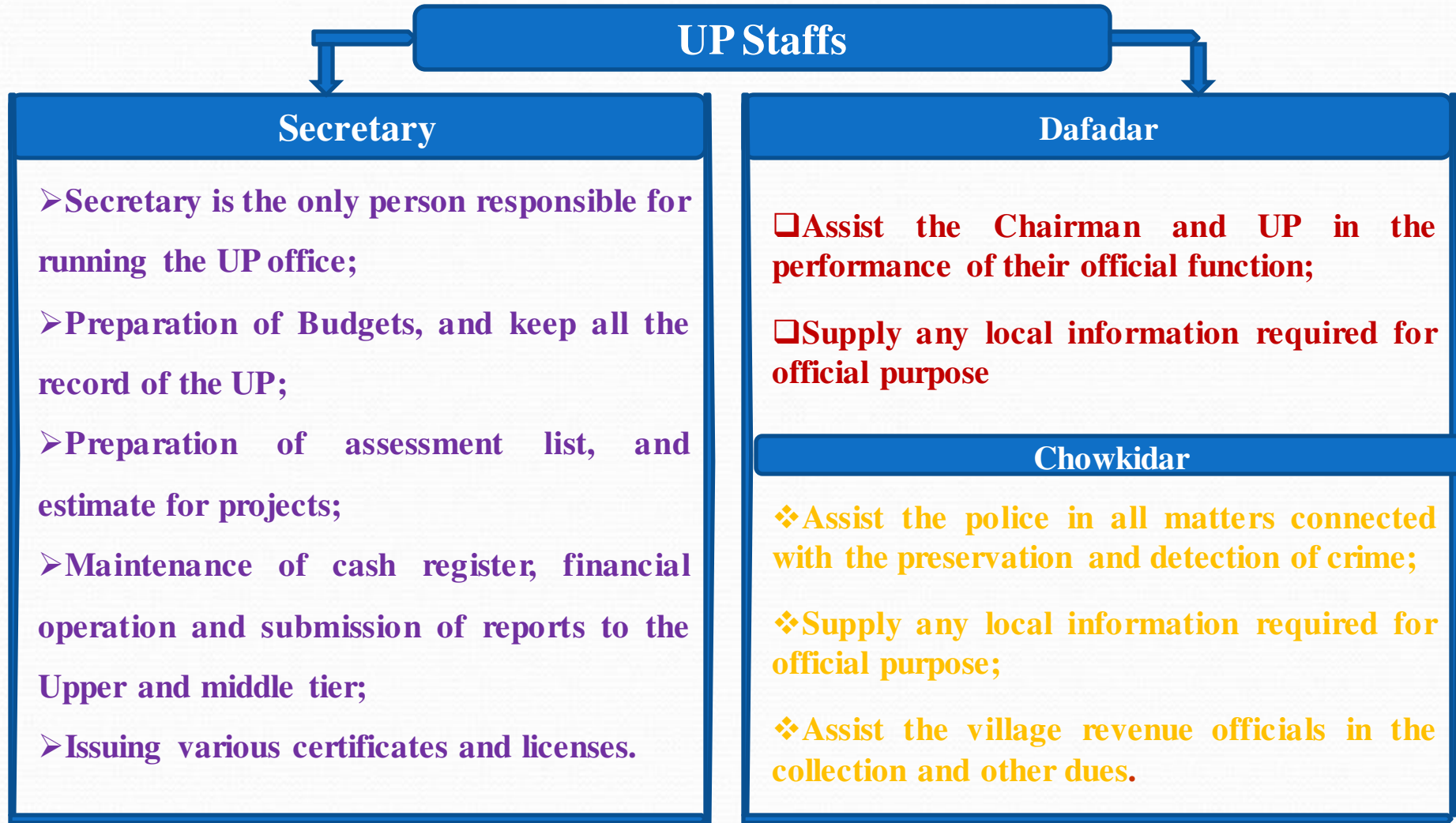


Table 3. Honorarium and Salaries of the UP Elected Members and Staffs

Elected (Honorarium)	Staffs (Salaries)	Total Allowance (Per person in per month)
Chairman		Tk. 8000.00 (3600 is paid by the GOB and the rest by UP)
Members (Both Male & Female)		Tk. 5000.00 (2375 is paid by the GOB and the rest by UP)
	Secretary	Tk. 35824.00 (75% is paid by the GOB and the rest by UP)
	Dafadar	Tk. 3400.00 (1700 is paid by the GOB and the rest by UP)
	Chowkidar	Tk. 3000.00 (1500 is paid by the GOB and the rest by UP)

Table 4. Major Sources of Income in the Union Parishad

Governments Grants	Local Sources	Other Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants to development heads (From central government); • Grants to salary and other allowances of the UP staff; • Grants in aid; • Grants for Rural Works Program (RWP); • ADP and other compensatory grants; and • Project aid grant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Tax on the annual value of homestead; ❖ Tax on the professionals, trades and callings; ❖ Fees (lease money) from specified hats and bazaars within the union boundaries; ❖ Fees from <i>Jalmahals</i> situated within the Union boundaries; ❖ Fees for different licenses and permits granted by the UP; ❖ Land transfer tax (1%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rents and profits from properties; ○ Profit from investments; and ○ Receipts from individual and trust.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

A focal point becomes necessary when there is more than one tier of local government. UP has a long history, and it is the oldest rural institutions in Bangladesh. UP can be the focal point of all development in rural Bangladesh, although UP has been facing various problems in performing their functions. To accelerate rural development in Bangladesh, UP needs to become more responsive, effective and accountable to the ordinary villagers. The following recommendations may help:

- ★ It is necessary to establish a rural government administrative structure at the village level, to ensure people's participation at all stages of the development process. A UP for 10-20 villages is not a practical proposition. Every village has its own existence. Distance becomes a barrier for aged persons or women to participate in UP activities. To take grassroots democracy to the doorsteps of the people, every village irrespective of its size and population should have a village council.

Concluding Remarks and Recommendations (Cont.)

- ★ UP should enact new legislations to ensure not only provision for representation of women, but also for poor villagers, and minorities in rural areas.
- ★ Increasing the staff at the UP will help in the more efficient performance of duties such as public delivery, record keeping, monitoring implementation, maintaining and displaying accounts.
- ★ According to the UP guidelines, representatives of the Union Parishads are accountable to the community. However, in practice, the representatives of the UPs mostly fell accountable to the Upazila or their District bureaucratic bosses, rather than to the community. Direct funding to the UPs could increase accountability to the rural communities.
- ★ UP should be constituted with numbers of elected members depending on the numbers of voters/populations in the UP area.
- ★ Effective training should be given to the elected members and staffs, and it should be made compulsory for them to attend the training courses.

Migration in Bangladesh

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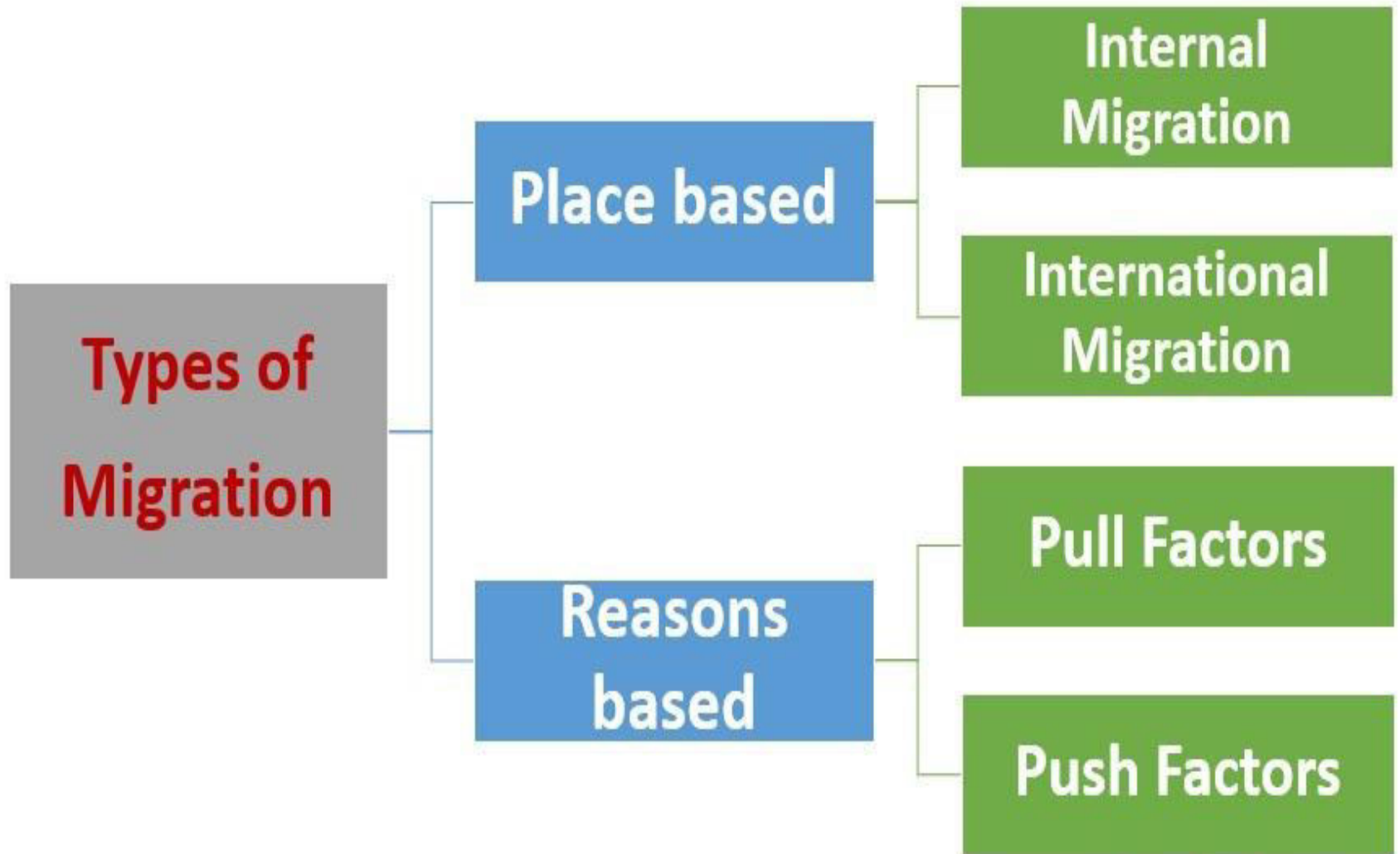
Migration: Definition

- The temporary or permanent movement of people from one place to another.
- “Migration refers to movement of a person from one place to another place, away from native place either within or outside the country for job, occupation, business or in search of better standard of living, on a permanent basis.”

Immigration and Emigration:

- When people from one country move permanently to another country, for example, if people from Bangladesh move to America then for America, it is termed as Immigration, whereas for Bangladesh it is termed as Emigration.

Types of Migration



Types of Migration

- ⦿ There are many types of migrations and many people are not aware of these types. Below we have discussed the most common ones:

- ⦿ **Internal Migration:** It is the type in which you move to a new home within the same state, country or continent. A person move to another administrative territory.

Rural-Urban Migration :Movement of people away from the rural region (countryside, farms) to an urban (town, city) area.

- ⦿ **External/International Migration:** It is the type in which you move to a new home in a different state, country or continent.

International Migration

- **Population Transfer/Forced Migration:** It is the type in which the government forces a huge group of people to leave a region on the basis of religion or ethnicity. It is also called the involuntary or the forced migration. Refugees are persons who owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinions, are outside of their country of origin and cannot or owing to such fear, do not wish to avail themselves of the protection of that country.
- **Impelled/Imposed:** It is the type of movement in which people are forced to leave a country because of unfavorable situations like religious persecution, political unrest or warfare.
- **Return Migration:** It is the voluntary movement of the immigrants to the place of origin.
- **Seasonal Migration:** It is the movement for a specific period of time in response to the climate conditions or labor conditions.
- **Chain Migration:** It is the type of movement which begins from one member of the family who arranges money for his family members in order to make them move to a new location.

Internal Migration in Bangladesh

- Rural-urban migration plays a key role in the rapid urbanization process of Bangladesh. Increasing urbanization is not caused by the natural population growth in the urban areas in Bangladesh; rather it is an outcome of the push - pull factors of migration.

Causes of Migration(Push-Pull Factors)Rural-Urban in Bangladesh

Push factors:

- ⦿ These are the negative factors in the home country that compel people to move to another one.

Push factors :

- ⦿ Rural Poverty
- ⦿ Less health and education facilities
- ⦿ Unemployment
- ⦿ Natural Disasters (Flood, Drought etc.)
- ⦿ internal conflicts
- ⦿ natural diseases
- ⦿ Low income
- ⦿ Lack of career development
- ⦿ Personal safety and security
- ⦿ Low standard of living
- ⦿ Lack of political/religious liberty

Push Factors:

- Sociopolitical factors – These include family conflicts and unification; the quest for independence; ethnic, religious, racial and cultural parameters; warfare, or the threat of conflict, among other factors that contribute to migration

Causes of Migration(Push-Pull Factors)

Rural-Urban in Bangladesh

- ◉ When a person gets attracted to better job opportunities, modern lifestyle and infrastructural facilities of more developed cities and migrates there, it is known as migration due to pull factors.
- ◉ **Pull Factors:**
- ◉ Better lifestyle
- ◉ Well Transportation communication system
- ◉ Better economic opportunities at the new place
- ◉ Health facilities
- ◉ Job availability
- ◉ Better standard of living
- ◉ Political/Religious liberty
- ◉ Attractive climate, suitable for industry, for example in case of Bangladesh RMG sector etc.
- ◉ Acceptance by society
- ◉ Pursuit of specialized education

Internal Migration – Rural-Urban Migration

IMPACT

- Widespread unemployment
- Rise of squatter settlements
- Overcrowding, unhygienic living conditions
- Strain on urban facilities
- Rising crime rates



- Depopulation
- Women take on greater share of farm work
- Declining farm productivity
- Social problems, single-parent family

Negative Impacts of Rural-Urban Migration

- Pollutions
- Traffic Jam
- Slum Dwelling/Squatter settlement
- Poor housing and sanitation
- Health and nutrition problem
- Growth of Informal Job sector
- Lack of facilities like water, electricity and gas
- Lack of Education for migrated people
- Urban Poverty
- Unemployment
- Increased Crime rate

Dhaka's Primacy

- The primacy of Dhaka, which is highly associated with centralised governance of the country, is overwhelming. The capital hosts 28 percent of the country's urban population and 25 percent of economic activities employing 35 percent of the total urban labour force.
- A primate city generally dominates over other cities literary in all aspects - politics, economy, media, culture and education, inter alia. According to urban economists, unitary governments generally favour the national capital, creating a primate city bias in public services and infrastructure investments, among others. Rent seeking and urban bias by central government bureaucrats result in the centralisation. This favouritism draws in immigrants. However, according to a World Bank study, the degree of urban concentration in Bangladesh is higher than many of its comparators with Dhaka's primacy rate being 32 percent, which is much higher than its optimal (21 percent) level.
- Finally, excessive urban concentration leads to degradation of the quality of life owing to congestion, contamination of ground water and poor air quality, among others.

Dhaka's Primacy

- ◉ The next point to ponder is how to break the urban primacy of Dhaka? Experience suggests that in developing countries, urban concentration increases in the early stages of economic development. Thus, part of the problem is structural. In fact, most developing countries have witnessed the rise of primate cities- Bangkok in Thailand, Jakarta in Indonesia, Manila in the Philippines and Colombo of Sri Lanka are some examples of primate cities. But their concentration varies widely. Nevertheless, there are numerous ways to lessen urban primacy.
- ◉ Externalities such as congestion or pollution arises from higher population density should be priced (through tax and other measures). This could lead to de-concentration. The lack of pricing or ineffective regulation means that immigration into the capital city is underpriced or subsidised.
- ◉ Investment in modern intercity transport and communications may prompt urban de-concentration as manufactures could locate their firms in hinterlands.
- ◉ Globalisation could also help reduce urban primacy, provided trade and other reforms are carried out. The literature on new economic geography predicts that a country's exposure to trade may encourage hinterland development.

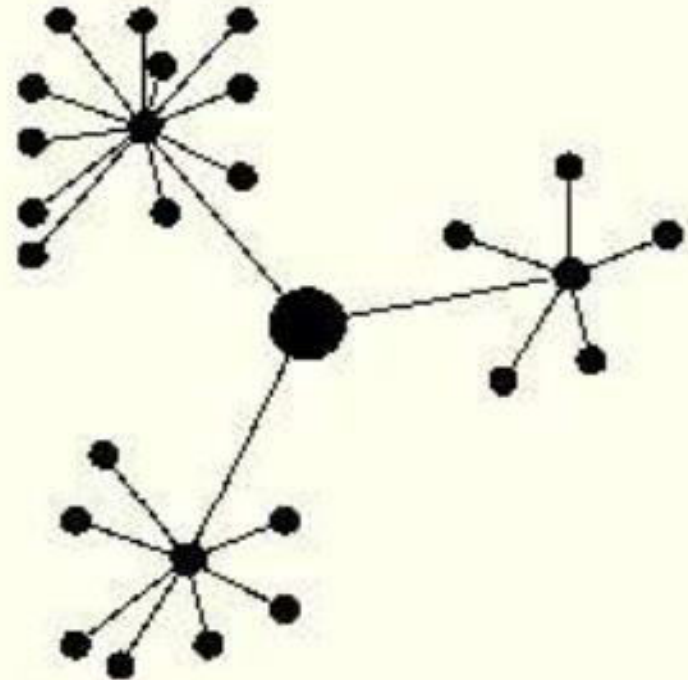
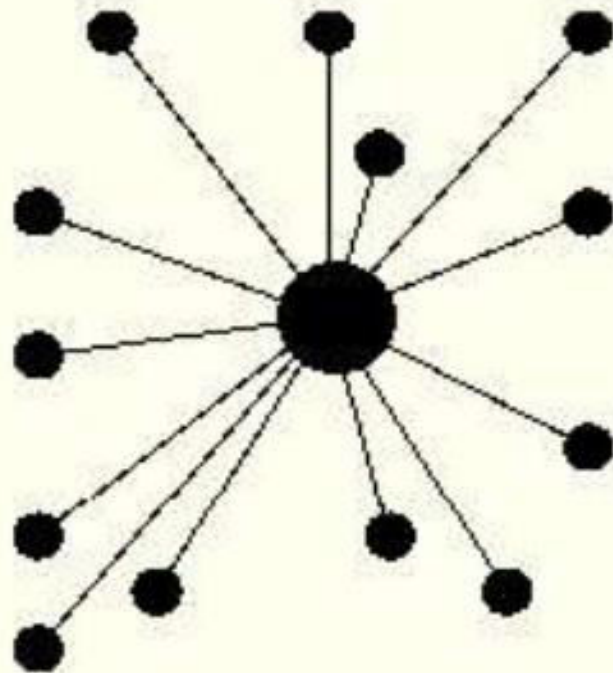
Dhaka's Primacy

- Finally, local political and fiscal autonomy could help in reducing urban primacy. Studies indicate that the key to a successful local political process is local participation in political processes (voting outside the influence of the central government and reasonably unconstrained by national-level party officials) and local determination of revenues and expenditure levels.
- That said, history is full of evidences that over-concentration of political and economic power, often in the capital, leads to the fall of many kingdoms, empires and states. Citing the example of Pax Romana, urban economists discourage over concentration of power in capital cities. Rome used its political and military might to suppress potential competitors to its rule and to extract resources from its empire. The result was that the parasitic character of the Roman metropolis was not only responsible for a weakening of the Italian economy, it also played a central role in the collapse of the empire.
- The outcome of power concentration is no different in other instances- Pharaonic Egypt and the Ming dynasty in China tightened the reins after, not before, they prospered, but this could not save their collapse. Dhaka seems to be following the same path. Taking lessons from history, the government should act now and show its commitment toward decentralised governance.
- Source: M Shahidul Islam ,The Daily Star **Friday**, March 27, 2020

How to manage/reduce Internal Migration in Bangladesh

- By decentralizing infrastructure, industrial activities, public services, and administrative functions, as well as diverting investment from Dhaka City towards small towns and villages, rural urban migration in Dhaka City can be reduced.
- Decentralization
(Population distribution, creating education, health, job facilities in other cities,)
- Rural development
- Self Employment
- Improving the condition of the Informal job sector
- Create Urban hubs and encourage settlement in growth area to help absorb migrants
- Develop peri-urban areas with improved transportation for migrant populations. This policy would ease pressure on slums and squatter settlements, as well as on amenities like sanitation

Centralization and Decentralization



How to manage/reduce Internal Migration in Bangladesh

- ① ***Urban decentralization*** through promotion of new locations in non-metropolitan areas can play a vital role in moulding migration flows and national settlement pattern. To be more specific, this refers to the promotion of locations, mainly rural market centres, to small rural towns. It assumes that small towns within a self-reliant territorial unit can promote rural development through greater local control over resources complementary urban-rural linkages and decision making at the local level.
- ② The approach suggests measures such as **rural industrialization**, diversification of agriculture, retention of surpluses at the local level, comprehensive land reform, introducing and adopting the key elements of urbanism to specific rural setting (Friedman and Dauglass 1978: Douglass 1992). It was found that such industrial and urban decentralization strategies had been fairly successful in Republic of Korea, Cuba, Poland, India, Malaysia, Tanzania and Japan (Simmon's 1979 and Oberai, 1987).

How to manage/reduce Internal Migration in Bangladesh

- Instead of allowing the prevailing urban centers to bear the burnt of migration it is necessary to **develop small urban centers** in the form of *Compact Townships* that would not only absorb willing migrants but also encourage other rural households to move to these Compact Towns. Similar concept had been used in other countries like Germany and Srilanka.

How to manage/reduce Internal Migration in Bangladesh

- The new industries should be established in middle-sized towns, small towns, or new locations selected on account of the accessibility of raw materials or other considerations.
- In the light of Todaro model (1976) it can be recommended that *imbalances in urban-rural employment opportunities* need to be reduced. By creating and increasing *wage rate* in different area or less populated area, population can redistribute or rural urban migration can reduce.

How to manage/reduce Internal Migration in Bangladesh

- The government may be *redistributing population* from thickly Populated areas to sparsely populated areas.
- *Subsidies and tax incentives* may be provided only for offices, factories of industries which will be out of Dhaka City.

How to manage/reduce Internal Migration in Bangladesh

- By increasing economic opportunities in rural areas through, e.g. promotion of small labour intensive industries and minor public works. Rural off-farm development also helps to satisfy the basic needs and practical ambitions of rural residents and hence reduce rural urban migration in Dhaka City.