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METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT AND IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS OF URBAN BASIC SERVICES  
GOVERNANCE IN DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH: RHETORIC OR REALITY?

# METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT AND IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS OF URBAN BASIC SERVICES GOVERNANCE IN DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH: RHETORIC OR REALITY?

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moinuddin.golam@gmail.com***Abstract**

Urban basic services, namely water supply and sewerage, power supply, telecommunication, road network etc. are the prerequisites for city living. Efficiency in managing and maintaining urban basic services ultimately dictates the quality of an urban government. In the last three decades, Dhaka's urban basic services governance has been tumbling behind the required standard. Specially, in the last five/six years the situation has reached to an alarming state—resulting to a high degree of inconvenience in urban living and loss of potentials in city economy. Frequent malfunctioning, limited capacity to expand, bureaucratic complexity in availing services, lack of public accountability etc. are some of the common characteristics of urban basic services in Dhaka. There is a general understanding in the concerned sphere that fragmented mode of governing these has attributed the service environment with a complex texture. In fact, fragmentation contributed in terms of multiparty involvement, overlapping of responsibility, obsolete organizational planning, monopoly management etc. Presently, Dhaka's urban basic services governance can't assure better living, competitive business environment and sustainable economic growth. As a potential remedy, adoption of a general purpose "metropolitan government" mechanism with prerogatives to plan, develop, maintain service provisions; adequately command the service providers; govern development initiatives; realize taxes and revenues have been in discussion for quite a period within the concerned political and administrative domain. This article discusses the rationale, potentials of a general purpose "metropolitan government" mechanism to improve Dhaka's present state of urban basic services. Additionally, the paper attempted to frame out the structure and operational mechanism of the proposed government.

**Keywords:** Urban basic services, metropolitan government, fragmented governance.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Metropolitan Government refers to the governance arrangement of a metropolitan area as a whole, as opposed to the fragmentary rule (Hamilton, 1999). It entails a set of public institutions (combination of departments, agencies etc.) to act in a locality under a "knitted" hierarchy and be controlled by a legitimate body namely city corporation, municipality etc (Barlow, 1991). Roberts and Sykes (2000) described the concept as "a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical,

social and environmental condition of an urban area that has been subject to change". This "comprehensive action" capacity transpires from powers bestowed upon it by supporting legislature. The very perception grew out of the recognition that a metropolitan area functions as a single community in terms of its social, economic character.

A metropolitan government is generally held responsible for policy decisions and responsibilities pertaining to all metropolitan affairs (Rusk, 2003). Concerning the delivery and management of urban basic services, Dehoog (1997) asserts that it is the primary function of the city government. He argues that services are at the heart of a city government and the grist of urban politics. Mentionably, urban basic services refer to engineering utilities, i.e, water supply, sewerage, power supply, roads; and community social services, i.e, community centre, school, health centre etc. In relation to that, a metropolitan government presupposes a mechanism that produces functional relationships for "area-wide" coordination and integration amongst various service providers to set priorities, formulating policies, making and executing decisions (Stephens and Wikstrom, 2000). Integration, in broad sense, refers to bringing the technical/engineering, spatio-environmental, financial and institutional affairs under a single institutional jurisdiction with motives of rendering clear benefits (Singh and Steinberg, 1996). Such integration needs to be overseen by an "umbrella" body that has the capacity to view matters from a metropolitan perspective and to act in the metropolitan interest (Vogel, 1997). In other words, the very concept of metropolitan government emphasizes on achieving efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and equity concerns of key urban services delivery and management to restructure the urban economy, augment the livability and strengthen the functionality. And it is this reform agenda that has been the primary driving force for the emergence of metropolitan government concept.

In Dhaka, governance of urban basic services has become a much debated issue in the last one decade because of their meager status. The provision of basic services i.e, water supply, sewage network, electricity supply, telecommunication, urban roads and highways are short in supply and irregular (Rahman, 2000). In specific terms, frequent malfunctioning, limited capacity to expand, bureaucratic complexity in availing services, lack of public accountability, pilferage of scarce resources etc. are some of the common characteristics of urban basic services in Dhaka. In fact, the urban basic services in Dhaka city, at the moment, are constantly failing to assure better living, competitive business environment and sustainable economic growth. The disarray and distress brought to the city life by the present urban basic services governance have been tremendous. 3/5 hour long power cut associated with intermittent water (piped) supply have become integral part of city life of Dhaka now a days (The Daily Prothom Alo, 2009). On economic front, according one estimate, the present power supply crisis in Dhaka is causing the country's Gross Domestic Product to lose .8% on yearly basis - which amounts

to US\$ 116 million (The Daily Prothom Alo, 2009). Thus, it can be stated that Dhaka has rather become an inefficient city. No doubt, governance of urban basic services is in dire need of reform-not only for ensuring better urban living, but also for sustainable and competitive business environment. Decadal efforts by successive urban governments to ensure effective and efficient governance of urban basic services have produced a complicated and disordered urban fabric. In general, it is believed that lack of clear perceptive regarding contextual “best-fit” governance mechanism, institutional and logistic support have been the contributing factors (Moinuddin, 2006). Nonetheless, the situation has earmarked long standing debates, discussions, policy reform and institutional experiments. And the outcomes of these are favoring the formation of a general purpose “metropolitan government” with the solitary governing authority on urban basic services. In fact, in the last couple of years, the elected city mayors of six metropolises have vented their full support for converting city corporations as “metropolitan government” with powers to govern all categories of urban basic services. The idea aroused out of their practical experiences in managing bedlams posed by the present fragmented mode of urban basic services governance. This paper - in the following sections and subsections; will portray the present picture of urban basic services governance in Dhaka and will attempt to examine the possibilities of adopting metropolitan government as an improvised solution over the present fragmented practice.

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The broad based objective of the paper is to explore and review the potential role(s) of a metropolitan government in promoting sustainable urban community through improved governance i.e, delivery and management; of urban basic services. The specific objectives of the study are as following-

- To explore the present status of the service provisioning and it’s mechanism.
- To explore the problem area(s) of governing urban basic services and the context that influenced the emergence of a general purpose metropolitan government as a solution in this connection.
- To devise an operational mechanism for the proposed governance arrangement needed for ensuring better municipal service delivery and it’s subsequent management.

Governance of Urban Basic Utilities in Dhaka city is a collective business — around forty organizations are involved in the provisioning of numerous services/utilities. Of those forty, this research has kept it’s scope limited to four services, namely water supply and sewerage, power supply, telecommunication (fixed line govt. service) and different categories of road that are under the jurisdiction of Dhaka City Corporation. The choice has been made on two considerations. Firstly, these are the core services—

according to the government's relevant policy documents, i.e Annual Development Plan. Secondly, the present crisis of city governance (inconvenient living, loss of business potentials and investments) in Dhaka arose due to ailing governance of urban basic services. Table-1 presents the name of the examined services, the operators and their organizational status-

TABLE 1 - EXAMINED SERVICES, RESPECTIVE OPERATORS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS

Organization	Status	Examined service
Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) ( <i>Municipal authority</i> )	Autonomous	Road network of different category
Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (DWASA)	Government	Water Supply, sewerage and drainage
Dhaka Electric Supply Company (DESCO) and Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC)	Government - limited company	Electricity/Power supply
Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL)	Government - limited company	Fixed line telephone

Source: Field survey, 2008

The research methodology has been basically a qualitative one, supported by quantitative data reporting wherever necessary. Mentionably, the quantitative database represents longitudinal scenario. The study compared the advantages of general purpose metropolitan government to fragmentary mode regarding urban basic services governance from different contexts of the world namely the USA, Thailand and Argentina. The aim here has been to extract applicable experiences for Dhaka city.

### 3. STUDY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Urban basic service operators in Dhaka exude mixed characteristics. There are municipal organizations- DCC headed by elected representatives. Additionally, there are government controlled service providers namely special development agencies- RAJUK for city planning and development control, special purpose authority- DWASA for providing water supply drainage and sewerage service, and special government bodies - BTCL for fixed-line telephone, DESCO/DPDC for power supply etc. (Khan, 2001). Alongside, private or business organizations have long been involved in transportation service, real estate, mobile telecommunication and various information technology dependant services, health care, recreation etc. in Dhaka. NGO's are playing active role in solid waste collection and disposal, traffic regulation, community policing etc. These service providers operate in a fragmented fashion – under different ministries (Pandey and Pandey, 2008).

In Dhaka, quite a number of urban basic services are being provided to around 8 million users (Moinuddin, 2006). Unfortunately the status of these services/utilities isn't up to the mark. This is particularly felt when the situation of publicly provided services are practically experienced (Begum,

**METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT AND IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS OF URBAN BASIC SERVICES GOVERNANCE IN DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH: RHETORIC OR REALITY?**

2000). The provision of basic utilities and services such as water supply, sewage network, power/electricity supply, telecommunication, urban roads and highways are short in supply and irregular (Rahman, 2000). The distribution of these services/utilities is unequal. End-users aren't being ensured with 24-hour service necessarily. Frequent failure in service delivery at customers end is quite a common scenario in Dhaka city. In the last four decades (approximately), the serviced area expanded at 4% rate approximately compared to 7% growth of city population on average (Rajdhani Unnayan Kortipakka, 1995) – thereby tumbling behind the requirement. According to a joint survey by World Bank and a local NGO named Proshika in 2002 over a sample of 3300 Dhaka city resident, 78% and 56% of the city dwellers have access to piped water supply and sewerage network, 100% have access to legitimate electricity network, 36% have government provided fixed line telephone connection and only 63% have access to better road network. However, end user's satisfaction level depicts a grim picture. Only 57% of the city dwellers have expressed their satisfaction with water supply and sewerage service, 42% with the power supply, 47% telecommunication and 22% better road connection (Moinuddin, 2009). And in the last seven years, unfortunately, the situation has worsened. The present demand - supply scenario of the four major services in Dhaka (table 2) supplements the above statement.

TABLE 2 - DEMAND- SUPPLY SCENARIO OF THE FOUR SELECTED SERVICES IN DCC AREA

Service category	Service provider	Demand	Supply	Shortage
Water supply	DWASA <sup>1</sup>	2050 million litre/day	1700 million litre/day	350 million litre/day
Sewerage		360 sq.km. or 100% of DCC area	Covers 110 sq.km or 30% of DCC area	250 sq.km or 70% of DCC area
Drainage		360 sq.km or 100% of DCC area	Covers 140 sq.km or 38% of DCC area	220 sq.km or 62% of DCC area
Telecommunication (Fixed lines)	BTCL <sup>2</sup>	596476 connections	542265 connections	54211 connections
Power supply (in DCC area only)	DESCO <sup>3</sup>	450 Mega Watt	290 Mega Watt	150 Mega Watt
	DPDC <sup>3</sup>	950 Mega Watt	500 Mega Watt	450 Mega Watt
Urban Roads	DCC <sup>4</sup>	5300 km	1868 km (Includes all categories of road)	5700 km

Source: <sup>1</sup> Al-Mamoon (2006); <sup>2</sup> Annual Report, Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Limited, (2008); <sup>3</sup> The Daily Prothom Alo, (2009), <sup>4</sup> www.dhakacity.org/Page/Menu\_Profile/Profile/Category/1/Profile\_info,9/3/2009.

The present practice of fragmented governance has ameliorated the surfacing of some critical service problems namely non-coordination in service management, wastage of resources, inefficient delivery and public inconveniences. The following reports from different newspapers will portray a clear picture of the present status.

**Case 1: Lack of coordination caused withdrawal of infrastructure development fund**

In 2003, the World Bank withdrew nearly 50 per cent of US\$ 220 million allocated grants from Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP)- meant for improving transport infrastructure in Dhaka City. The fund cuts led to the dropping of two major components of the plan, the first one having to do with reduction of traffic congestion and the second with road level pollution control. The reason – organizations assigned to implement various project components within their own decided time frame has failed to do so. This happened because of lack of coordination and understanding between the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and the Roads and Highways Department (R&HD), the two principal agencies involved in the project. Neither of the two organizations could clearly demarcate and decide their respective responsibilities concerning this project because of ambiguity in their organizational ordinances and of course, high headedness. Both organizations were blaming each other for the World Bank decision to withdraw funds. Obviously, they were trying to hide behind their failures by passing the buck against each other (Pandey and Pandey, 2008).

**Case 2: Endless digging and filling of urban roads – Dhaka is in the grip of chaotic traffic**

The constant digging and filling of city roads by various service agencies through out the year is regularly causing immense suffering to the city life. Recently, DWASA has started excavating all categories city roads i.e, VIP/major, connector and minor; for installing pipe network. Mentionably, DCC has completed maintaining/carpeting the city roads just four months ago- in January. This project has aggravated the present chaotic traffic as the eastern part of the city has fallen into the grip of hour long traffic congestion both at the peak and off-peak period. As per the DCC regulation, normally service providers are to complete scheduled maintenance and development works within 15 days of commencement. However, the ground reality has been utterly different as the Mayor- citing his personal experience; mentioned the service providers' takes up to 3 months to complete the earmarked projects on regular basis (The Daily Amadershomoy, 2009).

In practice fragmented mode of governance has established itself as a troubling arrangement because of the following reasons:

**A. Multiparty involvement & lack of co-ordination**

Forty organizations are involved with the delivery and management of urban basic services in Dhaka (Islam, 2001). These service organizations have been made to operate under different ministries as per the respective ordinances. However, the delegated directives in these ordinances have prevented the

service providers to develop a much sought integrated and collective “modus operandi” to serve the city dwellers. As a result, a serious quandary of coordination and mutual interaction between the service providers has become evident (Moinuddin, 2006). This has triggered the emergence of two major consequences in the service governance paradigm. First, of course, is the inefficient service decision-making and second has been the opening up of decision-making process to abuse (Moinuddin, 2006). The obvious outcome has been poor service governance – emerging in terms of frequent malfunctioning, limited capacity to expand, bureaucratic complexity in service provisioning, lack of public accountability, wastage of valuable resources etc. Evidently, lack of comprehensive perceptiveness regarding “contextual fit” of fragmented governance resulted with the emergence of such a distressed urban living.

According to the opinions of 3 ward commissioners (ward no. 90, 66 and 13) from Dhaka (with whom the author had face-to-face informal discussions in August, 2008) the absence of strong organizational consensus has caused serious stress and strains amongst different service providers resulting in the waste of valuable resources.

#### ***B. Overlapping of responsibilities***

Additionally, decrepit governance has also been attributed by the overlapping of duties between service providers (ALMEC Corporation and Nikken Sekkei Ltd., 2000). It has been rather a common practice in service policy environment to entrust more than one provider with the responsibility of a single service. One glaring example in this regard could be the piped water supply in Dhaka (Siddique, 2005). DAWASA is entrusted with the responsibility of potable water supply in Dhaka. At the same time, the constitution of DCC entails it with the same responsibility. However, there exists no specific guideline concerning the separation of spatial boundary, responsibility jurisdiction etc. in the respective service regulations. This particular trait has encouraged the two service provider to frame the respective responsibilities without consulting one another's. As a result, a notable portion of their annual development plan emerges as simply overlapping of duties on regular basis. This is applicable to other service provisions as well. In reality, at times, overlapping of responsibility prompts authorities to dispose off their respective duties to one another (Islam, 2005). This delays the scheduled jobs which, in the long run, causes a high degree of discomfort to the city dwellers.

#### ***C. Derelict planning practice amongst the service providers***

Presently, the service providers are familiarized with the “top down” planning approach. For instance, in developing and expanding an existing service provision, the concerned provider calculates the expected

demand on the basis of the government statistics and balances these demands with the actual capacity of the service installations (Moinuddin, 2006). The service providers determine per capita demand on the basis of specific engineering standards without reviewing changes in consumer's consumption pattern. And these standards are considered as constant—there could possibly be no change on these over time. Since projection of population and standard of consumption are very much supple, any planning based on torpid standards is bound to result with erroneous outcomes. Moreover, there exists no mechanism to synchronize the sector specific demand supply scenario. For instance, realization of full capacity of the water supply hardware installations is dependant on uninterrupted power supply. However, the common practice for DWASA has been to device plans without taking into consideration the status of power supply situation (Moinuddin, 2006). Additionally, absence of a mechanism for achieving sectoral coordination attributes the total service planning paradigm with an unrealistic countenance—in terms of projection and achievements. Mentionably, due to bureaucratic complexity, a massive time lapse gets induced between budget allocation, disbursement and execution of development/maintenance works at ground level (Siddique, 2005). This attributes the total service environment with unnecessary delay in the routine development/maintenance works, discarding of part of the Annual Development Plan (ADP) etc. by the concerned ministry.

#### ***D. Funding pattern of the service providers***

Source of finance, poor tax realization, failure to expand tax base are some of the major reasons for the service providers to depict unimpressive performance in Dhaka. A considerable portion of yearly fund for these service providers comes from the government in the form of grants, loans etc. Table 3 depicts that the service providers are largely dependant on government grants to carry out their businesses.

Annual budgetary arrangements of DCC, DWASA, DESCO and DPDC (former DESA) between 2002-'03 to 2006-'07 fiscal years depicts that 52% to 66% of the yearly budget came from government sources in the form loans, grants etc. Through this financial support the line ministries control all aspects of the service governance and literally prevent any form of effective coordinated budgeting (Moinuddin, 2006). Critics tend to categorize this as an effective way of maintaining ministerial status-quo (Siddique, 2005). The only exception has been BTCL(former BTTB). The reasons – compared to the other services, it's extent of coverage is small. Additionally it's staffing pattern and incentive scheme have proved to be conducive for comparative billing efficiency. However, this greater self fund reliance has not made it less government controlled in comparison. It is still very much a government organization – when it is about deciding development and budgetary affairs, it is the ministry that has the upper hand (Moinuddin, 2006).

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT AND IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS OF URBAN BASIC SERVICES  
GOVERNANCE IN DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH: RHETORIC OR REALITY?

TABLE 3 - FUNDING PATTERN OF THE SERVICE PROVIDERS BETWEEN 2002-'03 TO 2006-'07\*

Organization	Funding Source	Year				
		2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
		% of Budget				
DCC	Own Source Revenue	42	43	39	42	48
	Government Grants & others	58	57	61	58	52
	Total Revenue	100	100	100	100	100
DWASA	Own Source Revenue	49	43	44	38	36
	Government Grants & others	51	57	56	62	64
	Total Revenue	100	100	100	100	100
DESCO+DPDC(Former DESA)	Own Source Revenue	34	34	43	44	46
	Government Grants & others	66	66	57	56	52
	Total Revenue	100	100	100	100	100
BTCL (Former BTTB)	Own Source Revenue	80	77	81	84	83
	Government Grants & others	20	23	18	16	17
	Total Revenue	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Moinuddin (2009).

\* Figures have been rounded up to the nearest full number.

**E. Dhaka City Corporation: Organization with limited capacity to serve the city dwellers**

DCC, being an elected body, has a very little margin to govern Dhaka's urban basic services. The organization is very much controlled by the line ministry- Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperative (LGRD & C). The Ministry controls the functions of DCC through the ordinance because it has been very clearly laid down in the ordinance that,

“Various functions of DCC may be performed as may be prescribed by the rules or as may be required to be done following the by-laws or following the regulations.”

Indeed the control exercised by the ministry is very much comprehensive covering all aspects of DCC, namely legislative, administrative, financial, personnel and development (Islam, 2001). Up until 1962, DCC (the then Dhaka municipality) had the sole authority of delivering and managing urban basic services in the city (Begum, 2000). On that year, a new service organization named 'Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA)' - predecessor of present day DWASA, DPDC and DESCO; was created by the government and was awarded with the responsibility of potable water and power supply for the city. Reason –Dhaka municipality was encountering difficulties in delivering and managing these two services as the city was expanding. Instead of augmenting the service capacity of Dhaka municipality, the then government chose to delegate these service responsibilities to some new 'special

purpose' organizations with greater authority (Islam, 2001). Over the decades, government fashioned numerous organizations under different ministries and bestowed responsibilities of different services from DCC. Currently, DCC does nothing more than implementing central government's plan, largely with central government funding and staffs. Presently, DCC is entrusted with only a handful of service responsibilities namely road construction and maintenance, conservancy including street scavenging and collection and disposal of solid wastes, storm water drainage, control of infectious diseases, public places, gardens, street lighting and lighting of public places, provisioning and maintenance of slaughter houses and markets, licensing of factories, shops and private vendors, inspection of foods and drugs (Islam, 2001). Responsibility for the key urban services, i.e, water supply and sewerage, power supply, telecommunication etc. still remains with other government controlled organizations. Siddique (2005) considers it to be quite unfortunate for DCC being endowed only with the power to realize conservancy tax, waste collection, road network maintaining, issuing license to business and street lighting instead of assuming the comprehensive power to govern the urban basic services in Dhaka. Ironically, as far as the permitted operational jurisdiction is concerned, DCC is entrusted with greater number of job responsibilities than the other service providers.

#### ***F. Lack of accountability***

Almost all the service providers are under government control — operating either as a bureau under a line ministry or as a semi-government sector corporation (Moinuddin, 2006). Such organizational affiliation has made them accountable to the respective line ministry, directorates etc. — but not to the community in practice (Islam, 2001). Though as per the approved responsibility charter, the service providers are to be accountable to the consumers as well. As a result it has become a reality for Dhaka city dwellers not to receive responses or to expect long delay from the government controlled service providers for any service complaint (Islam, 2005). Again, this is another feature of Dhaka's urban basic services governance that attributes the overall city living and business with inconveniences of highest multitude. In terms of professionalism and serving aptitude, the service governance still revolves in a complex "authoritarian" sphere.

#### ***G. Monopoly market***

Fragmented mode of urban basic services governance is based on the premise that residents will have the opportunity to choose service from an array of providers – which would allow competitive price for quality services (Vogel, 2007). However, in Dhaka, the present fragmented mode of urban basic services governance- specially for these linear/engineering ones; has never allowed private sector

players to deliver the services alongside the government controlled ones. The respective service environment has always been under the incarceration of a syndicate of government operators that so far performed unimpressively in all account. This trend has effectively prevented the emergence of a competitive market mechanism for quality services. This is an utter contradiction to the very idea of fragmented governance. This has greatly affected the service realm with lack of accountability, professionalism, poor provisioning etc (Moinuddin, 2006).

#### 4. METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT: THEATRE FOR IMPROVED GOVERNANCE OF URBAN BASIC SERVICES

It is evident from the foregoing discussions that the crisis of urban basic services in Dhaka has emerged out fragmented mode of governance practice and has reached to a critical stage. None of the services providers are in a shape to fully cater to the needs of the city dwellers under the present mechanism. Considering the problems posed by the existing fragmented governance mode, the present crisis can well be done away with by resorting to a general purpose “metropolitan government” mechanism with prerogatives to plan, manage, maintain, and control all issues of urban basic service provisions i.e, installation, development, expansion and management affairs. In operational terms, this arrangement would entail a mechanism of overseeing all categories of urban services by a “umbrella organization” so as to ensure that a central policy command can overlook the same. The key idea ought to be achieving effective coordination and cooperation—both horizontally and vertically which, by default, metropolitan government embodies (Siddique, Ahamed and Ahamed, 2000). Table 4 portrays a comparative scenario between fragmented government and metropolitan government based on experiences from different parts of the world. Ironically, the features revealed by fragmented governance supplements Dhaka’s reality.

TABLE 4 - COMPARATIVE PROFILE OF OPERATION FEATURES BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNANCE MODES

Theme	Fragmented governance	Metropolitan government
Ability to create a platform for clear understanding of the services delivery and management	Relatively lower	Relatively higher
Resource accumulation and utilization	Less effective	Effectiveness is high
Matching social needs with resource availability	Poorly capable	Highly capable
Inefficiency in service administration	High	Low
Addressing equity	Absent	Highly successful
Effectiveness in coordinated planning and implementation	Poor	High
Potentials of promoting balanced urban development	Low to medium	High.

Source: Compiled from Rusk (2003), Mekvichi and Ridhiprasart (1996), Lanti and Hoff van der (1996)

In fact, Dhaka's scenario resembles the classic municipal impasse that promulgated the emergence of metropolitan government concept – inability of a municipal government to cope with the metropolitan condition due to the arousal of problems concerning the designated urban services delivery (Barlow, 1991). Interestingly, Siddique (2005) echoed the same view while proposing metropolitan government mechanism as an effective solution to the present muddled state of urban basic services governance in Dhaka. He reasoned that it would ensue a series of procedural advantages that are impervious to the problems which Dhaka is experiencing presently. Firstly, the mechanism would pave the way for the identification and solution of common problems. Secondly, it could lead to pooling and sharing of costly machinery, scarce financial resources, expertise and experience for providing certain common services, including public health, planning, election administration, staff training, public works, tax assessment and collection, waste disposal, recreational facilities and civil defense. Thirdly, it could not only help resolve disputes without outside intervention but also engender joint venture projects. Finally, it could be used for standardizing service norms, development planning of an urban government system.

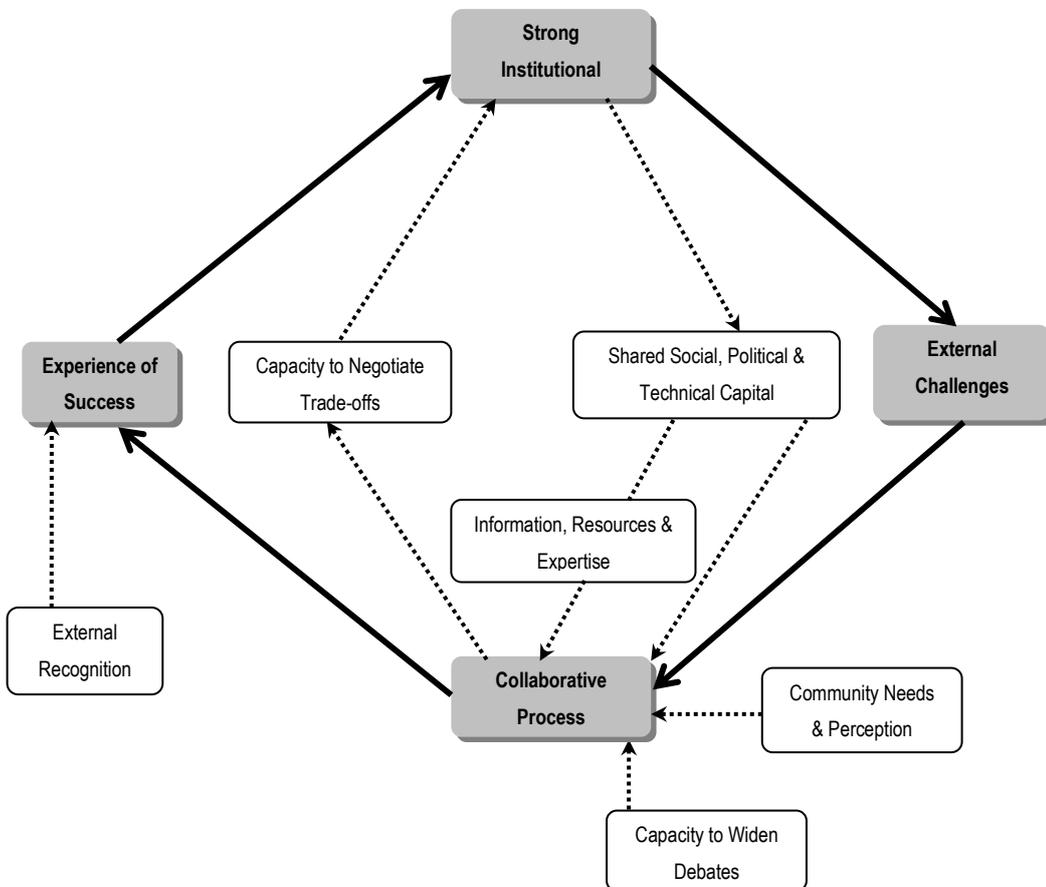


FIGURE 1- OPERATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT MECHANISM (MODIFIED FROM SMITH, 2002)

The very essence of having a general purpose metropolitan government rests in developing a strong institutional capacity for effective provisioning of urban services. This can be thought of as cyclical procedure, in which a range of factors reinforce each other in a cumulative way, as a 'virtuous' circle. Factors that help to build such institutional capacity can be both internal and external (Smith, 2002). Internal factors refers to shared social, political and technical capital which is expressed in the ability to widen the search for consensus beyond the immediate issue (grounded in understanding of basic community needs and perceptions), awarding sufficient trust on involved interests to negotiate tradeoffs in the confidence that other parties will deliver on their commitments; organizational and resource support for continuing contact, sharing information and collaborative responses to external challenges; Where as external factor refers to a style of government that recognizes and rewards "joined-up thinking" and collaborative effort. Thus the operational philosophy of a metropolitan government can be perceived as in Figure 1.

## 5. POTENTIALS OF DHAKA CITY CORPORATION AS A "METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT"

To supplement the above discussions, the inevitable question one might pose is "which organization has the highest potentials to be a successful metropolitan government?". Experts are favoring DCC to be accredited with that status. Primary reason being that it is the only local government body that is headed by elected leadership- both at the top and grass-root level. This feature, by default, entails the organization to be directly accountable to the community and thus deserves to be the nucleus of city affairs management including the urban basic services. Rusk (2003) considers this feature to be the prime requirement of a metropolitan government. Secondly, some inherent feature of DCC leaves it with a superior edge over other service providers to act as a general purpose metropolitan government. DCC is the only service provider amongst all that have acquired experience in provisioning and managing multiple urban basic services from time to time. The present organizational structure of DCC justifies that as the organization possesses several basic services departments within namely water supply and drainage, sewerage, urban roads, solid waste collection and disposal etc (Islam, 2005). Along with the technical and management expertise, DCC is the only service provider that is directly accountable to the dwellers by virtue of it's approved ordinance. Experience from Thailand, USA and Argentina reveals that municipal service governance can be improved by awarding the local urban government with greater authority and autonomy to decide, plan and manage the same (Moinuddin, 2009). In these countries, structural reform in the job responsibility has brought the municipal governments closer to the city dwellers and have made more capable of managing and administering urban basic services.

Thirdly, Dhaka City Corporation, according to one of its consultancy study, has been able to identify the potential contribution of metropolitan government on the way of attaining urban sustainability. The study perceived that metropolitan government mechanism promotes sustainable urban community development by helping to implement six fundamental planning elements successfully - of which urban basic services governance being one (Developing Planning Consultant, 2001). Schematically, the perception is as in Figure 2.

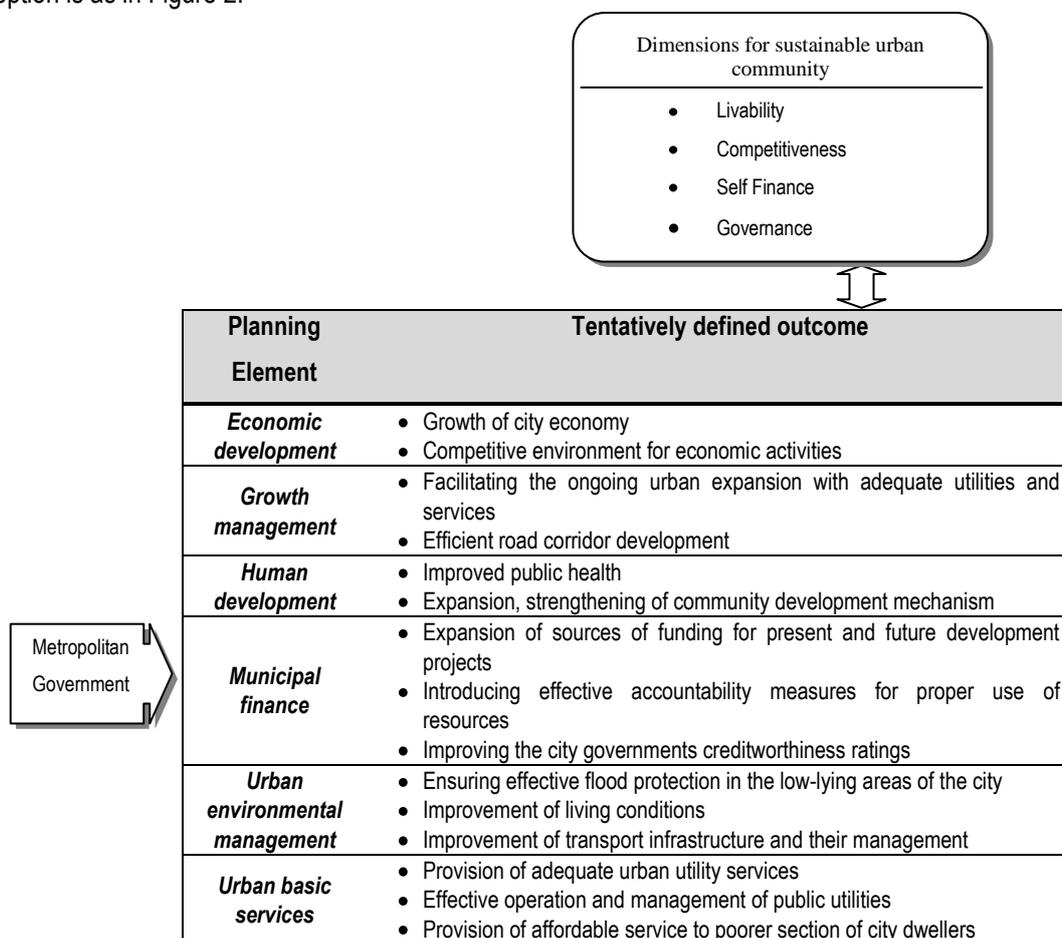


FIGURE 2: POTENTIALS OF A METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE URBAN COMMUNITY  
Source: Developing Planning Consultant, 2001

Chowdhury (2001) in one research discovered that the existing anomalies with the urban basic service governance in Dhaka could well be done away with the enactment of a general purpose metropolitan government. He also found that around 57.77% of all the stakeholders that are directly or in directly involved with the provisioning, managing, maintenance of urban basic services in Dhaka favors the creation of a “metropolitan government” headed by the elected mayor of the city to look after the above stated matters of urban governance (Table 5).

**METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT AND IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS OF URBAN BASIC SERVICES GOVERNANCE IN DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH: RHETORIC OR REALITY?**

TABLE 5- DEGREE OF SUPPORT FOR A METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT HEADED BY THE CITY MAYOR\*

Involved parties	Support for metropolitan government (%)	Support for Existing Fragmented governance (%)
CBO's (Community Based Organizations)	51	31
NGO's	56	36
PSO's (Public Service Organizations)	40	40
Parastatal Functionaries	60	20
Journalists/Researchers	50	44
DCC Officials	65	33
Ward Commissioners	74	24
Community Leaders	76	24
Leaders from Trade Unions/Chamber of Commerce/ Political Parties	48	30
Average response	<b>57.77</b>	<b>31.33</b>

\*Multiple answers possible. Size of sample was 802  
Source: Chowdhury, 2001.

Reasons for supporting "Metropolitan Government" were as following:

- It would ensure better coordination
- It would have better accountability
- It would prevent wastage of resources and time
- It would expedite development work and facilitate better planning
- It would ensure balanced and sustainable development

In fact, the research also found that the central government, back in 1985, prepared a draft report titled "The Physical Planning (land-use) and Development Control Ordinance" favoring the operation of urban basic service providers under one umbrella organization. The report proposed that the organization should possess the essential authority for governing urban basic services within the respective urban sphere. Clearly, municipalities/city corporations have proved their efficacy to be considered as the sole authority of urban affair long ago. Thus, as far as government's motive is concerned, the concept of metropolitan government has already proved it's worth and merit.

## 6. OPERATIONAL MECHANISM OF THE PROPOSED METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

All the service providers must have to be brought under the organizational jurisdiction of DCC so that it can effectively command and control these. Dhaka City Corporation must have the authority to plan, coordinate and implement all categories of urban services. Schematically, command flow for the new governance mechanism for the municipal services should be as following-

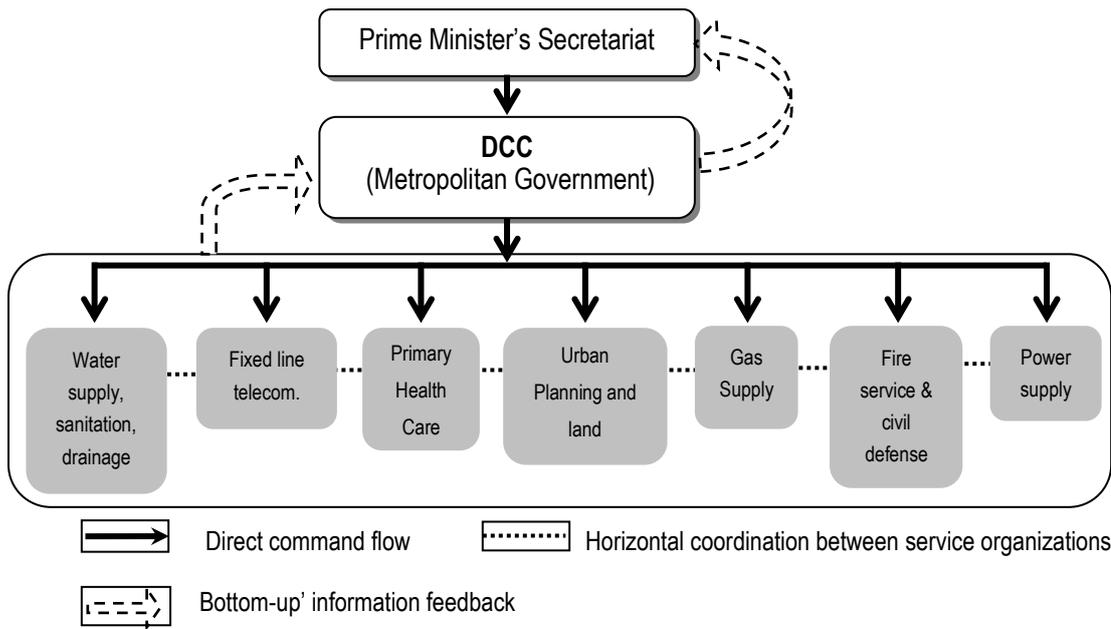


FIGURE 3: OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PROPOSED MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT (DEvised BY THE AUTHOR)

To be an effective service provider in accordance with the above proposition, DCC must have to have the following features:

**A. Technical capacity to take informed decisions**

The technical capacity for plan making is crucial for the effectiveness of any institutional arrangements concerning basic services governance. For that purpose, there is a need to assign priority for maintaining two basic technical requirements that underpins the process of formulation, review and monitoring of the strategic policy concerning service provisioning process, namely, analytical methodologies and related data bases. Technical studies have to be issue specific or thematic. In effect, this can be viewed as a check list of technical steps which seek to provide solid foundations, analytical rigor and defensibility to the strategy. The check list must have to have the following parameters.

Demand and supply assessments - In addition to the traditional and non-traditional demand assessments, strategic planning for municipal service provisions needs to develop the capacity for long-term future development by looking at the economic cycles, events and globalization trends, information and communication technology. These are the processes by which strategic planning evaluates the long term features that would frame the planning bases. There is therefore an issue of scenario building- both in demand terms and associated supply terms that needs to be “rediscovered” in strategic planning works.

Analytical techniques – The effective analysis of demand and supply requires the definition of functional interrelationship within the metropolitan area, that is, the catchments area which would ultimately define the basic analytical planning and policy geography. Without these, it will not be possible to initiate and implement coherent decisions. Tools such as transport modeling that use “integrative” analysis i.e, linking land-use and capability of the transportation network to support development strategies; can be used to formulate as well as appraising spatial strategies against declared objectives, supporting targets and indicators guiding those strategies

Monitoring techniques - Monitoring techniques support a number of functions in the planning of urban basic service provisioning namely:

- assessing the effectiveness of the planning strategy,
- establishing any forms of “strategic drift” from the aims of the strategy,
- providing the basis for strategy, program and project review,
- ensuring the currency of the data-bases.

At the core of this objective is the need to maintain an up-to-date spatial data. This could be accomplished via a series of surveys. Some, predominantly at the supply side of the service provisions, might be conducted on a yearly basis. The demand side surveys might be conducted on a four to five year cycle.

For achieving technical competency, an automation program can be initiated to establish a comprehensive municipal database. This could provide the new governance machinery with superior management capability. The key areas of computerization might be

TABLE 6 - POSSIBLE AREAS OF AUTOMATION IN DCC

Sector	Areas for tentative automation
Accounts	Integrated finance and accounts
Revenue	Revenue collection, assessment of tax base, identifying the arrears, mobilization for development initiative
Personnel	Training and better management of the human resources
Municipal Services	Digitizing and integrating the network map of water supply & sewerage, telecommunication, power supply, urban roads and other linear service under themes that must be easily retrievable for a range of municipal purposes.
Land Utilization and Control	Digitizing land use map prepared on the basis of spatial data so collected in the field survey

Source: Devised by the author

Automating municipal information concerning linear services i.e, water supply and sewerage, power supply, telecommunication, roads of all categories; would definitely be helpful in managing the services

provisions, detecting problem/malfunctioning within, devising suitable areas for future expansion of services etc. Moreover, by using GIS/Remote Sensing technology a comprehensive data map concerning urban basic services for the city can be developed. Such a database can be used to create a scenario depicting the state of compliance of individual structure to the stated zoning regulation. Automating the revenue provision of the municipality might well assist the city government with comparatively superior deciding capacity regarding the strategies for collecting taxes, reassessment of the tax base, holdings with unpaid taxes etc. At the same time, such an automation drive will be an added advantage for other sister concerns of the proposed municipal government for various decision making.

### ***B. Institutional competence to take effective decisions***

Apart from the technical competence, an efficient metropolitan government needs institutional competence to take effective decisions. Thematically, these decisions could encompass the following aspects of the municipality.

**Coherence of the Area-** Refers to the areal jurisdiction of the metropolitan government as a planning unit in terms of social, economic and development integrity. The “coherence” of the planning area can be measured by the context to which decisions regarding future development of the service provisions are internalized within the structure plan area. The more self-contained the plan area, the more coherent, and therefore competent, it will be in making effective choices about how the area is to be developed.

**Legal Power-** In terms of legal power, there is undoubtedly a need for clear legal framework that enables structure planning to take place with regards to the municipal service provisions. It ought to coerce the grass-root political, administrative and engineering organs to work together for producing coordinated and synchronized plan. Additionally, there ought to be a provision of intervention by the superior bodies in this regard if, for any reason, the grass-root operatives fail to come with a unanimous plan.

**Linkage to Implementation –** The competence to undertake strategic planning initiatives relates to the extent where “power” and responsibility are integrated. Moreover, the yearly or long term development plans must encompass a schedule by which services ought to undergo renovations one after another. The power to “prepare the plan” must have to be linked with the power to “implement the plan”. It is all about strengthening institutional capacity to implement effective decisions.

**C. Inclusive processes to take deliverable decision**

In view of the need to reintegrate the sector specific basic services planning into the overall strategic planning process, it is necessary to establish additional processes to increase the efficiency the effectiveness of the service delivery. These include the following:

The creation of Network – DCC have to set up a number of formal networks of organizations working at the ward level to facilitate strategies for the improved and better service provisioning. The decisions derived by these field level organizations then have to be channelized to the superior level of the DCC's planning committee. Such a "bottom-up" arrangement would be helpful in reducing the confrontational nature of the inter-agency dealings. The network groups could be:

- technical topic groups for water supply, drainage, power supply, telecommunication etc.,
- strategic future group incorporating relevant agencies for the development of long term sectoral strategies of urban basic service provisions in the city,
- consultative forum involving a wide range of interested groups from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors of the concerned area.

Participatory Planning Process with the Private Sector Agencies, NGO's and CBO's – The involvement and investment decisions of the private sector bears significant importance towards successful execution of development programs. Without such involvement, a mechanism would not exist whereby each is made aware of the respective approaches to the issues which are also being pursued through the plan. Over the time, it has been proved that involvement of private sector renders positive results in municipal services management. The solid waste collection and in enhancing tax collection efficiency in selected zones for particular service provision in Dhaka city is an exquisite example in this regard. The key areas of joint working might well be-

- a) testing the assumptions of the plans,
- b) identifying development scenarios,
- c) advising on the target of the plan, and
- d) advising on the approach to linking the plan to the respective implementation program.

**D. Financial competency**

An efficient metropolitan government must have to be financial competent. No doubt, a city government that can fund it's usual business from it's own source would definitely assume a superior edge in terms

of city service provisioning and management, and, in the long run, satisfying the dwellers. The components that can well ensure the financial competence of a municipal government are as following:

- greater billing and tax collection efficiency,
- careful assessment of the development projects to avoid potential monetary and time loss,
- focusing on attainable and realistic targets on the yearly budget,
- involving private sectors in areas where municipal authority has failed to achieve the financial targets,
- issuing bonds, shares of the city government in the market etc.

#### ***E. Training in DCC***

Metropolitan government's internal capacity for training the officials, elected representatives must have to be intensified substantially. The major areas of training might be-

- service hardware operation and maintenance,
- use of information technology application, i.e, GIS/Remote sensing, MIS etc; for creating a municipal database on property records, taxation records, accounts and audits, personal management etc.,
- handling of grievances, consumer satisfaction and public relation for the frontline officials and politicians,
- effective code of conduct for high class professionalism,
- accountability and transparency practices,
- financial management etc.

Additionally, the new governance mechanism should initiate the step of preparing the operational manuals concerning all important activities of DCC. The training schemes mustn't only remain restricted for the DCC's elected figures and the officials. Rather all the organizations that are involved with municipal functions, whether NGO's or CBO's, have to be welcomed in such venture.

#### ***F. Consistency with national planning strategy***

In view of the above considerations, the role of national planning must be seen as a critical element in building institutional capacity. In order to promote the competitiveness of the city, there is definitely a

need for developing linkages between the municipal services planning and the national development plan. The focus in this regard could:

- safeguarding the national interest, i.e, attracting investment to the city,
- consistency between policies of local planning and the national development objectives,
- consistency between policies of municipal authorities and government agencies with spatial planning implications.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Dhaka city occupies a primate position in context of Bangladesh's economy, politics and not to mention in the Bangladeshi society. From that end, the importance and urgency of governance reform cannot be overemphasized. In the suggested schema, a vastly transformed and strengthened Dhaka City Corporation is envisaged occupying the pivotal role in the day to day management of urban service of Dhaka City. What is evident from the above discussions that the present trends of urban governance must be reversed to enable healthy growth of the urban local bodies, which, will directly contribute to the city's economy. No doubt, the relationship between good governance, better service provision, flourishing of the city economy are all interrelated and thus affects one another directly. Last but not least, to form an effective city government, the political will of the central government is the primary requirement. Hopefully, such a well gesture has started to emerge in the last couple of years at the highest level of the government. What is needed in this regard is to capitalize such gesture for reforming the governance mechanism of the urban local bodies in Bangladesh.

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Moinuddin G.

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT AND IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS OF URBAN BASIC SERVICES  
GOVERNANCE IN DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH: RHETORIC OR REALITY?

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