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REVIEW ARTICLE

ASSESSMENT OF URBAN LAND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICES IN MEHALMEDA TOWN, NORTH SHEWA ZONE ANRS, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

Urban land administration is a critical aspect of urban development, particularly in developing countries. This study evaluates urban land administration practices in MehalMeda Town, Amhara Region, Ethiopia, using a mixed-methods approach. Document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a survey of households and landowners were conducted to identify challenges and strengths of the current system. The study found that the urban land administration system in MehalMeda Town faces numerous challenges, including weak legal and regulatory frameworks, inadequate institutional capacity, and lack of public participation. The study also identified some strengths, such as the presence of local land use plans and some efforts to implement participatory approaches. However, these strengths are not adequately leveraged due to the existing challenges. The study recommends various measures to improve urban land administration in the study area, such as strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks, enhancing institutional capacity, and promoting public participation. The findings have broader implications for urban land administration in Ethiopia and other developing countries, particularly in the context of rapid urbanization and land market dynamics.The study contributes to the literature on land administration by identifying the challenges and strengths of the urban land administration system and proposing practical measures to enhance it. It also highlights the importance of improving land administration practices to ensure the efficient and equitable use of urban land, which is crucial for sustainable urban development.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study: Urbanization is a global phenomenon, and it is expected to continue in the coming decades. According to the United Nations (United Nations. (2018)), the world's urban population is projected to increase from 4.2 billion in 2018 to 6.7 billion by 2050. In developing countries, this rapid urbanization is accompanied by significant challenges, such as housing shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation. Effective urban land administration is crucial in addressing these challenges and promoting sustainable urban development (Wu, X., Zhu, X., & Zhou, Y. (2016), Enemark, S., & McLaren, R. (2016)). Urban land administration refers to the legal, institutional, and organizational arrangements that govern the management, use, and transfer of urban land. It encompasses various functions, such as land registration, land use planning, land valuation, and land dispute resolution. These functions are essential for ensuring secure land tenure, promoting efficient land markets, and facilitating sustainable urban development (Enemark, S., & McLaren, R. (2016)). In many developing countries, including Ethiopia, the urban land administration system faces numerous challenges. These challenges include weak legal and regulatory frameworks, inadequate institutional capacity, lack of public participation, and corruption (Birru, Y. A. (2014), Zeleke, G. T., & Yasuda, H. (2017), Mulugeta, T. (2019), Ghebru, H., & Holden, S. (2019), Tilahun, B. (2019)). As a result, urban land administration often fails to meet the needs of urban residents, particularly the poor and marginalized (Birru, Y. A. (2014), Mulugeta, T. (2019)). MehalMeda Town, located in the North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region, is one such urban area facing challenges in urban land administration. Despite efforts by the government to improve the system, issues such as informal land transactions, unclear property rights, and lack of transparency continue to hinder the effective management of urban land. Therefore, there is a need to assess the urban land administration practices in MehalMeda Town, identify the challenges, and recommend measures to improve the system.

Statement of the Problem: Despite efforts by the government to improve the system, informal land transactions, unclear property rights, and lack of transparency continue to hinder the effective management of urban land. Therefore, the research aims to assess the current urban land administration practices in MehalMeda Town, identify the challenges, and recommend measures to improve the system. The effective administration of urban land is essential to ensure sustainable development and provide a conducive environment for economic growth and social well-being. However, in many developing countries, including Ethiopia, the urban land administration system faces significant challenges, such as weak legal and regulatory frameworks, inadequate institutional capacity, lack of

public participation, and corruption. These challenges often lead to issues such as informal land transactions, unclear property rights, and lack of transparency, which hinders the effective management of urban land.

Mehal Meda Town, located in the North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region in Ethiopia, is one such urban area facing challenges in urban land administration. Despite efforts by the government to improve the system, the absence of a well-established land administration system has resulted in disputes and conflicts over land. These conflicts often affect the poor and marginalized residents of the town, who do not have secure land tenure, and they are unable to access basic services such as water and sanitation. Additionally, inadequate urban planning leads to housing shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation, which negatively impact the town's economic and social development. Therefore, this research aims to address the challenges facing the urban land administration system in MehalMeda Town, North Shewa Zone ANRS, Ethiopia. The study will assess the current urban land administration practices, identify the challenges, and recommend measures to improve the system. The research will adopt a mixed-method approach that will involve both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The study will use structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with key informants to gather data from residents, government officials, and other stakeholders. The findings of this research will contribute to the existing knowledge on urban land administration in Ethiopia and provide recommendations for improving the system in MehalMeda Town.The main objective of this research is to identify the challenges associated with urban land administration practices in MehalMeda Town, North Shewa Zone ANRS, Ethiopia and recommend solutions to promote sustainable urban development.

METHODOLOGY

This study will use a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The qualitative data will be collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions, while the quantitative data will be collected through a survey questionnaire. The study will also employ a case study approach, focusing on MehalMeda Town as the case study area. The research approach began with a comprehensive review of existing literature on urban land administration practices and challenges. This provided a theoretical background for the study and ensured that the research was grounded in existing knowledge. The review covered relevant studies, reports, and policy documents, both locally and internationally. Research instruments were then developed based on the research questions and the literature review. These instruments included a survey questionnaire, key informant interview guide, and a focus group discussion guide. The survey questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data, while the key informant interviews and focus group discussions collected qualitative data. The data collection process involved the administration of the survey questionnaire, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with stakeholders involved in urban land administration in MehalMeda Town. The survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of the population, and key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with relevant stakeholders, such as government officials, community leaders, and urban land professionals. The data analysis techniques for the study involved both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods. The qualitative data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed thematically, using software such as NVivo. Thematic analysis involved identifying and organizing patterns and themes within the data, which were then interpreted and reported in the findings section. The quantitative data collected through the survey questionnaire were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, using software such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data and provide an overview of the responses. Inferential statistics, such as correlation and regression analysis, were used to examine relationships between variables and test hypotheses. Additionally, factor analysis was used to identify underlying factors that contribute to the challenges in urban land administration. The synthesized findings from both the qualitative and quantitative data analysis were presented in tables, charts, and graphs to aid in the interpretation of the results. The findings were also triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the urban land administration practices and challenges in MehalMeda Town. The recommendations for improving the urban land administration system in MehalMeda Town were based on the study findings and presented in a clear and concise manner.
Based on the study findings, recommendations were developed to improve the urban land administration system in MehalMeda Town, North Shewa Zone ANRS, Ethiopia. These recommendations were based on the identified challenges and aimed at improving the legal and regulatory frameworks, institutional capacity, public participation, and transparency of the urban land administration system. The recommendations were presented in a clear and concise manner, making them easy to implement. The sampling technique used for this study is a combination of probability and purposive sampling. For the land customers, a probability sampling technique will be used to select a representative sample from the population of land users in MehalMeda Town. This will involve randomly selecting individuals from a list of registered land users obtained from the municipality. For the land sector experts, purposive sampling will be used to select individuals with relevant knowledge and experience in urban land administration.

The formula for sample size calculation for the land customers is as follows:

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

where:

- n is the sample size
- N is the population size
- e is the margin of error (expressed as a proportion)

Therefore, n = 100 / (1 + 100(0.05^2))

n = 100 / (1 + 0.25)
n = 100 / 1.25
n = 80

Therefore, the sample size for a population of 100, with a margin of error of 0.05, would be 80. Assuming a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, the sample size for land customers can be calculated as follows:

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

n = 44 / (1 + 44(0.05^2))
n = 44 / (1 + 0.11)
n = 39.64

Rounding up to the nearest whole number, the recommended sample size for land customers is 40.

RESULTS

Customer Evaluation of the Level of Urban Land Administration Services: The majority of customers (53.8%) specified "others" when asked about the type of services they need, with demarcation being the most commonly mentioned service (22.5%). About half of the respondents (50%) found the service forms easily understandable and accessible, while 30% reported that they were not. Around two-thirds of the respondents (67.5%) evaluated the LAP as "poor," followed by 18.8% who rated it as "fair."

In terms of the time taken to complete services, a significant proportion of respondents (40%) reported that it takes a "very long" time, while 27.5% found it to be "long." The majority of respondents (61.3%) had visited the LAP more than four times. Only 23.8% of the respondents reported that there were enough experts to respond to their needs, while 48.8% were unsure. Overall, the results suggest that customers perceive the LAP in MehalMeda Town to be inadequate in terms of accessibility, time to complete services, availability of experts, and overall quality of service. The findings can inform the development of recommendations for improving the LAP in MehalMeda Town.

Experts' Perspectives on the Existing Land Administration Procedure (LAP) and its Implementation in the Organization: The first question highlights the frequency of land cases that come to the experts. The majority of the experts (76.7%) reported that they often or very often receive land cases. This suggests that there is a high demand for land services from the experts' point of view.The second and third questions focus on the experts' evaluation of LAP before and after the organizational reform. The experts' evaluation of LAP was poor before the reform, with 66.6% of them rating it as bad or very bad. After the reform, the evaluation did not improve significantly, with 60% of the experts still rating it as bad or very bad. This suggests that the organizational reform did not have a significant impact on the LAP's quality.

Moving on to the fourth question, it focuses on the frequency of monitoring and evaluation of LAP in the organization. More than half of the experts (56.7%) reported that they monitor and evaluate LAP on a daily basis. This suggests that the organization places a high emphasis on monitoring and evaluating the quality of LAP.Finally, the last question asks about the experts' assessment of the coordination between their organization and others for good land governance. The majority of the experts (66.7%) rated the coordination as bad or fair. This suggests that there is room for improvement in terms of coordination between the organization and other stakeholders to ensure good land governance.

Identifying Major Gaps and Challenges of Land Administration in the Study Area: The first two questions relate to the office's physical setup and technology. The majority of respondents (88.8%) disagreed that the office has a good-looking structure and compound and uses modern technology for its services. The mean scores for both questions were low, indicating that respondents generally did not have a positive view on these aspects.

The next three questions relate to procedures and systems for land administration. The vast majority of respondents (87.5%) disagreed that the procedures for new property formation, land transactions, and the recording system of land information are simple and clear. The mean scores for these questions were also low, indicating that respondents perceived these procedures and systems to be complex and unclear. The last two questions relate to the responsiveness and treatment of experts. The majority of respondents (88.8% and 87.5%, respectively) disagreed that the responsiveness of experts and their treatment were satisfying. The mean scores for these questions were also low, indicating that respondents generally perceived the experts as not being responsive and treated poorly.

Assessment of Expert Perceptions on Land Administration Services Capacity: The output is a summary of survey responses on various aspects related to the land administration office. The survey asked participants to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements using a Likert scale. The first question was about the appearance and cleanliness of the office compound, and most participants (73.3%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that they did not find the office attractive and clean. The second question focused on the setup of the land administration office, and the responses were more evenly split, with 53.4% of participants either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the setup was good. The third question asked about the implementation of rules and regulations, with half of the participants indicating that they agreed that they were well implemented.

The fourth question was about the use of modern technology in the office, with 50% of participants indicating that they agreed that the office used modern technology. The fifth question asked about the leadership of the land administration process, with almost half (46.7%) of the participants agreeing that it was good. The sixth question focused on the commitment of experts to serve customers, and the responses were more negative, with 60% of participants either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the experts were committed. The seventh question asked whether materials were available to provide good service, and a majority (63.3%) of participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed that materials were available. Finally, the eighth question asked about the budget allocation for providing good service, with most participants (73.3%) indicating that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was enough budget allocation. Overall, the survey responses suggest that there are areas where the land administration office can improve, particularly in terms of appearance, materials availability, and budget allocation.

Assessment of Customer Perception on Land Administration Services

Participation: Only 2.5% of respondents agreed that customers significantly participate in maintaining good land governance, while the majority (88.8%) disagreed or were neutral. The mean score for this question was 2.10 with a standard deviation of 0.47. For the second and third questions, only a small percentage agreed that customers significantly participate in the land delivery process and performance evaluation of land administration. The mean scores for these questions were 2.14 and 2.17, respectively, with standard deviations of 0.61 and 0.57. Regarding the existence of customers' consultation for policy and program implementation, the majority of respondents disagreed or were neutral, with a mean score of 2.1 and a standard deviation of 0.65. Overall, the mean score for customers' participation across all questions was 2.13 with a standard deviation of 0.57, indicating low perceived customer participation in land administration services.

Transparency: accordingly, 60% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is free flow of information on laws and regulations, while question two indicated that 53.7% of respondents expressed some level of disagreement or neutrality about the direct accessibility of land information to customers. Question three found that 60% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that land administration services are provided in a timely and transparent manner, and question four revealed that 70% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that there is a clear and open service procedure in the land administration process. The mean score for the transparency questions was 2.32 out of 5, indicating that there may be room for improvement in providing access to information and clear, open service procedures in land administration processes.

Accountability: The first question had the highest percentage of strongly agree responses (70%) regarding informal payments to experts. The majority of respondents (71.3%) agreed with the statement about periodic monitoring and evaluation system of experts in the second question. For the third question on mechanisms enabling customers to question and control land experts, most respondents (76.3%) disagreed. Similarly, in the fourth question related to decision makers' accountability, most respondents (77.5%) disagreed. The mean for accountability is 2.95, indicating a moderate level of agreement on accountability in land administration.

Equity: 70.8% disagreed with equal access, 72.9% disagreed with impartial service delivery, 63.3% disagreed with fair compensation, and 68.3% disagreed with reasonable service delivery fees. Mean scores for equity ranged from 2.24 to 2.42 with moderate variation. The overall mean score for equity was 2.29 with a standard deviation of 0.63, indicating low perceived equity in land administration services.

Efficiency and Effectiveness: Most customers (82.5%) disagreed that the experts provide services according to standards, and a similar proportion (83.8%) disagreed that the office meets their needs. Also, the majority of customers (82.5%) disagreed that the office has standardized service quality, while most customers (83.8%) disagreed that there are special mechanisms for disadvantaged groups. The mean score for efficiency and effectiveness was 2.11 with a standard deviation of 0.56, suggesting dissatisfaction with land administration services.

Expert Evaluation of Good Governance Principles in Land Administration Processes: This study analyzed the perceptions of experts on different principles of land administration, including participation, transparency, accountability, equity, and efficiency and effectiveness, and found varying levels of positivity and negativity towards each principle with different levels of agreement and disagreement among the respondents.

- **Participation**: The mean score for the participation principle is 3.38, which is slightly above the neutral point (3.0), indicating that overall, the respondents are somewhat positive about the level of customer participation in land administration plans and evaluation. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 0.88 indicates that there is a wide range of opinions on this issue among the experts.

Assessing the Implementation of Good Governance Principles in an Office

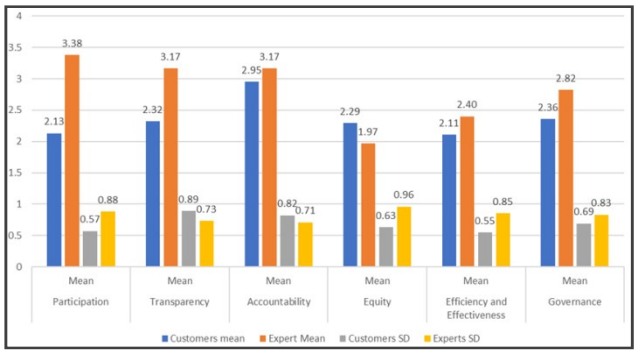

Figure 1. Overall Land Customers' Response on Good Governance Principles

- **Transparency**: The mean score for the transparency principle is 3.17, which is also slightly above the neutral point, indicating that overall, the respondents are somewhat positive about the transparency of the land administration process in the city. The standard deviation of 0.73 is relatively low, indicating that there is less variability in opinions among the experts on this issue compared to participation.
- **Accountability**: The mean score for the accountability principle is 3.17, which is the same as the transparency principle. This indicates that overall, the experts are somewhat positive about the presence of accountability mechanisms in the land administration office. The standard deviation of 0.71 is relatively low, indicating that there is less variability in opinions among the experts on this issue.
- **Equity**: The mean score for the equity principle is 1.97, which is below the neutral point. This indicates that overall, the experts are negative about the level of equity in access to housing land and land information, and the fairness of compensation for those who lose their holdings. The relatively high standard deviation of 0.96 indicates that there is a wide range of opinions on this issue among the experts.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness**: The mean score for the efficiency and effectiveness principle is 2.65, which is below the neutral point. This indicates that overall, the experts are negative about the affordability of the land administration process and the timeliness of decision-making. The relatively high standard deviation of 0.81 indicates that there is a wide range of opinions on this issue among the experts.

Assessing the Implementation of Good Governance Principles in an Office: The results displayed in Figure 1: indicate that the implementation of Good Governance principles in the office has not been successful, as evidenced by the mean value and standard deviation for both customers and experts. Specifically, the mean value for customers was 2.362, which suggests that customers have a relatively negative perception of the office's implementation of Good Governance principles. Additionally, the standard deviation of 0.38 suggests that there is relatively low agreement among customers on this issue. On the other hand, the mean value for experts was 3.017, which suggests that they have a relatively more positive perception of the office's implementation of Good Governance principles. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 0.595 indicates that there is a considerable level of variability in the expert opinions on this issue. Overall, the data suggests that there is room for improvement in the office's implementation of Good Governance principles to meet the expectations of both customers and experts.

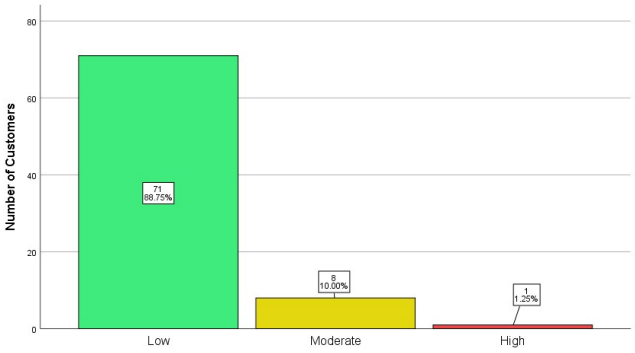

Figure 1. Overall response rate of land customers on Satisfaction

According to the ratings presented in Figure 2: Regarding the overall service delivery of the land development and management office, a significant majority of the respondents, over 71%, have rated the service delivery as low. Additionally, 10.0% of the respondents rated the service delivery as very low. Respondents cited reasons such as low levels of work completion, lengthy processes and waiting times, unfair compensation payments, and poor reception from the office. This poor service delivery has led to frustration amongst customers, which has been identified as a trigger for corruption, as customers may seek short-cuts to have their applications approved. Such a situation has resulted in low morale amongst customers and has negatively impacted the land administration institutions in the study area. It is evident that the land development and management office needs to improve their service delivery to enhance customer satisfaction and to combat corruption in the land administration process.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are consistent with several previous studies that have highlighted the challenges facing land administration institutions in developing countries. For example, a study by Deininger and Feder (2009) found that the lack of transparency, accountability, and customer participation were key factors contributing to corruption in land administration processes. Similarly, a study by Osei-Tutu et al. (2017) found that the lack of equity in land administration processes was a significant challenge facing land administration institutions in Ghana. In this study, the principle of equity received the lowest rating, with respondents expressing negative opinions about the fairness of compensation payments and access to land information. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlight the importance of efficient and effective service delivery in enhancing customer satisfaction and reducing corruption.

A study by Ayee et al. (2015) found that poor service delivery was a key trigger for corruption in land administration processes in Ghana. The results of this study support this finding, as poor service delivery was identified as a significant reason for the low ratings of the land development and management office's overall service delivery.

Another important finding of this study is the importance of customer participation in land administration processes. The principle of participation received a relatively positive rating in this study, indicating that respondents were somewhat satisfied with the level of customer participation in land administration plans and evaluations. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have emphasized the importance of customer participation in reducing corruption and enhancing transparency and accountability in land administration processes (Deininger and Feder, 2009; Ayee et al., 2015). In addition to the studies previously discussed, there are other comparative studies and literature that provide insights into the challenges faced by land administration institutions in developing countries. A study conducted by Enemark et al. (2014) analyzed the challenges and opportunities for improving land administration in Africa. The study identified the lack of political will, inadequate funding, and a shortage of qualified personnel as some of the major challenges facing land administration institutions in Africa. The study also noted that the lack of proper land administration systems can result in conflict over land rights, which can undermine economic development. Similarly, a study by Zevenbergen et al. (2016) examined the challenges of implementing land administration systems in post-conflict countries. The study found that the challenges included the lack of legal frameworks, weak institutional capacity, and inadequate resources. The study also noted that conflict and displacement can lead to land-related disputes, which can further complicate the implementation of land administration systems. These studies highlight the importance of having adequate resources, legal frameworks, and institutional capacity for effective land administration. They also emphasize the need for political will and commitment to address the challenges facing land administration institutions. Improving the capacity and resources of land administration institutions can help to ensure that land administration systems are effective and efficient, which can help to promote economic development and reduce the likelihood of conflict over land rights. Furthermore, it is important to consider the role of technology in improving land administration systems. A study by Srinivasan and Golub (2018) explored the potential of blockchain technology in land administration. The study noted that blockchain technology has the potential to increase transparency, reduce corruption, and improve efficiency in land administration systems. The study also identified challenges to implementing blockchain technology in land administration, such as the need for legal frameworks and institutional capacity to support the technology. In conclusion, the challenges facing land administration institutions in developing countries are complex and multifaceted. Adequate resources, legal frameworks, and institutional capacity are crucial for effective land administration systems. Political will and commitment are also important for addressing the challenges facing land administration institutions. The potential of technology, such as block chain, to improve land administration systems should also be considered. Future research should continue to explore strategies for improving land administration in developing countries to ensure that land administration systems are effective and efficient, which can help to promote economic development and reduce conflict over land rights.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, effective land administration services are essential for good governance and the efficient use of land. This study reveals significant challenges in customer satisfaction, corruption, transparency, and accountability in the land administration system in the study area. The study indicates a positive outlook towards participation, transparency, and accountability principles, but significant shortcomings in equity and efficiency and effectiveness principles. The study emphasizes the importance of addressing these challenges to improve the land administration system's efficiency, transparency, and accountability and enhance customer satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussions, several recommendations can be made to improve the urban land administration practices in Mehal Meda Town and address the challenges faced by the system.

Land Development and Management Office: To improve the current land administration system, the Land Development and Management Office should undertake an assessment to identify areas for improvement. Additionally, the office should establish a customer service charter that outlines the level of service customers should expect. To improve transparency and accountability, the office should develop and implement a system for tracking and reporting on the status of land applications. Staff should be trained on customer service, ethics, and anti-corruption measures. The office should also promote public participation by providing opportunities for engagement, feedback, and involvement in decision-making processes. This will help ensure that the land administration system is accountable and responsive to the needs of the public.

Government: The government should take several measures to improve the land administration system. Firstly, it should establish an anti-corruption task force and impose penalties for corrupt practices while also providing whistleblower protection. Additionally, increasing budgetary allocations to the land administration sector can help improve service delivery, and providing incentives to land administration staff can promote ethical behavior and discourage corruption. Developing and implementing a national land policy would also guide land administration practices. Lastly, the government should strengthen the legal framework governing land administration to enhance transparency and accountability.

Civil society Organizations: Can play a vital role in improving the land administration sector by increasing public awareness on land administration procedures and citizens' rights. They can advocate for reforms that promote transparency, accountability, and improved service delivery. Collaborating with the government and other stakeholders to monitor the implementation of land administration policies and regulations is also crucial. By working together, civil society organizations can help ensure that the land administration system is fair, just, and responsive to the needs of the public. These tasks will help to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of the land administration system and promote good governance.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Ethics approval for this study was taken from Debre Berhan University and North Shoa zone administrative office.

Consent for publication: Not applicable

Availability of data and materials: The datasets used and/ or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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