

Department of Development Studies

Policy Brief No. 22

January 2019

**Pakistan Institute of Development
Economics**

Thematic Focus: Political Economy

Revising Decentralisation and Quality of Public Services in Rawalpindi District of Pakistan – Shamas ul Deen (2012-2014)

The study theoretically as well as empirically attempted to find out how participation of the citizens, accountability, mechanisms of the complaint handling as well as transparency shape the downward incentive for the local leaders to perform in the favor of the citizens. Theoretically these concepts had found to be positively linked with decentralization. At empirical level, a qualitative research approach was synthesized along with documentary evidence from two selected local governments. Primary data was supplemented with review of relevant documents namely reports.

Key Findings

1. The study suggests that decentralization had offered more options for participation to citizens to express their opinion and suggestions if required. And this participation ranged from opinions to active partnerships in the form of community based organisations.
2. Decentralization introduces incentives for local leaders to be accountable to public since there were formal and informal mechanisms to put pressure on local leaders.
3. The study also suggests that the design of decentralization was favourable towards downward accountability. District Nazim is reported to report authority to the Nazim and he was responsible for performance appraisal of the DCO and could also request transfer if required. So this has altogether brought fundamental change to governance system.
4. The important aspect of better service delivery mechanism that really altered citizens' satisfaction is voting, it made sure that the candidates of local bodies are held accountable to public and have an incentive to serve them.
5. The study suggests that local governments gave confidence to the citizens; they performed well comparatively however there is a long way to go to get it matured so as to be able to reap the most out of it.
6. Given the weak institutional mechanisms of transparency, accountability and participation, local leaders tend to use their discretions to solve issues hence it may be detrimental at times as well.

Policy Implications

1. Local governments should use better means of communicating to the people. Since most of the people do not have access to information and it impedes their ability to hold local leaders accountable for their actions. This openness is only functional through people friendly communication mechanisms.
2. The local governments have poor local revenue base which is basically because of reluctance of the federal government to let the local government to raise taxation in their areas and secondly even the funds which are available with them are hardly reported. This makes it difficult for the citizens to hold their leaders accountable as they do not even have the necessary information about the revenue and expenditure.
3. At union council level, there were direct elections through public voting however at district level it were indirect elections through voting UC-nazimeen and *naib nazimeen* and hence involved various elements of corruption and horse trading. Direct elections of district authorities should be encouraged since this leads to avoidance of corruption and horse trading.
4. There is immediate need to build proper auditing system and ways to inform the citizens about financial matters. Corruption was very common during community participation cases whereby with 20-80 partnerships local projects were completed however there was no defined mechanism to deal with it. Distribution and spending criteria needed to be reformed as well. It has to change from population based criteria to distribute funds among different union councils.