

Assessing The Enforcement of Principles of Good Governance In Amhara National Regional State: The Case of Debre Tabor Town Urban Development and Houses Construction Department

By

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Abstract

The term good governance was first used in the 1990s by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to describe how public organizations best conduct public affairs and deliver public goods and services. The role of good governance to ensure equity resource distribution among the society, wise utilization of financial and non-financial materials, accelerating development progress, productivity, and so on without doubt obviously testified by countries, individuals, intentional financial institutions. The study dealt with assessing the enforcement of principles of good governance in Amhara national regional state: the case of Debre tabor town urban development and houses construction department. The study was conducted using 102 service users' and 25 employees' response of open and close ended questionnaires that were selected via random sampling technique. Furthermore, focused group discussion, interview and secondary data were used to gather relevant data, and rely on more descriptive and some form of explanatory research methods. Findings of the study reveals that the performance of the department pertaining to the principles of good governance was found dissatisfactory and much is left to be done in the department. The leading factors that inhibited the performance of good governance in the department were, among others, weak enforcement procedure, corruption, some employees disrespect of service users, weak public education, weak monitoring and evaluation system, administrative and technical incompetence of employees, and absence of public review system. Accordingly, to enhance good land governance and administration system in the department, it should be strive on addressing the above bottleneck through effective enforcement procedures.

Key words: *participation, accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, rule of law*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction and Background

Since the last three decades there is an agreement that good governance enable legitimate, accountable and effective ways of obtaining and using public power and resources in the pursuit of widely-accepted social goals. Moreover, now a day it believed that good governance is the essential ingredient for sustainable development and poverty reduction strategy. That is why Kofi Annan stated that "Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development (Kofi Annan in UNDR, 2002:51).

This is due to good governance allows for sound and efficient management of resources for equitable and sustainable development while inappropriate governance inhabits and impedes development (Tagesse Mathewos, 2015:2). Moreover, the development experts in recent years have emphasized 'good governance' as a prerequisite for development (Mohammad Ali, 2017). Hence, in those countries where there are lacks of accountability, transparency, responsiveness, inefficiency, ineffectiveness, corruptions, poor control of public funds and abuses of human rights, the activity of development can impede (IFAC, 2013). Hence, to achieve the economic and social development, strengthening good governance is assumed to play a key role especially in mobilizing human and capital resources (Tagesse Mathewos, 2015).

The late 1980s and 1990s were characterized by concerted struggle for democratization and the movement for good governance especially in the African continent (Hilal Ahmad, 2014:1). The thirst for freedom and justice, the political fallouts from the Structural Adjustment Programme and the entrenched autocratic and repressive political systems dominant in the larger part of Africa's post-colonial history provided the incentive and legitimacy for popular democratic struggles in Africa (UNDP, 2003).

In many developing countries, local communities are affected by a lack of rule of law and nontransparent decision making, often linked with abuse of power and corruption. One of the main issues negatively influencing sustainable development of both rural and urban areas is tenure insecurity and land grabbing affecting particularly poor communities. The World Bank estimates that only around 30% of land rights are registered or recorded worldwide and this means that the remaining 70% of the local population do not have their housing and land rights documented making them prone to land grabbing (WB, 1992). Such problem is mainly worsened in the areas of city municipality and land administration. The problem is supplemented with having infant democracy in which the African continent is a true political and social mosaic, including Ethiopia, most of them are conflict ridden societies and facing terrible governance challenges in the last decades. Particularly in Ethiopia there are political, economic and socio-cultural setbacks which inhibit to implement the principles of good governance both in local, regional and national administrations.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Since 1994 the Government of Ethiopia has, within the wider context of its poverty reduction strategy developed a programme to address governance challenges which in turn to support the aim of sustainable development. The focus of the agenda includes civil service reform, decentralization, urban management, judicial reform, participation and promotion of human rights (AfDB, 2009:2). Furthermore, the laws, rules and regulations governing Ethiopia civil service has undergone changes in line with the 1995 Federal constitution to foster an impartial, ethical and accountable civil service.

Furthermore, over the last two decades, good governance has become a major area of focus by the Ethiopian government. The liberalization of the economy and the corresponding structural adjustments in various economic, relative democratization of public life and the promotion of the private economic sector has triggered the demand for good governance in the country (The Ethiopian Herald, 2015).

Despite the fact that, especially public sector services may be provided in a noncompetitive environment because of alternative service providers often do not exist. Hence; service recipients, unlike consumers in the private sector, may have little or no option to use alternative service providers. Moreover, in the present time due to the influence of globalization, liberalization and pressures of international and national good governance agents, and others; citizens are becoming increasingly more demanding, less tolerant and very critical when they are not beneficiary of the fruit of good governance.

However, the public sector is highly criticized by its bad governance due to many serious corrupted working situations in the land administration and urban development, and related issues. It is customary that most of service recipients came to the office redundantly and waste their time to settle unaccomplished cases, majorities of services delivered with unnecessary procrastinations, there are customers' rumors due to inconsistencies on the service delivery of the sector and employees serve their customers with disdain manner. These and other un-described symptoms indicate that the service delivery of the department of urban development and houses construction need to be diagnosed and the root cause of the problem shall be revealed with the appropriate remedial action.

The researcher doesn't come across researches that previously conducted by other researchers on this specific issue, especially in this particular sector and place. Some previous studies such as: (by Yirgalem) which conducted the 'analysis on the process of informal land subdivision actors involved in land grabbing and their interaction with the formal and informal institutions', but unable to dig out the nexus of such institutions with customer satisfaction.

Moreover, 'the assessment of good urban governance practice in land administration of Addis Ababa focusing on in the case of Yeka sub-city' conducted (by Ashenafi Aimro). As a result, the researcher mainly focused on good governance problems in relation to land administration and confined in the center Addis Ababa. That is why, since no previous work is done on Debre tabor town related with problems of good governance in the specified sector, the researcher try to assess the main problems of good governance which can be a setback of service delivery in the town in particular and the whole socio-economic development of the country in general.

So, in this study the researcher tried to assess problems of good governance in Debre tabor town urban development and houses construction department in its service delivery activities, and found out the main hindering factors to cope with principles of good governance.

1.3. Research Questions

- What are observations of service users (customers) regarding the performance of Debre tabor town urban development and house construction in relation to good governance?
- How do good governance understood and practiced in the department of urban development and house construction of Debre tabor town?
- What are the major problems which hinder the prevalence of good governance in the study area?
- Does Debre tabor town urban development and house construction activities converge to or diverge from the standards/ principles of good governance?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The overall objective of the study is to assess the enforcement of good governance standards in Debre tabor town urban development and house construction which is responsible to answer questions of urban land administration and management, and to find out whether the system is complied with the principles of good governance and to identify the level of customer satisfaction by the service delivery of the department.

1.4..2. Specific Objectives

1. To assess customers' satisfaction on good governance activities and the overall service delivery of Debre tabor town urban development and house construction department.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of such sector in implementing the main national and international good governance principles.
3. To find out the main factors which are responsible to inhabit implementing the practice of good governance.
4. To identify any divergence or convergence of Debre tabor town urban development and house construction department from the main national and international good governance bench marks.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

2.1. Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

This research used probability sampling procedure. The participants (customers) of the study were selected by using a random selection method. However, according to the researcher's pilot study, there are around 53 employees in the department of urban development and house construction which stratified in six main offices based on interrelated but different tasks. The questionnaire would be conducted by distributing the prepared questionnaires randomly through their respective service desk offices for around half of the total employees. With respect to customers, respondents were selected based on convenience sampling (accidental) method. This is due to the nature of the service users' unavailability in fixed time and place. Especially the researcher

used as best opportunity to collect information during monthly meetings of different groupings of service users in every Sunday to facilitate and discuss over issues of land tenure and related matters who have been requesting in the department. Moreover, to get further information from other individuals, questionnaires were filling when the customers are available in the department to executing their activities in different working days.

2.2. Study Design

This study planned to research Debre tabor town urban development and house construction in implementing governance principles through more descriptive and some explanatory designs. The focus is more specifically on service providers and officials, customers of the department and the existing system that is harnessed to ensure good governance.

Accordingly, the primary data were collected through a field survey from its customers. In addition, qualitative research approach particularly, in-depth interview, focus group discussion (FGD) and field observation were employed to collect data from responsible respondents and to triangulate the obtained data and to mitigate respondents' biases.

So, the researcher used mixed research (qualitative and quantitative) design with its focus on case study method. The reason for employing qualitative research design is that first qualitative research design enable the researcher to analyze concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts. The other reason is the researcher used qualitative method is to become more familiar with the issue in detail. Moreover, quantitative approaches enabled the study feasible through filling the information gap and triangulate the data.

Moreover, since sampling is the statistical process of selecting a subset (called a "sample") of a population of interest for purposes of making observations and statistical inferences about that population, therefore, the sampling design process starts with defining the target population and study area, and sampling technique and procedures. Each of this stage is discussed in the next sub- sections.

2.3. Study Area

To talk on study areas, it is better to explain some points on the nature and main roles of Debre tabor town urban development and house construction department. Accordingly, the department has the tasks of (literal version of Amharic manual of the office):

- Address citizens quest/interest of land
- Conduct investigation on land and incorporate in law
- House census and registration of land
- Land preparation and banking
- Conduct and implementation of land marketing
- Routine follow-up the transferred land tenure of its beneficiary , and
- Follow-up 46 towns of south Gondar zone including Debre tabor town whether customers/ citizens are satisfied by the overall tasks of the department.

Hence, forty-six young town of South Gondar zone can appeal their issue to their respective Woreda administrations, however, based on proclamation No.91/ 2003 of Amhara regional state, if it doesn't resolve by the capacity of such Woreda administrations, south Gondar zone urban development and house construction is responsible to address it. As a result, the main study area is the department of south Gondar zone urban development and house construction, the researcher focused on claim of Debre tabor town residents.

In focusing on such sector the researcher doesn't chose it instinctively, rather has its own rationale. From its pilot study, as to Debre tabor zone administration office, sector of urban development and house construction is the most vulnerable in problems of bad governance due to the sector is mandated to resolve issues of urban

land and its administration which is the major sensitive issue and almost all residents of the town is customers of the department. Not only being customers, but also the residents has been recurrently heard in expressing their complaint against the activities of the department.

2.4. Study Population

The study population is specifically focus on the customers of urban development and house construction office; especially urban peoples who have a claim on land use and its management and the above mentioned tasks.

2.5. Variables of the Study

In this case the researcher would rely on both dependent (customer satisfaction) and independent variable (good governance), and tried to control the proliferation of variables which may leads to bias and detract its feasibility.

2.6. Data Sources

Based on the nature of research questions and objective of the study, the researcher would rely on primary and secondary data sources. These data were collected by using a combination of different methods. Primary data were collected using both structured and unstructured in- depth interview, focus group discussion, field observation and questionnaires.

The secondary data were gathered from different sources that are related to the theme of the study such as published and unpublished books and journals, internet, manuals of the working principles and laws.

2.7. Data Collection Instruments

- **Interview-** to the key informants and ordinary service users, semi-structured interview were conducted with the informants. It implies the researcher was conducted face-to-face both structured and non-structured in-depth interviews with key informants of the employee of the department and some service users.
- **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)-**Focus Group Discussion was employed to derive group perspectives that could not be gained by in depth interview, field observation and questionnaires. So that three FGD were conducted with service users which have 7 to 11 members.
- **Field Observation-**The researcher was employ field observation as other best means of data collection. So, it helps to observe degree of compliance of international and national good governance principles in the department. This is due to direct observation may be more reliable than what people say in many instances. Thus, problem of employee's mere answer for the researcher (reporting without doing) and the customer's frustration to avail it resolve by the direct observation of the researcher.
- **Questionnaire-** Primary data were collected mainly using close and open ended questionnaires for customers and employees of the department. Questionnaire was also another method which helps to the researcher to collect relevant data. The survey questionnaire were contained questions related with good urban land governance and its administration in terms of the major principles/standards of good governance such as participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, rule of law , protection of women and disadvantaged citizens' right, fairness, free from corruption, and others.

2.8. Methods of Data Analysis and Processing

Based on the analysis conducted using five core elements of good governance namely participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency and rule of law different achievements and failures were observed. As it expressed in the above, the collected data using the above techniques would be processed and analyzed in light of research objectives and questions designed for the study. The primary data were collected

from the survey questionnaire would be analyzed through descriptive statistics test.

Those data that would be obtained from FGDs, field observations and interviews, would be organized and discussed through qualitative description and secondary data that were gathered from different books, journals, internet, etc would be analyzed using documentary data analysis method.

3. Result

As to results of this study, the department of urban development and houses construction has not been found perfectly effective in any of the five good governance dimensions used in the study. Instead they were found encouraging progress in its enforcement in some of the sub-indices of the indicators and flaws in some other sub-indices. Moreover, great discrepancy is observed among the responses of service users and employees towards such dimensions of good governance. As a result, it requires particular conclusion for each of the five indicators/ dimensions of good governance.

Regarding to participation, based on the results acquired from employees' 56% of the respondents agreed by the existence of institutional framework which enables the customers (service users) to take part in the department concerned although 44% of them says the frame is unavailable within it. It infers that even though majority of the respondents testify the existence of open structure which invites the customers to involve in the department, however, there are large number of respondents who disagree by the aforementioned position. This disparity indicates the existence of a problem or a gap in implementing the framework.

As other supplementary related questions reveals that the department of urban development and houses construction didn't develop experience of reserving a space for women, youth and the disadvantaged society, regular schedule for public forum, and doesn't have a good result in participating the grass root community on different policy formulation, and there are no frameworks to participate them.

Moreover, the issue of citizens' engagement in decision making, new policy formulation and implementation is not well done in the department. As to both sides of the respondents proved that the department concerning public forum for women, youth and disadvantaged groups of the public have found poor and did not have the required forum for these section of society.

Regular public forum is the means that service delivery agents or institutions can detect the interest and position of customers. Dealing issues with the customers/ service users enhances the ability to redress problems and to articulate demands. Hence, based on the response of service users' 25.4 % of the respondents testified that the presence of community forum to construct fertile environment for customers to discuss the overall issues related with urban development and house construction. On the contrary, 74.6 % of the respondents suggested that the non-existence of such forum to service users to discuss issues related with utilization and fair distribution of urban land and its use for residences of the community. This infers us the employees are doing their activity without the consultation and partnership of service users.

For accountability standard, great discrepancy is observed among the responses of employees and service users, hence, in the former case they believed that the sub-indices of accountability, such as recurrent record

ing of financial data and publication of annual reports, periodical evaluation and monitoring of employees, internal review, and management accountability within the department, monitoring and reviewing procedures so as to implement anti-corruption policy are more or less effectively followed.

For example, to take one manifestation of accountability, 64% of the employee respondents suggested that the department adopted trends of internal review and sharing the findings within the department employees, however, 36% of the respondents replied in the antithesis with them. As the term refers, internal review is equivalent with check and balance of government organs; helps the employees suspend themselves to perform their task arbitrarily and intensify the habit of developing sense of accountability in their deeds.

However, for service users, because of lack of enforcement mechanism of employees' accountability to the community, danger of corruption, and the absence of monitoring and evaluation procedures are serious problems which detract the principle of accountability in the department. Except, customers proved that they could easily provide their suggestions, questions, comments and complaints for their service provider institutions without any frustrations, however, there is some failure in giving immediate solutions for the complaints and questions provided.

As to the interview with one employee in the department, the framework of management accountability is nominally put in the department, but no one strictly follows it and it conditionally gets attention by the employees during the period of invitation by the higher officials, for example in the time of annual/ quarterly reports, and in the recent mobilization and assessment of Amhara mass media agency on good governance, the so called 'Yeketemoch Medrek', and others (Interview on 12 December 2017 at 8:30- 10:20am, Debre tabor). So that, performances of the department in enforcing principle of accountability is not effective and has to be striving more to satisfy service users.

For transparency, from the response of participants, those employees who suggested that individuals who suspect involving in corruption in the department are disclosing 24% and the remaining 76% believed that even though employees involve in corrupt activities, they continue as an innocent in the department. So that, to label a given public service transparent; decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations (as disclosing individuals who involve in corrupt activities are part of rules of the law). It infers us there is a problem of unable to disclose individuals who censored for corrupt activities. Moreover, difficulty to obtain information on laws and regulations in the department, employees bias to their affiliated individual, the departments' inability to consider the potential of economically poor citizen in its request of cost to land tenure do not enforced effectively, whereas relying clear established rules and regulations for enforcement of decisions, the departments' trend of informing the public clearly on issues related with urban land and its administration, the departments clarity for its general service providing equally for all customers is effectively working in the department.

Hence, 67% of service user respondents responded that decisions of the department and their enforcement procedures clearly established rules and regulations. The existence of clearly established procedures and rules helps the service users to go in line with the appropriate time and formality. Hence, transparency qualifies to the availability of information to the general public and clarity about such rules, regulations and decisions; it might be useful to strengthen the citizens' right to information with a degree of legal enforceability. Accordingly, the study discovered that transparency in the department is gets medium level results.

Regarding to the principle of efficiency and effectiveness, even though still discrepancy among the two sides of respondents is displayed here, findings of the study reveals that poor financial resource management, problem of effective, efficient and ethical use of resources, the administrative and technical incompetency of employees, much more bureaucratic delay in its service delivery, were found poor in the department. Since as the data shows, the departments' trend of wisely managing financial resources is evaluated by the respondents as 8%, 8%, 36%, 28%, and 20% measure very poor, poor, good, very good and excellent respectively.

However, decision making based on reliable information, existence of accurate, integrated and computerized land related information were taken as good achievements of efficiency and effectiveness sub-indices. As a result, efficiency and effectiveness as one standard of good governance doesn't wisely implement in the department.

Rule of law as major governing instrument of public and private institutions, was not perfectly followed in the department. Hence, due to vulnerability to political pressure, some employees impartial treatment of customers, and existence of sense of superiority and inferiority within the staff are indicators of its failure while existence of code of conduct which guides employees of the department, and observance of rule of law in the

treatment of customers adopted by majority of the staff in the department were satisfactory achievements of the department.

In net shell, as general questions of good governance proves that the department has plenty of tasks which has to be improved and has to be take thoughts from other institutions which have good reputation in their enforcement of good governance principles. Moreover, as observation, interview, and FGD (on 23 December 2017 at 4: 00-4: 30 pm, Debre tabor) shows the department is in the moment of losing its credibility to the public due to its corruption, procrastination, illogical increment of mortgage costs to those new groupings who request land to houses, some employees sign of disrespect to the customer, and other aforementioned governance mal practices.

4. Conclusion

As the study reveals that even though the department is in the initial stage to fully observe and implement good governance standards much more is required from it to respond the society's' recurrent compliant. Accordingly, the study enables to recognize the possible factors of its failure, like overlooking to implement what the legal guide lines prescribes the department; absence of due attention and respect to engage and work together with the community; lack of employees commitment to answer service users request and being ignorant to take responsibility are identified.

Moreover, undesired political interference by the higher political officials and institutions in the task of the department also identified as another setback. In addition, obviously recurrent follow-up and observance is the engine for success of institutions. However, such trend is weak in the department and it can also mention as another factor for its failure. Lastly, another problem on the part of the department is its weakness to update its employee with the emergent national and global demand of the society taken as factors.

On the other hand, there are also supplementary problems emanated from the service users, like communities indifference to interrogate, and pressurize the department and ignorance to recognize the main task and responsibility of the department to fight its mal-practice can be another factor.

5. Recommendation

As far as the main rationale of the study is to enhance customers' satisfaction on urban land administration and its utilization to the community through governance dimensions, the researcher try to forward the following recommendations, based on the results of the analysis.

It in turn helpful for the urban land administration and houses construction department of Debre tabor town which has to be improve its service delivery and enforcement of good governance in order to alleviate customer service problems so as to increase customers' satisfaction.

- ▶ As to the findings of this paper shows, customers' ignorance and disrespect gets substantial weight from the perspective of respondents as main responsible factor to distort appropriate governance procedures. Accordingly, the department has to do its assignment of making employees cognizant to right and dignity of customers either through demotion, penalties and other teaching mechanisms.
- ▶ Since some employees of the department are not proved competent enough in their service delivery, administrative and technical skills, and the department has to update employees through seminars, workshops, and trainings to fit themselves with the emergent global, national and local demands.
- ▶ As public sectors has to be efficient in responding quest of customers, any unjustified postpone of cases of service users while they need prompt response can erode the feeling of service users towards the image of employees.

- ▶ As far as urban development and houses construction is more vulnerable to land grabbing and corruption, the regional government and administration of the town has to be design new policies and follow ups to oversee and protect it from further deterioration of property of the town and to halt the practices of corruption.
- ▶ Since Debre tabor town is young and in the inception of planning and deploying of its land for the citizen, variety investors and projects, it needs observance and visualization for its future excellence and development, as land is the principal input to do that.
- ▶ When policies and programs are going to be launched that directly or indirectly affects the society, there must be first conducted some form of consultation with the public concerning their demands and its way of implementation. It in turn helps to develop sense of partnership among the employees and service users and can dispatch the way to enforce such plans and programs.
- ▶ As women are half of the society and development cannot achieved with ignoring a back of women, youth and the disadvantaged section of society, the department has to move in cognizant to such fact, and do much more assignments to empower and make a task of mainstreaming them in the advantages of the department.
- ▶ To make the pubic active to involve and exercise their right, the department must have to inform the public the essence and role of good governance through notice, meetings, and media, and making the department open for public review can supplement the effort of creating energetic society.

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