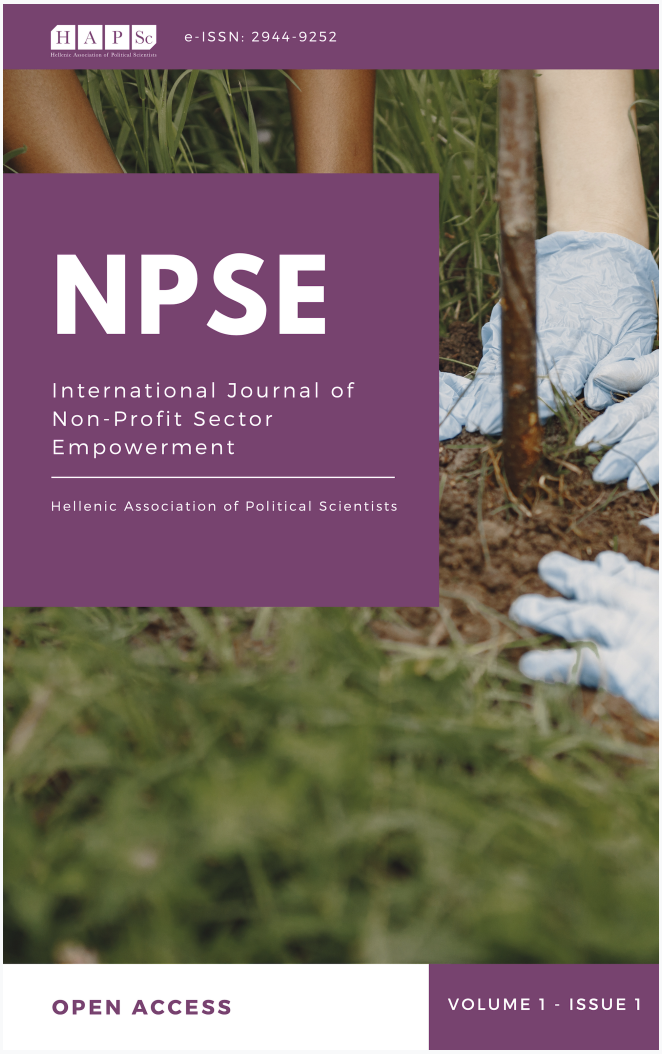
ePublishing

ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΤΕΚΜΗΡΙΩΣΗΣ
EKT NATIONAL DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

International Journal of Non-Profit Sector Empowerment

Vol 1, No 1 (2022)

International Journal of Non-Profit Sector Empowerment



Combating Corruption during Covid-19 in Bangladesh: The Role of Community-Based Organizations

Nurul Sakib, Faria Ahmed

doi: 10.12681/npse.31116

Copyright © 2022, Nurul Sakib, Faria Ahmed

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0.

https://epublishing.ekt.gr | **e-Publisher:** EKT | **Downloaded at:** 21/02/2026 00:42:41

International Journal of Non-Profit Sector Empowerment
Volume 1, Issue 1 (2022)
© The Author(s), CC-BY 4.0
ISSN: 5786-2432, e-ISSN: 7344-9856
https://doi.org/10.12681/npse.31116

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Combating Corruption during Covid-19 in Bangladesh: The Role of Community-Based Organizations

Nurul Huda Sakib
Department of Government & Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.

Faria Ahmed
Bangladesh University of Professionals, Bangladesh.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed significant challenges for effective governance worldwide. There is a significant question raised about the distribution of aid and relief for lower-income groups. In many countries, both government and non-government organizations, as well as locally elected bodies, were directly and indirectly involved in widespread corruption. In Bangladesh, various types of community mobilisation were witnessed amid the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent corruption. Based on empirical evidence, this paper argues that the COVID-19 crisis brought about a re-emergence in the sense of community at a local level and worked as an alternative governance mechanism. It operated using different mechanisms and worked alongside the government to ensure accountability. We discovered that community bonding assisted in mitigating the crisis in government relief and health equipment distribution through a variety of mechanisms, such as informing government officials to identify corrupt syndicates, raising voice against corrupt practises against authorities, raising awareness on social media, and so on. It also indicates that the role of community-based organisations in resisting and preventing corruption will reflect the global phenomenon of corruption in many developing countries and will help to understand to what extent community-based organisations are effective in resisting corruption. Finally, we also found the flipside of community-based organization, meaning that corruption was conducted during COVID-19 in the name of community activism, which indicates the challenges of community activism in Bangladesh.

Keywords: CBO, Corruption, Covid-19, Bangladesh, Horizontal Accountability

Introduction

Over the past few years, corruption has appeared as one of the most overriding issues in the social, economic, and political domains of contemporary Bangladesh. Corruption, at all levels of government and outside of government, has created a slew of issues for the developing world and its vast impoverished population, who bear the brunt of this phenomenon. Corruption is considered one of the hindrances to the eradication of poverty, achieving development, and good governance in the country.

Sakib, N. H., & Ahmed, F. (2022). Combating Corruption during Covid-19 in Bangladesh: The Role of Community-Based Organizations. *International Journal of Non-Profit Sector Empowerment, 1*(1), e31116. https://doi.org/10.12681/npse.31116

A similar trend has been seen during the COVID-19 period. The COVID-19 outbreak exposed the uncertainty in the health sector as the health department suffers from mismanagement, inefficiency, and corruption in providing health services, medical equipment purchases, etc. The government made a lot of benevolent effort to respond to the crisis, but due to the corrupt system, these efforts remained uncertain and Bangladesh fell into a deeper crisis trying to manage COVID-19. Apart from the corruption in the health sector, a significant number of corruption cases were found in government relief distribution, with both elected members and civil government servants involved. Significant questions about its transparency were raised in both the health sector and social welfare programmes. However, there were some countermeasures from the community perspective to prevent corruption where citizens became actively involved to ensure governance at the bottom level. Especially, in the case of relief distribution, many started virtual whistleblowing against its bad governance, which has been the key issue from the community perspective. The Community Based Organizations (CBOs) protested on social media and by responding to news broadcasts in the media, demanding accountability for the crimes and establishing a vertical accountability chain. This paper will discuss these issues in detail.

The study used interpretive and qualitative methodologies, such as content analysis. Finding patterns in recorded communication allowed for the identification of interpretive interpretations from content analysis that focused on language, signs, and meanings from the perspective of the media's (print media, social media, and so on) portrayal of the social occurrence. We sought data verification and reliability by confirming identical findings in a comparable context in a wide range of texts, including books, newspapers, web content, and social media, in order to triangulate the interpretative method. For this study's research, the subjective perspective used in the interpretative approach is media representation. Finally, we conducted an analysis using the "sense-making" method (Wibeck & Linnér, 2021).

Anti-corruption and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) during COVID-19: A Global Scenario

During the coronavirus outbreak, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp saw a significant rise in messaging, as well as a 100% increase in video calls in some areas (HEC Paris, 2020; Meta, 2020; Protocol, 2020). Hundreds of social media groups have sprung up as a result of this bad governance to voice their opposition against it (Protocol, 2020). Many of them kept an eye on the virus's progress in their area, while others organise neighbourhood aid (Meta, 2020). Civil society members were more

likely to communicate with their like-minded people over social media to pass out information in a crisis situation. However, certain systems are dedicated to crowdsourced monitoring, have a track record of doing so, and might be used for accountability purposes (Meta, 2020; Protocol, 2020). The Ushahidi (witness) mapping tool, for example, was created to document the escalating violence in Kenya following the disputed presidential election results of 2007 (Rotich, 2017). Since then, the crowdsourcing tool has been used to map needs during and after disasters, report harassment and abuse, and simply highlight problems in a community (U4, 2020). The platform has inspired a host of comparable concepts that have proven effective for civil society reporting since its inception more than a decade ago. Since the COVID-19 epidemic, more than 200 crowdsourced maps have been launched on the Ushahidi website (U4, 2020). Frontline PPE, based in the United Kingdom, provides information on the availability of personal protective equipment (GOV.UK, 2020). Frena La Curva, a Spanish newspaper, promotes appeals for assistance as well as offers to gather food or medicine (Castellanos, 2021). The maps in Kenya, Sudan, and Brazil show the virus's spread as well as the many types of help and services available (OECD, 2020). These are unannounced moves made in response to the current situation. There is also the chance to use the crowdsourcing platform in a more organised way. Many countries have used a version of the Ushahidi platform called Uchaguzi (election) that was made just for them to monitor elections with help from the public (U4, 2020). The idea includes a complete set of rules that cover the whole process, from planning the event and training the people who will be there to security measures and election-related issues for public awareness (U4, 2020). The Uchaguzi method lets you figure out how good a crowd is at keeping an eye on things and how to confirm and act on that information (Rotich, 2017). In other situations, civil society could be included in plans for how donors will help during the current crisis to make sure the help is working. The quality of these interventions would be much better if they came with recommendations and pre-set configurations (U4, 2020).

The OECD's Open Government Data (OGD) guidelines encourage the public to report against corruption or mismanagement via public websites (U4, 2020). Because governments purchase medical equipment and personal protective equipment on a large scale, the transparency of public tenders and the verification of business information on bidders are critical in exposing and preventing corruption in procurement (U4, 2020). Tenders and bids are published on the open platform ProZorro, an e-procurement system developed in Ukraine as a result of a partnership between business, government, and civil society (Depo, 2021). Civil society and interested parties monitor the tenders and bids, and

their findings are published on the Dozorro website (Open Government Partnership, 2021). The concept has become a model for open procurement since it allows for the close monitoring of government purchases (Nestulia, 2020). Civil society's role in long-term anti-corruption and accountability programs, as well as how such instruments should be built, is beginning to emerge (Nestulia, 2020). Another option is to use a mix of technology and people who want to help. In the case study of a Mexican project, GovLab, an action research centre, says that mixing technology and people could be done. The platform for citizen complaints is now part of government services in Mexico. It shows the steps in the process, from filing a complaint to solving the problem (U4, 2020). A brief sketch of the global context of citizen engagement shows that the number of instruments for people's participation in anti-corruption helps to reduce the volume of corruption even if there are challenges.

Corruption in Bangladesh during COVID-19

Corruption during COVID-19 was severe at all levels, including the health sector. Systematic corruption has consistently hampered health services in Bangladesh. When the pandemic forced the government of Bangladesh to spend more money on public health, it didn't work out as well as it should have as there were multiple entities who were given crucial sanctions to do corona tests that ended up pocketing profits from illegitimate tests (Iftekharuzzaman, 2020). Experts think that the government's inability to communicate the right messages to people and get them to help stop the spread of a new coronavirus was because the Ministry of Health and the Directorate-General of Health Services were not working as well as they should as their speeches were rhetoric and coronavirus tests conducted by them were initially questionable, leading to distrust among the public (Maswood, 2020). There was also a lot of corruption in the World Bank-funded COVID-19 project, which was supposed to help people in need (Maswood, 2020). Manufacturers also delivered substandard goods, while many only made money by selling counterfeit goods (Iftekharuzzaman, 2020).

Following the outbreak, people lost faith in the country's health care system, which made them turn away from the medical care system (Maswood, 2020). It was only on September 1, 2020 that the ban on public movement was lifted by the government. The risks of COVID-19 were still present. Bangladesh is also one of the countries with the fewest COVID-19 tests. The death rate for all cases is now 1.38 percent, which is less than the global rate of about 3.3% (Moral, 2020).

According to the World Bank, some of the huge emergency spending has been done without the usual checks and balances (The Financial Express, 2020). The World Bank wants governments to be clear about what they are doing, to follow the law, deal with violations, and fix problems. Their Global Report states that combining old and new ways of dealing with corruption can be very beneficial. This includes things like GovTech and e-Procurement (The Financial Express, 2020). People in Bangladesh have a lot of questions about the integrity of the healthcare system, as the media content gathered. From Al Zaman (2020, p. 1358), we find that:

> *The proposed $20.70 million was ten times the actual cost, and the products were inferior. Website development cost $1.18 million, up from $9,438. The software budget was raised from 0.17 million to 6.49 million. Protective eye google's proposed price was USD 59 per piece; the market price was USD 12. The market price was much greater than $1.36 million. Although the market price was less than $23, the proposed investment was $52. 500 doctors' monthly food and lodging initial budget may have been far lower than the planned $23.6 billion. Regent Hospital was swindled. 6,300 of 10,500 Covid-19 tests were scammed. Scammer: JKG HealthCare JKG Health Care developed 44 sample-collection stations with Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) approval. Daily samples totalled 500. By selling fake test results, they made $900,000.*

Examples of Ready-Made Garments (RMG) industry elites pocketing stimulus funds intended for employees include medical kit procurement corruption and local political leaders politicising relief distribution. There have been problems with how lockdowns, tests, and relief operations are run, such as bribery, fraud, violence, and corruption. Elected representatives such as Upazilla Chairman or Union Chairman were involved in relief distribution, showing nepotism in in-cash assistance during the lockdown. Public officials were involved in corruption in relief distribution or public procurement. The administration announced in late April 2020 that 35 million individuals had received food aid and another 15 million would receive cash transfers (Lata, 2020). On May 14, 2020, mobile financial services like BKash, Rocket, Nagad, and SureCash distributed $30 to five million low-income families (Lata, 2020). In Bangladesh, this money went to the country's "floating population," which includes van and rickshaw drivers as well as day labourers and dockworkers (Lata, 2020). It also went to people who work in retail and small enterprises, as well as people who sold street food and building materials (Lata, 2020). With the support of local governments and elected officials, the national government selected these recipients. However, the selection procedure was opaque, and some middle-class

supporters of the ruling political party received payments as a result (Asjad, 2020; Lata, 2020). Second, the distribution of various stimulus packages, including the Open Market Sale (OMS) program, reaped the benefits of food and cash assistance provided by the state, although multiple government agencies involved in these relief efforts did not work together effectively. Thus, both political and bureaucratic parties were involved in a corruption syndicate. Following revelations in the media, *24 local Awami League lawmakers and public officials were charged with corruption for allegedly diverting COVID-19 relief supplies intended for low-income neighbourhoods* (Freedom House, 2021; US Department of State, 2020).

A study by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) shows that favouritism and nepotism kept aid from getting to large parts of the population. Local governments often delivered fewer emergency materials than needed. The procedure of disbursing aid was not transparent or accountable. *"We are impoverished folks,"* said one BIGD study participant, "*We would have said so if we had felt any alleviation. Most of the relief in our names went to the chairman and his friends*" (BIGD, 2021, p. 122). According to the BIGD poll, 68% of respondents thought the relief distribution procedure was corrupt, and 11% said it was very corrupt (BIGD, 2021).

Vertical Accountability in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a good track record of working together to deal with disasters (Sakib & Rahman, 2020). Successful community efforts to deal with natural disasters like cyclones and floods have gotten more people to work together. In fact, civic engagement is one of the country's strengths. People across the country think that community activism is making a big difference in the fight against the pandemic. During a disaster, the gap between what people need and what the government does can often lead to mistrust, especially in places where people don't get along well with each other (Islam et al., 2021). Strong social networks and involvement in the community are important. People can link to different types and sources of resources, get help from the crowd, and share important information when they have this kind of social capital (Islam et al., 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has become a way to get information out to the public. People in Bangladesh also used social media and the internet to convey corruptive activities spontaneously during the pandemic. More people in Bangladesh use the internet and social media, which helps each other learn about corruption and take action against it. Community-based organisations (CBOs) have created broader engagement through whistleblowing by using social media. Social media helped raise awareness and spread news of

corruption to places where it would otherwise have gone unnoticed. It created a grapevine of communication and massive protests during lockdown by (a) reading and writing essays on social media as posts on Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube (b) seeing photos and flyers on social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. (c) viewing videos on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube (Islam et al., 2012). Information could easily be verified on social media by other social media users, and the re-share of verified information created massive outrage. Whistleblowing on social media during the pandemic was inexpensive as the lockdown made it the hub for information sharing.

Bangladesh's Community Based Organisations (CBOs) Structure and Engagement Procedures during the Covid-19 Crisis

Bangladesh's government has taken a number of steps to strengthen local and urban-local governance. Relief beneficiaries are chosen via CBOs according to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief's (MoDMR) guidelines. The guidelines also specify the member selection categories. The organisation branches into a huge hierarchy that is designed to stretch all the way down to the village level. Therefore, it requires an immense number of representatives as well as regulatory ability. Indeed, even without the ward-level advisory groups, this course of action would require the development of somewhere around 4,977 committees because of the quantity of administrative districts, city corporations, Upazilas, unions, municipalities, and the wards they are divided into. With nine wards in every region, the nation presently has a total of 44,565 wards, implying that almost 515,000 individuals are engaged with the alleviation board order (BIGD, 2021).

The coronavirus humanitarian assistance guidelines require all ward-level committees to operate at least two hotlines. Union and municipal committees were to open five. In addition to the National Committee, ten upazila committees were assigned hotlines. There were "Hotline" campaigns, mobile numbers, and microphone announcements for humanitarian programs. Create a QR code-based card for each recipient using information from their national identity card or birth certificate, as well as their mobile phone. It was also proposed that the help be exchanged for a QR card. The Upazila and Municipality Committees were in charge of entering the recipients' information online.

CBOs' Role in Combating Corruption

The goal of the formal structure of the local and urban-local levels is to ensure the function of CBOs is led by ordinary citizens, which ultimately works as a principal where everyone is accountable.

Although corruption during COVID-19 took place in many sectors, CBOs played a major role in ensuring proper distribution of relief, cash transfer and awareness of corruption in Bangladesh. Even though there are formal structures to ensure local engagement, there is minimal involvement of the people engaged in the process. Rather, we have found people involved in preventing corruption via informal channels or spontaneously. In most cases, individuals from the CBOs are spontaneously involved in corruption prevention. But, in some cases, CBOs worked as a force to tackle corruption. These CBOs adopted various strategies, such as an awareness campaign organised by a number of local and national CBOs to counter corruption, mainly through the use of social media, posted corruption-related news in their social media groups to make people aware and took administrative action. They also formed helpdesks or service desks to provide direct service to poor and vulnerable people to avoid syndicate. The CBOs carried out several types of activities:

First, CBO members provided information to government officials regarding corrupt activities or informed communities about the relief distribution process. Especially in the case of government relief distribution, citizens were active in providing information. They posted corruption news regularly on their group pages to mobilise citizens, which ultimately bound the government to act. According to the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) survey (2021), very few people were informed of the formal relief, cash of BDT 2500 distribution. Most of the relief reached the powerful local government representatives rather than the targeted population under the poverty curve. With 80.9 percent of GR rice and 74.5 percent of BDT 2,500 cash support recipients, it reached the chairman/secretary/UP committee member/guard.General People's continuous whistleblowing on relief distribution brought light to many such instances, such as:

More than 2,800 bags of rice, each carrying 50 kilograms, have been recovered in 20 upazilas (The Daily Star, 2020a). In addition, 30 cases of bottled soybean oil were seized, as were two 50-kilogram sacks of sugar. Deputies from the Rangpur District Bureau of Police, led by deputy commissioner Uttam Proshad, say they detained a man for stockpiling necessities (The Daily Star, 2020a). The arrestee had been selling TCB items at inflated costs to clients, according to the police (The Daily Star, 2020a). Twenty-four people, including ten public representatives, were arrested in connection with the crimes. According to the incidents reported thus far, Open Market Sale (OMS) dealers misappropriated the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) rice (Dhaka Tribune, 2020a; The Daily Star, 2020a; Roy, 2020; Noman, 2020; Asjad, 2020; Riaz, 2020).

According to a CPD report from 2021, one Chattogram community leader (Imam, school teacher) said that "word of mouth" was used to spread information about relief in his area.All this information was spread by family, friends, and neighbours, as well as local powerful people, who played an important part in disseminating the message. Social media was critical in disseminating information in some cases.

Second, CBOs involved indirect resistance against corruption or started new initiatives to prevent corruption. Generally, people caught corrupting elected members while stocking government relief and CBOs assisted government officials to perform efficiently. The government of Bangladesh came forward with relief goods, including staple foods such as rice and oil, to support all the informal workers. But people in the community directly accused local representatives in many ways of giving out this aid in the wrong way.

Third, COVID-19 created more dependency on social media. During the lockdown and social distancing, people have sought refuge in expressing themselves on social media. Social media has become a tool to create awareness among citizens. During the first surge of COVID-19 in April 2020, when the lockdown was making all the informal workers of Bangladesh insecure, they rose in mass disapproval for the misappropriation of relief goods that were meant for them.

"Social media users have been very angry about the theft of rice during the current crisis," says The Daily Star (April 12, 2020a).

There were outbursts on social media and in the news and print media, and thus, anti-corruption efforts were conducted by engaging the citizens. Citizens were able to create awareness among other citizens, which created pressure on the administration to not escalate this corruption any further. Relief goods for poor people were stockpiled by unscrupulous influential political groups at the local level with the involvement of open market sale dealers (Dhaka Tribune, 2020b). Also, a Rajshahi legislator described a community gathering and a Facebook page called "Covid-19, Humanitarian Relief," which the district office had approved as part of the relief programme campaign. There was also a separate advocacy website called "Bangladesh Directory" in Khulna (CPD, 2021).

In recent years, the World Bank's anti-corruption efforts have been complemented by an emphasis on "vertical" accountability to citizens through institutions such as the media and civil society

(Stapenhurst, Johnston & Pelizzo, 2006). In Bangladesh, amid COVID-19, there was a massive outburst on social media and mass media to complement this vertical accountability. From Hossain (2020), we surmise:

> *For example, during the Corona disaster, 50 people's representatives were suspended for embezzling rice from the needy. They are all 39 members of the ruling Awami League. Except for five, no party action was taken. In addition to the UP chairmen, 18 MPs have been ousted. At least 44 metric tons of rice have been stolen or embezzled, of which 18 tons were stolen from trucks in Zakiganj, Sylhet, and later some were looted, according to Awami League praesidium member and Agriculture Minister, Mr. Abdur Razzak. Furthermore, dealers have sold rice at higher prices. Two hundred and five sacks of rice were seized in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Many of those involved are Awami League leaders. The Chairman of Manson UP No. 8, Muktagachha, Mymensingh was sacked in connection with this. Moreover, Nazrul Islam Khan, a rice dealer, was sentenced to one month in jail for underpaying Tk 10 per kg of rice. Chairman BM Nasir Uddin and UP members Mofazzal Bepari and Shamim Beparia were fired.*

Therefore, awareness among citizens through social media and mass media has complemented vertical accountability and helped to take small actions of any kind, as stated in the above cases.

The Other Side: Corruption in the Name of CBOs

During the COVID-19 crisis, CBOs not only triggered anti-corruption activities but also some members of the community misused and took the opportunity to make a profit in the name of community activism. There are a number of cases of community initiatives that turned into misuses of noble causes. In the name of community initiatives, fake tests were generated, generating falsified reports and abuse of government money. Among the many cases, the Regent Hospital and JKG Healthcare controversies are discussed here to show a major obstacle to community initiatives.

Case 1: Regent Hospital

The Regent Hospital case was a perfect example of corruption using community involvement. Following an order from the health secretary, a contract was made with the Regent with the goal of saving people's lives. Md. Shahed, the owner of Regent Hospital, misused the crisis by using vulnerable people and making them take fake tests. Following an order from the health secretary, a contract was made with the Regent with the goal of saving people's lives. At the signing, both the

health minister and the health secretary were present. Regent Hospital was allowed to do 50 coronavirus tests per day. But Regent Hospital charged for the tests. The hospital agreed to treat COVID-19 patients free of charge, yet they charged the patients and the service for their treatment. They dumped samples from people's homes into hospital bins and buckets (The Business Insider, 2020). The clinical workers who gathered the samples made presumptions about whether they had a fever or different side effects. Then they made counterfeit affirmations in light of side effects. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) sealed Regent Hospital's head office in the capital, as well as two subsidiaries in Uttara and Mirpur. A RAB intelligence assessment claims Regent Hospital took samples from at least 10,000 people. Just 4,200 of them received genuine Covid-19 test authentications; the rest were phony (The Business Insider, 2020). They were blamed for taking government assets by gathering and treating COVID-19 tests without a permit. The blamed party purportedly mishandled authority by changing over the shutdown Regent Hospital into a Covid-19 medical clinic without recharging its permit. They took TK 1.37 crore by creating Covid-19 patient testing tests at the state-claimed National Institutes of Preventive and Social Medicine (The Business Insider, 2020). They were also blamed for taking TK 1.96 crore each month from specialists, attendants, and other clinic representatives. The Regent Hospital made somewhere around TK3.5 crore, the RAB knowledge chief says (The Business Insider, 2020).

Case 2: JKG Healthcare

Another dark example of misusing public resources was the case of JKG Healthcare, where the owner of Arif Chowdhury and Dr. Sabrina misused crisis by using vulnerable people to make money (Al-Zaman, 2020). JKG took advantage of the coronavirus test results being delayed. Those seeking tests experienced long wait times, with many being forced to wait in enormous lines, often overnight. Without testing COVID-19, they created a slew of phoney reports without conducting test (Sadia & Rahaman, 2022). Accused Arif Chowdhury and Dr. Sabrina from JKG admitted to charging patients for COVID-19 treatments and supplying bogus certificates confirming they had not contracted the coronavirus, despite promising the government that they would do it for free. According to the police, they charged Tk 5,000 for each sample collection and Tk 7,000 to 8,000 for each sample from expatriates (Bdnews24.com, 2020a). JKG Healthcare Chairman, Dr. Sabrina Arif Chowdhury, and seven other people were arrested soon after the incident was leaked (Paul et al., 2022). Later they were given 11 years in prison each by a Dhaka court for producing phony Covid-19 test reports (The Business Standard, 2022; The Daily Star, 2022).

Community Organizing against the Regent and JKG Scam

However, in both cases, anti-Covid-19 certificate scam protests took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where community and civil society members took part and raised their voices against such corruption. Bangladesh's reputation was tainted by the JKG Health Care and Regent Hospital scams (Rabbi, 2020). In front of the National Press Club, protesters formed a human chain (Rabbi, 2020). Corruption exacerbates the situation in the fight against the invisible enemy. Not just in Bangladesh but in other countries also, we have seen instances such as a nurse being arrested in Italy on January 15, 2022, for distributing fraudulent Covid jabs (Tondo, 2022). Hundreds of health professionals have been charged with giving fraudulent vaccines in recent months, according to the Guardian (Grierson, 2021). In Bangladesh, the RAB arrested Regent Hospital Chairman Mohammad Shahed Karim for distributing forged COVID-19 certificates. The media and law enforcement exposed the N-95 mask scam, the COVID test forgery, and other financial crimes. Dr. Abul Kalam Azad had to leave his job as Director General of Health Services (DGHS) because he was accused of being incompetent and doing things wrong several times (Rabbi, 2020).

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has been investigating corruption and irregularities in the health sector since March 2020 (Foyez, 2021). Despite strong criticism from both the ruling Awami League and the opposition, the Anti-Corruption Commission has been slow to act (Foyez, 2021). An audit of the health ministry found corruption and irregularities in both public and private hospitals during the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak. The panel compiled a list of over 100 people in July 2020 who were implicated in this corruption, including eight senior health ministry officials, 20 government physicians, and 70 mid-level health agency employees (Foyez, 2021). Even so, the commission has only filed two cases against Abdul Malek, a driver who was fired from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), and his wife (Dhaka Tribune, 2021e).

Forgery of COVID-19 test reports at Shahabuddin Medical College Hospital (SMCH) and other operations against deceit and malicious health businesses were also discovered by Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) (Rahman, 2021). The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), in particular, played a crucial role in combating corruption during the COVID-19 crisis (Rahman, 2021). Community organizing, CBOs and media coverage kept an eye on the activities.

Discussion and Conclusion

The government of Bangladesh was alarmed by the false COVID-19 test result certificates provided by the private Regent Hospital and JKG Healthcare in Dhaka during the epidemic that caused a global health disaster (Mainuddin, 2021). In this study we found that the government assistance is required to succeed in anti-corruption activities by community-based organisations due to help from the administration to curb corruptive activities as shown in our case studies of JKG-Regent hospital. On the contrary, there have been instances of money embezzlement in the guise of community-based organisations (Mostafa, 2022), such as the case study of a bureaucrat who, in the guise of taking direct action for the poor, lobbied for money for the needy during COVID-19 but was unable to prove where the money was delivered when questioned (Mostafa, 2022). The bureaucrat was active on Facebook accounts for fundraising drives that included not only locals but even expatriates. If not for the citizens who rose against this, which in turn made the government aware of it and take action against it, Citizens have a dual duty to perform. The National Integrity Strategy (NIS) or horizontal accountability are insufficient to have a wider impact. There has been progress with the use of both vertical and horizontal accountability. In research titled "Covid19 Pandemic and Media Performance in Bangladesh", the majority of the respondents criticize the health ministry for not doing enough to spread information (Paul et al., 2022). The media has a few drawbacks for disseminating bogus news, which causes citizens to have less faith in their initiatives (Paul et al., 2022). That is why the rise of social media has been a significant step toward becoming a principal role player for the action of community-based organisations (CBOs). It also depends on the regime. Sakib (2020) found that grassroots anti-corruption efforts in Bangladesh impacted accountability and transparency in government. Sakib and Rahman (2020) demonstrated the importance of spontaneous participation in preventing corruption. Social media has increased knowledge and unity among COVID-19, allowing them to form anti-corruption movements. The media's participation has created avenues for communication between government officials and citizens, allowing community-based organisations to play a role in maintaining accountability. In this study, we presented several issues in the context of COVID-19. One occurred during the provision of humanitarian goods to the needy as a Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), which was hoarded by local political elites, and another occurred when JKG Health Care and Regent Hospital faked Covid-19 reports. In both cases, the public protested on social media and by responding to news broadcasts in the media, demanding accountability for the crimes and establishing a vertical accountability chain. Because horizontal accountability alone would not have achieved justice, vertical accountability was able to supplement it. In the end, both incidents of corruption

revealed that the corruption was political and administrative in nature. However, the government and administration were kept in check owing to public opinion and the mass media.

In Bangladesh, the government's involvement in the healthcare industry has decreased over time as it has mostly been privatized. As a result of reduced state spending, the bulk of the population sought private health care services on their own dime. Bangladesh's economic reforms have made it easier for a small group of elites to take over the country's political and economic institutions as well as the wealthy parts of the population (Sadia & Rahaman, 2022). Above and beyond, the Covid-19 pandemic has posed enormous obstacles for efficient governance around the world. The provision of aid and relief for low-income populations has been a major point of contention. Governments, non-governmental organizations, and locally elected groups were all involved in corruption, both directly and indirectly, in a number of countries. There are, nevertheless, some attempts in place to combat corruption. Various methods of community mobilisation were seen in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic to combat corruption by raising their voices. The COVID-19 crisis fostered a feeling of community at a local level and served as an alternative government to avoid corruption in a variety of ways. Alternative governance emerged through various methods and collaborated with the government to achieve accountability. We found that community bonding contributed to alleviating the government assistance and health care equipment distribution issues through a variety of ways, including warning government officials about corrupt syndicates, raising awareness about corrupt practises against authority, and so on. The nature of community involvement in the fight against corruption demonstrates that good governance and crisis management require citizen engagement. It also suggests that the role of community-based organisations in resisting and preventing corruption will reflect the global phenomenon of corruption in many developing countries in a holistic way, allowing researchers to better understand how effective community-based organisations are at combating corruption.

References

Al-Zaman M. S. (2020). Healthcare Crisis in Bangladesh during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The American journal of tropical medicine and hygiene, 103(4), 1357–1359. https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.20-0826

Asjad, T. (2020). Unacceptable irregularities in relief operation. The Financial Express. from

Bdnews24.com (2020a). JKG Chief Executive Ariful, four others arrested over Covid-19 testing scandal. bdnews24.com, [online] Available at: <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2020/06/24/jkg-chief-executive-ariful-four-others-arrested-over-covid-19-testing-scandal> [Accessed 15 April 2022].

Bdnews24.com (2020b). ACC Commentary: Regent 'the way' Covid Hospital was. from https://bangla.bdnews24.com/bangladesh/article1804279.bdnews.

BIGD & ARC. (2021). State of Governance in Bangladesh 2020–2021: Governing COVID19 in Bangladesh: Realities and Reflections to Build Forward Better. State of Governance report series.

CPD. (2021). Coping with Covid-19 in Bangladesh – Assessment of Relief Delivery, Retrieved from: https://localizingsdg.cpd.org.bd/coping-with-covid-19-in-bangladesh-assessment-of-relief-delivery/?fbclid=IwAR2pL_az0vcJodEZzRIjtdIEZXzQHcGNZNuY0WQmlyHvb-r0MlJ-Ct_yII0

Depo, B. (2021). E-Procurement Lessons from Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova [Ebook]. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/Depo%2520-%2520e-procurement.pdf.

Dhaka Tribune. (2020a). TIB: Covid-19 exposed, created opportunities for corruption. from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/corruption/2020/11/10/tib-covid-19-exposed-created-opportunities-for-corruption.

Dhaka Tribune. (2020b). Coronavirus: Relief Theft Goes on Across the Country. from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2020/04/19/coronavirus-relief-theft-goes-on-across-the-country?fbclid=IwAR2DtJeoO9l4Qjs3Uh03cvwhqvkWsTvW-NOpGGQ5p1dkOKyRhi-evLlj2Kw

Dhaka Tribune. (2020c). Regent Hospital scam: Former DGHS chief Azad surrenders, gets bail till Nov 2. from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/court/2021/10/07/regent-hospital-scam-former-dghs-chief-azad-granted-bail?fbclid=IwAR0bYqnnPbkI_SeOmsmUUBURixqIfj9NtT4NlEvVNkKP0LykV3PyGJ3IkAo

Dhaka Tribune. (2021d). Regent, JKG scams have tarnished Bangladesh's image. Retrieved 4 November 2021, from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2020/07/13/regent-jkg-scams-have-tarnished-bangladesh-s-image.

Dhaka Tribune. (2021e). ACC approves charges against DGHS driver, his wife. Dhaka Tribune. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/09/21/acc-approves-charges-against-dghs-driver-his-wife.

Foyez, A. (2021). Corruption in Bangladesh health sector on due to poor action. New Age | The Most Popular Outspoken English Daily in Bangladesh. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.newagebd.net/article/145287/corruption-in-bangladesh-health-sector-on-due-to-poor-action.

Freedom House. (2021). Freedom in the World 2021: Bangladesh.

GOV.UK. (2020). PPE portal: how to order Covid-19 personal protective equipment (PPE). GOV.UK. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ppe-portal-how-to-order-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment.

GovLab and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). (2018). Smarter crowdsourcing for anti-corruption: A handbook of innovative legal, technical, and policy proposals and a guide to their implementation

Grierson, J. (2022). Fake Covid vaccine and test certificate market is growing, researchers say. the Guardian. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/16/fake-covid-vaccine-and-test-certificate-market-is-growing-researchers-say.

Hassan, M., Hossain, N., Islam, S., Hoque, R., Khan, I., Salina Aziz, S., ... & Matin, I. (2021). Governing Covid-19 in Bangladesh: Realities and Reflections to Build Forward Better. BRAC Institute of Governance and Development. Retrieved from https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/17254

HEC Paris. (2020). What is the Role of Social Media During the Covid-19 Crisis?. HEC Paris. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.hec.edu/en/knowledge/instants/what-role-social-media-during-covid-19-crisis-0.

Hossain, A. (2020). ত্রাণ চুরি: বরখাস্তেই সীমাবদ্ধ, জনপ্রতিনিধিদের ব্যাপারে দল নীরব. Prothom Alo.

Iftekharuzzaman. (2020). Political contents of corruption and anti-corruption in Bangladesh. The Daily Star. from https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/political-contents-corruption-and-anti-corruption-bangladesh-1960161.

Islam, M., Islam, M., Ahmed, F., & Rumana, A. (2021). Creative social media use for Covid-19 prevention in Bangladesh: a structural equation modeling approach. Social Network Analysis And Mining, 11(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-021-00744-0

Lata, L. (2020). Corruption complicates Bangladesh's fight against Covid-19 | East Asia Forum. East Asia Forum.

Mainuddin, R. (2021). Bangladesh healthcare corruption and workforce vulnerability amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Analele Universităţii Din Bucureşti. Seria Ştiinţe Politice, (2), 225-243. Retrieved 4 October 2022, from https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1047469&fbclid=IwAR2dmcLKTX9oX6a7FXazpARgDuH6M9Ee54fxyd8bAZMgzDoGBDtsAASxe2A.

Maswood, M. (2020). Covid-19 exposes deep-rooted corruption in Bangladesh health sector in six months. New Age. from https://www.newagebd.net/article/115657/covid-19-exposes-deep-rooted-corruption-in-bangladesh-health-sector-in-six-months.

Meta. (2020). Keeping Our Services Stable and Reliable During the Covid-19 Outbreak | Meta. Meta. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://about.fb.com/news/2020/03/keeping-our-apps-stable-during-covid-19/.

Moral, S. (2020). Corruption, weak leadership impede fight against coronavirus. Prothom Alo. from https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/corruption-weak-leadership-impede-fight-against-coronavirus

Nestulia, V. (2020). How do you build a network of citizen corruption fighters? Ask Ukraine's revolutionaries - Open Contracting Partnership. Open Contracting Partnership. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.open-contracting.org/2020/09/14/dozorro-a-network-of-citizen-corruption-fighters/.

Noman, M. (2020). Govt cracks down on corruption in relief programme. The Business Insider. from https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/govt-cracks-down-corruption-relief-programme-68410.

OECD. (2020). The territorial impact of Covid-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government. OECD. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/.

Open Government Partnership. (2021). Through The Power of the People: Empowering Citizen Watchdogs - OpenStories. OpenStories. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.ogpstories.org/through-the-power-of-the-people-empowering-citizen-watchdogs/.

Paul, J., Tanny, T., & Akter, S. (2022). Covid19 Pandemic and Media Performance in Bangladesh. International Journal of Social Science Research and Review, 5(8), 300-315. https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v5i8.417

Protocol. (2020). Inside WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok, a race to build Covid-19 tools. Protocol. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.protocol.com/coronavirus-instagram-tiktok-whatsapp-response.

Rabbi, A. (2021). Regent Hospital scam: Shahed a listed fraudster, absconding for four days. Dhaka Tribune. Retrieved 4 November 2021, from https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/07/11/regent-hospital-scam-shahed-a-listed-fraudster-absconding-for-four-days

Rahman, S. (2021). How did Bangladesh handle the Covid scams?. How did Bangladesh handle the Covid scams? | theindependentbd.com. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://m.theindependentbd.com/post/272418.

Riaz, A. (2020). Bangladesh's Covid-19 stimulus: Leaving the most vulnerable behind. Atlantic Council. from https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/bangladeshs-covid-19-stimulus-leaving-the-most-vulnerable-behind/.

Rotich, J. (2017). Ushahidi: Empowering Citizens through Crowdsourcing and Digital Data Collection. Openedition Journals, (Special Issue 16). Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/4316.

Roy, A. (2020). A web of corruption surrounding relief materials. Dhaka Tribune. from https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2020/04/15/a-web-of-corruption-surrounding-relief-materials.

Sakib, N. (2020). Community organizing in anti-corruption initiatives through spontaneous participation: Bangladesh perspective. Community Development Journal. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsaa027

Sakib, N., & Rahman, S. (2020). Local solutions for local Covid-19 problems: Community activism in Bangladesh. [Blog] London School of Economics (LSE), Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2020/05/20/local-solutions-for-local-covid-19-problems-community-activism-in-bangladesh/>.

Stapenhurst, R., Johnston, N., & Pelizzo, R. (2006). The role of parliament in curbing corruption. World Bank.

The Business Insider. (2020). Two Regent Hospital branches shut over Covid-19 testing scam. The Business Insider. Retrieved 15 April 2022, from https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/rab-seals-regents-headquarters-hospitals-103054

The Business Insider. (2022). Fake Covid reports: Dr Sabrina, 7 JKG Healthcare staff jailed for 11 years each. The Business Standard. Retrieved 4 October 2022, from https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/court/fake-covid-reports-dr-sabrina-7-others-jkg-jailed-11-years-each-460850.

The Daily Star. (2020a). Relief rice theft amid raging Covid-19 crisis. from https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/relief-rice-theft-amid-raging-covid-19-crisis-1892002.

The Daily Star. (2022). Fake Covid-19 certificates: JKG Health Care Chairman Dr Sabrina arrested. The Daily Star. Retrieved 4 October 2022, from https://www.thedailystar.net/fake-covid-19-certificates-jkg-health-care-chairman-dr-sabrina-arrested-1929117.

The Financial Express. (2020). World Bank sees curbing corruption as more important during pandemic. from https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/global/world-bank-sees-curbing-corruption-as-more-important-during-pandemic-1600935688.

Tondo, L. (2022). Italian nurse accused of giving fake Covid jabs to anti-vaxxers arrested. the Guardian. Retrieved 20 April 2022, from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/16/italian-nurse-accused-of-giving-fake-covid-jabs-to-anti-vaxxers.

U4. (2020). Supporting civil society during the Covid-19 pandemic. [online] pp.11-13. Available at: https://www.u4.no/publications/supporting-civil-society-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf.

US Department of State. (2020). 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bangladesh.

Wibeck, V., & Linnér, B.-O. (2021). Sense-making Analysis: A Framework for Multi-Strategy and Cross-Country Research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 20, 160940692199890–. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406921998907