



Overview of Governance and Rampant Corruption in Land Administration in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the governance and corruption in the land management system of Bangladesh and the effect of these factors on the tenure security of land and the country's economic growth. This study used a quantitative research design. The research outcomes show that corruption is systematic in all levels of land management, thus eroding the security of tenure, and worsening social inequalities. The new governance reforms have also been implemented to curb corruption; however, these changes' impact has been rather poor. In light of the findings of the study, there is a well-established need for systematic reform to improve the situation in Bangladesh through digitization of land records, better transparency, and higher accountability in the land administration sector. The investigation presented in this research adds to the discussion of governance and development and offers practical policy suggestions that relate to fighting corruption and enhancing the efficient utilization of Bangladeshi land.

Keywords: Rampant Corruption, Land Administration

INTRODUCTION

Land is the most significant resource in Bangladesh and has economic as well as cultural and social importance. It's an essential component of the nation since it impacts agriculture, which employs the majority of the workforce and accounts for a significant portion of its GDP (World Bank, 2021). Besides, Bangladesh has a culture where ownership is correlated with community, political power, and economic status (Khan, 2020). However, the land administration system is in charge of maintaining and protecting land ownership and transaction records, and the system also is extremely troublesome and adds to the major difficulties (Sarker & Rahman, 2019). The present land administration system in Bangladesh had its origin in the colonial past, British colonialism more specifically. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 forms the basis of the present land tenure system of Bangladesh. Several reforms have been implemented over the years and still, the structure of the land administration system is intricate with numerous departments involved in land record keeping, conducting of surveys and demarcation as well as settlement of disputes. Efficient and proper land management is always important for a country like Bangladesh, as land is a limited resource in nature due to the large population and geographical conditions (Barkat et al., 2016).

Corrupt practices in the land administration system in Bangladesh are numerous and include petty corruption that involves offering small incentives to middlemen to large scale corruption involving senior civil servants and political leaders (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022). Corruption is systematically practiced at the grassroots level whereby people pay visits to the local land offices to get services like issuing title deeds or succession certificates (Sarker & Rahman, 2019). This type of corruption adversely affects the already established high cost of land throughout the transaction process with the added effect of locking out the poor in the society who may not be able to afford the bribes (Ahmed & Sohail, 2018). Major embezzlement is practiced through the alteration of records for the gain of influential persons or organizations. This may include the unlawful alienation of public land to individuals, through fraudulent documents or use of force on the owners of the land (Islam, 2015). Due to the fact, that there is no digitization regarding the land records and there is no integrated register in place corrupt officials can tamper with the records without being apprehended (Rahman & Islam, 2020). The close relationship between the land officials, politicians, and powerful businessmen holds the land grabbing a permanent root to continue sinking deeper hence not easily reversible (Zaman, 2021).

According to Hossain (2017), effective land management enhances tenure security, enables the cultivation of crops, initiates infrastructure investment, and fosters social equity. However, the existing system has numerous challenges that are creating problems to work properly. Some of these challenges are out of date and out of touch records, overlapping in the jurisdiction of various agencies, opaque, and that the official who administers the land lacks capacity (Rahman & Islam, 2020). These drawbacks are even worse due to corruption in land administration that hinders ordinary citizens from the protection of their rights over the land (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022). Some of the tactics mentioned include changing of records of the land, paying bribes to be issued with services more so in the land sector, and corruption between the land officials and suppliers of cash throughout the country (Zaman, 2021). Unfortunately, cases of land related conflicts are on the rise and what ensues is lengthy court processes and sometimes even physical confrontations. This inefficiency and corruption are also drawn in the land administration to hamper development projects, where confusion in the land title and disputes prolong infrastructure projects, enhance cost, and minimize investor confidence (World Bank, 2021).

The reported corruption in the land administration system creates several significant implications for the general development and society in Bangladesh (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022). A direct consequence of the contemporary acquisition factors is a surge in the number of land-related legal cases hence developing social strain and clogging the judicial process (Islam, 2015). Most of these disputes are derived from; irregularities in land registry or registry fraud and these two are driven by corruption (Sarker & Rahman, 2019). Most of the time the issues are resolved through some form of legal action which is slow and costly, making the issue worse (Khan, 2020). Similarly, corruption erodes the stability of land rights which is central to development. The problem of uncertain property rights in land and agricultural investments acts as a disincentive by locking up the ability to invest in land by individuals and businesses because such property may be subjected to land dispute or unlawful taking and appropriation (World Bank, 2021). Such insecurity is most damaging in the agriculture sector where the only security is the security of tenure and ownership of the land used for agriculture (Barkat et al., 2016). In developing nations, especially in urban settings, the issues of corruption in the land segments weaken infrastructure development since people's land titles remain unknown or disputed hence making development a herculean effort (Ahmed and Sohail, 2018). In addition, corruption in land administration widens the social injustice gap by depriving citizens of their rightful share of the resources. The poor and those nicknamed

social animals are the most affected form this vice as they cannot afford to even find their way through the system or even afford a single bribery (Sarker & Rahman, 2019).

Due to the rampant corruption that has plagued the system of land management in Bangladesh, the government has launched various activities to increase governance and reduce corruption (Rahman & Islam, 2020). Some of these reforms can be grouped as: – digitization of land records to discourage fraudulent activities as well as facilitate easy access, – the development of a centralized land registry to combat land corruption and fraud –; and e-governance reforms to enhance transparency and curb the vice (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022). However, now the reforms have been slow and mere due to political influence and bureaucratic red tape and corruption policies have not been fully implemented; their effectiveness is still hindered by the influence of the elites and successive governments' unwillingness to undertake full-fledged structural change (Zaman, 2021).

Corruption especially in the land administration system in Bangladesh is not only a matter of how to manage land but also has social impacts which are enough to affect the total development of the country. The lack of an updated record-keeping system, lack of well-coordinated governance, and weak accountability paves the way for corrupt practices that lead to land rights erosions, suppressed economic growth, and social injustice (Khan, 1889). Solving these issues demands a holistic framework that encompasses the following steps: digitization of the records of the land, consolidation of more accountable structures, conducting capacity building sessions for the officers conversant with land administration, and engaging the public on issues of land. Therefore, such technical and administrative measures have to be supported by political will and commitment to change (Khan et al., 2020). It is only through continuous endeavors, involvement of several key stakeholders, and multifaceted strategies that the situation of the governance of land administration in Bangladesh can be enhanced to a level that corruption, undue favoritism, and misappropriation of this significant national resource- 'land', can be minimized with fair distribution and usage for the overall population. Therefore, this study aims to identify the corrupt practices prevalent in the administration of land in Bangladesh.

2.0 Literature Review

Land administration can be seen as a strategic sector that is central to governance and that relates to land ownership and use as well as land rights. Sustainable land management is the key to guaranteeing people's rights in land, development, and stability in society. For decades,

the existing land administration system in Bangladesh has suffered from institutional inefficiency, corruption, and poor governance all of which bear heavily on its development blueprint. In the context of land administration, the term governance can be described as a set of activities or processes, rules, and structures through which rights to the land are established and protected. It encompasses the legal and institutional environment of tenure rights, land-use planning, and market systems (Ramezani et al., 2023). Principles of good governance of land administration imply that such process is open, responsible, fair, and efficient in the defense of the rights of all actors in the land market, including owners, tenants, and the state. Good land governance is a central input in the sustainable development and poverty reduction processes because it determines the access to resources, social issues, and choice of economic prospects. This is the foundation of good governance when it comes to land administration and this is anchored on the strength of the law. It describes and creates rights over land, provides the framework for operating land deals, and sets the legal foundations for the protection of those rights. In Bangladesh, there are many laws in place that regulate and control the land administration and management but most of the laws are archaic in nature (Shovon et al., 2022). The major laws governing tenure and use of lands include the land reform ordinance of 1984 and the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950. However, the efficacy and impact of these laws are somewhat checked by duplicate and conflicting laws coupled with uneven application of these laws and no coordinated land policy in Bangladesh (Rahman & Islam, 2015). Institutional arrangements have to do with the land policy implementing institutions and organizations that are charged with the responsibility of overseeing the functions of land administration. In Bangladesh, it is decentralized amongst the different departments such as the Ministry of Land, the Directorate of Land Records and Survey, and the local land offices. It always results in coordination issues, redundancy, and corruption vantage points. Bearing this in mind, global research on effective institutions for land administration has pointed out that the key factors include viability and accountability of the institutions for land administration which have a clear mandate (Barkat et al., 2016).

The department has the judiciary and quasi-judicial such as the Land Survey Tribunal and the Land Appeal Board that are responsible for the determination of issues concerning land (Mookherjee, 2020). But these are normally weak and inefficient structures, as most of the time they are very expensive, bureaucratic, and heavily influenced by corruption thus very slow in rendering any justice to the common man. This needs to enhance the existing framework for the resolution of disputes as a way of enhancing the efficiency in governance of land

administration and protection of rights in land (Hossain, 2017). There are some issues associated with the governance of the land administration system in Bangladesh such as corruption, inefficiency, and lack of transparency (Sakib et al., 2022). Most of these problems emanate from the historical, social, and political context.

Corruption in the implementation of the land administration is maybe the greatest problem in Bangladesh. It is present in the local land office right through the higher forms of administrative structures. Corruption such as through providing bribes, alteration of records, and bias is rife which compromises the conduct of land administration (Mbalaka, 2023). It is evident that corruption is prevalent in Bangladesh and across sectors and one of the most corrupt sectors in Bangladesh is land administration, the corruption can be manifested when people are involved in the process in case of registration of land, mutation, and the final process of dissolving the disputes (Minnee, 2022). On the same note corruption in land administration has dire repercussions. It results in denials of faith in the system by society, restricts access to land and other resources by the poor and other vulnerable groups of society as well as increases social injustices. However, corruption skews the development and use of land by altering the Land markets, and making Land prices unreasonably high (Ferdousi et al., 2020). The fight against corruption in the land administration sector needs structural changes which include embracing technology in storing and maintaining records of the land, determining clear procedures, and implementing anti-corruption measures (Khan, 2020).

The other form of governance challenge relates to land administration processes, which are seen to be very inefficient. The system lacks flexibility with bureaucratic delays, is outrightly procedural, and lacks adequate capacity within the land administration officials. Such drawbacks make the whole process of land transactions lengthy and expensive which in turn hampers investment and development on the land. The World Bank has listed nurturing to be a serious constraint in Bangladesh's economic development especially the agricultural and real estate sectors (World Bank, 2021). Anything related to the land records has not gone through a full transition to digital and most of the regions are still operating analogously. Aside, it slows down the process of transacting land, and most importantly, it predisposes the transaction to more errors and fraud. Efficiency can be improved in the field of administration of land, for it is necessary to attract the latest technologies, develop officials, and simplify the procedures (Rahman & Islam, 2020). Transparency especially land administration is one of the measures that play a signifying role of good governance, which is however non-existent in the case of Bangladesh. Lack of disclosure of the identity of buyers and sellers of land and making of

decisions in the transactions tend to give room for corruption and abuse of power. For example, the prerogative of decision-making for land distribution and conflict solutions pertinent to the land administration officials invariably prompts bias and corruption (Sarker & Rahman, 2019).

Another key principle to promote transparency is to clearly define and publicize procedures for land transactions and to collect and disseminate land records. Initiatives such as digitization of land records are in the right direction, but they should be followed by steps to safeguard the authenticity of the data. Moreover, auditing procedures and other independent bodies should ensure the efficiency of land administration officials, and to address misconduct, a periodic audit is recommended (Islam, 2015). Land tenure becomes significant in the economic improvement of a community and overall societal order as it empowers the holder or the group of people with confidence that their land is safe for any form of development. Nevertheless, corruption and inefficiency in the governance channels of the land administration system in Bangladesh negatively affect land tenure security. Some of the factors include land registry fraud, double sales, and pending disputes make the status of rightful ownership of land inconclusive hence resulting in conflicts and delayed developments (Hossain, 2017). This has negative consequences in the lives of the poor and other vulnerable groups since they are then exposed to land grabbing and other negative practices. Especially, women encounter numerous difficulties in obtaining tenure rights because of Discriminatory laws and traditions. Enhancing governance in land administration is thus decisive for ensuring that all persons, especially the socially and economically vulnerable, have the right to obtain land. The present-day LPA in Bangladesh has its origin in the British Permanent Settlement Act of 1793. It provided for a structure of land tenure that has existed to the present but has been adjusted more than once (Islam, 2015). There are a number of institutions that are involved in the administration of land in Bangladesh namely, the Department of Land Records and Survey, Ministry of Land, and Local Government (Barkat et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the institutions described above have not streamlined the system, and still many agencies working independently with overlapping jurisdictions and lack proper interconnectivity.

Corruption in land administration is expressed in corruption schemes such as bribery, embezzlement, and fraud in regard to land records. Small-scale corruption is common in local offices, and it occurs when people have to pay some amount of money to receive a service, or a product or to have a dispute resolved (Ahmed & Sohail, 2018). This type of corruption delays the delivery of essentials as well as puts off vulnerable groups who cannot afford these payments (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022). Grand corruption includes problems

of a more structural nature, for instance, the embezzlement of state resources and ownership of the land and cheating of records. Such corruption is fostered by the fact that these records are largely paper-based and there is no central land registry that coordinates records thus enabling officials to alter records to suit their needs as observed by Islam (2015). The nexus between land officials, politicians, and wealthy businesspeople consolidates corruption, thus, making system reform nearly impossible (Zaman, 2021).

As highlighted above corruption in land administration lead to the following consequences. One of the major effects is the increase in land related disputes; these are occasioned by either differing registration records or fraudulent activities in the transfer of land. Such disputes are normally protracted leading to political instabilities and social unrest further stretching the judicial system and hindering development (Barkat et al., 2016). This also reduces the security of tenure in land leading to low investment in agriculture and infrastructure due to the unknown ownership of land. As noted earlier, corruption widens the gap besetting social equality by reaching out to the poor and vulnerable in society. The poor are locked out during the process as they do not have the capacity to overcome factors such as corruption, nepotism, and bribery that characterize the land administration system and deepen their marginalization and poverty. This computerization increases social injustice and can also possibly cause conflict due to the process of consolidating land to the elites through corrupt practices.

The development of human capital for handling land administration officials has also been in the reform process. Technically the training program is aimed to increase the capability of officials and to solve problems associated with obsolete practices and/or lack of resources (Hossain, 2017). Still, before realizing the goals, it has been challenging due to inadequate funding and missing a strategic plan on how to achieve capacity building. CSOs and international development partners remain involved, by providing recommendations, support measures, or correctives to the corruption prevalent in the administration of land. They also promote transparency, offer lawyer support to those who are affected by land related corrupt practices, and also supervise different stages of land administration (Sarker & Rahman 2019). Foreign players provide expertise, financial sponsorship, and examples from other nations on how to proceed with reforms (World Bank, 2021). But such efforts are far from achieving the desired results mainly due to the prevailing political scenario and the backlash from powerful rent-seeking forces (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022).

A review of the literature on governance and corruption in land administration pointed to the context of Bangladesh and it is a product of history, institutional weakness, and systemic corruption. Although achieving these objectives may utilize relatively recent concepts, like digitization of records and centralized land registries, the solution generally has serious problems dealing with technological, bureaucratic, and political constraints. The remedy to corruption in land administration is multifaceted and entails enhancing the transparency of the sector, accountability, and the strengthening of the individuals' capacity, alongside public participation. More regular attempts from Bangladeshi individuals as well as international organizations are required to bring positive and enduring changes in the land governance in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative approach was selected since it facilitates the collection of numerical data that can be analyzed using statistics, which would in turn help in the identification of trends, patterns, and relationships regarding governance and corruption in land administration. The main objective is to identify the corrupt practices prevalent in the administration of land in Bangladesh.

The data were obtained from various research papers and from the Land Administration Department of Bangladesh. This quantitative research method offers a comprehensive way of studying governance and corruption in land administration in Bangladesh (Akter, 2023). Hence, the employing of structured findings of the study intends to provide empirical support which will be useful for policy formulation and helpful for the existing and budding discourses of governance and development in Bangladesh. The implications of this research shall determine the extent of corruption in land administration and inform the strategies to enhance the strengthening of governance in this sensitive sector.

DISCUSSION

The study provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of land administration, the impact of corruption, and the effectiveness of recent reforms. The findings reveal several key insights that are crucial for understanding and addressing the challenges faced in this sector.

Governance and Corruption in Land Administration

The quantitative data reveal that corruption continues to be prevalent in the land administration system of Bangladesh. Malfeasance and embezzlement, including bribery and alteration of

records relating to the property, are rife and considerably weaken governance systems. The breakdown of the overall results in terms of the number of incidents revealed that a large number of the respondents, especially those who are directly engaged in land use, reported regular experiences with corrupt activities. This finding supports prior studies that listed corruption as the most significant challenge to efficient land administration (Barkat et al., 2016; Rahman & Islam, 2020).

The study also identified issues of transparency and accountability to be systemic in nature. Opacity, lack of institutional and legal safeguards, and mindset of passive acceptance and compliance are some of the main reasons for impunity in the land administration sector (Hossain, 2017; Ahmed & Sohail, 2018). These challenges are aggravated by weak land administration procedures, records, and procedures, as well as bureaucratic hindrances that provide room for corruption to thrive (Khan, 2020; Sarker & Rahman, 2019).

Effectiveness of Reforms

Due to recent reforms in the areas of governance and eradication of corruption, some developments like e-tendering of land records and implementation of e-governance have had a mixed success rate. From the analysis, it can be observed that these reforms have some net positive effects but are constrained by technical and administrative issues. For instance, while the digitization of various processes has brought an aspect of transparency to an organization, the overall implementation is still sloppy and many sectors have not yet transitioned from manual systems (Rahman & Islam, 2020; Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022).

The results also show that stakeholders have appreciation towards the reforms carried out but at the same time have many concerns about the process of implementation. There are challenges like gaps, technical problems, and opposition from stakeholders that slow down these reforms to achieve the intended objectives (Islam, 2015; Zaman, 2021). In addition, many e-governance programs fail to offer sufficient and standardized training for the officials working in the land administration departments, and these are compounded by bureaucratic constraints (Sarker & Rahman, 2019).

Impact of Corruption on Land Tenure and Development

Corruption has various negative effects on the administration of land especially in issues to do with tenure security and economic development as noted in the study. The increased rate of fraudulent transactions as well as disputes arising from corrupt practices weaken tenure rights

hence limiting the capacity of users in the land sector to undertake investment and development in their land (World Bank, 2021). The following leads to uncertainty, and lack of efficiency to steer investment and consequently slow down the economic growth.

It can be concluded that the effects of corrupt practices on the land administration are worst felt by the more vulnerable groups of people due to their weaknesses in dealing with corruption systems. This further worsens social imbalance and restricts hopes of income migration, and unemployment (Sarker & Rahman, 2019; Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022).

Outdated Regulations

Bangladesh's land management scheme is founded on antiquated or customary laws. The majority of the laws were passed during the British rule. The antiquated laws primarily depended on surveyors, revenue collectors, and land officers, which opened the door to corruption. Certain rules result in falsified documentation, compelling landowners to pay them to maintain accurate records of their properties. Examples include the Bangladesh Land Holding (Limitation) Order of 1972, the Land Reforms Ordinance of 1984, the State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950, and the Non-Agricultural Tenancy Act of 1949. In addition, a small number of revenue officers, surveyors, and sub-registrars covertly entice squatters to occupy the land of innocent owners. In civilized societies, land management standards are held to be the highest. Proper processing of property ownership, registration, relocation, mapping, tax payment, will or testament, and other legal documents will only be achievable with changes to the central land administration infrastructure (Saleh, 2015).

Fragmented Institutional Framework of Land Administration

The dispersion of land administration and management has resulted in the establishment of numerous field offices. Tahsil Offices are located at the union level and are responsible for managing land within their authority. Tahsil Offices are responsible for managing land records in their area, identifying and maintaining records of khas land, assisting the AC Land Office with mutation investigations distributing khas land to landless people, and collecting land development tax (LDT) from renters. Upazilla Land Offices are responsible for managing land within respective upazillas. These offices play critical roles in handling land issues, providing 28 unique functions. Their primary duties include maintaining records of Khas land, issuing certificate cases to LDT defaulters, sending proposals to the DC office for the distribution and leasing of Khas land, water bodies, and hat bazar, and updating records resulting from changes in land transfers for the purposes of buying, selling, inheritance, and other changes resulting

from natural causes. Assistant Commissioners (AC)-Land, who report directly to the relevant Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO), oversee these offices.

Additional District Commissioners (ADC) - Revenue, who are based at the district level, are in charge of AC-land Offices. However, managing land issues and carrying out government policies on land at the district level is the exclusive responsibility of the District Commissioner (DC) in each district. Every DC office in a district also maintains a record room from which tenants and service recipients receive certified copies of the RoR. The relevant Divisional Commissioner's Office oversees and coordinates the execution of land policy after this point. Sub-registry offices under the Directorate of Registration handle various registers for land transfers resulting from purchases and sales, inheritances, gifts, and other circumstances at the upazilla level. District Registrars, who are based at the district level, oversee these Sub-registry offices. In addition, land surveys are carried out by 245 Settlement Offices under the Directorate of Land Survey and Records (DLSR) at the upazila level. 16 Zonal Settlement Offices are located all around the nation and oversee these Settlement Offices.

The Ministry of Land, the Directorate of Land Survey and Record, and the Directorate of Registration are the many units that operate at the central level and are responsible for providing general supervision over field-level offices as well as creating related policies and guidelines (Ntihinyurwa & Vries, 2020). These offices offer various land services to service recipients within various institutional frameworks. Ordinary service recipients are forced to visit or communicate with several agencies at various levels as a result of these fragmentations. In order to accomplish this, service recipients must make lengthy trips, put in a lot of time, and undergo physical labor and financial loss.

Various Institutions' Coordination Gaps

The Ministry of Land, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs are the institutional processes that oversee land administration and management (Ménard et al., 2020). Additionally, six secondary ministries have an indirect role in land management, including the Ministry of Forest and Environment, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Fishery and Livestock, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the Ministry of Railways, and the Ministry of Industry. The three main Ministries are primarily in charge of managing and leasing khas land, waterbodies, hat-bazaar, vested property, abandoned properties, and conducting periodic land surveys. They are also responsible for maintaining Records of Rights (RoR) and registering land transfers. However,

when it comes to managing these activities and creating pertinent regulations, there are often coordination gaps across these entities. Official directives state that Subregistrars are responsible for registering land where mutations have been made. Subregisters may register without making any changes, which makes it difficult for AC land offices to update and maintain RoR. Additionally, it is stipulated that Land Transfer (LT) Notices must be forwarded from sub-registry offices to AC land offices. However, some Subregistry offices fail to routinely maintain this provision. There have been numerous cases when Deed Writers have committed various abnormalities, such as forging deeds with fictitious seals and stamps, in collusion with sub-registrars who are concerned. However, the AC Land office is unable to hold Sub-registrars responsible for their misdeeds. The Department of Land Survey and Records (DLSR) is another entity that conducts land surveys. They do not receive updated RoR from the relevant AC Land Office during land surveys.

Lack of Digitalization in Land Management

It is believed that digitalization will inevitably increase efficiency in the land sector. At the moment, the e-Service Center, DLRS, and Khatian records are entered using a digital system, and the data is printed. Nevertheless, the system is limited to printing the khatian; it is unable to handle modifications. The current approach might work well for digitally preserving land records, but a more comprehensive land information system (LIS) must be created to ensure current record keeping in an integrated way (Hasan & Rupa, 2021). Land record keeping will be managed and maintained inefficiently and with a lack of coordination if there is no integrated digital record system with a central server. Furthermore, some officials and staff lack excitement and are hesitant to offer digitalized services because doing so would limit their opportunity to engage in irregularities and corruption. Among the digitalization projects being performed are digital surveys utilizing two different technologies, digitization of land records and integration of AC land and Sub-registry offices, e-filing seeking Khatian (RoR) from District Record Room, and scanning of maps and shredded khatian (Islam et al., 2020). Additionally, certain Upazilla Land Offices have begun providing service recipients with information regarding the status of mutation khatian by SMS under the Innovation Fund after posting scanned copies of khatian and maps to their websites. The digitalization of the land sector is only getting started. Nevertheless, they are sporadic undertakings without regard for a grand plan. Real-time land upkeep data were not taken into consideration while selecting some in order to achieve certain immediate goals. Sometimes intentions are not the same. In three upazillas, for instance, surveys are carried out using cutting-edge technology, while in

three others, less sophisticated apparatus is used. The government still lacks a comprehensive plan for completely automating the land industry. The aforementioned issues have complicated the digitization process in a number of ways. It has lacked momentum and been clumsy and slow for the entire year. Ultimately, the land industry's attempt to go digital was unsuccessful in preventing anomalies and corruption, nor in offering customer-friendly services.

Multiplicity of Documents

The main issue with land management is the proliferation of records or paperwork pertaining to rights. Three primary functions—record keeping, registration, and settlement—form the foundation of the current land management system (Raihan et al., 2020). Various offices are responsible for managing each of these tasks. Now, how is a court supposed to resolve a disagreement if one side presents ownership proof from the Tahsil office, another from the Registrar's office, and yet another from the Settlement office, and if there happens to be a discrepancy, which is evident? The main problem with the land administration system is the abundance of records or paperwork pertaining to rights.

Massive Workforce Shortages

Considerable labor shortages are seen in the management and administration of land. There are 8800 open managerial posts overall, or about 60 of the authorized positions. It should be mentioned that the promotion of Tashilder and Kanongo from Third Class to Second Class sparked numerous lawsuits, which has caused a lengthy delay in hiring for these roles. However, the Department of Land Survey and Records still has 43% of First Class and 47% of Second-Class positions open. Additionally, there are vacancies in the registry department, with 18% of the Sub-register posts unfilled. Service recipients are denied requested services as a result of numerous job openings and a multiplying increase in workload brought on by fast industrialization and increased land use (Sakib et al., 2022).

Data Management and Record Keeping are Done by Hand

Throughout the land sector, information management and record keeping are done by hand. For more than a century, all land surveys (CS, SA, and RS) were completed by hand. To preserve land records and office operations, Upzilla and union land offices keep more than dozens of manual registers. Furthermore, an ineffective manual information management system makes it difficult to enforce accountability and unintentionally hinders appropriate field operation monitoring. There are currently 45.8 million manually maintained and used RoR

(khatian) and mauza maps in the nation. The inefficiency of manual record keeping and information management hinders the ability of UPASIL and Union land offices to provide efficient customer service (Alam et al., 2022). They take a lot of time searching through the manually kept survey and registrar records. Furthermore, worn-out old maps and CS and SA survey records that were stored in various offices, especially Record Rooms, have been frayed from frequent use.

Lengthy Land Survey Process

Land surveying is a laborious process in Bangladesh. From beginning to end, there are 10 steps involved, which include different phases of field surveys, analysis processes, editing, and record printing. The 1935 Survey Rule stipulates that a district's land survey must be finished in five years. Many stakeholders did, however, point out that it can take up to 20 years to complete and print a survey. Potential causes include surveyor irregularities and corruption during field surveys, the employment of inexperienced labor, inadequate technology, and powerful individuals interfering with the review procedures (Hazarika et al. 2023). Land surveys take ten to fifteen years to complete, and during this time, tenancy rights undergo several changes due to changes in inheritance, land transfer, and the type of land.

Other issues

Khatian, also known as the Record of Rights (ROR), only establishes the basis for possession at the moment of recording; it is not definitive proof of ownership. In the current legal system, a Civil Court may use khatians, deeds, and mutation documents while making ownership determinations. Conflicts are exacerbated by the protracted and difficult ownership determination procedure.

Property tenure and property transfer in Bangladesh are made more difficult by inadequate and inaccurate land registrations since the deed system does not offer conclusive evidence of the proprietary right. Additionally, during the deed registration process, there has been noticeable corruption at Registration Offices, which exacerbates the suffering of the general public.

CONCLUSION

Thus, this study offers a heuristic discussion of the governance and corruption scenario of land administration in Bangladesh. The study shows that corruption continues to be a major issue as many instances like bribery and altering records of the land are evident. New developments,

such as e-governance and digitization, have positive effects in specific cases but face issues of implementation and opposition from vested bureaucratic stakeholders.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This is important, especially in expanding the scope and coverage of digitization initiatives. Much emphasis should be placed on the fact that all registers are digitized to the public. Extensive measures like online registers of the lands and public checks on a regular basis can minimize the number of occasions of corrupt. Thus, it is crucial to ensure proper independent regulatory bodies are established to fight corruption, such as anti-corruption agencies and effective mechanisms of complaint handling. Public monitoring, inspection as well as extending the anti-corrupt measures or the effectiveness of the accountability framework can reduce corrupt practices and hence, build up the efficiency of the land administration. Offices managing and distributing land should be equipped with better knowledge and skills through training, the importance of training cannot be over-emphasized. Future capacity building efforts should thus aim at imparting adequate knowledge and skills to the officials in order to effectively deal with the new technologies and processes. Citizen participation through the CSOs and the community groups can supplement the monitoring activities in the processes of land administration and guarantee that the reforms are being instituted properly. People can contribute and report more instances and cases of corruption and governance through public participation and feedback.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should then seek to analyze the effect of recent reform measures on corruption and governance in the land administration function. The most valuable type of research is probably longitudinal research since it offers a chance to assess the endurance and efficacy of reform steps in the future. Further, examining how political factors and institutions influence corruption and governance, is equally beneficial in gaining a better appreciation of the issues at hand.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations that could have impacted. The study is only focused on the quantitative method. However, future researchers can implement both qualitative and quantitative methods to generate different outcomes. In turn, to tackle such factors as governance and corruption in the context of land administration in Bangladesh, a series of solutions must be put forward

including better transparency, increased oversight, improved staff training, and increased public participation. In this manner, following these recommendations and developing the network for even more reviews and improvements of reforms, Bangladesh would have immensely progressed in the course of reaching an enhanced system of land administration.

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