

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Governance is now a widely debated concept both nationally and globally. It has become a concept of choice for International Financial Institutions, donor agencies and development partners who view it through the prism of development. Consequently, governance has become the catchphrase in contemporary times drawing attention and generating deliberations in countries that believe in democracy and freedom of speech. In Bangladesh, a great deal of debate is raging on the “state of governance”. Political scientists have identified some factors – political, social, economic and cultural that act as barriers to ensure good governance in the country (Parvez, 2012).

Since the 1980s, the issue of good governance has taken the centre stage in international discourse on development and international assistance to developing countries. The phrase ‘good governance’ after it was introduced by the World Bank in 1989 to characterise the crisis in sub Saharan Africa is now being widely used, especially by donors, to assess the functioning of a government and whether it is good enough to receive funds. Good governance through meeting certain criteria is now viewed as essential for promoting economic growth and alleviating poverty in the developing countries (Parvez, 2012). Without good governance, it is assumed by international partners that funds will not be used effectively and the desired benefits will not reach the poor (Parvez, 2012). However, it should be noted that the cornerstone of good governance is democracy.

Good governance requires an efficient executive, a functioning legislature, an independent judiciary and the effective separation and balance of powers, all constituent elements of a democratic regime. According to Mr Kofi Anan, the former UN Secretary General, ‘good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development’ (Gisselquist 2012). Therefore, development according to Wikipedia is ‘the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people by providing social amenities like quality education and other critical national infrastructure as well create the avenue for human development.

Development is a general concept which stands for various things such as economic growth and level of affluence, or even social development as measured by a complex set of indicators. Development also needs enhanced state capacity, as

well as institutional and governmental stability that stem from democracy. Good governance and development therefore, have the attributes of empowerment, participation and freedom.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Good Governance

Almost all major development institutions today say that promoting good governance is an important part of their agendas. Despite this consensus, ‘good governance’ is an extremely elusive objective: it means different things to different organizations and to different actors within these organizations (Gisselquist 2012). This paper provides a review of donor approaches and discusses good governance as a concept. What then is *good* governance? Working definitions of good governance and the quality of governance more generally, are notable in their diversity. This will be seen from definitions propounded by major multilateral agencies, including the UN, the multilateral development banks, the European Commission, the IMF, and the OECD. As it will be observed in the definitions there are clear similarities across working definitions of all these organisations, but there are also major differences.

According to the UN, ‘In the community of nations, governance is considered “good” and “democratic” to the degree in which a country’s institutions and processes are transparent. Its institutions refer to such bodies as parliament and its various ministries. A country’s success in achieving this standard has become a key measure of its credibility and respect in the world. Good governance promotes equity, participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and the rule of law, in a manner that is effective, efficient and enduring. The greatest threats to good governance comes from corruption, violence and poverty, all of which undermine transparency, security, participation and fundamental freedoms’ (UNwebsite, ‘Governance’).

The multilateral development banks also have various definitions, however, only those of the World Bank, ADB and IMF will be considered. The former World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz said in Jakarta on 11 April 2006 that “In the last half-century we have developed a better understanding of what helps governments function effectively and achieve economic progress. In the development community, we have a phrase for it. We call it ‘good governance’.” Similarly, the ADB in its document *Governance: Sound Economic Management* (August 1995, pp. 3, 4, 8) says ‘Among the many definitions of “governance” that exist, the one that appears the most appropriate from the viewpoint of the Bank is “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of

a country's economic and social resources for development" (Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, London: Dorset and Baber 1979)... Although policy aspects are important for development, the Bank's concept of good governance focuses essentially on the ingredients for effective management. In other words, irrespective of the precise set of economic policies that find favour with a government, good governance is required to ensure that those policies have their desired effect.'

However, Michael Camdessus, the former IMF Managing Director, in his address to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2 July 1997, said that 'Good governance is important for countries at all stages of development. ... Our approach is to concentrate on those aspects of good governance that are most closely related to our surveillance over macroeconomic policies—namely, the transparency of government accounts, the effectiveness of public resource management, and the stability and transparency of the economic and regulatory environment for private sector activity'.

All the definitions with the exception of the UN attempted to link good governance with development. Therefore, in this paper the following broad definition of governance is used: *Governance is the totality of interactions, in which government, other public bodies, private sector and civil society participate, aiming at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities.*

Poor Governance

For better understanding of good governance let us have a look at poor governance. A World Bank booklet cogently summarized the major symptoms of poor governance. These are: failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private hence a tendency to direct public resources for private gain, failure to establish a predictable frame work of law and government behaviour conducive to development or arbitrariness in the application of rule and law, executive rules, regulations, licensing requirements and so forth, which impede, functioning of markets and encourage rent seeking; priorities, inconsistent with development, resulting in a misallocation of resources; excessively narrowly based or non-transparent decision making process. The other symptoms of poor governance are "excessive costs, poor service to the public and failure to achieve the aims of policy (The British Council, 1991).

Developmental Perspective

The term development is being used in various contexts and is being qualified as: economic development, human development, international development, democratic development and social development. The notion of human development – quantified by the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) – has been used and emphasised by some development thinkers to counteract the mainstream thinking in development that is thought to emphasize too much on 'economic' development and growth. This approach may not be valid: there is nothing desirable in economic development per se other than human welfare, development and fulfilment (Business Dictionary online).

Development is the discipline first and foremost to tackle human destitution, poverty and lack of basic welfare, and after attaining those may be 'raising' living standards. To economists, 'economic' and 'development' are only valuable in so far as they act as a proxy for 'human' development. Accordingly, there is causal relationship between good governance and development.

Relationship between Good Governance and Development

There is a consensus that good governance is a necessary foundation for efforts to achieve sustainable development. Good governance is generally characterised by accessibility, accountability, predictability and transparency. While many other factors play an important role in development, good governance is now recognised as playing an essential role in the advancement of sustainable development. Good governance promotes accountability, transparency, efficiency and rule of law in public institutions at all levels. In addition, it allows for sound and efficient management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for equitable and sustainable development. These aspects of good governance do not in themselves ensure that society is ran well nor do they guarantee sustainable development. However, their absence severely limits that possibility and can, at worse, impede it. Consequently, good governance and sustainable development are intertwined. Therefore, to the extent possible, they should be pursued simultaneously. Lastly, good governance has to be built on the quality of democratic institutions of government i.e. the executive, legislature and judiciary as well as civil society and media so that development is based on these.

World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators

The World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs) are a compilation of the perceptions of a very diverse group of respondents, collected in large number of surveys and other cross – country assessment of governance. The WGI

which measure the broad definitions of governance capturing the key elements are; voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness and regulatory quality. Others include rule of law and control of corruption.

The six WGI can be grouped into two, which is political governance and institutional governance. Political governance will encompass voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence while institutional governance will be made up of government effectiveness, and regulatory quality, rule of law as well as control of corruption (<http://info.worldbank.org/governance>).

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH: AN APPRAISAL

Overview of Governance in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, a developing country in South Asia, characterised by large population, low per capita income, persistent trade deficit and an economy dominated by agriculture - has increasingly moved towards a market-based economy since the mid 1970s as a result of receiving assistance under structural adjustment programs of World Bank, IMF and other donor nations. Despite this foreign assistance, poor governance remains a big challenge for the country. It was observed that both internal and external factors such as politics, public pressure and donor country's conditions on reform are slowly generating a paradigm shift towards good governance and sustainable development. However, the paradigm shift towards good governance needs to pick up more speed to establish Bangladesh as a globally competitive nation (Hossen, 2011).

It has been over 42 years that the country got her independence, but it has not yet achieved any significant result in governance. The core challenge lies in developing a governance model that fits the current economic and political condition of the country. The other major bottlenecks are its slow monolithic non transparent, bureaucratic structure, rampant corruption in public offices which not only puts Bangladesh in TIB (Transparency International Bangladesh) top corrupt list of nations but also raise the cost of living in the country.

In addition, politicization, favouritism, nepotism and corrupt practices in recruitment and placement of government employees are also major obstacles to good governance in Bangladesh. Strong political willingness to fight against corruption, ensure accountability, transparency and the rule of law has become

imperative for establishing good governance. In addition, a pro people approach by strengthening the local government system is a must, to achieve the goal of good governance. “Good governance for sound development” is a campaign echoed in Bangladesh as across the world (Anwar, 2011).

Emergence of Good Governance in Bangladesh

A landmark study by the World Bank (1998), *Assessing Aid – What Works, What doesn't and Why*, demonstrated the crucial role that good governance plays in enhancing the effectiveness of aid. Where there is sound country management, an additional one per cent of GDP in aid translates into a one per cent decline in poverty and a similar decline in infant mortality – whereas in a weak policy and management environment aid has much less impact. Findings like this clearly indicate that the ‘returns’ from development assistance are generally greater in developing countries characterized by good governance. One element of good governance that is needed for sustained development is an economy that operates in an ethical, accountable and appropriately regulated environment, which facilitates competition in the marketplace. Without this, there will be no driver for economic growth and sustainable development will not be possible. It is needless to say, Bangladesh is far away from achieving good governance. What’s going on in the country can’t be termed as democracy, the power of the government is limited to a few powerful persons and more importantly personal or party interest is greater to them. Although the expectation of the country’s people is not so high, fulfilment is still beyond imagination. People living in Bangladesh only want the assurance of; the basic needs of life i.e. food, shelter, clothing, education and healthcare. Others are socio-economic safety, enough employment opportunities for the growing population which also belong to the previous demand.

Review of Governance and Development Situation Across Countries

Governance is a global phenomenon, whether it is good or poor. Therefore, the issue of good governance which has been identified as an ideal is difficult to achieve, although some countries have made significant inroads into it. There is the need to examine it across countries. This will be based on a uniform set of parameters or indicators. Accordingly, making use of the WGI, we can briefly examine the governance and development situation of Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia in order to determine the performance of Bangladesh within its geo – strategic environment and beyond.

The percentile score is given below:

- a. 90 – 100 percentile (extremely high).
- b. 75 – 89 percentile (high).
- c. 50 – 74 percentile (around average).
- d. 25 – 49 percentile (low).
- e. 10 – 24 percentile (very low).
- f. 0 – 9 percentile (extremely).

Political Governance Dimension across Countries

Table-1 summarises indices of political governance for six countries. In south Asia, political governance of Bangladesh is far better than Pakistan while it is almost at par with Sri Lanka. However, it is significantly lower than India. In comparison to countries in South East Asia, Bangladesh is much lower than Malaysia and Singapore. The performance of Bangladesh's political governance deteriorated and showed a dismal picture during the period 2002 to 2005 and showed a marginal improvement from 2006 onwards. This indicates that political governance in Bangladesh is problematic and political institutions are becoming increasingly dysfunctional due to imperfections in the prevailing political market.

Table 1: Political Governance across countries														
Serial	Country	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Mean	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)	(o)
1.	Bangladesh	45.5	42.0	42.5	41.0	39.0	45.0	44.5	46.5	48.5	48.0	47.0	44.5	
2.	Pakistan	34.5	32.5	35.0	35.5	34.5	35.5	32.0	30.5	30.0	28.0	28.5	32.4	
3.	Sri Lanka	38.0	52.5	53.0	49.5	51.0	51.0	45.5	41.0	49.0	50.0	51.5	47.5	
4.	India	51.0	52.5	53.5	55.5	56.0	57.0	56.5	56.0	55.0	54.5	54.0	54.7	
5.	Malaysia	56.5	61.0	62.0	61.5	64.5	63.0	62.5	59.0	60.5	60.5	61.5	61.1	
6.	Singapore	74.0	73.0	71.0	70.0	70.5	73.0	74.0	76.0	75.5	75.0	74.0	73.3	
Source: World Bank Institute @ www.govindicator.org														

Institutional Governance Dimension across Countries

The institutional governance dimension across countries in South and South East Asia is actually based on the quality of a country's public and private institutions within which the economy main players interact to generate income and wealth. It benchmarked the institutional scores of Bangladesh in comparison to other selected countries in South and South East Asia. Table 2 provides the performance of public institutions for different countries over the period 2000 to 2011. Bangladesh's score is the lowest of all the countries sampled. However, it showed marginal improvement from the period 2004 to 2011. The lowest performance index on public institution aspect serves a reminder of the governance problem in which the country is enmeshed.

Table 2: Institutional Governance across countries

Serial	Country	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Mean	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)	(o)
1.	Bangladesh	31.5	28.5	27.3	33.5	36.0	36.3	40.3	40.5	40.3	39.5	40.0	35.8	
2.	Pakistan	30.5	32.8	34.5	34.0	39.5	43.3	42.8	40.8	40.5	40.3	39.8	38.1	
3.	Sri Lanka	52.5	52.0	52.0	52.5	51.8	53.0	52.3	50.5	50.0	48.8	49.3	51.3	
4.	India	44.3	42.3	45.3	48.8	50.3	51.8	51.0	50.3	49.8	49.0	48.5	48.2	
5.	Malaysia	58.3	58.3	59.5	60.5	58.3	61.0	59.0	56.0	56.8	59.8	59.5	58.8	
6.	Singapore	86.8	86.3	86.0	85.0	88.3	86.3	87.5	87.0	85.0	85.8	85.5	86.3	

Source: World Bank Institute @ www.govindicator.org

Appraisal of Good Governance Indicators and Impact on Development in Bangladesh

After the above comparative analysis, it is now necessary to look at the performance of Bangladesh with regards to governance and development. During the last few years it has been increasingly recognised that Bangladesh needs good governance to reduce poverty and increase prosperity. To examine good governance vis-a-vis its impact on development, this study will make use of the internationally recognised WGI (2000 -2011) mentioned earlier to arrive at a reasonable conclusion. Table 3 below shows the performance of Bangladesh over the period of eleven years based on the mentioned aggregate indicators.

Table 3: Country Data Report for Bangladesh World Governance Aggregate Indicators														
Serial	Indicator	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Mean	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)	(n)	(o)
1.	Voice and Accountability	41.0	41.0	42.0	43.0	46.0	50.0	48.0	50.0	56.0	54.0	53.0	47.6	
2.	Political Stability and Absence of Violence	50.0	43.0	43.0	39.0	32.0	40.0	41.0	43.0	41.0	42.0	41.0	37.6	
3.	Government Effectiveness	32.0	31.0	31.0	34.0	36.0	41.0	42.0	43.0	41.0	41.0	41.0	37.5	
4.	Regulatory Quality	39.0	36.0	39.0	40.0	43.0	43.0	44.0	44.0	43.0	43.0	43.0	41.5	
5.	Rule of Law	36.0	37.0	26.0	38.0	40.0	38.0	42.0	42.0	42.0	41.0	43.0	38.6	
6.	Control of Corruption	19.0	10.0	13.0	22.0	25.0	23.0	33.0	33.0	35.0	33.0	33.0	25.4	
Source: World Bank Institute @ www.govindicator.org														

Voice and Accountability. A cursory look at the table reveals a steady improvement in voice and accountability even though it is still a far cry from the desired outcome. It gives hope that the voice of the voiceless can be heard and there is also a reasonable degree of both vertical and horizontal accountability. There will therefore be the need for them to improve on their overall performance as this will ensure the participation of all stakeholders in development effort.

Political Stability and Absence of Violence. The level of political instability is quite alarming. This is as a consequence of the highly confrontational politics being played in the country. It has therefore almost entirely crippled the political institution in the country. This is of course not without violence which has from February of this year (2013) led to serious loss of lives and destruction of properties worth billions. The boycott of parliamentary activities by the opposition has also made the parliament dysfunctional and ineffective. The adverse result of the confrontational politics and non democratic behaviours in political life of the country has led to a number of politically related hartals. The coalition of opposition parties led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party boycotted the parliament and called out several hartals (Shut down). This action has negatively impacted on the economic fortunes of the country leading to serious drop in the steady growth of the GDP. A proof of the political instability in Bangladesh is further illustrated by the steady decline in table 3.

Government Effectiveness. Government effectiveness is about exercising different types of power, that is executive, legislative and judiciary. The legislative and judiciary have been relatively weak compared to the executive. The parliament has been made ineffective by long series of “hartals”, parliamentary boycott and street political hooliganism (“Mastans”) backed by powerful political personnel (Roy, 2006). Despite this, there has been a steady but marginal improvement in government effectiveness over the years.

Regulatory Quality. Power is centralised in the hands of cabinet and head of the government to exert authority and unjustified power. Organisations, such as Accountability Bureau and the Comptroller General’s office, serve more as the agents of the government in power than autonomous, non partisan bodies. Political patronage and weak autonomy of the law enforcing agencies have caused these bodies to often serve as instruments of control and sources of harassment of the opposition political parties and the civil society. Regulatory quality needs to be improved by allowing the regulatory agencies the full and proper autonomy to function without undue external influence.

Rule of Law. A government works through its public institutions. All that government does by way of business must be seen to be within the ambit of the law. The performance of Bangladesh in the rule of law showed some form of decline and fluctuates within the sphere of low performance. Access to justice by the poor is still a problem in a country with a serious back log of cases awaiting adjudication. There is the need therefore for strict enforcement of the rule of law. This will assist in the control of corruption within the country. The effectiveness of the rule of law and adequate access to justice will encourage the inflow of foreign investment for development because the foreign investor will be confident of the security of their investment and absence of impunity.

Control of Corruption. Control of corruption is a sore point in the institutional governance of Bangladesh. The corruption perception index in public institutions provides the gloomiest picture although it has improved marginally over the years (Table 3). The Transparency International rates Bangladesh as the most corrupt country in the world for five consecutive years over 2001 – 2006, due to institutional problems (Roy, 2006). Corruption is partly a reflection of underlying weak institutions. Corruption mostly originates in large government procurements, purchases and in the provision of public service delivery programmes. In Bangladesh, as other countries, the problems of nepotism and perverse client – patron relationships and bribery, deprives most efficient firms (Roy, 2006).

There is plenty of evidence of corruption in the provision of public services in Bangladesh. TIB study (2005) based on nationwide household survey in 9 sectors of Bangladesh provides information on the incidence of corruption as a consequence of weak public institutions. It has been found that an average Bangladeshi paid Taka 485 per year as bribes. The bribes paid by households for 25 service categories within the 9 sectors (education, health, land administration, police, judiciary, electricity, taxation, local government – shalish and relief, and pension) are Taka 6,796 Crore. To seek to eliminate corruption is not the issue, rather effort should be made to control and minimise it. Therefore, the Independent Anti corruption Commission should be empowered and strengthened to function effectively without interference. The office of the ombudsman needs to be established to assist in tackling corruption in government.

Findings

Bangladesh performance in the WGI has been mixed (Table 3), while Poor political governance impacts negatively on the institutions and vice versa. The institutional problem associated with public service delivery is severe. The

worsening institution badly affects the government delivery of programmes, generates corruption and slow economic growth. In Bangladesh, NGOs participate in the delivery of social programs, thereby mitigating to a great extent the low efficiency and high corruption of public service delivery.

Good governance has a consequential effect on development. Generally, Bangladesh ranks between 25 and 50 percentile on the WGIs assessment scale. The country has showed marginal improvement in governance over the period of eleven years in some sectors or indicators with fluctuation in others. Unless there is a marked improvement in governance quality, Bangladesh may not achieve its desired outcome of becoming a middle income country by the Year 2021.

Political instability, government inefficiency, poor regulatory quality, non adherence to the rule of law and rampant corruption have collectively affected socio – economic development. The ease of doing business in Bangladesh is another problem due to bureaucratic red tapism. The cross country comparison showed that Bangladesh was only able to do a little better than Pakistan in terms of good governance. In countries like India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore, the impact of good governance on their development is commendable. The greatest threat to development in Bangladesh is rampant corruption because it significantly reduces per capita income. Therefore, if corruption can be reduced to manageable level, it will positively impact on all sectors of the national life and could increase its annual income per capita by more than two per cent.

Bangladesh has the capacity and potentials for higher rate of socio – economic development. However, this potential has been thwarted by the existence of poor governance. Despite her low performance in both political and institutional governance, the country has made some noticeable progress. The commitment and resilience of her people more than anything else is responsible for the steady progress recorded. There is therefore the need to break the vicious circle of poor governance, slow economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Therefore, it should be noted that poor institutional or governance quality has not affected development as much as economists expected. Accordingly, poor institutional quality results in myopic (low payback period) and reversible investments affects quality more than quantity. Consequently, governance deficits could bite harder as income grows. What is counterfactual is that the recorded growth could have been higher with better Governance. Finally and more importantly is the fact that good governance is an end in itself (World Bank: Zahid Hossain 2012).

Bangladesh experience in governance and development is indeed a paradox. This is because despite the seeming low performance of the country in good governance, it has continued to make progress in her march towards becoming a middle income country by the year 2021.

The quality of both political and institutional governance has been found to remain at a low level. Per capita income is accordingly positively related to governance dimensions.

Consequently, despite the preponderance of literature on good governance and development and the conviction that is held generally by multilateral global institutions, it is clear from the finding of this research that ***good governance is not an absolute determinant of development*** as we have seen in the case of Bangladesh.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon the findings, it is recommended that:

- a. The Government of Bangladesh should take necessary steps to improve on both political and institutional governance dimensions for sustainable development.
- b. Researchers should be encouraged to carry out further studies to determine which of the six WGs specifically affects development.

CONCLUSION

Good governance and development in Bangladesh are a desired national outcome based on the prescription of multilateral organisations and development partners. Bangladesh wishes to become a middle income nation by the year 2021, a target towards which she has showed tremendous and consistent progress.

A comparative analysis of six countries which includes Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia and Singapore reveals that Bangladesh has not done very poorly over the years in political governance, although there is a lot of room for improvement based on the internationally recognised WGs assessment criteria. Bangladesh comparatively very low performance in institutional governance calls for concern as her lowest performance index in public institutions serve as a grim reminder of the political governance deficits in which the country is enmeshed in. In this regard, it has become crystal clear that poor political governance impacts negatively on the institutions and vice versa. The institutional problem associated with public service delivery is severe.

Whereas, this potential has been thwarted by the existence of poor governance and despite her low performance in both political and institutional governance, Bangladesh has made noticeable progress.

Furthermore, it is also observed that poor political and institutional governance quality has not affected development as much as economists expected. Accordingly, Bangladesh performance in governance and development is indeed a paradox because despite the seeming low performance of the country in good governance, it has continued to make progress in her march towards the middle income target of 2021. What has come out clearly is the fact that in spite of the generally held conviction that good governance matters for development, it has found out that ***good governance is not an absolute determinant for development*** as we have seen in the case of Bangladesh. There is therefore the need to carry out further studies to determine which of six WGLs specifically affects development positively or negatively as the case may be.

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