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The Local Government System in Pakistan: Citizens Perceptions and Preferences

Shahzad Arif, William Cartier, Andrew Golda and Ritu
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Results from a National Survey, November 2008

Shahzad Arif, William Cartier, Andrew Golda and Ritu Nayyar-Stone

January 2010

Abstract

Since the 2008 elections, there has been a lively debate in Pakistan on the reform of local government. Initially, this debate involved stakeholders from many government levels. Later, other voices joined—academics and policy analysts, columnists and media commentators, and representatives of civil society organizations. What was missing was a voice for citizens. This report presents the results of an opinion survey on citizens' views of local government in Pakistan, carried out in October 2008, by the Urban Institute (UI) and ACNielsen (Nielsen). The survey was carried out at a moment in which all of the provinces in Pakistan were reviewing and reforming their local government systems to improve the delivery of services. The survey is intended to solicit and present the citizens' voice—which needs to be taken into account as provinces and the federal government move forward.



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Shahzad Arif, William Cartier, Andrew Golda & Ritu Nayyar-Stone

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 2008 elections, there has been a lively debate in Pakistan on the reform of local government. Initially, this debate involved stakeholders from many government levels—federal government ministries, parliamentarians, provincial departments, and members of provincial assemblies. Later, as federal and provincial positions came to be known through media reports, other voices joined in the debate, including nazims, local government council members, academics, policy analysts, columnists, media commentators, and representatives of civil society organizations. What is missing is a voice for citizens.

Certainly, policymakers now face many other urgent problems requiring immediate solutions. However, devolution reform can provide solutions to critical issues in management of law and order, price regulation, poverty alleviation, access to social services, efficiency in government spending, taxation, etc. By definition, local governments are the level of government and public administration closest to citizens, and for that reason can be effective in providing many public services. Furthermore, effective local governments are an important determining factor in the overall legitimacy and stability of institutions of democratic governance. But as this report demonstrates, just assigning new responsibilities to local officials, without attending to the institutional incentives to be responsive to citizen needs and responsible for outcomes, does not necessarily improve upon prior arrangements.

This study presents the results of an opinion survey on citizen views of local government in Pakistan, carried out in October 2008 by the Urban Institute (UI) and ACNielsen (Nielsen). The results presented in this report refer to the consolidated results across all provinces. Four provincial reports, presenting results for each province, have also been published.

The UI/ACNielsen survey has been carried out at a moment in which all of the provinces in Pakistan are undertaking a formal review and reform of their local government systems to improve the delivery of services to the people. In the past, local government systems have been imposed on the provinces, and this is the first time the provinces have directly reformed their local government systems in an open and consultative manner. By incorporating people's voices into the design of the new local government systems, policymakers can ensure greater ownership of the new system by all levels of society.

The survey is intended to solicit and present the citizens' voice—which needs to be taken into account as the provinces and the federal government move forward with the review and reform



of local government systems. It is abundantly clear from this and other surveys that people in Pakistan support a democratically elected government and believe that a properly functioning local government system is the best method for improving their quality of life through the services it can deliver. The people surveyed express substantial dissatisfaction with service delivery to date by government at all levels, including local governments, but they also have expectations that the system can be improved.

Following this introduction, the report is divided into four main sections: a short background on the current debate on local government reform; a methodology section describing the sample design; a detailed presentation and discussion of the survey results; and a brief section on conclusions and implications for policy reform.

2. The Local Government System In Pakistan

The Local Government Ordinance (LGO) of 2001, enacted by the Musharaf government to devolve powers from the central to local governments, is not the first attempt to strengthen local provision of services, fiscal autonomy, and accountability to citizens. Both the Basic Democracies System of the late 1950s and the New Social Contract of the mid-1990s had similar objectives, but they broke down as power was recentralized. The LGO is unique, however, in the constitutional protection given to its reforms. By acting in December 2003 to incorporate the local-government changes into the 1973 Constitution, President Musharaf cushioned the structure of devolution against amendment or repeal for six years (until December 31, 2009), except with the approval of the President.

The 2001 LGO put into place a three-tiered system of local government (union, tehsil/taluka municipal administration, district) below each province with the union nazim (mayor) and union naib nazim (deputy mayor) being the only directly elected officials; devolved 10 sectors/functions to the districts, including health and education; and devolved municipal services, including water, to the tehsils.

To carry out the reform process, the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) was directed to implement the Devolution Plan. Beginning in March 2000 with the publication of a discussion paper, the NRB laid out a plan that combined “top-down” centrally led devolution with elements of “bottom-up” citizen involvement through a system of direct and indirect elections for different types of subnational governments, the establishment of Citizen Community Boards (CCBs), which were granted the power to identify and initiate local capital investment projects, and the creation of local devolution and service monitoring committees.

However, according to several assessments carried out in recent years, the reform has failed to meet these goals.¹ While there has been devolution of political power, in many localities this has reinforced local elite capture by influential families and strengthened patron-client

¹ “Local Government Assessment.” Pakistan Districts That Work Project. June 2008; “Social Development in Pakistan”, Social Policy and Development Centre. 2007; “Assessment Report: Pakistan Devolution Support Project”, Ritu Nayyar-Stone, Robert Ebel, Sonia Ignatova, Khalid Rashid with Harry Hatry and George Peterson. The Urban Institute, Project No. 07862. February 2006; “Social Audit of Governance and Delivery of Public Services. Pakistan 2004/05. National Report.” A. Cockcroft, N. Andersson, U.U. Chaudhry, and S. Saeed. Islamabad, September 2005. Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment and Community Information Empowerment and Training.

relationships rather than promoting political participation. The decentralization of administrative authority was only partial, as the provincial government maintained control over allocation of financial and human resources for operations (non-development budgets). The distribution of resources gave precedence to transfers over taxation powers. The deconcentration of management functions was constrained by the lack of provincial buy-in and weak policy coordination with districts and Tehsil Municipal Administrations (TMAs). And finally, the checks and balances were not put into place.

This failure points out the inherent difficulties in establishing democratic local government in the context of a non-democratic polity, both nationally and in the provinces. In other words, there was insufficient democratic space for effective implementation of the key governance components of the 2001 LGO because the essential attributes of a democratic system were missing both nationally and locally. The activities of opposition parties, civil society organizations, and independent media organizations, to name a few, were all severely constrained. The link between the efficacy of local governments and governance is often overlooked, resulting in governments that are unable to deliver and citizens that mistrust their government.

With respect to local governance, the main problems have been excessive executive (mayoral) powers at the expense of the elected local government councils; nonfunctioning oversight and internal control mechanisms; weak external controls; clientalistic manipulation of investment budgets through the assignment of budget quotas to individual council members; emphasis on infrastructure projects offering possibilities for manipulation of procurement; and leakage of public resources, whether through manipulation of procurement, kickbacks and commissions, or outright embezzlement. Also, anecdotal evidence from the field suggests that this leakage of public resources has significant implications for security in some regions, as local militant groups are able to pressure local government for access to resources.

Not surprisingly, all of this has had a detrimental impact on service delivery. Appointments, transfers, and postings of government employees (especially teachers and medical staff) are now subject to control by nazims; there is evidence of widespread absenteeism in all sectors; many infrastructure projects are left unfinished or substandard; insufficient resources are allocated for operations and maintenance; local elites have taken over schools, clinics, and other government facilities have been taken over by local elites for private ends; and water and sewer systems have been entirely abandoned owing to lack of maintenance. There has not been sufficient research to claim that service delivery has deteriorated with devolution, as is often stated in the press and by politicians. Two prior studies –including a social audit–examined citizen satisfaction with services at two points in time after the 2001 LGO was implemented. Both studies suggest that there has been only marginal improvement in some service delivery, and little or no improvement in health services. Both stress the wide disparity in service provision within each province.

Another critical weakness in the implementation of the 2001 LGO was the absence or weakness of mechanisms for coordination between the provinces and local governments, in particular, the failure to develop procedures for implementing the ordinance and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government. Indeed, the Local Government Commissions created under the 2001 LGO were rarely formed, and if formed, were not active. For its part, the Provincial Finance Commission awards did not include any significant

performance component. Overall, the provinces did not exercise their legally mandated role of oversight and inspection. Finally, the 2001 LGO also contained parallel decision structures and lacked political support from provincial authorities who nonetheless played a large role in staffing and funding many aspects of service delivery. It therefore did not instill ownership among those whose cooperation was needed for its success.

The Devolution Debate. The presidential elections in 2008 brought a new democratically elected coalition to government, restored policy and decision-making with respect to local governance to the four provinces, and led to the resignation of Mr. Musharaf. Following the elections, federal politics were redefined in terms of intergovernmental interests and positions. Simultaneously, the provinces moved quickly to reassert authority over local governments, challenging the authority of the nazims, replacing and transferring a large proportion of senior managers, and re-centralizing day-to-day administration, especially in such key sectors as health and education. These changes were felt most in the districts and city districts and less in the smaller and rural TMAs.

The provinces are now developing changes to the 2001 LGO. These changes are meant to correct the perceived political bias in the Musharaf government's devolution policies, which can be summarized as follows: the federal government imposed the LGO with no consultation; the LGO was designed to undermine the powers of the provincial governments and legislatures and to neutralize the opposition parties (particularly the PPP and PML-N); and central government manipulation ensured that local government elections in 2001 and 2005 were neither free nor fair. Other problems aggravated these issues, including the devolution of authority for policing; discretionary powers in bylaw enforcement; and administrative control over land registry and revenue collection. In many regions of the country, this has accentuated existing tendencies toward elite capture and contributed to a deterioration of law and order and increased crime.

Recent policy statements from the federal and provincial governments indicate that revision and refinement of the local government system will attempt to improve and protect service delivery and citizens' access to and participation in governance processes. For any future system to address the people's needs, an objective and consultative review by each province of its local government ordinances is critical.

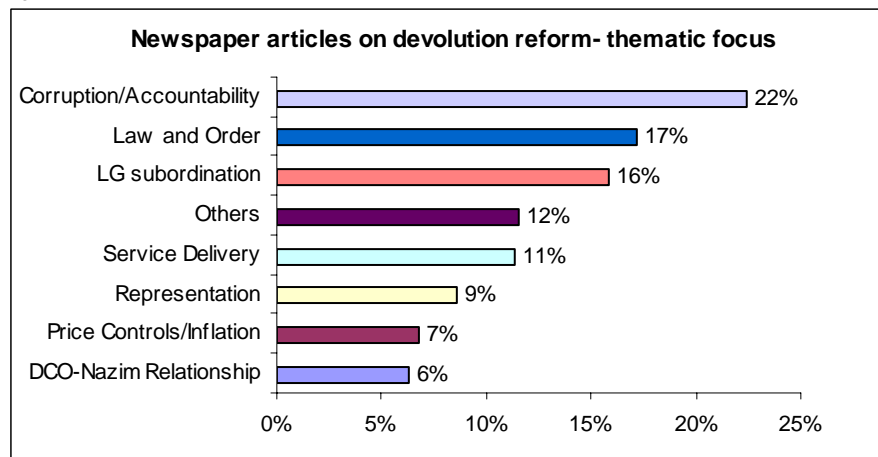
The idea of an open and inclusive dialogue met with resistance from some quarters. Initial policy statements from some of the newly elected provincial officials and senior provincial bureaucrats in March and April, 2008, referred to the intention to immediately abrogate the 2001 LGO and return to the 1979 LGO. The justification for immediate abrogation most often mentioned had to do with the grave problems caused by bureaucratic subordination to local elected politicians.

The critical areas in which the local government failed, according to these officials, was the deterioration of law and order and the inability of local governments to enforce laws and regulations. The only viable solution, according to provincial officials, was to take back control of local affairs to the bureaucracy. In this first phase of the debate, many official policy statements and press reports had to do with the relationship between nazims and public servants, reflecting the success of the senior provincial bureaucrats in shaping the debate in their favor.

But the early enthusiasm for immediately abrogating the 2001 LGO wore off, and with time, other important policy issues emerged, such as corruption in administration, taxation and land

registration, worsening coverage and quality of basic services, and the need to maintain effective political representation at the local level. The breakdown of the thematic focus in English newspaper coverage from April 18 to October 31, 2008, is presented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Thematic focus on newspaper articles on devolution Reform ²



As well as incorporating new themes, the policy debate started to include other voices, often to counterbalance the provincial position. Provincial officials were taken to task for wanting to push through a counter reform with no substantial debate or consultation—in the same way that the 2001 LGO was enacted under a military government. Some columnists and editorial writers also observed that while the law and order situation might well justify taking away the policing role, this had nothing to do with other local government roles and responsibilities, whose reform would have to be evaluated on its own merits. Researchers also lent their voices, arguing for the merits of the system, although admitting that it had not been fully implemented.

The federal government, too, has intervened in the debate, sometimes with contrasting views expressed by different ministries, executive agencies, and parliamentarians. While recognizing the paramount role of the provinces in local government reforms, the federal government's Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) took a measured position, suggesting the need for a common legal framework that could be adapted to the needs of each province and the need for formal intergovernmental consultation and coordination. The NRB also weighed in, presenting specific proposals for amendments to the 2001 LGO. Further, for their part, the district and tehsil nazims, initially silent after the 2008 elections, mounted a counterattack through incipient local government associations in Punjab and NWFP, and through legal actions in the courts to oppose provincial initiatives to restrict their administrative and financial powers.

This lively and sometime acerbic policy debate in the national and regional press has demonstrated the merits of a democratic process. Indeed, it has contributed to forestalling

² The total number of English newspaper articles used for this analysis is 250 (spanning the period April 18 to October 31, 2008). The newspapers include: Daily Times, Dawn, Pakistan Observer, The National, The News, and The Post.

immediate abrogation of the 2001 LGO and has generated a more reasoned and reasonable discussion about policy options. The terms of the debate, initially dominated by senior bureaucrats, have broadened, as has participation and voice as different actors joined in.

Citizens' Voice in the Policy Reform Process. The function of a consultative dialogue in the policy process is to ensure that the proposed policies have the support of the stakeholders and to ensure that devolution is appropriate to serve the needs of the people in each province. All four provinces have established Provincial Working Groups (PWGs) to review the constitutional and legal framework for local government and to propose policy reforms.

This dialogue reflects a commitment to pluralism and inclusiveness in policymaking. In the course of the debate on devolution reform, it is common to hear elected and unelected officials and civil society representatives talk about “what people want.” But policymaking at the federal and provincial level is constrained in directly involving citizens. While the PWGs established to review the policy options for devolution reform include both elected and administrative officials as well as representatives from civil society organizations, citizens’ views are lacking. The objective of the UI/ACNielsen survey is to provide objective and statistically representative data on citizens’ perspectives on the operation and form of local government in support of the discussions in each province.

The survey elicits citizen responses in seven areas: (i) access to different levels of local government in Pakistan and citizens’ value of such access; (ii) perceptions of the responsiveness of different levels of government in regards to citizens’ priority service needs; (iii) opinions of the ability of different levels of local government in Pakistan to effectively represent them and the degree to which representative bodies are held accountable for their decisions; (iv) performance in terms of the coverage, quality, and efficiency of core public services; (v) perceptions of the capacity of different levels of local government to effectively carry out their duties; (vi) trust of different levels of local government and their perceptions of issues of corruption in regards to different levels of local government; and (vii) perceptions regarding the demographical and geographical appropriateness of local government structures. The methodology and findings from the survey are discussed in the following sections.

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

The National Survey on Citizen’s Perceptions about Local government was conducted in October 2008, by ACNielsen Pakistan, in collaboration with the Urban Institute, to obtain citizens’ views on the form and structure of the local government system as well as access to, coverage, and quality of essential government services.

The survey is based on a sample of 4,002 nationally and provincially representative households across the country. The respondents represent a mix of urban and rural dwellers, male and female, from all provinces of Pakistan. The selected cities and villages were identified based on the geographical spread. The table below shows the distribution of the sample size as per the key variables, that is, provinces, urban or rural settings, and gender:

Table 3.1: UI/ACNielsen survey sample size

Province	Urban		Rural		Total Sample
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Punjab	456	475	500	508	1939
Sindh	363	355	191	192	1101
NWFP	108	112	192	193	605
Balochistan	69	72	110	106	357
TOTAL	996	1014	993	999	4002

Teams of qualified enumerators administered the survey questionnaire by conducting face-to-face interviews in both Urdu and Sindhi languages. The data was collected from 78 districts across the four provinces including 35 urban localities and 166 rural localities. The detailed methodology is available upon request from the authors.

The national sample has 39 percent of respondents living in city districts, 12 percent in other urban areas, and 50 percent in rural areas. The sample is made up of 50 percent male and 50 percent female respondents, with the largest number of respondents – 28 percent belonging to the age group from 25 to 34 years old. Eighty-three percent of respondents have a household size of five or more individuals. Literacy levels are 54 percent and of those literate, the majority of the respondents – 47 percent (40 percent male and 60 percent female) have some primary or completed primary education. The highest level of education attained by the respondents (25 percent) is secondary or higher secondary. Within this group, the ratio of male and female is 57 percent and 43 percent respectively. Twenty-four percent of respondents fall within the income bracket of PKR 3001 to 7000 per month.

4. FINDINGS

4.A Governance

The UI/Nielsen survey includes a series of questions about different dimensions of democratic governance, asking respondents about the degree of accountability, openness, access and responsiveness of provincial, district, and municipal governments throughout the country. It takes as a starting point the premise that the majority of Pakistanis support democratic government—although there is a significant minority that is quite critical of the functioning of these same democratic institutions. Other surveys conducted after the 2008 elections show that the majority of Pakistanis want democratic government; they believe that things will improve under a democratic government; and they give relatively high approval ratings to the newly elected national government and the national assembly. Nevertheless, these same surveys show that the majority of people also believe that the government has not effectively addressed

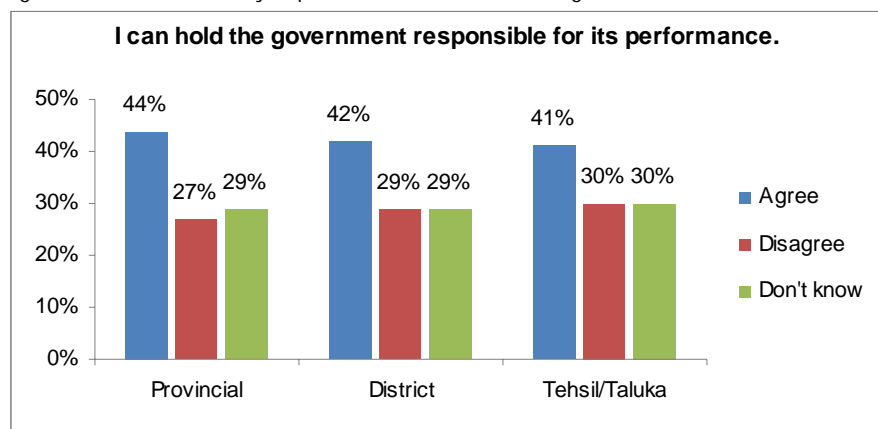
major problems facing the country; that the country is “heading in the wrong direction”; and that their personal situation has worsened and will continue to worsen in the coming year.³

The results of the UI/Nielsen survey on local government reflect this same mix of optimism about the return to democratic government and very critical attitudes with respect to the actual performance of government institutions, whether federal, provincial or local (districts, tehsils and unions). The survey asks the respondents to evaluate these levels of government on several dimensions of governance.

Accountability. The concept of accountability can be understood in different ways. It is now customary to distinguish between “vertical accountability” of public institutions to citizens, and “horizontal accountability” of one public institution to another. In Pakistan, like other democratic countries, the elections to the national parliament and provincial assemblies, and the direct and indirect elections to district, municipal, and union councils are the most visible mechanisms for ensuring vertical accountability. But there are other important institutions, such as civil society organizations, research institutes, think tanks, and communications media, which exercise oversight of government.

The UI/Nielsen survey focuses on vertical accountability, asking the respondents whether they agree/disagree with the statement “I can hold provincial/district/tehsil government responsible for its acts.” The results show about 30 percent of respondents answering “don’t know”, with respect to accountability of these three levels of government. At the same time, 44 percent considered that they could hold provincial governments accountable; falling slightly to 42 percent for district and 41 percent for tehsil levels of government.

Figure 4.A1: Accountability of provincial, district and tehsil governments

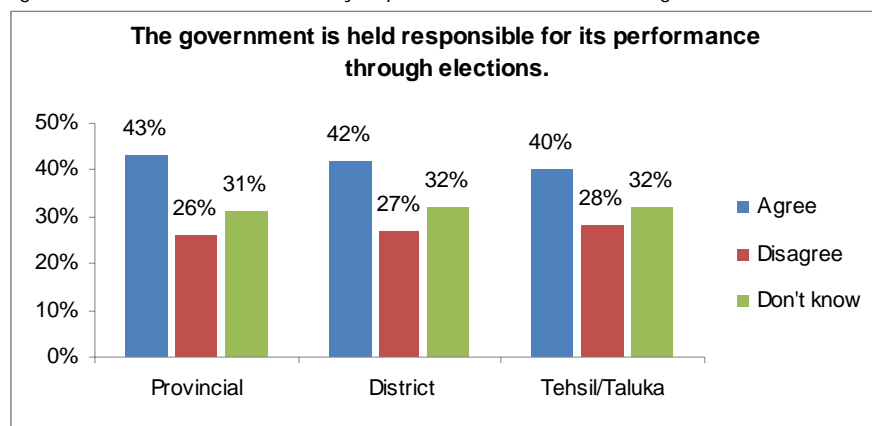


The survey also asked respondents about electoral accountability: “The provincial/district/tehsil government is held responsible for its performance through elections”. As Figure 4.A2 shows,

³ See International Republican Institute. 2008. Pakistan Public Opinion Survey June 1-15, 2008. Washington, DC: IRI; and United States Institute of Peace and World Public Opinion. 2008. “Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the U.S. “, Washington, D. C.

the results for each level of government are more or less similar to the responses to the more general question on accountability.

Figure 4.A2: Electoral accountability of provincial, district and tehsil governments

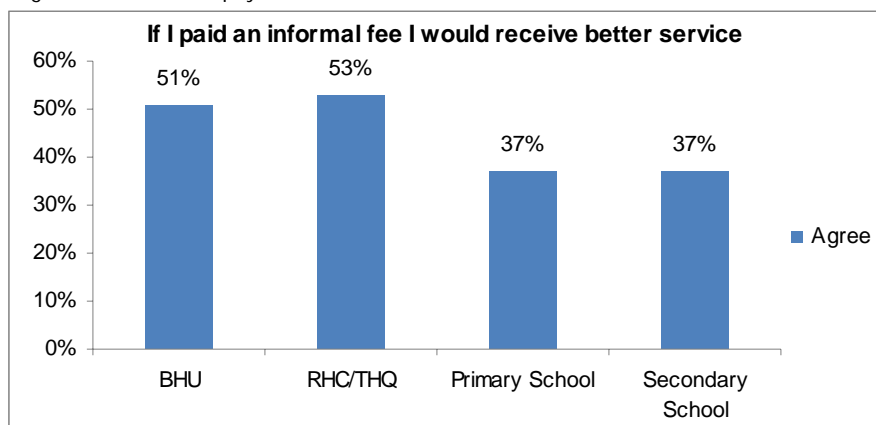


While it might be expected that the 2008 elections would have reinforced citizens' expectations for electoral accountability in the newly elected provincial governments, in fact the survey respondents rated the provinces and local governments more or less equal in this respect.

Transparency. The survey has included a number of questions about government transparency, which can be understood as the extent to which citizens have access to information that can facilitate their understanding of decision-making (policies, budgets, projects, etc.). One of the most common results of low transparency in government decision-making is corruption. There is a difference between perceived levels of corruption and the frequency of "victimization", i.e., the direct experience of corrupt acts (for example, paying a bribe). Transparency International carried out a survey of corruption victimization in Pakistan in 2006; the results show high levels of corruption in most interactions between citizens and government. Of those respondents reporting transactions with police in the two years previous, 90 percent paid bribes; in legal procedures involving judicial authorities, 78 percent paid bribes; in land administration 92 percent; in getting access to health services from public hospitals, 67 percent; and in public school admission/registration 50 percent.⁴

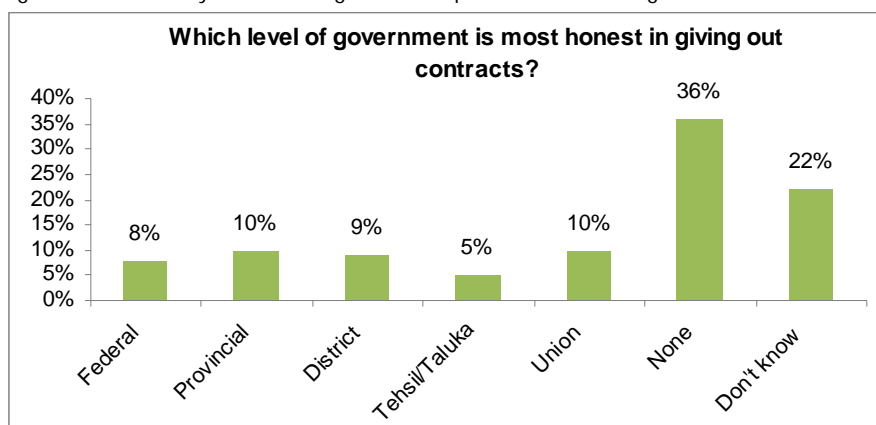
⁴ See Transparency International Pakistan. 2006. "National Corruption Perception Survey 2006".

Figure 4.A3: Informal payments for better social services



While the Transparency International survey mentioned above did find high levels of corruption in most government services, whether federal, provincial or local, in fact it is difficult to attribute corruption in social services to a particular level of government since responsibility for social services is split between provinces and districts. To the UI/Nielsen question whether they would receive better services if they made an informal payment, more than 50 percent of survey respondents said yes for health services and 37 percent said yes for education, for both primary and secondary schools. This parallels the findings of the Transparency International survey, which shows somewhat higher levels of corruption victimization in health services than in education.

Figure 4.A4: Honesty in contracting in federal, provincial and local government

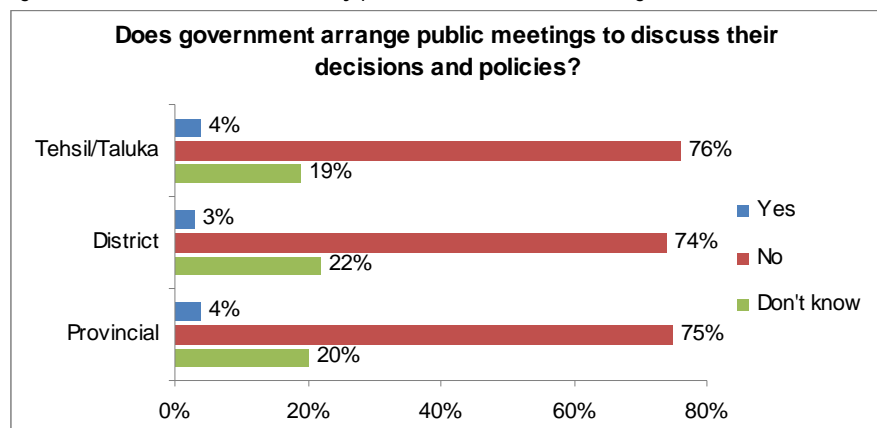


Finally, the UI/Nielsen survey also asked respondents about their perceptions of corruption in government contracting across different levels of government. One question asked “Which level of government is honest in awarding contracts, construction projects, licenses, etc.?” The responses to this question do provide a gauge of how citizens perceive different levels of government in this respect. Given the results of other surveys, it is not surprising that the most

frequent response to the question is again “None”. In fact, as Figure 4.A4 shows, the maximum responses provided for any level of government is just 10 percent. Clearly, the respondents are very skeptical about government’s contracting and procurement practices at the federal, provincial, district, tehsil and union levels, without distinction.

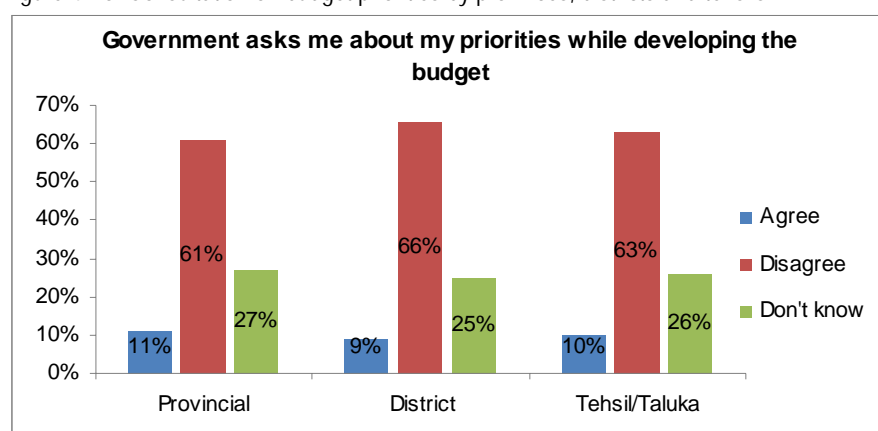
Openness to Consultation and Dialogue. One of the most important justifications for decentralization and local government is that it brings government closer to the people, in that it offers more opportunities for interaction – including face-to-face meetings -- between decision makers and citizens. However, many of the most important provisions for transparency in the 2001 LGO were not implemented. It has not been a practice of local governments in Pakistan to allow public access to council meetings; to present periodic reports in open council meetings; or to hold consultative meetings on budget priorities—even though all of these are formal provisions of the 2001 LGO. Nor is it a practice of nazims and councilors to hold informal meetings with constituents, or to convene public hearings on important decisions, practices used by governments in many other countries to improve accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

Figure 4.A5: Public consultations by provincial, district and tehsil governments



Responding to the question, “Does the provincial/district/tehsil government arrange public meetings to discuss decisions and policies?”, only 3 to 4 percent of the UI/Nielsen survey respondents across four provinces answered affirmatively. On average, 20 percent of respondents said that they don’t know. Overall, these results point to the almost complete absence of formal mechanisms for consultation and dissemination of information to citizens, whether in provincial or local governments.

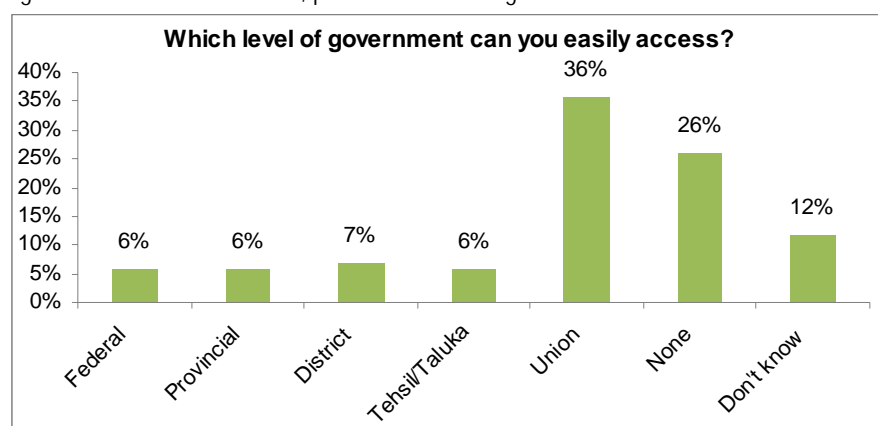
Figure 4.A6: Consultation on budget priorities by provinces, districts and tehsils



As Figure 4.A6 shows, only between 9 percent and 11 percent of respondents say that provincial, district or tehsils governments do consult with citizens on budget priorities. The differences between provincial and local governments are negligible, again suggesting that local governments did not effectively apply the provisions of the 2001 LGO for public budget consultations.

Access to Government. One of the survey questions asked “Which level of government can you easily access?” As shown in Figure 4.A7, about 38 percent of the responses were “None” or “Don’t know”. Comparing the different levels of government, 36 percent of the respondents said that the union councils can be easily accessed while 6 percent said federal, provincial and Tehsils and 7 percent said district governments. This difference isn’t surprising, given the relatively small size of union councils and opportunities for direct interaction between officials and citizens.

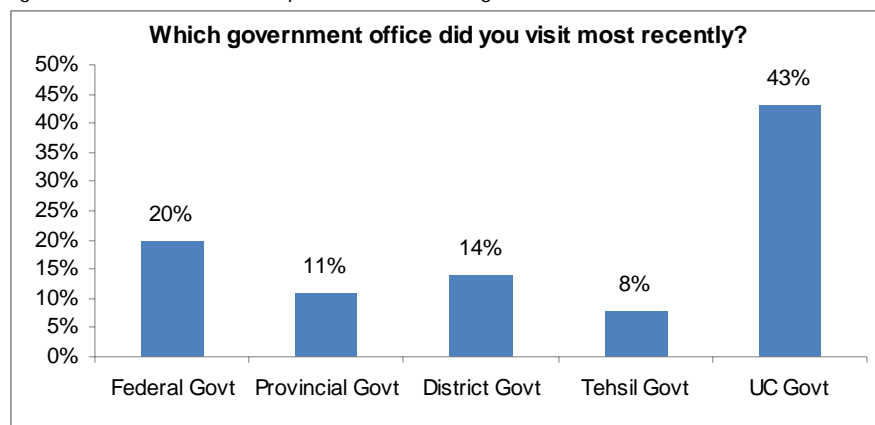
Figure 4.A7: Access to federal, provincial and local government



In response to the question “Have you visited any government offices or elected officials during the last one year” about 13 percent of respondents replied affirmatively. As can be seen in Figure 4.A8, majority of the visits occurred at the union council level, with 43 percent of

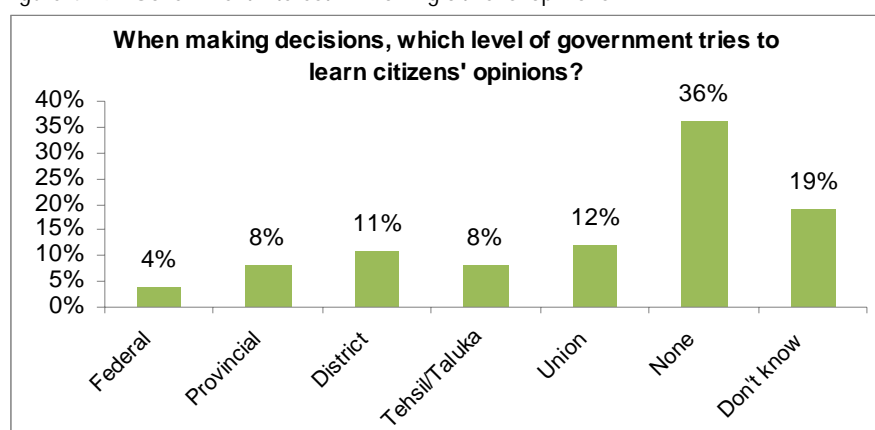
respondents stating that they visited the union council. This is followed by visits to the federal government, 20 percent, district governments, 14 percent, provincial 11 percent and lastly TMAs, at 8 percent.

Figure 4.A8: Visits to federal, provincial and local governments



Overall, about 59 percent of the visits to government offices or officials were to elected officials. While this might seem high, it reflects the high proportion of visits to union councils, which are centered almost exclusively on interactions with the nazim or elected council members. In contrast, in the other levels of government the interactions were more often with unelected officials.

Figure 4.A9: Government interest in knowing citizens' opinions

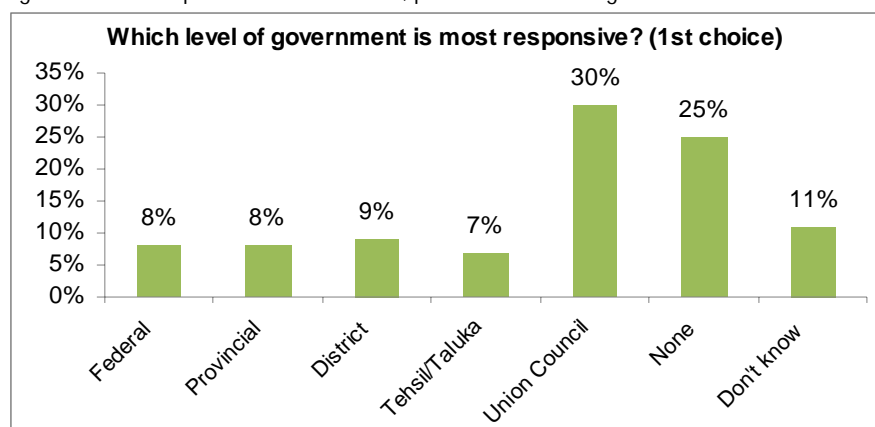


Responsiveness. This aspect of governance refers to the degree to which citizens see government decisions—policies, budgets, projects, etc.—as responding to their preferences, and their perceptions on whether they, as citizens, can influence government decision-making. In reply to the question of which level of government tries to take into consideration citizen's opinions in decision-making, a majority of respondents said either “None” or “Don't know”—36 percent and 19 percent of total responses respectively. There were marginal differences

between levels of government, with 12 percent of respondents saying “union councils” and 11 percent saying districts, which suggests that people see them as somewhat more responsive than the federal, provincial, and taluka government – 4 percent, 8 percent and 8 percent respectively (see Figure 4.A9).

Despite this, survey respondents still tend to see local governments, and particularly union councils, as more responsive to their needs. As shown in Figure 4.A10, union councils receive 30 percent of mentions, compared to a maximum of 9 percent for any other level of government. However, the most frequent response was “None” and “Don’t know”, again reflecting the prevalence of very critical attitudes on the quality of governance at all levels.

Figure 4.A10: Responsiveness of federal, provincial and local governments

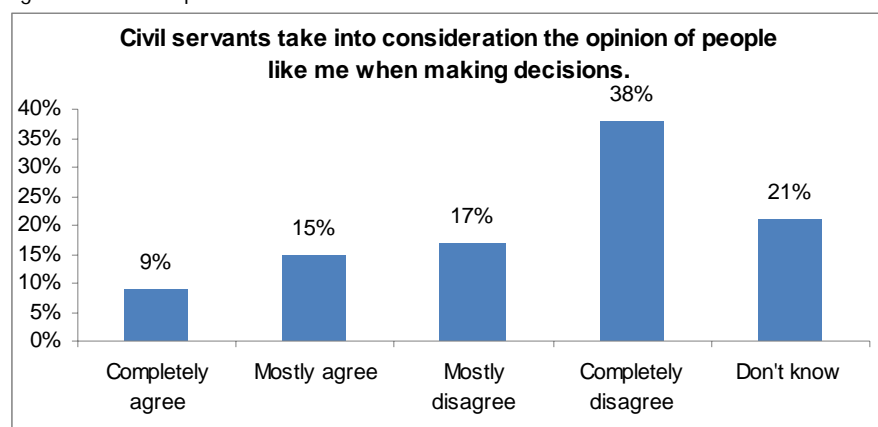


Bureaucratic Responsiveness. The survey results suggest that citizens tend to seek assistance from elected representatives—about 59 percent of the respondents who reported an interaction with government sought out an elected official. Why the preference for elected officials versus civil servants?

The UI/Nielsen survey asked respondents to indicate agreement or disagreement with the statement, “Civil servants take into consideration the opinion of people like me when deciding”. The results are presented in Figure 4.A11. Only 24 percent of respondents say that they “completely agree” or “agree”, whereas 55 percent say that they “mostly disagree” or “completely disagree”.

Of course, in most instances the elected official is a union nazim, naib nazim or councilor. Compared to the middle and senior ranks of the bureaucracy who are appointed by federal and provincial governments and rotated among districts and tehsils on a regular basis, these local political representatives are probably seen as much closer to their community. They are also part of a patron-client network that stretches upwards through locally powerful people and families connected to provincial and federal politics.

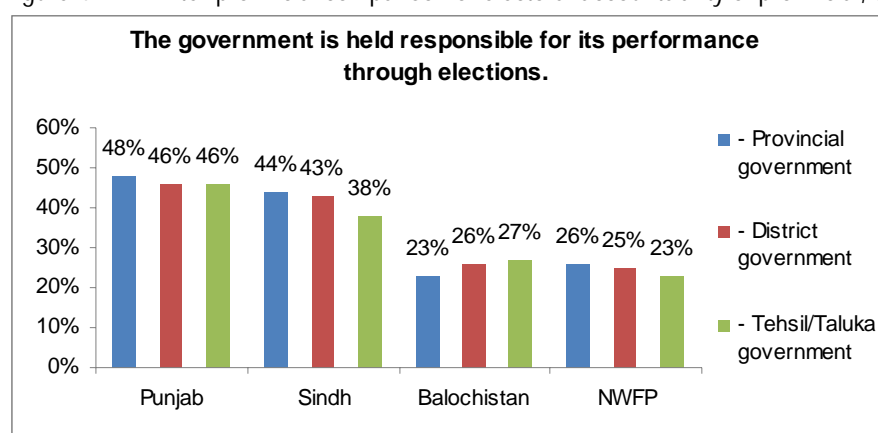
Figure 4.A11: Responsiveness of civil servants to citizen needs



Another explanation might be the quality of the local administration itself. Mostly without exception, districts and tehsils have not established formal processes and procedures for attending the general public. Nor is there written information or sign boards in government offices on regulations or requirements for routine transactions. For example, only a small proportion of respondents—12 to 15 percent --considered that the provincial, district or tehsil administrations had an “open door” policy which would allow them to access government officials. Almost one-third said that they didn't know.

Interprovincial Differences. The UI/ACNielsen survey included separate provincial samples, allowing for the disaggregation of results for each province and the analysis of inter-provincial differences. How different are the responses in the four provinces on questions about governance? For example, to the question whether different levels of government can be held responsible through elections, on average 46 percent of survey respondents in Punjab agreed. As Table 4.A12 shows, this frequency was significantly lower in Sindh, 42 percent; NWFP, 25 percent; and Baluchistan, 25 percent.

Figure 4.A12: Inter-provincial comparison of electoral accountability of provincial, district and tehsil governments



On questions of transparency, the results summarized in Table 4.A1 demonstrate a very high level of skepticism about government integrity across the board. The respondents in Punjab were somewhat more positive; with 31 percent of respondents answering “none” to the question what level of government is most honest in awarding contracts. In NWFP the result was similar to that of Punjab, but in Baluchistan it increased to 42 percent, and in Sindh 45 percent.

Table 4.A1: Inter-provincial comparison of most honest level of government in awarding contracts

Government	Punjab	Sindh	Balochistan	NWFP
Federal	8%	8%	3%	9%
Provincial	11%	8%	8%	10%
District	9%	10%	6%	8%
Tehsil/Taluka government	5%	2%	1%	9%
Union council	13%	8%	1%	5%
None	31%	45%	42%	33%
Don't know	23%	18%	33%	22%

In fact the local governments were not particularly well evaluated in comparison to the provincial and federal levels of government. The only governments that received more than 10 percent of positive responses were the provincial governments in NWFP (10 percent); district government in Sindh (10 percent); provincial government in Punjab (11 percent), and the union councils in Punjab (13 percent). Overall local government (districts, TMAs and union councils) were evaluated the worst in Balochistan relative to the other provinces.

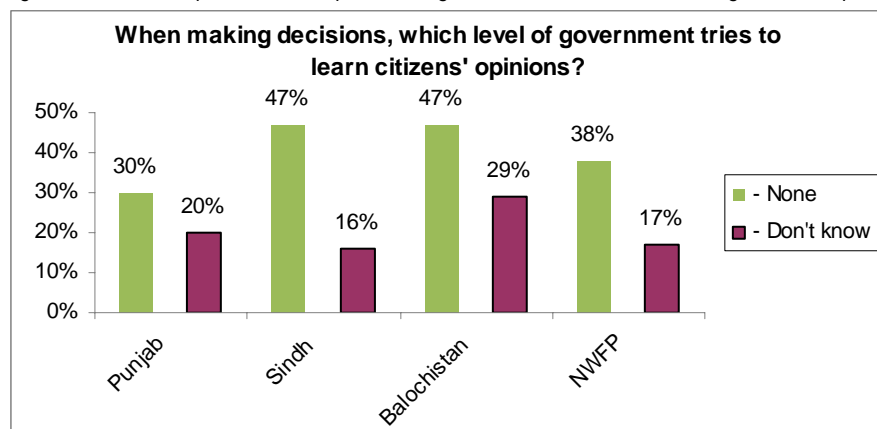
On the question of access to government, there were also very sharp differences between the four provinces, as Table 4.A2 indicates. To the question, which level of government can you easily access, in Punjab 15 percent of respondents answered “none”, compared to 36 percent in NWFP, 42 percent in Sindh and 44 percent in Baluchistan. Federal, provincial, district, and TMA government got a few positive mentions in the range of 2 to 8 percent.

Table 4.A2: Inter-provincial comparison of which level of government is easiest to access

Government	Punjab	Sindh	Balochistan	NWFP
Federal	7%	2%	0%	8%
Provincial	7%	3%	3%	7%
District	8%	6%	3%	9%
Tehsil/Taluka government	6%	5%	3%	7%
Union council	44%	31%	18%	13%
None	15%	42%	44%	36%
Don't know	11%	10%	25%	18%

As was presented above in this section, the UI/Nielsen survey results show that the union councils are the most frequent point of contact of citizens with government; on average, 30 percent of respondents said they can easily assess union council members. There are some important differences between the provinces in responses to this question: In Punjab, union councils were mentioned by 44 percent of survey respondents; and in the province of Sindh 31 percent. In NWFP and Baluchistan the frequency fell considerably, to 13 percent and 18 percent respectively.

Figure 4.A13: Inter-provincial comparison of government interest in knowing citizens' opinions



To the question, which level of government tries to understand citizens' opinions, the answers in Figure 4.A13 again show a high level of skepticism in all provinces: in Punjab 30 percent of survey respondents said "None"; in NWFP 38 percent; and in Sindh and Baluchistan it was 47 percent. Again, on this question the union councils in all of the provinces received more positive ratings.

It should be noted that on many of the questions the respondents in Punjab, and to a lesser extent Sindh, showed a more positive assessment of government institutions (except on questions of transparency in Sindh). Overall, this seems to suggest a weaker presence of government institutions in NWFP and Balochistan. These results are also consistent with other research, which has shown that in some regions of NWFP and Balochistan, the traditional tribal structures of power and authority continue to be more salient and relevant than the formal structures of government, whether federal, provincial or local.

4.B Service Delivery

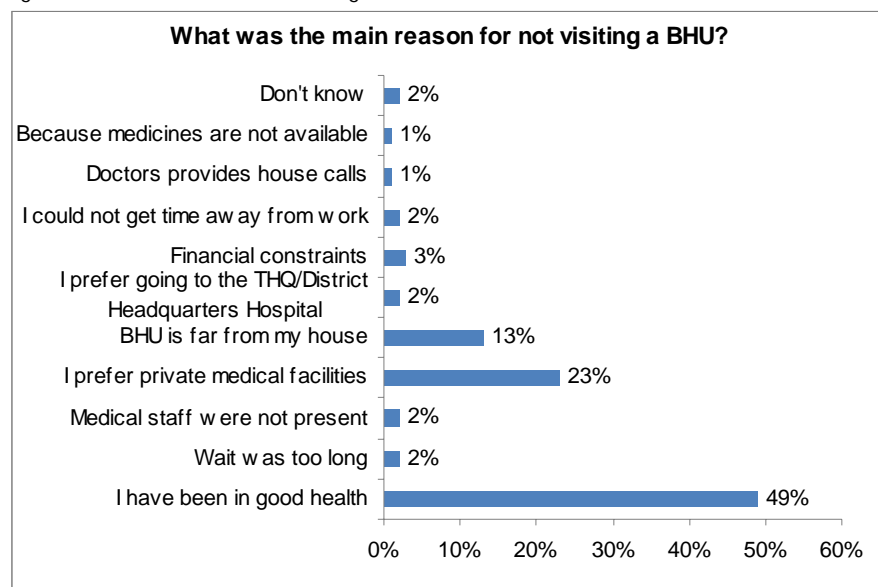
The underlying logic of decentralizing service delivery to local governments is that they are closer to the citizens, and are better positioned to determine citizen needs and priorities, thereby providing more efficient and effective services. Two key determinants of effectiveness in decentralization is the capacity of local government to provide services and clarity in allocation of roles and responsibilities between levels of government regarding service delivery.

One of the major criticisms of devolution in Pakistan has been that service delivery has suffered, particularly in health, education, water supply and sanitation, all services devolved to local governments under the 2001 Local Government Ordinance. Corruption, a lack of trained staff, jurisdictional arguments, political interference and lack of resources have all contributed to this alleged decline in service coverage and quality. Even if service provision has not deteriorated, argue the critics of the 2001 LGO, it certainly hasn't kept up with citizens' needs. In particular, according to this argument, districts and tehsils have squandered large amounts of investment resources on schemes that have little impact on the overall quality of life. It is also argued that local governments are reticent to spend sufficient resources to maintain and repair existing facilities—preferring investments in new infrastructure.

Social Services—Health. Under the 2001 LGO, the district governments were given responsibility for providing key social services such as healthcare and education. The expertise and financial capacity to provide these services was to be made available at the district level, while newly formed political bodies were empowered to make decisions regarding investment as well as to respond to citizen concerns and needs.

Districts are responsible for the management of primary and secondary healthcare facilities—Basic Health Units (BHUs), Rural Health Centers (RHCs) and Tehsil and District Headquarters (THQ/DHQ) Hospitals. This includes issues such as the equipping and maintenance of facilities, assuring a supply of medicine, attendance of staff at facilities and construction of new facilities. Provincial health departments, however, also have important roles to play in these facilities, specifically in the posting and transfer of staff and other critical aspects of human resource management.

Figure 4.B1: Reasons for not visiting a Basic Health Unit



The UI/Nielsen survey asks a series of questions regarding utilization of BHUs including reasons why people say that they did not use BHUs. According to the results of the survey 20 percent of citizens across four provinces say that they have visited a Basic Health Unit in the

past 6 months. Of the people who did not visit a BHU, 49 percent say it is because they have been in good health and did not need medical treatment. People in urban areas say that they are relatively healthier than in rural areas with 53 percent of urban respondents saying that they did not go to a BHU because they were in good health, compared to 45 percent in rural areas. In urban areas people are more likely to prefer private medical facilities than in rural areas with 26 percent of urban residents responding that that is the reason that they did not go to a BHU compared to 19 percent in rural areas. In rural areas 19 percent of respondents say that they did not go to a BHU in the past six months because it is too far from their home compared to only 7 percent in urban areas.

The UI/Nielsen survey asks a series of questions about respondents' visits to the BHU. These questions are designed to provide an insight into how citizens perceive the quality of primary healthcare services provided through Basic Health Units.

Figure 4.B2: General satisfaction with different aspects of BHUs



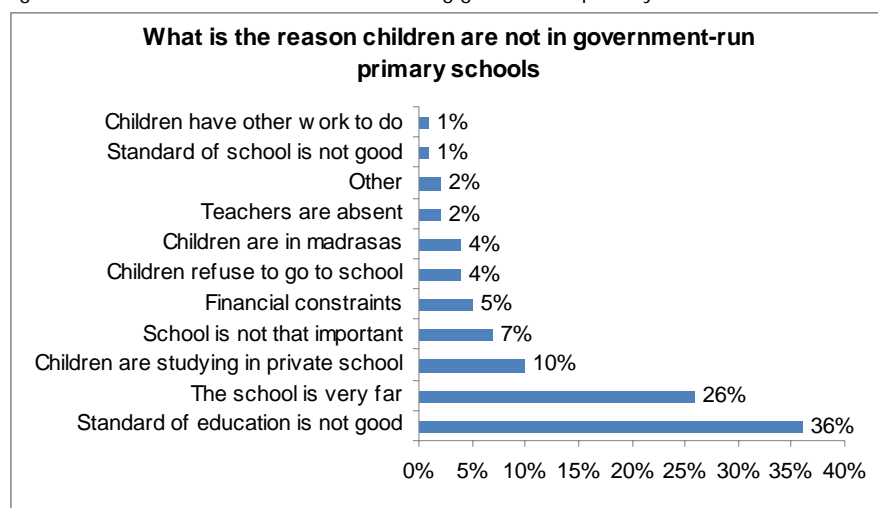
While none of the results are a resounding endorsement of citizens' satisfaction with primary healthcare services, a majority of people are generally satisfied with their visits to BHUs with 64 percent of respondents agreeing with the statement that they received good medical aid from qualified staff. The aspect of BHUs that people are most satisfied with are the availability of medical staff, with 72 percent of respondents agreeing with the statement that medical staff was available during their visit to the BHU. Citizens are less satisfied with the length of time they had to wait at BHUs as well as the distance of the BHU from their house with 64 and 60 percent of respondents stating that they are satisfied with these aspects respectively. People are most dissatisfied with the lack of medicines at the BHU, with only 55 percent of respondents saying they were satisfied with the availability of medicines.

Social Services—Education. Education is another crucial social service that was devolved to district governments. Similar to the roles devolved in regard to health, district governments are responsible for the maintenance and management of both primary and secondary schools, but the provincial government retains control over key human resource issues such as transfers and posting.

According to the results of the UI/Nielsen survey, 57 percent of households across four provinces have children that are of primary school age. The average number of children of primary school age per household is 2.2 with a maximum number of six children of primary school age in the household. Of the households with children of primary school age in them, 54 percent have some or all of their children in government-run schools.

The reasons that people stated they do not have their children in government primary schools include poor education services and difficulty of accessing schools, which are often at a distance. Of households that had children of primary school age, but have none of the children enrolled in government-run schools, 26 percent say that the school is very far and 36 percent say that the low standard of education in government schools is the reason that their children are not enrolled. This reflects a general dissatisfaction with the quality of the education services provided. Other reasons stated across four provinces include “children are studying in private schools”, 10 percent; “children are in madrasas”, 4 percent; “schools is not that important”, 7 percent; “financial constraints” 5 percent; and “children refuse to go to school” 4 percent.

Figure 4.B3: Reason for children not attending government primary schools



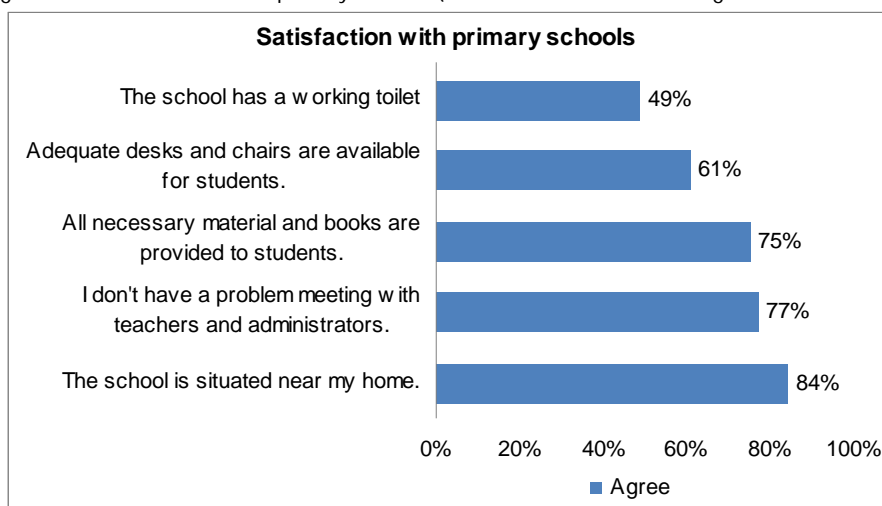
The UI/Nielsen survey asks respondents who have primary age children in government-run schools a series of questions regarding their satisfaction with primary schools. These questions cover issues such as the respondents' opinions of the physical conditions of the school, the availability of books, as well as perceptions of the professionalism and availability of the teachers and administrators. While quality is a major issue in deciding whether or not to send your child to a government school, the majority of households that do have children in government-run primary schools are generally satisfied with the quality of the education. Seventy-four percent of respondents agreed that their children receive a quality education from qualified teachers.

Households with children in government primary schools are also generally satisfied with the access they have to primary education services. Eighty-four percent of respondents say that the school is situated near their home and 77 percent say that they do not have a problem meeting with teachers and administrators. Respondents are, however, less satisfied with school facilities

with only 61 percent agreeing that adequate desks and chairs are available for students and 49 percent saying that their children's school have a functioning toilet.

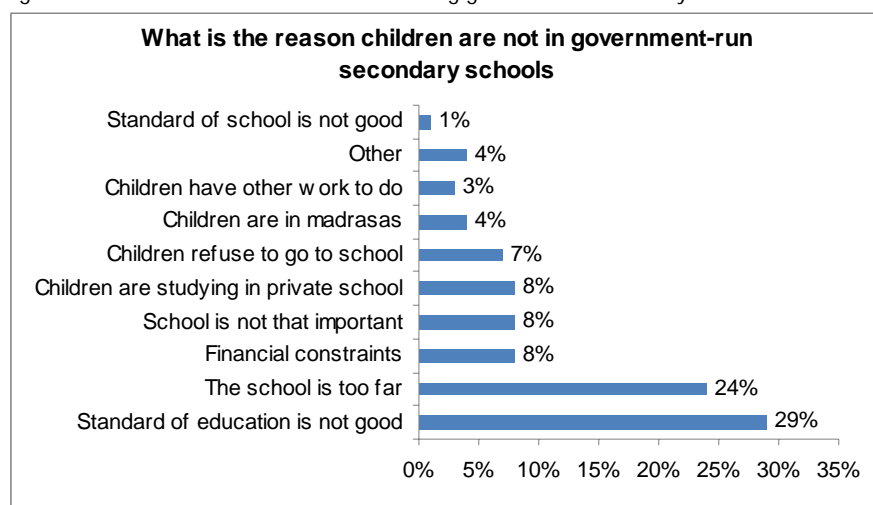
The UI/Nielsen survey also explores people's opinions regarding government-run secondary schools. According to the results of the survey, 36 percent of households have children that are of secondary school age. The average number of children of secondary school age per household is 1.6 and the maximum number of children per household is six. Of the households with children of secondary school age in them, 62 percent of them have some or all of their children in government-run secondary schools.

Figure 4.B4: Satisfaction with primary schools (households with children in government schools)



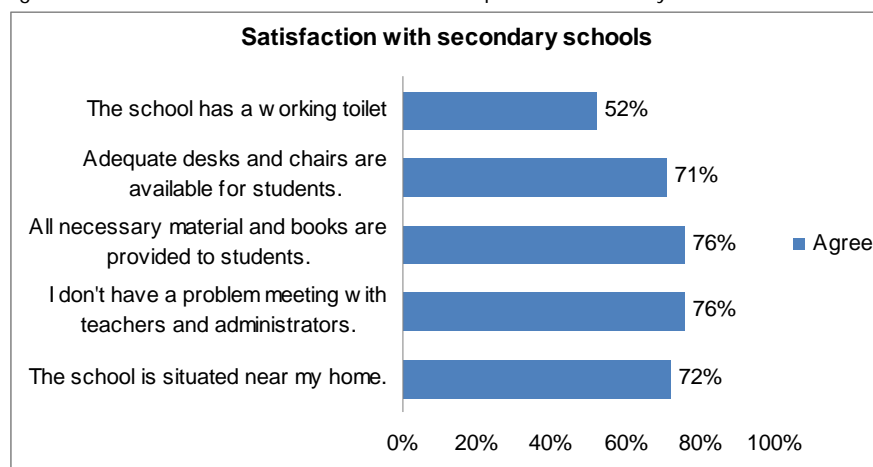
Similar to primary schools, the reasons that people do not have their children in government secondary schools focus on access and quality. Social reasons that emerge across four provinces for children not attending government secondary schools are 8 percent of respondents saying that "school is not that important" and 3 percent saying that "children have other work to do." Of households that have children of secondary school age, but have none of the children enrolled in government-run schools, 29 percent say that the poor standard of education is the foremost reason that their children are not enrolled in government schools. 24 percent respond that the distance of the school from their house is the reason their children are not in government schools.

Figure 4.B5: Reason for children not attending government secondary schools



The UI/Nielsen survey also asks respondents who have secondary age children in government-run schools about their satisfaction with secondary schools; and the majority of households are generally satisfied with the quality of the education. Seventy seven percent of people responded affirmatively that their children are receiving a quality education from qualified teachers. Seventy-two percent of respondents say that the school is situated near their home and 76 percent said that they do not have a problem meeting with teachers and administrators. Respondents are also satisfied with some aspects of secondary school facilities with 71 percent agreeing that adequate desks and chairs are available for students. Other aspects of school facilities are not seen in such a positive light, with 52 percent saying that their children's school has a functioning toilet.

Figure 4.B6: General satisfaction with different aspects of secondary schools

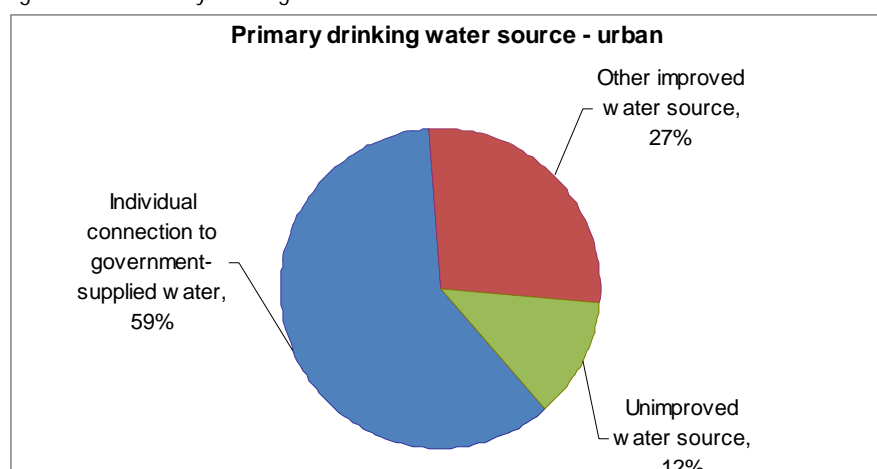


Household Services. Through the 2001 LGO, the responsibility for providing household services was devolved to TMAs. In theory, TMAs were to receive staff from both previous

Municipal Committees as well as from provincial departments such as Public Health Engineering, but many of the staff as well as financial resources have yet to be transferred to TMAs. Since then, critics of the LGO say funds for maintenance are not provided by TMAs and investment by TMAs is often seen as politically motivated leading to a decrease in service quality, particularly in the rural areas. The UI/Nielsen survey examines questions of both coverage and quality of services, two key indicators of how successfully services are provided.

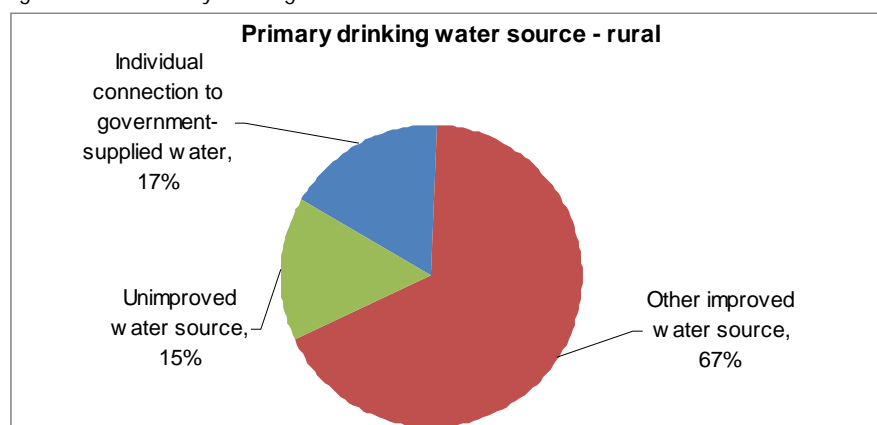
Drinking water is an essential household service which is technically complex and often difficult for local governments to provide effectively, especially in rural areas. In urban areas 59 percent of people say that their primary source for drinking water is an individual connection to a government water scheme. An additional 27 percent say that they receive their water from other types of improved water, and 12 percent receive their water through unimproved water sources. It is important to keep in mind that access to an improved water source does not necessarily equate with access to a clean water supply.

Figure 4.B7: Primary drinking water sources in urban areas



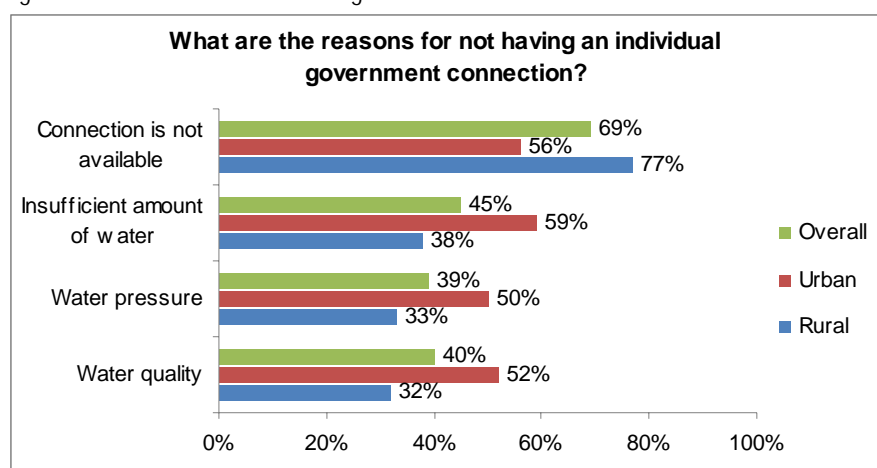
According to the survey, people in rural areas of Pakistan have almost the same access to improved water sources as in urban areas. Government-run water schemes, however, have considerably less coverage with only 17 percent of respondents saying that they receive their water through an individual connection to the government water supply, and 67 percent saying that their primary drinking water source is other improved water. These other improved services, such as bore holes and other types of protected wells, may have been installed by the government, but in general require little in terms of continued investment and maintenance. Fifteen percent cite water source through unimproved water sources in rural areas.

Figure 4.B8: Primary drinking water sources in rural areas



As seen in Figure 4.B9 below, when people are asked why they do not get their water from a government water scheme 69 percent reply that there is no government connection available. Seventy-seven percent of respondents in rural areas cite this as the reason they are not connected to a government connection while a smaller percent —56 percent of people in urban areas cite this. The amount of water supplied is also important to people in choosing not to be connected to a government connection with 45 percent of people saying that the government connection does not provide a sufficient amount of water and 39 percent of people saying that the water pressure provide by government connections is not good. These reasons are similar across both urban and rural areas. Water quality is also important to people, with 40 percent of respondents stating that this is a factor in why they do not use government water. Surprisingly, the problem seems to be worse in urban rather than rural areas.

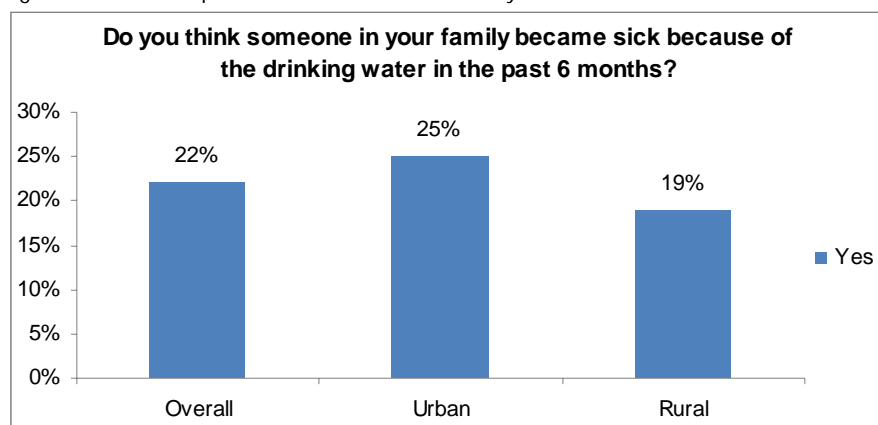
Figure 4.B9: Reasons for not having an individual water connection



The availability of water is an important measure of citizens' satisfaction with their water supply. When asked whether they receive a sufficient supply of water, 37 percent of survey respondents say that they rarely or never have a sufficient supply of water. There is a difference between urban and rural areas with 44 percent urban and 31 percent rural respondents saying they rarely or never have a sufficient supply of water.

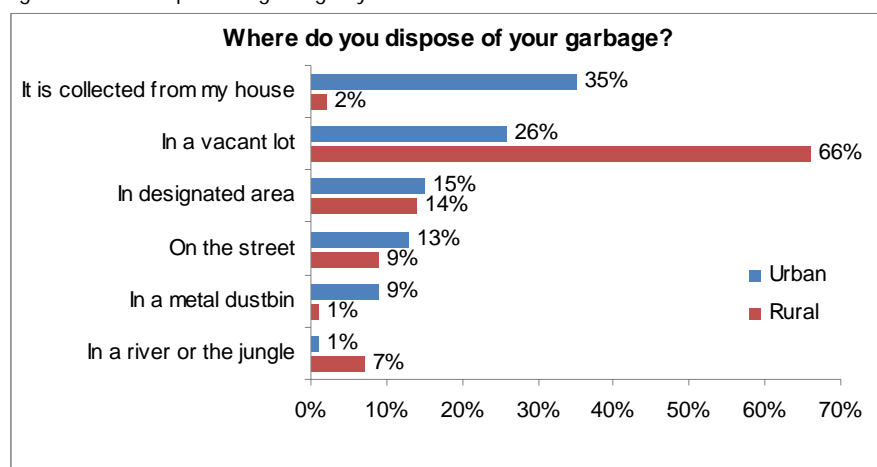
The quality of drinking water is also an issue across the four provinces. When asked whether they thought anyone in their household had become sick in the past 6 months from the drinking water supply, 22 percent of households state yes. Twenty-five percent of respondents say this in urban areas while 19 percent in rural areas think someone in their household had become sick from the drinking water supply. Given that individual connections to government supplied water are considerably more prevalent in urban areas, this raises important questions about the local government's ability to supply clean water.

Figure 4.B10: Perceptions of water-borne disease by urban/rural



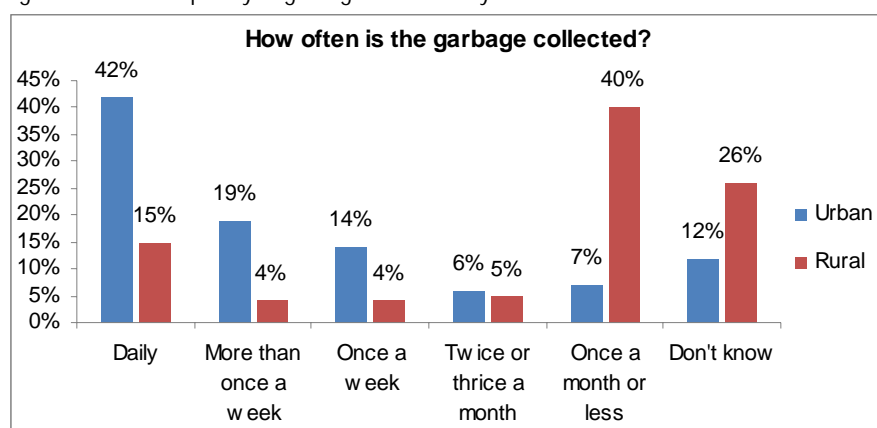
Street cleanliness and sanitation are another key household service investigated by the UI/Nielsen survey. Access to these services is firmly divided along urban and rural lines with urban areas having considerably higher access to services with 35 percent of urban respondents saying that they have door to door trash collection, 15 percent stating that they dispose of their garbage in designated areas and 9 percent saying that they put it in metal dustbins. In rural areas while 66 percent of people say they dispose of their garbage in vacant lots, 9 percent dispose of it in the street, 7 percent in a river or the jungle, and 14 percent say they dispose of their garbage in designated areas. Even in urban areas, 26 percent of people state that they dispose of their garbage in vacant lots, 13 percent on the street and 1 percent in the river or the bush.

Figure 4.B11: Disposal of garbage by urban/rural



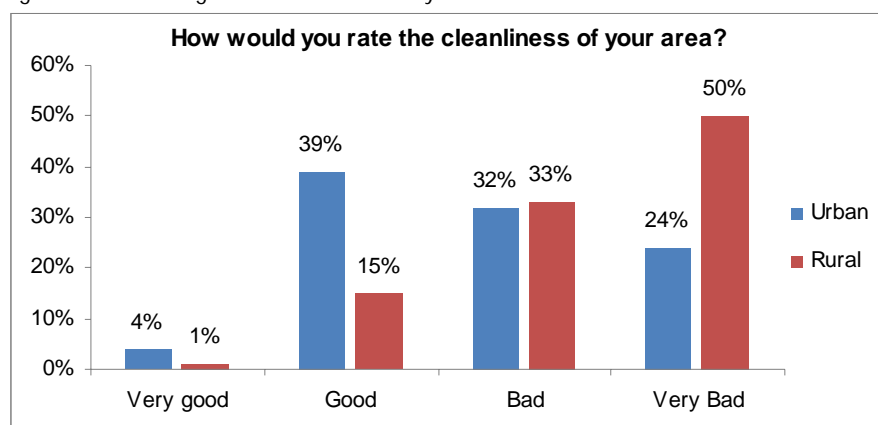
Frequency of services also varies considerably between urban areas and rural areas. People who dispose of their garbage in dustbins, designated areas or who have door to door collection service were asked about how frequently their garbage was collected. In urban areas, with its higher percentage of door to door service, 42 percent of people say that their garbage is collected daily, with an additional 14 percent stating that it is collected at least once a week. In rural areas this frequency drops considerably with 40 percent of people stating that their garbage is collected once a month or less and only 15 percent stating that their garbage is collected daily. It is striking that 26 percent of respondents in rural areas do not know how often their garbage is collected.

Figure 4.B12: Frequency of garbage collection by urban/rural



This urban bias in the coverage and frequency of trash collection translates into higher satisfaction levels with street cleanliness in urban areas, with 43 percent of respondents in urban areas saying that the cleanliness of their area was good or very good while in rural areas this drops to 16 percent.

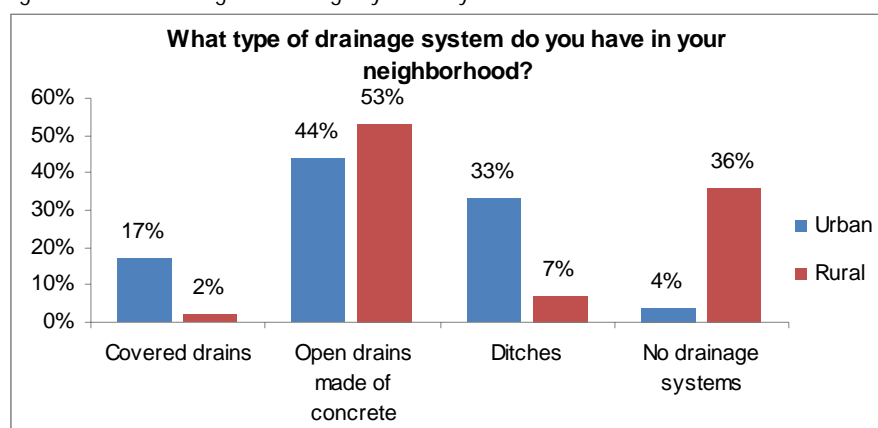
Figure 4.B13: Rating of street cleanliness by urban/rural



Such a marked difference in the quality of service provision between rural and urban areas, as well as the relatively low level of service provision throughout the province, requires serious consideration about the future of sanitation services.

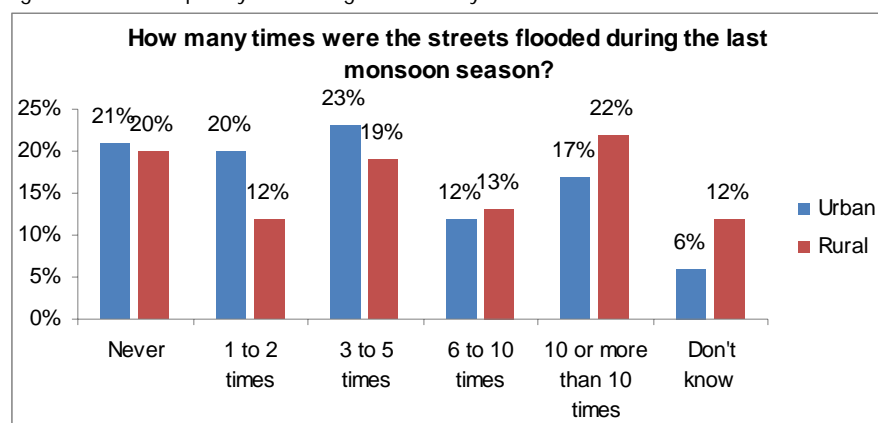
Drainage is another household service that has a large impact on public health outcomes. Flooding during the monsoon season increases the incidence of waterborne diseases and malaria as well as directly reducing the potential for economic activity.

Figure 4.B14: Coverage of drainage systems by urban/rural



As expected, people in urban areas indicate that they are better covered by drainage infrastructure with 61 percent saying they have covered drains or open drains made of concrete compared to 55 percent to rural areas. However, 37 percent respondents in urban areas still say that they either have ditches or no drainage system at all in their neighborhoods. Rural areas are substantially worse off with 43 percent of rural respondents saying that they either have ditches or no drainage system at all.

Figure 4.B15: Frequency of flooding of streets by urban/rural



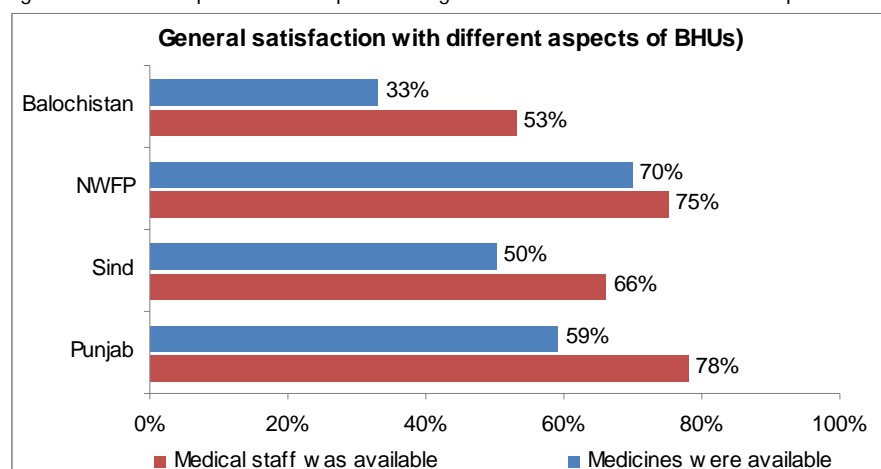
While the coverage of drainage infrastructure is considerably lower in rural areas, rural areas do not face considerably higher incidences of flooding. While rural respondents are slightly more likely to say that their neighborhood flooded 10 times or more during the last monsoon season, these responses do not have a significant relationship with whether respondents say their neighborhood has drainage infrastructure or not. That is, the frequency of flooding is not connected with the type of drainage provided, but instead with other factors such as geography and even maintenance of infrastructure.

The results of the UI/Nielsen survey show substantial levels of dissatisfaction with services presently provided by local governments both in social services such as health and education as well as in household services of water supply, sanitation and drainage. While the LGO was meant to make districts and tehsils/talukas responsible for the provision of these services, as we will see in the next section citizens do not clearly attribute services to these levels. This lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities has far reaching implications on responsiveness and trust in government.

Interprovincial Differences. While this survey was intended to highlight issues in local government, comparing the results on service delivery issues across the four provinces of Pakistan also underscores the considerable disparities in the level of development in these regions, which is a matter for concern of both federal and provincial policy makers.

In identifying the reasons for not using a BHU in the last six months, respondents in Baluchistan were more likely to emphasize distance/location as the problem: 26 percent said that the BHU was too far, compared to 14 percent in NWFP, 13 percent in Sindh and 11 percent in Punjab. This of course points to the geographical terrain in Balochistan as well as population densities and dispersion.

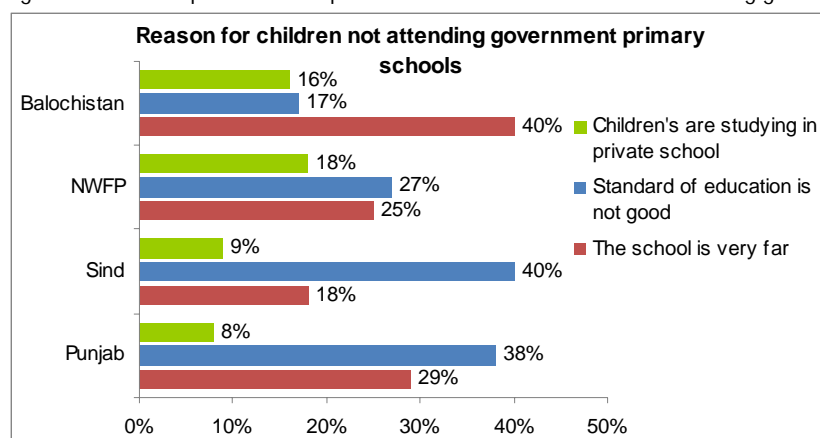
Figure 4.B16: Inter-provincial comparison of general satisfaction with different aspects of BHUs



On the questions referring to the quality of the services received from BHUs, in Punjab and NWFP, these services are better evaluated than in Sindh and Baluchistan, where a larger proportion of the respondents' reported that medical staff and medicines were not available. In Baluchistan another significant problem was the length of time people have to wait—which would of course be a significant issue for patients having to make long journeys to and from the closest BHU.

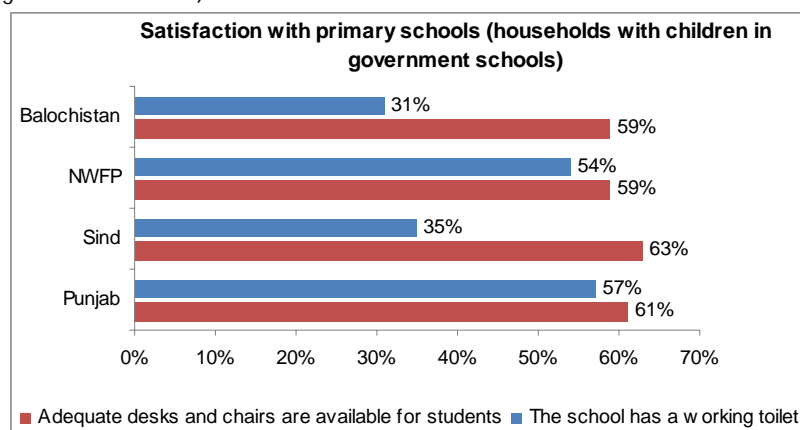
There also emerge significant differences between the provinces in the evaluation of education services. In explaining why their school age children do not attend a government primary school, "low standard of education" is mentioned by 38 and 40 percent of respondents in Punjab and Sindh. As Figure 4.B17 shows, this problem is less salient in NWFP and Baluchistan. In the latter province the most frequent response, 40 percent is "the school is very far", while in Punjab, Sindh and NWFP this is less of an issue. Balochistan and NWFP also have a larger percent of respondents with children in private schools compared to Sindh and Punjab. In Balochistan 10 percent of respondents who have school age children not in government schools report that they are in madrasas.

Figure 4.B17: Inter-provincial comparison of reasons for children not attending government primary schools



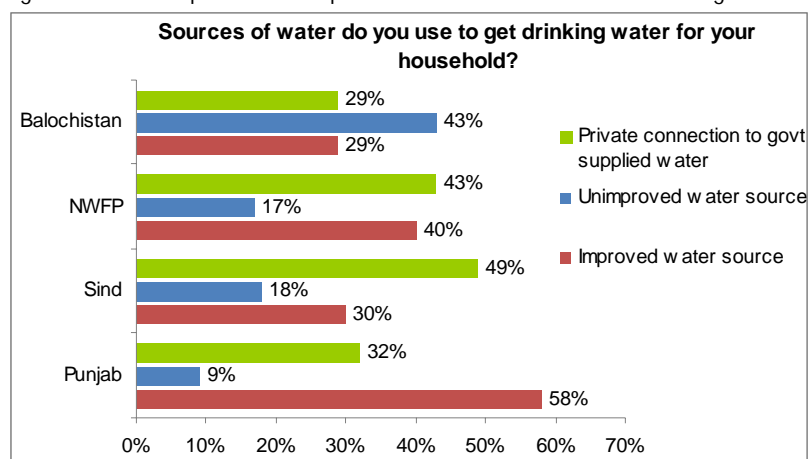
In terms of inter-provincial differences, the survey responses on questions about secondary schools are more or less similar to the results for primary schools. It is worth noting that in Punjab and Sindh, 26 percent and 41 percent of parents say that low education standards are the reason for their child not attending government secondary school, versus 13 percent and 9 percent in NWFP and Baluchistan. The responses from all four provinces also suggest that there remain many problems with the provision of equipment and adequate education infrastructure: on average 40 percent of respondents say that there are inadequate desks and chairs; and 40 to 70 percent of respondents say that there are no working toilets in the school. The summary results presented in Figure 4.B18 suggest that on issues of infrastructure, schools in Baluchistan and Sindh are rated worse by parents than those in Punjab and NWFP.

Figure 4.B18: Inter-provincial comparison of satisfaction with the infrastructure of primary schools (households with children in government schools)



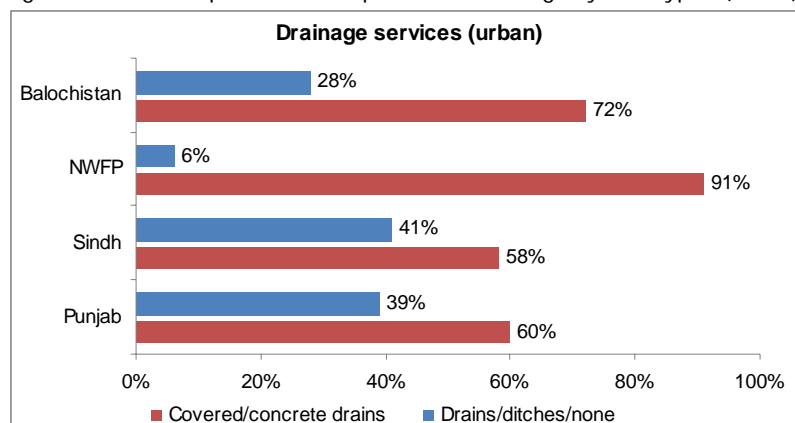
Finally, turning to household services, the interprovincial differences appear to be similar. As Figure 4.B19 shows, in Punjab, Sindh and NWFP a larger proportion of urban and rural families have access to either a government water connection or another improved water source. In Baluchistan 43 percent of survey respondents have to use unimproved water sources.

Figure 4.B19: Inter-provincial comparison of the sources of water used to get drinking water for the household?



In Sindh, however, there are relatively more problems with water quality. Twenty-eight per cent of the survey respondents in this province reported that someone in their family had been ill from waterborne diseases recently, compared to 25 percent in Baluchistan, 21 percent in Punjab and 9 percent in NWFP.

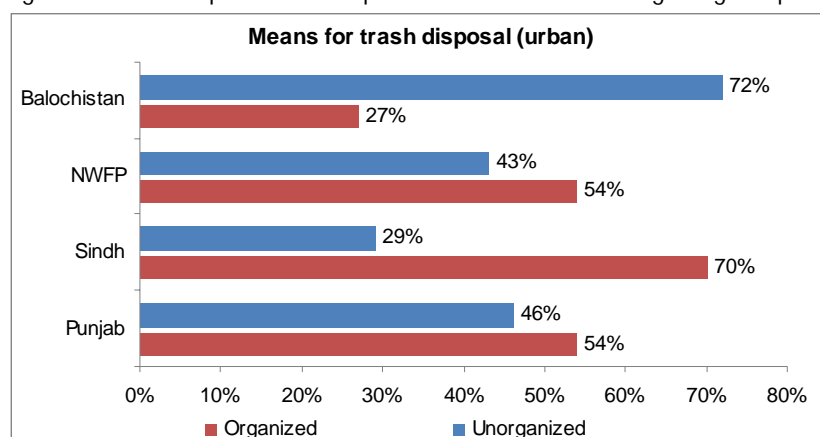
Figure 4.B20: Inter-provincial comparison of drainage system types (urban)



With respect to drainage services, the responses again show significant interprovincial differences. The responses summarized in Figure 4.B20 are only for urban areas. Both Baluchistan and NWFP show better coverage of improved drains (covered drains and concrete lined drains) compared to both Sindh and Punjab. These two latter provinces have a larger, rapidly growing urban population; clearly the tehsils/talukas have not been able to keep up with these increased service needs in urban places.

For solid waste management, results in Figure 4.B21 show that overall a large proportion of urban respondents report disposing of their garbage in the street and vacant lots (“unorganized disposal”). The issue of solid waste management is particularly acute in the urban places in Baluchistan.

Figure 4.B21: Inter-provincial comparison of mechanisms for garbage disposal (urban)



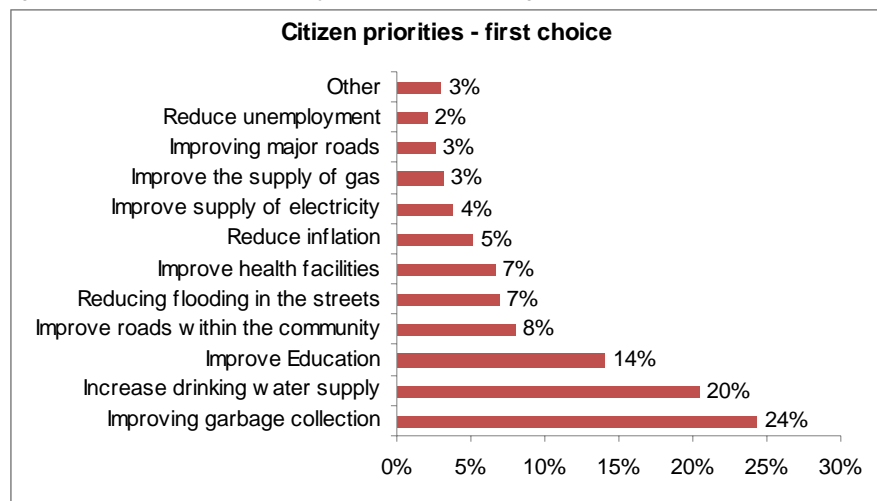
It is impossible to say whether the interprovincial differences in service coverage and quality discussed in this section reflect the specific regional contexts or disparities in their resource bases and revenues. No doubt, in comparison to Punjab, the provinces of Baluchistan and Sindh and to a certain extent NWFP lag behind in terms of their resource base and own source revenues. However, good service coverage and quality can also be the result of better governance and management of service delivery.

4.C Citizen Expectations for Improvement

The results of the survey presented in the previous sections of the study indicate that citizens are critical of government at all levels, but less in local government; they also report numerous problems with coverage and quality of services provided by local governments. This section looks at citizen views on improvement of government: priorities for improvement of services; which level of government should be responsible for service provision; how local governments should be elected; and whether citizens are optimistic about improving local government performance through better governance.

Priorities for Service Improvement. Usually one of the stated objectives of devolution reform is improvement of the capacity of government to provide public goods (law and order, justice, transport and communications infrastructure, social services, and household services). It is useful to look at what survey respondents say are their priorities for improving government services. The survey question stated that while there is room for improvement in any or all services, there are insufficient funds, and asked the respondents to suggest three priority areas for improvement.

Figure 4.C1: Citizens' first priority for improvement of government services



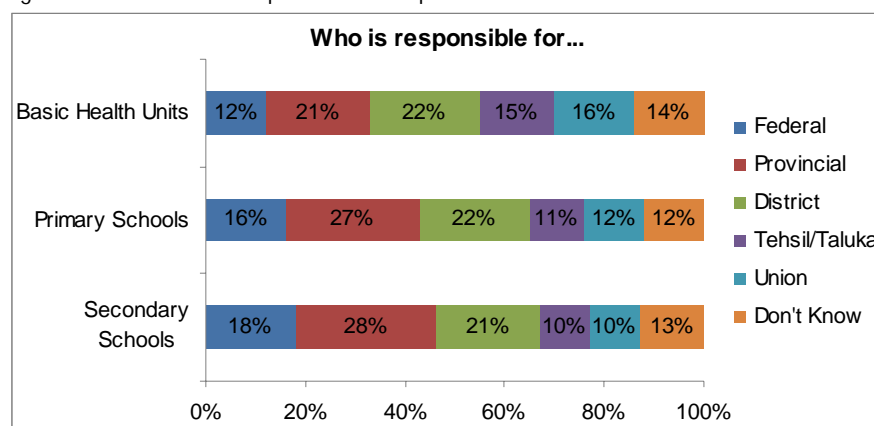
“Improving garbage collection” and “Increase drinking water supply” has the most mentions as first priority for service improvement, with 24 percent and 20 percent respectively. In urban areas it was mentioned by 29 percent and 22 percent of survey respondents respectively and in

rural areas 19 percent for each of the two priority services. The remaining two most frequently mentioned services include improving: education, 14 percent, and improve road within the community, 8 percent.

Who Is Responsible for Services? Many assessments of the 2001 LGO and of the way in which it was implemented suggest that it left ambiguities in the management of service delivery, in that local governments were not free to decide on non-development expenditures or critical aspects of human resource management. At the same time, the federal and provincial governments continued to fund large-scale health and education and basic sanitation programs, usually with support from donor agencies, and local governments were mandated with their operation and maintenance.

The overlapping responsibilities for service provision are reflected in the dispersion of the responses to the questions on responsibility for provision of health and education. While about 13 percent of responses are “Don’t know”, the remainder is dispersed among all five levels of government, including 33 percent to 46 percent mentioning federal and provincial governments. More than 10 percent of respondents assign responsibility to union councils for BHUs.

Figure 4.C2: Perceived responsibilities for provision of health and education

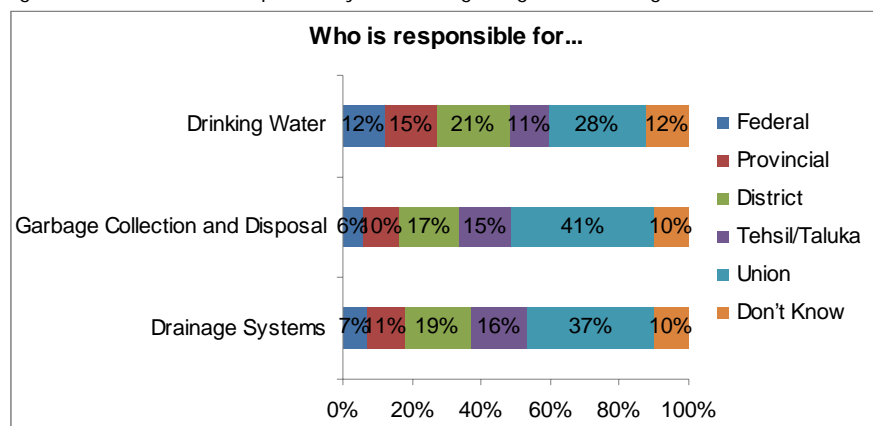


Answers on the perception of responsibilities for the provision of household services show a different pattern of dispersion. As shown in Figure 4.C3, relatively few respondents ascribed responsibility to federal or provincial governments. However, there was considerable disagreement with respect to the roles of districts, tehsils and union councils in provision of water, garbage collection and drainage.

This is not to imply that the majority of citizens are in some sense “wrong”; rather it underscores the confusion caused by the numerous overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions between levels of government. However, it is important to note that even when authority has been clearly assigned, there is still perceived confusion – for example, while tehsils do in reality have the authority and responsibility to provide drinking water, only 11 percent of respondents were able correctly identify that. This has important implications for democratic governance — accountability, transparency and responsiveness. The dispersion of real or perceived authority makes it very difficult to establish accountability for low coverage; to press government officials

to be more responsive to service users; or even to ascribe responsibility for misuse of public funds.

Figure 4.C3: Perceived responsibility for water, garbage and drainage services



The UI/Nielsen survey also revealed that most citizen interactions and consultations with government officials and offices—43 percent of total interactions—were with either union nazims or union council members. Not surprisingly, when asked to identify the most accessible level of government, 36 percent mentioned union councils. This is despite the fact that under the 2001 LGO the union councils were assigned a very limited role in providing services. This issue will be discussed in the concluding section on implications for devolution policy reform.

Who should provide services? The UI/Nielsen survey also asked citizens their preferences as to which level of government should provide social and household services. With respect to social services, 56 percent of survey respondents favored provision of primary health services by local governments; 47 percent for primary education; and 45 percent for secondary education.

Figure 4.C4: Preferences for provision of social services by all levels of government

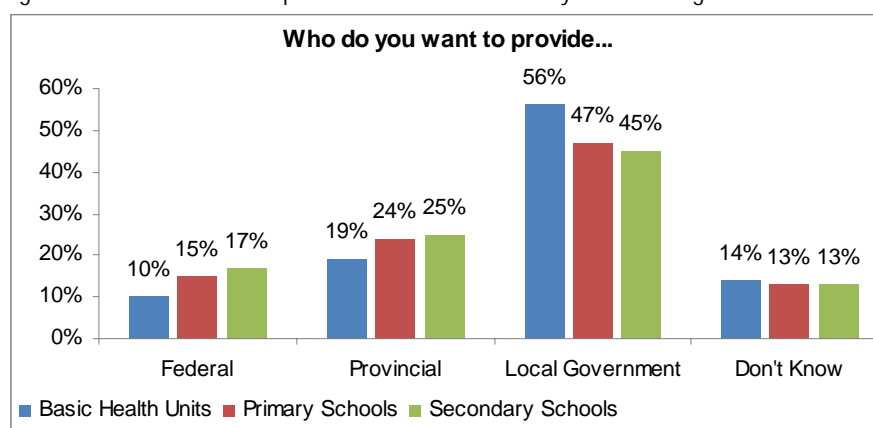
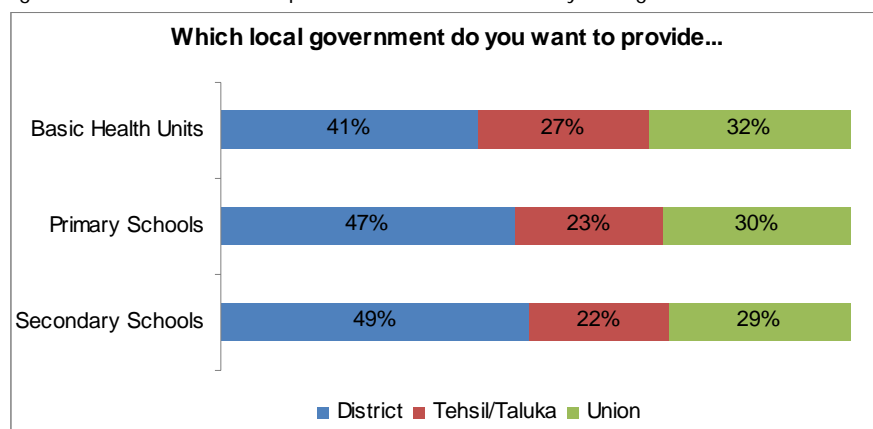


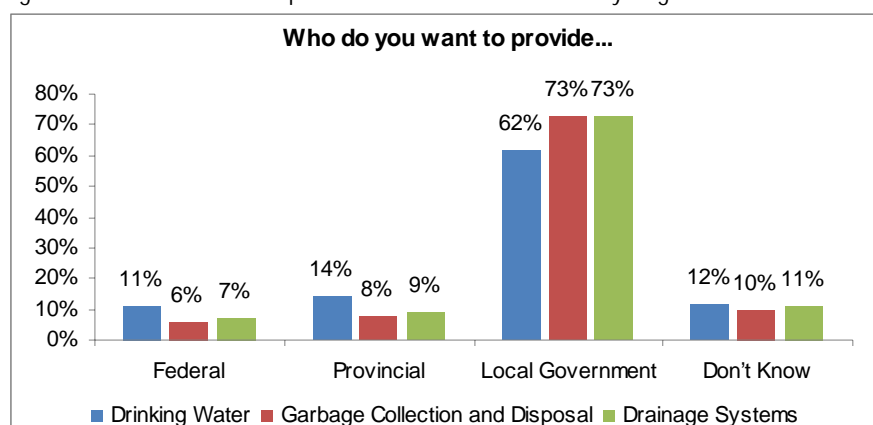
Figure 4.C5 disaggregates these responses. Of those survey respondents who favored giving responsibility for BHUs provision to local governments (56 percent), 41 percent said they preferred district government to provide this service, while 27 and 32 percent said they would prefer TMAs and union councils to provide this service respectively; for primary school 47, 23 and 30 percent of respondents would like the service to be provided by the districts, TMA, and union council respectively; for secondary schools the break up is 49 percent, 22 percent, and 29 percent would like service provision by the districts, TMAs and union councils respectively. A relatively small proportion of the respondents said “Don’t know”.

Figure 4.C5: Preferences for provision of social services by local governments



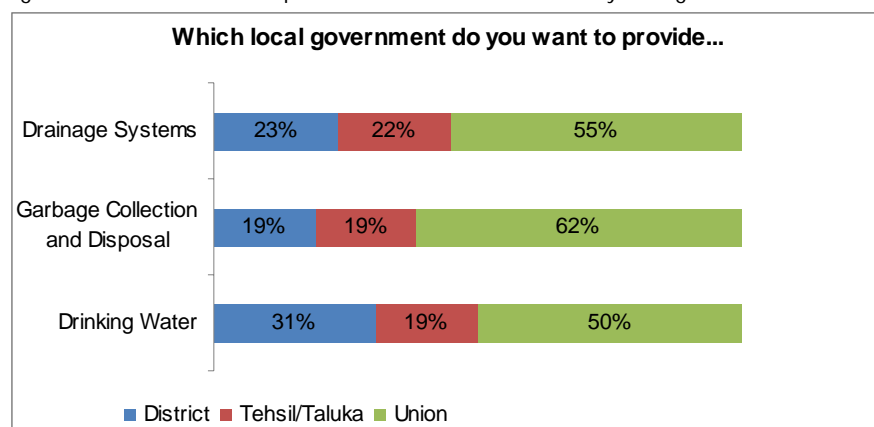
A similar pattern emerges insofar as citizen preferences for the provision of household services. Figure 4.C6 shows that there is a strong consensus among the UI/Nielsen survey respondents on giving local governments responsibility for water, garbage collection and disposal, and drainage.

Figure 4.C6: Preferences for provision of household services by all governments



As can be seen in Figure 4.C7, the responses on the provision of household services differ considerably from the preferences for provision of social services reported above. Of the survey respondents who prefer local government provision of water, garbage disposal and drainage services, 50 to 62 percent would assign the responsibility to union councils.

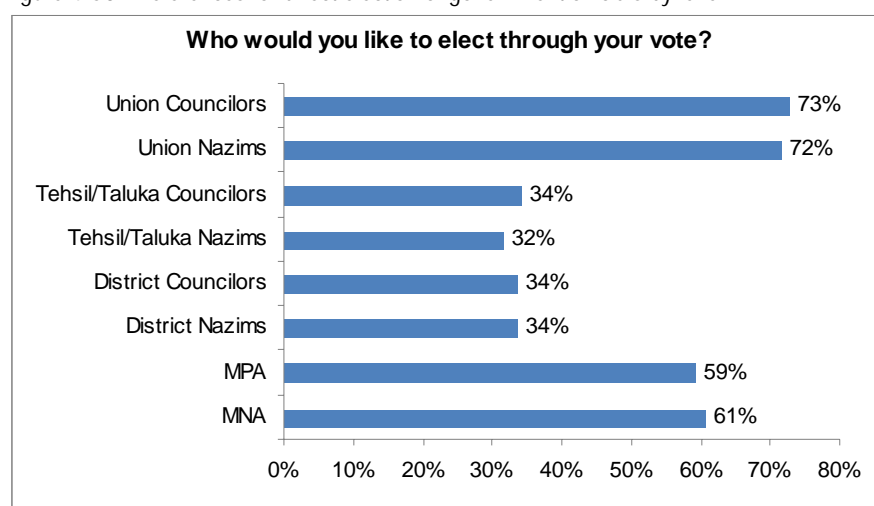
Figure 4.C7: Preferences for provision of household services by local governments



What is particularly striking about these results is the low proportion of respondents in favor of assigning both social services and household service responsibility to tehsils among the local governments. It also echoes the responses to some of the questions on governance, access to government, and responsiveness, in which tehsils fared significantly worse than unions. In fact, tehsils emerge as the level of government with the lowest number of interactions with citizens, most confusion of present roles and responsibilities and fewest respondents in favor of assigning them responsibility for service provision.

Local Government Elections. Under the terms of the 2001 LGO, at present only union councils are directly elected. The union council nazims and naib nazims are the members of the district and tehsil councils and select the nazims of these councils. This might explain why in the UI/Nielsen survey results the union councils were seen as a preferred site for interaction with government, and for resolving problems; and why they are perceived by so many respondents as responsible for service delivery and preferred by most to be assigned greater responsibilities. The perceptions of respondents about the relative importance of union councils might be explained by several factors. First, upon abolishing the municipal and town governments, the 2001 LGO probably reduced, to a considerable extent, the opportunities for face-to-face interactions with public officials, in that tehsils typically administer several urban and rural areas that are widely dispersed geographically. Second, union council nazims and naib nazims have a significant role in selecting and implementing development schemes in their unions, although these are actually funded out of both district and tehsil budgets. This gives the union council nazims and naib nazims considerable political power, in spite of the limited formal roles and fiscal resources assigned to unions.

Figure 4.C8 Preferences for direct election of government officials by level

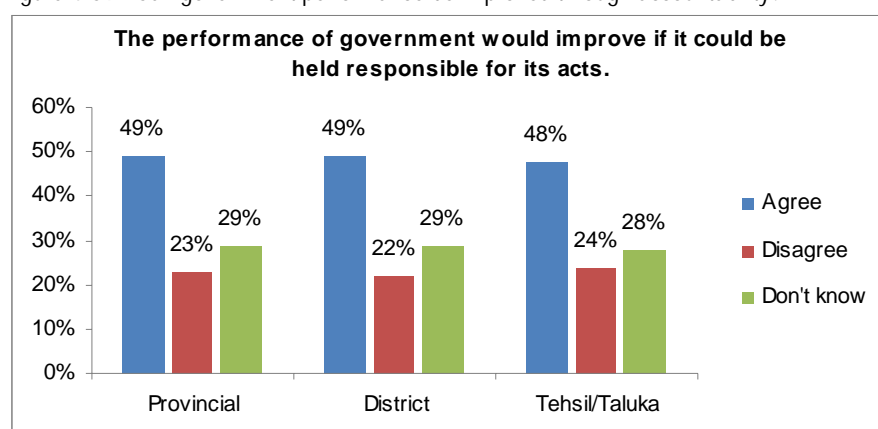


For their part, most districts are not sites for face-to-face interactions between citizens and public officials. As discussed in the section on governance, districts have not utilized the legally mandated mechanisms for citizen consultation on budgets, dissemination of policies and priorities, and access to information. For most citizens, districts are probably seen to be as distant and inaccessible as federal and provincial governments.

The UI/Nielsen survey asks respondents which levels of government and which public officials should be directly elected. The results are presented in Figure 4.C8 above. A majority of survey respondents say that union councilors and union nazims should be directly elected—73 and 72 percent respectively. This is considerably higher than nazims of districts and tehsils, mentioned by 34 and 32 percent of respondents respectively. The support for direct election of MPAs and MNAs by respondents is 59 and 61 percent respectively. Again, these results highlight the critical governance role of the union councils in the local government system established by the 2001 LGO. The union nazims, naib nazims and council members are “gate keepers”, interacting daily with local people, responding to questions, and interceding to resolve problems with higher levels of government. And it is this role that explains the high level of support for the maintenance of direct elections to union councils.

Improving Government Performance. The UI/Neilson survey asked respondents whether they agree that the different levels of government responsible for delivering services—province, district and tehsil—would improve if they could be made accountable. Given the highly critical assessment of current governance practices, the answers to this question are surprisingly. The responses are presented in Figure 4.C9 below. Between 48 and 49 percent of respondents, depending on the level of government, replied that they “completely agreed” or “agreed” with the statement, and a smaller range of respondents, 22 to 24 percent replied that they disagreed. A large proportion answered “don’t know.”

Figure 4.C9: Can government performance be improved through accountability?



The survey went on to ask whether the respondents agreed with the statement that government projects would be more effective if people's opinions were taken into consideration during implementation. About one-fourth of the respondents across all levels of government did not express their opinion; 48 to 51 percent agreed, and 22 to 26 percent answered disagreed.

Inter-provincial Differences. As might be expected, similar to the responses on governance and service delivery, there are inter-provincial differences in the survey responses on priorities for improvement of government and preferences for management of service delivery. As Figure 4.C10 shows, on the question about who should provide the basic health services, the highest response in Punjab was for the district government, 26 percent, while in Sindh it was for the provincial government. In both Balochistan and NWFP "Don't know" received the highest response. As was discussed above, provision of this service is a district government function at present.

Figure 4.C10: Inter-provincial comparison of preferences for provision of service - Basic Health Units

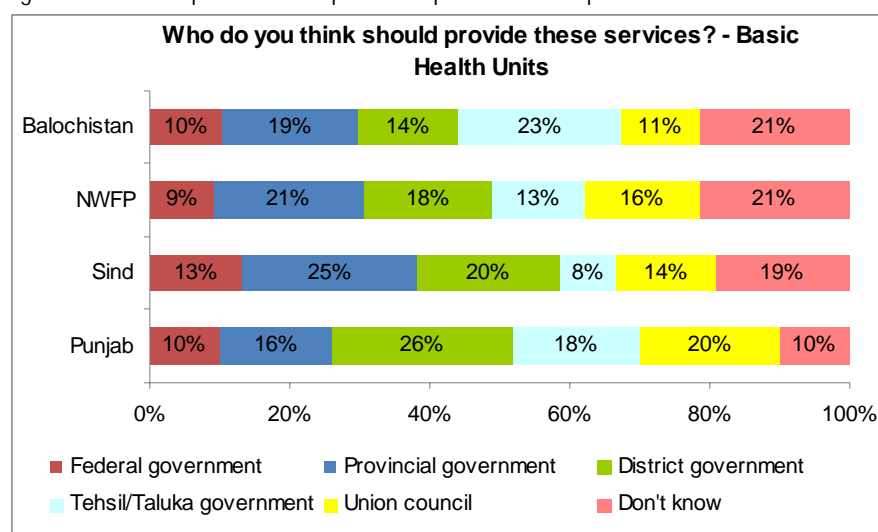


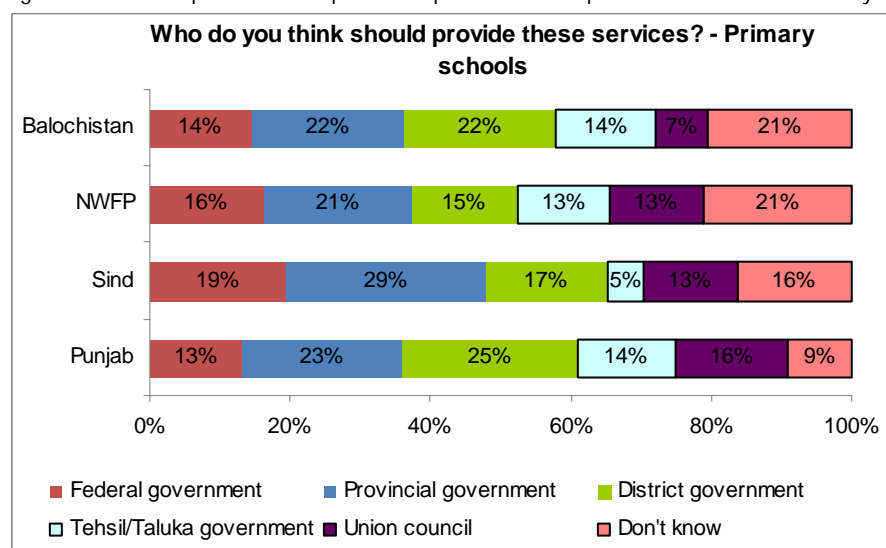
Table 4.C1 below shows citizen rankings/priorities for improvement of government services by province. In Punjab, for example, the top priorities were improving education, improving garbage collection and disposal, and increasing the amount and quality of drinking water. This contrasts with Balochistan, in which the respondents chose increasing the amount and quality of drinking water, improving education, and improving health facilities.

Table 4.C1: Inter-provincial comparison of citizens' priorities for improvement of government service

Citizen Priorities	Punjab	Sindh	Balochistan	NWFP
Improving education	1	2	2	3
Improving garbage collection and disposal	2	3	5	1
Increasing the amount and quality of drinking water	3	1	1	3
Improving health facilities	4	3	3	2
Reducing flooding/standing water in the streets	5	4	6	5
Improving roads in our community	6	5	4	4

On who should provide different services, a large proportion of respondents answered “Don’t know”, especially in Balochistan, NWFP and Sindh, suggesting less understanding or interactions with the local governments responsible for providing these services. In education, as was discussed above, summing the responses for all levels of local government shows a strong preference for local provision of services. But again Punjab stands out with a high proportion favoring provision by districts, and Sindh, again emphasizing provincial and federal provision.

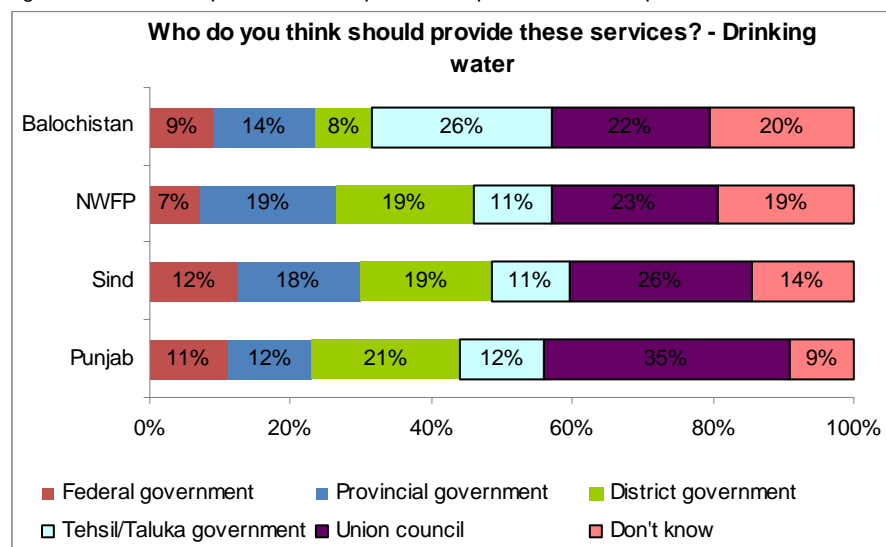
Figure 4.C11: Inter-provincial comparison of preferences for provision of service – Primary schools



In drinking water, respondents show even clearer preference for provision of the service by local government: preference for federal and provincial provision is less than 30 percent overall and there are as low as 23 percent of mentions in Balochistan and Punjab. In all the provinces,

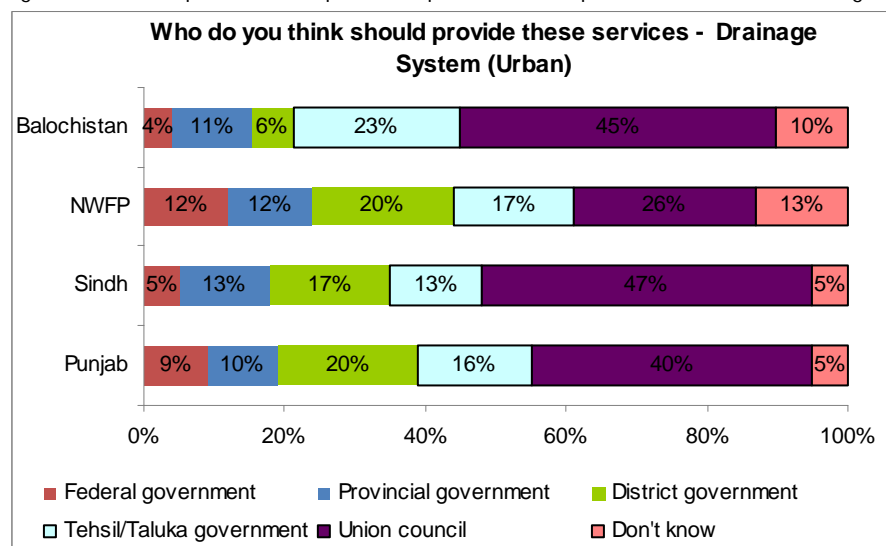
except for Balochistan, preference for provision of the service by union councils, is the same or higher than that for TMAs.

Figure 4.C12: Inter-provincial comparison of preferences for provision of service - Drinking water



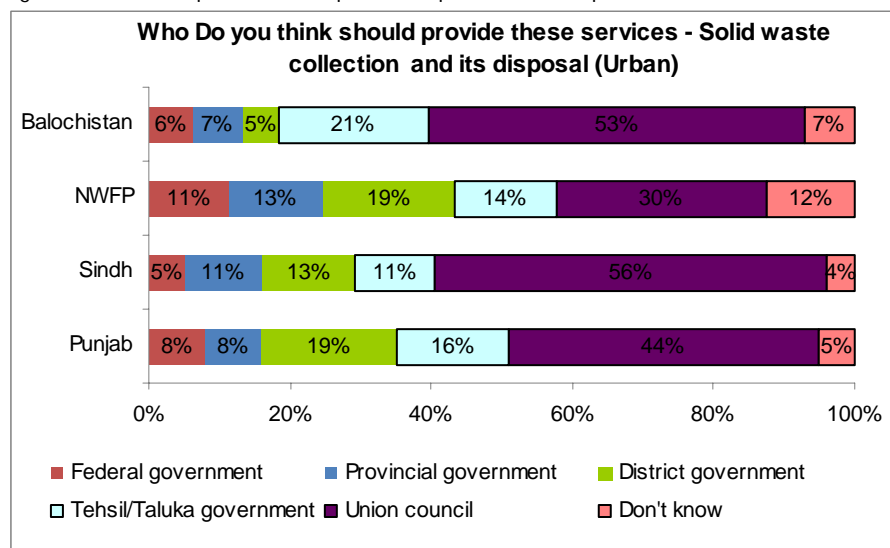
This last point is underscored by responses on drainage. Among respondents living in urban areas, there is a very strong preference for union council to provide drainage infrastructure, even though this function is currently assigned to the TMAs.

Figure 4.C13: Inter-provincial comparison of preferences for provision of service - Drainage system



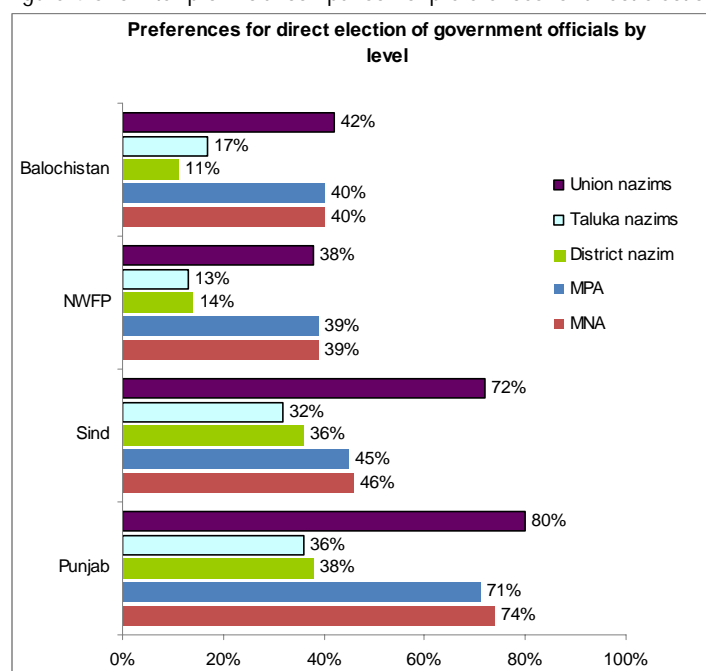
Responses for garbage disposal are the same as for drainage systems, with 30 to 56 percent preferring union councils, as against 11 to 21 percent for tehsils/talukas.

Figure 4.C14: Inter-provincial comparison of preferences for provision of service – Solid waste collection and its disposal



Finally returning to the discussion of governance, as was discussed above, with respect to electoral representation, there is a strong preference for electing representatives to national and provincial bodies, and also to union councils. There is less emphasis on the district and tehsil/taluka levels. Yet, sharp inter-province differences again highlight the relevance of institutions of representative government versus other institutions.

Figure 4.C15: Inter-provincial comparison of preferences for direct election of government officials by level



5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The 2008 elections were fought on a campaign *against* non-accountable, arbitrary and undemocratic government. In that sense, there was a clear mandate for change. But there was no specific mention of policies for local government and it would be erroneous to claim a mandate for rolling it back. Rather voters supported the democratic election of new leaders to lead in a democratic manner and to formulate policies in an open, consultative manner on this or any other area of policy. It is hoped that the results of this survey will be of some help in that undertaking.

This section looks at the implications of the UI/ACNielsen survey results across four provinces for the ongoing policy debate on the reform of the local government system and it asks what results are most relevant for decision makers at the national and provincial levels. Space limitations necessarily restrict the discussion to a few broad issues. There are many more conclusions and policy implications that might be drawn from the results of the survey. However, that should be the work of the other participants in this debate.

A general conclusion that can be drawn from the UI/ACNielsen survey results is that a large proportion of the population is not satisfied with services provided by local governments. A substantial number of people referred to problems with access and quality in explaining why they did not use government education and health facilities. In education, among families with children in government schools, 22 to 38 percent of the survey respondents identified problems with infrastructure, books, and furniture. In health, 27 percent of the respondents said that medical staff was unavailable and almost half said that medicines were unavailable. Survey responses for household services are better, but still have problems of coverage and quality. There are still people without access to water from improved sources in rural areas, instead relying on surface water and unprotected wells. The majority of citizens rate their towns and cities as dirty and susceptible to flooding because of poor drainage.

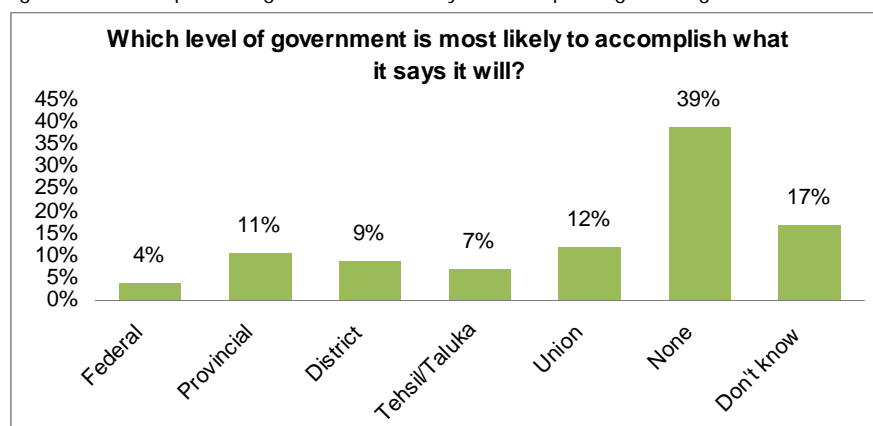
Education, health, water, drainage and garbage collection continue to be the highest priorities for service improvement. These are local government responsibilities at present; the improvement of services provided by other levels of government was ranked as a much lower priority overall. In this sense, the present policy debate on devolution reforms is of critical importance, because its final resolution will determine how and to what extent government will respond to public demand for better services. While federal and provincial governments design ambitious reforms to improve education, health and household services, and take on long-term debt from multilateral and bi-lateral lenders to fund these reforms, their success or failure has been determined by the implementing arrangements at the local level. And many of the policy reforms carried out in this decade have failed on this account, because of local implementation.

A policy issue of particular concern is the quality and coverage of services in rural areas, which is worse than in urban areas. This reinforces the view that the existing provincial/district/tehsil division of functions is not working. As is often the case, when several levels of government have overlapping responsibilities, some issues get sidelined. For example, tehsils are not able to keep up with citizen demand for improved household services in their urban places, much less for the dispersed rural population, but the district sees this as a tehsil

responsibility and does not make investments in this sector. Policy makers will have to revisit this issue in deciding on the distribution of functions and resources between different levels of government.

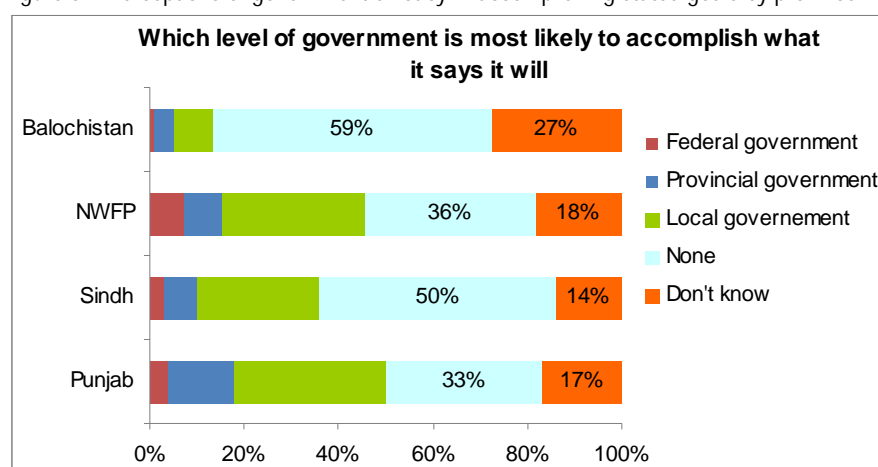
As noted above, the initial debate on devolution reforms was dominated by the views of senior bureaucrats and provincial officials, who were arguing for immediate abrogation of the law. In justifying their position, they referred time and again to the failure of “political accountability,” that is, the subordination of the bureaucracy to elected local governments. The solution, they argued, was to take back control to the province, which in practical terms would mean returning control of local affairs to unelected provincial bureaucrats. This justification ignores one vital fact, that none of the provisions for ensuring the accountability, transparency and responsiveness of local elected officials was implemented under the Musharraf government. It is not possible to assess the success or failure of “political accountability” when these provisions were never implemented. It also ignores another issue, that there were—and still are—very strong constraints to effective democratic governance across the board, at all levels of government.

Figure 5.1: Perceptions of government efficacy in accomplishing stated goals



The UI/ACNielsen survey asks a general question: “Which level of government is most likely to accomplish what it says it will?” As Figure 5.1 shows, 56 percent of responses to this survey question were “none” and “don’t know”. No level of government is well evaluated. The federal and provincial governments received 4 percent and 11 percent of mentions respectively. On this question some levels of local governments were rated somewhat better: union councils were mentioned the most, with 12 percent of the survey respondents saying they are most likely to accomplish what they say, but only 9 percent of the respondents said “districts”, and 7 percent “TMAs”. There are also significant differences between the provinces on the responses to questions about governance. Figure 5.2 shows comparative results across provinces on the responses to this same question, “Which level of government is most likely to achieve what it says it will?”

Figure 5.2 Perceptions of government efficacy in accomplishing stated goals by province



One striking result of the Baluchistan results is the very high proportion of survey respondents who answered “don’t know” to many of the questions on governance. On issues of accountability, transparency and responsiveness, on average about two-thirds of people replied in this way. This result suggests that most people in the province do not think of their relationship with government in these terms. Rather, traditional, tribal structures of authority and intermediation are much more salient and relevant for everyday life. **This also suggests that for policy makers, it may be prudent to emphasize measures to establish a much stronger formal state presence throughout the province, alongside of these traditional structures. Building more effective, transparent and accountable local governments might be one way of achieving this.**

However, Sindh also does not fare well on this question, with 50 percent of respondents answering “none”. Again, this might indicate the high salience of other structures of intermediation, through so-called “feudal” social organization dominated by powerful landholding families. Rather than offering alternative spaces for representation and participation, local governments in these regions are captured by these same families, replicating in the political sphere the exclusion and marginalization prevalent in economic and social relations.

This general skepticism about the efficacy of government reflects other highly critical attitudes of citizens with respect to government accountability, transparency, access and responsiveness. Provinces are seen as only slightly better than local governments on any of these dimensions of governance, despite the fact that they were just recently elected and benefit from high approval ratings. **From this it can be concluded that from the viewpoint of the citizens, there is no *prima facie* case for taking back control of local affairs to the provinces on the justification that they are more accountable, transparent or responsive.** In fact, on questions of access, they fare much worse than local governments.

In addition, the survey results are clear that citizens want to use mechanisms of political representation — elected councils — to interact with their local governments. For example, most interactions with local governments to resolve specific problems or complaints go through the elected union councilors. **Whatever the senior bureaucrats in the provinces might think about it, these results suggest that there is no strong public support for the idea of**

increasing bureaucratic control over local affairs; rather, the survey shows that the majority of citizens are generally critical of the lack of responsiveness of bureaucrats.

A question for policy makers is how the reform of the current local government system can generate better local governance, enhance accountability, reinforce transparency, reduce corruption, improve citizen access and increase responsiveness. One possibility is to review the provisions for democratic governance in the existing law and ask how these can be effectively implemented in the context of democratic governments at the federal and provincial levels: Would local governance improve if council meetings were in fact public? If there was public access to critical information on budgets, revenues, taxes, development schemes, contracting, etc? If districts and tehsils consulted the public on budget priorities? If elections to district and tehsil councils were direct, instead of the indirect elections that favor collusion and corruption. Or if there were procedures for public recall of local governments?

Recently there have been numerous press reports about the discovery of widespread corruption in districts and tehsils, and some provinces have announced actions against individual nazims. **The UI/ACNielsen survey results show that citizens are critical of local governments in this respect, whether in relation to small bribes for services or corruption in contracting.** Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that corruption is systemic, involving both elected officials and civil servants. Other studies suggest that small scale corruption in service delivery is tolerated by senior bureaucrats and elected officials — who have opportunities for large-scale corruption in contracting, supply of medicines, purchase of desks and books, etc.

It should be noted that corruption isn't just a matter of "leakage" of funds. Small scale corruption in services is an important determinant of coverage and quality. Poor households may not use a service because of the additional payments required. Doctors and teachers are able to avoid attending their posts because mid-level officials in the districts are willing to take bribes to look the other way. Essential medicines are stolen from BHUs and resold in local pharmacies; desks don't get delivered in the quantity and quality contracted, etc. The large scale corruption in districts and tehsils operates through the distribution of budgets among nazims and council members, who often use their "quotas" for small infrastructure projects instead of purchasing inputs to improve social services. **Without improvements in accountability and transparency, widespread corruption in local government will continue unabated and service coverage and quality will not be substantially improved.**

Recognizing the systemic nature of corruption will help policy makers think about the sequencing of devolution reforms. Some stakeholders have put forward the idea of holding local government elections immediately, to readjust the political balance and to punish ineffective or corrupt nazims. However, the change in political incumbents through new elections will not automatically improve accountability and transparency. The new councils elected will have the same opportunities for graft as the old ones; international experience shows that without new arrangements to promote transparency and accountability and to reduce impunity, the institutional incentives for corrupt acts will remain. **Policy makers might want to consider not bringing forward elections, currently scheduled for October 2009, until the devolution reforms—including mechanisms to promote accountability and transparency — are finalized.**

Apparently, citizens are more optimistic than the policy makers on all of these questions. The majority continues to believe that local governments can be more effective if they were more accountable, and that their budgeting and project management would improve if they were to take into consideration the opinions of the people—which also might explain why they continue to support keeping service delivery at the local level. **In this respect, perhaps the most important finding of the UI/ACNielsen survey is the overwhelming support for maintaining control of service delivery in local governments. Only a small minority support federal or provincial control.** This finding contradicts the statements from some provincial authorities that the “general public” wants the local government system to be rolled back. The survey results suggest the exact opposite.

In the provision of household services, the tehsils did not fare well—the respondents favored a strong role for the union councils. As was discussed above, this might be explained by the structure of the tehsil governments created by the 2001 reforms. These governments manage services for several urban places, sometimes many kilometers apart, and with differing service needs, citizen demands, etc. **The survey results suggest that citizens want more localized service provision, which would lend support for going back to local governments for each urban place by reactivating the town and city governments.**

Another policy-relevant finding was with respect to the role of the union councils. On almost all measures of accountability, access and responsiveness they received the most positive mentions of any level of government. **Despite the fact that the unions do not provide any social services or household services, by virtue of their frequent face-to-face interactions with their community they appear to play a key role in representing citizens’ concerns and resolving specific problems with higher levels of government.** This might also help to explain why the respondents did not feel strongly about the need for direct elections to districts and tehsils—in contrast there was a large majority in favor of keeping the direct elections to unions. This finding does not mean that policy makers who are reviewing the current local government system should try to devolve service delivery to the unions. Other questions of economies of scale and organization have to be taken into consideration. Rather, the policy question here has more to do with ensuring adequate political representation and access to local decision-making. This access, alongside of other reforms to improve accountability and transparency, is what will make local government responsive to citizens’ needs.

Returning to the question of elections, for the present discussions about devolution reform, this raises a dilemma. It is generally acknowledged that the current system of indirect elections of district and tehsil nazims offers opportunities for collusion and corruption and erodes the political accountability of the local government executive. **But any proposal for direct elections in all local governments would have to look carefully at the design of the electoral system to guarantee effective political representation in the other levels of the local government system, whether districts, tehsils, town and city committees and corporations, etc.**

Holding district or municipal-wide elections on a single party list would undermine the existing practices of direct, face-to-face interactions between constituents and their elected representatives. A better electoral system for local governments might be a system based on a separate ballot to elect the nazim on a district or municipal-wide basis, and another, separate ballot for council members to be elected in smaller constituencies (similar to the ward system).

These constituencies might be the existing union council divisions or larger jurisdictions (for example the markaz divisions in some provinces).

Another, more general issue that emerges from the survey findings is the confusion about roles. To some extent this probably reflects limited knowledge and access to information about the structure and workings of government, especially among people with low levels of formal education. But it also reflects the overlapping roles and responsibilities between federal, provincial and local governments. The federal government continues to operate “vertical” programs in education and health, which override both districts and provinces and cause problems of accountability. **One final policy implication of these results is the need to consider eliminating or reengineering the federal vertical programs so that implementation is under the effective control of the responsible local government.** This would reduce confusion among service users and make for clearer lines of accountability.