LAND e-MUTATION SYSTEM IN BANGLADESH: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A2I PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study focuses on the activities of A2I (Access to Information), specifically on the land e-Mutation system in Bangladesh. For this, a baseline study had been conducted in Pabna and Sirajganj districts to evaluate the existing land mutation process. From this baseline study, it is seen that current land mutation process is costly and time consuming. Hence, it is imperative to automate the land mutation process to provide hassle free services to the citizens and it is also necessary to make awareness among the people regarding land e-Mutation process to reduce the access of different brokers. Creating automation in land mutation process will save time of the service provider as well as service recipients.

Key Words: e-Mutation; baseline study; Bangladesh; A2I (Access to Information); Exploratory

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a small country with huge population. Therefore, land management is very important for overall development of the country. Land mutation refers to the ownership of land. Updating the record of land and any type of change in that record is made through mutation. It is one of the most important tasks of Upazilla land office of Bangladesh government. The government has taken initiatives for managing land records with e-mutation systems by Access to Information (A2I). Access to Information (a2i), PMO (Prime Minister's Office) is "Service @ Doorsteps" with the vision 2021 for establishing "Digital Bangladesh". For simplifying all the services, a2i is working since 2007. It's a project of the Government of Bangladesh with the support of UNDP & USAID under the Prime Minister's Office. A2i is mainly working for simplifying the government services for the citizens.

Bangladesh has a total landmass of around 1,47,570 square kilometres. The population of Bangladesh depends on land for their living, and monetary activities. So land management is a fundamental issue in the social and financial attributes of Bangladesh. Land mutation is one of the most significant services of government land office. But many people are facing lots of problems in getting these services.

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People need to spend more time, and give money to the middleman for land mutation. This study is conducted to introduce e-mutation in land mutation system and make the service more people responsive. A2I has taken initiatives for improving the land mutation systems in Bangladesh. Mutation means ownership of land. Replacing, transferring or rewriting the name of the owner on the Records of Rights or Khatians is known as mutation. When this mutation process is done electronically, it is called e-Mutation of lands.

Under present procedure, people apply for land mutation in Upazilla land office. For getting mutation, people need to visit Upazilla land office for several times and need to give money to brokers. Sometimes proper information cannot be found due to absence of land records. Change in the ownership of land becomes difficult due to inappropriate land records and eventually it creates dispute between the buyer and seller. This study will enhance e-mutation awareness in sale and purchase of land.

Objectives of the Study
The specific objectives of the study are:

- To find out the current state of e-mutation through access to information (a2i)
- To draw recommendations on land e-mutation system in Bangladesh

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current research suggests that Bangladesh is highlighting on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), power and energy sector, agriculture and food processing, pharmaceuticals, leather and leather products, and jute and jute goods, sustainable blue economy, and establishing Economic Zones (EZs) etc. A set of policies along with a model for sustainable blue economy have been proposed (Jafrin, Saif, & Hossain, 2016). The adoption of ICTs in SMEs located in rural areas of Bangladesh was explored (Hoque et al., 2016). Citizens are benefited through different online services rendered by multiple organizations. Rahman et al. (2017) exposed the service quality of online bill payment system and introduced an extended SERVQUAL model named SERVQUAL-Butterfly model.

For better understanding about existing land mutation process, this study has reviewed some other land mutation related literary work. There is not enough work done before in this particular context in Bangladesh. The record of land ownership is insufficient and incomplete. Inadequate and improper land records increase dispute and security problem of land tenure and land transfer (Nahrin et. al, 2009). Present land laws, land administration and land management in Bangla

desh are not only full of intricacy, procedural difficulties and mismanagement but also not accessible and responsive to the interest of the common people of our country. Furthermore, the present mechanism to settle land related disputes is not time saving, cost effective, and peaceful (Islam et. al, 2015). Problems of present procedure and benefit of automated land registration and record systems have been identified (Islam et. al, 2015). In the existing procedure, the land records stored in the Tehsil office are not properly checked to determine whether the seller is the real owner of the land, if checked it takes long time. Getting information from the volumes of registers is very difficult. The database will contain all the information of the buyer and seller, the particulars of the land (lot number, JL number, name of Mouza), the mode by which the seller became the owner of the plot (i.e., purchase, inheritance, etc.), the classification of land, area of land, boundary demarcation, the value at which the land is being transferred, tax etc. (Khan et. al, 2009). In their paper, (Khan et. al, 2009) explores the problems related to the current system, and offers an IT-based option, that would be simple in implementation, yet effective and efficient. In Bangladesh, land related services are given by multiple institutions. But there are numbers of institutional limitations in existing land administration and management. For services, recipients have to receive services from different offices. Hence, they need to spend more time, money, and numerous visits. A framework for ensuring both transparency and efficiency to the existing land management system has been designed (Choudhury et. al, 2011). Bangladesh is increasingly getting digitalized to keep up with the contemporary world. Unfortunately, we are yet to have a fully digitalized system of keep tracking of lands (Thakur et. al, 2018). The land management system of this country still suffers from outdated methods and technologies and yet too far away from the touch of modernization. Corruption, incompetence and lack of transparency have made the land management system of this country a slow process (Talukder et. al, 2014). For getting land mutation, people need to visit Upazilla land office and face numerous types of hazards. Sometimes it takes long time for getting land mutation and due to this people need to spend more money. Citizens of Bangladesh face harassment by brokers in land mutation (Islam, 2013). In Bangladesh, land management system still follows traditional method in providing land mutation process.

METHODOLOGY

The study followed a mixed research approach. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used to conduct this study. Survey method was used to gather the required data. Descriptive statistics was used to demonstrate the actual scenario regarding land e-Mutation. For baseline study, Pabna and Sirajganj regions were selected and visited. These regions were selected since much of lands from these two regions fall under the context of mutation procedure. Data were collected from

primary sources. AC land office, Union Digital Centre (UDC) and Sub-registry office were visited. Authors developed leaflet providing all the necessary information about the online mutation process and sent it to 46 Upazilas of those two districts. Upazilas were selected randomly and representative sample size was included in selecting Upazilas. We divided the upazila between two groups: Control and Intervention. The methods we used here to conduct the survey are behavioral insights and Randomized Control Trial (RCT).

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A2I on Land Mutation

A2i has an ongoing project to simplify the land mutation process through behavioral insight technique and e-mutation process. It was sought to identify the problems of land mutation process and provides both the intervention and the alternative solution to the existing problems.

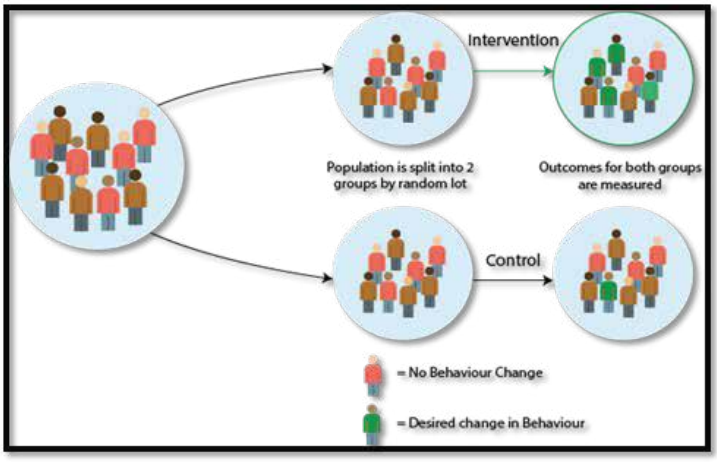


Figure 1: Graphical view of intervention and control group

Piloting Two Districts: Pabna and Sirajganj

Comparison on off-line and e-mutation between two uapzilla for study

Sl. No.	Region	Off-line Mutations in June, 2016	e-Mutations in June, 2016	% e-mutations in June, 2016	Offline Mutations in July, 2016	e-Mutations in July, 2016	% e-mutations in July, 2016
1	Sirajganj Sadar	86	22	20%	80	14	15%
2	Pabna, Chatmohor	0	249	100%	0	304	100%

Fig.2. Time Required for Completing the Mutation Process (in days)

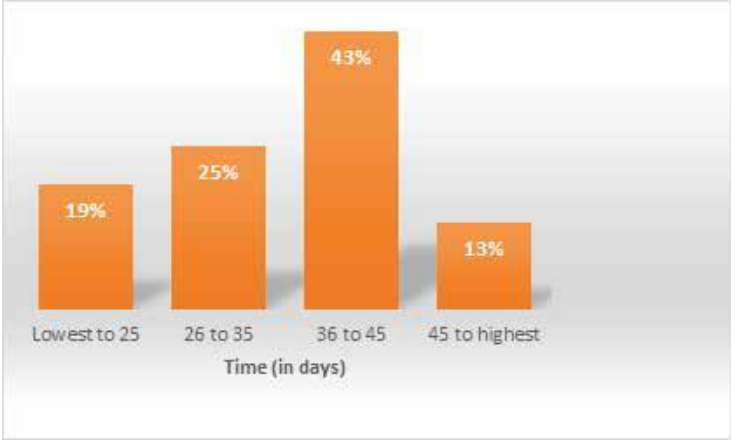
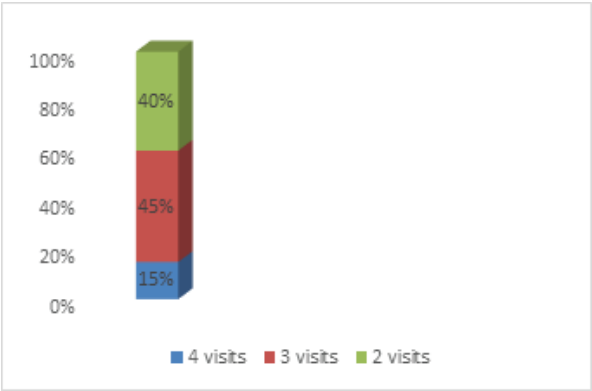


Figure 2 depicts the total time required to complete the land mutation process. According to the figure, a significant number of service recipients (43%) opined that to complete land mutation process it required 36 to 45 days and 25%to complete land mutation process it required 26 to 35 days. On the other hand, 19% of the informants exposed it took 25 days for land mutation process while 13% mentioned that it needed more than 45 days.

Fig.3. Total Cost Required in Mutation Procedure

The above figure shows the total cost to complete the whole land mutation process. 57% service recipients mentioned that they required taka 1300. This cost includes visit cost, process cost and court fees. 25% service recipients opined that taka 1301 to taka 1500 is needed for land mutation process. Depending on distance the amount of visit costs were different and court fees were same for all the respondents.

Fig.4.Total Visits Required in Mutation Process



According to the above figure, it is seen that 40% service recipients cited that whole land mutation had been completed within two visits while 45% mentioned that it took three visits to complete the whole procedure. In contrast, rest of the respondents (15%) opined that it required more than four visits for land mutation process.

Fig.5: Average Time, Cost and Visit in Land Mutation Process

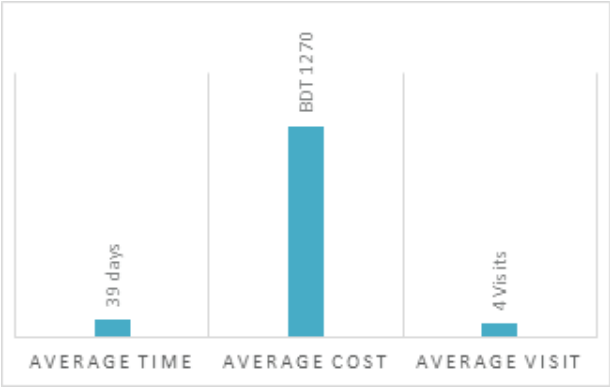
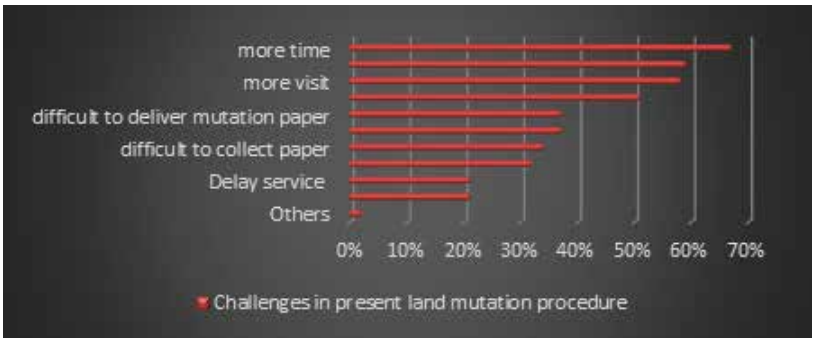


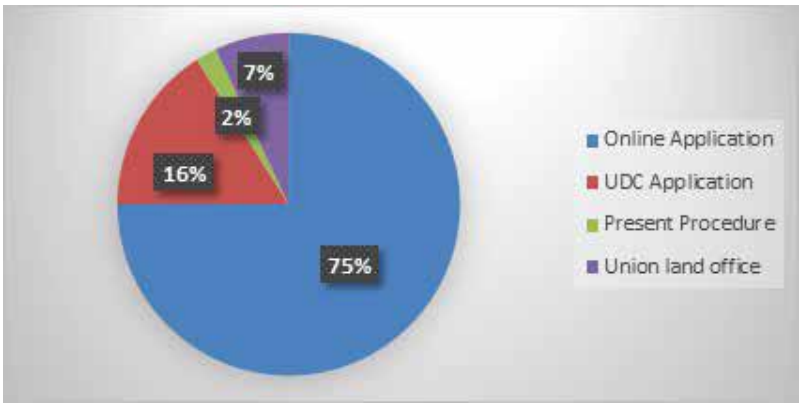
Figure 5 provides the information about average time, costs, and number of visit required in land mutation process. A service recipient spent average 39 days in Upazilla land office for land mutation application process, hearing and receiving DCR. Similarly, average cost required BDT 1270 for mutation purpose including government fee 1150, court fee 20 and others were travel cost. Usually for land mutation, it required 3 visits but here required average 4 visits.

Fig.6: Challenges in Present Land Mutation Procedure



The above figure shows the challenges in present land mutation procedure. About 67% informants opined that in present land mutation it was needed more time to complete the procedure whereas 59% service recipients mentioned about more cost in land mutation process. In contrast, 58% service recipients cited took several numbers of visits in land mutation process. On the other hand, 51% respondents exposed that it required more labor in land mutation process.

Fig.7: Present Scenario Used for Land Mutation



The above figure shows that majority of the respondents (75%) opined that online application would be more appropriate in mutation process as it saves time, costs, and number of visits of the service recipients. 16% service recipients cited that application through UDC would be more appropriate for land mutation while 7% opined that application from union land office would be easier for them.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- People do not know the procedure of mutation, or even the application process.
- Citizens' knowledge about controlling authority of upazila land office is adequate.
- People do not know the amount of mutation fee.
- Employees of land office are colonial in their approach.
- There is lack of work force in Upazilla land office. On the other hand, the service providers do multiple activities and they are not specialized for specific land service sector.
- Time limit mentioned by the circular is not maintaining in most of the cases.
- Time limit is not sufficient for all offices. More time is needed to deliver the service, particularly for busy land offices.
- Land offices don't have not sufficient funds, logistics and labor to implement the mutation process successfully.
- Absolute dominance of males in the mutation process. Most service providers and receivers are male.
- Service providers of land offices are educated, but service receivers' level of education is not in satisfactory level.
- The majority of service-seeking people are farmers.
- Income level of service-seeking people is not high.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The study has some suggestions to overcome the hurdles and develop quality of service delivery by the study.Without legislative change that improves co-ordination between AC Land, Survey and Sub-Registry, these ideas could improve the citizen's experience.

1. Publicity will increase for online application of e-Mutation through providing the leaflet
2. Guide people to online application at the point they receive certified deed
3. Provide e-mutation information in online Khotian request: splash screen at end of application; document with the provided Khotian
4. Set up a UDC within the land registration office
5. Encourage deed writers to also provide e-mutation application service
6. It would be helpful if proper training is provided to the service provider about land mutation.
7. Citizen friendly option/view should be generated/added to the portal
8. To reduce harassment, it is necessary to introduce complaint box in every land related office and there should be a mechanism to address and solve all the complaints with sincerity.

The present e-Mutation or land management system does not cover our whole land management systems in the country. We need to take proper steps regarding this system for the whole country. So, it necessary to develop image conversion from the paper based map to the digital map. Further research may be done to develop the whole central system for land management, provide a land account for every land owner.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh is an agricultural country under huge population pressure and scarcity of land hence, it is essential to maintain proper record of the land and sound management of the land. Digitalizing land management system is a crucial need in Bangladesh as it still follows the ancient land management system and people face numerous problems in changing the ownership of the land. Land mutation is important for transfer of land, land revenue, fixation of title and possession. Finding revealed that people face many problems getting land mutation. Most of the cases they need to give money to the middle man. As existing mutation process is complex, it required more time, cost and number of visits. On the other hand, because of proper record of the land lead disputes in having ownership of the land and this dispute create other corruption. Automation of manual process is necessary to reduce error of the record, increase the transparent of the system and improve the speed of the work. It is also required for providing service to the people doorstep and makes the service more citizens responsive. Besides, it is generally assumed that automation reduce time, cost and number of visit. However, it is imperative to automate the land mutation process to provide hassle free service to the citizen and it is necessary to aware the people about land mutation service process to reduce the access of the broker. Creating automation in mutation process will save the time of the service provider and service recipients as well as it will reduce the cost and harassment of the service recipients.

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