

Findings from
NWFP 

The Local Government System CITIZENS PERCEPTIONS & PREFERENCES

nielsen
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 **URBAN
INSTITUTE**

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INTRODUCTION



1. Introduction

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

Certainly, at present policy-makers 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 closest level of government and public administration to citizens, and for that reason are an important determining factor in the overall legitimacy and stability of institutions of democratic governance.

This report presents the results of an opinion survey on citizen views of local government in Pakistan, carried out in October, 2008. The results presented in this report refer only to the province of NWFP. Subsequent reports will present results for the other three provinces and consolidated results for all four provinces.

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 in order 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 occasion where the provinces are themselves, in a coordinated manner, directly reforming their local government systems in an open and consultative manner.

Reform of the provincial local government systems is not a matter of closeted technical design and drafting of legislation, but should take place in an environment where the wishes, wants and desires of the people with respect to the form and functioning of local government are of paramount importance. This is because the legitimacy of government is often measured by the capacity of government to meet the service delivery needs of the people in the form and function that the people require of their elected governments.

The survey is intended to represent the citizens' voice — which not only needs to be

heard and considered, but also 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 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 substantive 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.

The survey results are invaluable to elected political leaders and senior bureaucrats in their overall policy deliberations on the form and function of local government in Pakistan as it enables the voices of their constituents to be clearly heard, considered and acted upon in delivering to the people not only the services that they need, but in the manner that they need and want them. At the same time, by incorporating people's voice into the design of the new local government systems, policy makers can ensure greater ownership of the new system by all levels of society.

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. In addition, there is a technical appendix which goes into greater detail on the survey design.

DEBATE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IN PAKISTAN



2. Debate on local government reform in Pakistan

The Local Government Ordinance (LGO), 2001 enacted by the Musharaf government to devolve powers from the central to local governments is not the first attempt to nature 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, Musharaf cushioned the structure of devolution against amendment or repeal for six years, except with the approval of the President.

In order 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 sub-national 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.

Thus the 2001 LGO put into place a four-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 by citizens; devolved 10 sectors/functions to the districts, including health and education; and devolved municipal services, including water, to the tehsils.

The official goals for devolution put forward by the NRB were known as the "Five Ds": Devolution of political power, by which elected politicians would articulate the goals of their communities; Decentralization of administrative authority, by giving autonomy to district departments; Distribution of resources to districts and municipalities, both through taxation powers and transfers; Deconcentration of management functions, underpinned by specialization of staff and performance-based appraisal; and Diffusion of the power authority nexus by establishing checks and balances through monitoring by citizens.

However, according to several assessments carried out in recent years the reform has failed to meet these goals¹. While there has been devolution of political power, in many localities this has reinforced local elite capture by influential families and strengthened patron-client 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 TMAs. And finally the checks and balances were not put into place.

In fact, referring to this last point, most of the important governance innovations in the 2001 LGO were not implemented. These include: the freedom of information provisions in Article 137, that guaranteed access to public documents; the provision for public access to the sessions of the council; the establishment of council monitoring committees to oversee administration; the accounts committees to review audit findings and initiate remedial actions; the requirement for public consultations on budget priorities; the requirement that nazims and DCOs/TMOs present periodic performance reports to the public sessions of their respective councils; and the establishment of district ombudsmen.

Admittedly, under the Musharaf government there were also amendments to the 2001 LGO, aimed at correcting perceived weaknesses. The amendments included the creation of the Provincial Local Government Commissions (PLGC) to exercise oversight of local governments; nazims who defied provincial directives, or who were guilty of misconduct, could be suspended or removed after an enquiry by the PLGC. District Councils were also vested with the authority to recall the Nazim with a no confidence motion. Local council resolutions and orders of the nazim could be suspended if against the public interest. However, the provisions for provincial oversight and a stronger oversight role of the councils have been largely ignored?

This failure points out the inherent difficulties in establishing democratic local government in the context of a non-democratic polity 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, independent media organizations, etc. — all were severely constrained.

Why was this factor so significant in determining the success or failure of the reform? The effectiveness of a local government system depends on it being closely linked to local governance — a political market that stresses the importance of effective and efficient service delivery by opening spaces for participation and dialogue between elected officials and the community; making elected and unelected officials accountable; and creating pressure for responsiveness of the government to citizen priorities and needs. This 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



PHOTO BY DTW

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. UI Project No. 07862. February 2006.

(mayoral) powers at the expense of the elected local government councils; non-functioning 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 massive leakage of public resources whether through manipulation of procurement, kickbacks and commissions, or outright embezzlement. Also, anecdotal evidence from the field suggests that this massive 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; 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. While recent assessments have not found evidence that social services and household services have deteriorated, the very least that can be said is that there has not been a notable improvement in service delivery during the seven years during which the new system of local government has been in place.

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 virtually dormant. 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. The 2001 LGO also lacked political support from provincial authorities who nonetheless played a large role in the staffing and funding of many aspects of service delivery, contained parallel decision structures. It lacked 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, the restoration of the four provinces in all aspects of policy and decision making with respect to local governance, and eventually the resignation by Mr. Musharraf. 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 (DCOs, EDOs and TMOs) and re-centralizing day-to-day administration, especially in key sectors such as health and education. These changes were felt greatest in the Districts and City Districts and less in the smaller and rural TMAs.

The provinces are now proposing changes to the 2001 Local Government Ordinance (LGO). These changes are meant to correct the perceived political bias in the Musharraf government's devolution policies, which can be summarized as follows: the LGO was imposed by the federal government with no consultation; in fact, 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); central government manipulation ensured that local government elections in 2001 and 2005 were neither free nor fair. These issues were aggravated by other problems, owing to 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 towards elite capture and contributed to a deterioration of law and order and increased crime in some areas.

The next round of local elections is currently scheduled for August, 2009. If they are held, they will undoubtedly be the most competitive yet, increasing citizen pressure for greater accountability and responsiveness. However, in light of the rapid changes taking place, these elections may either be obviated or accelerated, depending on the outcome of the provincial devolution reviews. The newly elected provincial governments are in any event now positioned to play a dominant role in local governance and service delivery; at the same time, the Federal government is likely to acquiesce to the pressures from the provinces for constitutional and legal reforms to give them more autonomy and more control over local government.

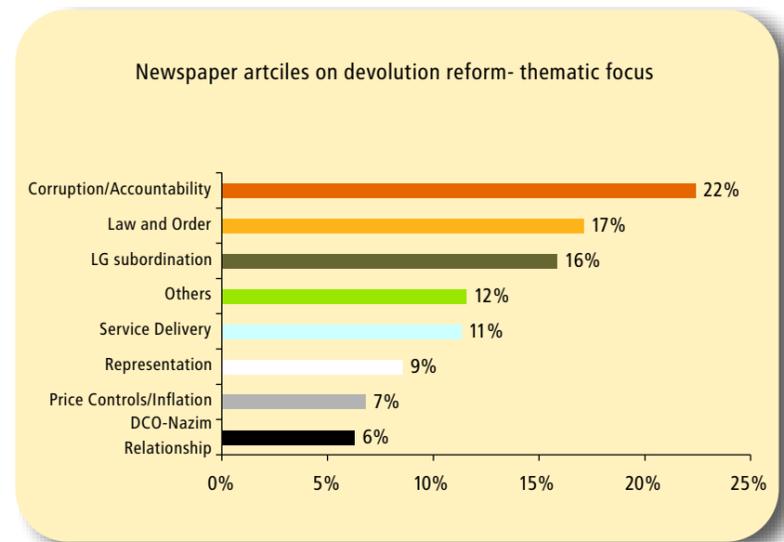
Recent policy statements emanating from the federal and provincial governments indicate that revision and refinement of the local government system will deal with administrative and executive authorities within provinces as well as improving and protecting service delivery, citizens' access and participation in governance processes. There have been talks of a wider constitutional package to be considered in the National Assembly including the abolishment of the concurrent list and removal of the protection given in 6th Schedule of the Constitution to the local government system currently in place. This will allow the provinces to review their Local Government Ordinances and implement appropriate changes without any other approval or oversight by federal government. In order that any future system is appropriate for the needs of the people, an objective and consultative review by each of the provinces of their Local Government Ordinances is critical, taking into account improving and protecting service delivery and ensuring citizens' access and participation in governance processes.

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. One province even began to circulate a draft law. 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 failure of local government was manifested, according to these officials, was the frank deterioration of law and order and the inability of local governments to enforce laws and regulations. The only viable solution, according to the provincial officials, was to take back control of local affairs to the bureaucracy. In this first phase of the debate, in fact, a large number of the official policy statements and press reports had to do with the relationship between nazims and public servants (DCOs and TMOs), reflecting the success of the senior provincial bureaucrats in shaping the debate in their favour.

But the early enthusiasm for immediately abrogating the 2001 LGO wore off, and with time other important policy issues began to emerge, 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 newspaper coverage is presented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Thematic focus of newspaper articles on devolution reform



In addition to the emergence of other themes, the policy debate started to include other voices, often in counterbalance to 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 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 their 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, intervened in the debate, sometimes with contrasting views expressed by different ministries and executive agencies, as well as parliamentarians. While recognizing the paramount role of the provinces in the area of local government reforms, the federal government's 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 inter-governmental consultation and coordination on the reform process. The NRB also weighed in, presenting specific proposals for amendments to the 2001. And for their part, the district and tehsil nazims, initially silent after the 2008 elections, also 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 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 the senior bureaucrats, have broadened, as has participation.

Citizen's 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 the system of devolution is that which is most appropriate to serve the needs of the people in each of the provinces. All four provinces, including NWFP, have established Provincial Working Groups (PWGs) to undertake inclusive consultative processes 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 policy-making. Democratic governance isn't just about elections to choose a government. It is also about what happens between elections, when decision makers have to respond to a series of complex issues on which there is no explicit mandate and about which there is no clear political consensus. Public debate and dialogue has the function of building consensus and generating pressure for policy makers to explain and justify their decisions, which should reinforce public trust in democratic institutions. I.e., policy is about both substance and process.

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 policy making at the federal and provincial level is constrained in directly involving citizens. While the Provincial Working Groups established to review the policy options for devolution reform include both elected and administrative officials as well as representatives from civil society organizations, the feedback and views of the citizens is 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 of the four provinces.

The survey elicits citizen responses on: (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) the 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.



SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE



PHOTO BY SARAH PERVEZ

3. Survey methodology and sample

The National Survey on Citizen's Perceptions about Local survey 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 total 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, and 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/rural settings and gender:

Table 3.1: UI/A.C Nielsen 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 Urdu. The data was collected from 11 districts of NWFP province including 5 urban localities and 32 rural localities. The detailed methodology is attached as Annex.

The provincial sample has 31% of respondents living in city districts, 5% in other urban areas, and 64% in rural areas. It comprises of 50% male and 50% female respondents, with the largest number of respondents – 28% belonging to the age group of 25 to 34. Eighty five percent of respondents have a household size of 5 or more individuals. Literacy levels are 46% and of those literate, majority of the respondents – 54% (of which 37% are male and 63% female) have some primary or completed primary education. The highest level of education attained by the respondents (24%) is Secondary–Higher Secondary. Within this group, the ratio of male and female is 62% and 38% respectively. Fifteen percent of respondents fall within the income bracket of PKR 3001 to 7000 per month.



PHOTO BY NIDA KAMAL SIDDIQUI

FINDINGS



PHOTO BY ANDREW GOLDA

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 year².

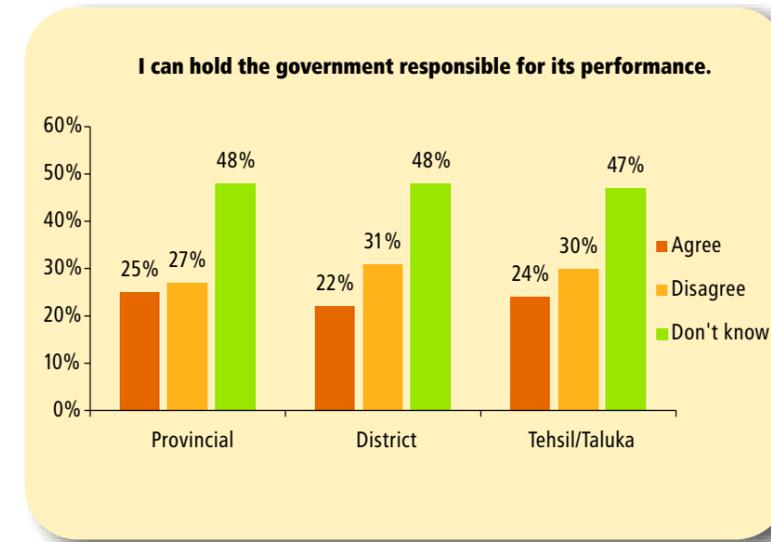
The results of the UI/Nielsen survey on local government reflect this same mix of optimism about the return to democratic government and very critical attitudes with respect to the actual performance of government institutions, whether federal, provincial or local (districts, tehsils and unions). The 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. Modern states combine multiple institutional arrangements, legal frameworks and organizational structures to ensure both vertical and horizontal accountability. 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 48% of respondents answering “Don't know”, with respect to accountability of these three levels of government. At the same time, 25% considered that they could hold provincial governments accountable; falling slightly to 22% for district and 24% for tehsil levels of government.

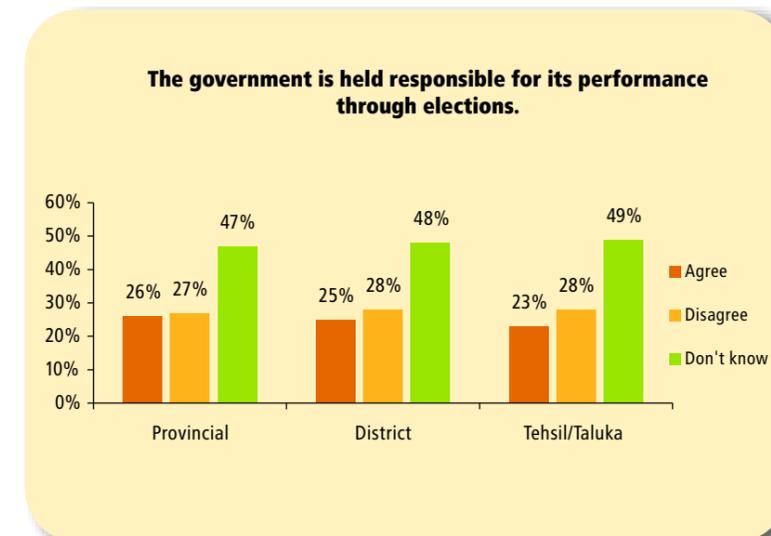
² See International Republican Institute. 2008. Pakistan Public Opinion Survey June 1-15, 2008. Washington, DC: IRI; and United States Institute of Peace and World Public Opinion. 2008. “Pakistani Public Opinion on Democracy, Islamist Militancy, and Relations with the US”. Washington, D. C.

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, 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

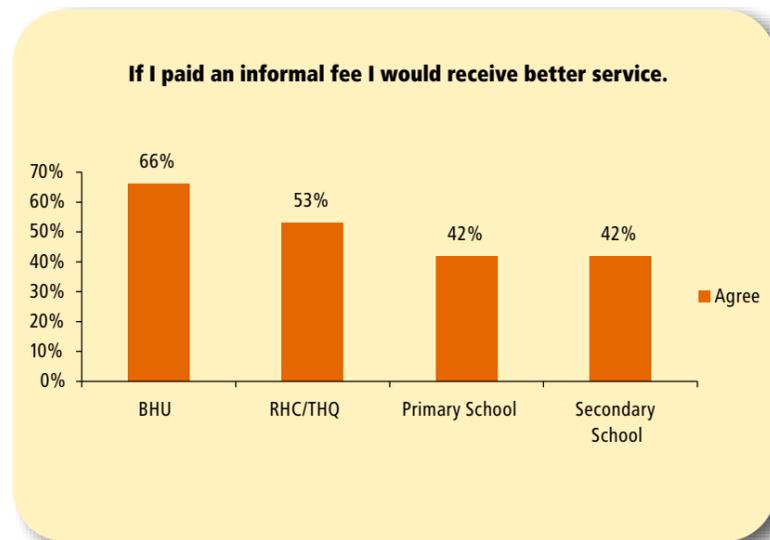


While it might be expected that the 2008 elections would have reinforced citizens' expectations for electoral accountability in the newly elected provincial governments, in fact the survey respondents rated the provinces and local governments more or less equal in this respect.

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.). Transparency is important because it generates pressure on public officials for greater accountability for their decisions; and to the extent that it allows access to information it serves as a check on corruption.

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% paid bribes; in legal procedures involving judicial authorities, 78% paid bribes; in land administration 92%; in getting access to health services from public hospitals, 67%; and in public school admission/registration 50%³.

Figure 4.A3: Informal payments for better social services

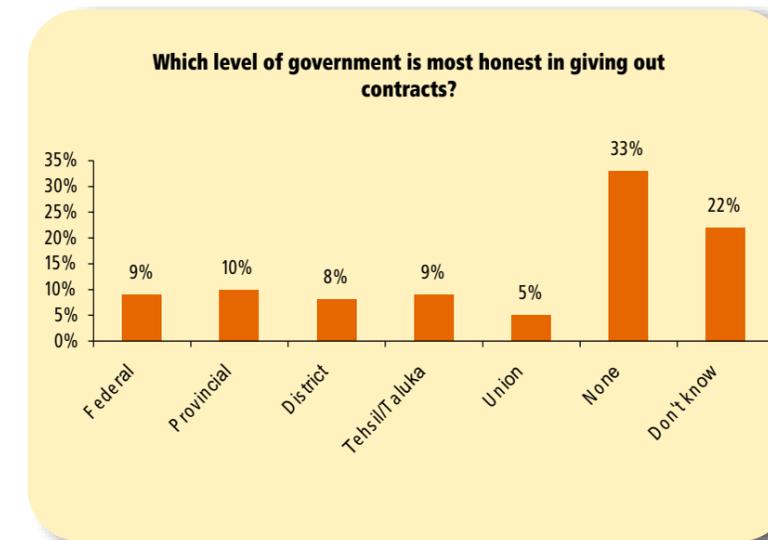


³See Transparency International Pakistan. 2006. "National Corruption Perception Survey 2006".

However, the responses to questions about the prevalence of corruption in specific areas of service delivery are difficult to analyze. 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. Responsibility for social services is split between provinces and districts. While education and health are devolved to district administration, the managers and staff are provincial employees.

To the question whether they would receive better services if they paid bribes, more than 60% of survey respondents said yes for health services; for education it is 42% 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

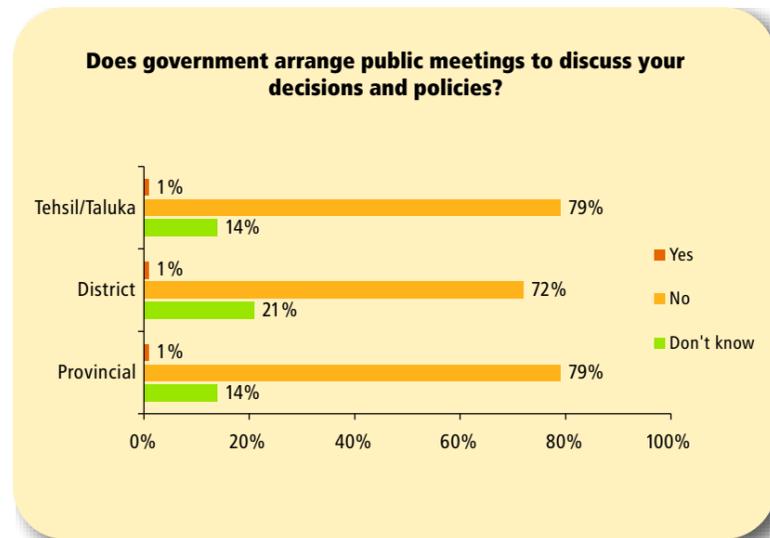


Finally, the UI/Nielsen survey also asked respondents about their perceptions of corruption in government contracting across different levels of government. One question asked "Which level of government is honest in awarding contracts, construction projects, licenses, etc.?" The responses to this question 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%. 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 face-to-face interaction between decision makers and citizens. However, as mentioned above, recent assessments of local government in Pakistan have pointed out that many of the most important provisions for transparency in the 2001 LGO were not implemented.

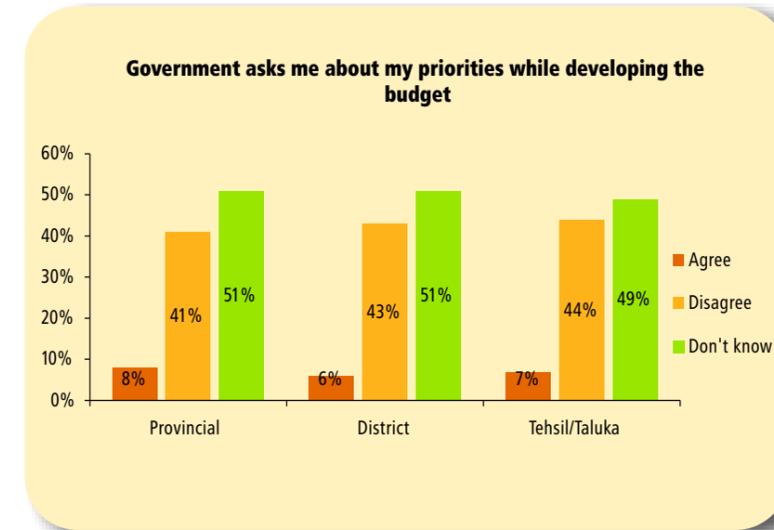
In particular, it has not been a practice of local governments in Pakistan to allow public access to council meetings; to present periodic reports to open council meetings; or to hold consultative meetings on budget priorities — even though all of these are formal provisions of the 2001 LGO. Nor is it a practice of nazims and councilors to hold informal meetings with constituents, or to convene public hearings on important decisions, the kinds of practices used by local 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 1% of the UI/Nielsen survey respondents in NWFP answered affirmatively. 16% 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

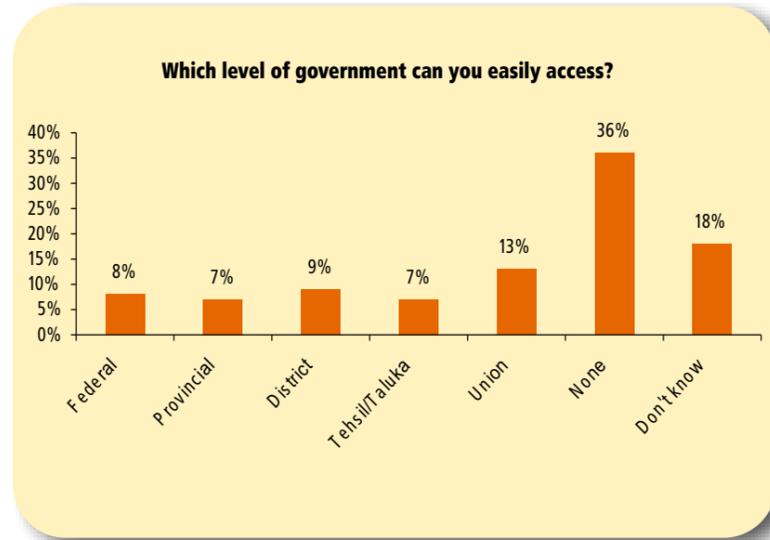


With respect to the practice of consulting with citizens on government budget priorities, the NWFP survey results are only marginally more positive. Even so, as Figure 4.A6 shows, only between 6% and 8% of respondents say that provincial, district or tehsils governments do consult with citizens on budget 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. When faced with problems, where do citizens go to resolve them? One of the survey questions asked “Which level of government can you easily access?.” As shown in Figure 4.A7, about 54% of the responses were “None” or “Don't know”. Comparing the different levels of government, 13% of the respondents said that the union councils can be easily accessed while 8% said federal, 7% said provincial and TMAs, and 9% said the district government. Even though this difference is marginal, it isn't surprising, given the relatively small size of union councils and opportunities for direct interaction between officials and citizens.

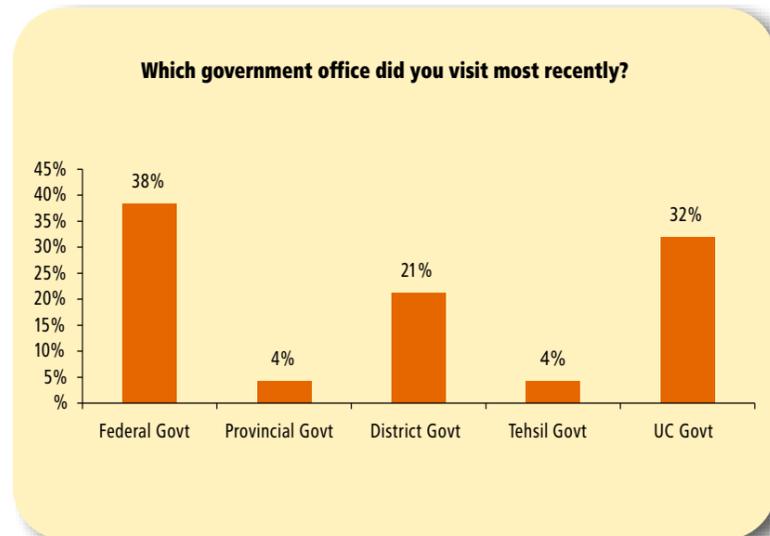
These opinions were reflected in the responses to the question “Have you visited any government offices or elected officials during the last one year”; to which about 8% of respondents replied affirmatively.

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



As can be seen in Figure 4.A8, most of the visits occurred at the federal and union council level, with 38% and 32% of respondents stating that they visited the federal and union council respectively.

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

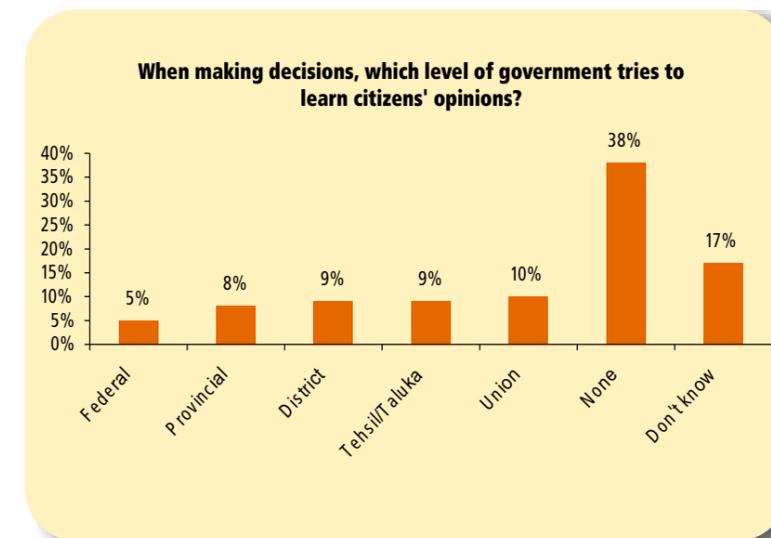


Overall, about 53% of the visits to government offices or officials were to elected officials. While this might seem high, it reflects the high proportion of visits to union councils, which are centered almost exclusively on interactions with the nazim or elected council members. In contrast, in the other levels of government the interactions were more often with unelected officials.

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 as a citizen they 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" — 38% and 17% of total responses respectively. There were marginal differences between levels of government, with 10% of respondents saying "union councils" and 9% saying districts and TMAs, which suggests that people see them as somewhat more responsive than the federal and provincial government – 5% and 8% respectively (see Figure 4.A9 below).

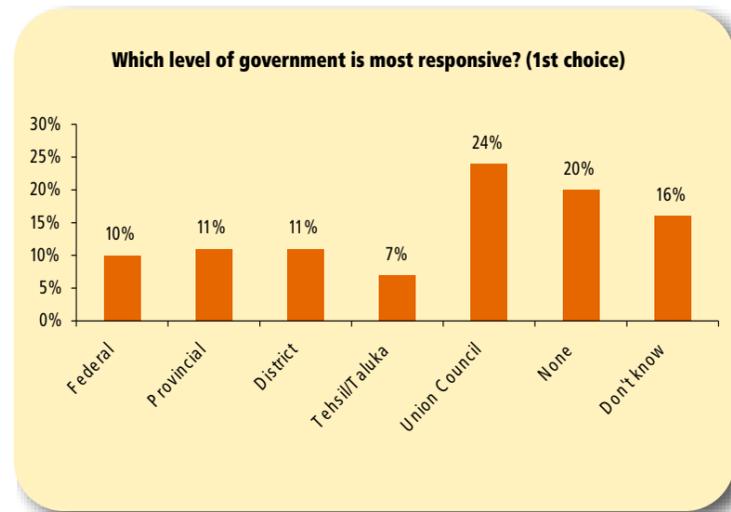
Figure 4.A9: Government interest in knowing citizens' opinions



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 24% of mentions, compared to a maximum of 11% for any other level of government. Of course, the second most frequent response was "None," again reflecting the prevalence of very critical attitudes on the quality of governance at all levels.

Bureaucratic Responsiveness. The survey results suggest that citizens tend to seek assistance from elected representatives — about 60% of the respondents who reported an interaction with government sought out an elected official. Why the preference for elected officials versus civil servants?

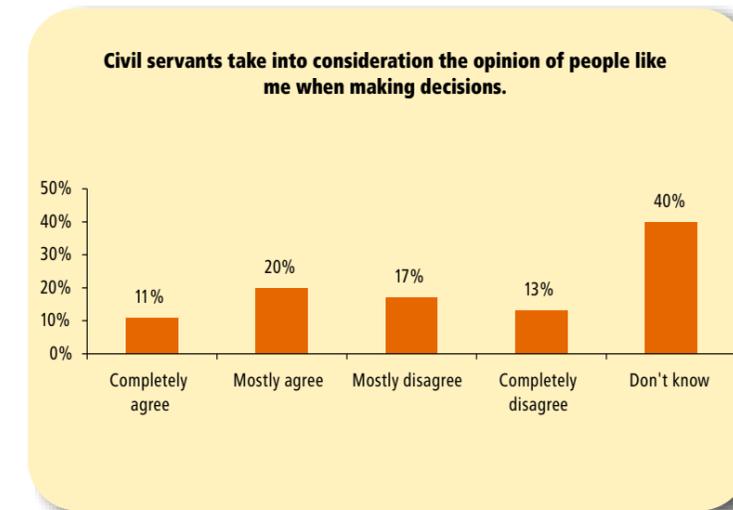
Figure 4.A10: Responsiveness of federal, provincial and local governments



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. The results are nearly evenly divided among respondents agreeing and those disagreeing. Thirty one percent of respondents say that they "Completely agree" or "Agree", whereas 30% 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 local 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 — 8% to 13% --considered that the provincial, district or tehsil administrations had an "open door" policy which would allow them to access government officials. Almost a half said that they didn't know.

Finally, as the Transparency International surveys have indicated, most transactions, requests for rectification of errors or registering of complaints with district and tehsil managers and employees require paying a bribe. Generally the local political representatives do not require bribes from constituents.



PHOTO BY SARAH PERVEZ

4.B Service delivery

The services that local governments provide are fundamental to determining their composition, their roles and the form which they take. 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.

Are these criticisms of local government service delivery supported by broad public opinion? What do citizens think about service delivery under devolution? What services are provided well and which aspect of service delivery are weak?

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.

In Pakistan, a country of over 160 million people, primary healthcare is critical for maintaining the productivity and well-being of the population as well as promoting Pakistan's progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The utilization of Basic Health Units is an important indicator in measuring the effectiveness of primary healthcare programs in Pakistan.

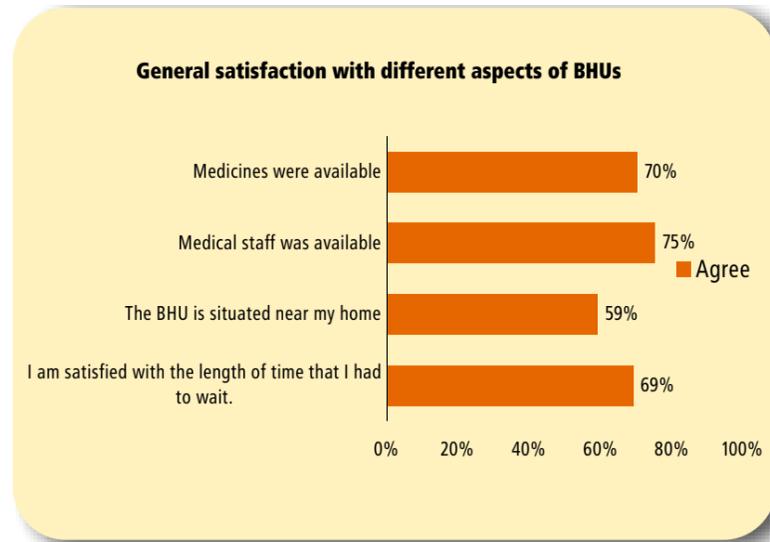
Figure 4.B1: Reasons for not visiting a Basic Health Unit



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 18% of citizens in NWFP say that they have visited a Basic Health Unit in the past 6 months. Of the people who did not visit a BHU, 45% say it is because they have been in good health and do not need medical treatment. People in urban areas say that they are relatively healthier than in rural areas with 52% of urban respondents saying that they did not go to a BHU because they were in good health, compared to 42% in rural areas. In urban areas people are more likely to prefer private medical facilities than in rural areas with 26% of urban residents responding that that is the reason that they did not go to a BHU compared to 23% in rural areas. In rural areas 18% 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 4% in urban areas.

The UI/Nielsen survey asks a series of questions about respondents' visits to the BHU. These questions, including questions on citizens' perceptions of staff capacity, facility quality and overall satisfaction with the visit, 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



A majority of people are generally satisfied with their visits to BHUs with 67% 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 75% 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 availability of medicines with 69% and 70% of respondents stating that they are satisfied with these aspects respectively. People are most dissatisfied with the location of BHUs, with only 59% of respondents agreeing that the BHU is situated near my home.

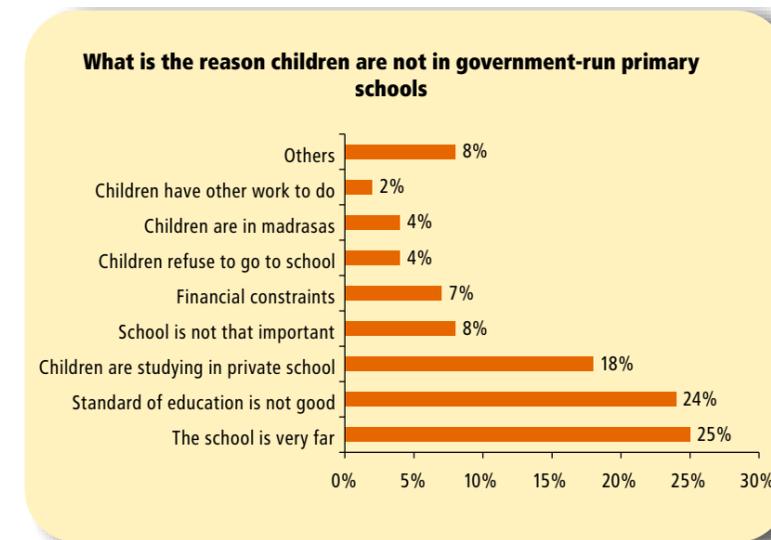
Social Services Education. Education is another crucial social service that was devolved to district governments. Similar to the roles devolved in regard to health, district governments are responsible for the maintenance and management of both primary and secondary schools, but the provincial government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

According to the results of the UI/Nielsen survey, 63% of households in NWFP 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, 68% have some or all of their children in government-run schools.

The reasons that people do not have their children in government primary schools are they are difficult to access (distance very large) and poor quality of the services. Other

reasons stated in NWFP include "children are studying in private schools", 18% and "schools is not that important, 8%. Of households that had children of primary school age, but have none of the children enrolled in government-run schools, 25% say that the school is very far and 24% 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.

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

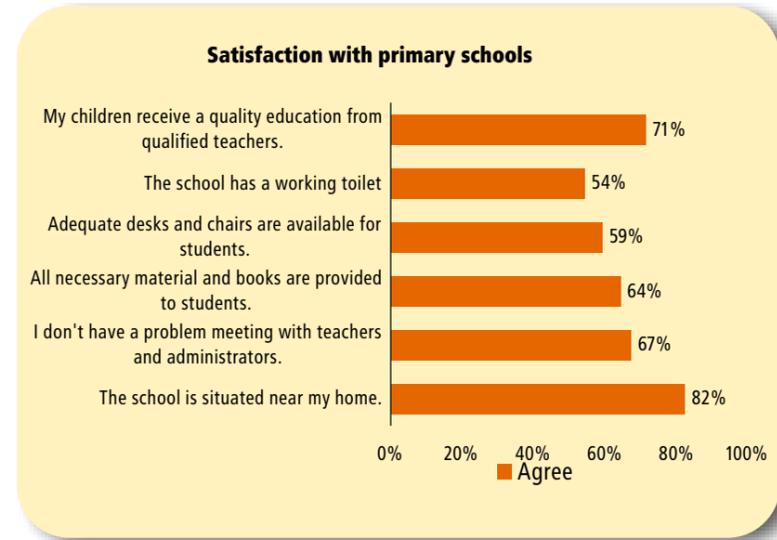


The UI/Nielsen survey asks respondents who have primary age children in government-run schools a series of questions regarding their satisfaction with primary schools. These questions cover issues such as the respondents' opinions of the physical conditions of the school, the availability of books, as 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-one 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-two percent of respondents say that the school is situated near their home and 67% say that they do not have a problem meeting with teachers and administrators. Respondents are, however, less satisfied with school facilities with only 59% agreeing that adequate desks and chairs are available for students and 54% saying that their children's school have a functioning toilet.

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

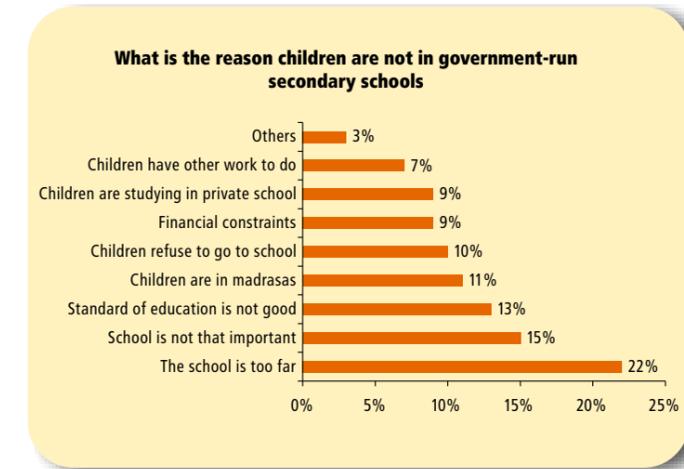


The UI/Nielsen survey also explores people's opinions regarding government-run secondary schools. According to the results of the survey, 35% of households have children that are of secondary school age. The average number of children of secondary school age per household is 1.5 and the maximum number of children per household is five. Of the households with children of secondary school age in them, 74% of them have some or all of their children in government-run secondary schools.

Similar to primary schools, the reasons that people do not have their children in government secondary schools focus on access and quality. Another social reason that emerges in NWFP is 15% of respondents saying that "school is not that important." Of households that have children of secondary school age, but have none of the children enrolled in government-run schools, 22% say that the distance of governments school from their house is the foremost reason that their children are not enrolled in government schools. Thirteen percent respond that the standard of education is not good.

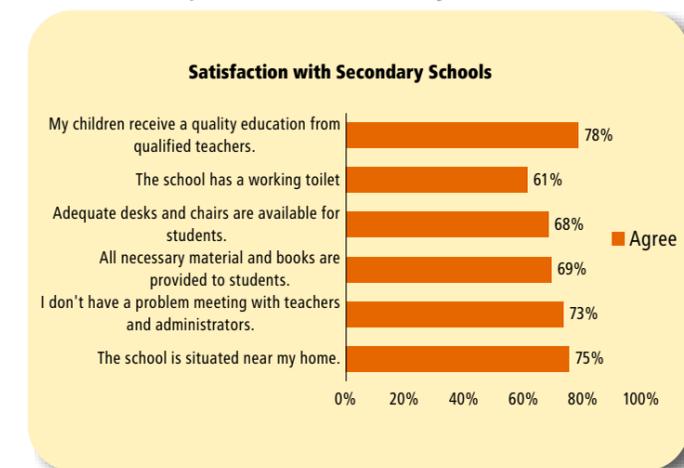
The UI/Nielsen survey also asks respondents who have secondary age children in government-run schools the same series of questions regarding their satisfaction with secondary schools as is asked of respondents with children in primary schools. These questions covered such issues as the respondents' opinions 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.

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



The majority of households that have children in government-run secondary schools are generally satisfied with the quality of the education. Seventy-eight percent of people responded affirmatively that their children are receiving a quality education from qualified teachers. Seventy-five percent of respondents say that the school is situated near their home and 73% 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 68% agreeing that adequate desks and chairs are available for students. Other aspects of school facilities are not seen in such a positive light, with 61% saying that their children's school has a functioning toilet.

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

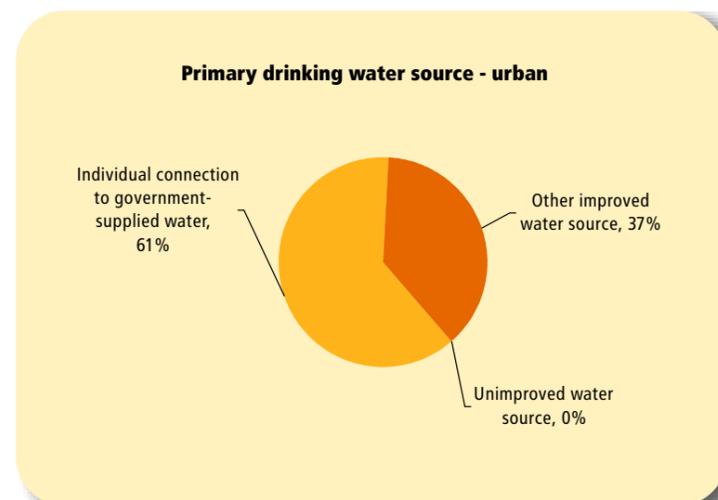


Household Services. Household services such as drinking water, sanitation, drainage and sewerage, are vital for the health of communities as well as creating an environment which promotes investment and economic growth. Through the 2001 LGO, the responsibility for providing household services was devolved 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. Citizens' responses about whether they use and have access to government services, as well as their perceptions of the quality of that service provide important insight into how citizens view government performance overall.

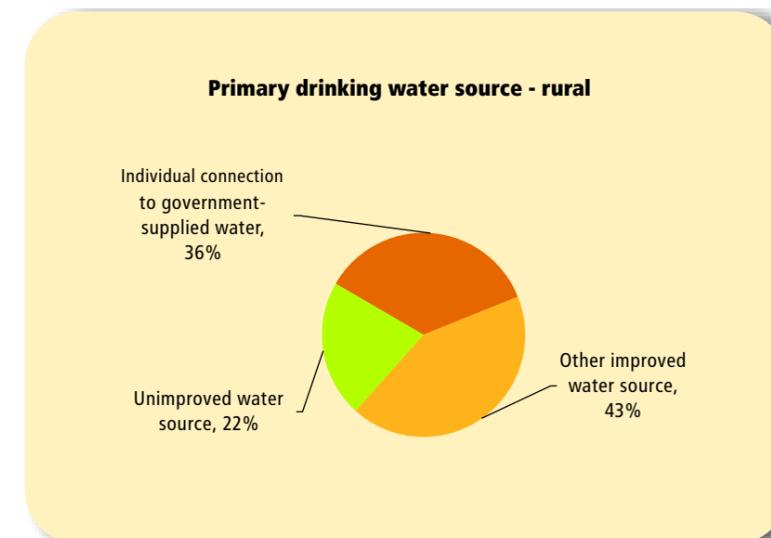
Drinking water is an essential household service which is technically complex and often difficult for local governments to provide effectively, especially in rural areas. In urban areas of NWFP 61% of people say that their primary source for drinking water is an individual connection to a government water scheme. An additional 37% say that they receive their water from other types of improved water. While none of the respondents receive their water through unimproved water sources which is seen in other parts of the country, 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



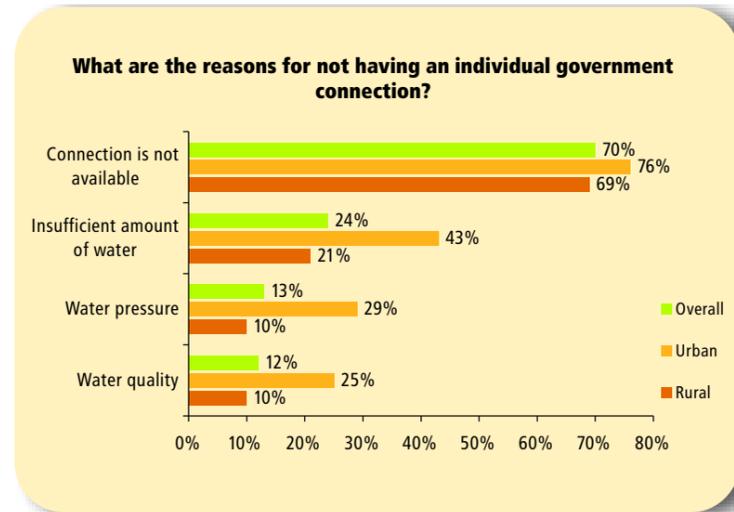
According to the survey, people in rural areas of NWFP have almost the same access to improved water sources as in urban areas. Government-run water schemes, however, have considerably less coverage with only 36% of respondents saying that they receive their water through an individual connection to the government water supply. 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. While none of the respondents receive their water through unimproved water sources in urban areas, in rural areas 22% cite this as their water source.

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



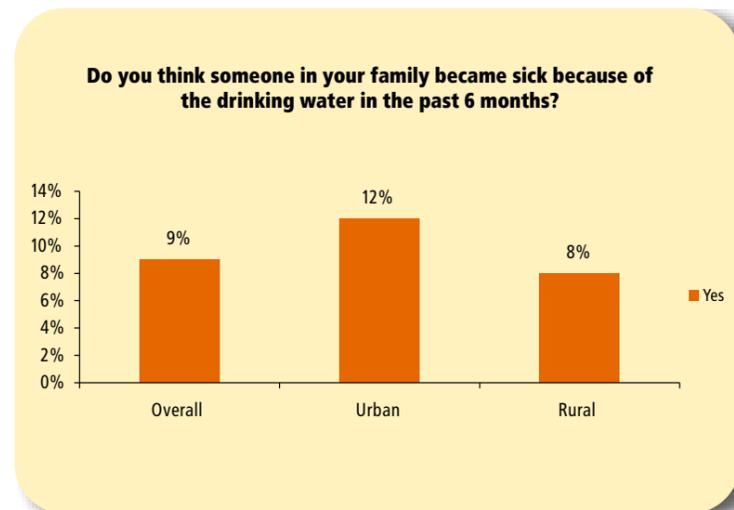
As seen in Figure 4.B9 below, when people are asked why they do not get their water from a government water scheme 70% reply that there is no government connection available. Sixty-nine percent of respondents in rural areas cite this as the reason they are not connected to a government connection while a higher percent -- 76% 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 24% of people saying that the government connection does not provide a sufficient amount of water and 13% of people saying that the water pressure provide by government connections is not good. These reasons are relatively higher in urban areas than in rural areas where there is presumably more choice in how one decides to receive drinking water. Water quality is also important to people when deciding how to receive drinking water, with 12% of respondents stating that this is a factor in why they do not use government water.

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, 24% of survey respondents say that they rarely or never have a sufficient supply of water. In urban areas this number is slightly higher with 43% of citizens saying that they rarely or never have a sufficient supply of water. In rural areas water supply is better with 21% of people stating that they rarely or never have a sufficient supply of water.

Figure 4.B10: Perception of water-borne diseases by urban/rural

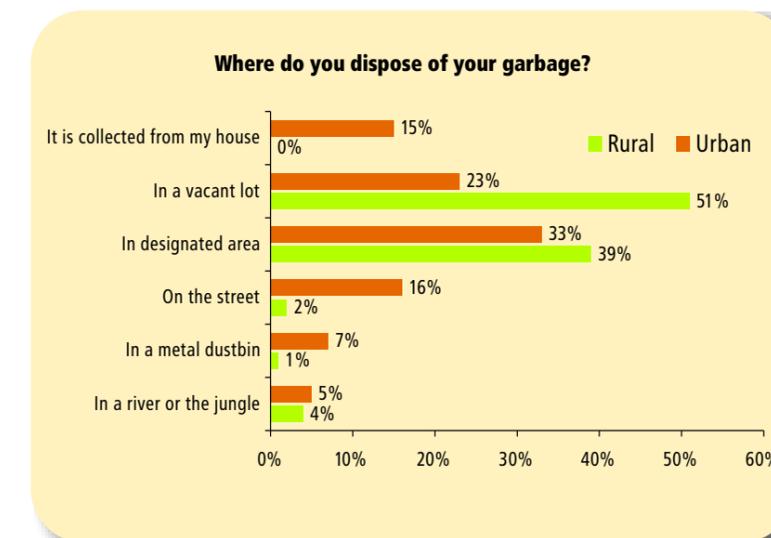


The quality of drinking water is also an issue in NWFP. When asked whether they thought anyone in their household had become sick in the past 6 months from the drinking water supply, 9% of households state yes. In urban areas this is higher with 12% of people responding yes, while in rural areas, 8% 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 than in rural areas, this raises important questions about the local government's ability to supply clean water.

Figure 4.B10 – Do you think someone in your household became sick because of the drinking water in the past six months?

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 15% of urban respondents saying that they have door to door trash collection, 33% stating that they dispose of their garbage in designated areas and 7% saying that they put it in metal dustbins. In rural areas while 51% of people say they dispose of their garbage in vacant lots, only 2% dispose of it in the street, 4% in a river or the jungle, and 39% say they dispose of their garbage in designated areas. None of the respondents have door to door trash collection. Even in urban areas, 23% of people state that they dispose of their garbage in vacant lots, 16% on the street and 5% in the river or jungle. This high rate of chaotic trash disposal has serious implications for the cleanliness of communities throughout the province.

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 how frequently their garbage was collected. In urban

areas, with its higher percentage of door to door service, 30% of people say that their garbage is collected daily, with an additional 17% stating that it is collected at least once a week. In rural areas this frequency drops considerably with 69% of people stating that their garbage is collected once a month or less and only 25% stating that their garbage is collected daily.

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

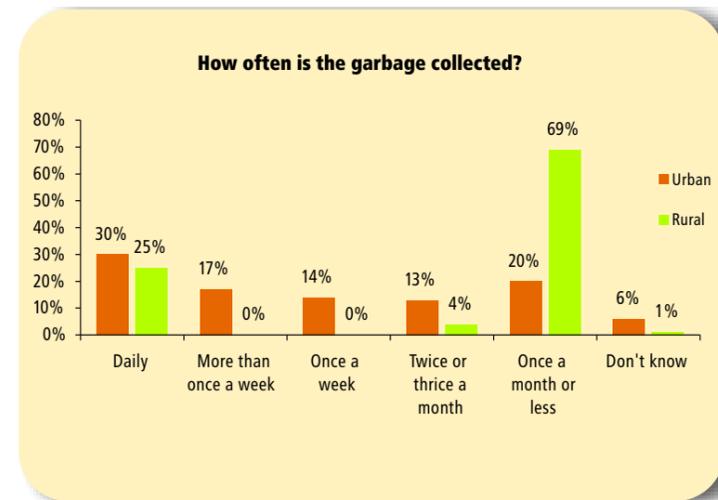
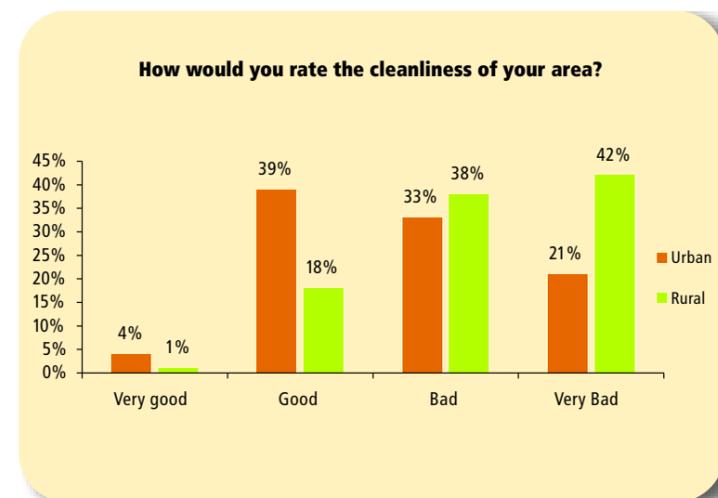


Figure 4.B13: Rating of street cleanliness by urban/rural

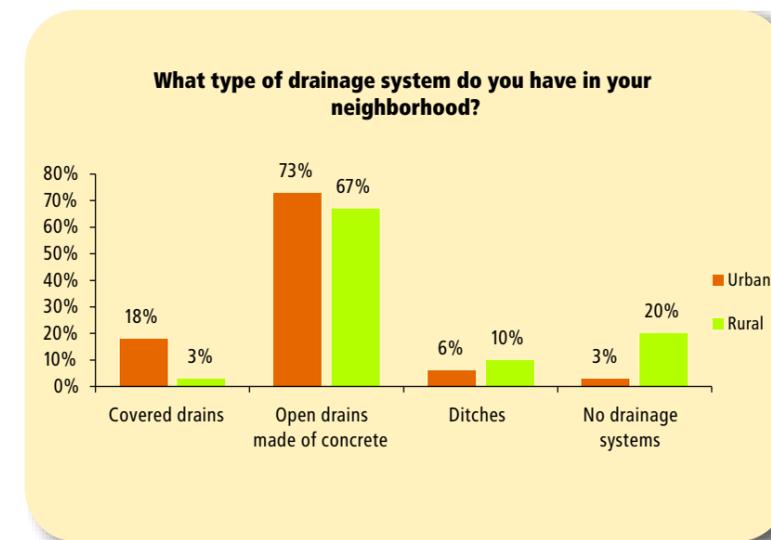


Does this urban bias in the coverage and frequency of trash collection translate into higher satisfaction levels with street cleanliness in urban areas? Indeed, the results of the survey show that people in urban locations generally rate the cleanliness of their areas higher than in rural areas. In fact, 43% of respondents in urban areas say that the cleanliness of their area was good or very good while in rural areas this drops to 19%.

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 system by urban/rural



As expected, people in urban areas indicate that they are better covered by drainage infrastructure with 91% saying they have covered drains or open drains made of concrete compared to 70% to rural areas. Although they are better covered with infrastructure than in rural areas, 9%, still say that they have ditches or no drainage system at all in their neighborhoods. Rural areas are even worse off with about one-third of rural respondents saying that they have no drainage system at all.

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.

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

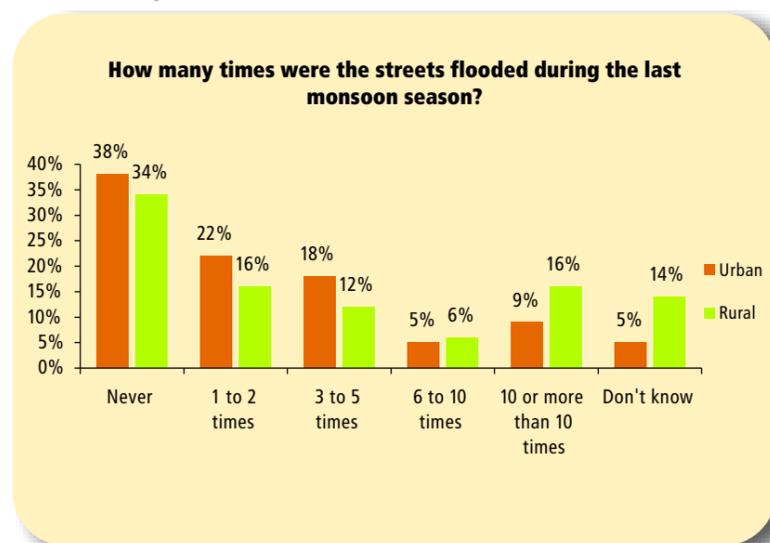




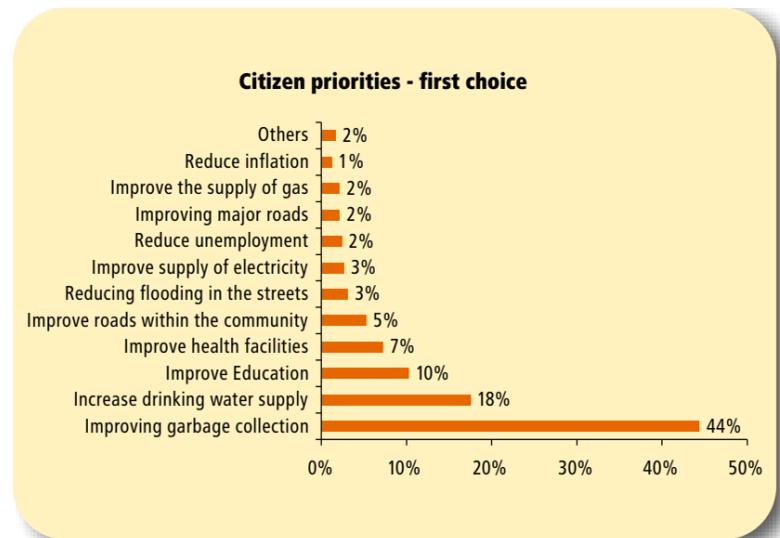
PHOTO BY SARAH PERVEZ

4.C Citizen expectations for improvement

This section is about what citizens in NWFP think of their government, more specifically about the roles and responsibilities of their local governments. The results of the survey presented in the previous sections of the report indicate that citizens are critical of governance 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. Devolution reform is aimed at improving 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.

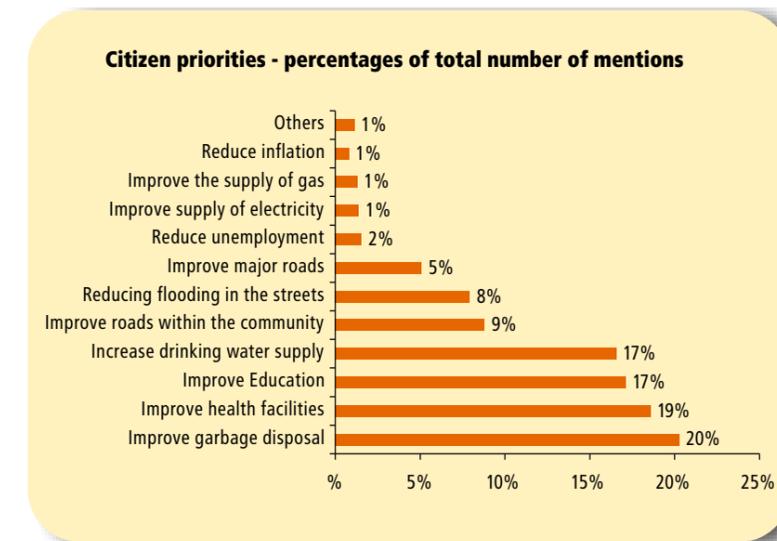
Figure 4.C1: Citizens' first priority for improvement of government services



Garbage collection has the most mentions as first priority for service improvement, with 44%. In urban areas it was mentioned by 50% of survey respondents and in rural areas 42%. This was followed by improvement of drinking water with 18%. The remaining four most frequently mentioned services include improving: education, 10%, health facilities, 7%, roads within the community, 5% and finally reducing flooding, at 3%, also tied with improving the supply of electricity.

Another way of looking at this is to examine how many times a specific service is mentioned as either first, second or third priorities for improvement. As Figure 4.C2 indicates, this changes the top five priorities slightly, as does the ordering, with improving garbage disposal in first place with 20% of total mentions as either first, second or third priority, followed by improvement of health facilities, 19% and then improvement in education, 17% which is also tied with increasing drinking water supply. The fourth place is improvement of local roads, 9% and reducing flooding in the street at 8%.

Figure 4.C2: Citizens' top three priorities for improvement of government services

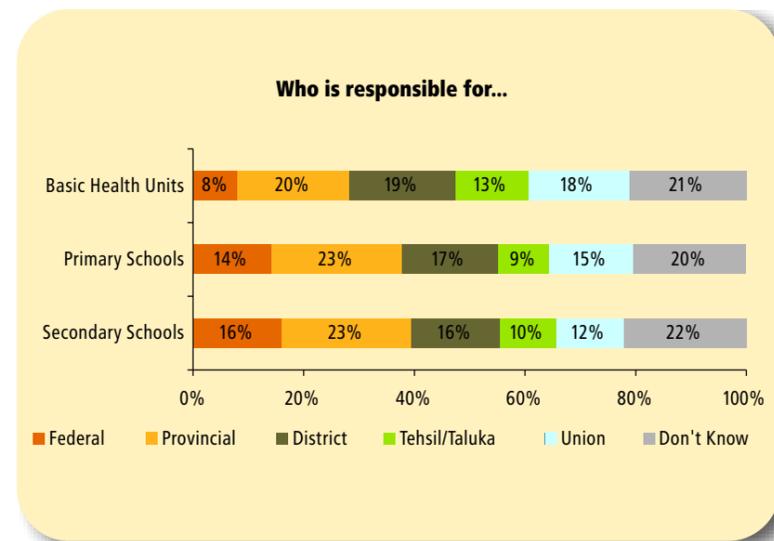


Either way, education, health, water, drainage and garbage collection continue to be the highest priorities for service improvement. All of these are local government responsibilities at present. It should be noted that this was an open question — i.e., the responses were not suggested in the questionnaire and there was no mention at all of local government services. Nevertheless, the improvement of services provided by other levels of government was ranked as a lower priority.

Who is Responsible for Services? Many assessments of the 2001 LGO and of the way in 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.

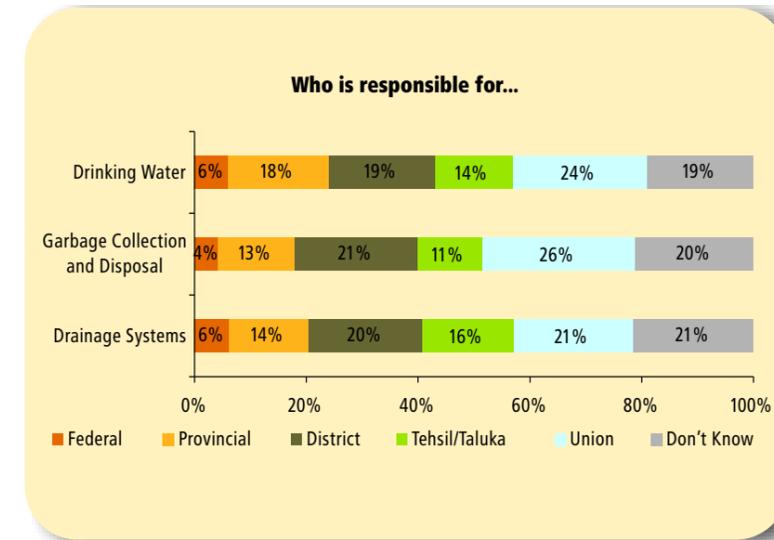
The overlapping responsibilities for service provision is reflected in the dispersion of the responses to the questions on responsibility for provision of health and education. While about 20% of responses are "Don't know", the remainder is dispersed among all five levels of government, including 28% to 39% mentioning federal and provincial governments. More than 18% of respondents assign responsibility to union councils for BHUs.

Figure 4.C3: Perceived responsibilities for provision of health and education



The answers on the perception of responsibilities for the provision of household services show a different pattern of dispersion. As shown in Figure 4.C4, 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.

Figure 4.C4: Perceived responsibility for water, garbage and drainage services



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. 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.

Theories of government decentralization argue that improvements in management and service delivery will be the result of better — more timely and more accurate — information flowing between public officials and citizens. That public officials at the local level, whether elected or unelected, can understand citizen preferences better; at the same time, citizens can access public officials more easily. But this advantage is reduced when government responsibilities are ambiguous. And this same ambiguity might help explain some of the survey results presented in the previous section on governance with respect to citizen access to government.

The UI/Nielsen survey also revealed that most citizen interactions and consultations with government officials and offices — 30% 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% of respondents mentioned "none" and 13% mentioned union councils. This, 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, 47% of survey respondents favored provision of primary health services by local governments; 41% for primary education; and 40% for secondary education.

Figure 4.C5: Preferences for provision of social services by all levels of government

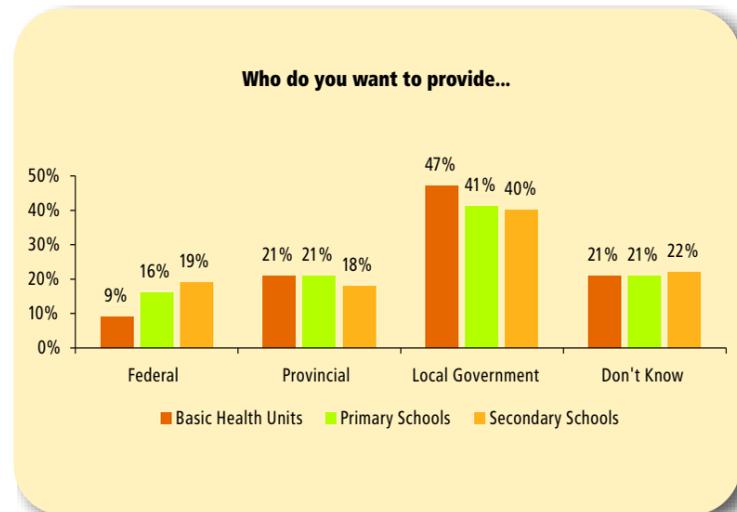


Figure 4.C6: Preferences for provision of social services by local governments

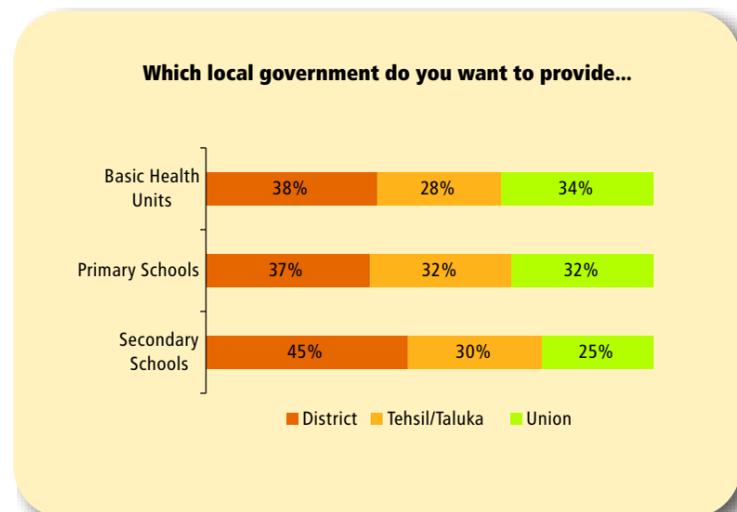
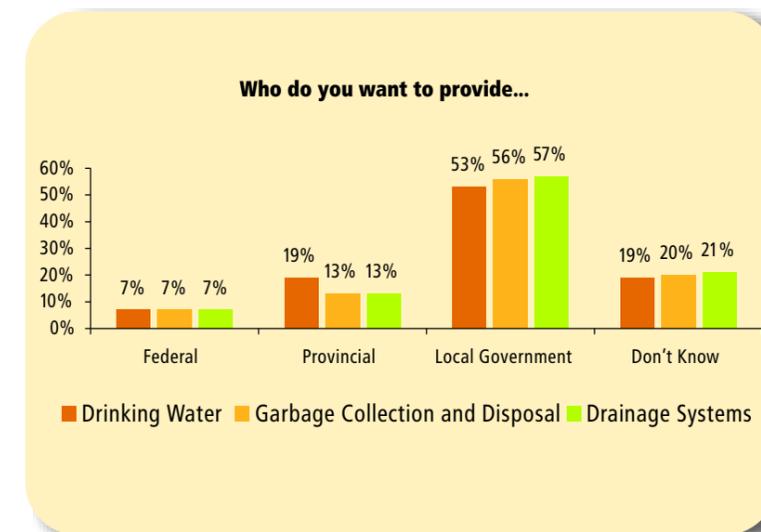


Figure 4.C6 disaggregates these responses. Of those survey respondents who favored giving responsibility for BHUs provision to local governments, 38% said they preferred district government to provide this service, while 28% and 34% said they would prefer TMAs and union councils to provide this service respectively; for primary school 37%, 32% and 32% of respondents would like the service to be provided by the districts, TMA, and union council respectively; for secondary schools the break up is 45%, 30%, and 25% would like service provision by the districts, TMAs and union councils respectively. A relatively small proportion of the respondents said "Don't know".

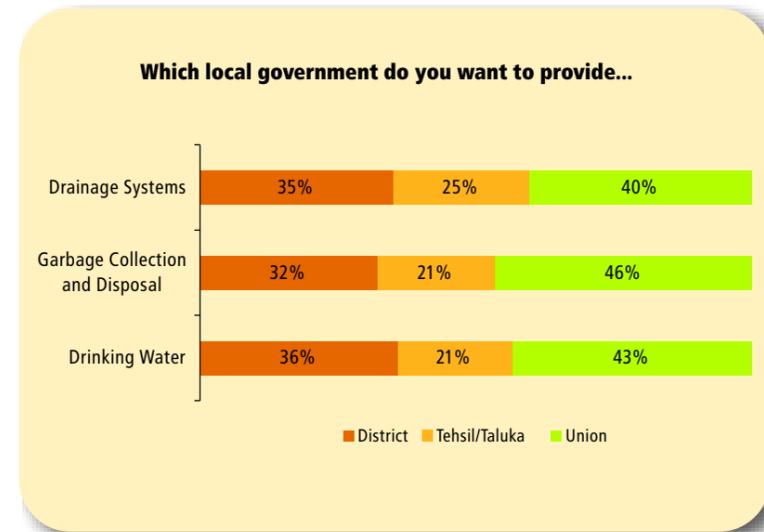
A similar pattern emerges insofar as citizen preferences for the provision of household services. Figure 4.C7 shows that there is a strong consensus among the UI/Nielsen survey respondents on giving local governments responsibility for water, garbage collection and disposal, and drainage.

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



It is useful to disaggregate the responses favoring local government provision. As can be seen in Figure 4.C8, 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, more than 40% would assign the responsibility to union councils.

Figure 4.C8: Preferences for provision of household services by local governments

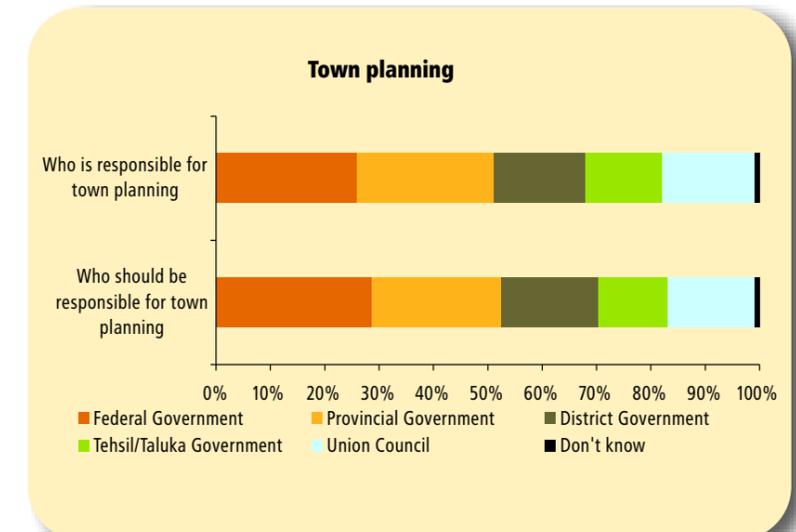


What is particularly striking about these results is the low proportion of respondents in favor of assigning both social services and household service responsibility to tehsils among the local governments. It also echoes the responses to some of the questions on governance, access to government, and 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.

Another indicator of the ambiguities inherent in the tehsil structure established by the 2001 LGO is the degree of confusion about the roles and responsibilities with respect to town planning, which is one of the most basic functions of a municipal authority. As Figure 4.C9 shows, there is a wide dispersion of views as to which level of government is responsible for this function; only 14% of respondents say that this is and 13% say it should be the responsibility of tehsils. In fact, the survey respondents are more likely to see it as a function of districts or higher levels of government.

Of course, this may reflect the current state of urban planning in most municipalities in Pakistan. Many tehsils do not have qualified planners; and few tehsil councils have approved urban development plans (i.e., for service areas, land use, transport, environmental protection, etc). In other words, citizens do not perceive a clear role for tehsils in this area because to date tehsils have failed to exercise their legal and regulatory mandate under the 2001 LGO.

Figure 4.C9: Present and preferred responsibility for town planning by level of government



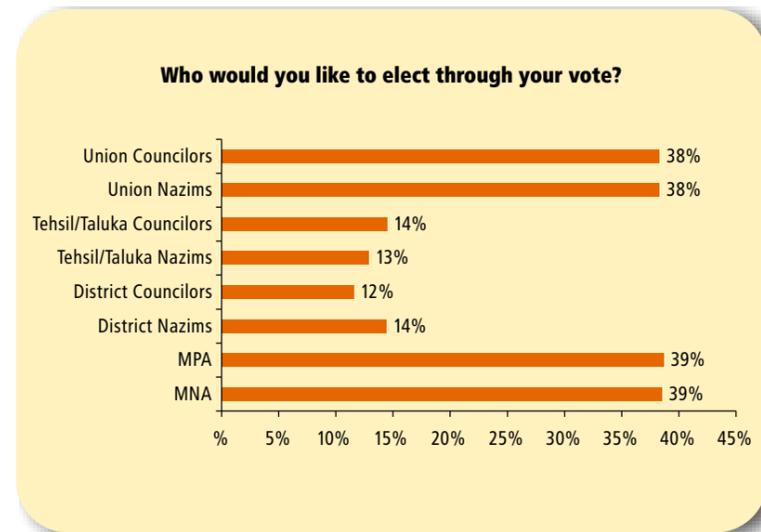
Local Government Elections. The section on governance showed that citizens are quite critical of issues of accountability, transparency, access and responsiveness of government. While local governments fared somewhat better than national and provincial governments, the differences were not large, with the exception of union councils. And in this section we saw that citizens are clear on their priorities for improving services provided by local governments; while they are not always sure of who is presently responsible for service provision, the majority of respondents think that services should continue to be provided by local governments, again giving priority to union councils.

But how should local governments be elected and governed? And who would citizens like to directly vote for? 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 privileged 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 selection and implementation of development schemes in

their unions, but 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.C10: 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.C10 above. A majority of survey respondents say that MNAs and MPAs should be directly elected — 39%. This is considerably higher than nazims of districts and tehsils, stated by 14% and 13% of respondents respectively. The support for direct election of union nazims and councilors by respondents is 38%.

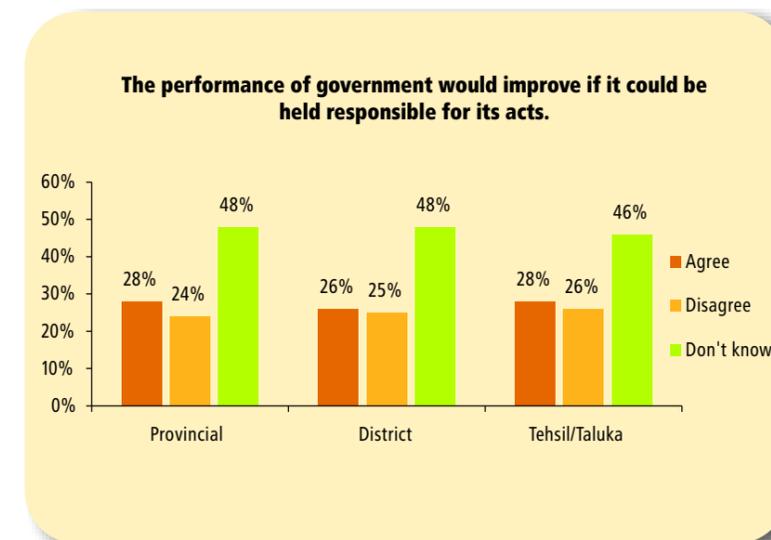
Again, these results highlight the critical governance role of the union councils in the local government system established by the 2001 LGO. The union nazims, naib nazims and council members are “gate keepers”, interacting daily with local people, responding to questions, and interceding to resolve problems with higher levels of government. It is this role that explains the high level of support for the maintenance of unions to union councils.

Improving Government Performance. The section on governance, above, included citizens' response on the question as to what level of government was “most responsive”; twenty-four percent responded “Union councils” and 20% said “None”. All other levels of government were considered responsive by less than 11% of respondents.

The UI/Neilson survey also asked citizens if the government can be made more responsive. The 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 not surprising.

The responses are presented in Figure 4.C11 below. Between 26% and 28% of respondents, depending on the level of government, replied that they “completely agreed” or “agreed” with the statement, and a similar range of respondents, 24% to 26% replied that they disagreed. A large proportion answered “Don't know.”

Figure 4.C11: 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 half of the respondents across all levels of government did not express their opinion; only 28% to 31% agreed, and 21% to 24% answered disagreed.



CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY



PHOTO BY NADIA TARIQ

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. Likewise, as was argued in the introduction to this document, in even asking citizens these kinds of questions, there is a tacit acceptance that democratically elected governments do not have a blank cheque to do whatever they want. While governments are elected to lead, good leadership in a democratic context is predicated on dialogue, consultation and consensus. In this regard, surveys are critical tools for governance, in that they can provide reliable evidence of broad citizen preferences on difficult and potentially conflictive themes.

This section looks at the implications of the UI/ACNielsen survey results in NWFP 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.

The first 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, from one-quarter to a third of the survey respondents identified problems with infrastructure, books, and furniture. In health, similarly, a quarter 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.

Not surprisingly, 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. 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.

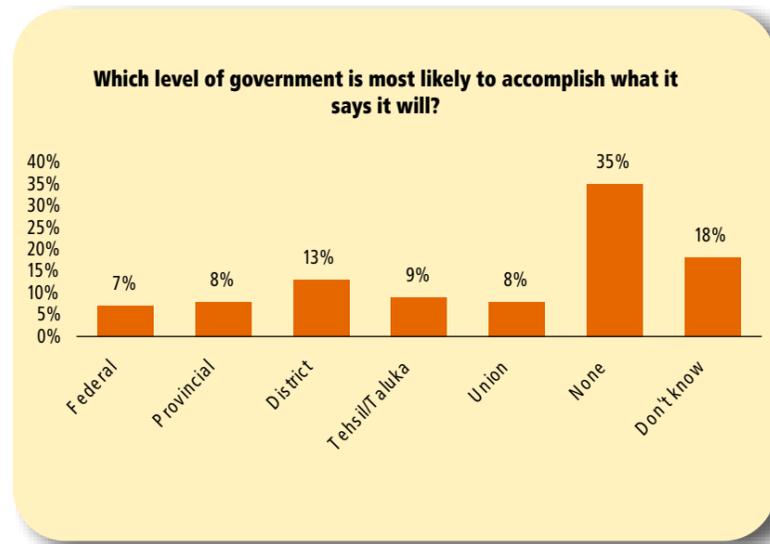
Few people would dispute the argument that the local government reforms promulgated by the Musharaf government in 2001 have not met their stated objectives, whether in terms of strengthening governance or improving the delivery of essential services. Indeed, the results of the UI/ACNielsen survey suggest that many citizens are dissatisfied with services they receive. However, the survey results can also provide an explanation as to why these reforms have failed — and that explanation is at odds with the views and opinions of some of the major stakeholders in the policy debate, particularly the senior bureaucracy.

In the background section above on the 2001 LGO and the current debate on devolution reforms, it was noted that in its initial phase the debate 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", i.e., 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 Musharaf government. It is not possible to assess the success or failure of "political accountability" when these provisions were never implemented. It also ignores another inconvenient issue, that there were — and continue to operate — very strong constraints to effective democratic governance across the board, at all levels of government.

It is useful to return to the discussion of government efficacy. Another dimension of efficacy — and linked to the concept of accountability — is the degree to which governments are perceived to follow through with their public commitments, for example, meeting campaign promises or implementing their stated policy objectives. The UI/ACNielsen survey asks a general question: “Which level of government is most likely to accomplish what it says it will?”

Figure 5.1: Perceptions of government efficacy in accomplishing stated goals



As Table 5.1 shows, 53% of responses were “None” and “Don't know”. No level of government is well evaluated. The federal and provincial governments received 7% and 8% of mentions respectively. On this question some levels of local governments were rated somewhat better: with 13% of respondents saying “districts”, and 9% “TMAAs”. But union councils were mentioned by only 8% of the survey respondents.

As was presented above, 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 might think about it, there is no strong 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 existing 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.

On this point, 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 reforms. Some stakeholders have put forward the idea of holding local government elections immediately, to readjust the political balance. 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 delaying elections 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.

This applies to all of the services prioritized by the respondents, whether education, health, water or basic sanitation. In health and education, there was a preference for keeping these services at the district level. Less than a 19% of respondents favored provincial control over these services. As was discussed above, the federal and provincial governments might have good reasons to justify a decision to take back control of policing, or to reinforce the enforcement of price regulations, or to curb corruption in land registration and taxes. But these are separate issues from being responsible for actual service delivery and should be treated as such.

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.

It should be noted that 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).

To conclude, another, more general issue that emerges from the survey findings is the confusion about roles. The responses to questions about the current division of responsibility for service delivery showed a wide dispersion. 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 example is the Peoples' Primary Health Initiative (PPHI), which completely sidelines district health decision-makers and has caused deterioration in preventative health programs even while it has tended to improve access to curative services.

The final recommendation in this sense is to eliminate or reengineer 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. While the federal government has continued to insist, rightly, that the provinces conduct a careful review of the local government system before deciding on reforms, this same principle should be applied to the vertical programs. While a definitive solution would be of course the review and reform of the concurrent list in the constitution, even before this happens the federal government could take measures to reform the implementing arrangements for these programs.



ANNEX

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey methodology

A comprehensive questionnaire was designed keeping in view the core objectives of the survey and characteristics of the respondent population. The questionnaire was later translated into Urdu and Sindhi and pre-tested in 30 households in Sukkur, Sindh and Rawalpindi, Punjab.

The draft questionnaire was tested and evaluated in each language, by the field teams of enumerators. The overall objective of the pre-test was to determine the length of the questionnaire and its overall fluidity, applicability of content, correctness of skipping and coding patterns, and ease of comprehension in both languages. Following this, enumerators and supervisors provided useful input based on empirical knowledge during in-house training sessions. This feedback allowed for the correction of various issues that had surfaced before finalizing the questionnaire in each language.

Sampling. A random sample of nationally as well as provincially representative households was selected, while maintaining a specific margin of error. A multi-stage stratified cluster sampling method was used along with Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) technique to select the target number of cities and villages for the urban and rural sample. The total sample size for this survey was 4,002 with approximately equal representation of both genders and urban and rural dwellers.

Margin of Error. The margin of error for the city sample was 2.19% and 2.20% for the rural sample at a 95% confidence level. To give adequate representation to urban/rural dwellers and all four provinces, a disproportionate allocation was required⁴. However, to accommodate this disproportionate allocation, the final data was weighted back to the actual proportions. The following grid provides the details of the sample sizes and splits which were used during this analysis.

Table A.1: Distribution of the sample by demographic variables

Province	Urban			Rural			Total Sample
	Male	Female	Error Margin	Male	Female	Error Margin	
Punjab	456	475	4.56%	500	508	4.88%	1939
Sindh	363	355	5.20%	191	192	7.07%	1101
NWFP	108	112	9.34%	192	193	7.07%	605
Balochistan	69	72	11.71%	110	106	9.43%	357
TOTAL	996	1014	3.10%	993	999	3.27%	4002

⁴Based on population, the sample from Baluchistan was very small. The size was increased to ensure meaningful analysis for the provincial data.

Sample Demographic Profile

The following table presents the key demographics of the sample.

Table A.2: Sample Profile

	Number	%	
Gender	Male	300	50%
	Female	305	50%
Age	18-24	142	23%
	25-34	167	28%
	34-44	149	25%
	45-54	84	14%
	55-64	40	7%
	64+	23	4%
Household size	2	9	1%
	3	26	4%
	4	54	9%
	5+	516	85%
Education	Primary or Below	329	54%
	6-9 years of school education	101	17%
	Secondary and Higher Secondary education	146	24%
	Graduation and above	29	5%
Community	City District	190	31%
	Other Urban	30	5%
	Rural	385	64%
Income	PKR 3000 or less	10	2%
	PKR 3001 to 7000	89	15%
	PKR 7001 to 11000	83	14%
	PKR 11001 to 15000	16	3%
	PKR 15001 to 20000	15	2%
	PKR 20001 to 25000	2	
	PKR 25000 and above	28	5%