

NIS or Local Solutions in Land Administration to Prevent Corruption in Bangladesh: Towards a Sustainable Policy Framework

Nurul Huda Sakib (✉ nhsakib@juniv.edu)

Jahangirnagar University

Mujahidul Islam Jahid

Jahangirnagar University

Research Article

Keywords: Land Corruption, NIS, Bangladesh, Integrity

Posted Date: April 23rd, 2021

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-371954/v1>

License:  This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. [Read Full License](#)

Abstract

Corruption in land administration is one of the challenging issues to implement National Integrity Strategy. Citizens who visited the land office has somewhat bitter experiences in many ways. Drawing these issues, this research attempted to investigate the challenges of NIS in Land administration and possible way out. Based on in-depth interviews with citizens and public officials and document analysis found that NIS helped to modernize the land administration in recent years. The government with the help of the young officials at the land administration have taken several measures to resolve the minor crisis. However, the improvement in service delivery is somewhat quite nominal compared to the volume of corruption land administration. This likely because of the nature of the societal pattern of the country. In practice, there are still local and administrative politics has significant influence. Therefore, despite having good initiatives and appropriate measures, officials in land administration failed to implement NIS properly. Also, several other problems like lack of skilled manpower and technical support, the tendency of violating rules and others stated in the paper about corruption are making NIS implementation challenges. However, the study found that an alternative approach like 'local solutions for the local problems might have more success compared to NIS approach. Therefore, the paper argued that dynamic sustainable and corruption-free land administration requires a combined approach of both local solutions, innovation and NIS implementation in Bangladesh.

Introduction

Land administration plays a critical role in functioning governments policy implementation. The policy government pass in the parliament and policy hub, the land administration implements those through various ministries and departments with the help of the field administrators. It has been assessed that almost 80 per cent of legal disputes in rural territories are identified with land-clashes (Hossain, 2015). However, systematic corruption in the land administration has become a significant concern to functioning government's policy. People living in rural or urban areas must face corruption in the land sector. The Bangladesh Citizens Survey (BCS) 2015-2016 also provided evidence that there is corruption in this sector. According to the survey 69.5%, people believe that the land sector in Bangladesh is very corrupt, and 21.9% believe that it is somewhat corrupt. Very few people think that the land sector in Bangladesh is a corruption-free sector. Besides, 74.5% of people think that people need to pay a bribe or unauthorized money to get services from the land sector (Sakib, 2018). Regarding ranking, the land sector is the second-largest corrupted sector behind law and enforcement agency in Bangladesh. Land sector corruption has shown in various Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) study. In the TIB's National Household Survey 2015 and 2012 indicate that 53.4% and 59% of people are the victims of corruption in this sector. It also suggests that 49.8% and 54.8% of people must pay the bribe to get service from the land sector. TIB also finds that in this sector people have to pay 245,030 million BDT, which is the most of all sectors (TIB, 2016). Most households faced corruption and irregularities (payment of unlawful money/ bribes, nepotism and biased, harassment by agents, etc.) while accessing services from land service institutions.

Nevertheless, in 2012 the government of Bangladesh adopted the National Integrity Strategy (NIS) to promote good governance. Therefore, the government started to focus on NIS implementation in various pillars with pillar specific indicators and visions. Thus, the government began to organised seminar, workshop and training on NIS for the government officials. Additionally, officials also stated to convey governments initiatives to the root level to promote the strategy. A massive shift also began at the land administration by re-organizing the entire administration. Such change also happened in land administration. Last few years land administration in Bangladesh had many changes with some positive outcome. But still, people suffer a lot. Why it is? What are the challenges in this sector? These are the issues that need to be investigated. Therefore, drawing land administration as a case this research is aiming to enquire the NIS implementation effectiveness, challenges and alternative approaches for a sustainable solution in land administration in Bangladesh.

Unpacking National Integrity Strategy

Public service in recent years delivered through both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Both approaches have success and limitations according to place and context. However, in developing countries, scholars in recent years are more comfortable to incur on bottom-up approaches. Therefore, donors in developing countries reluctant to promote various accountability mechanism to prevent corruption and make public service effective. The National Integrity Systems is one such initiative was developed in the 1990s by Jeremy Pope. The founder of Transparency International (TI) introduced it as a system of 'horizontal accountability' and argues that the organs of the government and indicators of governance are the key indicators for good governance (Pope, 2000). The core idea of NIS has been borrowed by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and adopted the National Integrity Strategy (NIS) in 2012 under the Cabinet Division combining 16 pillars. Combining ten state components and six non-state institutions the strategy had a strong legal framework and a comprehensive set of goals, strategies and action plans, aimed at increasing the level of independence to performance, accountability, efficiency, transparency and effectiveness of state and non-state institutions [Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); 2016].

The strategy has a 'National Integrity Advisory Council' headed by the Prime Minister and an Executive Committee (EC) to help the Advisory Council (GoB, 2012a). A National Integrity Implementation Unit (NIU) was also set up in the Cabinet Division under the supervision of the Cabinet Secretary and headed by the additional secretary of the Administrative Reforms and Implementation Wing. Every ministry or division was to form an Ethics Committee (EC) comprised of senior officials to implement the recommendations and action plans of the NIS. Their role is to promote integrity and good governance in their respective ministry or division. An officer from each ministry or division was to be nominated as an Integrity Focal Point (IFP) to maintain liaison with the Cabinet Division and manage the implementation of NIS activities within the institution. The Cabinet Division acts as the secretariat for this institutional arrangement and coordinates the activities under this strategy. The activities of the NGOs and business organizations in respect of integrity were to be supervised by an NGO Affairs Bureau and the Ministry of Commerce respectively. To encourage members of the public service, civil society and the private sector, 'integrity awards' were introduced for honouring and rewarding outstanding contributions to the prevention of corruption and promotion of integrity.

This paper, drawing some evidence from land administration attempted to investigate the performance of the strategy as donor led project often have various limitation to deliver effective public service in developing countries. Besides, research on the NIS approach criticized by many scholars and practitioners regarding its less focus on cultural distinctiveness. They argued that a more effective NIS needed greater recognition of specific cultural challenges and national legacies with effective reforms. These recent criticisms extended earlier critiques. Another criticism of NIS concerns its applicability outside developed democratic countries (Brown & Heinrich, 2017; Doig 2006). Thinking about these issues this paper also investigates the NIS application in land administration.

Literature Review

Williamson, Enemark, Wallace, & Rajabifard (2010) opine that all countries are unique and have their own needs. They propose some principles for land administration to land management paradigm, people and institutions, rights, restrictions and responsibilities, land administration for sustainable are dynamic, processes, technology, spatial data infrastructure, and measure for the success of land administration that is applies to all countries. Ali (1981) also provided a detailed analysis of land administration and recommended modernize administration for good governance in Bangladesh. In an alternate research Huque (2011) found that field level is influenced by a few extra authoritative, political, and social variables like procedural deferrals, the assortment of errands, choice example and conduct, government official chairman communication, double faithfulness of authorities, lacking offices for satisfying family commitments, and connection to major urban habitats for wellbeing and instructive administrations. Ahsan and Pandey (2013) argued that coordination among various offices in field organization holds key to the achievement of the legislature. Their finding recommends that casual correspondence in the field organization among various offices has been seen to be one of the noticeable components of guaranteeing coordination. Hassan (2015) also argued that corruption-free land administration requires a strategic and tactical systems-level framework and effective public service delivery model to promote good governance. Similarly, Choudhury, Ridwan, Awal and Hosain (2011) offered a new modelling technique that represents data for the current land management system through a user-friendly and digitized map-based system. They showed that the current problems that are haunting the country because of the presence of a poor and opaque land management system. However, a web-based land management system will be able to create transparency and efficiency to the current land management system that allows the wonderful visual presentation of maps and easy searching facility. They proposed to replace paper-based current data and maps of land administration with digital versions so that searching and retrieving land data become easier. These researches on land administration suggest that the importance of land administration is pivotal. It also suggests that corruption and misappropriation of power in land administration is a critical issue. These researches do not emphasis on land administration as a case or narrow down the scope of research in this context separately. Therefore, in this research, drawing land administration as a case we are aiming to investigate possible solutions.

Research Methodology

This research is based on qualitative data collection using in-depth interviews and official documents. In-depth interviewing is a method that has been widely used in social science (Berry, 2002). It can provide a vivid picture of a situation and allow significant insights to be revealed (Creswell, 2012). The nature of the study required one-to-one verbal interactions with interviewees to clarify questions on many NIS related issues. Thus, for this research, 75 in-depth interviews were conducted with interviewees representing key have direct interaction the land-related issues and expertise with the land sector. There are many techniques used in qualitative research, but purposive and quota sampling is most widely used in social science (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The researcher prepared different categories based on the nature of the research and allocated a target number of participants to each one (Robinson, 2014).

The study categorised in-depth interviewee targets into significant groups like present government officials (Assistant Commissioner of Land) at eight districts in Bangladesh, academics, researcher's civil society members and finally service recipients. However, due to COVID-19 outbreak, these in-depth interviews were conducted over phone or e-mail communication. The people interviewed for this research were first sent an e-mail by the researching asking whether he or she was interested to participate in the research. Then they were communicated through e-mail or phone to collect data. These interview over the phone were lasted 10 to 20 minutes depending on their answers.

The interviews of the service recipient were carried to understand the dynamics of land administration corruption and improvement of service. Therefore, half of the interviews were conducted choosing service recipient as an important element for this research. These interviews were conducted two phases; the first phase was in January to March (before the pandemic started) visiting various locations in Bangladesh. The second phase was conducted during May to June over the phone. Citizens were chosen through Facebook post based on their response over the research issue. In addition to in-depth interviews, a range of official documents—mostly in the form of reports, policy documents, contract extracts, and newspaper articles were reviewed for this research. Social media sources such as Facebook (the most popular social media platform in Bangladesh) also provided much information regarding cases of NIS and land corruption. We analyzed all the data through coding and data triangulation and try to develop a web of meaning.

NIS or Local Solutions in Land Administration

This paper has found both constructive development of NIS implementation and various challenges to implementing the strategy. At the same time, the paper has found some local initiatives that foster land administration in rural areas. All the findings are discussed below;

Constructive Outcome of the NIS in Land Administration

Since NIS implemetation in the land administration there are some positive change occurred to upheld the image of the government. The land administration promoted several activities to foster citizen-centric services. The most prominat activities is the Digitalization, Automation and Online Banking system. The government introduced a digitalized version of *namjari* as *e-namjari*. People can apply for their duplicate *namjari* online and after the process is completed, they will receive a message to collect their paper from the respective land office. Besides, the national database of land got digitalized and looking up for information got more hassle-free for both government and citizens. As a result of such initiatives, many land-related problems can be solved within a short time. This is also potential to reduce conflict between two parties claiming ownership of land. As a recognition of the successful implementation of *e-namjari*, Bangladesh received the 'United Nations Public Service Award 2020'. Simultaneously, land offices are getting automated with computer software. Additionally, the officials also created Facebook pages and groups for a faster and more transparent way of service delivery. Therefore, the citizen can easily seek for the guidance they need from the land office and can also publicly expose any corrupt staff. In many land offices, the AC Land himself/herself monitor and operate the Facebook Page to get a wider view of his/her office. This indeed eases the payment procedure, helps to track the transactions and minimizes fabricated charges.

NIS also help to establish Citizen's Charter, honesty box and complaint box to get efficient service and feedback from citizens. It is observed that people often have to pay an excessive amount of fees because of not knowing the actual fee for the service they are taking. As a result, some staffs and brokers take advantage of it. Now offices have billboards or charts about the fees for their services. Therefore, people can escape from the trap of the brokers and corrupt officials. As one citizen mentioned,

Before, when I used to come to the land office, I did not know the fee for any services. As a result, the officials took extra money from us according to their demand. Now we know what services require how much following the Citizen's Charter and can bargain with the officials (personal communication, 7 March 2020).

The NIS is also trying to bring public integrity through widening the concept, awareness campaign and integrity practice. It is also widely argued that to promote integrity there is a need for changing behaviour. As one of the interviewees mentioned that, 'you can't change the system unless you change your behaviour' (personal communication, 2 March 2020). Therefore, the NIS is also working on behavioural change of public through many activities. As land office deals with several activities and people come to the office with a negative mindset, many AC Land now promoting different mechanism to practice integrity. One such initiative is 'honesty box'. Many land offices with direct monitoring by the AC Land set up honesty box to promote public integrity. In honesty box, people take purchase various documents from the office, where there is no seller at the service point. Customers purchase stamps and other documents and put the right amount of money in the honesty box. Similarly, the complaint box is a popular choice of the administrative office where people can drop their complaint or suggestion while keeping their identity anonymous. Most of the land office now has complained box, which is monitored by Assistant Commissioner (Land), commonly known as 'AC Land, to get a view of citizens regarding land-related services.

AC Land from different districts, organised various awareness-building campaigns for citizens to aware of the transparency and accountability practice of their office. As a process, the Zonal Office organizes regular meetings and public seminars focusing on the activities and to do's of the land office. The main focus here is to increase morality and efficiency of staffs and make people know about their functions. They also organise motivational campaign to motivate citizens to follow the rules and to keep their papers up to date. Land offices often distribute leaflets, banner festoon etc. about their activities, people's rights, needs of updating papers etc.

Why is NIS Implementation in Land Administration Often Blur?

Despite some positive effects of NIS, considering the volume of corruption in land administration, is still lacking far behind to make a dynamic administration. There are several reasons for such claim. For example; **political pressure and syndicate** at land administration in Bangladesh is common scenario. Land administration works under significant political pressure which came from different manners. Sometimes political leaders, brokers, some corrupt officials and charge people create a syndicate for simple services. These syndicates maintain a strong network with local politicians, it is difficult for the land office to tackle them. However, influential people in land administration are involved in the land-related business, owner of a sandcastle, brickfield, *char*. In most cases they build these properties on an illegal land or without consent of the government, not maintaining all the valid papers or grabbing other people's property. Therefore they use their patron-client network to resolve their problem through linkage and money. During an interview with an AC Land, mentioned that;

I can give you several examples of political pressure. One of my colleague who was making significant steps against a powerful politician involving illegal sandcastle owner later transferred from his place. Even, when I was taking some actions against illegal structure in government property, got a life threat through an anonymous phone call. These issues are very common in our working procedure (personal communication, June 14, 2020).

Also, local politicians maintain 'soft relation' with the public officials. They regularly interact with them and send them gifts and other benefits. Often they try to build-up social relationship inviting the officials in family gatherings. These sort of practices create a soft corner for the officials to those people. Therefore, in many cases, public officials remain silent when any recommendation comes from those people. This soft pressure, is a common practice in the local land office. While politicians failed to build a soft relationship with the public servants they are keen to use hard skills like creating threat, fear, transfer, etc. The officials thus often think that it's a win-win situation for both parties as he can earn revenue for the government in an easier way. Another problem is some government lands are occupied by influential people, but the officials could not allocate to eligible people due to the time limitations. On the other hand, they are pressurized from the government to increase revenue.

The syndicate also manipulate ordinary service recipient by misleading and false information. According to one interviewee;

This is the first time I went to the land office. I never thought that I will saw so many people in a small tiny office stick together with one another. I was not sure where to go. First, I went to a person who was not interested to talk with me at all. Then I went to another and then another. Suddenly, one person came towards me asking do I need any help? I was like excited to have someone who willing to help me. Then he took me to the same officials who didn't talk to me at all. I got my service within a few hours. But I had to cost an extra 2000 TK (personal communication, February 20, 2020).

These are the scenario still exists in many land offices. People who are coming for the first time in the land office, get strained frequently in the following manners. Similarly, in the land office, often brokers from a syndicate create pressure who allegedly is involved in a political network. As a result, sometimes it becomes difficult to stop the broker's activity in the land office.

Second major problem of NIS implemetaton is the the awarness of the service receiptant. People often don't raise voice about corruption and are afraid of using a complaint box. Therefore, people coming to the land office has pre-set tendency of violating rules and regulations. Most of the service recipients do not read the citizen charter. They are even reluctant to follow the official rules. They are interested in getting the service as soon as they come to the office immediately. During the in-depth interview, one AC Land stated that;

Most of the service recipients are not interested to take information from citizen charter or online/social media. They start visiting the office before the specified provided time and fell in trouble with corrupt officials and broker syndicate (personal communication, June 16, 2020).

Though the service recipients are explained how to apply for the service in the land office they are reluctant to submit the required documents as they have a natural tendency of violating rules. They rather think that officials are providing wrong information. Instead, they prefer to go to a broker.

Their preset mindset also keep them away from automation and digitalisation. The people in the field level come to the land offices for service are either farmers/uneducated and do not know about online/automation. Therefore, they are afraid of taking the service. So, they can not take the benefits of automation and are not be able to do their task by themselves. As a result, they seek the help of computer shops or Union Digital Centre (UDC) to receive the service of the land office. The computer operator or UDC service providers are repeatedly making mistakes due to lack of land-related training. As a result, these people failed to get services on time. One AC Land who was interviewed for this research mentioned that;

Actual service recipients of the land office are not receiving the advantage of digitalization/automation. They are afraid of online services and currently considering online services and automation as harassment (personal communication, June 14, 2020).

Lack of awarness is also driven by some activities for show off. Citizens are happy to see complaint box, CCTV cameras is being set up by the officials to improve the land office. However, in most cases, very few people complain or dare to complain in the complaint box. Usually, land office employees put people in a kind of fear that if they complain in the complaint box, it will cause damage to their service. As one of the service recipients who was interviewed for this research mentioned the entire harassment process in detail;

One day I went to the land office to pay my house tax. They demanded BDT 10,000 from me where the total amount of tax is around BDT 600. Then I asked them to give an official calculation breaking down of 10000 BDT, as per their demand. Then they tried to convince me in various ways without showing the calculation that they have other expenses to do, which is not in the rules laid down by the government. But as a conscious citizen, I knew that there is no extra cost in this regard, so I ask them to do my job with the amount of money set by the government and they are reluctant to do so. As a result, when I tried to make a complaint in the complaint box, they stopped me and threatened me saying, if they found any complaint against them in the box, I will have to suffer a lot with the issue. So, step down from complaining (personal communication, June 16, 2020).

Moreover, the complaint box is kept in an open place in the land office and it is visible to all. If anyone complains, the employees see it and put them under various threats. Also, the service recipient is not informed about what action is taken or not taken at all if a complaint is lodged in the complaint box. Yet the problems are the service recipients do not know what action is taken against the accused if there is any evidence of corruption in the complaint box or they do not even know whether the complaint box was opened or not. Therefore, most service recipients think that complaint boxes, CCTV cameras or other means of curbing corruption are just like lip service.

There are **skilled manpower is hardly available for technical issues.** Land related issues often complex and sometimes for new officials, it is difficult to understand. Therefore, it often delays the service in simple issues. As a result, the workforce moves slowly than anticipated and people suffer because of it. Moreover, land offices have a shortage of staff. An AC Land reported that;

We don't have enough staff to cope with the huge workload. Beneficiaries often try to take advantage of the lack of adequate manpower in many of our departments (personal communication, June 15, 2020).

Also, staffs mostly prefer the traditional way of service delivery. In addition, the government does not offer adequate technical workshops for its staffs rather opted for recruiting short term technical operators in land offices, are often not enough educated.

These challenges indicate that NIS implementation often blurs and need massive efforts to make land administration more effective to fulfil the actual goal of the strategy.

Local Solutions to the Local Problems: As an Alternative Approach

A local solution for the local problem or bottom-up approach is a concept developed from the new public management (NPM) suggests that the solution of a problem should be done from the local context. Andrews (2013) argued that isomorphism or best practices of problem solution might not be effective for every context. Therefore, different problems need different solutions. NPM drives towards more on finding problems at the root level. Evidence from different countries in preventing corruption in various sectors suggests that the bottom-up approach is likely to reduce corruption more than the top-down approach. Similarly, this research has found that some innovations at the local land office have made a crucial contribution to preventing corruption. These efforts of local innovation often drive towards achieving goals not following code of conduct.

The local innovation process in land administration is largely driven in recent years notably by Sahadat Hossain at Paba in Rajshahi district. Working as an AC Land in Paba Mr. Hossain made some locally based solution at the land office. His initiatives like sitting outside the office at the yard, digitalization of records, direct public interaction have made a significant change in land offices in Bangladesh. His model was further followed in many offices and got positive results (Sakib, 2018). Likewise, the research also found some alternative approach to preventing corruption:

Case Study 1: Relocating the Sitting Aggement of AC Land

The most and common problem in the land office is the frequent movement of middlemen and indomitability subordinate officials. The syndicate combining middlemen and land officials harass ordinary citizens. When the service recipients go to a sub-ordinate official for any service, the employees harass them in various ways and sometimes demand extra money in return of the work. Therefore, to protect the service recipients from such harassment, some AC Lands

have set up their rooms at the entrance. In that case, any service recipient has to go across by the AC Land's room first to receive services at the land office. During an in-depth interview, an AC Land stated that;

I sit at the entrance of my office every morning with a table and chair. As soon as service recipients come, I listen to their problem myself and if there is any solution within my control, I solve it myself. Otherwise, I call the concerned official and ask him to solve their problems. When they leave after finishing their work, I ask the service recipients again if there is any problem in doing his job or if any officer has demanded extra money. This has reduced the tendency of corruption among the officials in my office. My office is now 100% corruption-free and I think this action has contributed the most (personal communication, June 24, 2020).

This approach also significantly reduced the influence of middlemen in the land office. The solution again derived from Mr Sahadat Hossian is suited in the context of Bangladesh (Sakib,2020). The NIS does not provide such a solution to reduce corruption rather a mindset of the AC Land in this context is exclusive. The AC Land should come out from traditional bureaucratic ethos and rely on local innovation to solve their problems.

Case Study 2: Bhumi Pathshala

Bhumi Pathshala (Bengali word *Bhumi* means land and *Patshala* means school) is an innovative approach to make awareness and teaching land-related problems directly. It generally occurs in *Gol Ghar* or roundhouse in the land office two days a week. Some of the land offices initiate schooling to aware citizens against corruption where AC Land himself teaches the citizens about the functions of the land office including mutation, registration, withdrawal of records and maps, the charges fixed for different services etc. According to an AC Land who was interviewed in this research mentioned that;

We held hearings two days a week for those who come to our office to receive services. Most of the time, the service recipients do not have a clear idea about the dag, khaitan or the continuity of how his land came to him. That's why I take the initiative to give them an idea. Before each hearing I spend 30-40 minutes in my office giving them various information about the service, informing them that no extra money is required to avail the services of the land office and answering their various questions. After this session, I periodically call them to the hearing. As a result, people have become much more aware than before and corruption in my office has been greatly reduced (personal communication, June 23, 2020).

The *Bhumi Pathshala* made significant response among citizens as they are being empowered. Such an alternative process of making awareness has become more effective than traditional workshops and seminars as most uneducated or villagers ain't interested in seminars or workshops. On the contrary, people while sitting with AC land in *Bhumi Pathshala*, discuss their problems and complain against corrupted individuals. In return, this reduces problems instantly and help to gather knowledge in practice.

Both the cases drawn in this paper indicate that rather than sticking with the textbook or traditional bureaucratic approach, the NIS implementation also needs local innovations because local innovations in the land offices are making a way better contribution than NIS guidelines.

Discussion: Towards Sustainable Policy Framework

NIS is a combination of acts which directs public officials to follow the code of conduct. It is also a process of achieving targets for officials in a specific time frame. As a result, public officials are driven to achieve those targets to fulfil their service goals. One of the senior officials mentioned that being driven towards such goals has both positive and negative effects in public service delivery. The benefits of such activities are that the officials look forward to achieving their goals. Nowadays many young officials work in the office (AC Land), they often work competitively to fulfil their Annual Performance Appraisal (APA). Also, they are keen to achieve 'integrity award' by showing their activity, problem-solving capacity, achieving targets. Consequently, they frequently organize seminars, workshops, giving a lease of government properties as much as possible to gain government revenue. Also, government officials are now using the 'buzz word' of *Shuddhachar* in Bengali meaning 'integrity' in the rural land offices to promote good practices. The NIS also changes the mindset of the people of the land office. Because of target based activities, the officials started work promptly compared to the previous time. A wonderful example is the releasing of mutation papers in 45 days. To some extent, these sorts of activities are making some contribution to promoting the NIS in the land sector. However, looking at the challenges of the NIS, the actual picture of NIS implementation is still far from reality.

Nevertheless, the study has found that the NIS has made some positive effects to the land offices followed by suggesting the implementation of more NIS activities at the field level. However, the alternative approach 'local solutions' that is making a more significant contribution to the local land office needs to take as a serious issue for land management. These approaches are more problem-oriented, based on local context and more importantly challenges powerful syndicate to make positive changes. Therefore, the paper argues that sustainable land management needs combined efforts to reduce corruption. Many AC Land took various self-driven initiatives in a combination of the NIS framework provides more success to prevent corruption and tackle potential challenges. Perhaps the most significant example of such initiatives was taken by former *Upazila Nirbahi Officer* (UNO) of Paba, a sub-district in Rajshahi district initiated Shahdat Hossain. Generally, in Bangladesh bureaucrats are often keep their distance from the citizens due to their colonial legacy. However, his problem-centric approach of local solutions set up an example in land administration (see Sakib, 2020). His approach can be characterized through the following chart which likely to be a successful approach of preventing corruption and bring a sustainable solution to land management.

Following chart illustrate that the NIS approach might bring some success in preventing corruption but remain dormant due to local problems like political influences, awareness problems. The nature of the problems might vary in different locations. Therefore, the NIS approach of prescribing solutions of following code of conduct or official norms might not be effective and public officials often compromise with the local problems. However, these prescribe format has driven through the local solutions of local problems there is a chance of sustainable solution of land administration. Some cases of local solutions of land management like *Bhumi Pathshala* shown in this paper capable of taking care of problems like awareness or political syndicate. Sustainable

land management thus requires a combination of NIS approach (which will encourage officials to follow code of conduct) and locally driven approach of corruption prevention to meet challenges.

Conclusion

The NIS is a vivid document for policy implementation in Bangladesh. It covers widespread guidelines for policy implementation. In this paper, choosing land administration as a case shows that, a combining effort with NIS and local innovation may provide a better result to combat corruption in Bangladesh. The findings of the research along with policy suggestion convey that, the role of land administration in public service delivery is very critical and much of the government image depends on the success of land administration in Bangladesh. Although there are several critical problems linked with the success of land administration and NIS implementation, the government should take these policy suggestions seriously and make substantive changes in land administration at field level. Therefore, the government should also take more steps to overcome the challenges. For example, issues like adequate, regular, timely and need-based training are required for more dynamic administration. Also, the government should take more punitive actions against corrupt officials to set an example. Additionally, one-stop services, more allocation on government offices, easy accessible old records might make a sustainable land administrative system along with suggested combined approach.

Declarations

Competing interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Concerning ethics, a supplemental file for a letter of permission has been added; I confirmed with MAW that a formal ethics statement is not needed, the supplemental letter works.

References

- Ahsan, A., & Panday, P. (2013). Problems of Coordination in Land administration in Bangladesh: Does Informal Communication Matter? *International Journal of Public Administration*, 36(8), 588–599. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2013.772626>
- Andrews, M. (2013). *The limits of institutional reform in development changing rules for realistic solutions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Berry, J. M. (2002). Validity and reliability issues in elite interviewing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 35(4), 679-682.
- Brown, A., & Heinrich, F. (2017). National Integrity Systems—an evolving approach to anti-corruption policy evaluation. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 68(3), 283-292.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). *Business research methods*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Choudhury, E., Ridwan, M., Awal, M., Hosain, S., (2011). *A web-based land management system for Bangladesh*, 14th International Conference on Computer and Information Technology, ICCIT 2011.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE publications.
- Doig, A. (2006). Not as easy as it sounds? Delivering the National Integrity System approach in practice – The case study of the national anti-corruption programme in Lithuania. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 30(3/4), 273-313.
- Government of Bangladesh (GoB). (2012a). *Governemnt notice on forming Executive Committee*. Dhaka: Cabinet Division. Retrieved from http://cabinet.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/cabinet.portal.gov.bd/page/0552537a_9cf3_43ff_b906_772a36a3bd8a/Advisory%20Council%20%281%2
- Government of Bangladesh (GoB). (2012c). *National Integrity Strategy*. Dhaka: Cabinet Division. http://cabinet.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/cabinet.portal.gov.bd/page/dbacee2c_bf4a_469d_99a3_776840bf35b5/SOP_Final_Feb%2026.pdf.
- Hassan, M. S. (2015). Ensuring Effective Public Service Delivery in the Land administration of Bangladesh to Boast up Good Governance: The Perspective of Deputy Commissioner Office. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 10(4), 92.
- Hossain, M. (2015). Improving land administration and management in Bangladesh. *Final Report. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dhaka*.
- Huque, A. (2011). Some Neglected Aspects of Performance in Land administration in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 34(5), 318–328. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2011.561475>
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). (2015). National Integrity Strategy seminar on good practice. Retrieved from Bangladesh: <https://www.jica.go.jp/bangladesh/english/office/topics/press151015.html>
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). (2016). 2nd National Integrity Strategy training. Retrieved from Bangladesh:

Pope, J. (2000). *Confronting corruption: The elements of a National Integrity System*. Berlin: Transparency International.

Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1), 25-41.

Sakib, N. H., (2018). *Anti-Corruption Efforts in Bangladesh*. University of Sydney.

Sakib, N. H., (2020) Community organizing in anti-corruption initiatives through spontaneous participation: Bangladesh perspective, *Community Development Journal*, Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsaa027>

Shawkat Ali, A. M. (1981). *Land administration and rural development in Bangladesh: the collector's role* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tasmania).

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). (2012). *Corruption in service sectors: National Household Survey 2012*. Dhaka: Author. Retrieved from Dhaka, Bangladesh:

<http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/files/HHSurvey-ExecSum-Eng-fin.pdf>

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). (2015). *Land Management and Services in Bangladesh: Governance Challenges and Way-forward*. Dhaka: Author. Retrieved from https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/images/2015/fr_ds_land_15_en_v4.pdf

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). (2016). *Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2015*. Dhaka: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/beta3/index.php/en/activities/4988-corruption-in-service-sectors-national-household-survey-2015>

Williamson, I., Enemark, S., Wallace, J., & Rajabifard, A. (2010). *Land Administration for Sustainable Development*, FIG Congress 2010; Facing the Challenges - Building the Capacity' Sydney, Australia, 11-16 April 2010.

Figures

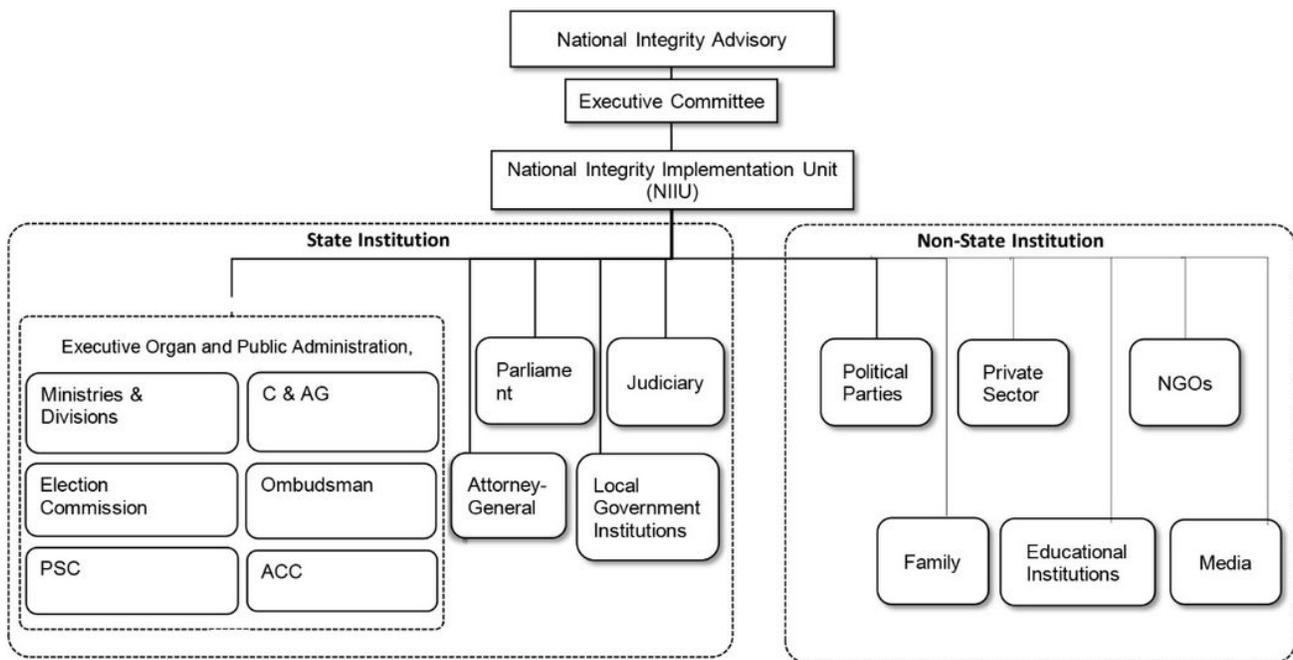


Figure 1

Institutional Arrangements for NIS Implementation Source: (JICA, 2015). Notes: Comptroller and Auditor General (C & AG) and Public Service Commission (PSC).

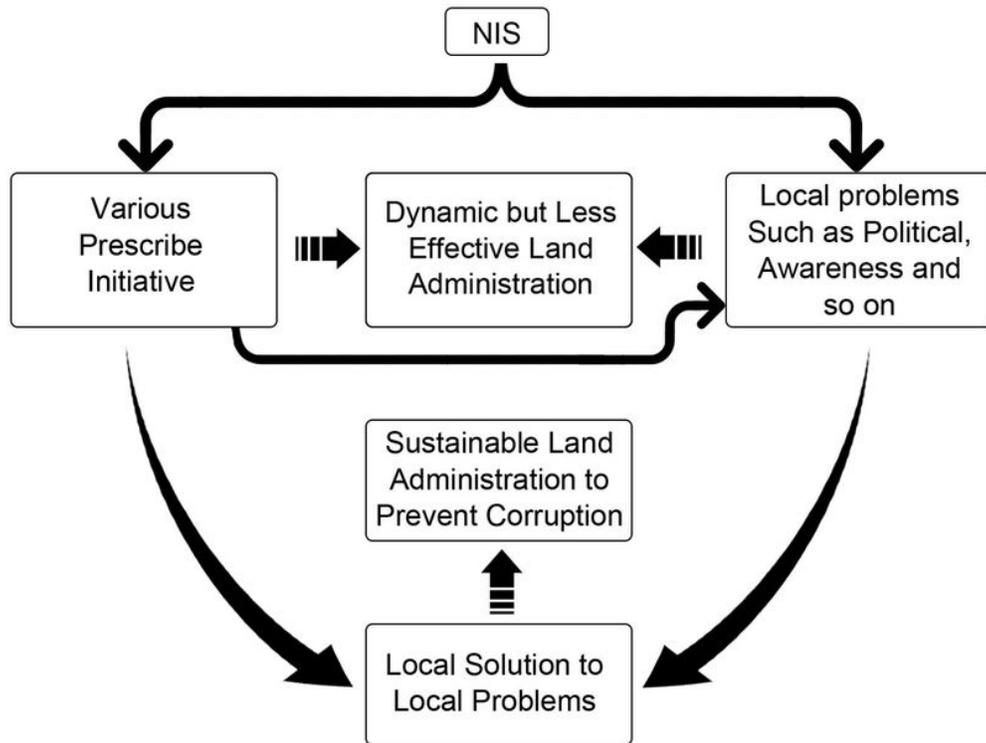


Figure 2

Framework of Sustainable Land Administration in a Combination of NIS and Local Solutions

Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- [Permissiontoconductfieldwork1.pdf](#)