



Present status of accountability on health related activities among city corporation's officials: A qualitative study

Md. Ruhullah Siddiqy

Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP), Dhaka 1216, Bangladesh

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Abstract

The main purposes of this research were to assess the present status and challenges to establish accountability on health related activities among selected city corporation officials in Bangladesh. The study duration was six months from March to August in 2017. This qualitative study based on IDI (74) and KII (9) methods included Dhaka city (North and South), Rajshahi city and Chittagong city using purposive and convenient sampling approach. The overall scenario of accountability was satisfactory among the city corporations' officials. The condition of Rajshahi City was better than other sectors in terms of health and cleanliness as well as waste management. In many cases Chittagong City Corporation had similarity to Rajshahi City Corporation. The present scenario was not satisfactory and there was no adequate place for recreation in Dhaka City. WASH systems were not satisfactory in all City Corporations comparatively. For controlling malaria and other diseases, all the City Corporations were trying hard to reach the goal. Most city dwellers participated at the ward level through indirect mechanisms like ward councilors and local political leaders. Sometimes City Corporation officials opened the opportunity through direct mechanisms, such as participation in public hearings, meetings and petitions. Therefore, it can be concluded that both upward accountability and downward accountability were responsible for not to better exercise to ensure participation.

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Introduction

Good governance is an essential precondition for development. Since Bangladesh has been aiming to become a middle income country day by day, ensuring good governance in all sectors is fundamental. Since

the end of the 1980s, the issue of good governance has dominated international discussion about development and international assistance to developing countries (Wohlmut, 1999). Various countries quite similar in terms of their natural resources and social structures have shown strikingly different performance in improving the welfare of their people. Much of this was attributable to standards of governance. Poor governance stifles and impedes development.

E-mail address: mruhullahs@gmail.com.

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Accountability is one of the components of good governance. Accountability is important to governance because of evaluating the ongoing effectiveness of public officials or public bodies (Stapenhurst & O'Brien, 2008). In recent years, Bangladesh has made impressive gains across a range of social indicators and has enjoyed strong economic growth, which together convincingly refuted its reputation as an “international basket case” (World Bank, 2007). To ensure sound local development action should be taken to work towards achieving good governance (Ara & Khan, 2006).

Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Given the absolute centrality of issues of accountability to any discussion of contemporary governance and the challenges facing government administration, it is obviously useful to assess the present status of accountability among city corporation officials in Bangladesh. Accountability regimes such as access to information are recognized worldwide as crucial components of a democratic state (Stefanick, 2011). Hashemi (2006) pointed out that now-a-days, Chittagong City Corporation faces some challenges, for example: rapid growth of slum areas, industrial waste, unplanned hill cutting, medical/clinical waste, unplanned urban growth, solid waste management, sewerage system, traffic management, unplanned industrial growth and haphazard growth of slum areas etc.

Methodology

A qualitative study design was deployed and used secondary data. Respondents were selected by a purposive and convenience sampling. The study duration was six months, from March to August in 2017 in Bangladesh. A qualitative study was done because it relies on the opinion of individuals; ask broad, general questions and data collection consists largely of words or texts (Creswell, 2014). In this study, In-depth Interview (IDI) and Key Informant Interview (KII) techniques were used for qualitative data collection. In the qualitative study, 9 respondents for KII and 74 respondents for IDI were the sample size with a guideline and checklist applied. KII was conducted with government officials and political persons. On the other hand, IDI was conducted with teacher, ward commissioner, household head, businessman, student and NGOs key personal. Study areas were Dhaka city (North and South), Rajshahi city and Chittagong cities in Bangladesh. In this proposal, local development meant that one segment of development area related to four tier Local Government Institutions (City Corporation/

Pourosava, Zilla Parishad, Upazilla Parishad and Union Parishad) of Bangladesh. This purpose study was carried out with the four oldest City Corporations and their related accountability, which is a major component of good governance, for different intra organization and other existing government institutions. The interviews session took about 40 minutes at their preferred place. Finally, the interviews data were translated to English by using a reserve translation and transcribed manually.

Result and Discussion

Level of Participation of City Corporations' Officials

The overall scenario of accountability was satisfactory among the city corporations' officials. Accountability was found at institutional service at Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC). They were accountable to the mayor and all staff were responsible to him. The mayor of City Corporation, ward commissioners and other admin officers were very cordial in providing services to the people and were very much accountable to the authority. Accountability was a tool which made them play a significant role in their decision making process. The RCC tried to carry out their committed services in time. The RCC officials did not use to emphasize or care about accountability. However, now accountability is considered at the time of the decision making process. The RCC tried to fulfill their commitment in time. In the past, the general public could not raise their legal demands to the RCC, and those concerns were not rightly addressed. Accountability exists fully in Chittagong City Corporation (CCC). The CCC disclose all their activities to the public every year. In many cases, after project completion, the project workers did not remain accountable. But they should be made accountable even in the post work period if any problem arises. There were 18 standing committees to ensure accountability in Chittagong City Corporation. In order to ensure accountability, they were trying to ensure the principle of accountability within an organization. Their work was monitored in coordination with the various committees. One of the IDI respondents stated that:

“Attendance and accountability are less found in the City Corporation Office, but the corporate office is not like that. Officers sometimes take the salary without coming to the office, which indicates their lack of accountability and sincerity” (Treasurer Officer, 2017).

The overall situation of accountability was better but not satisfactory among the Dhaka South City Corporation (DNCC) officers. There were fewer internal obstacles in the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) area,

and female councilors were less respected by senior officials. Councilors who were not affiliated with any political parties did not get any projects for city dweller development.

The majority of the respondents said that the scenario of accountability was good among the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) officers. One of the KII respondents stated that:

“A team was working for implementation and all officials continue their duties for a healthy & clean city, traffic jam free, good environment, disease control as well as adequate places for mental recreation.”

Another study (Rahman,2017) revealed that the context varies as the form was different as Jessore was a municipality and Khulna was a city corporation. The significance was to identify which form of organizational arrangement was more functional to promote accountability issues in urban development practices.

Figure 1 shows that the level of participation among city corporation officials was found consistent. Councilors were responsible for collecting citizen perceptions in four of the City Corporations (RCC, CCC, DSCC, and DNCC). As councilors represented the community/ward people, their decisions were accepted from project design to implementation and evaluation in four City Corporations. They generally perform meetings in Ward Councilor Office with different stakeholders, but their involvement was not sufficient for developing in five sectors (clean & healthy city, pollution & traffic free city, WASH, mental health, malaria, & other diseases), which needed to improve accountability. Insufficient meetings were organized, punctuality was lacking in addition to lack of coordination, lack of follow-up, lack of proper monitoring, failure of the project duration, and lack of implementation, all of which were the main causes of not fulfilling their participation in accountability.

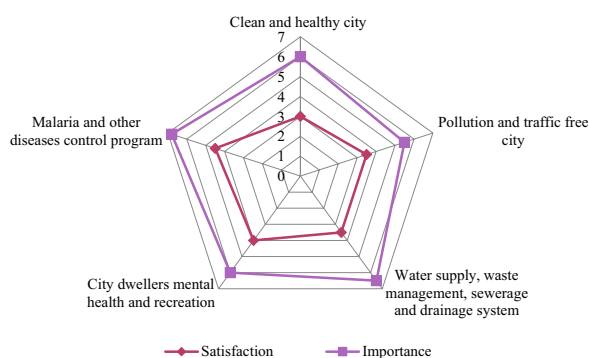


Figure 1 Level of Participation among Officials on Accountability

Accountability on Clean and Healthy City

Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation convenes and presides over a meeting with all officials and world commissioners to maintain a healthy and clean city. In the meeting Mayer discusses progress and projects being implemented. The provision of Rajshahi City was better than other sectors in terms of health and cleanliness. The officials of Rajshahi City Corporation need more accountability focusing on this sector to maintain the present scenario and improve it step by step. For seven Lakh people in the Chittagong City Corporation provide 300 dustbins over the city to ensure cleanliness. Other innovative steps were taken for receiving complaints from the general public by phone and action would be taken within 48 hours for better service.

“Assigned persons were committed to fulfill people’s demand on making a clean city for a model city in Bangladesh and among the south Asia countries and ensure complete accountability for increasing life style of city dwellers in Rajshahi City” (Chief Health Officer, 2017).

A KII official (CCC) stated, “*The role of the present mayor on making a clean and healthy city has been very satisfactory. For making the city clean, wasteis collected by visiting every house, and a bin has been given to every house for the waste. The mayor is also accountable to the general public and receives complaints in both oral and written form to solve within two days.*”

The Dhaka South City Corporation was accountable for development works. There were six MPs in the DSCC area, and each had been allocated 20 crores. In the park areas, toilet facilities were well managed. Footpaths were freed from being dispossessed in Gulistan, but several groups fought to keep them in place.

Cleaners cleaned roads regularly and collected waste at doorways. Although there were dustbins along the roadside, a majority of the time the waste was still left on the road. This results in bad smells spreading throughout the area and polluting the environment. The problem could be reported, but a more advanced process needs to be developed to deal with it. In general, most people were unaware of their rights, and when getting a citizen certificate, an extra fee was required.

Regarding accountability, one of the KII Respondents said, “*DSCC was working towards making the city clean and healthy. The road was cleaned before 8:00 AM, with ward committees to oversee the cleanness activities. City Corporation officials were working for implementation of this project and should increaseservice as they are responsible for monitoring and implementation.*”

Accountability on Pollution and Traffic Free City

Currently, Rajshahi City did not have a great reputation when it came to pollution and traffic free roads, which was due to the fact that City Corporation was building roads and facing many challenges to complete them on time. As a result of the widening of small roads in Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), fewer traffic jams result from vehicles traveling on the roads. As part of Chittagong City Corporation's traffic division, the Metropolitan Police worked to eradicate traffic jams throughout the city. Nagar Bhaban" makes arrangements for lighting in the street and took initiative with rickshaws to be taken off the streets to reduce traffic jams. Disciplinary actions should be brought into "Traffic Management" for controlling pollution and developing a traffic jam free city. Moreover, sound pollution and emission of smoke from motor vehicles were also polluting the environment. There was an environment directorate but they were inactive. We should be informed what initiative they take.

One of the IDI respondents said, *"Effective steps were not visualized to reduce pollution and traffic jams in Dhaka South City Corporation. At some points, U-turn had been imposed and personal cars were plentiful in Dhaka, which was the cause of traffic jams. Drivers did not follow the traffic rules and did not obey the traffic police at all. Also, there was lack of enforcement and road site construction was a continuous process throughout the year. After such work, broken bits of bricks/stone were not removed"*.

Accountability on Water Supply, Waste Management, Sewerage and Drainage System

Rajshahi City Corporation mayor and commissioner were working together and were very much cordial for work. Rajshahi City is better than other cities in the sector of waste management because all the waste is transferred within a night. On the other hand, they were working on establishing their reliability and capacity throughout the South Asia countries, and were facing some financial problems to implement projects properly. Chittagong City Corporation was working on developing water and sanitation with WASA, but the general public did not follow the rules properly. Dhaka South City Corporation was working on waste management for a long time but service was not at a satisfactory level. Recently, DSCC dustbins had been placed at different locations throughout the city and also along the roadside. There were no visible activities for mosquito eradication, and there was no fixed budget. Another study at Khulna City Corporation revealed that most households (about 84%) have a door

to door collection system, where garbage carts pick up waste from different neighborhoods (Rahman, 2017)

One of the IDI respondents stated, *"Dhaka North City Corporation was not very effective for the construction of a well-planned and healthy city, and the condition of roads was not good. During the rainy season, water accumulates on the road after the rain and leads to suffering. However, some initiatives are available to create a pollution free environment. Dirty garbage on roads was less visible than before, and the supply of water was better than previously. The condition of drains was good but still not satisfactory because of the need to build this management using modern technology. Some initiative was taken and after completing the implementation, it can be enjoyed by the city dwellers and then it will be successful"*.

Accountability on Mental Health and Recreation

For mental health and recreation, Rajshahi City Corporation had taken many good initiatives such as the decorated bank of the Padma River as an attractive tourist area, but the steps need to be properly shaped to be more beautiful. There were not enough RCC activities related to city dweller's mental health and recreation, and such should be taken to keep focus on people's mental health. There was no monthly meeting agenda about mental health and recreation.

For recreation of the city dwellers, Chittagong City Corporation had taken initiatives to have a park for every ward. There was a field in East Bakolia, where Chittagong City Corporation would develop a child research center. "Nagar Bhaban" was working with mental health. Chittagong City Mayor was giving all of his monthly salary to disabled people. This money was used for the disabled on the basis of application.

According to one IDI respondent (CCC), *"We made arrangements to have modern toilets in the city. There were two large parks in Chittagong City Corporation. Apart from this, there was Patenga sea beach, where people can enhance their mental health. More playgrounds were needed for children to improve their physical and mental health. To increase beauty, greenery activities have been undertaken and if CCC can keep 40% of the area green, then the quantity of carbon will decrease."*

There are many parks in Dhaka South City Corporation for the recreation and entertainment of city dwellers. As part of beautifying the parks, well-equipped toilets and walkways were constructed. The conditions of other projects were not satisfactory. The infrastructure of gymnasiums, music schools and community centers situated in Dhaka South City Corporation were not in a

good condition. Being very old, they were even worse than their privately owned competitors. There were 12 gymnasiums which could maintain standards. Several changes were made in order to modernize following public input. On the other hand, some lucrative Cineplex started operating in the city. The present scenario of accountability was not satisfactory because of having no adequate place for recreation in Dhaka North City Corporation.

Accountability on Malaria and other Diseases Control Program

Malaria and other diseases were tedious to maintain for Rajshahi City Corporation when it was epidemic. The implementation strategy for eliminating malaria and other diseases was being improved, but there were no malaria medicines or mosquito killing systems in RCC. Sometimes malaria became an epidemic crisis, but the main problems were addressing the lack of awareness among the citizen and having lack of proper future plan. One of the KII respondents stated:

“More sustainable programs that should be taken as soon as possible for different mosquito related diseases like chikunguniya and dengue were challenging. Some mosquito related activities continue to be run but often face questions for their effectiveness”

Level of Satisfaction among the General People on Accountability

Figure 2 shows that public satisfaction with accountability to City Corporation officials was not satisfactory among the five health sectors, as well as the general public was not accountable for its duties and responsibilities as city dwellers since there was lack of awareness, and improvement is needed to fulfill such obligations. Data on the level of satisfaction by the general public were found consistent.

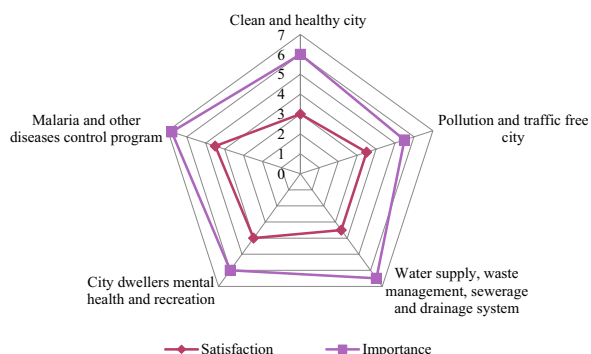


Figure 2 Level of Satisfaction among the General Public on Accountability

Figure 3 shows that Accountability is one of the best components of good governance and intertwined with other components. The development of a city depends on successful plan implementation, proper preparation, and adequate service delivery. Nevertheless, all developments were successful when there was constant accountability everywhere. The proper development of a city depends on coordination and participation among city corporation officials, which in turn depend upon accountability. Taking part in good activities in one’s sector is also part of accountability if one is showing transference. Accountability is an integral aspect of all sectors in our society.

Table 1 shows relevant challenge matrix of accountability on health related activities among four different city corporations in Bangladesh. Challenge matrix of accountability is presented below.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the above discussion, it was evident that the overall scenario of accountability was satisfactory among the city corporations’ officials, but among such officials there was a lack of coordination with ward councilor to implement any project and solve any kind of problem. Accountability among city corporation officials were different within four city corporations (RCC, DNCC, DSCC, CCC) and five development sectors (Ensure Healthy and Clean City, Pollution free city &Traffic free city, Waste management and sewerage and Drainage System, City dwellers Mental Health and Recreation, Malaria and other diseases). There were

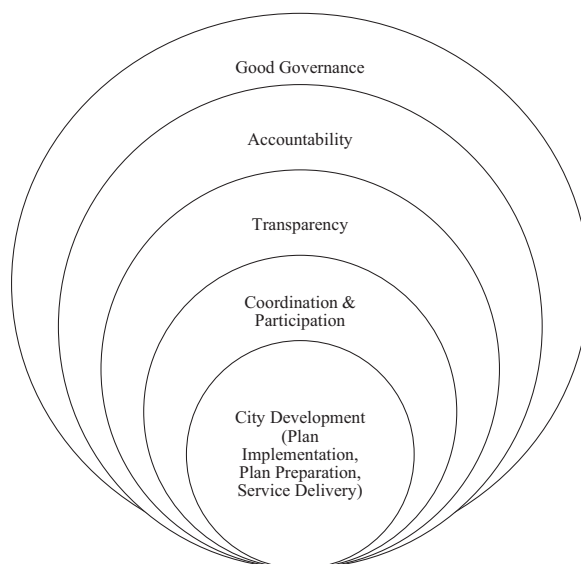


Figure 3 Socio-economical model of Accountability

Table 1 Relevant challenge matrix of accountability on health activities

DSCC	DNCC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too much arrogance among the mayors and employees - Autocracy. - Representatives did not go to the public. - General public did not go to the Mayor directly without permission. - The election process needs to develop - Lack of skilled man power & inadequate financial budget allotment. - Lack of co-ordination with public. - Lack of proper co-ordination among these 26 departments in DSCC areas & political motivation - People did not use dustbin, foot over bridge due to lack of awareness. - Lack of proper place for mental recreation; -Not possible to spraychemical everywhere for timely mosquito destruction. - Lack of man power, awareness, monitoring system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was no internal resistance. Action is taken on the basis of complaint. - Lack of Training, skilled manpower & need IT/Computer specialist. - Lot of internal impediments. - Having personal weakness. - Lack of budget allotment, time management, good relation among officials. - Political interfere. - Poor road construction and suitable place for recreation. - Lack of city cleaner. - Hawker on foot path, increasing rickshaw puller & private car. - Defecation beside the city drain & it is scattered everywhere. - Vehicle driver did not obey traffic signal, - Increasing personal vehicles. - Jurisdictional Spillover.
RCC	CCC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of proper monitoring, awareness and willingness. - Inefficient use of resources and poor management systems. - Essential better mind set & lack of training for capacity buildup, transparency among the officials, inter-communication, political commitment & proper implementation of law. - Poor drainage system & recreation facilities for financial crises & lack of awareness about dust placement among the city dwellers, and crack down on all illegal structures in city. - In controlling malaria, not enough medicine and testing lab facility. - Lack of time management, natural calamity, good relationship among the RCC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People adopt many ways not to pay tax and sometimes to reduce their taxes. - Lack of awareness among mass people and their tendency not to abide by the laws, - of coordination and proper planning, -Lack of project and skilled manpower. - Some sorts of internal impediment. - Poor management & lack of enforcement & patriotism - Less involvement of the public in the projects. - More political interference and internal conflict. - Project activities are very time-consuming. - Due to financial problems, there is a lack of coordination among the institutions. - Lack of land, cleanliness, implementation on tobacco control law, traffic law & waste management.

some challenges to establish accountability among the officers, for example-lack of changing mind-set, lack of awareness, lack of cooperation and coordination, lack of budget allocation, lack of respect to the people and officials and lack of proper monitoring systems. A genuine effort from citizens, city corporation officials and elected representatives should ensure an effective participatory decision to guide the development of the city in a more accountable way.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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