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Reliable Data for Sustainable Development: A Case of Waqf Statistics in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT
This article reviews the role of generating reliable data focusing on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to measure the success of sustainable development in Bangladesh. In this age of rapidly changing world, the current, reliable, timely and trusted data is considered crucial in formulating evidence-based policy making. The covid-19 pandemic has shown us how daily confirmed cases, death and recovery data and their demographic (i.e., age and sex) and district-wise distribution are essential for formulating policies to address the pandemic-induced economic crisis. Despite this importance, data is not very reliable in Bangladesh. One major reason is that the data is not updated regularly. In this case, we can refer to the 1986 Waqf Census Report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The census data reveals that Waqf has played a significant socioeconomic role in Bangladesh by financing human capital development. However, since this census has not been updated in the last 35 years, there is no comprehensive study on Waqf properties and the full potential of waqf in socioeconomic development has not been realized. We recommend the BBS to take the initiative to update the waqf data to monitor and ensure the accountability of the waqf estate in Bangladesh.

KEYWORDS
SDGs; Sustainable Development; Data reliability; Waqf Estates; BBS

1.0 Introduction

The theme of the third World Statistics Day, celebrated around the globe on 20 October 2020, "Connecting the world with data we can trust", clearly gives importance on the necessity of current, reliable, timely and trusted data to understand the changing world. Inviting governments to celebrate World

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Statistics Day-2020, António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, pointed out that "the unprecedented Coronavirus pandemic has elevated the importance of data and statistics, and demonstrated how linking data to geospatial information can help us to track the dynamics of a rapidly changing global situation" (World Statistics Day Website, 2020). Hence, it is very important for all UN Member States, the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, research institutions, media and all producers and users of official statistics, to do their part to highlight the value of statistics in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. The Secretary-General also underlined that "investing in data and statistics is the only way in which we will be able to make the decisions needed to respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and get on track to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030" (World Statistics Day Website, 2020).

Goals-oriented development initiatives began in the year 2000 with millennium declaration and target-based Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been proved very helpful as it reduced poverty staggeringly and increase education in terms of enrollment throughout the developing world. The era of MDGs ended in 2015 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was endorsed in 2015 for 2016-2030 that are applicable for all countries. Though the concept of Sustainable development (SD) is very complex, the most widely quoted concept is, "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987). For SD, hence, the quality data is very important because data can tell us exactly what is required to satisfy the needs of the present generation. It also helps design policies for future generation efficiently.

As inspiring as the ambitious ideals encapsulated in the 2030 Agenda are, goals are often easier to adopt than to achieve. In fact, there is growing recognition that the fulfilment of the SDGs' potential will hinge on the ability of governments, businesses, civil society, academic institutions, policy think tanks, and people themselves to harness data for development. While the increase in the quantity, quality, and diversity of data in recent years has been astonishing, new tools and innovative data systems that draw on dynamic sources of data for sustainable development are crucial to turn analytics into actionable insights and effective policies. In this way, data provides a 'reality check' in term of what is achievable and how (UNDP, 2017; Kapto, 2019).

In the context of the economic performance, Bangladesh has substantially grown in recent years so much that the World Bank has classified Bangladesh now as a lower middle-income economy. Asadullah, Savoia & Mahmud (2014) argue that economic reforms of the 1990s support Bangladesh economy

to grow continuously since 1995 though growth was not impressive between 1980 and the early 1990s. They present Bangladesh as a paradoxical case because the country's growth momentum does never decline, the performance of the economy is better comparing to developing economy average and this remarkable achievement has been possible at a time when the global economy is in crisis and the quality of governance has been deteriorating across the globe (Asadullah, Savoia & Mahmud, 2014).

Bangladesh is also a surprise case when it comes to human development evolution, considering its low per capita income level. Bangladesh, a medium human development country, has increased her the Human Development Index (HDI) value almost 50 percentage point in the period 1990-2015 (UNDP, 2016). Through succeeding in lifting millions out of poverty over the last two decades, Bangladesh has placed in a small group of nations which performed well not only in economic growth but also in human development indicators. Since 1980, Bangladesh has shown consistency in performing better in human development compared to economic development (Asadullah, Savoia & Mahmud, 2014).

Since independence, Bangladesh has gone very far in terms of achieving social progress significantly. Within this nearly five decades, child mortality has brought down, gender parity has achieved especially in the secondary school enrolment, life expectancy has improved, child marriage and human trafficking has reduced, and women has empowered in terms of participating in the labor force. Showing the trends of budgetary allocations, noted economist Wahiduddin Mahmud states that from the 1990s, every national budget has emphasized on both education and health and has increased allocations steadily to these sectors (Mahmud, 2008). However, the expenditure of Bangladesh on education and health as a percentage of GDP is lower than many other developing nations. Therefore, improvement in the human development indicators in Bangladesh despite the insufficient public investment in health and education is noteworthy. The study of Asadullah, Savoia & Mahmud (2014) notes that low-cost solutions and involvement of non-government service providers have helped Bangladesh to achieve progress given low budget expenditure and levels of inputs. These complemented education and health by public sector (Asadullah, Savoia & Mahmud, 2014).

1.1 Reliability of Data in Bangladesh: Recent Debates

On June, the finance minister of Bangladesh presented the national budget for fiscal year (FY) 2021 amid Covid-19 (C19) pandemic. the budget document projects Bangladesh's GDP growth to be 5.2 percent in the outgoing FY2020

and 8.2 percent for the upcoming FY2021. Most of the country's leading economists found the budget unrealistic in terms of projecting GDP growth. it is observed by many economists that this unrealistic budget has been framed bypassing the coronavirus situation and its subsequent impacts on the economy (Murtuza, 2020).

Selim Raihan, executive director of South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM), thinks that the target an 8.2 per cent growth rate of GDP in the FY2021 might have been assumed that the economic activities will shortly return to normal, and the economic growth will resume its previous trend. This assumption means, economic activities will quickly pick up its normal pace and the economy will experience a V-shaped recovery. However, the question remains whether reality corroborates this assumption (Raihan, 2020).

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) estimated that Bangladesh's growth of gross domestic product (GDP) would be 2.5 percent in FY2020. The World Bank, in its June 2020 estimation revised Bangladesh's growth downward to 1.6 percent in FY2020. In April 2020, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated Bangladesh's GDP to be 2 percent in 2020. The IMF projected India's growth to be 1.9 percent and China's 1.2 percent in 2020. The World Bank forecasted India's growth to be negative (-) 3.2 percent and China's only one percent in 2020 (Khatun, 2020).

According to Moinul Islam, former president of the Bangladesh Economic Association, skepticism about growth projection is not unreasonable. He said that for a long time now, there has been a tendency to exaggerate the rate of GDP growth. That is why we find that every year our government accounts differ from those of the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank (ADB). He thinks that there is a lot of room for manipulation in the way GDP is calculated in Bangladesh. And now that GDP has been politicized, it will not be easy to get out of it (Hasan, 2020).

Riti Ibrahim, former Secretary, Department of Statistics and Information Management, Ministry of Planning, expressed her dissatisfaction over GDP calculation. She says, "I saw at a young age, how much the GDP will be, is decided beforehand. Later the calculation is done by doing 'back calculation'. It was before. However, the few years I was in charge, I did not allow this kind of work. Especially during the census, I have instructed, no eraser (used for rubbing) can be used. The data that can be found in the field must be used. I do not understand why so much influence is exerted on GDP? GDP is not everything. Women's empowerment, health- the development of these social sectors must also be taken into consideration." (Ibrahim, 2020).

In this background, this paper critically evaluates the reliability of data in Bangladesh with an in-depth case study of waqf statistics. A complete nationwide census on Waqf Estates was conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 1986. This was the first and the last survey. In the last three decades, there is no comprehensive study on Waqf properties in Bangladesh. Due to the lack of data, proper reporting, and digitalization, many waqf estates have been misappropriated by the parties involved with waqf management. This paper argues that this misappropriation could have been slowed or checked if waqf statistics would have been regularly updated and the scenario of waqf estates in Bangladesh would have been often discussed in the public policy forums.

1.2 Structure of the Paper

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses socio-economic role of waqf in Bangladesh from a historical perspective. Section 3 describes the salient features of waqf census report 1986. Section 4 reports challenges of waqf estates in Bangladesh and the necessity of updating waqf statistics. Section 5 concludes with policy recommendations.

2.0 Waqf Estates and their Socio-Economic Role in Bangladesh: A Historical Perspective

Waqf is an Arabic word. It means forbidding movement, transport, or exchange of something, confinement, or prohibition (Raissouni, 2001, p. 13);). Renowned economist Monzer Kahf defines Waqf as holding a Maal (an asset) and preventing its consumption for the purpose of repeatedly extracting its usufruct for the benefit of an objective representing righteousness and/or philanthropy (Kahf 1998, p. 4). According to the Bangladesh census report of Waqf Estates 1986, Waqf Estate is land or other immovable property (a part or whole) donated by a person or a group of persons or an organization for any social, religious, or state activity without having any return (BBS, 1986).

There are basically three kinds of waqf: Religious Waqf, Family Waqf and Philanthropic Waqf. Mosques are mainly funded though Religious Waqf. Moreover, earning revenue through real estate and spending on the religious needs of people fall under this category. Whereas, in case of Family Waqf, the revenues of Waqf must first be given to the descendants of the waqf founder (waqif) and only the surplus, if any, should be given to the poor. On the other hand, the scope of Philanthropic Waqf is very broad in terms of supporting the poor segment of the society. Moreover, waqf can be used for libraries, scientific research, education, health services, lending to small businessmen, parks, roads, bridges, dams etc.

There is huge potential of waqf in financing SDGs, such as eradication of poverty (G1) and hunger (G2) and provision of education (G4) and health services (G3). The recorded history of Indian subcontinent tells us that Bangladesh (the Bengal region during Mughal period) had a very rich tradition of establishing waqf and still it persists. As an important social institution, waqf institutions such as Mosques, religious schools (Madrasah), prayer grounds for Eid (Eidgahs), graveyard, dwelling places of the peers (Dargahs), shrines (Mazars), pastures, arable lands, and real estates have been serving to the community development for centuries.

The British enacted The Bengal Waqf Act in 1934 to supervise directly all the Awqaf properties in Bangladesh. Pakistan government passed the Waqf Ordinance in 1962 to govern Waqf. Bangladesh, as part of Pakistan, was under this ordinance, and even after independence, Bangladeshi governments adapted the ordinance of 1962 for the maintenance and management of waqf properties in the country. Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA), at present, administers waqf properties in Bangladesh with an Administrator of Waqf (Karim, 2010). Through Waqf declined in the 19th century by the influence of colonization by the British and cultural stagnation, the political independence in the mid-20th century has raised hope in revitalizing the waqf institutions. Waqf institutions can be used for long-term financing to fund various types of projects that can expand the productive capacity of Bangladesh economy.

3.0 Findings from the Waqf Census Report 1986

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) conducted a nationwide census of Waqf Estates at the request of the ministry of Religious Affairs between January and February in 1986. Khan (2011) took an attempt to assemble the census data into division wise. At that time, Bangladesh had six divisions namely Dhaka (17 Districts), Rajshahi (16 Districts), Chittagong (11 Districts), Khulna (10 Districts), Barisal (6 Districts), and Sylhet (4 Districts). The findings of the census are briefly discussed below:

3.1 Status of Waqf, Management, and Main Beneficiaries

Waqf Estates are classified into three classes: Registered, verbal, and traditional.[3] There are 150,153 waqf estates in Bangladesh. Out of the total

[3] Registered *waqfs* are those which were reported to be registered with the office of the Waqf Administrator. In the verbal category the concerned property was declared

waqf estates, 97,046 are registered, 45,607 verbal and 7,940 traditional. Rajshahi division has the highest number of registered waqf (30,419), verbal waqf (12,809) and traditional waqf (1,971). On the other hand, Sylhet division shows the least number of registered waqf (6,024) and traditional waqf (744) while Barisal division shows the least number of verbal waqf (2,877).

Table 3.1: Number and Percent of Waqf Estates by Status of Waqf

Division	**All Waqf Estates**		**Status of Waqf**					
			Registered		**Verbal**		**Traditional**	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Barisal	11,931	7.95	8,224	8.47	2,877	6.31	830	10.45
Chittagong	26,386	17.52	17,562	18.1	7,132	15.64	1,692	21.31
Dhaka	41,317	27.45	28,422	29.29	11,225	24.61	1,620	20.4
Khulna	14,533	9.52	6,395	6.59	7,055	15.47	1,083	13.64
Rajshahi	45,159	30	30,419	31.34	12,809	28.1	1,971	24.82
Sylhet	11,267	7.50	6,024	6.21	4,509	9.89	744	9.37
Bangladesh	**150,593**	**100**	**97,046**	**100**	**45,607**	**100**	**7,940**	**100**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

The Waqf Estates by Management have been classified into 5: Managed by heirs, managed by trustee boards, managed by a committee, managed by government officials, and managed by others. The Table-3.2 provides data on absolute and percentage terms. A Waqf Estate is managed by only one of the five arrangements. It appears from the table that the waqf are managed by the local committees/ Mutawallis (92.5%) and a small number is managed by trustee boards (0.7%).

waqf verbally and is being used as such. The third category relates to Waqf Estates used as traditionally. It could be private or government property (BBS, 1986).

Table 3.2: Waqf Estates by Mode of Management (Number and Percent)

Division	Waqf Estates Managed By									
	Heirs		Trustee Board		Committee		Government		Others	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Barisal	1,744	21.41	82	11.03	10,012	7.19	26	4.77	67	3.64
Chittagong	1,973	24.22	187	25.17	23,864	17.13	106	19.45	256	13.91
Dhaka	2,074	25.46	156	21	38,578	27.69	152	27.89	357	19.4
Khulna	497	6.1	95	12.79	13,733	9.86	87	15.96	121	6.58
Rajshahi	1,433	17.59	160	21.53	42,543	30.54	116	21.28	907	49.29
Sylhet	424	5.21	63	8.48	10,590	7.6	58	10.64	132	7.17
Bangladesh	**8,145**	**100**	**743**	**100**	**1,39,320**	**100**	**545**	**100**	**1840**	**100**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

The Waqf Estates by principle of beneficiary have been categorized into five: common public, heirs, religious institutions, educational institutions, and others. A Waqf Estate may have more than one beneficiary. Table-3.3 shows that the major beneficiaries of the Waqf Estates are the religious institutions (93.5%) followed by the common public (22.2%)

Table 3.3: Waqf Estates by Main Beneficiaries of Waqf (Number and Percent)

Division	Main Beneficiaries of Waqf									
	Public		Heirs		Religious		Educ. Ins.		Others	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Barisal	1,203	3.6	528	15.62	11,406	8.1	655	10.26	23	1.21
Chittagong	8,072	24.16	1,043	30.85	24,639	17.51	2,087	32.68	548	28.77
Dhaka	9,883	29.58	684	20.23	38,432	27.31	1,743	27.29	497	26.09
Khulna	3,663	10.96	223	6.6	13,626	9.68	311	4.87	150	7.87
Rajshahi	6,780	20.29	630	18.63	42,625	30.29	968	15.16	485	25.46
Sylhet	3,807	11.4	273	8.07	10,007	7.11	623	9.75	202	10.6
Bangladesh	**33,408**	**100**	**3,381**	**100**	**140,735**	**100**	**6,387**	**100**	**1,905**	**100**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

3.2 Land Size and Annual Budget of the Reporting Waqf Estates

In Table 3.4, the total land and the average are computed based on the number of *waqfs* reporting the corresponding data. The corresponding averages are calculated from the 'Reporting' waqfs. The averages calculated based on the total number of *waqfs* will be equal or less than the values shown in this Table. The Table-3.4 shows that annual income from reporting *waqf* estates is 906 million Taka and annual expenditure is 856 million Taka, and the surplus is 50 million Taka.

Table 3.4: Land and Annual Income-Expenditure of the Waqf Estates Reporting

Division	All Waqf Estates	Total			Average		
		Land (Acres)	Annual Income (Taka)	Annual Expenditure (Taka)	Land	Income	Expenditure
Barisal	11,931	15,647	53,148,082	50,846,209	1.31	4,455	4,262
Chittagong	26,386	28,407	269,796,354	275,845,585	1.08	10,225	10,454
Dhaka	41,317	16,395	271,170,290	242,472,893	0.40	6,563	5,869
Khulna	14,533	5.919	56,937,920	51,834,046	0.41	3,918	3,567
Rajshahi	45,159	31,796	163,250,355	147,261,507	0.70	3,615	3,261
Sylhet	11,267	21,101	92,128,927	87,817,472	1.87	8,177	7,794
Bangladesh	**150,593**	**119,265**	**906,431,928**	**856,077,712**	**0.80**	**6,628**	**6,306**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

3.3 Sources of Annual Income of Waqf Estates

Table 3.5 shows the Total and Percentage distribution of income by broad sources. The Percentage under 'all sources' column shows the distribution of income at divisional level to the national level, but the percentages in the other columns show the distribution of income by sources to the total of the nation.

Table 3. 5: Annual Income of Waqf Estates from Broad Sources of Income

Division	All Sources		Land		Other Property		Other Sources	
	Total (taka)	%	Total (taka)	%	Total (taka)	%	Total (taka)	%
Barisal	53,148,082	5.86	21,648,153	13.71	728,220	1.81	30,771,709	4.34
Chittagong	269,796,354	29.76	50,506,631	32.00	12,614,322	31.35	206,675,401	29.18
Dhaka	271,175,280	29.92	27,431,403	17.37	22,080,521	54.87	221,663,356	31.3
Khulna	56,937,920	6.28	6,192,380	3.92	1,286,668	3.20	49,458,872	7.00
Rajshahi	163,250,356	18.00	39,053,106	24.73	1,940,585	4.82	122,256,665	17.26
Sylhet	92,128,927	10.16	13,069,199	8.28	1,592,079	3.96	77,467,649	10.94
Bangladesh	**906,436,919**	**100**	**157,900,872**	**100**	**40,242,395**	**100**	**708,293,652**	**100**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

Table 3.6 shows Number of Waqf Estates Reporting Annual Income by Sources other than land by category of sources. There are 8 such categories viz. House, Factories, other immovable property, public subscription/donation, donation in kind, Govt. grants, Investment/ share/ etc. and other sources. "Any sources except land" column shows

Number of Waqf Estates reporting income from these 8 categories of sources of income.

Table 3.6: Number of Waqf Estates Reporting Annual Income by Sources (Property except Land and Others)

Division	Any Source Except Land	Immovable Property But Land			Others sources of Income				
		House(s)	Factories	Others	Public Subscrip Donation	Other Donation In Kind	Govt Grants	Investment share	others
Barisal	10,399	84	7	56	9,648	2,053	569	286	1,402
Chittagong	23,741	306	106	313	22,315	7,954	1,203	861	2,801
Dhaka	35,685	256	154	548	31,762	14,027	1,918	1,760	3,062
Khulna	11,772	63	17	130	10,856	4,309	469	645	1,309
Rajshahi	37,621	88	46	167	34,037	13,966	1,275	1,864	3,465
Sylhet	9,467	50	26	127	9,005	4,124	205	421	888
Bangladesh	**128,685**	**847**	**356**	**1,341**	**117,623**	**46,433**	**5,639**	**5,837**	**12,927**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

Table 3.7 shows the average Annual Income distributed in detailed categories by sources other than land. There are 8 such categories viz. House, Factories, other immovable property, public subscription/donation, donation in kind, Govt. grants, Investment/ share/ etc. and other sources. The average is calculated based on the reporting waqfs.

Table 3.7: Average Annual Income of Waqf Estates by Sources (Property except Land and Others)

Division	Any Source Except Land	Immovable Property But Land			Others sources of Income				
		House(s)	Factories	Others	Public Subscrip Donation	Other Donation In Kind	Govt Grants	Invest-ment share	others
Barisal	2,943	3,908	1,792	4,741	2,148	1,188	8,523	2,937	1,334
Chittagong	8,884	8,989	11,602	8,685	5,763	3,173	14,441	7,967	6,212
Dhaka	6,194	6,685	7,548	8,796	3,898	2,167	9,713	6,041	4,395
Khulna	4,091	3,516	8,776	4,633	2,764	1,784	8,683	2,277	2,445
Rajshahi	3,318	6,079	5,140	5,244	2,265	1,572	11,039	2,878	2,170
Sylhet	7,482	8,304	13,064	5,285	5,812	2,600	6,610	4,193	3,747
Bangladesh	**5,817**	**12,761**	**14,096**	**18,249**	**3,898**	**2,209**	**10,292**	**5,040**	**4,628**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

3.4 Expenditures of Waqf Estates in Human Capital Development

Table 3.8 (Panel A & B) shows average annual expenditure of Waqf Estates by 14 categories. The users are advised to consult the footnote to the table for descriptions of categories. The averages are calculated based on the reporting waqf estates of the relevant category.

Table 3.8: Average Annual Expenditures of Waqf Estates by Category of Expenditure

Panel-A

Division	All Use	Paid to Heirs	Taxes /Rent	Mosque	Madrasah/ Maktab	School /College	Orphanage
Barisal	4,293	17,398	132	872	2,438	2,126	13,285
Chittagong	10,654	43,404	413	5,897	5,340	9,774	37,074
Dhaka	6,014	5,320	391	4,139	5,572	27,837	28,837
Khulna	4,096	4,318	112	2,688	2,579	4,447	16,789
Rajshahi	36,10	10,787	213	2,129	2,746	6,532	14,624
Sylhet	8,342	17,502	263	4,016	3,106	3,985	12,868
Bangladesh	**3895**	**15,504**	**113**	**853**	**3,045**	**1,257**	**6,850**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

Panel-B

Division	Charitable Clinic	Local Employees	Honorarium to Committee Members	Maintenanc/ Gas/ Electricity /Water/ Phone	Religious Function	Musafir / Poor Feeding	Stipends	Other Grant Donations
Barisal	1,146	2,384	1,667	716	916	1,307	1,170	944
Chittagong	10,591	5,575	6,244	1,776	1,841	4,386	6,876	3,963
Dhaka	4,144	3,456	2,029	1,694	1,060	2,230	1,310	1,364
Khulna	432	2,750	858	1,098	836	2,798	3,492	2,544
Rajshahi	8,051	2,271	2,113	989	912	1,670	1,934	1,932
Sylhet	4,409	5,429	3,391	1,334	1,565	2,156	10,139	3,188
Bangladesh	**825**	**2,308**	**1,549**	**453**	**900**	**767**	**450**	**631**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

Table 3.9 shows the Number of Waqf Estates Reporting Income from Land by category of use of land. There are 8 such categories of land use viz. Agricultural land, Garden/Orchards, Pond/Tank, Mosque, or place of performance of salat, Eidgah/ open space, Graveyard/Dargah, Madrasah/ School and use for other purposes. "Any use" column shows the number of Waqf Estates Reporting Income from at least one of the eight categories.

Table 3.9: Number of Waqf Estates Reporting Income from Land by Detail Use

Division	Any Use	Agri-Culture	Orchard	Pond/Tank	Mosque	Eidgah/ Open Space	GraveYard/ Dargah	School/ Madrasah	Others
Barisal	8,410	7,484	1,194	666	982	358	32	74	145
Chittagong	14,686	12,945	1,259	2,578	1,091	334	213	252	226
Dhaka	12,569	9,093	961	987	1,665	453	370	128	733
Khulna	3,397	2,396	412	280	460	150	132	28	55
Rajshahi	17,073	13,630	547	714	2,833	705	426	59	272
Sylhet	5,598	4,744	689	920	245	53	94	11	104
Bangladesh	**61,733**	**50,292**	**5,062**	**6,145**	**7,276**	**253**	**1,267**	**552**	**1535**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

Table 3.10 shows Average Annual Income of Waqf Estates from Land by Detail Use in 8 categories viz. Agricultural land, Garden/Orchards, Pond/Tank, Mosque or place of performance of salat, Eidgah/ open space, Graveyard/Dargah, Madrasah/ School and land use for other purposes. The figures in the table are the averages in taka unit of the reporting source of income of the relevant category

Table 3.10: Average Annual Income of Reporting Waqf Estates from Land by Detail Use

Division	Any Use	Agri-Culture	Orchard	Pond/ Tank	Mosque	Idgah/ Open Space	Grve-Yard Dargah	School/ Madrasah	Others
Barisal	2,430	2,326	828	871	651	541	1,280	2,590	1,180
Chittagong	3,277	2,954	817	1,463	2,047	576	4,406	2,593	6,662
Dhaka	1,914	1,612	597	1,641	1,229	781	1,266	5,110	3,594
Khulna	1,750	1,860	683	1,286	1,363	298	2,899	1,656	1,575
Rajshahi	2,180	2,219	1205	2,139	591	877	1,994	4,956	2,410
Sylhet	2,453	2,302	1519	1,124	1,306	637	1,916	2,598	5,907
Bangladesh	**2,558**	**2,432**	**857**	**1,344**	**990**	**704**	**3,055**	**6,061**	**4,645**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

3.5 Waqf Estates Reporting Land Area by Detail Uses

Table 3.11 shows the Number of Waqf Estates Reporting Land Area by Different category of land use. There are 9 categories viz. Agriculture, Garden/Orchards, Pond/Tank, Homestead/ shops, Mosque, or place of performance of salat, Eidgah/ open space, Graveyard/Dargah, Madrasah/ School and others. "Any use" column shows the number of Waqf Estates Reporting use of land in at least one of these nine categories of land use.

Table 3.11: Number of Waqf Estates Reporting Land Area by Detail Uses

Division	Any Use	Agriculture	Orchard	Pond/ Tank	Home Stead Shops	Mosque	Idgah/ Open Space	Grve-Yard Dargah	School/ Madrasah	Others
Barisal	11,927	7,554	1,738	2,161	439	11,310	5,872	1,708	720	299
Chittagong	26,382	13,258	1,722	5,294	792	22,483	9,697	6,781	3,574	995
Dhaka	41,304	9,439	1,400	2,007	710	33,172	15,781	4,406	1,876	672
Khulna	14,530	2,476	558	606	169	10,695	5,569	1,426	446	514
Rajshahi	45,144	14,069	829	1,082	334	36,828	12,612	4,117	1,152	642
Sylhet	11,263	4,908	1,311	5,294	293	9,161	6,053	2,725	549	737
Bangladesh	**150,593**	**51,704**	**7,558**	**16,496**	**2,737**	**123,649**	**55,584**	**21,163**	**8,317**	**3,859**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

Table 3.12 shows the Average Land Area (in Acres) under different uses of land. The use of land is classified into 9 categories viz. Agriculture, Garden/Orchards, Pond/Tank, Homestead/ shops, Mosque, or place of performance of salat, Eidgah/ open space, Graveyard/Dargah, Madrasah/ School and others. The 1st column of the table shows the average size of the reporting Waqf estates. The average is calculated based on the reporting waqfs only.

Table 3.12: Average Land Area (in Acres) of Waqf Estates Classified by Detail Uses

Division	Any Use	Agri-Culture	Orchard	Pond/Tank	Home Stead Shops	Mosque	Idgah/Open Space	GrveYard Dargah	School/ Madrasah	Others
Barisal	1.37	1.43	0.45	0.26	0.71	0.05	0.17	0.1	0.18	1.63
Chittagong	1.24	1.43	0.37	0.28	0.38	0.1	0.18	0.38	0.12	1.47
Dhaka	0.38	0.74	0.14	0.4	0.34	0.071	0.17	0.48	0.15	0.40
Khulna	0.43	1.07	0.2	0.45	0.6	0.08	0.18	0.6	0.25	0.3
Rajshahi	0.72	1.47	0.5	1.04	0.67	0.08	0.24	0.76	0.24	0.95
Sylhet	1.91	1.79	3.98	0.65	0.68	0.09	0.17	0.77	0.25	9.45
Bangladesh	**0.8**	**1.37**	**0.41**	**0.35**	**0.5**	**0.07**	**0.16**	**0.52**	**0.14**	**2.22**

Source: Khan (2011, Appendix)

4.0 Waqf Estates in Bangladesh: Challenges and The Way Forward

Waqf estates have been confronting several problems in Bangladesh. One of the problems is that a huge amount of arable land has been designated as waqf and no one knows exactly how much because of haphazard registration and inefficient administration. The majority of these lands lie idly unproductive because of the lack of funds to maintain and develop them. Moreover, the lack of readily accessible public information about their status makes them vulnerable to corrupt administrators or unscrupulous third parties taking them over and treating them as their own.

Many studies find that the founders set the activities of waqf, and the beneficiaries could not participate in selecting and evaluating officers who looked after the waqf properties. Hence, it opened the door of corruption. Many officials were appointed not based on merit rather through nepotism. The dire consequences were that waqf did not play any meaningful role in building civil society and socioeconomic development (Kuran, 2013).

The study of Khan and Hassan (2019) finds a plethora of news in print and electronic media that shows the illegal appropriation of waqf properties in Bangladesh. The greatest example of grabbing the waqf property is the Bangladesh secretariat which is the heartland of the administrative activities of the country. The owner of the land, where the present Bangladesh secretariat and the office of the president, Bangabhavan, are situated, was Ainuddin Haidar and his wife Foizunnisa. They donated approximately 12,500 acres of land as waqf. Though the documents of the land are in the possession of the Waqf administration, the reality is that the government occupied a small portion of the land and almost 90 percent lands are illegally occupied by many people who built permanent structures in those lands (Hosen,2016). Another

example of misappropriation is Shah Makhdum Dargah Sharif, a waqf estate of Rajshahi city. Among the 5,000 acres of waqf land and property, only 200 acres are now in the procession of the management. The local political and socially influential persons grabbed after taking lease and some were occupied on fake documents (Karim, 2016). The division-wise picture of illegal appropriation of waqf lands and property are shown in Table-4.1.

Table 4.1: Misappropriation of Waqf Land and Property

Division	Total Waqf land (in Acre)	Misappropriation (in Acre)	% of Misappropriation
Dhaka	85,109	84,663	99.5%
Chittagong	12,866	6,683	52%
Rajshahi	23,718	22,987	97%
Rangpur	1,501	6,74	45%
Khulna	2,853	755	26.5%
Barisal	55,319	1,406	2.6%
Sylhet	11,881	5,162	43.5%

Source: Hosen (2016)

This evidence of misappropriation clearly reveals that waqf estates in Bangladesh will not be able to contribute to the achievement of SDGs unless these unscrupulous practices can be checked. For this to happen, many different types of data on waqf estates (e.g., demographic, economic, social, environmental, etc.) will be required to collect and regularly updated. BBS had done a great task in conducting nationwide survey on waqf estates in 1986. Now Bangladesh needs a solid framework of indicators and statistical data to monitor progress, inform policy and ensure accountability of waqf estates. In this context, data communities within countries—from traditional to non-traditional producers and users of data—as well as the UN system can work together and demonstrate collaboration and greater coordination of efforts. This is not only a technical exercise, but also a political one. So, government should have political will in terms of data collection on waqf estates so that waqf can accelerate sustainable development.

5.0 Conclusion

The foregoing analysis attempts to substantiate that waqf can help achieve SDGs. In Bangladesh, the data on waqf estates is in disarray. The first ever complete census on Waqf Estates was conducted by BBS in 1986. Despite all the limitations and challenges, the historical evidence and waqf census of 1986 of Bangladesh show that Waqf has played a significant socioeconomic role in Bangladesh through financing education, health care, and enhancing the equal opportunity for both girls and boys. During the last 34 years we have no

comprehensive study on Waqf properties. Hence, the full potential of waqf has not been realized in Bangladesh. In this the third World Statistics Day, taking a decision of updating the status of waqf estates through a new survey by BBS can be a right move towards harnessing the full potential of waqf in sustainable economic development. For this, the first step is to upgrade data and statistical systems by assessing legal and policy frameworks and capacities for official statistics. Moreover, multi-stakeholder engagement is needed so that waqf estates can play an effective role in SDG implementation. Finally, it is important to support the creation of national frameworks for monitoring and accountability of waqf estates in Bangladesh.

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