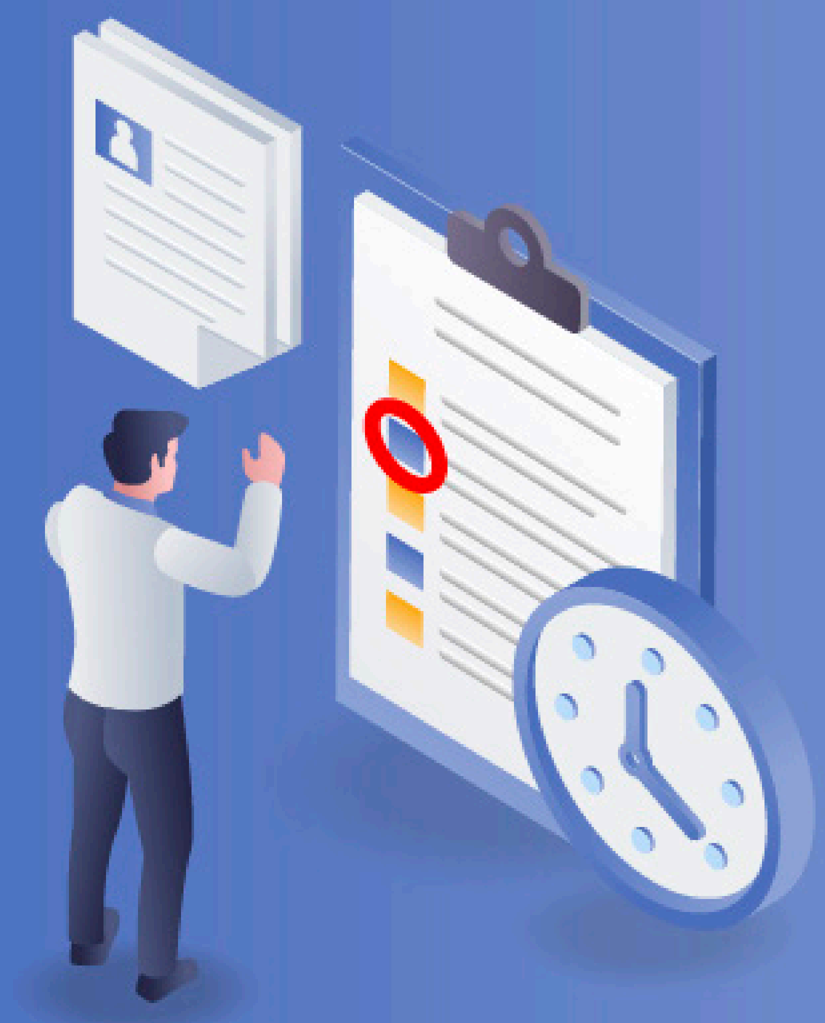
Journal of Policy and Planning (JPP)

ISSN: 3066-4543 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1 (2026)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Journal of
Policy and Planning (JPP)

Volume 3 Issue 1, Year 2026
ISSN: 3066-4543 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.54536/jpp.v3i1.5966
https://journals.e-palli.com/home/index.php/jpp

Redefining the Role of The State in the Provision of Housing Through the Neoliberal Real Estate Market of Dhaka

Fawzia Farzana[1*]

Article Information

Received: April 02, 2026

Accepted: July 01, 2026

Published: August 05, 2026

Keywords

Accumulation Dispossession, Affordable Housing, Asset Based Welfare, Neoliberalism, Public Private Partnership (PPP)

ABSTRACT

Neoliberal housing policies have been widely critiqued for failing to deliver affordable housing for low- and middle-income households across the Global South. However, empirical research examining how the state's simultaneous roles as regulator, provider, and market facilitator interact to produce housing unaffordability in least developed country contexts remains limited. Addressing this gap, this study investigates how neoliberal restructuring has shaped institutional and structural constraints on affordable housing provision in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where middle-income households constitute approximately 60 percent of the population yet are largely excluded from the formal housing market. Drawing on qualitative in-depth interviews with ten housing experts, ten corporate developers, and four senior officials from key public institutions, analyzed thematically using NVivo 12, the study finds that the state's regulatory role has fostered crony capitalism through weak enforcement and collusion between planning authorities and influential developers; its provider role has disproportionately subsidized affluent groups while displacing low-income communities from peripheral land in patterns consistent with accumulation by dispossession; and its facilitating role has intensified speculative investment, further eroding affordability. The study's originality lies in applying a tripartite analytical framework, to show how these three state roles interact and mutually reinforce housing unaffordability, moving beyond the single-mechanism explanations prevalent in existing literature. Theoretically, the findings extend Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession into the domain of state-led housing facilitation in a South Asian urban context. In terms of policy relevance, the study proposes an institutional framework for affordable housing delivery through public-private partnerships, emphasizing transparent developer selection, cross-subsidization mechanisms, and beneficiary participation as preconditions for equitable housing provision in Dhaka.

INTRODUCTION

Neoliberal restructuring gained global prominence in the late twentieth century through the political agendas of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States. These policy regimes promoted market-oriented governance through privatization, deregulation, and the reduction of welfare-oriented state interventions. As David Harvey argues, neoliberalism represents a political economic project aimed at restoring conditions for capital accumulation by expanding market mechanisms into areas previously governed by the state. In urban contexts, these transformations have significantly reshaped housing governance by shifting responsibility for housing provision from public institutions to market actors. Building on this perspective, Neil Brenner and Jamie Peck conceptualize neoliberalism as "actually existing neoliberalism," emphasizing that market oriented reforms are implemented and adapted within specific national and urban contexts. Rather than implying a simple retreat of the state, neoliberalization often involves the restructuring of state institutions to facilitate market expansion. In many developing countries these reforms were institutionalized through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which promoted market liberalization, privatization of state owned enterprises, and reduced state involvement in economic management (Brenner & Theodore, 2002).

Bangladesh entered this phase of neoliberal restructuring in the early 1980s by accepting SAP reform packages as part of aid conditionalities imposed by the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral development agencies. These reforms initiated processes of privatization and economic deregulation across several sectors of the economy. External donors and international agencies consistently promoted market based policy reforms aimed at liberalizing the national economy and encouraging private investment. Such policy shifts were justified through the prevailing neoliberal argument that the state had failed to ensure economic efficiency, stimulate growth, and effectively deliver public services (Quadir, 2000). The housing sector in Bangladesh followed a similar trajectory. Beginning in the 1980s, the government gradually withdrew from direct housing provision and instead adopted policies designed to enable market actors to play a leading role in housing production. During the 1990s, this transition was formalized through market-enabling policy frameworks aligned with the broader neoliberal development agenda. The influence of multilateral development agencies was reflected in policy guidelines for public and private sector participation in the Fourth (1990–1995) and Fifth (1997–2002) Five Year Plans (FYPs).

[1] Urban and Rural Planning Discipline, Khulna University, Bangladesh
[*] Corresponding author's e-mail: fawzia.farzana@ku.ac.bd

A major milestone in this policy transition was the formulation of Bangladesh's first National Housing Policy in 1993, which incorporated the market enabling principles advocated by the World Bank. Within this framework the role of the state was redefined from direct housing provider to facilitator of housing markets. Public sector agencies were expected to support housing development mainly through the provision of land, infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks that would enable private developers to undertake residential projects. In practice, however, this policy orientation largely prioritized housing production for middle and higher income groups (Rahman, 2012). Historically, housing provision in Dhaka had been dominated by incremental self-construction by individual households because large scale public housing programs and formal housing markets remained limited. However, economic liberalization during the 1980s created conditions for the emergence of private corporate developers. Prior to Bangladesh's independence in 1971, only one housing and land development company operated in Dhaka's housing market and restrictions limited the entry of additional firms. Following liberalization, private developers gradually entered the market during the late 1980s, marking the expansion of the formal real estate sector.

Institutional reforms during the 1990s further reinforced the state's commitment to market enabling housing strategies. Policy documents such as the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans and the National Housing Policy emphasized institutional restructuring to improve coordination among housing provision subsystems. In line with these recommendations, the Housing and Settlement Directorate (HSD) and the Deputy Commissioner Settlement (DCS) were merged in 2000 to form the National Housing Authority. The new institution was intended to coordinate housing policy implementation and promote a more integrated approach to housing provision. Another development reflecting neoliberal governance principles was the establishment of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh in 1991 as an umbrella organization representing private developers. The formation of REHAB coincided with the expansion of private developers following the liberalization of industrial, import, and tariff policies introduced under SAP reforms (Khan, 2005). These institutional arrangements reflected the market enabling approach advocated by the World Bank, which emphasized developing frameworks capable of managing housing systems through market based mechanisms (World Bank, 1993).

Despite the growth of the private real estate sector over the past four decades, its contribution to Dhaka's housing stock remains limited. More than 1,500 companies are currently active in the sector and private developers have produced approximately 100,000 apartment units during this period. Nevertheless, their contribution accounts for only about 4.6 percent of the city's total housing stock (Azad, 2011). Although the sector has expanded steadily, its capacity to respond to the housing demand generated by Dhaka's rapid urbanization remains constrained. Moreover, housing produced by private developers largely targets upper income groups, as the dominant price range of apartments in the formal housing market corresponds primarily to the affordability levels of high income households (REHAB, 2012). As Raquel Rolnik observes, the global spread of market-oriented housing policies has increasingly transformed housing into a financial asset rather than a social good, often excluding lower and middle-income households from formal housing markets. The experience of Dhaka reflects similar dynamics where the commodification of housing within a market driven development framework has limited access to formal housing for the majority of residents.

This mismatch between housing supply and household affordability is particularly significant because middle income households constitute approximately 60 percent of Dhaka's population. When market generated housing supply does not correspond with the affordability levels of the majority of households, it reveals structural limitations within the housing market and highlights the persistence of a housing affordability crisis. In such circumstances, the assumption underlying neoliberal housing policy that market mechanisms can efficiently provide housing for all income groups becomes increasingly problematic. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the contribution of neoliberal housing policies to the housing affordability crisis in Dhaka. Using an exploratory research design, the study employs qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to investigate the institutional and structural constraints that hinder the provision of affordable housing and to identify the need for a supportive institutional framework that redefines the role of the state in enabling housing markets while ensuring that housing policies respond more effectively to the needs of middle income households.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Neoliberalism and Unaffordable Housing

The expansion of asset-based welfare (ABW) (Ronald, 2008; Rolnik, 2020; Watson, 2009; Doling & Ford, 2007; Wu, 2015; Wang *et al.,* 2012; Doling, 2002), processes of gentrification driven by the growing importance of prime cities for global capital accumulation (Smith, 2002; Harvey, 2004; CHORE, 2006; Afenah, 2009; Shin, 2009; Wong, 2006), and the increasing centrality of housing markets in the urban economy have contributed to housing affordability crises in many global cities. Housing markets have increasingly become exclusionary spaces where low-income residents face significant challenges in exercising their "right to the city" (Kadi & Ronald, 2014; Rolnik, 2013).

In many developmental states, following the end of the planned economy phase (1950–1977), the real estate sector experienced significant asset price appreciation similar to that observed in developed countries. However, in some cases, state interventions helped low-income households through affordable housing programs (Shin, 2009; Wong, 2006). In developing cities, housing affordability crises have been intensified by rising income inequality associated with neoliberal reforms, rapidly increasing land and housing prices, and limited access to mortgage finance. These challenges are often linked to heavy reliance on market forces and the gradual withdrawal of the public sector from direct housing provision (Deshpande, 2004; Harvey, 2005).

Dhaka illustrates these dynamics clearly. Only about 30 percent of households own housing property, while approximately 70 percent live in rental housing, government quarters, or informal settlements (BIGD, 2017). Rapid increases in land and apartment prices have made homeownership increasingly unattainable for much of the population. Between 1990 and 2010, land prices increased by about 625 percent and apartment prices by nearly 174 percent (REHAB, 2012). More recent estimates indicate even sharper increases, with land prices rising by around 2,740 percent and apartment prices by 716 percent since 2000 (IPD, 2021).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design based on in-depth semi-structured interviews to examine constraints affecting affordable housing provision in Dhaka's neoliberal housing market. Qualitative methods were selected because the research aims to understand the perspectives, institutional logics, and experiential knowledge of actors embedded in Dhaka's housing system, phenomena that require interpretive inquiry rather than quantitative measurement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Interview guides were structured around neoliberal reforms, housing market dynamics, institutional constraints, and the regulatory role of the state, while remaining flexible enough to allow exploration of emergent issues. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were audio-recorded with participants' consent and supplemented by contemporaneous note-taking. Transcription and translation were carried out personally by the author, which deepened familiarity with the data prior to analysis and reduced interpretive loss in translation (Bazeley, 2013).

Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling to identify information-rich respondents with direct expert knowledge of the mechanisms under investigation (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling guided the identification of three participant categories: housing policy experts, corporate real estate developers, and senior officials from key public housing institutions. Within each category, specific criteria were applied: experts were required to have demonstrable research or advisory experience in Bangladeshi housing policy; developers were drawn from the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) membership list and stratified into "old" and "new" firms by years of operation to capture varying market perspectives; and public officials were selected on the basis of seniority and direct policy responsibility. Snowball sampling was subsequently used to identify additional respondents through professional referrals, particularly within the expert and developer categories (Noy, 2008). The final sample comprised ten housing experts, ten corporate developers, and four senior officials from the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK), National Housing Authority (NHA), Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (BHBFC), and Housing and Building Research Institute (HBRI). These four institutions were deliberately included as each occupies a distinct position in Dhaka's housing governance architecture, spanning regulatory, delivery, financial, and technical functions.

Interview data were analyzed thematically using NVivo 12, following an iterative process informed by Miles and Huberman (1994), Maxwell (2009), and Saldaña (2011). Analysis began with repeated reading of all transcripts before coding commenced, to achieve deep familiarity with the full dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A deductive coding framework was developed from the study's theoretical themes, neoliberal market mechanisms, institutional constraints, regulatory arrangements, and the state's role in housing provision and then applied systematically across all transcripts. Where participants raised issues not anticipated by the initial framework, new codes were inductively incorporated, producing a combined deductive-inductive structure that maintained theoretical coherence while remaining responsive to emergent data (Naeem *et al.,* 2023). Codes were progressively grouped into broader analytical themes, with NVivo's query functions used to compare perspectives across the three participant categories systematically. Themes were then defined and interpreted in relation to the study's theoretical framework. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the coding framework was shared with the PhD supervisor, whose independent review of the framework and a sample of coded transcript passages confirmed its logical coherence and sound grounding in the data; discrepancies identified during this review were discussed and resolved through iterative revision of the framework before final themes were defined. Member checking was subsequently conducted by sharing a summary of the preliminary findings with four participants, one established developer, one newly operating developer, one housing expert, and one senior official from the National Housing Authority, who confirmed that the themes accurately reflected their experiences and institutional perspectives, with minor clarifications incorporated into the final analysis. Triangulation was further achieved by comparing accounts across all three participant categories, allowing convergences and divergences to be examined systematically. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any stage.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Unaffordable Housing in Dhaka

Interview findings from housing experts and developers confirm that the formal housing market largely fails to provide affordable options in Dhaka. Respondents noted that strong demand for luxury apartments persists due to the purchasing power of a small affluent group, many of whom purchase property as investment assets. In contrast, households seeking housing primarily for accommodation face severe affordability constraints. Nevertheless, experts suggested that with appropriate state interventions and supportive policies, the housing market could potentially contribute to affordable housing provision.

Most housing experts interviewed agreed that the majority of housing units supplied by the real estate market do not match the affordability levels of typical households in Dhaka. Some developers have recently attempted to provide relatively lower-priced apartments by reducing unit sizes, often to less than 500 square feet. However, the majority of apartments in the market range between 1,000 and 1,500 square feet, representing about 55 percent of available supply. Apartments smaller than 1,000 square feet account for only about 18.6 percent of listings, with prices ranging from BDT 1.3 million to BDT 11 million.

Even the lowest-priced units remain difficult to access. Purchasing an apartment priced at around BDT 1.3 million would require monthly mortgage payments exceeding BDT 8,000, along with a substantial down payment. Although this level of expenditure may theoretically fall within the housing budgets of middle-income households, the supply of such low-priced apartments is extremely limited. Units priced below BDT 2 million constitute less than one percent of total market listings, highlighting the severe mismatch between housing supply and affordability in Dhaka.

According to one housing expert, a middle-income household (MIH) in Dhaka typically occupies around 1000 sqft of housing space. Similarly, a recent study indicates that the preferred apartment size among MIHs ranges between 1050 sqft and 1450 sqft (BIGD, 2017). This suggests that apartments priced below BDT 2 million, which are generally smaller and located in peripheral areas, may not correspond to the notion of sustainable housing affordability. Sustainable housing affordability involves not only financial capability but also housing quality, accessibility to employment opportunities, and the availability of urban amenities (Mulliner *et al.,* 2013). Consequently, although some lower-priced apartments exist, their small size and distant locations may reduce their suitability for MIHs seeking adequate living conditions.

Table 1: The size and price patterns of apartments provided by the market

Size of Apartments (Sqft)	Apartments up for sale		Lowest and highest Prices in BDT		Area (sqft)	Location
	No.	%				
Below 1000	1126	18.6	Lowest	1300000	450	Lalbagh road
			Highest	11000000	900	Bashundhara R A
1000-1500	3327	55.0	Lowest	3000000	1000	Jurain
			Highest	20000000	1486	Dhanmondi
Above 1500	1596	26.4	Lowest	4500000	1650	Bhuiyanparha, Khilgaon
			Highest	130000000	3200	Gulshan

Source: www.bproperty.com , October, 2023

One interviewed housing expert explained that middle-class households are still reluctant to live in very small apartments simply because they are more affordable. According to the respondent, a standard-sized apartment in a favourable location may be affordable for MIHs in terms of rental, but ownership remains largely unattainable due to high land prices and limited access to housing finance. The expert further noted that if a middle-income household could obtain homeownership with a monthly instalment (EMI) similar to the rent it currently pays, such housing would fall within its affordability range. Most interviewed housing experts therefore emphasized that the rent currently paid by MIHs reflects their effective housing payment capacity. Long-term mortgage arrangements with EMIs comparable to existing rental payments could potentially enable homeownership for this group.

However, analysis of the housing market reveals a substantial gap between rental costs and the monthly payments required to purchase apartments of similar size and location (see Table 2). This disparity reflects broader transformations in urban housing systems under neoliberal governance, where housing increasingly functions as an investment asset. As property prices rise faster than household incomes, access to homeownership becomes increasingly restricted for middle-income households (Harvey, 2005; Rolnik, 2013; Kadi and Ronald, 2014).

Apartments ranging from 700 sqft to 1600 sqft located in middle-income areas and advertised for both rent and sale were analyzed to examine the gap between the monthly costs of renting and purchasing housing. Interview findings indicate that the monthly housing expenditure of middle-income households (MIHs) ranges between BDT 10,000 and BDT 35,000. Accordingly, households renting apartments in middle-income areas and paying rents between BDT 9,000 and BDT 20,000 (see Table 2) can reasonably be considered MIHs.

If tenants of these apartments intend to purchase similar units in terms of size and location, they would need to

Table 2: The size and price patterns of apartments provided by the market

Location		Monthly cost in BDT	
		Rent	Buy/ownership
Sector 12, Uttara	(700-800) sqft	11000	EMI: 30874 Down Payment: 1350000 Price: 4500000
	(1500-1600) sqft	20000	EMI: 56602 Down Payment:2475000 Price:8250000
Shekertek, Mohammadpur	(700-800) sqft	9000	EMI: 24013 Down Payment: 1050000 Price: 3500000
	(1500-1600) sqft	18000	EMI: 53512 Down Payment:2340000 Price:7800000
South Banasree Project	(700-800) sqft	9000	EMI: 24013 Down Payment: 1050000 Price: 3500000
	(1500-1600) sqft	20000	EMI: 54866 Down Payment:2400000 Price:8000000

Source: www.bproperty.com , October, 2023

pay equated monthly instalments (EMIs) over a 25-year period that are approximately three times higher than the current rent (see Table 2). In Dhaka, mortgage financing typically covers only 70 percent of the property price, requiring buyers to provide the remaining 30 percent as a down payment. For the apartments examined, this down payment ranges from BDT 1 million to BDT 2.5 million. As a result, apartments that appear affordable for renting remain largely unaffordable for ownership for most MIHs.

This widening gap between rental affordability and homeownership reflects broader transformations in urban housing systems under neoliberal governance. As housing increasingly functions as an investment asset integrated into capital accumulation processes, property prices rise faster than household incomes. Consequently, access to homeownership becomes increasingly restricted for middle-income groups in cities like Dhaka.

The limited provision of affordable housing for middle-income households (MIHs) through market mechanisms

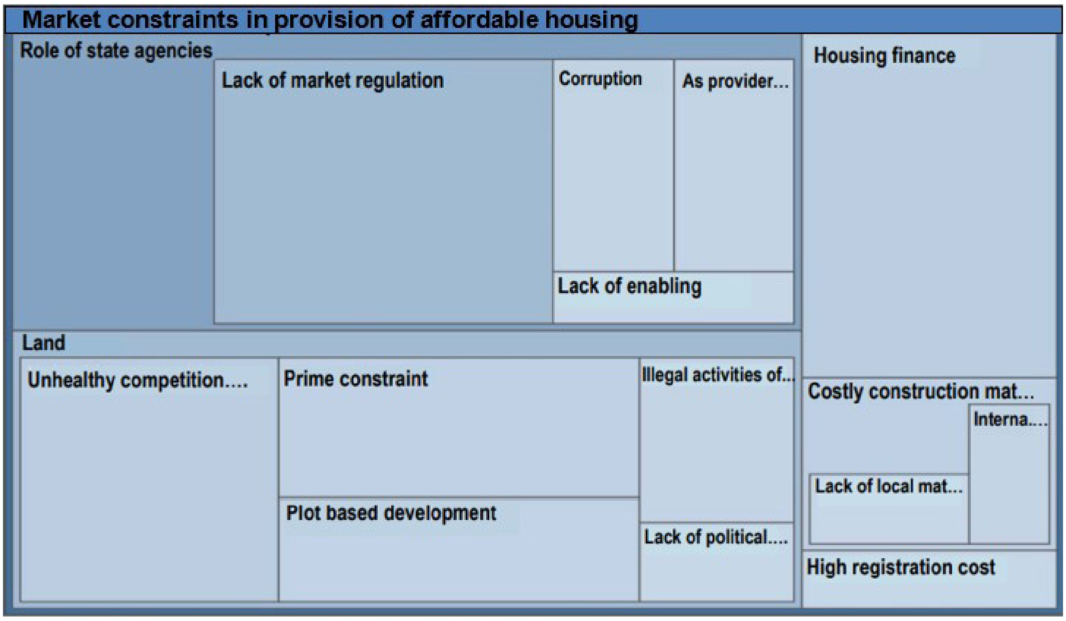


Figure 1: Hierarchy of codes in analyzing Market constraints from housing experts' perspectives
Source: Generated in NVivo 12 based on Interview data, 2024

was confirmed by both housing experts and developers during the interviews. Respondents noted that demand for luxury apartments remains strong due to the purchasing power of a relatively small but affluent segment of the population. These high-income households often purchase apartments as investment assets, while MIHs seeking housing primarily for residential purposes face significant affordability constraints. Many developers acknowledged that the high-income housing segment is perceived as both safer and more profitable. Although some developers claim to target middle-income buyers, the price levels of these units generally remain beyond the affordability limits of most MIHs.

This pattern reveals a structural bias in market-led housing provision, where developers prioritize high-profit segments rather than addressing the housing needs of the majority of urban residents. Under neoliberal housing systems, such market selectivity typically concentrates housing supply in higher-income segments, while middle- and lower-income households become increasingly excluded from formal housing markets. Nevertheless, housing experts suggested that the market could potentially provide affordable housing for MIHs if appropriate state interventions were introduced to support and catalyze such initiatives.

Table 3: The size and price patterns of apartments provided by the market

Name of Codes	No of interviewee (Housing Experts) referred the code	Frequency of References
1. Market constraints in provision of affordable housing	10	55
1.2. Costly construction material	1	2
1.2.1. International market is controlling the supply	1	2
1.2.2. Lack of local materials	1	1
1.3. High registration cost	1	1
1.4. Housing Finance	6	6
1.5. Land	8	16
1.5.1. Illegal Activities of developers	2	2
1.5.2. Lack of political will	1	1
1.5.3. Plot based development	3	3
1.5.4. Prime constraint	4	4
1.5.5. Unhealthy competition raised the price	5	6
1.6. Role of State Agencies	8	30
1.6.1. As provider constrain the market	2	2
1.6.2. Corruption	2	2
1.6.3. Lack of enabling	1	1
1.6.4. Lack of market regulation	7	16

Source: Author, generated in NVivo 12, 2024

Barriers that Constrain the Provision of Affordable Housing

The thematic analysis indicates that both land availability and the role of state agencies are major constraints to the provision of affordable housing. While an equal number of housing experts identified these two issues, the number of coding references related to the role of state agencies was considerably higher, suggesting that institutional factors are perceived as the most critical constraint. Experts emphasized that the actions of state agencies influence multiple aspects of the housing market, including land supply and pricing.

According to the interviewees, agencies such as RAJUK and the National Housing Authority (NHA) continue to directly provide plots and apartments to individual households. In a market-oriented housing system, however, this role is typically expected to be performed by private developers, while public agencies focus on enabling and regulating the market. Experts argued that state institutions should prioritize direct housing provision for low-income groups, where market mechanisms generally fail. In the current context, however, such interventions remain limited. Instead, by acting simultaneously as both regulators and developers, these agencies often compete with private firms. Because they benefit from institutional privileges, such as access to land at relatively lower acquisition costs and limited external oversight, their involvement can distort market dynamics and constrain private sector participation.

Another major concern highlighted by interviewees is the weak regulatory role of the state in the housing sector. Housing experts noted that ineffective regulation has contributed to the rapid escalation of land prices following the expansion of private real estate development. Interviewees also referred to speculative and deceptive practices by some developers, which should fall under the jurisdiction of state regulatory authorities. However, due to weak institutional commitment and corruption, existing regulations intended to control property prices and rents, regulate development activities, protect buyers and landowners, and safeguard environmental resources are often poorly enforced or applied inconsistently (Key Informant Interview, 2022).

Experts further argued that state agencies have not effectively fulfilled their intended market-enabling role. Some respondents suggested that alliances between influential market actors and public institutions have contributed to oligopolistic tendencies in the real estate sector, limiting fair competition. Policies introduced under the banner of market facilitation such as relaxed building codes, zoning adjustments, or opportunities to invest undeclared income in real estate were perceived to disproportionately benefit a small group of powerful developers and investors. According to interviewees, such measures rarely improve housing accessibility for the wider urban population.

Figure 2 presents the hierarchy of codes under the theme 'Constraints in the Market', based on the coding references derived from interviews with real estate developers. Similar to the findings obtained from housing experts, eight out of ten developers identified the contradictory roles of the state captured under the code 'State as regulator or enabler' as a key constraint affecting the housing market. This code was referenced 47 times in total, indicating the prominence of this concern among developers (see Table 4).

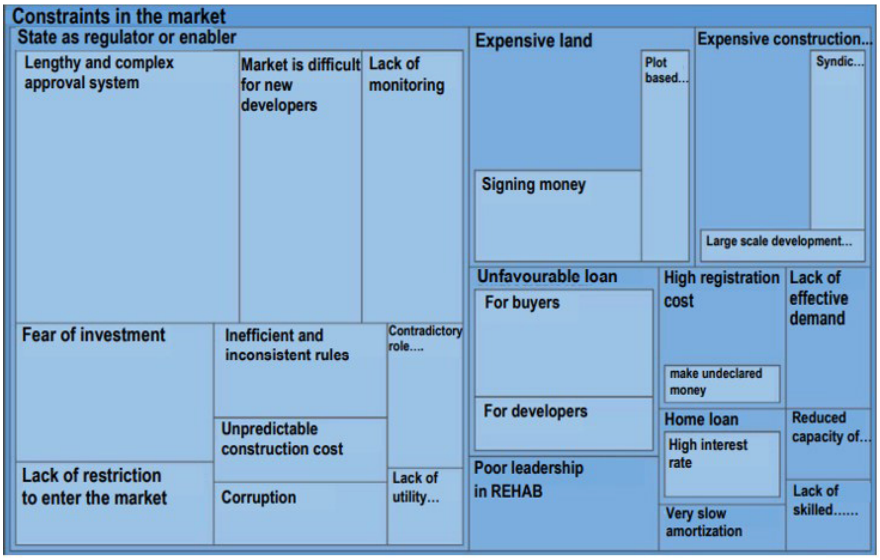


Figure 2: Hierarchy of codes in analyzing Market constraints from housing developers' perspectives
Source: Generated in NVivo 12 based on Interview data, 2023

Both newly established developers (those who entered the market after the 1990s) and older developers (operating since the 1980s) expressed criticism regarding the role of state agencies in regulating and enabling the housing market. However, their perspectives diverged in certain respects. According to one experienced developer, the housing market is excessively open, allowing virtually any developer to enter the sector without adequate restrictions. This situation, in his view, has led to unhealthy competition and, in some cases, surplus supply within the market. While competition among producers generally contributes to price reduction or improvements in product quality, the dynamics of the housing market operate differently. In the context of Dhaka, where land is an extremely scarce resource, increased competition among developers tends to intensify demand for land, thereby driving up land prices. As land constitutes a major component of housing production costs, escalating land prices ultimately translate into higher apartment prices.

In contrast, two newly established developers argued that state agencies have not created a sufficiently supportive or predictable business environment for new entrants to the sector. They emphasized the lack of institutional support, regulatory clarity, and procedural efficiency necessary for facilitating real estate development. These differing perspectives highlight the complex and sometimes contradictory expectations that developers hold regarding the role of the state in shaping the housing market (see Table 4).

Both older and newer developers raised concerns regarding the regulatory role of state agencies, particularly in relation to policies governing the investment of undeclared income in the real estate sector. According to Section 19B of the Income Tax Ordinance 1984, undeclared or "black" money can be invested in real estate and subsequently legalized through the payment of property transfer taxes. However, developers noted that although this provision formally exists, buyers who attempt to utilize it increasingly face scrutiny from the Anti-Corruption Commission (DUDOK). Developers argued that such regulatory uncertainty discourages potential investors and may divert capital to foreign investment destinations, thereby constraining the housing market.

Table 3: The size and price patterns of apartments provided by the market

Name of Codes	No of interviewee (Housing Experts) referred the code	Frequency of References
1 Constraints in the market	10	92
1.2 State as regulator or enabler	8	47
1.2.1 Contradictory roles of the State	2	2
1.2.2 Corruption	2	4
1.2.3 Fear of Investment	4	7
1.2.3.1 Investment in Foreign	2	3
1.2.3.2 Investments in abroad	1	2
1.2.4 Inefficient and inconsistent rules	2	3
1.2.4.1 Cost incurred due to	1	1
1.2.5 Lack of monitoring by state agencies	2	8
1.2.5.1 Lack of man power	1	2
1.2.5.2 Local Influentials	2	3
1.2.5.3 Quality	1	2
1.2.6 Lack of restriction to enter the	1	1
1.2.6.1 Ill competition among	1	1
1.2.6.2 Supply surplus demand or	1	3
1.2.7 Lack of utility and service facilities	1	1
1.2.8 Lengthy and complex approval	7	11
1.2.8.1 Corruption	3	5
1.2.8.2 Lack of coordination	1	1
1.2.9 Market is difficult for new	2	6
1.2.9.1 Defaulter customer	1	1
1.2.9.2 Fail to deliver in time	1	1
1.2.9.3 Landowner's negligence	1	1
1.2.9.4 Supply surplus demand	1	1
1.2.9.5 Unfavorable Investment	1	1
1.2.10 Unpredictable Construction cost	2	4
1.2.10.1 Delayed hand over of Flats	1	3

Conflict the interests of Limited Income Households

Contradictory comments made by old and new developers

Source: Author, generated in NVivo 12, 2023

While the inflow of undeclared money may increase investment and market liquidity, it can also have negative implications for housing affordability. Speculative investment often drives up land and property prices, further limiting access to housing for middle- and lower-income households (see Table 2). These dynamics reflect broader processes of housing financialization, where real estate functions increasingly as a vehicle for capital accumulation rather than as a basic form of shelter (Rolnik, 2013; Harvey, 2005).

Developers also criticized the lack of effective monitoring mechanisms in the housing sector, particularly in relation to controlling property prices and preventing unfair practices by powerful local actors. Limited manpower within relevant state agencies was identified as a major institutional constraint. In addition, the approval process for development projects was widely described as lengthy and complex. Several respondents noted that corruption within the approval system increases both the time required to secure approvals and the transaction costs associated with housing development.

Analyzing the Role of the State

The neoliberal restructuring of urban governance has reshaped the role of the state in housing provision. The roll-back phase of neoliberal reforms intensified social and spatial inequalities as uneven development was reinforced through interactions between market actors and government institutions (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). In developing countries, housing needs are rarely met through private markets alone, particularly when regulatory and policy frameworks are weak or poorly implemented (World Bank, 1993). To address these challenges, the World Bank promoted an "enabling strategy," encouraging states to facilitate private sector participation while withdrawing from direct housing provision where markets could operate more efficiently.

In Bangladesh, a major institutional shift occurred with the adoption of the first National Housing Policy in 1993. Influenced by the World Bank, the policy incorporated market-enabling principles and recommended that the state intervene primarily to address land supply constraints and inefficiencies in land transfer systems, while allowing private developers to provide housing for most income groups except the poorest. Under this framework, the role of the state shifted from direct provider to facilitator responsible for ensuring an efficient housing market (GoB, 1993).

However, the effective integration of these enabling principles into national planning frameworks has remained limited. As a result, the state's evolving role reflects broader tensions in neoliberal urban governance, where housing increasingly operates within market and investment logics rather than being treated primarily as a social good (Harvey, 2005; Rolnik, 2013; Kadi and Ronald, 2014).

Regulator: Resulted in Crony Capitalism

Interview findings suggest that although a formal regulatory framework exists to guide urban development in Dhaka, its implementation is widely perceived as weak and vulnerable to manipulation. Respondents frequently referred to the Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) 2006 and the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) as key regulatory instruments administered by RAJUK, the main planning authority responsible for regulating development in the capital.

Following fraudulent apartment development practices in the 1990s, the state strengthened regulatory intervention through the Real Estate Development and Management Act, 2010. Interviewees also highlighted the Water Body Conservation Act, 2000 as an important measure aimed at protecting low-lying areas and water bodies from residential development.

Despite these regulations, both developers and housing experts questioned their effectiveness. Many respondents described the regulatory process as complex and time-consuming, often lacking transparency and efficiency. Instead of protecting homebuyers and ensuring orderly development, lengthy approval procedures frequently create opportunities for informal negotiations and rent-seeking practices within the regulatory system. Several developers indicated that maintaining informal connections with officials or intermediaries is often necessary to expedite project approvals.

Interviewees also referred to the growing influence of powerful actors within the real estate sector. According to some respondents, interactions among regulatory bodies such as RAJUK, developers' associations like REHAB, and political actors sometimes facilitate the approval of projects that deviate from formal planning regulations. Such relationships were described as creating favourable conditions for a small group of influential developers who are able to dominate the housing market.

Housing experts further noted that many land development projects in Dhaka have not fully complied with land-use guidelines outlined in the DMDP structure plan (Morshed, 2014). Some respondents suggested that pressure from real estate developers has influenced subsequent modifications of planning documents. In particular, several interviewees pointed to the preparation of the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) as an example where previously designated flood flow zones and agricultural land were reclassified as residential areas. According to these accounts, such changes raise concerns regarding inconsistencies with earlier planning frameworks and environmental protection legislation such as the Water Body Conservation Act, 2000 and the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995.

Corruption in the planning approval process was another issue repeatedly highlighted by respondents. Some interviewees referred to earlier reports indicating that planning approvals often involve informal payments or political influence (TIB, 2007). These practices weaken regulatory enforcement and encourage widespread rent-seeking within the sector. As a result, several participants argued that the regulatory system has facilitated the emergence of "cronies" in the real estate market, where influential developers benefit from close relationships with regulatory officials and political actors (Mujeri, 2018).

Overall, the findings suggest that although formal regulations exist to govern urban development in Dhaka, weak implementation and limited oversight allow informal practices to persist. Consequently, the regulatory framework often functions not only as a mechanism of control but also as a system that can be manipulated by powerful market actors.

Provider: Irrational Subsidization and Accumulation by Dispossession

The role of the state as a direct housing provider has also been widely criticized by both housing experts and developers. Although the Constitution of Bangladesh commits the government to ensuring housing for all and national housing policy emphasizes limiting direct provision primarily to the poor, interviewees argued that many publicly initiated housing programs have disproportionately benefited higher-income groups.

Respondents frequently cited subsidized sites-and-services schemes implemented by state agencies as examples. According to interviewees, these projects often evolve into high-end residential areas rather than affordable housing developments for low-income households. Several respondents noted that residential plots provided by RAJUK have historically been allocated at prices significantly below prevailing market rates to politically influential or relatively affluent households. These perceptions correspond with earlier research suggesting that RAJUK has often distributed residential plots at subsidized prices to influential groups rather than to intended beneficiaries (Chowdhury, 1992). Some housing experts also argued that RAJUK increasingly operates in a manner similar to a private real estate developer while retaining the institutional advantage of acquiring land through its authority as a public agency. This observation aligns with Rahman's (2001) argument that RAJUK has functioned as a typical real estate company with the added power of compulsory land acquisition. Earlier studies likewise criticized RAJUK for primarily serving affluent groups while claiming to cater to all income categories (Islam, 1996; Islam, 2005).

Similar outcomes have been observed in public apartment projects. Although these initiatives were introduced to address housing shortages, interviewees argued that pricing structures and allocation procedures often exclude lower-income households. Previous studies similarly suggest that public housing programs in Dhaka have largely benefited upper-middle and high-income groups due to affordability constraints and flawed allocation mechanisms (Akter, 2013; Haque and Akter, 2016; Hossain, n.d.).

Another major concern relates to land acquisition for public housing projects. Interviewees noted that many sites-and-services schemes are developed on peripheral lands surrounding the city, which are frequently occupied by small farmers or low-income residents. Several respondents argued that affected landowners often experience delays or difficulties in receiving fair compensation following land acquisition. Similar concerns have been documented in previous research, which indicates that land acquisition in Bangladesh involves lengthy administrative procedures that frequently delay compensation payments (Morshed, 2014). Some respondents also suggested that corruption within the acquisition process can result in landowners receiving less than their entitled compensation, a concern highlighted in earlier reports (CARE, 2003).

Overall, the interview findings suggest that state-led housing interventions may unintentionally contribute to the redistribution of valuable urban land in favour of relatively affluent groups. In many cases, marginalized communities are displaced from peripheral land areas that later become valuable urban real estate. These dynamics resemble processes described by critical urban scholars as accumulation by dispossession, where the expansion of urban property markets occurs through the displacement and marginalization of less powerful populations.

Facilitator: Only Benefited the Well-Offs

Interview findings indicate that the facilitating role of the state in Dhaka's housing market has largely benefited higher-income groups. Under neoliberal policy frameworks, the state was expected to promote market efficiency by enabling private sector participation in housing development. However, respondents argued that many facilitating measures have primarily supported affluent investors and developers rather than improving housing accessibility for low- and middle-income households.

Use of Undeclared Money

Several interviewees highlighted the role of Section 19B of the Income Tax Ordinance 1984, introduced in 1999, which permitted individuals to invest undeclared or "black" money in real estate and legalize it through the payment of property transfer taxes. According to respondents, this provision stimulated speculative investment in the property market and contributed to the rapid escalation of apartment prices during the 2000–2010 period. Key informants noted that the sharp increase in housing prices after 2006 was partly driven by the influx of such capital into the real estate sector (Key Informant Interview, 2022).

While this policy increased market liquidity and encouraged investment in housing development, interviewees emphasized that it also intensified speculation in urban land and property markets. As a result, property values rose significantly, reducing housing affordability for lower- and middle-income households. In this sense, policies intended to stimulate investment in the housing sector inadvertently reinforced speculative dynamics and increased barriers to homeownership for many urban residents.

Subsidized Home Loans

Respondents also discussed the role of state-supported housing finance through the Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (BHBFC). The institution was originally established to support low- and middle-income households through subsidized housing loans. However, interviewees suggested that these financial facilities have often benefited higher-income groups. Earlier studies similarly indicate that the allocation of housing finance was influenced by political considerations and frequently served wealthier borrowers rather than the intended beneficiaries (Rahman, 2008; Hoek-Smith, 2000).

Interviewees also referred to recent subsidized housing loan programs provided to government employees at interest rates significantly lower than prevailing market rates. While such initiatives may stimulate demand within the housing market, respondents argued that they can also contribute to rising property prices by increasing purchasing power within a limited supply of housing. Consequently, households that do not have access to these subsidized loan schemes—particularly private-sector employees and informal workers—may face greater barriers to homeownership.

Legal and Regulatory Facilitation

Developers interviewed in this study also highlighted legal reforms that facilitated the growth of Dhaka's apartment market. One such reform allowed the registration of undivided and undemarcated land shares for apartment buyers. According to respondents, this change—strongly advocated by early real estate developers—enabled the expansion of apartment construction in the city by simplifying property transactions.

Interviewees also pointed to frequent modifications of development regulations, including adjustments to land-use zoning and building height limits, which were introduced to accommodate rapid urban growth and increasing demand for housing. Previous studies have documented similar regulatory changes that were often promoted by real estate developers seeking to expand development opportunities (Farzana, 2016; Nahrin, 2008; Shumi, 2006; Nancy, 2004).

Although these legal and regulatory adjustments facilitated the growth of the real estate sector, respondents argued that the benefits were unevenly distributed. Because the formal housing market primarily targets upper- and upper-middle-income households, these facilitating measures have largely supported the expansion of housing supply for wealthier groups rather than improving affordability for the broader population.

Public–Private Partnership (PPP)

Public–Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives were also discussed as a relatively recent strategy for housing provision. Interviewees frequently referred to the Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project (BRP), launched in 2004 with the objective of rehousing evicted squatters. The project aimed to deliver approximately 13,000 flats within five years through collaboration between the public and private sectors.

However, respondents noted that the initiative ultimately failed due to corruption, delays, and a lack of transparency in the selection of the private developer. Only a limited number of buildings were completed before the contract was cancelled, and the project was later redirected toward providing housing for government employees rather than the originally targeted low-income households (Akter, 2013).

Interviewees argued that the failure of the Bhashantek project illustrates the limitations of PPP initiatives when governance mechanisms are weak. Without effective oversight, transparent procedures, and clear accountability, such partnerships may fail to deliver affordable housing for the intended beneficiaries.

Overall, the findings suggest that although the state has played an active facilitating role in Dhaka's housing sector, many of these interventions have reinforced market dynamics that primarily benefit higher-income groups rather than addressing the housing needs of the broader urban population.

Redefining the Role of the State

Interview findings indicate that good governance is widely regarded as a prerequisite for improving housing provision in Dhaka. Housing experts emphasized the importance of stronger collaboration between public institutions and private developers to create integrated and contextsensitive housing solutions. Respondents also stressed that institutional capacity building is essential so that state agencies can effectively monitor, regulate, and facilitate housing markets. In addition, several interviewees argued that the state must maintain comprehensive and up-to-date information on housing supply, demand, and land markets to support informed policy interventions (Key Informant Interview, 2022).

A major concern raised by respondents relates to the availability and price of urban land. Housing experts frequently recommended policy tools such as land banking and decentralization. Decentralization was considered essential for reducing population pressure on Dhaka, which interviewees identified as a key factor contributing to the city's housing crisis. Land banking was also proposed as a mechanism through which the state could acquire and reserve land for future housing development, thereby strengthening its bargaining power in negotiations with private developers (Key Informant Interview, 2022).

Respondents further suggested several regulatory measures to discourage speculative land investment. These include revising ceilings on property ownership, strengthening monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and imposing higher taxes on vacant land or multiple property ownership. Interviewees also recommended that land for different housing groups be allocated within long-term physical planning frameworks and acquired in advance of urban development in order to ensure affordability.

Housing experts also proposed expanding access to affordable housing finance, including longer repayment periods for housing loans, targeted subsidies, and cross-subsidization mechanisms. The promotion of rental housing was mentioned as another potential strategy, particularly given the growing international recognition that housing systems should not rely exclusively on asset-based welfare approaches. Diversified housing systems that combine ownership and rental options may provide greater flexibility and accessibility for different income groups.

Overall, interview findings suggest that effective housing policies require a combination of regulatory and enabling roles for the state rather than exclusive reliance on market-based solutions. Most proposed interventions relate directly or indirectly to improving land availability for housing. While the role of state agencies as direct housing providers was often criticized, joint initiatives such as PPPs were viewed more positively when supported by transparent governance and appropriate institutional arrangements.

Several respondents also proposed adopting a block-based development approach to address the challenges of fragmented land ownership in Dhaka. Such an approach could enable coordinated redevelopment while ensuring more efficient land use.

Interviewees further noted that policy discussions on housing often focus primarily on the number of housing units produced and their prices. However, respondents emphasized that greater attention should be given to target groups, location, and design quality, as these factors determine whether housing initiatives can genuinely improve urban living conditions. Housing projects should be integrated with urban infrastructure such as transport networks, schools, healthcare facilities, and public services. Without such integration, even large-scale housing developments may have limited impact on the broader housing crisis.

Respondents also criticized the dominance of an asset-based welfare approach, where housing is treated primarily as an investment asset rather than as a social good. According to interviewees, housing policy should move toward a more balanced framework that recognizes the social function of housing while still engaging market actors. In this context, the state should remain the direct provider of housing for the poorest groups, while the market can play a larger role in providing housing for low- and middle-income households under appropriate regulatory oversight.

Based on the recommendations of interviewees and insights from the literature, an institutional framework (see Figure 4) was proposed to guide housing provision. Respondents suggested that housing targets for different income groups should be determined at both national and metropolitan levels through coordination among relevant ministries. While high-income housing can largely be left to the market, affordable housing for the majority of the population should be delivered through integrated public–private partnerships.

Within this framework, planning authorities such as RAJUK would allocate land for phased development under the guidance of the Ministry of Land and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. Decentralization and the development of new urban centers were identified as key strategies, although respondents also emphasized the importance of exploring urban redevelopment opportunities within Dhaka.

Interviewees further suggested that the Ministry of Finance should play a stronger role in housing planning to facilitate construction financing and affordable home loans at differentiated interest rates for various income groups. Cross-subsidization mechanisms could allow profits generated from higher-income housing developments to support subsidized loans or housing programs for middle-income households.

Finally, respondents emphasized the importance of adopting a neighbourhood-based planning approach. Public sector planners should design housing projects using a block-based model and consult with relevant stakeholders throughout the planning process. Such planning approaches should align with principles of affordability and sustainability, ensuring that housing development contributes to long-term improvements in urban living conditions (Mulliner *et al.,* 2013).

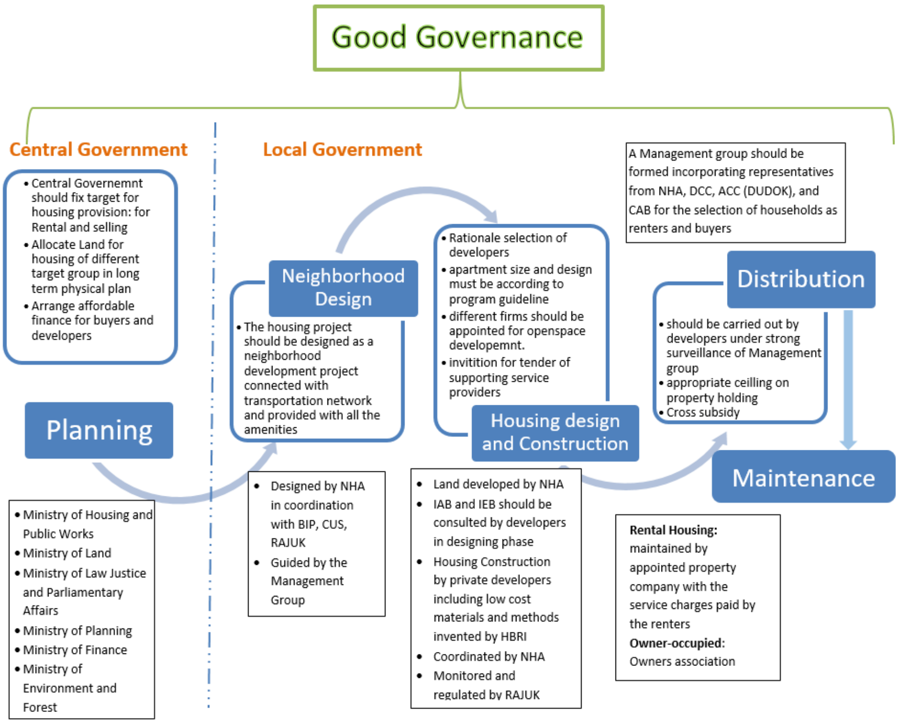


Figure 3: Institutional Framework for the provision of affordable housing through PPP
Source: Author, based on insights developed from literature review and interview findings

Guidelines for Public–Private Partnership (PPP) in the recommended institutional framework

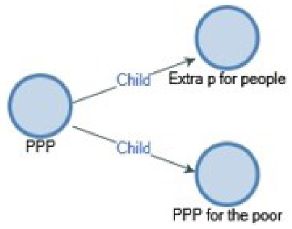
Public–Private Partnerships (PPP) involve collaboration between government institutions and private companies in financing, developing, and managing services. Unlike full privatization—where responsibilities are entirely transferred to the private sector—PPP arrangements distribute responsibilities, risks, and benefits between public and private actors. Such partnerships are often promoted as mechanisms that combine the regulatory oversight of the state with the technical and managerial efficiency of private enterprises (Bult-Spiering and Dewulf, 2006; Savas, 2000; Doherty, 2004). In the housing sector, PPPs have been widely recognized as a practical approach to addressing housing shortages in contexts where governments face limited financial capacity (Sengupta, 2006). However, scholars also warn that excessive reliance on privatized systems may weaken the protection of social objectives and citizens' rights (Harvey, 2005).

Interview findings indicate that PPP has gained increasing policy attention in Bangladesh as the government seeks to accelerate economic growth and attract private investment. Respondents noted that achieving middle-income status requires large investments in infrastructure and housing, which the state alone cannot finance. As foreign direct investment has remained limited, PPP has been promoted as an alternative mechanism to mobilize private capital. In this context, the Office for Public–Private Partnership was established in 2010 to facilitate PPP initiatives (PMO, 2010).

Despite its potential, interviewees identified several governance challenges in implementing PPP projects in the housing sector. The Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project (BRP), introduced to rehabilitate evicted squatters, was frequently cited as an example. Respondents argued that the project failed largely because of the inappropriate selection of the private developer. According to interviewees, weak transparency and patron–client relationships within public institutions contributed to the selection of a developer lacking adequate technical and financial capacity (Key Informant Interview, 2022).

The design of the housing units was also criticized. Interviewees noted that the apartments did not adequately reflect the needs and aspirations of the intended beneficiaries. The units were extremely small and lacked shared spaces that could support community interaction. Similar concerns were identified in earlier studies, which argued that cost reduction in the project focused mainly on minimizing apartment size rather than adopting innovative construction techniques (Akter, 2013).

Respondents further suggested that construction costs could have been reduced through the use of alternative materials and technologies. For example, previous research indicates that costs can be lowered through the use of concrete hollow blocks instead of traditional burnt clay bricks (Akter, 2013). Although national housing policy encourages the use of low-cost building materials, interviewees suggested that such options were not sufficiently explored in the project. This reflects broader governance challenges, including limited innovation in public housing initiatives and insufficient consultation with target beneficiaries during project design (Key Informant Interview, 2022).



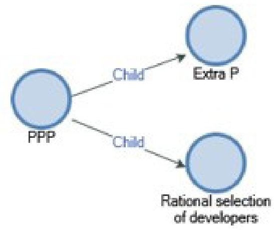


Figure 4: Housing experts'(left) and developers' (right) Suggestions to make PPP effective for the provision of affordable housing
Source: Generated by NVivo12 based on Interview data, 2023

Overall, the findings suggest that PPP has significant potential to expand housing provision in Bangladesh, but its effectiveness depends on transparent partner selection, strong institutional oversight, and the meaningful participation of intended beneficiaries in project design and implementation. Without these conditions, PPP initiatives risk failing to deliver affordable and socially appropriate housing.

Due to the limited financial capacity of the state, interview findings suggest that Public Private Partnerships (PPP) could provide an important opportunity to mobilize private capital for affordable housing provision. Large scale housing development requires substantial financial investment that the public sector alone often cannot provide. In this context, PPP arrangements are viewed as a practical mechanism through which government institutions and private developers can collaborate to expand housing supply. However, respondents expressed concerns regarding the functioning of the three components of PPP: public agencies, private developers, and people or beneficiaries. These concerns were largely informed by the shortcomings observed in the Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project and insights gathered during interviews (Figure 5). Addressing these issues was considered essential for ensuring that PPP initiatives can effectively deliver affordable housing for middle income households (MIHs) in Dhaka.

Efficiency of the First P (Public Agencies): Upholding Public Values

Housing experts emphasized that the effectiveness of PPP initiatives depends largely on the institutional capacity of public agencies. Previous studies indicate that public values such as accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and service quality may be strengthened or weakened depending on the efficiency of public institutions and their relationship with private partners (Reynaers, 2013; Reynaers and Graaf, 2014; Lonsdale, 2007; Weihe, 2008). Domberger and Jensen (1997) argue that these values can be reinforced through systematic performance monitoring, clearly defined service standards, and mechanisms that prevent or penalize noncompliance. These perspectives suggest that strong public oversight remains essential even when housing provision involves private sector participation.

Interviewees noted that in the Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project the role of public agencies was largely limited to appointing the private developer, while monitoring during construction and allocation phases remained limited. Respondents argued that stronger supervision throughout the project cycle might have prevented several problems that contributed to the project's failure. Experts therefore emphasized that institutions responsible for housing provision should play a more active role in supervising private sector performance and ensuring compliance with project standards.

Respondents also suggested that agencies such as the National Housing Authority (NHA) should promote innovative design strategies and cost efficient construction techniques in order to maintain affordability without excessively reducing apartment size. Interviewees highlighted the potential contribution of the Housing and Building Research Institute (HBRI) in developing sustainable and low cost building materials. They also recommended greater engagement of professional bodies such as the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) and the Institute of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) in planning and implementation stages to strengthen technical standards and transparency.

Rational Appointment of the Second P (Private Developers)

Transparency in selecting private developers was identified as another critical factor affecting PPP performance. Interviewees frequently referred to the lack of transparency in appointing the private developer in the Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project. According to respondents, the developer selection process appeared to be influenced more by political affiliations than by technical expertise or financial capability. As a result, the selected developer lacked sufficient capacity to successfully implement the project.

Housing experts and developers interviewed in this study emphasized the importance of transparent and competitive bidding procedures in PPP projects. Respondents suggested that public agencies should invite open tenders and evaluate proposals using clearly defined criteria such as technical competence, financial capacity, and experience in similar developments. Establishing such procedures would help ensure that selected developers possess the necessary resources and expertise to implement large scale housing projects effectively.

Interviewees also argued that transparent procurement systems could strengthen accountability and increase public confidence in PPP initiatives. When private partners are selected through merit based procedures rather than informal networks, the risk of project failure due to managerial or financial weaknesses can be significantly reduced. Transparent developer selection was therefore considered essential for ensuring that PPP initiatives achieve their objective of providing affordable housing for MIHs (Figure 5).

Inclusion of the Third P (People): Ensuring Affordability and Sustainability

Respondents also emphasized the importance of including intended beneficiaries in the planning and implementation stages of PPP housing projects. Previous studies highlight that housing affordability should not be assessed solely in financial terms but must also consider housing quality, accessibility, and suitability for different social groups (Whitehead *et al.,* 2009; Stone, 2006; Bogdon and Can, 1997; Rea *et al.,* 2008). These perspectives indicate that housing policy should address broader social and spatial dimensions of affordability.

Interviewees noted that housing solutions that appear affordable for one group may not necessarily be appropriate for another due to differences in income levels, household structures, and livelihood patterns. Apartment size, layout, and location can therefore influence whether housing units meet the needs of intended residents. Respondents emphasized the importance of incorporating representatives of target groups in consultation and decision making processes so that housing projects better reflect the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries.

Such participation can improve the social sustainability of housing initiatives by ensuring that housing design, location, and financing mechanisms correspond with the realities of residents. Respondents also stressed that the success of PPP initiatives ultimately depends on good governance, particularly in addressing corruption and institutional weaknesses within public agencies. Strengthening governance structures and stakeholder participation was therefore considered essential for expanding affordable housing provision in Dhaka.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that although Bangladesh adopted a market enabling housing policy, the state has not been able to facilitate the formal housing market to expand supply for all income groups. Interview findings suggest that the absence of effective regulatory mechanisms, combined with intense competition among land and housing developers, has contributed to rapidly increasing land prices in Dhaka. As a result, homeownership has become increasingly unaffordable for a large share of the city's population.

Both housing experts and developers interviewed in this study criticized the role of the state in the housing sector. Respondents argued that state interventions as regulator, facilitator, and provider have not been implemented effectively. Several interviewees noted that public initiatives intended to support housing provision have often benefited middle and higher income groups, which contradicts national housing policy objectives aimed at ensuring broader housing access.

Recent policy discussions in Bangladesh increasingly emphasize PPP as a potential mechanism for addressing housing shortages that the private market alone has failed to resolve. Most respondents acknowledged that PPP could mobilize private investment and expand housing supply. However, interview findings suggest that PPP should not be viewed as a standalone solution. Strengthening governance, ensuring transparent selection of private partners, and incorporating participation of beneficiaries were identified as key conditions for improving housing provision and promoting more inclusive urban development in Dhaka.

REFERENCES

Afenah, A. (2009). *Conceptualizing the effects of neoliberal urban policies on housing rights: An analysis of the attempted unlawful forced eviction of an informal settlement in Accra, Ghana* (DPU Working Paper No. 139). University College London, Development Planning Unit.

Akter, A. (2013). *A study on physical requirements of housing for low–middle income families in Dhaka City: An attempt towards affordability* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

Azad, A. K. M. (2011). *Analyzing housing policy in Dhaka: Exploring ways from housing policy in Seoul to tackle the housing problem in Dhaka* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Korea University.

Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies.* SAGE.

Bogdon, A. S., & Can, A. (1997). Indicators of local housing affordability: Comparative and spatial approaches. *Real Estate Economics, 25*(1), 43–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6229.00705

BRAC Institute of Governance and Development. (2017). The state of cities 2017: Housing in Dhaka. BRAC University.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brenner, N., & Theodore, N. (2002). Cities and the geographies of "actually existing neoliberalism." *Antipode, 33*(3), 349–379. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00246

Bult-Spiering, M., & Dewulf, G. (2006). *Strategic issues in public–private partnerships.* Wiley-Blackwell.

CARE Bangladesh. (2003). Land policy and administration in Bangladesh: A literature review. CARE SDU Reports and Studies.

Chowdhury, A. I. (1992). Urban land market in Bangladesh. In N. Islam & A. Islam (Eds.), *Urban land management in Bangladesh* (pp. 115–122). Ministry of Land, Government of Bangladesh.

Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions. (2006). *Government obligation on forced evictions.* http://www.oldsite.cohre.org/view_page.php?page_id=101#article153

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Deshpande, S. (2004). *Slums of Mumbai: Crying for bottoms-up approach. In Mumbai city development strategies* (pp. 13–44). Indian Merchants' Chamber Economic Research and Training Foundation.

Doherty, J. (2004). European housing policies: Bringing the state back in? *European Journal of Housing Policy, 4*(3), 253–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461671042000280530

Doling, J. (2002). The South and East Asia housing policy model. In M. R. Agus, J. Doling, & D.-S. Lee (Eds.), *Housing policy systems in South and East Asia* (pp. 178–188). Palgrave Macmillan.

Doling, J., & Ford, J. (2007). A union of homeowners [Editorial]. *European Journal of Housing and Planning, 7*(2), 113–127. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616710701309346

Domberger, S., & Jensen, P. (1997). Contracting out by the public sector: Theory, evidence, prospects. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 13*(4), 67–78. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/13.4.67

Farzana, F. (2016). Dhaka: An example of land-use succession where market forces supersede planning regulations. *Jahangirnagar University Planning Review, 14*, 1–16.

Government of Bangladesh. (1993). *National housing policy 1993*. Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

Haque, A., & Aktar, M. (2016). Public sector housing initiative for low-income people: Evidence from 'Uttara Model Town' project, Dhaka. *Global Business and Economics Review, 10*(1), 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1504/GBER.2008.016600

Harvey, D. (2004). The 'new' imperialism: Accumulation by dispossession. *Socialist Register, 40*, 63–87.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.

Hoek-Smit, M. C. (2000). Housing finance in Bangladesh: Improving access to housing finance by middle and lower income groups. In N. Islam (Ed.), *Urban land tenure and housing finance in Bangladesh.* Centre for Urban Studies.

Hossain, K. H. (n.d.). *Public policies on urban land and housing in Bangladesh: The context of governance*. Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

Islam, N. (1996). *Dhaka from city to mega city: Perspectives on people, places, planning and development issues*. Urban Studies Programme, University of Dhaka.

Islam, N. (2005). *Dhaka now: Contemporary urban development.* Bangladesh Geographic Society.

Kadi, J., & Ronald, R. (2014). Market-based housing reforms and the 'right to the city': The variegated experiences of New York, Amsterdam and Tokyo. *International Journal of Housing Policy, 14*(3), 268–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2014.928098

Khan, M. H. (2005). Markets, states and democracy: Patron–client networks and the case for democracy in developing countries. *Democratization, 12*(5), 705–725. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340500322555

Lonsdale, C. (2007). The challenge of public–private partnerships. *Local Government Studies, 33*(2), 311–319. https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930601186264

Maxwell, J. A. (2009). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods* (2nd ed., pp. 214–254). SAGE.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. SAGE.

Morshed, M. M. (2014). Illegality of private subdivision and access to land for housing by the urban poor in Dhaka. *Habitat International, 44*, 386–393. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2014.08.005

Mujeri, M. K. (2018, October 2). *Crony capitalism afflicts the economy: Why and remedies.* The Financial Express.

Mulliner, E., Smallbone, K., & Maliene, V. (2013). An assessment of sustainable housing affordability using a multiple-criteria decision-making method. *Omega, 41*, 270–279. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.omega.2012.05.002

Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789

Nahrin, K. (2008). Violation of land use plan and its impact on community life in Dhaka City. *Jahangirnagar Planning Review, 6*, 37–47.

Nancy, S. J. (2004). *Effects of commercialization on the adjoining residential areas: A study of Dhanmondi and Banani* [Unpublished MURP dissertation]. Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 11*(4), 327–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401305

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Prime Minister's Office. (2010). *Policy and strategy for public–private partnership (PPP).* Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Quadir, F. (2000). *The political economy of pro-market reforms in Bangladesh: Regime consolidation through economic liberalization?* Contemporary South Asia, 9(2), 197–212. https://doi.org/10.1080/713658731

Rahman, K. K. (2008). Development of housing finance and its impact on socio-economic uplift in the emerging economy in Bangladesh. In *Proceedings of the IFC conference on measuring financial innovation* and its impact (pp. 1–15). International Finance Corporation.

Rahman, M. (2001). Bastee eviction and housing rights: A case of Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Habitat International, 25*(1), 49–67.

https://doi.org/10.1016/S0197-3975(00)00010-4

Rahman, M. A. U., Chowdhury, T., & Ahmed, I. (2011, October 20–22). *Can an enabling approach promote the transformation for scaling-up pro-poor housing initiatives in Bangladesh?* [Conference paper]. 12th N-AERUS Conference, Madrid, Spain.

Rea, W., Yuen, J., Engeland, J., & Figueroa, R. (2008). The dynamics of housing affordability. *Perspectives on Labour and Income, 20*(1), 37–48.

Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh. (2012). *A comprehensive study on the real estate sector of Bangladesh.* REHAB.

Reynaers, A. (2013). Public values in public–private partnerships. *Public Administration Review, 74*(1), 41–50. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12137

Reynaers, A., & De Graaf, G. (2014). Public values in public–private partnerships. *International Journal of Public Administration, 37*(2), 120–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2013.836665

Rolnik, R. (2013). Late neoliberalism: The financialization of homeownership and housing rights. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 37*(3), 1058–1066. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12062

Rolnik, R. (2020). *Urban warfare: Housing under the empire of finance.* Verso.

Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research.* Oxford University Press.

Savas, E. S. (2000). *Privatization and public–private partnerships.* Chatham House.

Sengupta, U. (2006). Government intervention and public–private partnerships in housing delivery in Kolkata. *Habitat International, 30*(3), 448–461. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2005.04.005

Shin, H. B. (2009). Property-based redevelopment and gentrification: The case of Seoul. *Geoforum, 40*(5), 906–917. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.06.003

Shumi, S. (2006). *Commercialization impact of Dhanmondi residential area* [Unpublished bachelor's thesis]. Jahangirnagar University.

Smith, N. (2002). New urbanism: Gentrification as global urban strategy. *Antipode, 34*(3), 427–450. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00249

Transparency International Bangladesh. (2007). *National household survey 2007 on corruption in Bangladesh.* Transparency International Bangladesh.

Wang, Y. P., Shao, L., Murie, A., & Cheng, J. (2012). The maturation of the neo-liberal housing market in urban China. *Housing Studies, 27*(3), 343–359. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2012.651106

Watson, M. (2009). Planning for the future of asset-based welfare? New Labour, financialized economic agency and the housing market. P*lanning Practice & Research, 24*(1), 41–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/02697450902742148

Weihe, G. (2008). Public–private partnerships and public–private value trade-offs. *Public Money & Management, 28*(3), 153–158. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9302.2008.00637.x

Whitehead, C., Monk, S., Clarke, A., Holmans, A., & Markkanen, S. (2009). *Measuring housing affordability: A review of data sources.* Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research.

Wong, T.-C. (2006). Revitalizing Singapore's central city through gentrification: The role of waterfront housing. *Urban Policy and Research, 24*(2), 181–199. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111140600712054

World Bank. (1993). *Housing: Enabling markets to work* (World Bank Policy Paper). https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/387041468345854972/Housing-enabling-markets-to-work

Wu, F. (2015). Commodification and housing market cycles in Chinese cities. *International Journal of Housing Policy, 15*(1), 6–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2014.925255