PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN URBAN LAND MANAGEMENT IN ADAMA TOWN, ETHIOPIA

MEKDES TELELEW HAYLEGEBREAL

mekdestelelew24@gmail.com
Department of Public Administration and Development Management.
College of Business and Economics, Haramaya University, Ethiopia

Abstract

Good governance has been one of the main pillars of sustainable urban development. The features of good governance include transparency, accountability, participation, efficiency, and the rule of law, which are vital to effective public service delivery. This paper aims to evaluate the practices and challenges of good governance in urban Land Management in the study area. To accomplish this objective, the study has used a mixed research approach and a cross-sectional research design. A questionnaire was distributed to 368 randomly selected respondents across four kebeles. In addition, eight participants were enlisted for four focus group discussions, and 15 key informants were interviewed. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were analyzed through narrative analysis. The results of the study indicate that poor and inefficient practice of good governance in urban land management is based on the four principles chosen for the study, including equity and inclusiveness, consensus-oriented, effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability within the study area. This study also identified institutional and socio-economic issues related to good governance in urban land management. The study suggests establishing a transparent, participatory, and accountable land management system, along with structural reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of land service delivery in the study area.

Keywords: Good Governance, Land Management, Urban Governance, Adama Town, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

In the twenty-first century, good governance has emerged as one of the most significant means of attaining long-term development and effective public administration. It is considered the basis of stable political institutions, fair resource distribution, and full social development. The concept examines the decision-making process and its implementation by analyzing formal and informal institutions. This extends to the conventional systems of government. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 1997), good governance is characterised by the right to participate, an open process, accountability, effective functioning, justice, and adherence to the law. It ensures that society has broad agreement on priorities across political, social, and economic spheres, and that it provides an opportunity for the entire population, including impoverished and marginalized individuals, to participate in decision-making.

Good governance is essential for efficient land management and the sustainable development of cities. Urban land is a scarce and in-demand commodity that shapes housing, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and the economy. The principles of good governance—transparency, accountability, participation, responsiveness, and efficiency—are needed to ensure that land is distributed and used in a manner beneficial to the entire society. Enemark (2005) adds that effective land administration systems, which can control land ownership, utilization, and development while maintaining equity and environmental sustainability, are a significant ingredient of effective land management. These forms of governance are poor and may lead to informal, unfair, and unsustainable development of the city.

The land governance practice is highly sensitive and a challenging issue to address in developing nations. Most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are afflicted by institutional weaknesses, such as disjointed laws and a culture of corruption that erodes trust and hinders equitable land distribution (Wehrmann, 2012; Burns, 2012). An example of such problems is prevalent in Ethiopia. However, the city's land management system continues to be irregular, marked by administrative feebleness, bureaucratic insignificance, and the incompetence of different governmental tiers to coordinate, despite extensive reforms aimed at modernizing urban administration (Behailu, 2018).

In Ethiopia, Land is owned by the state and the people under the Federal Democratic Republic (FDRE). The leasehold system has been in practice for Individuals and organizations, with only usage rights. The regional and municipal administrations are responsible for the execution of loan management functions in accordance with the national policies of the federal government.(FDRE, 1995). The main objective of this decentralized structure was to increase the accountability of leaders and the administrative structure at the local level. However, this often resulted in overlapping directives, lack of coordination, and discrepancies in the process of land allocation (Abuye, 2006). Furthermore, the lack of a single overarching land policy document and the low institutional capacity at the regional and local levels have further weakened implementation (Daniel, 2015).

Adama Town in the Oromia Regional State is a typical example at the local level of the challenges facing the country as a whole. It is one of the fast growing urban centers in Ethiopia. The population and land demand are increasing, and the prevalence of informal settlements is growing. The urban administration is not efficient in delivering sufficient serviced land, ensuring transparency and accountability in land allocation processes, and providing fair urban land access. These pressures have underscored weaknesses in governance structures, including low levels of public participation, bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption, and political interference (Arimoto et al., 2010).

The Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC) stated that urban land management as one of the most corrupt areas in Ethiopia (Lindner, 2014). Corruption takes different forms, from petty administrative corruption, such as bribes and favouritism in the provision of services, to major rent-seeking in land auctions and transfers. Such measures not only lack the confidence of citizens but also misinform urban planning and undermine the practice of distributive justice at the grassroots level. Hence, the need for good governance in urban land management is not only to ensure transparency and accountability but also to support sustainable urban development and distributive justice.

The literature emphasizes that urban land management guided by good governance principles can yield significant benefits. Magel and Wehrmann (2001) state that the use of governance principles makes institutions more efficient, increases public participation, and decreases corruption. Similarly, Antwi et al. (2009) argue that cities with transparent and accountable land administration systems are better able to provide

affordable housing and infrastructure for all residents. On the other hand, weak governance results in tenure insecurity, land market distortions, and widespread informality (Rajack, 2009).

In Ethiopia, empirical studies on good governance in land management have grown over the last few years. However, most studies have been limited to describing challenges rather than adequately analysing the institutional and governance dimensions of urban land administration. This study addresses the gap by assessing how key governance principles—consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability—are practised in Adama Town. Furthermore, the study explores institutional and socio-economic factors that hinder the realization of good governance in the urban land management sector.

This study therefore, aims to analyze the practice of good governance in urban land management in Adama Town, identify major institutional and social challenges, and propose practical strategies to improve transparency, efficiency, and accountability. The insights derived from this study are not only relevant to Adama but also applicable to other rapidly urbanizing cities in Ethiopia and across Sub-Saharan Africa, where urban governance remains central to achieving

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Concept and Principles of Good Governance

The concept of governance has evolved from a narrow focus on government institutions to a broader understanding encompassing public, private, and civil society actors. Stoker (1998) describes governance as a "new process of governing" that involves multiple stakeholders working collaboratively to address societal problems. Governance becomes "good" when it is transparent, participatory, accountable, responsive, equitable, and consistent with the rule of law (UNDP, 1997).

Sheng (2010) defines good governance as a multidimensional concept that includes political, economic, and administrative aspects. The political dimension concerns how governments are selected and replaced; the economic dimension concerns the management of public resources; and the administrative dimension concerns the capacity of institutions to implement policies effectively.

There are several principles of good governance identified by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP, 2009) and the World Bank (2002).

Participation: the involvement of citizens and stakeholders in decision-making processes.

Rule of Law: interaction of legal recommendations through fairness and impartiality.

Transparency: The availability of information and the process of decision-making.

Responsiveness: on-time, high-quality service provision.

Consensus Orientation: balancing diverse interests to reach shared goals.

Equity and Inclusiveness: ensuring that all individuals, especially vulnerable groups, have opportunities to improve their well-being.

Effectiveness and Efficiency: using resources judiciously to achieve desired outcomes.

Accountability: ensuring that public officials and institutions answer for their actions and decisions.

Together, these principles form a holistic framework for evaluating governance performance across sectors, including urban land management.

2.2 Good Governance and Urban Land Management

Urban land management refers to the processes by which land resources within urban areas are allocated, developed, and regulated to support social, economic, and environmental objectives. It includes land use planning, registration, valuation, and development control (Enemark, 2009). Effective land management ensures tenure security, equitable access to land, and efficient utilization of space.

Good governance and urban land management are closely interdependent. When governance principles are applied to land administration, they create systems that are transparent, efficient, and responsive to citizens' needs. Conversely, weak governance manifests in poor recordkeeping, inconsistent land valuation, informal settlements, and corruption (Palmer et al., 2009).

Magel and Wehrmann (2001) emphasize that implementing good governance in land management enhances transparency in transactions, improves institutional coordination, and fosters public trust. Rajack (2009) adds that poor land governance is a major factor behind inefficient land delivery systems and rising urban informality. Furthermore, Burns (2012) identifies inadequate policy frameworks, institutional fragmentation, and weak capacity as the core obstacles to good land governance in developing countries.

2.3 Urban Land Governance in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's land governance system has undergone significant transitions over the last five decades, reflecting changes in political regimes and economic ideologies. During the imperial period, land ownership was largely feudal and concentrated among elites. The Derg regime (1974–1991) nationalized all land, introducing a socialist model that eliminated private ownership. Since the establishment of the FDRE in 1991, Ethiopia has maintained state ownership of land under the leasehold system, as outlined in Article 40 of the 1995 Constitution.

Although the lease system was designed to ensure equitable access and efficient land use, its implementation has faced persistent challenges. Successive urban land lease proclamations—Proclamation No. 80/1993, 272/2002, and 721/2011—were introduced to regulate land allocation, valuation, and transfer. Nevertheless, they have been vulnerable to institutional weaknesses, role duplication, and poor transparency (Alemie, 2015).

According to the World Bank (2002) and USAID (2004), in Ethiopia, urban land administration is characterised by low cadastral coverage, outdated record systems, and poor coordination among institutions. Corruption, informal land deals, and a lack of enforcement of urban plans further worsen these problems. It causes acute shortages of serviced land, the proliferation of informal settlements, and the widening of social disparities

in cities such as Addis Ababa, Adama, and Hawassa (Adam, 2014).

2.4 Empirical Studies on Governance and Land Management

Most empirical studies have identified opportunities and challenges in implementing effective governance of urban land in Ethiopia. According to Berhanu, Jaap, and Rohan (2015), one of the most devastating limitations to governance in land administration is the absence of autonomous and accountable institutions to monitor the government. In a similar vein, Necha (2014) observed that cities tend not to be open, responsible, and democratic in the distribution of land and the provision of services.

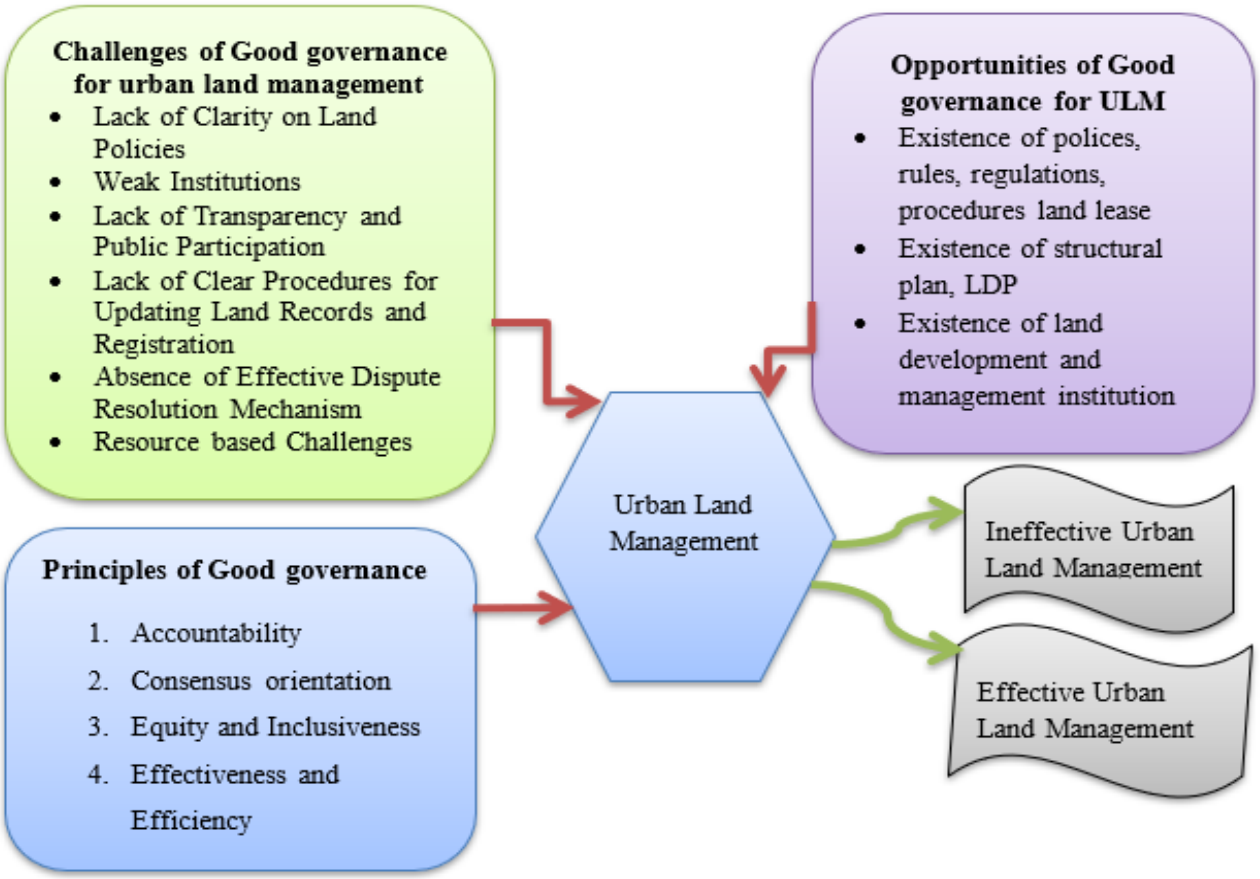
Olira (2017) and Yirga (2010) noted that poor bureaucratic structures, corruption, and political interference characterise urban land management in cities such as Shashemene and Hawassa. Moreover, failure to coordinate technical and administrative units compromises the institution's performance. These findings highlight decentralisation, citizen participation, and institutional capacity building as measures that can be employed to improve the outcomes of governance.

As the literature shows, good governance is not merely a normative construct but also a practical template for improving the management of urban land. Good land governance has been a problem in Ethiopia due to institutional weaknesses, policy incoherence, corruption, and low public participation. Such difficulties are concentrated in Adama Town, a rapidly developing metropolis. Thus, the research article adds to the existing empirical literature on the use of governance principles in urban land management and offers effective recommendations to enhance accountability, transparency, and efficiency in the field.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework was based on the UNDP (1997) model of good governance, which relates the principles of good governance to the performance of urban land management. The framework presupposes that the concepts of transparency, accountability, participation, equity, and efficiency have been effectively applied, and that this will directly enhance the quality of land administration in an urban area. On the other hand, weak institutional capacity, corruption, and the absence of citizen participation result in governance failure, leading to an inequitable distribution of land, informal settlements, and poor service delivery. The framework also informed the data collection and analysis processes, enabling the study to systematically evaluate the degree to which the principles of good governance are incorporated in urban land management practice in Adama Town.

Figure-1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: Researcher's Own Sketch based on Review of Literature

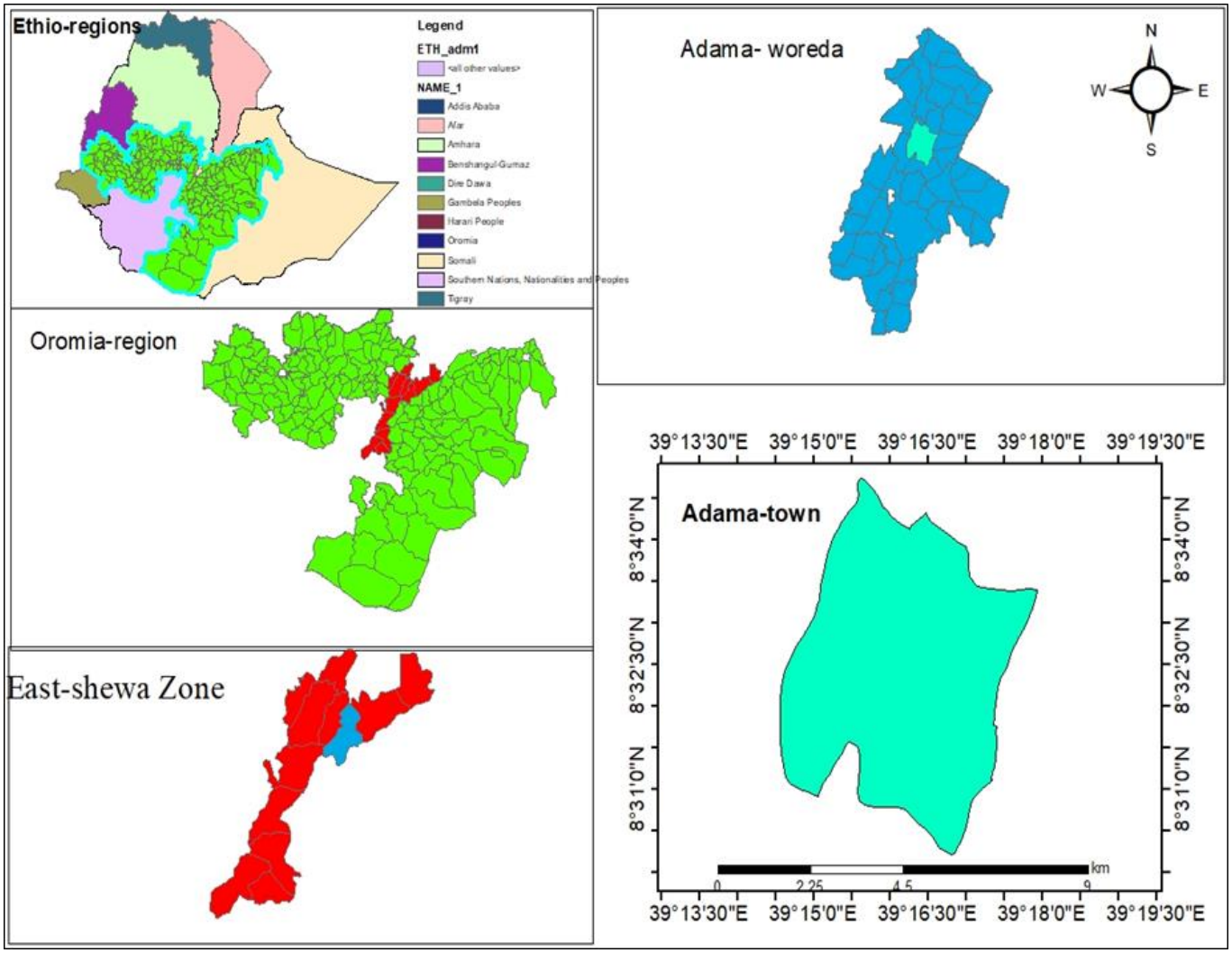
3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Study Area

The research was conducted in the town of Adama, one of the fastest-growing urban areas in the Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia. Adama is a commercial, administrative, and transportation center, situated about 99 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa and strategically located along the Addis Ababa-Djibouti corridor. The town's proximity has led to population growth and investment, resulting in rapid spatial expansion and enhanced land and infrastructure services. Adși is an administrative unit comprising 18 kebeles (the smallest local administrative units). The town has a variety of socio-economic groups engaged in trade, manufacturing, services, and the informal sector. The Central Statistics Agency (CSA, 2019) reports that the Adama population is estimated at over 340,000 and that its growth rate is around 4.8 per year. Urban sprawl has placed significant pressure on land management institutions in cities to provide fair and transparent services.

Boku Shanan, Melka Adama, Bedhatu, and Odaa kebeles were purposively selected for this study. These kebeles fall into different categories based on settlement type: Boku Shanan and Melka Adama are examples of planned early settlements, and Bedhatu and Odaa are examples of informal and commercial settlements. This combination ensured the possibility of having a holistic understanding of governance practices in several socio-spatial settings

Figure 2: Map of the Study Area



3.2 Research Approach

To assess the practices and challenges of good governance in urban land management, a mixed-methods research design was used. It used a The quantitative component used structured questionnaires administered to randomly selected respondents to facilitate statistical analysis of their perceptions and experiences regarding the principles of good governance. The qualitative component included key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to obtain comprehensive information on institutional practices, procedural gaps, and stakeholder perceptions that the survey would not address. quantitative and qualitative approach, providing the opportunity to cross-analyze data and ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.3 Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional research design, which enabled data collection at a specific point in time and across various types of respondents. This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to capture a picture of what was happening in the Empire of Adama's land management system, including governance and challenges, during the research.

3.4 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data sources were used for this study. Primary data were collected through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. Officials from the land administration, property owners, community members, and representatives of the Adama Town Land Development and Management Office were present.

The secondary data were collected from relevant documents, including urban development plans, policy papers, institutional reports, and past research on land governance in Ethiopia. This data was used to put the main data results into perspective.

Triangulation of the data using various sources increased the credibility and validity of the study's findings (Denzin, 2012).

3.5 Population and Sampling Techniques

The study area was selected purposively because the researcher is familiar with the town. Accordingly, the targeted populations for this study were the heads of households in four kebeles. Currently, Adama town has six sub-cities with 18 kebeles, and the study involved only 4 kebeles to ensure a representative sample. The two kebeles selected for this research are recent mergers from rural areas into the city administration, and the other two represent old settlements. Among the rural kebeles that recently merged into the city administration (Boku shanan and Melka Adama), the place with illegal construction that has expanded significantly (Bedhatu and Odaa kebele) represents the old settlement and commercial area, is nearly the smallest in size and the densest in population among the other selected kebeles. To determine the sample size for the above study population, the researcher used Yemane's (1967) formula to estimate the required sample size at the 95% confidence level, with a degree of variability of 0.05 and a precision (acceptable margin of error) of 5% (0.05). This distinction aimed to balance manageability and representativeness. The researcher initially attempted to apply the formula by considering the number of households: 935 in Boku shaman Kebele, 694 in Melka Adama Kebele, 1,601 in Bedhatu Kebele, and 1,341 in Odaa Kebele. The sample was drawn from these given households.

Based on the above information, the sample size of the study population was determined in the following way:

N= N1 + N2 +N3 + N4

N=935+694+1601+1341=4571

Therefore, N= 4571; where (N= the target population, N1= Boku shanan Kebele, N2= Melka Adama, N3= Bedhatu Kebele, N4= Odaa Kebele). Then, the following formula of Yamane (1967) was applied:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where,

n= the desired sample size

N=Population size (equal to 4571)

e =the level of precision or acceptable margin of error (equal to 5% or 0.05)

$$n = \frac{4{,}571}{1 + 4571(0.05)^2} = 368$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study was 368 respondents. The researcher assumed that, with a 95 per cent confidence level and a 5 per cent margin of error, 368 households would be considered a representative sample size. Hence, the sample size was determined as follows: firstly, a random starting point was chosen, and then all K elements in the population were selected from both households of independent kebeles as the sampling frame. To calculate k, the formula used was K = N/n. Accordingly, using the formula N/n, every 12th household head was selected from the list, and the selection continued until the desired 368 household respondents were obtained.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

No.	Sample Kebeles	Total Households	Proportionate to Population Size (PPS)	Sample Size
1	Boku shaman	935	935*368/4571	75
2	Melka adama	694	694*368/4571	56
3	Bedhatu	1601	1601*368/4571	129
4	Odaa	1341	1341*368/4571	108
Total		4,571		368

3.6 Tools for Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using three major tools: a structured questionnaire, key informant interviews (KII), and focus group discussions. All data collection instruments were prepared in English and translated into *Afan Oromo* and *Amharic* languages to facilitate comprehension and inclusivity.

3.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected quantitative data were coded and input into SPSS Version 25 for descriptive analysis. Abd the qualitative data were analysed using Interpretative Thematic Analysis. The integration of both methods of data analysis has supported the researcher in arriving at strong conclusions and an explicit assessment of the good governance practices and challenges in urban land management in the study area.

4. Results and Discussion

The results are grouped into four main dimensions of core governance: consensus orientation, efficiency and effectiveness, equity and inclusiveness, and accountability, as identified in the conceptual framework. Moreover, institutional and socio-economic issues, along with possible ways to enhance governance, are addressed.

4.1 Characteristics of Respondents

The socio-demographic background of the respondents provides valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of good governance practices in urban land management. A total of 368 respondents were surveyed across four kebeles: Boku Shanan, Melka Adama, Bedhatu, and Odaa.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondent by Sex

No	Sex	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Male	239	65.8	65.8	65.8
2	Female	124	34.2	34.2	100.0
Total		363	100.0	100.0	

4.2 Age of Respondent

Data on the age of the survey respondents were also collected via a household survey and are presented in the table below.

Table 3 Distribution of respondent by Sex

No	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	20-30	68	18.7	18.7	18.7
2	31-40	134	36.9	36.9	55.6
3	41-50	90	24.8	24.8	80.4
4	Above 50	71	19.6	19.6	100.0
Total		363	100.0	100.0	

Regarding age composition of the sampled respondents the majority 134 (36.9%) was found in the age interval of 31-40 years old, found in the age interval of 41-50 years old were 90 (24.8%), found in the age range of Above 51 years old were 71(19.6 %), and the remaining 68 (18.7 %) of the respondents were above (20-30) years old. The survey data reveal that the majority of respondents were in the mature age category, with significant experience in land-related issues and the ability to understand the status of land management in the study area.

Tenure Ownership Status of the Respondents

Table 4.6 shows that among 363 households, 63.4% of respondents reported documented tenure ownership. The remaining 36.6% of participants were reported as non-documented owners. Many respondents have experience in land management and are familiar with urban land management service delivery.

Table 4: Tenure ownership status of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Documented owner	230	63.4	63.4	63.4
Non-documented owner	133	36.6	36.6	100.0
Total	363	100.0	100.0	

4.2 The Practice of Good Governance in Urban Land Management

4.2.1 Consensus Orientation

Consensus orientation refers to the degree to which the decision-making process accommodates diverse interests and seeks collective agreement among stakeholders. According to the study results (Table 5), the majority of respondents reported that land-related decisions in Adama Town were not adequately participatory. 67% indicated that decisions regarding land allocation, lease auctions, and compensation were made with minimal community consultation.

Table 5: Response rate of Respondents on Indicators of Consensus-oriented

No.	Variables		Scale of agreements					
		Response	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
1	The land management office of the city conducts meetings to deliberate on community issues	F	135	115	21	78	14	363
		%	37.2	31.7	5.8	21.5	3.9	100.0
2	Service users are invited to evaluate the service provider's office management.	F	82	197	46	27	11	363
		%	22.6	54.3	12.7	7.4	3.0	100.0
3	Community participation is significant in the land delivery process.	F	131	130	19	50	33	363
		%	36.1	35.8	5.2	13.8	9.1	100.0
4	Society gets involved, and its input is integrated into land policy decisions.	F	154	110	15	53	31	363
		%	42.4	30.3	4.1	14.6	8.5	100.0
5	The services in city land management fulfil the requirements to get services from the office	F	121	126	10	71	35	363
		%	33.3	34.7	2.8	19.6	9.6	100.0
6	Different sections of society are represented and involved in decision-making.	F	93	141	28	67	34	363
		%	25.6	38.8	7.7	18.5	9.4	100.0
7	The city land management Institution fosters collaboration and participation in all community members to resolve land-related disputes and conflicts.	F	113	129	61	46	14	363
		%	31.1	35.5	16.8	12.7	3.9	100.0

***Key**: SD=Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree SD=Strongly Agree, F= Frequency*

Key informant interviews revealed that public participation was often limited to formal notifications rather than genuine consultation. One official explained:

"Most of the time, decisions are made at the administrative level. Communities are only informed after the fact, not involved in shaping the decision."

Focus group participants similarly emphasized that while town meetings are occasionally held, they are

often dominated by officials and lack meaningful deliberation. The study found that public hearings were primarily used for information dissemination rather than participatory decision-making. This suggests that consensus-building, a critical element of good governance, remains weakly institutionalized in Adama's urban land management.

This finding aligns with Necha and S. (2014), who observed that Ethiopian urban land management processes are frequently top-down, with limited space for citizen engagement. Genuine consensus requires inclusive platforms for negotiation and dialogue, ensuring that the interests of all stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups, are reflected in land-use decisions.

4.2.2 Efficiency and Effectiveness

Efficiency and effectiveness refer to the ability of institutions to deliver land-related services promptly and to use available resources optimally. According to Table 6, respondents expressed strong dissatisfaction with the efficiency of service delivery in the Adama Town Land Development and Management Office (ULMDO). Over **70%** reported experiencing delays in obtaining land titles, lease renewals, or development permits.

Table 6 Response rate of respondents on Indicators of Efficiency and Effectiveness

No.	Variables	Response	Scale of agreements					
			SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
1	The office of urban land management has accurate, integrated, and computerized land data.	F	55	139	31	103	35	363
		%	15.2	38.3	8.5	28.4	9.6	100.0
2	There are competent staff in the Municipality.	F	105	133	43	69	13	363
		%	28.4	36.6	11.8	19.0	3.6	100.0
3	All applications received a decision, including building permits and transfers of ownership/use rights, without delay.	F	99	146	29	63	26	363
		%	27.3	40.2	8.0	17.4	7.2	100.0

***Key**: SD=Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree SD=Strongly Agree, F= frequency*

Respondents identified several causes of inefficiency, including bureaucratic procedures, a lack of trained staff, and poor record-keeping systems. These inefficiencies often force applicants to make repeated visits or resort to informal payments to expedite services.

Figure 3: The residents' level of satisfaction with the land delivery process.

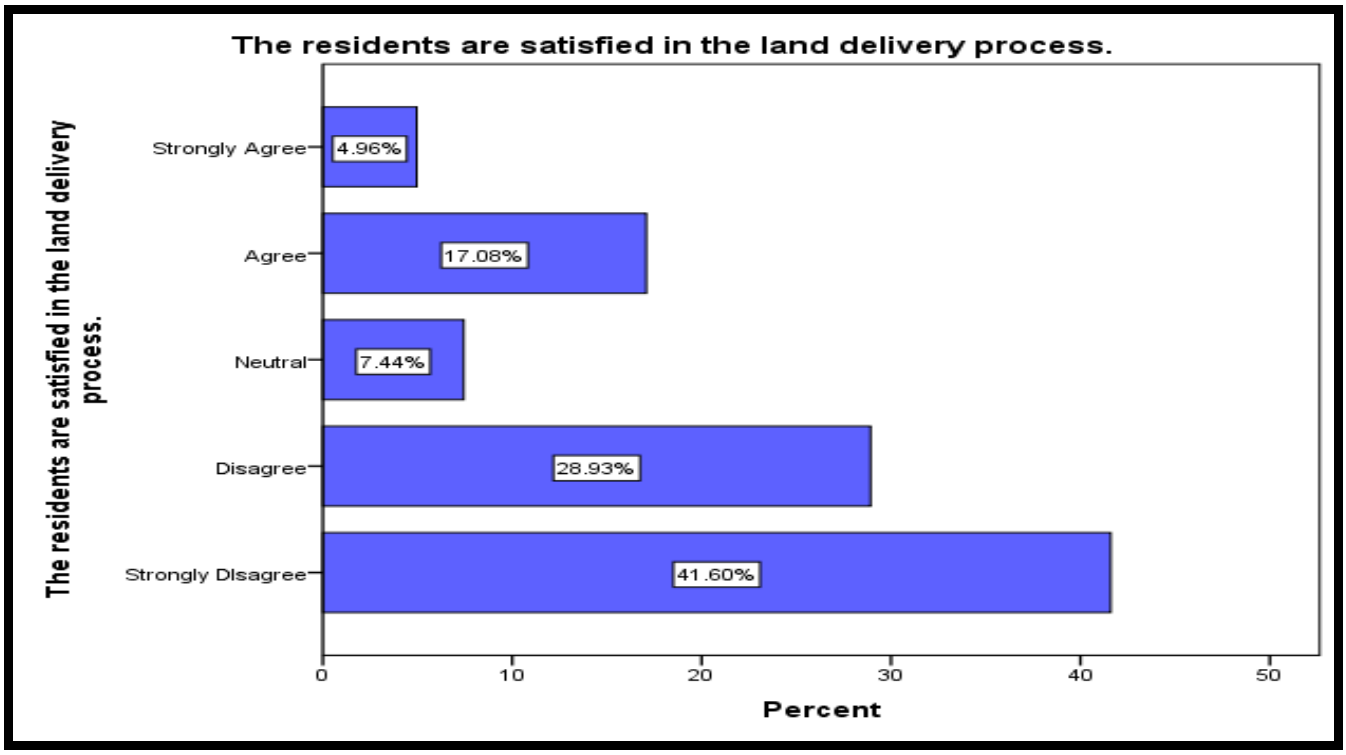


Figure 2 illustrates residents' level of satisfaction with the land delivery process, showing that only 19% were satisfied, while 54% were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied. This describes systemic inefficiency and recommends procedural reform.

In addition, the qualitative data further revealed that the absence of advanced land information technologies results in administrative delays. Land files are maintained manually, which increases the likelihood of duplication, data loss, and manipulation. One of the FGD participants stated:

"You can spend months merely transferring ownership or obtaining a lease certificate because everything is paper-based and approvals take too slow."

These inefficiencies erode public trust in public institutions and create opportunities for corruption. Similar findings were also reported by Alemie (2015), who contended that inefficiency in Ethiopian urban land management stems from both technical limitations and the absence of institutional accountability. Strengthening efficiency thus requires digitising land records, capacity building, and procedural transparency.

4.2.3 Equity and Inclusiveness

Equity and inclusiveness also involve providing equal access to land and other related services to all social groups. As shown in Table 4.12, only a third of the respondents felt that land allocation in Adama was equitable with 47% feeling that there was favors or political influence in the process. Corruption, nepotism, and discrimination based on socio-economic status were often mentioned as major obstacles to equity by respondents.

Respondents in the focus groups indicated that politically connected people are usually given

favourable treatment in land allocation or compensation. At the same time, low-income residents find it difficult to obtain serviced plots. Women, especially, are subject to systemic forms of discrimination because of the socio-cultural standards that restrict their involvement in land dealings.

This observation supports the fact that the absence of inclusiveness in land management contributes to inequality and social tension, as argued by Wehrmann (2012). The unequal distribution of land opportunities in Adama has contributed to the dissatisfaction of the population with the increasing informal settlements in which the marginalized groups occupy the land illegally because they have no other options. Impartiality will require land governance institutions to uphold clear standards for land distribution and to improve mechanisms to protect vulnerable groups. Inclusion can be realised through open land auctions, affordable housing, and gender-sensitive policies.

4.2.4 Accountability

One of the fundamental principles of Good Governance is accountability, which requires decision-makers and institutions to be accountable for their actions. The respondents' views on accountability within Adama's land administration system are shown in Table 7 and Figure 3. Of the total respondents, only 28% agreed that land officials are accountable to the public; the remaining 55% disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Table 7: Respondents' Opinions on the Accountability of the Land Sector

Variables	Response	Scale of Agreements					
		SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
The complaint and grievance handling mechanisms are available in the city municipality.	F	54	91	27	147	44	363
	%	14.9	25.1	7.4	40.5	12.1	100.0
Land administration officials are committed to justifying any failure of their actions.	F	99	186	32	33	13	363
	%	27.3	51.2	8.8	9.1	3.6	100.0
The general public and service users had the opportunity to review the office's budget.	F	110	159	20	59	15	363
	%	30.3	43.8	5.5	16.3	4.1	100.0
Officials at the service delivery office asked service users and the general public for irregular payments to complete their tasks.	F	14	65	29	206	49	363
	%	3.9	17.9	8.0	56.7	13.5	100.0
In case of loss of confidence, people can sanction or punish the land administration officials.	F	74	184	19	45	41	363
	%	20.4	50.7	5.2	12.4	11.3	100.0

***Key**: SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SD-Strongly Agree, F- frequency*

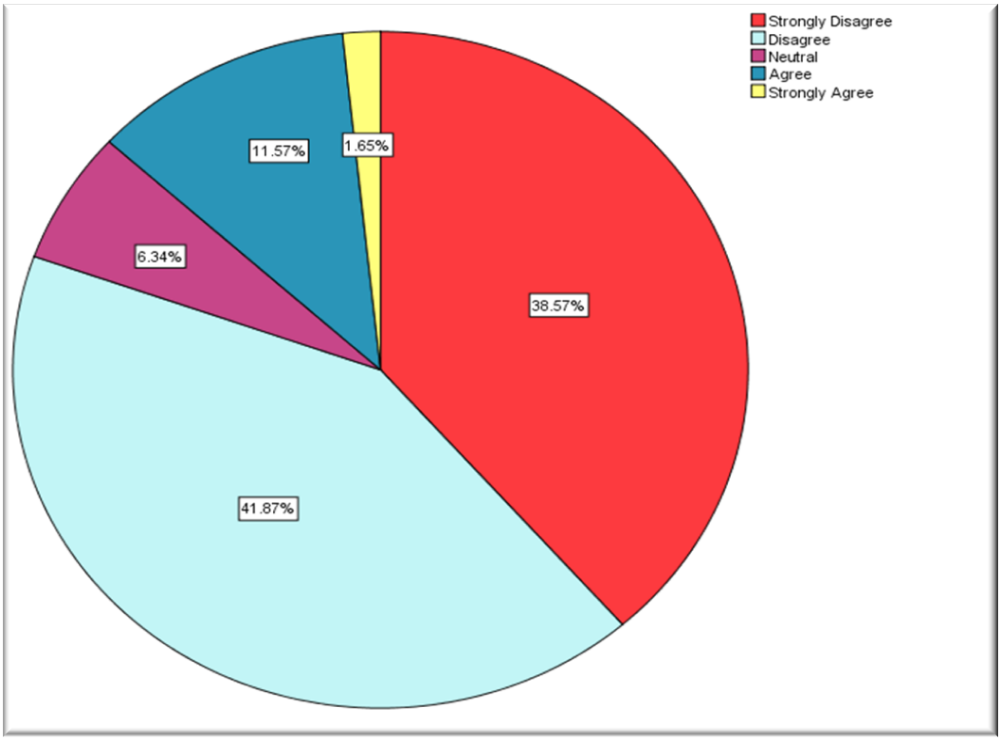
The results of the interviews indicate that poor internal monitoring, lack of transparency in budget management, and limited oversight mechanisms lead to poor accountability. Respondents noted that complaints submitted by citizens often remain unresolved, and disciplinary actions against officials are rare.

The absence of specific feedback mechanisms has eroded people's confidence. As one of the participants noted:

"When we raise concerns about corruption or delay in service delivery, no one follows up. The officials are rarely held responsible for misconduct".

There is also weak inter-departmental coordination regarding Institutional accountability. The departments of planning, registration, and valuation operate in silos, making oversight and maintaining consistency difficult. These findings align with the study by Berhanu, Jaap, and Rohan (2015), which found that ineffective institutional frameworks and limited citizen oversight weaken urban land management in Ethiopia.

Figure 4: Land administrator's accountability to the people



Establishing robust reporting systems, transparent decision-making processes, and external audit mechanisms is essential for effective accountability in land management. Enhancing downward accountability—where public officials are answerable to citizens rather than only higher administrative authorities—is particularly crucial.

4.3 Institutional and Socio-Economic Challenges

4.3.1 Institutional Challenges

Institutional challenges emerged as the most significant impediments to good governance in Adama's urban land management.

Table 8: The institutional challenge of good governance in urban land management

S.N	Variables	Response	Scale of agreements					
			SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
1	Corruption	F	10	23	5	84	241	363
		%	2.8	6.3	1.4	23.1	66.4	100.0
2	Bureaucracy	F	29	17	17	99	201	363
		%	8.0	4.7	4.7	27.3	55.4	100.0
3	Political interference	F	11	34	70	89	159	363
		%	3.0	9.4	19.3	24.5	43.8	100.0
4	Incompetence of the service providers	F	18	21	44	181	99	363
		%	5.0	5.8	12.1	49.9	27.3	100.0
5	Lack of funds	F	22	236	52	38	15	363
		%	6.1	65.0	14.3	10.5	4.1	100.0
6	Misuse of funds	F	6	23	91	149	94	363
		%	1.7	6.3	25.1	41.0	25.9	100.0
7	Poor management	F	11	29	50	99	174	363
		%	3.0	8.0	13.8	27.3	47.9	100.0
8	Low technology	F	33	55	34	146	95	363
		%	9.1	15.2	9.4	40.2	26.2	100.0
9	Delays in providing service	F	28	17	29	197	92	363
		%	7.7	4.7	8.0	54.3	25.3	100.0

***Key**: SD=Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree SD=Strongly Agree, F= frequency*

As summarized in Table 8, respondents identified the following key issues:

- Lack of skilled human resources to manage modern land information systems;
- Overlapping mandates between regional and municipal authorities;
- Poor coordination between planning, survey, and legal departments; and

4.3.2 Limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Interview data indicated that organisational structures are often hierarchical and centralised, with limited decision-making authority at the operational level. Bureaucratic stagnation and a lack of responsibility are also factors that slow service delivery. Also, there is no integrated land database to promote efficiency and transparency.

The institutional weaknesses are consistent with the World Bank (2002) and USAID (2004) reports, which found that fragmented institutions and weak legal systems characterize urban land administration in Ethiopia. To overcome these institutional shortcomings, it is necessary to move beyond technical reforms and shift the governance model towards participatory, accountable forms.

4.3.2 Socio-Economic Challenges

Adama is affected by socio-economic issues that worsen governance issues. Rapid urbanization, population growth, and rural-urban migration have increased competition for scarce urban land. The informal settlements grow due to the lack of

affordable housing and the bureaucratic hurdles to obtaining legal land, as noted by the respondents.

Moreover, the lack of poverty and unemployment forces many residents to conduct informal transactions on their land, thereby weakening formal governance systems. The administrative fairness and public trust are also distorted by political interference in land allocation, particularly during election periods.

Table 9: Respondents' opinions on the socio-economic challenges of good governance for urban land management

No	Variables	Response	Scale of Agreements					
			SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
1	Social awareness	F	11	33	38	192	89	363
		%	3.0	9.1	10.5	52.9	24.5	100.0
2	Rapid growth of population and urbanization	F	56	23	36	76	172	363
		%	15.4	6.3	9.9	20.9	47.4	100.0

***Key**: SD=Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree SD=Strongly Agree, F= frequency*

According to Table 4.9, corruption, bureaucratic slowness, and low population awareness ranked among the most significant socio-economic issues. The respondents in the focus group noted that people tend to see bribery as a shortcut to bypass slow, bureaucratic procedures. This culture of corruption undermines moral responsibility and promotes inequality.

To overcome these socio-economic problems, policy interventions must be organized, including housing programs for low-income populations, public awareness campaigns, and strict enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that good governance in urban land management in Adama Town is a crucial yet underdeveloped field of urban governance. Even though Ethiopia's national policies focus on transparency, accountability, participation, and efficiency, their implementation in Adama's land management system is inconsistent and fragmented. The empirical data indicate that the good governance practices, in terms of consensus orientation, efficiency, equity, inclusiveness, and accountability, have failed to become a sustainable institutional culture. Decision-making processes are more top-down, and citizen participation is restricted, making governance more procedural than participatory. The land management system is also rife with inefficiencies, compounded by bureaucratic delays, obsolete record-keeping, and a lack of qualified staff. Long and obscure land lease issuance, renewal, and registration procedures have promoted corruption and rent-seeking. Equity and inclusiveness are also significant issues as land allocation procedures favor rich and politically influential persons, and disadvantaged populations, especially low-income residents and women, are systematically disadvantaged. Social inequality and

urban informality are perpetuated by disparities in land access and decision-making based on gender. In addition, the absence of transparency, ineffective oversight systems, and ineffective grievance-handling systems have undermined people's confidence in land governance institutions. Institutional and socio-economic factors, such as overlapping mandates, inter-departmental coordination, insufficient human capacity, and the lack of integrated digital systems, further worsen these governance gaps. Accountability and institutional independence are compromised by political interference in land allocation decisions.

Nevertheless, the research reveals some obvious areas for improvement: technological innovations (digitised land records, GIS-based mapping, and online platforms) can make the situation much more transparent and efficient. Increasing institutional capacity by engaging in continuous training, encouraging participatory governance, and implementing effective monitoring systems is the way forward. Conclusively, good governance in urban land management in Adama is not only an administrative reform but also a strategic necessity to ensure sustainable urban development in Ethiopia, with equitable resource distribution, public trust, and inclusive growth.

5.2 Recommendations

This study offers the following recommendations to improve governance in Adama's urban land management system. To enhance institutional capacity and coordination, the first step should be effective institutional reforms, such as establishing a Land Governance Coordination Unit (LGCU) and regularly training staff to improve competence and ethical standards. It should also be institutionalized through the introduction of a digital land information management system to make ownership, valuation, and lease data publicly available. Frequent open audits and ICT integration would ensure accountability. The public's involvement should be enhanced through inclusive mechanisms, such as community advisory committees, to ensure citizens' voices influence land policy and planning.

Additionally, equity and gender inclusion should be promoted by providing special programs for women and people experiencing poverty to ensure equality and social unity. The municipality needs to adopt technological modernization, such as an integrated Land Information System (LIS) and automated administrative procedures, to enhance efficiency and accountability. It would be more effective to have an Independent Land Oversight Committee (ILOC) and internal monitoring mechanisms to assess performance and enforce integrity. The reinforcement of anti-corruption strategies should be achieved in cooperation with the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC), ethics training, and whistleblower protection. Capacity building and alignment of policies with national frameworks can be further facilitated by partnering with universities, NGOs, and development agencies. In addition, public education should be implemented to promote civic responsibility and awareness of land rights, enabling citizens to demand transparency, resist corruption, and participate in governance.

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