Electoral representation in decentralized governance in the Asia Pacific region: Selected Country Case Studies

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ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL CENTER
BANGKOK, THAILAND
1. Electoral representation and democratic governance at the local level
2. Decentralized governance systems and electoral representation: Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand
3. Sharing Ideas and experiences
Electoral representation and democratic governance at the local level

SECTION 1
Paradigm shift from economic growth to human and sustainable development with the participation of all segments of the society;

Shift from centralization to decentralization to take government closer to the people and localize the delivery of and access to services;

To move from government to democratic governance that provides institutional mechanisms for the engagements of three sets of actors – those from the government, civil society and the private sector;

Allows for greater representation of various political, religious, social and ethnic groups enhancing political legitimacy of the government and national integration.

Why Decentralize?
Principles of Democratic Local Governance

- Sustainability
- Equity
- Poverty Alleviation
- Inclusion

Democratic Governance
- Representation
- Participation
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Access
- Rule of Law

Decentralization
- Devolution of Power
- Civil Society Engagement
- Local Partnerships
Electoral representation at the local level

Provides a focal point to bring together leadership from all stakeholders including civil society, communities, traditional leadership. Facilitates leadership for the three pillars of local democracy by allowing access and participation of representatives from marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Platform to break taboos that are insensitive to gender while fostering good practices acceptable to all people.

Possible creation of a new group political elites at the local level reflecting national party structures. Corruption at the local level creating a further burden on poor and disadvantaged. May become frustrated without power and finances creating instability and potential for conflict.
Electoral representation at the urban level

Lack of representation for a large segment of the population can create insecurities and possible conflict. As urban populations are diverse, electoral representation will provide a cohesive platform to articulate the needs of the marginalized. Opportunity to create leadership regardless of wealth and position, since poor can vote for their member of choice, from the poorer ‘wards’ of an urban area.

Housing, infrastructure, need large budgets, prone to higher levels of corruption. Cronyism with city private sector magnates. Political support may come from crime syndicates. Lack of a cohesive community. Difficulties in registration. Metropolitan elections may marginalize the poorer neighbourhoods.
Country Case Studies

SECTION II
Malaysia
State Governments

13 states in the federation of Malaysia. All 13 states adopts the Westminster Parliamentary system and each has a unicameral state legislative assembly. Structure in all 13 states is similar to the government system of the federal government of Malaysia but the state legislatures consist of only a single chamber. 3 Federal Territories (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan) come under the Ministry of Federal Territories. No quotas for women. 7% participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Governments</th>
<th>Rural areas</th>
<th>Urban areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are 149 local authorities including 98 District Councils at the local level. Approx. 20% women</td>
<td>President and 8 – 24 Councillors appointed by the state government from nominees recommended by ruling political parties</td>
<td>12 city councils pop. 500,000 and above: rapid development</td>
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<td>39 municipal councils (pop. 100,000 and above)</td>
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<td>Mayor and between 8 and 24 councillors appointed by the state government. Municipalities can be upgraded to cities through an application to the King</td>
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<td>State Governments</td>
<td>State/regional elections were held in 2010 under the 2008 new constitution and 7 state and 7 regional governments have been formed with a legislature, and state government headed by a Governor appointed by the President. No reserved seats for women or marginalized groups. 2% women.</td>
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<td>Local Governments</td>
<td>Ward and Village Tract Administration Act passed in July 2012. Rules and regulations under the new Act, and the date for elections to the Wards and Village Tracts are yet to be announced. Several committees appointed at the village and township level consisting of government, civil society, and community participants. Chaired by the Township Administrator who is the senior most civil servant appointed by the national government.</td>
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Thailand
### Provincial Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>76 Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAO)</th>
<th>Representative bodies: PAO Council (24-48 elected members)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Population:</td>
<td>Directly elected Head of PAO Bangkok and Pattaya Separate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large – 2,565,117</td>
<td>No reserved seats for women</td>
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<td>Small – 182,729</td>
<td>7% women participation</td>
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### Local Governments

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<tr>
<td>6,089 Tambon Administrative Organizations</td>
<td>1,687 municipalities, 23 metropolitan, 142 city, 1,522 town</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. Pop. Large: 25,000 Small: 2,000</td>
<td>Council – 12 members for town, 18 for city, 24 for metropolitan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directly elected</td>
<td>Directly elected</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Council (numbers depend on number of villages/two elected members per village)</th>
<th>12 members for town, 18 for city, 24 for metropolitan</th>
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<p>| 1,522 town | | |</p>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Service Delivery at Local Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Local authorities act as service provider, revenue collector, regulator, facilitator, negotiator and strategic integrator. However, these are appointed public officials. Quality control by central Ministry of Local Government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Service Delivery done by Line Ministries through civil servants recruited at the national level. The Township Administrator is a civil servant reporting to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Increasing participation by community representatives in an elaborate system of township level committees in identifying priorities and bottom up planning.</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Not rolled back the deconcentrated arms of the central government for service delivery, perform traditional command and control functions over local authorities. Lack of clearly delineated responsibilities between central-government and LAO’s in health, education. Wide disparities between regions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Human Development Indicators (Impact)</td>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Ranked at number 64 in the high human development category. Comparatively high gender inequality index of 42 (same as USA). Inequality in Malaysia is among the highest in the region. Rural-urban income gap jumped 3 times from 1989-2009. Only 25 per cent of social assistance goes to the poorest 20 per cent.</td>
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<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>Ranked 149 in the low human development category. Gender inequality index of 80. Service delivery to conflict affected and geographically isolated areas extremely poor. Government making serious efforts with development partners to improve.</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>103 in medium human development. Gender inequality index 66. Great disparities between Bangkok/central areas and the northeast. Ongoing competition between central and local authorities for fiscal control and delivery of essential services.</td>
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Challenge: Increasing Inequalities

Solution: Empower citizens at the local/urban level

Stating the Obvious!
• Credible local elections
• Power and capacity development

• Anti-corruption mechanisms
• Community/CSO oversight

• Uniform service delivery
• Resources for local level

• Between levels of government
• Especially for health/education

• Quotas for women
• Increased participation

• Participation /define roles
• Innovative activities
ICLD, Workshop on Democratic Local Governance in Asia: Reforms and Innovations in Local Democracy (May 13 – 14, 2011)

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Saldanha, Cedric, Website on Decentralization – Public Sector Management

Dr Muhammed Abdul Khalid, research fellow with University Kebangsaan Malaysia, The income equality gap

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The World Bank: Thailand: Challenges and Options for 2012 and Beyond, Improving Service Delivery


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Thaib, Lukman, Tun Abudl Razak School of Government (TARSOG)’ Facilitating Sustainable Political Stability: Malaysia’s Experience

References
THANK YOU