



POLICY AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

A CASE STUDY OF MEGA CITY-
DHAKA

Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman

Policy and Governance Challenges: A Case Study of Mega City - Dhaka

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Contents

Introduction	01
Urban Governance: An Overview.....	03
Urbanization and City Governance in South Asia	05
Urbanization Trends and Patterns in Bangladesh	06
Dhaka City: An Overview	07
Policy and institutional framework on urban governance	18
Policy framework	18
Institutional framework of Dhaka City’s urban governance	22
Multiparty involvement & lack of co-ordination	25
Political economy of Urban Governance	27
Conclusions	30
Way forward and policy options	33

Policy and Governance Challenges: A Case Study of Mega City - Dhaka

Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman*

Introduction

The global urban pattern provides some critical evidence and predicts that urban areas will play an increasing role in absorbing large shares of the world population. The distributions of urban population over broad regions of the world will change dramatically and there will be a significant trend towards concentration of urban population in larger cities (over 1 million) and very large cities (over 2 million), and super-large cities (over 5 million). The evidence further suggests that the policy context in developing countries differs noticeably from the historical patterns of advanced countries. It is further predicted that the relationship between urbanization and economic growth will be perplexing. It is now empirically established that there is a strong correlation between urbanization and economic growth. Most importantly, it also asserts that a given country cannot obtain the expected economic benefits from accelerated urbanization, especially when it is in the form of government-led urbanization^{1,2}.

¹Chen M, Zhang H, Liu W, Zhang W (2014) The Global Pattern of Urbanization and Economic Growth: Evidence from the Last Three Decades. PLoS ONE 9(8): e103799. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0103799>

²Andersson, Mats “Municipal Finances: A Learning Program for Local Governments” of the World Bank Institute <http://www.einstitute.worldbank.org>

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As the cities are growing, the challenges to adapt the changing context and complexities are getting difficult. Urban governance are changing rapidly as cities struggle to adapt new issues like climate change, rapid migration, security are the driving urban change and the national governments increasingly challenged to address such growing demand³. Such new challenges are not often proportionate to the increasing responsibilities and resources of cities to meet. Resources also rarely come with augmented authority for cities, and even where cities are secure in budgetary terms they often have little autonomy for developing policy responses to meet these new and intractable challenges⁴.

In general, there are three distinct features that shape urbanization process and policies in developing countries – *first*, the wave of urbanization is sweeping and faster; *second*, there are significant quantitative differences between the urbanization pattern of the developing and the developed countries; *third*, the policy problem encountered by the developed countries are significantly different from the developing countries.

Urbanization provides South Asian countries with the potential to transform their economies to join the ranks of richer nations in both prosperity and livability. Though South Asia is the home to 6 of the world's 29 megacities - Bangalore, Delhi, Dhaka, Karachi, Kolkata, and Mumbai - the region has struggled to make the most of the opportunities of the mega-cities. One of the prime reasons is that the region's urbanization process has been messy and hidden⁵.

Furthermore, urban policies in developing countries as a well as the region, tend to suffer from a kind of policy “depression⁶”

³Nuno F. da Cruz ,Philipp Rode &Michael McQuarrie (2019), New urban governance: A review of current themes and future priorities, Journal of Urban Affairs, Volume 41, 2019 - Issue 1

⁴Frug, G., & Barron, D. (2008). City bound: How states stifle urban innovation. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

⁵Ellis, Peter and Mark Roberts (2016), Leveraging Urbanization in South Asia Managing Spatial Transformation for Prosperity and Livability, World Bank

⁶Ryan RJ, McAllister R Matthew Beaty, BruceTaylor (2010), Urban policy and governance in a global environment: complex systems, scale mismatches and public participation, Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, Volume 2, Issue 3, 2010, pp 127-208.

Urban Governance: An Overview

Urban governance refers to the institutional process of engagement of urban local government and the critical and major stakeholders in the process managing the urban areas. A true and effective urban governance is characterized by various process of social engagement and negotiation to ensure the optimum allocation of financial and material resources to the community. The quality of urban governance is, therefore, depend upon the degree of political influence of the community as well as the quality of the operational role of the political institutions. The qualities of urban governance also depend upon the capacity to plan and implement relevant urban development programs that recognize and respond to the needs of the city dwellers including the interests of the marginalized communities. The quality of urban governance depends upon a host of economic, political-economic and social factors, including the role service delivery institutions and their inter-relationships.⁷

Available empirical evidences suggest that there are huge gaps between poor and better-off urban residents in terms of access to social, economic and political opportunities, space for participation in decision making processes. According to Slack and Côté⁸, urban governance: a. plays a critical role in shaping the physical and social character of urban regions; b. influence the quantity and quality of local services and efficiency of delivery; c. determines the sharing of costs and distribution of resources among different groups; and e. affects residents' ability to access local government and engage in decision-making, influencing local government accountability and responsiveness to citizen demands.

⁷Devas, N., with Amis, P., Beall, J., Grant, U., Mitlin, D., Nunan, F. & Rakodi, C. (2004). *Urban governance, voice and poverty in the developing world*. London: Earthscan.

⁸Slack, E. & Côté, A. (2014). *Comparative urban governance (Working paper)*. London: Foresight, Government Office for Science

Urban governance is not a standalone process, but a number of actors and institutions tend to influence the role, function, coverage and quality of Urban governance. The role, function and performance of urban governments to a great extent depend on a range of strategic engagement and partnerships with various national, regional, sub- -regional and other stakeholders.⁹

Avis¹⁰ makes a comprehensive summary of the typical problems of Urban governance and noted that in general it is neither inclusive nor participatory. It is characterized by “large gaps between the poor and non-poor in their access to social, economic and political opportunities and ability to participate in and leverage the benefits of urban living”. There is a need for policy coordination to accommodate the concerns of the poor, as well creating space for their effective participation. It is also observed that the informal sector plays a critical role in urban economies, but the mainstream policies often fail understand and capture the needs and concerns of the informal sector.

The Urban governments /authorities generally fail to provide adequate access to services for the poor that in most cases lead to social disorder and conflict. An unplanned and open migration to urban areas significantly affects the housing, infrastructure and social services. It also results in social conflicts and tension between migrant and host communities.

⁹UNESCAP & UN-Habitat. (2010). *The state of Asian cities 2010/11*. Nairobi: UN-Habitat/UNESCAP.

¹⁰Avis, W. R. (2016). *Urban Governance*, Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

Urbanization and City Governance in South Asia

South Asia's urban population grew by 130 million between 2001 and 2011 – more than the entire population of Japan – and is poised to rise by almost 250 million by 2030¹¹. South Asia's urbanization is also known to be messy with the widespread prevalence of slums. At least 130 million South Asians, equivalent to more than the entire population of Mexico, live in informal urban settlements characterized by poor construction, insecure tenure and underserviced habitat. In some of South Asia's cities, the pattern of urbanization has also been hidden, because of severe shortages of official statistics of the share of population living in areas with urban characteristics.

Urbanization, however, provides South Asian countries with the potential to transform their economies to join the ranks of richer nations in both prosperity and livability. But the region has struggled to make the most of the opportunity. One big reason is that its urbanization has been messy and hidden¹².

Cities across South Asia are emerging as drivers of economic growth and witnessing rapid social transformation. As the number and sizes of the cities are growing, the demand for better urban local governments to deliver more accessible and efficient public services is increasing. However, studies on urban local governments across South Asia, provide evidences of a number of institutional and managerial constraints to deliver such basic public services¹³.

The evidence further suggests that urban local governments in South Asia tend to suffer from unclear institutional roles and limited functional and revenue assignments¹⁴. The city governments also tend to suffer with

¹¹World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22549> ...

¹²Ellis, Peter and Mark Roberts (2016), *Leveraging Urbanization in South Asia Managing Spatial Transformation for Prosperity and Livability*, World Bank

¹³Dahiya, Bharat, Das, Ashok Kumar (Eds.) (2020), *New Urban Agenda in Asia-Pacific-Governance for Sustainable and Inclusive Cities*, Springer. 2004

¹⁴Siddiqui, Kamal (2004), *Megacity Governance in South Asia: A Comparative Study Hardcover* – 2004, Dhaka, UPL

uncertain authority and limited power to make decisions for most service delivery obligations. They depend greatly on transfers from upper tiers of the government, and the reporting requirements for budget approvals are complex and time consuming¹⁵.

The main implication of such institutional and managerial constraints of the cities of South Asia have a critical bearing on the responsiveness of service delivery, decision-making processes and subsequently economic growth and development. The experts and scholars therefore suggest that urban growth and governance need to be assessed beyond technical and structural perspectives but also need to be assessed and understood with a political economic prism¹⁶.

Urbanization Trends and Patterns in Bangladesh

In the last three decades Bangladesh has undergone rapid urbanization. The urban population of Bangladesh is about 62.8 million in 2019¹⁷, and is estimated to be 83.2 million in 2030 and 112.4 million in 2050¹⁸. During 1980-2014, urban growth averaged 4.4 percent per year, as compared to 1.3 percent for rural areas. More specifically, between 1961 and 2014, the urban population increased from 2.6 million to about 62.8 million—a growth of nearly 2415.3¹⁹. Dhaka's 325 square kilometers houses an estimated population of 19.8 million, or more than 45,000 persons per square kilometer. Dhaka alone contains 37% of the total national urban population²⁰.

Dhaka City, like many other cities over time, has become closely economically interdependent with their surrounding areas, resulting

¹⁵Ellis, opcit.

¹⁶Luebke, Von, Christian, *The Political Economy of Local Governance: Findings From an Indonesian Field Study*, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 45(2):201-230, 2009 DOI: 10.1080/00074910903040310

¹⁷<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bangladesh-population/>

¹⁸Asia-Pacific Human Development Report (APHDR) *Shaping the future: how changing demographics can power human development*, 2013

¹⁹<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bangladesh-population/>

²⁰Dhaka: Past and Present, [https:// www.rajukdhaka.gov.bd](https://www.rajukdhaka.gov.bd)

in a single economy and even labor market for the metropolitan area. The economic links between the core and the periphery can become so close that one part cannot succeed without the other. In fact one of the processes of the growth is either through an outbound growth of a city, or a gradual integration of various settlements. Dhaka City for that matter is one of the classic examples of such integration processes²¹.

Dhaka is one of the fastest growing megacities in the world, almost 75 percent denser than Hong Kong. By 2025, with about 20 million people, Dhaka is predicted to become larger than Beijing, Mexico City or Shanghai²². Dhaka City consists of only 1 percent (1371 sq.km) of the country's land, but has more than 10 percent of the total population and 28 percent of the country's urban population. It is estimated that more than 60% of Bangladesh's urban population will be concentrated primarily in four metropolitan cities - Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi. By 2035, nearly 110 million people, about half of its total population, are expected to live in urban areas of the country²³.

Dhaka City: An Overview

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh is one of the oldest cities of South Asia. The city has “flourished, declined and re-surfaced at least four times in the past 2,500 years”²⁴. In the late seventeenth century British historian Thomas Bowrey described Dhaka as a “large spacious metropolis, situated amidst low swampy ground and the city stood beside a “fine large river” navigable for ships of 500 to 600 tons”²⁵.

Historical documents reveal that human settlement in Dhaka started in the 12th century. The Mughals recognized the strategic location and

²¹Andersson, Mats “Municipal Finances: A Learning Program for Local Governments” of the World Bank Institute <http://www.einstitute.worldbank.org>

²²Iqbal Iftokhar, opcit

²³Dhaka Tribune, November 19th, 2018

²⁴Quoted from Iqbal Iftokhar, First Master Plan for Dhaka City: An Environmental Exploration, South Asia Chronicle 3/2013

²⁵Bowrey, Thomas, 1905. A geographical account of countries round the Bay of Bengal, 1669 to 1679. Ed. by Richard Temple, Cambridge: the Hakluyt Society

economic importance of the city, and established the city as their capital to rule the region in the early 17th century^{26,27}. The Mughals established their capital in Dhaka in 1610 and developed the city as a business hub along with their defense headquarters. The British East India Company took over control of Dhaka in 1757 and considered Dhaka as a regional trading centre and market. Being the capital of East Pakistan in 1947, the landscape of Dhaka City has undergone rapid change and expanded towards the highlands of the northern part of the city, which was later named as ‘new Dhaka’.

Dhaka is a dynamic and fast changing city. The city reached its present state through a series of dynamic changes it underwent during different phases of history. The growth and evolution of Dhaka from 1949 to 1989 has followed the territorial limits set by the Mughals (i.e. towards north up to Tongi, up to Mirpur in north-west, up to Postagola in south-east). The growth of so-called new Dhaka started right after the independence of Bangladesh. The rapid expansion therefore caused many low lands to be get filled causing direct and indirect social and environment hazards. Dhaka gradually lost its original features of habitat and so the social and political character²⁸.

The Global Livability Index (2019) however ranks Dhaka city as 3rd worst city to live while the World Health Organization (WHO) placed Dhaka as the fourth worst city in the world for air quality. An estimated 15,000 premature deaths as well as around 5 million pulmonary, respiratory and neurological illnesses were attributed to poor air quality as early as 1999 (UNEP). Dhaka city’s population is continuously growing by rural migration of about 4.4 percent annually, which is the highest in the world. By 2031, the World Bank estimates that the population of Dhaka could exceed 25 million, while that of greater Dhaka could surpass 40 million.

²⁶Mohsin, K. M., “Commercial and Industrial Aspects of Dhaka in the Eighteen Century.” in Sharif Uddin Ahmed (eds), *Dhaka Past Present Future*, The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Dhaka: 1989.

²⁷Karim, A., “Origin and Development of Mughal Dhaka” in Sharif Uddin Ahmed (eds), *Dhaka Past Present Future*, The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka: 1989.

²⁸Rajuk, Chapter 2 Dhaka: Past and Present - Dhaka Structure Plan 2016-2035

Dhaka is the 16th largest city in the world. At the same time, it is consistently ranked as one of the world’s least livable cities²⁹. The city received an overall rating of 39.2 (100=ideal) in a 2019 index. The city has received 55 for stability, 29.2 for healthcare, 40.5 for culture and environment, 41.7 for education and 26.8 in infrastructure (see the figure1).

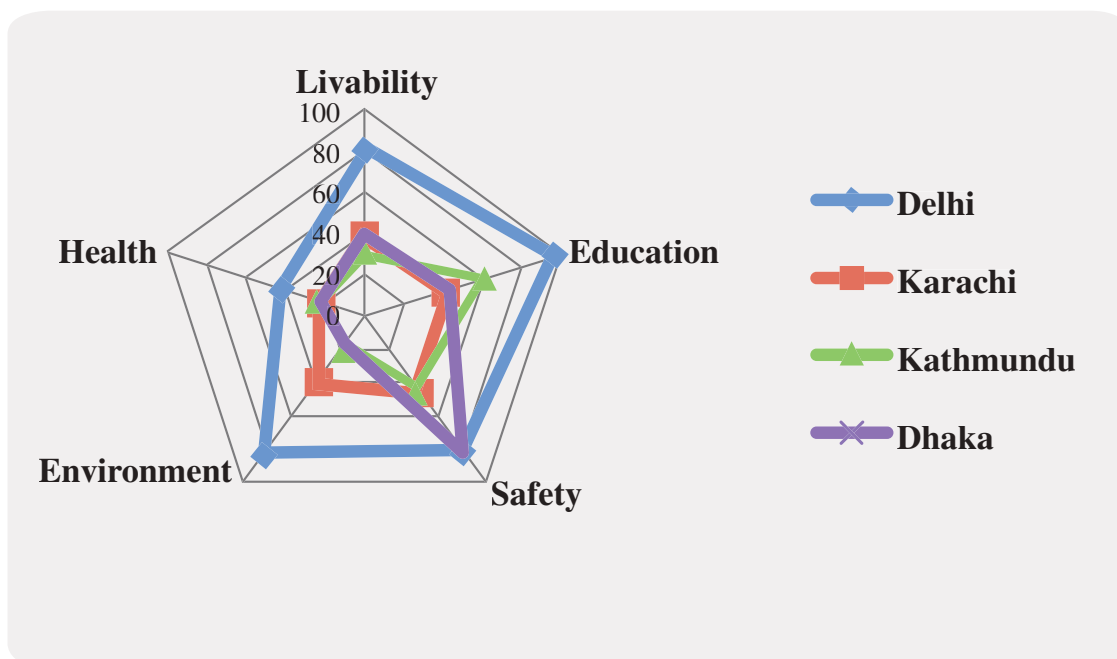


Fig1: Spider diagram on livability of selcted South Asian Cities

Source: EIU, Global Index 2019

The city scores very poorly on most ratings of urban quality of life brought out by various international agencies. United Nations’ City Development Index (CDI)³⁰ ranked it the 7th worst; while the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) ranked it the 3rd worst³¹. The City ranked third in the Air Visual Index of the world’s cities with the worst air quality. The

²⁹Demographics May 26, 2016 see <http://www.citymetric.com/fabric/where-are-worlds-largest-cities-2131>

³⁰The CDI is defined at the city level and could also be taken as a measure of average well-being and access to urban facilities by individuals. Epilogue The City Development Index (CDI)

³¹EIU, A Summary of the Livability Ranking and Overview, August 2016 see http://pages.eiu.com/rs/783-XMC-194/images/Liveability_August2016.pdf

World Health Organization (WHO) found Dhaka to be one of the 20 most polluted cities in 2020³². This megacity is also extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate, and generates a significant proportion of Bangladesh's carbon dioxide emissions through energy generation, vehicles, industry, and the household and industrial burning of fossil fuels and biomass.

The city is characterized by its unplanned construction, land grabbing, waste dumping, waterlogging, traffic congestion, air and noise pollution and fast rising population. The road comprises only 7 percent of the city instead of the 16 percent minimally required. (Mohsin, 2016). The city has also witnessed a "messy urbanization" as reflected in the widespread existence of slums. There is also some hidden urbanization, particularly on the peripheries of the city, which is not captured by official statistics. Such unplanned, messy and hidden urbanization is due to rural push migration towards the city.

Recent studies also observed that residential areas are used for non-residential and commercial purposes. Sixty two percent of residential/commercial areas have 25 percent planned and 37 percent unplanned infrastructure. Estate developers and powerful mastaans have either illegally occupied or destroyed 80 percent of the capital's open spaces; water retention ponds and wetlands flood flow areas³³.

Dhaka is the economic hub and contributes 40% to the country's GDP³⁴. Each day about 1048 new migrants move to the city. Annually, an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 migrants come to Dhaka from different parts of Bangladesh³⁵. It provides employment opportunities for 35 percent of the total urban labor force³⁶. Dhaka's rapid population increase is attributed to rural in-migration, with the resultant expansion of slums

³²http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair/databases/cities/en/

³³Mohsin, K. M. (1989), "Commercial and Industrial Aspects of Dhaka in the Eighteen Century." In *Dhaka Past Present Future*, edited by Sharif Uddin Ahmed, The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Dhaka: 1989."

³⁴United Nations Population Fund, *Urbanization and Migration in Bangladesh*, 2016

³⁵World Bank, *Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor - Bangladesh Development Series - Paper No. 17*, Dhaka : World Bank Office, 2007

³⁶M. Shahidul Islam, *Dhaka's Primacy: Rome without Empire*, The Daily Star, May 22, 2015

and the urban informal economy. It has been estimated that 300,000 to 400,000 migrants come to Dhaka from different parts of Bangladesh every year. It is estimated that by 2030 the present population of 14.6 million will grow at least by another 10 million³⁷.

Dhaka City has a core area of 325 sq km with a density of over 45,000 people per sq km. The metropolitan area comprises around 2,161,17 sq km. Unplanned construction, land grabbing, waste dumping, waterlogging, traffic congestion, air and noise pollution and fast rising population has led to a crisis situation. In 2004, road and infrastructure damage cost around Tk. 7 to 8 billion annually. The roads comprise only 7 percent of the city instead of the 16 percent minimally required.

Dhaka is prone to flooding, congestion, and messiness, to a point that is clogging its growth. Due to unplanned approaches, Dhaka is not developing activities with higher economic productivity. Furthermore, Banks³⁸ predicts that within this generation, Bangladesh's poor population will become predominantly urban and mostly concentrate in large cities. With the given the trend and scale of urban poverty, Bangladesh is likely to face new forms of demographic and urban governance challenges.

Dhaka city faces the challenges of rapid population increase characterized by crises of lack of economic dynamism, governance failure, severe infrastructure and service deficiencies, inadequate land administration, massive and growing unplanned slums.

The city lacks planned networks with adequate feeder roads to main roads and highways. With 650 major intersections and 60 main traffic lights, some often not in order, resulting in a disruption of inner-city communication and at times can take over an hour to cover 1 km. Traffic

³⁷Research Initiative for Social Equity Society - , A look into Dhaka, Bangladesh – The most densely populated city in the world March 9, 2013 see <https://risebd.com/2013/03/09/a-look-into-dhaka-bangladesh-the-most-densely-populated-city-in-the-world/><https://risebd.com/2013/03/09/a-look-into-dhaka-bangladesh-the-most-densely-populated-city-in-the-world/>

³⁸<https://bigd.bracu.ac.bd/images/40yearsConference/Papers/niki%20banks.pdf>

congestion delays are estimated to cost US\$ 3.8 billion annually. A World Bank³⁹ report found that 50 percent of the bus drivers and less than half of the CNG drivers have proper driving license. Moreover, the footpaths are occupied by temporary shops, forcing pedestrians to walk on crammed roads leading to accidents. The study found 60 separate bus companies, each with their own routes and schedules. Links to political parties or powerful trade unions make it almost impossible to regularize them. Annually, over 37,000 additional vehicles ply the roads. It is observed that about 50 percent of the bus drivers and less than half of the CNG drivers have no proper driving licenses. Moreover, the footpaths are occupied by temporary shops, forcing pedestrians to walk on crammed roads leading to accidents.

Based on current trends, Greater Dhaka would have a population of 25 million in 2035 and an income per capita of US\$8,000 at 2015 prices. However, embracing a strategic approach would add 5 million people to the city. It would be a more productive city, with nearly 1.8 million more jobs and an income per capita of more than US\$9,200 at 2015 prices, enough to put Dhaka on the map of global cities.

Given the context and the population dynamics and migration patterns, there are predictions that Bangladesh's poor population will become predominantly urban. City population is predicted to reach to 27 million by 2030. Given the scale and severity of urban poverty, and such influx of rural workforce to the city may led to significant governance challenges. More alarming as Banks observers that the nature of political economy has prevented "urban poverty from being accorded a higher priority at the national level"⁴⁰.

³⁹World Bank (2015), Open Transport Development and Integration of ICT and Transport, Integrated Transport Planning Ltd. Also see World Bank, Operationalizing Political Economy - South Asia Political Economy and Governance Issues - Urban Bus Operations in Dhaka Note No. 1 file:///C:/Users/HP/Desktop/BUS%20Driver%20World%20Bank.pdf

⁴⁰Julia Bird, Yue Li, Hossain Zillur Rahman, Martin Rama and Anthony J. Venables, (2018) Toward Great Dhaka: A New Urban Development Paradigm Eastward, <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1238-5>

Socio-economic and demographic features of Dhaka is also changing fast. By 2020 about 68.5 million Bangladeshis will reside in urban slums, with the largest share in Dhaka. In 2010 there were 5000 slums in Dhaka City with a total population of 3.4 million. Slum dwellers have to pay high rents to a network of middlemen and pay much higher costs for services than those who live in formal housing⁴¹. Most of Dhaka's slum dwellers work in the informal sector. Though Dhaka is the largest employer in the country, it is also the nation's most unequal city. Its Gini coefficient is 0.37, higher than the national average of 0.31. Household consumption for the richest quintile is five times that of the poorest quintile; inequality is wider, deeper and visible in than any other Bangladeshi city⁴².

About 37 percent of Dhaka residents have no housing or tenure on land. Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (D-WASA) supplies water to some 70% of Dhaka's population, at an average consumption of just 16 litres per person per day⁴³. The estimated shortfall of water supply is about 250 to 300 million litres per day. Poor garbage collection and management poses another major public health and sanitation threat. D-WASA can collect only 50 percent of the solid waste of a total of 3200 metric tons.

The amount of garbage generated daily in the city comes to about 3500 tons, and only 44 percent of which are collected by the City Corporation. The sewage system covers only 30 per cent of the city population. The sewerage network depends on a lone waste treatment plant with a daily capacity of treating 1.20 lakh cubic metres of sewage. About 15,000 tons of human excreta is generated every day by city dwellers, of which only 6,000 tons is treated by the treatment plant or disposed into individual septic tanks. The rest is dumped without treatment into the rivers and

⁴¹Banks, *ibid*

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³Institute of Governance Studies, *State of Cities: Urban Governance in Dhaka*, BRAC University Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2012

⁴⁴Ahmed Sadiq, *Urban Issues and Challenges in Dhaka*, World Bank 2006

water bodies surrounding the capital⁴⁵. The BBC reports that, the air around the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka shows an air pollution index (API)⁴⁶ as high as 40%.⁴⁷ A World Bank study suggests that Dhaka's soaring pollution levels cause 40,000 premature deaths every year⁴⁸. Polluted air, rivers and lakes, wrecked and bumpy roads, unauthorized and illegal construction of malls and apartment now characterize the city.

Institutional coordination in Dhaka. Urban structure and transportation planning have not kept pace with population growth or urban development in Dhaka, where the lack of horizontal and vertical coordination within municipal government impedes spatial planning and infrastructure programming. Consecutive urban master plans have underestimated population growth and urban development and failed to allocate enough land for urban expansion. Transportation planning has not only failed to anticipate growth, but has also been unsuccessful to mobilize sufficient investment for roads and transit networks, leaving Dhaka poorly connected and highly congested.

Though there are seven ministries and 13 agencies are responsible for various aspects of Dhaka's transport system, such agencies are in disarray, despite seven ministries and 13 agencies being responsible for it. Dhaka's chaotic city traffic is a mix of motorized and non-motorized vehicles. Illegal parking and the unauthorized presence of hawkers contributes to severe traffic congestion. All these factors increase travel time and economic losses, in addition to detrimental consequences for public health and the environment⁴⁹.

In the absence of a credible urban governance system, Dhaka city is facing urban challenges of "congestion, environment degradation, pollution,

⁴⁵Khan Md. Asadullah, "Can't we arrest the decline of Dhaka city ?", The Daily Star, February 20, 2010

⁴⁶The AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality. It tells you how clean or polluted the air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern. The AQI focuses on health effects on human being after breathing polluted air.

⁴⁷<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-164380>

⁴⁸ Khan Md. Asadullah, opcit

⁴⁹Bangladesh: Improving Transport Lifelines, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/10/07/improving-bangladeshs-transport-lifelines> 2016

unplanned land use, increase in number of slum populations, poor traffic system, appalling law and order, increasing number of slums, illegal occupation of public land by *mastaans* (miscreants), criminalization of politics, poor services and economic disparities”⁵⁰.

In order to further understand and capture the overall institutional concerns and governance issues of Dhaka city, the researcher arranged a Focused Group Discussion (FGD)⁵¹. The experts and practitioners have identified some critical issues that need immediate attention from the policy makers. The summary findings of the FGD are as follows:

Multiple agencies address overlapping service delivery functions

Service sector areas like water, sanitation and healthcare have overlapping functions that involve multiple agencies with little coordination.

Urban environmental issues are ignored and appear to elude institutional oversight.

Concern for the urban poor is weak, which impacts their housing, health delivery and livelihood issues.

Institutional overlap/duplication raises the cost of service provision and compounds citizen’s woes.

Clarity and/or consensus on institutional coordination/alliances missing.

The failure of service delivery by formal agencies provides the space for alternative/informal service delivery systems, which are often costlier albeit done in collaboration with existing line agencies.

A coalition of informal power structures and the local chapter of ruling political party tends to manipulate and compromise local development efforts.

The regulatory frameworks of urban service agencies are inconsistent, which hampers institutional coordination and support.

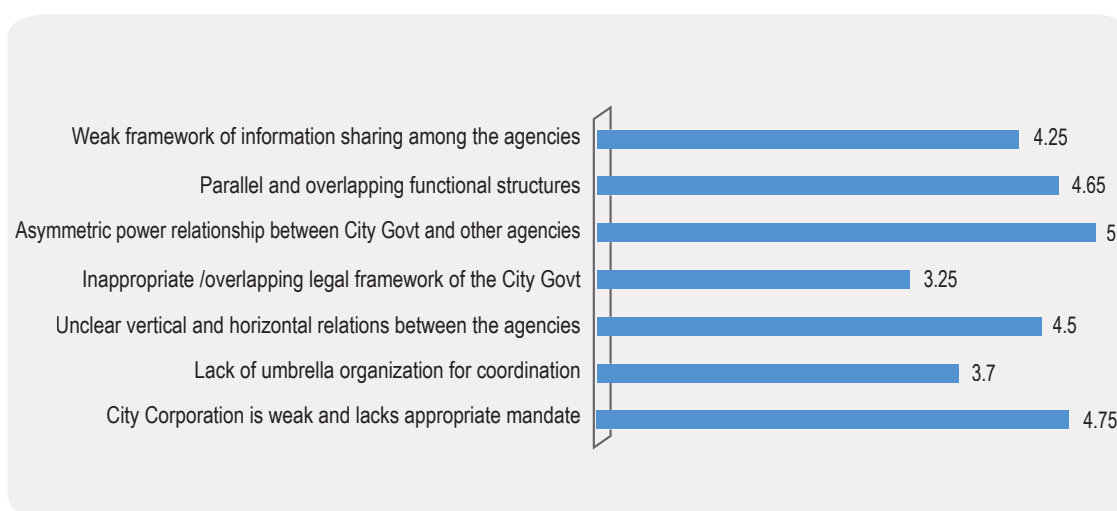
Another survey undertaken by the Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka in 2018 yielded similar findings to the aforementioned

⁵⁰Institute of Governance Studies, BRAC University, Political Economy of Dhaka City Governance , Seminar June 27, 2013

⁵¹The FGD session was organized by the Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka. It was attended by the senior town planners, representatives from Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development Directorate, City Corporation, RAJUK, Civil society members, media representatives and academics, 5th September 2018.

ones. The bar chart shows the relative strengths of forces (on a scale of 5) that Dhaka residents perceive as affecting urban governance.

Factors Affecting Coordination



The bar graphs clearly shows in addition to other factors like parallel and overlapping structures, relationships with different planning agencies - asymmetric power relationship between the city government and line agency, and weak capacity are most critical factors impinge on performance of City government and its close engagement with other agencies.

One observer thus summarizes the appalling state of the city of Dhaka. He narrates “shockingly, Dhaka, once the hub of dream and optimism of the country, has already descended into a nightmarish metropolis. People here now feel like being driven away by an accelerating deterioration in the quality of life, clogged thorough-fares, eye-stinging smog, polluted landscapes and streets, vanishing parks and lakes, crowded yet unaffordable housing, overcrowded schools and colleges, also hospitals, polluting industries and spiraling crimes”⁵². A summary can be drawn from the basis on the above discussion.

⁵²The Daily Star, February 2010

Summary of factors affecting coordination

Outdated and ambiguous rules of respective agencies cause the division of responsibilities to be blurred, fragmented and duplicated.	Lack of umbrella organization to coordinate planning.
Inappropriate/overlapping legal framework.	Indifference of the line agencies.
Senior officials and professional staff in city corporations are central government employees. This makes central government control conspicuous and shows decentralization to be a myth.	Lack of a format of institutional coordination mechanism. City Corporations and field level organizations have different chains of authority and command leading to conflicting and indifferent relationships.
Too much central control causes city corporations to lose its autonomy.	Parallel & overlapping functional structure.
Coordination is informal, temporary and adhoc, based on personal ties and acquaintance.	unclear vertical & horizontal relation between urban planning org of City.
Weak framework/nonexistence of information sharing.	Lack of common accountability mechanism.
Asymmetric relationship between City Govt. and Line agencies.	Limited or no space for people's participation.

Policy and institutional framework on urban governance

In Bangladesh, numerous acts and laws constitute the legal and regulatory frameworks that guide urban planning and development⁵³. Many of these policies have attempted to direct urban development from a sectoral perspective. The regulatory frameworks govern, for instance, the devolution of powers, resources and responsibilities to local governments, community engagement, addressing environmental issues, waste management, and promote private-public partnerships. However, it is observed that most of the regulatory frameworks have been framed/enacted in isolation, which prevents a coherent institutional framework for implementation⁵⁴.

Policy framework

The 7th Five Plan of Bangladesh (7 FYP) therefore recognizes the need for: a. “improving efficiency and quality of service delivery” through a series of “institutional and process engineering” of urban local government⁵⁵. The Plan therefore emphasized the need for creating *an urban vision* for the country with an emphasis to “pursue towards compact, networked,

⁵³Dhaka City Corporation 1978, Water Supply & Sewerage Authority Act_1967, , The Bengal Motor Vehicles Tax Act, 1932, Land management: National Land Use Policy, 2001, National Zoning Act in 2010, ‘Dhaka Improvement Trust’ (DIT) Act 1956, National Housing Authority (NHA) Act. 2000, City Corporation Act 2, Dhaka Improvement Trust (Allotment of Land) Rule of 1969 and The Town Improvement Act of 1953, Water Supply Act 2013,Urban Sector Policy 2011, Draft National Housing Policy 2014, National Policy on Safe Water Supply and Sanitation, Water Supply and sanitation Sector Development Plan, The National Sanitation Strategy and the pro-poor water and sanitation, East Bengal Estate Acquisition and 1950 , East Bengal Construction Act 1952, Town Improvement Act, 1953, Paurashava Ordinance 1977 Changed in 2009, Environmental Pollution Control Act1995, Master Plan for Dhaka 1917 (Sir Patrick Geddes), Master Plan for Dhaka (1959), Strategy Plan for Dhaka (1980) DMDP Structure plan (1997), Urban area plan (1997), Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (2010), National Land Use Policy, 2001, Land Registration Act, 1908.

⁵⁴PA 411 Project Report, City Governance : A Case Study of Service Delivery Agencies of Dhaka City , Department of Public Administration, 20120.

⁵⁵Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Seventh Five Year Plan - Accelerating Growth,Empowering Citizens, General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission, 2015, p.123

resilient, competitive, inclusive and smart urban development”. The 7 FYP also sets the following guiding principles for the overall development of the urban sector: a) ensuring regionally balanced urbanization through polycentric decentralized development and hierarchically structured urban system; b) ensuring legitimate comprehensive development plans for future development of urban areas of Bangladesh; c) facilitating economic development, employment generation, reduction of inequality and poverty eradication through appropriate interventions, preferably through public-private partnerships; d) ensuring better utilization of land resources and mitigating increased demand for housing and urban services; e) protecting, preserving and improving the urban environment, particularly those of the water bodies; f) devolving authority at the local urban level and strengthening local governments through transfer of appropriate powers, governance improvement program, capacity development activities, so that these can improve on resource mobilization, provide better service delivery and regulatory functions, and undertake responsibility for planning and implementing a wide range of, infrastructure provision; g) involving, as much as possible, the community, including women and the poor, in participatory decision-making and implementation processes; i) involving public and private agencies with urban local government institutions and ensuring inclusiveness in planning and implementation of service delivery; and, j) strengthening coordination among urban service providers.

National Urban Sector Policy: A National Urban Sector Policy has been developed by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Local Government Division in 2011⁵⁶.

The National Urban Policy envisions strengthening the beneficial aspects of urbanization, while effectively mitigating its negative consequences so as to achieve sustainable urban development. It also envisions a decentralized and participatory process of urban development in which the central government, the local government, the private sector, civil society, and citizens all have roles to play.

The National Urban Policy envisions strengthening the beneficial aspects of urbanization, while effectively mitigating its negative consequences so as to achieve sustainable urban development. It also envisions a

⁵⁶Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of LGRD&Cooperatives, National Urban Sector Policy, 2011

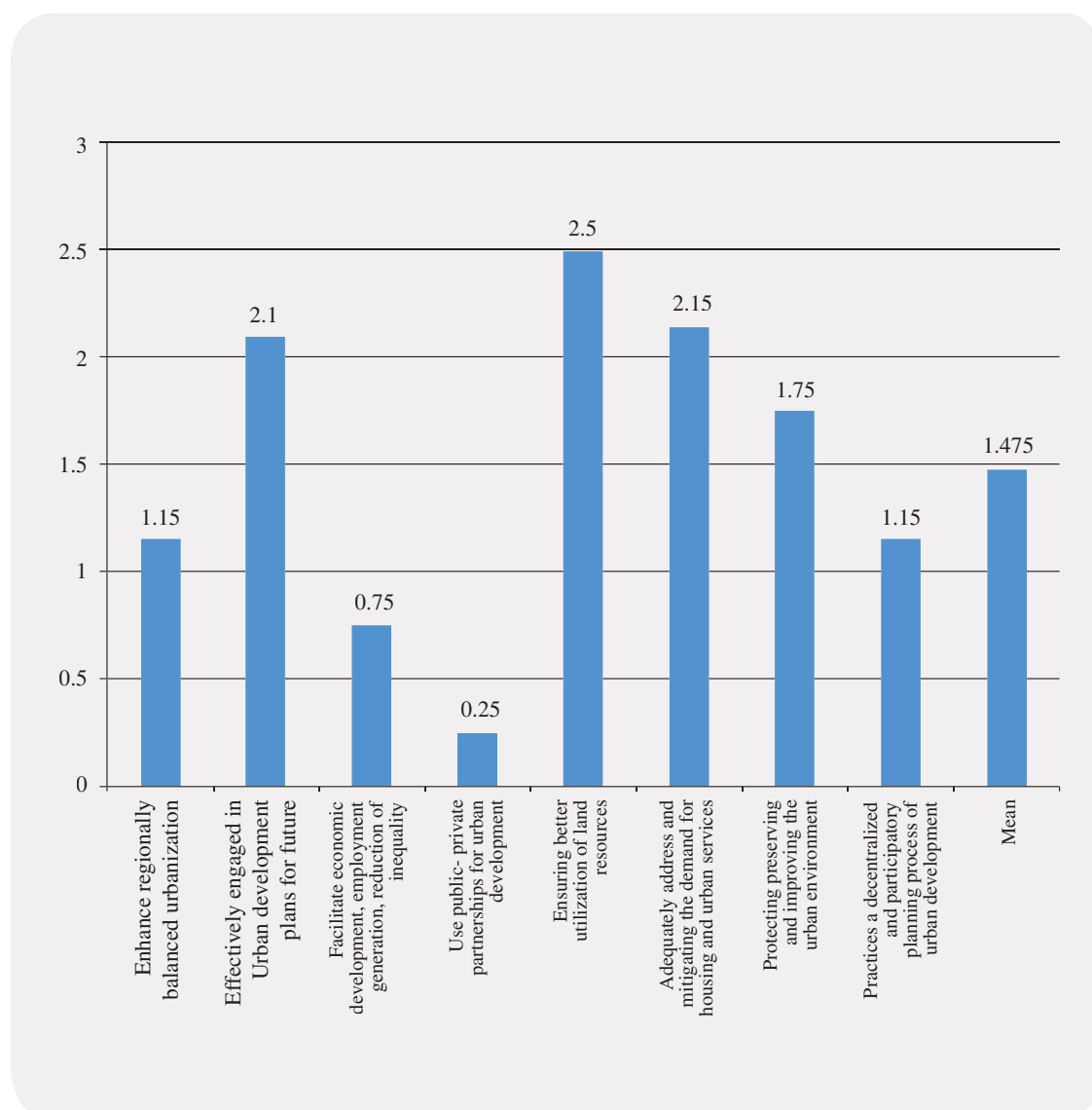
decentralized and participatory process of urban development in which the central government, the local government, the private sector, civil society, and citizens all have roles to play. It, therefore, cover spatial, economic, social, cultural, aesthetic and environmental aspects towards achieving freedom from hunger and poverty; capacity to live a healthy life; access to education, shelter, and basic services, and a secure and livable environment at home and at the workplace. The policy strives to be gender sensitive and friendly to children, the aged and the disadvantaged communities.

The major objectives of National Urban Sector Policy for Bangladesh are to:

- ensure regionally balanced urbanization through decentralized development and hierarchically structured urban system;
- facilitate economic development, employment generation, reduction of inequality and poverty eradication through appropriate regulatory frameworks and infrastructure provisions;
- ensure optimum utilization of land resources and meet increased demand for housing and urban services through public-private and other partnerships;
- protect, preserve and enhance the urban environment, particularly water bodies;
- devolve authority to the local urban level and strengthen local governments through appropriate powers, resources and capabilities so that these can take effective responsibility for a wide range of functions;
- involve all sectors of the community, including women and the poor, in participatory decision-making and implementation processes;
- ensure social justice and inclusion by measures designed to increase the security of poor people through their access to varied livelihood opportunities, secure tenure and basic affordable services;
- take into account particular needs of women, men, children, youth, the elderly and the people with disabilities in developing policy responses and implementation;
- assure health, safety and security of all citizens through multifaceted initiatives to reduce crime and violence;
- protect, preserve and enhance the historical and cultural heritage of cities and enhance their aesthetic beauty;
- develop and implement urban management strategies and governance arrangements for enhancing complementary roles of urban and rural areas in sustainable development; and,
- ensure good governance by enhancing transparency and establishing accountability.

A survey has been carried out by a group of graduate students of public administration of the University of Dhaka in 2017-18 to explore the opinions and perceptions of a selected number of 124 respondents covering media representative, CSO representative, GoB professionals, officials of the ministry of Local Government, Public Works and Directorate of Urban Development. The respondents were asked to assess the performance and effectiveness of the National Urban Sector Policy of Bangladesh. The figure below presents the rating of the respondents in a Likert scale of 5. The scale is based on higher to lower score of performance assessment.

Performance of the National Urban Development Policy of Bangladesh: Experts Observations



The above graphs clearly indicates that on average the performance of the National Urban Development Policy components is found to be very low.

Institutional framework of Dhaka City's urban governance

Central government organizations continue to carry out major urban development activities in Bangladesh. Urban development functions are divided among various ministries based on their broader mandate and allocation of functions set by Government regulations⁵⁷. There are at least 18 ministries and 56 line agencies directly engaged in providing overlapping and complementary services⁵⁸. However, their activities are not effectively coordinated, neither at the national and nor at the local level⁵⁹.

Among a host of political and specialized urban institutions, the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is the primary organ of urban political administration. Other specialized agencies that provide a slew of services include *Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha*– Capital Development Authority (RAJUK); Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA); Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP); Titas Gas; various line ministries (e.g. Land Administration, Public Works, Education and Health); the Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB); Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (D-WASA). In general, most of these agencies face institutional challenges, such as internal fragmentation, poor coordination with other institutions, resource constraints, and limited autonomy, especially, in their relation with line ministries).

⁵⁷Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Cabinet Division, Rules of Business, 2012

⁵⁸Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Seventh Five Year Plan - Accelerating Growth, Empowering Citizens, General Economics Division (GED), Planning Commission, 2015

⁵⁹Panday, Pranab Kumar and Ishtiaq Jamil, Challenges of Coordination in Implementing Urban Policy: The Bangladesh Experience, Public Organization Review, June 2011, Volume 11, Issue 2, pp 155–176

Additionally, a number of national level agencies also providing services to urban areas. Some of these include: the Urban Development Directorate (UDD), the National Housing Authority (NHA), the City Development Authority, and the Public Works Department (PWD), all under the Ministry of Works; the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), under the Ministry of Local Government; the Roads and Highways Department, under the Ministry of Communication; the Directorate of Environment under the Ministry of Environment and Forests; and the Power Development Board under the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources. Other ministries such as the Ministries of Commerce, Education, Youth and Sports, are also actively engaged in urban development through their regional and local level offices.

The Local Government (City Corporation) Acts allows every city corporation, including the Dhaka City Corporations (DCCs) to undertake and implement any development plan, under the approval of the Government's Local Government Division. In practice, subjecting it to the purview of the Local Government Division leaves the City Corporations with limited autonomy. The Third Schedule of the Act lists 28 types of activities of the DCC, of which about 18 overlap directly with the roles and functions of the government's respective line agencies. Thus, Dhaka's residents rarely see their local government play these roles, which causes them to have little confidence in its competence and capacity for service delivery⁶⁰.

Furthermore, the overlapping of DCC's jurisdiction with other agencies creates confusion. For instance, DCC is empowered to formulate a master plan, including provisions to develop land and regulate building construction in the city. On the other hand, RAJUK is responsible for the formal physical planning and development activities for housing, commercial and industrial use in Dhaka. However, at present, RAJUK and DCC lack any organizational or functional relationship. As per its

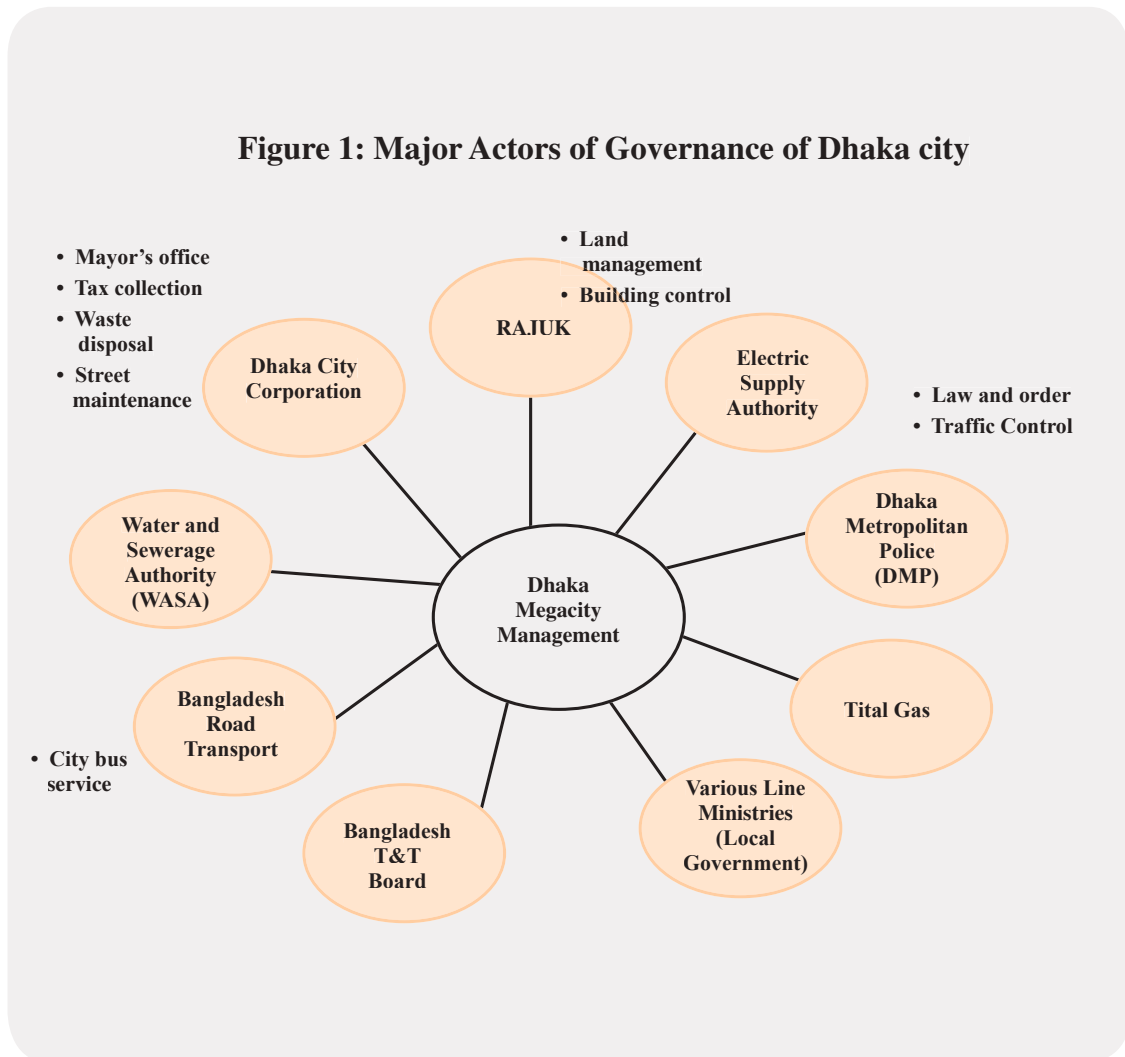
⁶⁰Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka, Urban Governance: Citizens Perception on Dhaka City Corporation, 2016.

mandate, in 1995 RAJUK prepared the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) for 20 years (1995-2015). A three-tier plan package, DMDP includes a Structure Plan, an Urban Area Plan, and a Detailed Area Plan (DAP). However, major stakeholders, including DCC, had no active engagement in the process. This eventually dented the credibility and image of the local government.

Comprised of DCC North and DCC South, the city government of Dhaka also suffers from two other critical problems: poor resource base stemming from a lack of autonomy; and inadequate human resources. Despite the emphasis on decentralization and devolution of powers to the local level, city governments in Bangladesh, in general, remain heavily dependent on the central government for financing development. DCC North and South receive 52 percent of their resources from the national government. The city government's weak resource base is not even adequate for its regular functions, let alone for financing large or new infrastructure investments. Thus, the City Governments have to depend on central government grant for their infrastructure development. Some 59 per cent of its total resources come from the central government in the form current and capital transfers and grants. Of the 41 percent revenues generated from own resources, property taxes account for about 37, which is a mere 15 per cent of DCC's total resources. Though Dhaka contributes 40 percent of the country's GDP, it receives less than 0.1 percent from the national government.

Efficient urban governance is not possible without efficient and better trained manpower. The City Corporations lack organizational capabilities to undertake and successfully complete the massive task of urban development. One of the reasons for such a deficiency is the lack of trained manpower resources available to the local authorities. Furthermore, top level strategic and decision making positions are occupied by the deputed officers from the Central government. This has developed a dependency syndrome of the city government.

Figure 1: Major Actors of Governance of Dhaka city



Multiparty involvement & lack of co-ordination

As noted earlier that 28 ministries and as many as 56 line agencies, including the DCC are involved in delivering and managing basic urban services in Dhaka. Each operates under different ministries, as per their respective legal frameworks. However, these laws' delegated directives have prevented the development of an integrated and collective modus-operandi of service delivery. One of the reasons for the lack of coordination and cooperation between the city government and the special purpose authorities is that the former are elected bodies accountable to their local constituencies, while the latter are government departments staffed by civil servants who are accountable to their line ministries

in a hierarchical manner. Major service delivery responsibilities in the city areas are under the operational jurisdictions of different ministries. However, confounding or incongruent rules and operating protocols result in duplication, lack of coordination/cooperation, and sometimes even mutual competition between the service providers⁶¹.

The quandary of coordination and mutual interaction evident among the service providers has had the following undesirable consequences for the services governance paradigm. First, decision-making is inefficient; second, professional rivalry results in nobody taking ownership; and, third, operational delays and escalation of project costs. Moreover, at times, overlapping responsibilities prompt concerned agencies to shirk from their duties.

A closer look at the existing institutional frameworks of urban service agencies and governance in Dhaka reveal some other shortcomings. First, despite their prescribed responsibilities, the agencies lack the adequate mandate, authority and adequate resources to dispense them. Second, the urban development agencies seem to have no comprehensive plan or approach to promote inclusiveness and participation by various stakeholders. Third, with increasing pressures of migration and a rising population, continuous and unplanned expansion of metropolitan areas, the city government has increasingly backtracked on its responsibilities. Fourth, there is no broader framework to develop service delivery partnerships with other actors like: the private sector, NGOs, community organizations, etc. Fifth, these institutional limitations have created a space for the mastaans (informal mischief-makers), middleman, rent-seekers to intervene informally through illegal channels of service delivery at much higher costs⁶².

Frequently malfunctioning services, stagnant capacity, bureaucratic complexity, lack of accountability, and wastage of resources amount

⁶¹Interview with a Senior Professional of Local Government Engineering Bureau, Ministry of Local Government, Government of Bangladesh.

⁶²Farhad, Shahriar M, Governance from the below and Interplay between and formal and formal system in Dhaka City: Slum Governance of Korail, Unpublished MPPG Thesis, Public Policy and Governance Program, North South University, 2016

to public mistrust of the city government⁶³. Frustratingly, the Mayor of DCC South says, “I am supposed to be the father of the City. But there are as many as 56 Fathers of Dhaka City. And perhaps this is the problem”⁶⁴. While another Mayor, of DCC North, observes, “Often there is serious lack of coordination amongst the service delivering central government agencies, like: electricity supply, gas connection, water supply, telecommunication system, civil defense, fire services, etc. To resolve such problem city government is often not supported by the line agency executives⁶⁵”. There is, in fact, much evidence that lack of coordination between DCC and the national government agencies reached such heights that a multi-lateral development Bank withdrew funding amounting to US\$ 110 million for developing Dhaka’s transportation infrastructure⁶⁶.

Political economy of Urban Governance

The UN-HABITAT’s State of Cities report notes that Dhaka is a highly divided city, with space allocated and used for the benefit of a privileged few, while the rest of the population remains marginalized from access to key social amenities. Thirty four percent of the Dhaka City space is planned for and allocated to 4.4 million upper and middle income people outside the city centre, compared with only 4 percent for 4.5 million low income residents⁶⁷. A study on the political economy of urban space in Dhaka noted that the rich and influential people are becoming landowners by manipulating the law and governance system⁶⁸. Poor farmers on the urban fringe are increasingly unable to live there or protect their farmland. Either they are compelled to sell their land or

⁶³Ishtaiq Jamil, (et,al) Governance and Citizen Trust Survey – Bangladesh, Dhaka: North South University, 2016

⁶⁴Interview with City Mayor, Dhaka South City Corporation

⁶⁵Interview with City Mayor, Dhaka North City Corporation

⁶⁶Panday and Ishtiaq Jamil, opcit.

⁶⁷UN-HABITAT, 2011.State of the World’s Cities 2010-2011: Bridging the Urban Divide. London, Sterling: Earthscan, United Nations Human Settlement Programme.

⁶⁸The Daily Star “Influential Gain Dhaka City land by abusing power”, May 26, 2013

land developers grab it⁶⁹. This was underscored by another study that found significant links between urban crime, violence and governance practices of Dhaka city⁷⁰.

Dhaka's urban governance witnesses a unique political management of the informal coalition of politicians, mastaans, and public officials⁷¹. These mastaans and public officials control access to service delivery in the city's slums and its periphery, creating and sustaining a patron-client relationship⁷². These mastaans are, basically, a creation of the ruling party politicians, who rely on links with these local leaders for support and re-elections⁷³. In addition to being able to mobilize politicians' 'vote banks' for politicians, mastaans help create a dependency relationship between the marginalized urban population and the state⁷⁴.

Residential areas are used for non-residential purposes, and high rise buildings, too closely built, are results of uncontrolled market forces. Sixty two percent of residential/commercial areas have 25 percent planned and 37 percent unplanned infrastructure. Estate developers and Dhaka's population increase by rural migration is 4.4 percent annually, the highest in the world. Powerful mastaans have destroyed 80 percent of the capital's open spaces; water retention ponds and wetlands flood flow areas. The water level has gone down below 300 feet due to overuse. This can lead to subsidence⁷⁵.

⁶⁹Prof Nazrul Islam a noted Urban Planner and Chairman of the Centre for Urban Studies made this statement in a seminar entitled "The political economy of urban space in Dhaka city" see The Daily Star, May 26, 2013.

⁷⁰Farhad, Shahriar opcit

⁷¹Hossain, S., 2012, 'The production of space in the negotiation of water and electricity supply in a bostiof Dhaka', Habitat International, 36: p.68.

⁷²Nicola Banks, opcit

⁷³Sen, B., and D. Hulme, 2006, *The State of the Poorest 2005/06: Chronic Poverty in Bangladesh: Tales of Ascent, Descent, Marginality and Persistence*, Dhaka and Manchester: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies and Chronic Poverty Research Centre

⁷⁴Nicola Banks, opcit

⁷⁵World Bank, *Operationalizing Political Economy - South Asia Political Economy and Governance Issues - Urban Bus Operations in Dhaka* Note No. 1 file:///C:/Users/HP/Desktop/BUS%20Driver%20World%20Bank.pdf

Saving Dhaka is described as a “dying city”⁷⁶. In order to salvage the city it needs politically committed and expensive choices. There is a need for the government to devise effective institutional setup to synchronize sector specific plans and install mechanism for effective coordination and collaboration of the agencies and authorities involved in the management of urban affairs. It is indeed a difficult choice for the political masters. About 60 percent of the unplanned constructions and buildings on wetlands, river banks and other open spaces have to be demolished, irrespective of partisanship or powerful political lobby.

The City has reached at the tip of its social, political and environmental and economic risks. A political initiative perhaps can devise a mechanism of political settlement of the problem to rehabilitate the city from its dying condition. Once a wider political settlement is made between the government and all parties concerned, only then the planning and strong action initiatives would be able to give Dhaka City a fair chance of a sustainable future.

At least 60 percent of the unplanned constructions and buildings on wetlands, river banks and other open spaces have to be demolished, irrespective of partisanship or powerful political lobby. In addition, rivers and lakes must be cleared and restored. Polluting industries must upgrade their technology and move outside greater Dhaka or to other divisions, thereby enabling other areas to develop. New and existing commercial centres must be helped to grow outside the city and compete to reduce population pressure on Dhaka, for instance by relocating RMG factories, SMEs, private universities and essential government and medical services to other districts.

In summary, the institutional assessment of Dhaka’s urban governance reveals that:

National sectoral agencies dominate urban development activities. Having numerous service organizations results in uncoordinated and overlapping activities. Especially, services in areas like water, sanitation and healthcare suffer from overlapping jurisdictions and weak coordination.

⁷⁶Mohsin, Selina (2016) A City Dying, The Daily Star, January 21, 2016

Consequently, urban development has been haphazard. Each agency has its stand-alone legal framework, some over a century old, which causes overlaps and conflicts.

More importantly, these frameworks lack emphasis on inclusion and social accountability. Despite some donor-aided projects pushing for inclusion as a main component, it is yet to be institutionalized.

In the absence of proper institutional and legal framework to guide and coordinate, urban development, in most cases, become haphazard.

City governance of Dhaka is highly political. Devising strategic option is very challenging. It need difficult and expensive political choices and requires strong political commitment and institutional competence.

Conclusions

International experiences show that the performance of a city is strongly correlated with the underlying urban governance. Good governance essentially involves a sound legal framework undergirding rules of business, a well-defined management structure, clear assignment of responsibility and accountability to various agencies, and adequate coordination among those, financial autonomy, and enabling the voice of and participation by beneficiaries⁷⁷.

Bangladesh's forecasted urban future and the magnitude of urban poverty must therefore be understood and contextualized at the national policy level. Current systems of urban governance seem to have paid inadequate attention to the urban poor, with obstacles at both the national and sub-national there are institutional barriers to recognition of the depth and gravity of urban poor⁷⁸.

⁷⁷Sivaramakrishnan K.C., *Governance of Megacities: Fractured Thinking, Fragmented Setup*, published to Oxford Scholarship Online, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199454136.001.0001

⁷⁸Banks, (opcit)

A noted Bangladeshi economist observes that while Dhaka has grown into a mega city and is the nerve centre of the country's economy, the city's governance system has evolved more by default than developed by design⁷⁹. An urban planner laments that because, for 50 years, Dhaka grew without any planning, it cannot be expected to be a livable city⁸⁰. Actually, there have been several plans but none has been fully implemented. Planning actions are executed ad hoc, and more often projects have been designed by just bypassing the Plans. Few decisions have been made keeping in mind the best interests of the society and the environment⁸¹.

Though there exists a National Urban Policy, urban governance has hardly received the recognition or priority it requires; subsequently, unplanned urban growth has come to characterize Bangladeshi urbanization⁸².

Multiple agencies are engaged in service delivery in Dhaka, but there is a serious lack of coordination among the city government and central government's service delivery agencies. The city government does not have effective control over urban affairs. Thus, multiple ministries—of Housing and Public Works, Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives—and a number of regulatory agencies end up administering the urban affairs almost in isolation.

The Dhaka city government is severely under-resourced, and lacks the autonomy and decision-making powers to take major developmental decisions without the approval of the Ministry of Local Government. Moreover, there is no mechanism for coordinating developmental interventions among various line ministries that deal with the city's affairs.

The city government also experiences pressure from powerful lobbying groups, like real estate developers and the local vanguards of the political

⁷⁹The Daily Star 'Dhaka limping, but for how long?' Nov 14, 2006

⁸⁰The Daily Star, "Unhealthy, Uneven Urbanization" October 26, 2016.

⁸¹The Daily Star, "Unhealthy, Uneven Urbanization" October 26, 2016.

⁸²Banks, opcit

parties who compromise larger public interests to “colonize” the urban space⁸³.

The lack of financial autonomy is perhaps the biggest constraint that affects Dhaka City Corporation’s (DCC’s) functioning, largely due to weak property tax collection. While dependence on central government transfers may be inevitable for poorer cities, a rational property tax collection can sustain most functions of Dhaka city. The inability to do so is a reflection of the bigger governance problem at the national level where tax collection is amongst the lowest in the world.

This has created unprecedented challenges for weak city authorities. Illegal infrastructure and blocked water courses abound. Residential areas are used for non-residential purposes, and high rise buildings, too closely built, are results of uncontrolled market forces. 62 percent of residential/commercial areas have 25 percent planned and 37 percent unplanned infrastructure. Estate developers and Dhaka’s population increase by rural migration is 4.4 percent annually, the highest in the world⁸⁴.

The struggle to deal with the urban issues are products of both the market and policy failure. Planners and government decision-makers therefore need to explore and adopt forward-looking planning approaches to guide urban expansion, invest in better quality public urban spaces to enhance quality of life and livability, and to utilize spatial planning approaches to permit greater variation in land uses.

Inadequate provision of housing, infrastructure and basic urban services, as well as a failure to deal with pollution, are constraining the potentials of the city.

⁸³Dhaka Structure Plan 2016-2035, Chapter 13- Governance and Institutional Development, “Regional Development Planning (RDP) Project within City Region Development Project (CRDP, Package No. CRDP/ RAJUK//S-01, Loan No. BAN-2695), Asian Development Bank (ADB), p.260

⁸⁴World Bank, Operationalizing Political Economy - South Asia Political Economy and Governance Issues - Urban Bus Operations in Dhaka Note No. 1 file:///C:/Users/HP/Desktop/BUS%20Driver%20World%20Bank.pdf

Way forward and policy options

A modern and dynamic city, ideally sets and plans its activities to promote the economic development and wellbeing of its city dwellers through the provision of essential services⁸⁵. Therefore better urban governance demands both mid-term and long term master plans and committed implementation strategies backed by a long term vision political commitment and addressing the challenges of the political economic actors⁸⁶.

As in many developing countries, urban governance in Bangladesh too faces some common and critical challenges: continuous and unplanned metropolitan expansion; and poor service delivery; inadequate institutional frameworks; entrenched political power; and insufficient inclusiveness and participation⁸⁷.

Bangladesh does not have a comprehensive and integrated Urban Vision that takes into account urban growth dynamics, the diversity of primary and secondary cities and their size and shape, competitive advantages, diversity, connectivity, and resilience. In light of Article 58 and 59 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, there is an urgent need to develop a broader strategic approach on urban local governance. However the most significant challenge is how to devise effective approaches to address the challenges embedded in political-economic factors and processes.

The proposed urban vision needs to address key constraints to the effective functioning of Dhaka's city government—weak overall mandate; poor accountability mechanisms; finances and financial autonomy; coordination, control and overall management. These problems cannot be resolved by tinkering at the margin, but clearly call for a major rethinking and wholesale changes in city management paradigm and policy framework. One of the options could be a metropolitan governance

⁸⁵Sharma, S., (1989) "Municipal Management", *Urban Affairs Quarterly-India*, Vol. 21 pp 47-53
Sharma, S., (2007) "Democracy, Good Governance, and Economic Development", *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Volume 3, No.1, pp 29-62

⁸⁶Luebke, Von, Christian (2009), *The Political Economy of Local Governance: Findings From an Indonesian Field Study*, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 45(2):201-230, DOI: 10.1080/00074910903040310

⁸⁷Habitat III , *Urban Governance, Capacity and Institutional Development*, Habitat III Policy Unit 4 , Policy Paper , 2016

model. However, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Therefore, selected regional models should be examined keeping in view the political and administrative milieu and culture of Bangladesh.

City and urban governance must not be seen in isolation but be recognized on the issues of a bigger developmental context. Therefore the strategies should be based on two-pronged approaches integrating both from macro- and micro-level plans and strategies covering a perfect balance between the rural urban areas in one frame. At the policy level it is to be recognized that there is a need to develop a strategic and perfect mix of macro and micro level development approaches and intervention.

Urbanization is inevitable and being recognized both as a cause and a consequence of economic growth. In Bangladesh, the rate of growth in urban areas is four percent annually, which happens to be more than 2.5 times the rate of growth in the rural areas. Thus urban governance issues cannot be delinked from the rural economic dynamics. The direct implication of this is that rural-to-urban migration is at a higher rate⁸⁸.

Policy option should be so planned that urbanization, growth of industry and services sectors are rightly and pragmatically linked to rural economic rejuvenation. Therefore urban governance and infrastructure deficits need to be duly assessed. There is a need for a strategic mix of urban renewal and the design as well as strengthening infrastructure reforms and capacity for planning and management at the local level. A permanent task force should be the principal player in creating an environment in which city governments can discharge the responsibilities with the active backup support from others along with the local governments⁸⁹.

It is now empirically established that cities in developing countries especially in the global Asia are at different stages in their development, and are having relatively higher growth rates and generating a strong pull factors that draw rural urban migration. In fact there is no one top-down solution to such urban governance problem but need a blend of bottom up approach to address such pull factors.

⁸⁸Ahsan SM Mehedi. Achieving SDGs and reducing urban poverty together DS, October 12, 2019

⁸⁹Ahluwalia Isher Judge (2019) Urban governance in India, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 41:1, 83-102, DOI: 10.1080/07352166.2016.1271614

The big/mega-city urban planning should also consider creating a space for participation of the district and sub-regional local government to assess and understand the push and pull factor of urban governance challenges.

At the highest level, the national government could engage the local and regional government and agree on mandates and financing collaborate projects that would appropriately contribute the mega city urban sustainability.

Development of the local economy beyond conventional agricultural activities may have considerable significance in view of the increasing unemployment and also the pull factor and opportunity and quality of life in cities and towns.

The government needs to create an environment conducive to supporting local economic development. Small, medium micro enterprises will receive maximum support of investment and guidance in this regard.

Specific zones may be created through appropriate land use planning for different types of industries export processing / free-trade zones, medium and micro-enterprises, developing a mixed-use zoning (residential/commercial/industrial) approach to economically activate the rural areas.

-
- To ease key congestion constraints, policymakers must address three fundamental deficits local governments are facing – in empowerment, resources and accountability.
-
- Intergovernmental fiscal relations must be improved to financially empower the local government.
-
- Practical ways must be identified to increase the resources available to city governments to allow them to perform their mandated functions.
-
- Mechanisms must be strengthened to hold city governments accountable for their actions.
-
- An integrated and interrelated policy action plan has to be devised to address urban issues to improve the city's prosperity and livability: connectivity and planning; land and housing; and resilience to natural disasters; and the effects of climate change.
-
- Planners and government decision-makers need to invest to strengthen intra and inter-urban connectivity of the cities and local governments of the periphery and adopt forward-looking planning approaches to invest in a complementary plan to enhance supplementary and complementary benefits.
-
- To address the tide of proliferating slums, City governments must embark on land and housing policy reforms and foster innovative settling and housing finance.
-

Annex 1

Country	City	Rank	Overall Ranking (100=Ideal)	Stability	Healthcare	Culture & Environment	Education	Infrastructure
Venezuela	Caracus	131	46.9	35	33.3	56.3	66.7	53.6
Alegeria	Algiers	132	44.2	50	45.8	45.4	50	30.4
Cameroo	Douala	133	44	60	25	48.4	33.3	42.9
Zimbabwe	Harare	134	42.6	40	20.8	58.6	66.7	35.5
PNG	Port Moresby	135	41	30	37.5	47	50	46.4
Pakistan	Karachi	136	40.9	20	45.8	38.7	66.7	51.8
Libya	Tripoli	137	40.4	35	41.7	40.3	50	41.1
Bangladesh	Dhaka	138	39.2	55	29.2	40.5	41.7	26.8
Nigeria	Lagos	139	38.5	20	37.5	53.5	33.3	46.4
Syria	Damascus	140	30.7	20	29.2	40.5	33.3	32.1

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