Reflection of Good Governance in Sustainable Development: The Bangladesh Context

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Abstract: This article attempts to explain the relationship between good governance and sustainable development. The aim of the paper is to examine how the good governance reflects in sustainable development of Bangladesh. Actually the sustainable development is the main pillar of good governance because the mechanism of good governance includes transparent, democratic institution as well as efficient and effective public services like poverty reduction, women empowerment and education, people’s participation, promoting economic growth etc., and all these services are the main goals of sustainable development. So it is easy to reflect good governance in sustainable development. Bangladesh is a developing country which is trying to ensure good governance and also promote to achieve sustainable development. Bangladesh has already achieved sustainability in many sectors within very short time, especially in social sector. The country has improved annual GDP growth rate over 6% during the past few years. The foreign currency reserve of the country is over US$ 10 billion as of first quarter of 2012. The per capita Gross National Income is currently US$ 772. Now the population growth rate is down to 1.3%. The country has made significant progress in the areas of increasing literacy for both girls and boys, and in primary level enrolment has reached 94.7%. Government provides ICT in all over the country. After achieving all the above segments it is clear that Bangladesh is progressing in ensuring good governance. Nevertheless, some challenges are creating obstacles on the way of good governance. These are corruption, criminalization and violence, absence of rule of law, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, lack of people participation, poverty and inequality, climate change and natural disaster etc. If the problem is reduced it will be possible to achieve sustainable development. Therefore, ensuring good governance is vital to achieve sustainable development in Bangladesh.

Introduction: The relation between good governance and sustainable development are the two more discussed issues in the contemporary world. The concepts of good governance and sustainable development are both absolutely indispensable and one cannot be realized without the other. The phenomenon of good governance importantly emerged in the mid of 1990s by the World Bank. Since then it is very important to ensure, especially for the developing countries the aspects of sustainable development. Good governance promotes accountability, transparency, efficiency, participation and rule of law at all levels which allows management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for equitable and sustainable development, guaranteeing civil society participation in decision making process. In a society still in search of

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solutions for sustainable development, good governance has always been recognized to be a critical tool for advancing sustainable development and a crucial element to be incorporated in sustainable development strategies (K. Ginther, 1999 p.18). The concept of sustainable development necessarily includes economic, social and environmental issues. Provision of social services along with a growing economy and clean environment has recently been recognized as the pre-requisite for sustainable development.

Bangladesh, being a least developed country with measuring natural resources, is facing tremendous problems due to increasing population pressure. Good governance in Bangladesh is rare in practice because both the public and private officials are not accountable and the decision-making process is not transparent. Corruption is a big obstacle in the way of good governance in Bangladesh. In recognition of the long-term development challenges, the government under the Leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina adopted the vision 2021 (Naznin Islam, 2012, p.56). Vision 2021 lays down a development scenario where citizens will have a higher standard of living, will have a more equitable socio-economic environment and the sustainability of development will be ensured through better protection from climate change and natural disasters. The government of Bangladesh has been taking continuous initiatives in terms of policies, programs and strategies to promote sustainable development in the country. Bangladesh seriously recognizes the need for well-balanced inter-linkages of economic, social and environmental aspects in order to confront the challenges. For the purpose, the paper intends to explore the linkage between good governance and sustainable development and how the good governance reflects in sustainable development of Bangladesh.

**Good Governance: Conceptual Clarity**

The concept of governance is not new. It is as old as human civilization. Simply governance means the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance and so on.

World Bank (2002) described good governance entails sound public sector management (efficiency, effectiveness and economy), accountability, exchange and free flow of information (transparency), and a legal framework for development (justice, respect for human rights and liberties).
Bilney (1994) states “Good governance means the effective management of a country’s social and economic resources in manner that is open, transparent, accountable and equitable” (Bilney, 1994, p.44).

ESCAP (2003) defined that Good governance has 8 major characteristics.

**Participation**
Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate representatives.

**Rule of law**
Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights.

**Accountability**
Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their stakeholders.

**Transparency**
Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations.

**Consensus oriented**
Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved.

**Effectiveness and efficiency**
The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

**Responsiveness**
Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

**Equity and inclusiveness**
A society’s well being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society.
Therefore, it can be said that good governance is a multidimensional concept. Good governance is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality. Very few countries and societies have come close to achieve good governance in its totality.

**Sustainable Development: Theoretical Discussion**

Sustainable development is maintaining a delicate balance between the human need to improve lifestyles and feeling of well being on one hand, and preserving natural resources and ecosystems, on which we and our future generations depend. Sustainable development is a socio-ecological process characterized by the pursuit of a common ideal. An ideal is by definition unattainable in a given time but endlessly approachable and it is this endless pursuit what builds in sustainability in the process.

Lynn R.Kahle,(2014) said that Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political, and economic challenges faced by humanity (Lynn R.Kahle, 2014).

Edwards B. Barbier (2006) provided a definition of sustainable development. According to him, the terms sustainable development aims at reducing the absolute poverty of the world poor through providing lasting and secured livelihoods that minimize resource depletion and social instability”( Edwards B.Barbier, 2006, p.44)

Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the extensive discussion and use of the concept since then, there has generally been recognition of three aspects of sustainable development:

**Economic**

An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage agricultural or industrial production.

**Environmental**

An environmentally sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions, and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes.
Social

A socially sustainable system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity, and political accountability and participation.

Sustainable development mentions the following criteria by which we can measure a country’s sustainable development.

Source: The National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS 2010-2021), Bangladesh, May-2013.

Linkage between Good Governance and Sustainable Development

There is a great relationship between good governance and sustainable development as both are related with each other in various aspects to ensure the betterment of the common people and to achieve the paramount of the success. Good governance and sustainable development always depend on each other. Sustainable development cannot be possible without good governance like while good governance does not run properly without sustainable development. The main pillars of this linkage is given below-

Figure-1: Linkage between good governance and Sustainable development.
From the above figure, it can be said that the main pillar of good governance is the main goals of sustainable development. When people get their necessary thing from government and live happily that government is called good government and good government plays good governance. The main goals of sustainable development is the end of hunger and poverty, ensuring health security, ensuring education opportunities for all, achieving gender equality and ensuring sanitation for all. This is not possible to achieve the goals of sustainable development without good governance. Good governance which drives the achievement of development results must also now rise to the challenge of achieving the equitable and sustainable development which will secure our common future. Active and effective governance requires governing institutions which are capable of delivering reliable and quality services where and when they are needed. Effective governance is prerequisite for putting in place the integrated policy making capacity which is needed to drive sustainable development. We know from Singapore’s history, active and effective governance has made substantial contribution to its sustainable development. A good governance responses to the complex and interlinked challenges of a country such as economic growth, poverty reduction, social development, equity, health, environmental strands, women empowerment and so on which are key challenges of sustainable development. For facing the challenge of sustainable development
government has to be fair because it holds the key to building stable and secure societies and to drive inclusive growth within the finite boundaries of our planet over long term and it can overcome the challenges, reduce risk and take advantage of opportunities to ensure the sustainability of a country. So, for achieving the goals of sustainable development the governance has to be accountable, transparent, effective, efficient and responsive in order has achieved the goals. So this is very clear that the relation of good governance and sustainable development is very close, and they are always dependable on each other. In a word, it can be said that the good governance of a country is reflected in sustainable development.

**Reflection of Good Governance in Sustainable Development in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is a south-east Asian small country. The economy of Bangladesh is largely agro-based with just under 50% of the total labour force still employed in different sector and more than 70% of the population is involved directly or indirectly in agricultural activities. Historically, agriculture has been playing significant role in the development of Bangladesh. Vast majority of the population of the country is still directly or indirectly engaged in a wide range of agricultural activities which including crops, fisheries, livestock and forestry. Agriculture generates employment for 47.5 percent of labour force, contributes about 5 percent of total export earnings and provides food security for the growing population of Bangladesh. Contribution of agriculture to GDP by sub-sectors is crop 10.74%, fisheries 4.39%, livestock 2.50% and forestry 1.66%. In broad terms of sectoral contribution to GDP, the share of agriculture is 19.29 %.(Bangladesh Economic Review, May-2012, pp.59-61).

The priority sectors which are important to sustainable development are economic growth, agriculture, industry, energy, transport, environment and human resource development. The strategies suggested under these sectors are to provide direction to the economy as they will remain the engine for overall economic growth and support for sustainable development of the country. Sustained and accelerated economic growth will be attained through enhancing public investment in infrastructure programmes, human resource development, improving quality of education and skills training, export growth and diversification, facilitating overseas employment, formulation and implementation of national land use plan and promoting green growth (The Daily Star, 8th June, 2012). Bangladesh has taken some policies which have contributed to its capacity building for promoting economic,
social and environmental sustainability during the decade following the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The policies are given below:

Table: 01 Policy for Good Governance in Sustainable Development.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>POLICY INSTRUMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Governance</td>
<td>Fifth Five Year Plan, 1997-2002</td>
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<td>(including poverty</td>
<td>Anti- Corruption Act, 2004</td>
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<td>eradication through</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction, 2005</td>
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<td>National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR) -II, 2009-2011</td>
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<td>National Sustainable Development Strategy, 2009</td>
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<td>Public Administration Reform Road Map, 2010-2014</td>
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<td>Sixth Five Year Plan, 2011-2015</td>
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<td>Economic</td>
<td>Seed policy, 1993</td>
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<td>National Agriculture Policy (NAP), 1999</td>
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<td>National Food Policy Plan of Action , 2008-2015</td>
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<td>National Sustainable Development Strategy, 2009</td>
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<td>Social</td>
<td>Draft Bangladesh Economic Zones Regulations, 2011.</td>
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<td>Child &amp; Mother Health Institute Law, 2002</td>
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<td>National Sanitation Strategy, 2005</td>
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<td>National Policy for Women’s Advancement 2008</td>
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<td>National Education Policy, 2010</td>
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<td>Domestic/Family Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National Child Policy, 2011</td>
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<td>Environmental</td>
<td>National Land Use Policy, 2002</td>
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Reflection of Good Governance in Sustainable Development

Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan (BCCSAP), 2009
Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund Act, 2010
National Plan for Disaster Management 2010-2015
Disaster Management Act, 2012


The above policy instruments for specific policy areas are not necessarily restricted to only their respective areas. Many of them overlap with other areas. For example, the renewable energy policy and brick policy are a part of the government’s strategic interventions in the energy and industrial sectors, with implications relating to greening the economy. Similarly, all policies related to natural disaster management under environment are also relevant to the social area since they are people-centered. Again, sanitation under social sector is also related to environment.

During the last couple of decades, various aspects of “good governance” have been introduced into national strategies and plans in various ways for promoting equity and enhancing the quality of life of the people and putting due importance to their expectations from the state. Although there are governance deficits by global standards, Bangladesh has made gradual but definitive progress in recent years to rise from the bottom of global ranking to become within the bottom 25 countries according to the Corruption Perception Index (Human development report, may-2014, p.79). Since corruption inflicts high costs on growth and discourages investment, the government is committed to building accountability and transparency mechanisms to check it. Bangladesh has posted an average annual GDP growth rate of about 4.8% in the 1990s which improved to over 5% on average during 2000-2008 and to over 6% during the past few years (GED, Planning Commission, 2011, pp.111-112). Here government’s efficiency plays the causal factor to increase of GDP rate.

In spite of frequent natural disasters, particularly the mega cyclones Sidr and Aila in 2007 and 2009 respectively, which have wrought losses and damages to the tune of billions of dollars, the country has shown a tremendous resilience and, through focused policy interventions, particularly in agriculture and other sectors, and in rural and industrial sectors, the GDP growth could be maintained at as high a rate as over 6% in recent years, in fact attaining 6.7% in FY 2011. The government’s
policy is to follow an inclusive economic growth, as it promotes sustainable development. Key economic issues related to food security and sustainable agriculture, water security, energy security, sustainable cities, transportation and infrastructure are presented under the chapter “Priorities, Emerging Issues and New Directions Beyond 2012”.

Life expectancy at birth has increased in Bangladesh from 46.2 in mid-69.0 years currently, which is due to improvement in nutrition and availability of vaccines against diseases and affordable medicines (National Report on Sustainable Development, May-2013, p.141).

The total fertility rate (TFR) has fallen from 7 live births in the mid-70s to 2.3 births per woman in 2011 as the contraceptive prevalence rate increased from about 8% in the early 1970s to 40 % in early 1990s to 60% by 2011. The reduction in birth rate is also attributed to education of girls and more women joining the work force. The population growth rate which was of 1.42 % in 2001 is down to 1.3% according to 2011 Population Census, which is a worthy achievement. The male-female ratio is also quite stable at 105:100 (Naznin Islam, 2012, pp. 66-67).

Bangladesh has made significant progress in the areas of increasing literacy rates both for girls and boys and greater enrolment of girls in primary schools and secondary schools. The literacy rate for 7 years and above was 44.3%, the female literacy rate was 28.5% and male was 50.4% and adult literacy was 35.3% (Human Development report, September, 2011, pp.107-108). The Bangladesh government has taken four major steps to improve the quality of education: first, digitalization in education such as, introduction of ICT in education, ICT facilities in classroom, teacher training on digital content & multimedia in classroom, uploading e-book in the website, online result publishing & admission, ; second to update curriculum at primary and secondary level as well as to introduce creative question; third to improve the classroom environment through infrastructural development such as construction of academic building and four, to strengthen education management.

| Table- 2: Indicators of Performance of Primary and Mass Education |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicators | FY2011 | FY2015 |
| `Gross Enrolment Rate | 103.5 | 105 |
| Net Enrolment Rate | 98.7 | 99.5 |
| Student Absenteeism | 18 | 1.3 |
Gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary levels of education in which is a significant achievement for Bangladesh. As of 2010, the ratios are in favor of girls at 1.02:1 and 1.14:1 at primary and secondary levels respectively. Free education for girls is now extended to intermediate level (12th grade). Primary level enrolment has reached 94.7% in 2010 against MDG target of 100% by 2015 (NSDS 2010-2021, P. 64-56). The school dropout rate has also significantly decreased. It is expected that by 2015 all primary age children will be enrolled in schools.

Bangladesh is trying to provide energy security by tapping all conventional and non-conventional sources of energy to ensure accelerated pace of economic development and industrial production. The power sector strategies include enhancing power supply through increased generation and import electricity from regional countries, improving demand management, reducing dependency on gas for power generation, switching over to coal, nuclear power and other cleaner technology for electricity generation provision for dual fuel for electricity generation wherever possible, adjusting prices of electricity and liquid fuel to reflect cost of production and energy sector reform focusing on cost reduction, improved service delivery and system loss reduction, and use of environment friendly technologies in power generation. Per capita electricity consumption in Bangladesh is only 265 Kwh in April 2012 which is much lower than India (444 Kwh) and Pakistan (388 Kwh). Only 55.26 percent of the households have access to electricity with 90.10 percent households in urban and 42.49 percent households in rural areas (BBS, Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010, p.119). This is very big challenge for the government to achieve sustainable development.

One of the important aspects of sustainable development is social sustainability which means citizens should be ensured social security and protection. In the constitution of Bangladesh is to ensure citizens basic necessities of life that is right to food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care, rest recreation and leisure and social security. In order to ensure rights granted by the constitution, many policies have been formulated and laws enacted in the country. These include health and sanitation policies, education policy, and laws regarding dowry and gender equity. But few policies are properly implemented due to lack of commitment of policy executioners, lack of efficient officials, and corruption. Over the years the government introduced some social security and protection programmes such as old age pension, VGD
(Venerable Group Development), VGF (Venerable Group Feeding), allowance for the insolvent physically challenged citizens, honorarium program for insolvent freedom fighters, allowance for poor lactating mothers, employment generation programme for the poorest and national Service Programme.

From the above discussion we can say that good governance can achieve sustainable development for a country. On the other hand, when a government can achieve sustainable development for a country then the government can be called good governance. In addition, for achieving sustainable development government needs stronger step in accountability, transparency, rule of law, justice, efficient and effective policies. Therefore, it is clear that good governance of a country is reflects in achieving sustainable development.

**Key Challenges**

The challenges to attain medium and long term goals of development of Bangladesh are identified in the 6th Five Year Plan and the Perspective Plan of the country. The development goals are set taking into considerations the long term vision of development of the government. The NSDS has identified some key challenges through the consultation process some that need to be overcome to ensure sustainable development.

**Population**

Bangladesh is the 8th largest country in the world with a population of 149.8 million in 2012 (BBS, Population and Housing Census, 2011, p.112) living in an area of 147,570 sq km. Bangladesh has made commendable achievements in decelerating population growth. Still the population and its growth are far from what the country needs to achieve sustainability particularly social sustainability. A large population along with high population growth requires faster growth of agricultural production with significant pressure on environment. Some of the ways by which population growth can make an impact on environment which includes degradation of agricultural land through unbalanced use of chemical fertilizers, decline in tree cover due to collection of fuel wood, hill cutting and shifting of land to cultivate agriculture, decline in livestock because of lack of grazing land. The challenge facing is to reduce the population growth at a faster rate so that population creates less stress on natural and built resources and basic services.
Unplanned Urbanization

Bangladesh has been experiencing rapid increase in urban population since its independence resulting in increase in the proportion of urban population to total population from 8.2 percent to 23.3 percent during the 1974-2011 periods. The proportion of urban population will continue to grow with economic development, and it is estimated that 31.4 percent of the population will be living in the cities by 2021 (GED, Planning Commission, Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021, pp-141-142). Population has increased in all urban centers such as metropolitan areas, district towns, upazila centers, growth and business centers. A large proportion of urban population is, however, concentrated in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna metropolitan areas. Dhaka has the fastest population growth with about 6,970 thousand population in 2011 and it is one of the most densely populated cities of the world.

Poverty and Inequality

Significant reduction in poverty has taken place in the last four decades – the incidence of poverty as measured by headcount rate declined from more than 80 percent in 1973-74 to 31.5 percent in 2010(NSDS, 2010-2021, p.40). Despite notable progress in poverty reduction Bangladesh faces the stark reality that about 46.8 million of its population still live in poverty. Another reality is that income inequality has increased over the years. No process of development and eradication of poverty can be conceived of without putting caring for environment and sustainable development at the center stage. On the other hand, as the poor depend heavily on nature for their livelihood, without the whole-hearted involvement of the poor, caring for environment becomes an extremely difficult task.

Corruption

Corruption wastes national resources, causes social inequities and creates distrust among people. The government will strengthen the Anti-Corruption commission (ACC) and ensure that it is able to function with constitutional guarantees about its powers, and free from influences of the executive and lower judiciary. The ACC also must act transparently and must not penalize any person and organization without following due legal process.

Ensuring Accountability and Transparency

Political accountability is an important element of good governance in a democratic system. Elective political bodies of the state must be
accountable to the citizens for all their action. Transparency is strongly related to accountability. In Bangladesh both political and public officials are not accountable and decision making process is not transparent. The parliamentary government has been far away from satisfactory. Parliaments control over the executive is a vital thing for a democratic system but there are a number of factors that is constrained the system.

**Lack of Energy Security**

Energy is one of the primary drivers of economic growth and sustainable development. Lack of coverage and quality of energy supply is one of the key barriers to development of both industry and agriculture sector. Accountability, transparency and modernization in the management of the power and gas sector need to be ensured. Illegal electricity connections have to be severed and system loss has to be minimized. As a strategy for sustainable development of energy sector development of renewable energy, which is less polluting, will be emphasized.

**Natural Disasters and Climate Change**

Natural disaster and climate change are regular phenomena in Bangladesh due to its unique geographical location. Key natural disasters are revering flood, tropical cyclones, droughts, and river erosion. Earthquake is also a potential threat to the country gross national savings. Bangladesh needs to improve its investment climate to make effective use of national savings. Remittance contributes directly to increased income and wellbeing of the remittance recipient households and indirectly to the economy through multiplier effect exerting significant development impact on the economy.

**Conclusion**

Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in respect of all three pillars of sustainable development, especially the social front. Sustainable development has conceptually become an area of concentration in the development circles. Indeed, it has taken the position of the venerably concepts such as growth, modernization, progress and accelerated growth. To view this concept as one of those passing yet another feeble effort to capture the imaginations of development policymakers is to miss the power of the concept. Actually the progress of sustainable development is critically dependent on people’s participation in governance and various process of social transformation, and the local governments, the logical mechanism to promote local people participation. Environmental governance is a thematic issue because of its critical role in ensuring environmental protection and
enlacement — one of the three major pillars of sustainable development. At the same time, corruption, criminalization, and violence, food security, energy supply, technological advancement, climate change, natural disasters are the major governance challenges of sustainable development. For that reason, good governance and sustainable development reflection are very low. Bangladesh can easily ensure sustainable development if the government ensures good governance and sector strategy, an effective parliamentary process, sound law and order, strengthened local governance, and a corruption-free society with social justice. The strategies focus on strengthening institutional capacity, controlling corruption, and reviving value and ethics in the society.

References

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