

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: **IJAR- 59330**

Title: Many Plans, Thin Pipes: The Delivery Deficit in Bangladesh's Climate Governance.

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after Moderate revision.....

Accept after Major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✓		
Techn. Quality		✓		
Clarity			✓	
Significance			✓	

Reviewer Name: **Dr. ANAPANA GOPAL**

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

1. General Comments

This manuscript examines why climate vulnerability persists in Bangladesh despite the expansion of national climate policies, adaptation plans and climate-related financial allocations. The authors propose a **“three-ledger” framework** covering physical hazards, climate finance and leakage/procurement integrity, using documentary analysis of national plans, budgets, audits, journal articles and grey literature from 2009–2026.

The topic is highly relevant, particularly because Bangladesh has developed an extensive climate-governance architecture while continuing to face significant exposure to flooding, salinity, heat, cyclones and displacement. The manuscript also has a potentially useful conceptual contribution in attempting to connect **climate risk, public finance and institutional integrity**, rather than treating these as separate research domains.

However, the current manuscript requires **substantial methodological, conceptual, evidentiary and stylistic revision** before it is suitable for publication. The most important concerns are the absence of a sufficiently reproducible documentary-review methodology, unclear operationalization of the proposed “three ledgers,” overreliance on grey-literature estimates for some of the strongest corruption claims, insufficient distinction between documented evidence and author interpretation, and a tendency toward causal and normative conclusions that exceed the evidence presented.

Overall Recommendation: MODERATE REVISION

2. Moderate Comments

2.1 The research design is not sufficiently reproducible

The manuscript describes itself as a qualitative documentary analysis and states that official records were prioritized, scholarly literature was searched by keyword, grey reports were added, and newspapers were used to fill gaps.

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However, the methodology does not provide enough information to reproduce the literature/document selection process.

The authors should clearly report:

- databases searched;
- search engines/platforms used;
- exact or representative search strings;
- date of the literature search;
- inclusion criteria;
- exclusion criteria;
- number of documents initially identified;
- number retained for analysis;
- categories of documents;
- how duplicate documents were treated;
- how government documents were authenticated;
- how conflicting sources were evaluated.

The statement that “journal articles were sought by keyword, and recency was prioritised” is insufficient for a rigorous documentary review.

3. The “Three-Ledger” Framework Needs Formal Operationalization

The manuscript presents the hazard, fiscal and integrity ledgers as its principal analytical contribution. The framework is introduced conceptually in the Introduction and subsequently used to structure the Results.

However, the reader is not given a formal coding framework.

The authors should provide a table showing:

Ledger	Main question	Indicators	Data sources	Coding criteria
Hazard	What risks are increasing?	Flood, heat, salinity, cyclone, displacement, etc.	Official/peer-reviewed sources	Defined extraction criteria
Fiscal	How much money is allocated and spent?	Allocation, utilization, funding gap, external finance	Budgets/reports	Defined fiscal indicators
Integrity	Where does implementation fail?	Audit gaps, procurement irregularities, delays, corruption	Audit/TIB reports	Defined coding categories

Without such an operational framework, the “three-ledger” model currently functions more as an organizing metaphor than as a clearly reproducible analytical method.

4. The Manuscript Claims to “Measure” the Delivery Deficit but Does Not Define a Delivery-Deficit Metric

The Introduction states:

“I call that gap the delivery deficit; I measure it.”

Yet no explicit quantitative or qualitative metric called the **delivery deficit** is subsequently calculated.

The manuscript provides evidence of:

- funding gaps;

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- project delays;
- monitoring gaps;
- audit limitations;
- allocation-vulnerability mismatches;
- reported corruption.

However, these are presented separately.

The authors should either:

1. develop a transparent composite/analytical framework for measuring the delivery deficit; **or**
2. change "I measure it" to a more defensible statement such as **"I assess it through three documentary evidence streams."**

At present, the terminology implies a level of measurement that the methodology does not demonstrate.

5. Causal Claims Need to Be More Carefully Qualified

The manuscript frequently moves from observed associations to strong causal conclusions.

For example, it argues that visible projects such as solar streetlights "crowded out" research and capacity-building and suggests that **countability rather than risk shaped most funding decisions**.

The evidence presented may support an association between project visibility and allocation patterns, but it does not necessarily demonstrate that countability **caused** the funding preference.

Similarly, the manuscript states that external safeguards "genuinely bite."

This is an interpretive causal claim.

The authors should distinguish clearly among:

- documented evidence;
- correlation;
- interpretation;
- causal inference;
- normative judgment.

More cautious wording would strengthen the manuscript.

6. The Integrity/Corruption Evidence Requires Stronger Source Criticism

A substantial portion of the manuscript's strongest conclusions relies on Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) estimates. For example, the manuscript states that **US\$248.4 million, approximately 54% of approvals since 2010, was lost**, and attributes the largest share to implementation-stage embezzlement.

The authors appropriately acknowledge that TIB estimates depend on assumed sectoral rates.

However, this limitation needs to be incorporated directly into the interpretation of the results.

The manuscript should explain:

- what the 54% denominator represents;
- whether this is an observed loss or an estimated loss;
- how TIB calculated the estimate;
- whether the estimate applies to all climate finance or only particular funds/projects;

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- the uncertainty surrounding the estimate;
- whether independent government audit data corroborate it.

The phrase **“corruption absorbed over half of trust approvals”** is too strong unless the underlying methodology demonstrates that conclusion.

7. “Statutory Audits Effectively Ceased After 2015” Is Potentially Overgeneralized

The Abstract states that:

“statutory audits effectively ceased after 2015.”

The Results later state that the auditor-general examined a single project in 2015 and none followed.

This evidence may demonstrate a serious **audit gap in the particular climate-finance programme examined**, but it does not necessarily establish that statutory audits across Bangladesh's climate governance system “ceased.”

The authors should specify exactly:

- which fund;
- which institution;
- which type of audit;
- which years;
- which projects.

The Abstract should then use appropriately bounded terminology.

8. “Climate-Relevant Allocations” Need Clear Definition

The Abstract reports that climate-relevant allocations reached **11.03% of the budgets of 25 ministries in FY2026–27**.

The manuscript should explain exactly what qualifies as “climate-relevant.”

In particular:

- Is the figure based on climate-budget tagging?
- Does it include adaptation and mitigation?
- Are only incremental climate expenditures included?
- Are development expenditures partially attributed to climate objectives?
- Are the figures nominal or inflation-adjusted?

The discussion later says that three-quarters targets adaptation, but the methodology does not explain the underlying tagging methodology.

This is important because climate-budget tagging can produce significantly different totals depending on the attribution rules.

9. The Fiscal Ledger Should Distinguish Allocation, Commitment, Disbursement and Actual Expenditure

The manuscript sometimes discusses “allocations,” “requirements,” “approvals,” “money,” and “spending” as though they were interchangeable.

They are not.

For example, the manuscript states that the NAP requires approximately US\$8.5 billion annually while national budgets recently provided about US\$3.6 billion.

The manuscript should distinguish:

required finance → budget allocation → approved project → commitment → disbursement → expenditure → completed output → verified outcome.

This distinction would actually strengthen the proposed **delivery-deficit** framework.

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10. The Manuscript Does Not Clearly Establish Whether “Unfunded” Means Fully or Partially Unfunded

The Abstract states that the National Adaptation Plan remains “largely unfunded.” The manuscript later reports a financing requirement of US\$8.5 billion annually and approximately US\$3.6 billion from national budgets.

This indicates a financing gap, but “largely unfunded” should be quantified.

The authors should provide:

- annual requirement;
- domestic allocation;
- international finance;
- actual disbursement;
- estimated gap;
- percentage funded.

A simple summary table would be highly useful.

11. The Temporal Scope Needs Greater Consistency

The manuscript states that documents from **2009–2026** were analysed.

However, the historical policy discussion extends back to:

- 2005 NAPA;
- 2009 BCCSAP;
- 2010 Trust Act;
- 2018 Delta Plan;
- 2022 NAP;
- 2025 NDC 3.0.

The authors should explain why the formal analysis starts in 2009 if earlier policy documents are central to the institutional history.

Either:

- expand the stated documentary period to cover the complete policy history used; or
- explicitly distinguish **historical contextual documents** from documents included in the systematic analysis.

12. Policy Layering Is a Useful Concept but Needs More Systematic Application

The manuscript uses institutional layering and drift based on Streeck & Thelen and Mahoney & Thelen.

This is potentially one of the strongest theoretical components of the paper.

However, the analysis could be substantially improved by explicitly mapping:

institution → policy introduced → previous institution retained → new mandate → implementation conflict → observed consequence.

For example, a chronological institutional-layering table could include:

Year	Policy/institution	New mandate	Existing institution retained?	Observed consequence	delivery
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This would transform the theoretical discussion from descriptive commentary into a stronger analytical contribution.

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13. The Literature Review Is Broad but Not Sufficiently Synthesized

The Literature Review covers:

- physical hazards;
- heat;
- health;
- water;
- mobility;
- adaptation governance;
- climate finance;
- corruption;
- projections;
- fiscal tracking.

This breadth is a strength, but the review is often a sequence of individual study summaries rather than a structured synthesis.

The authors should explicitly identify:

1. what is already known;
2. what is disputed;
3. what has not been measured;
4. how the current study resolves that gap.

The final paragraphs of the literature review begin doing this effectively, especially where they identify the separation between hazard, budget and integrity research.

That synthesis should be expanded and made the central research gap.

14. Some Literature-Review Statements Are More Rhetorical Than Scholarly

Examples include:

- “Summers grew harsher; relief stayed scarce.”
- “Bodies tire, minds fray, and household incomes shrink accordingly.”
- “Promises travelled widely; money rarely followed.”
- “The laws aged; meanwhile, hazards kept accelerating.”

These expressions are engaging but are more appropriate for an essay or policy commentary than a research article.

The manuscript should adopt a more neutral academic style.

15. First-Person Narrative Should Be Removed or Greatly Reduced

The Introduction contains statements such as:

“I wrote my first proposal on this topic when AR4 still dominated.”

and:

“My 2014 proposal had already listed them.”

These personal statements are not necessary for the scientific argument and may create uncertainty about whether the manuscript is a research article, perspective, or reflective policy essay.

Similarly, the conclusion says:

“When my proposal began...”

These should be removed unless the journal specifically permits an autoethnographic or reflective format.

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16. The Manuscript Mixes Research Article and Policy-Essay Styles

The manuscript contains a conventional academic structure:

- Introduction;
- Literature Review;
- Materials and Methods;
- Results;
- Discussion;
- Conclusion.

However, parts of the text are written in a highly personal and editorial style.

Examples include:

"I suspect visibility explains what got funded."

and:

"Narrow conduits carry little, whatever the reservoirs promise."

The authors should decide whether the manuscript is intended as:

- an empirical qualitative research article,
- a policy analysis,
- a conceptual article, or
- a perspective/commentary.

At present it sits between these forms.

17. The Hazard Ledger Is Not Clearly Connected to the Fiscal and Integrity Ledgers

The manuscript effectively documents hazards and fiscal/integrity problems, but the actual linkage among the three remains mostly conceptual.

For example, the paper states that allocation does not correspond well with vulnerability, reporting a correlation of 0.2 for national funds and 0.4 for international money.

This is potentially a central empirical finding.

The authors should explain:

- what vulnerability score was used;
- how it was calculated;
- at what spatial level;
- what allocation variable was correlated;
- sample size;
- whether the correlation is Pearson or Spearman;
- whether it was statistically tested;
- whether the relationship is robust.

Without these details, the reported correlation cannot be independently assessed.

18. The Spatial Dimension of the Analysis Is Underdeveloped

The paper argues that funding does not adequately follow vulnerability, but it does not provide a sufficiently detailed spatial analysis.

If district-level allocation and vulnerability data are available, the authors should consider:

- a district-level map of vulnerability;
- a map of climate-finance allocation;
- allocation per vulnerable population;

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- allocation per unit vulnerability;
- identification of over-funded/under-funded districts.

This would make the central argument considerably more compelling.

19. The Claim Regarding Chattogram Requires Better Context

The manuscript states that Chattogram, described as comparatively safe, received the largest domestic sum, while a former board chair directed US\$23.6 million toward his home district.

These are potentially important findings, but the paper should provide:

- the vulnerability ranking;
- the allocation ranking;
- the source of the political-targeting allegation;
- whether the funding was entirely climate-related;
- whether Chattogram's lower vulnerability at national scale is consistent across the selected vulnerability index.

Strong political or corruption-related claims require especially careful attribution.

20. Delays Need a More Transparent Statistical Treatment

The manuscript reports:

- first disbursements averaging 388 days;
- project durations more than doubling;
- later stating a 134% increase.

These are useful quantitative indicators, but the underlying denominator and calculation are not described.

The authors should report:

- number of projects;
- baseline planned duration;
- actual duration;
- median and mean;
- range;
- method for calculating the 134% increase.

If these numbers are derived from TIB's report, this should be stated explicitly.

21. The Paper Needs a Clear Evidence Hierarchy

The manuscript combines:

- peer-reviewed articles;
- government plans;
- government budget documents;
- international organization reports;
- civil-society reports;
- newspapers.

This is acceptable for policy research, but the evidence hierarchy should be explicit.

For example:

Tier 1: official administrative/budget/audit data

Tier 2: peer-reviewed studies

Tier 3: international organization reports

Tier 4: civil-society/NGO reports

Tier 5: news reports.

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The strongest conclusions should rely on the highest-quality available evidence.

22. Newspaper Sources Should Not Carry Major Empirical Claims Alone

The manuscript uses Al Jazeera and The Business Standard for contemporary political and budget information.

Newspapers may be appropriate for contextual information, but official government or parliamentary sources should be preferred for:

- government formation;
- budget allocations;
- legal changes;
- official programme figures;
- institutional mandates.

23. The Manuscript Needs a Dedicated Limitations Section

Although limitations are acknowledged in the Discussion, they are not sufficiently developed.

A separate section should discuss:

- documentary-source bias;
- dependence on secondary/grey literature;
- lack of household fieldwork;
- inability to directly measure household-level outcomes;
- uncertainty in corruption estimates;
- absence of primary procurement data;
- difficulty attributing outcomes to individual policies;
- possible publication/source-selection bias;
- limitations of vulnerability-allocation comparisons.

This is particularly important because the paper makes broad conclusions from documentary evidence.

24. Fieldwork Is Missing From the Current Study

The manuscript openly states that the planned fieldwork in Barguna, Bagerhat and Noakhali has not occurred.

This is acceptable if the article is explicitly presented as a documentary study.

However, the manuscript should not imply that it has demonstrated how households experience the delivery deficit.

The authors correctly state that future household surveys are needed.

This distinction should be maintained consistently throughout the paper.

25. The Discussion Should Better Distinguish Evidence From Author Interpretation

For example:

“Scale is not destiny, and institutional design can compensate.”

and:

“Honesty pays, and leakage costs everyone twice.”

These are normative interpretations rather than findings.

The Discussion would be stronger if each major interpretation followed a structure such as:

Finding → evidence → comparison with literature → interpretation → limitation.

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26. Recommendations Are Useful but Need Stronger Evidence-to-Policy Linkages

The five proposed reforms are clearly presented:

1. amend the Trust Act;
2. use e-procurement and independent audits;
3. allocate according to vulnerability;
4. strengthen locally led adaptation;
5. evaluate outcomes rather than outputs.

These are potentially valuable recommendations.

However, each recommendation should be explicitly linked to a documented finding.

For example:

Finding	Governance problem	Recommended reform
Weak independent monitoring	Accountability deficit	Annual independent audit
Low vulnerability-allocation correlation	Misallocation	Vulnerability-based formula
Output-focused projects	Incentive distortion	Outcome-based evaluation
Procurement irregularities	Leakage risk	Open e-procurement

This would make the policy contribution much stronger.

27. The Conclusion Should Avoid Saying That Governance “Matters More” Than Physical Risk

The conclusion states:

“Today governance matters more, because hazards are already thoroughly documented by climate scientists.”

This is an unnecessarily strong comparison.

Governance and physical risk are complementary dimensions rather than competing explanations.

A better formulation would be:

“As physical climate risks become increasingly well documented, strengthening governance, financing and implementation capacity becomes essential for translating climate-risk knowledge into effective adaptation.”

28. The Manuscript's Novelty Needs to Be Stated More Precisely

The manuscript claims that Bangladeshi climate scholarship has rarely treated procurement integrity as an adaptation variable.

This could be a meaningful contribution, but the authors need to demonstrate the novelty more explicitly through the literature review.

The novelty should be stated as something like:

“The study integrates three evidence domains—physical climate risk, climate finance allocation and implementation integrity—within a single documentary analytical framework.”

That is more defensible than broadly claiming that procurement integrity has rarely been studied in adaptation.

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29. References and Citation Quality Need Attention

The reference list is substantial and includes peer-reviewed articles, institutional reports and policy documents.

Nevertheless, the authors should:

- verify every citation;
- ensure all URLs remain functional;
- standardize formatting;
- provide DOI information consistently;
- distinguish reports from peer-reviewed studies;
- verify organizational author names;
- provide complete bibliographic details for incomplete entries such as “Jubaed, et al. (2025).”
- ensure that all claims in the text have an appropriate source.

The incomplete **“Jubaed, et al. (2025)”** reference should particularly be corrected.

30. Language and Academic Style Require Extensive Revision

The manuscript contains many strong ideas but the writing frequently becomes rhetorical.

Examples:

- “Paper grew thicker; capacity did not.”
- “Promises travelled widely; money rarely followed.”
- “The laws aged; meanwhile, hazards kept accelerating.”
- “every new plan simply inherits the same cracked pipes underneath.”

The title metaphor **“Many Plans, Thin Pipes”** can be retained if the journal permits an engaging title, but the main manuscript should use formal academic language.

A professional language edit is recommended.

31. Specific Strengths of the Manuscript

Despite the major issues, the manuscript has several important strengths:

1. Important research problem

It addresses the important question of why extensive climate-policy planning does not necessarily translate into effective implementation.

2. Strong interdisciplinary orientation

The manuscript connects climate science, adaptation governance, public finance and institutional integrity.

3. Potentially useful conceptual framework

The three-ledger framework provides a promising structure for integrating otherwise disconnected evidence streams.

4. Broad documentary evidence base

The study draws on national plans, climate budgets, international organizations, peer-reviewed research and civil-society assessments.

5. Recognition of evidence limitations

The authors appropriately acknowledge the absence of fieldwork and uncertainty associated with some TIB estimates.

6. Policy relevance

The proposed reforms are concrete and directly related to the governance problems identified.

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32. Minor Comments

1. Define **NAP, NAPA, BCCSAP, NDC, TIB, BCCT, LLA, CPD and IDMC** at first use.
2. Maintain consistent terminology for “climate finance,” “climate-relevant finance,” “adaptation finance” and “trust funding.”
3. Avoid switching between “money,” “funding,” “allocation,” “spending” and “finance” when technically different concepts are intended.
4. Use consistent fiscal-year notation, e.g., **FY2026–27**.
5. Provide units consistently for all monetary values.
6. Clarify whether US dollars are nominal or inflation-adjusted.
7. Use “US\$” consistently rather than switching formats.
8. Avoid informal expressions such as “paper grew thicker.”
9. Remove unnecessary personal history from the Introduction.
10. Avoid first-person statements unless the target journal explicitly permits them.
11. Provide a conceptual diagram of the three-ledger framework.
12. Add a table summarizing the major policy milestones from 2005–2026.
13. Add a table summarizing climate-finance requirements, allocations and gaps.
14. Clearly distinguish adaptation finance from mitigation finance.
15. Explain the methodology underlying reported vulnerability scores.
16. Explain the statistical basis of reported correlations.
17. Avoid describing findings as “significant” unless statistical significance is demonstrated.
18. Clarify whether the US\$248.4 million figure represents estimated losses, documented losses or modelled losses.
19. Check all current political statements against authoritative sources.
20. Ensure every recommendation is linked to a corresponding empirical finding.

33. Suggested Additional Tables/Figures

The manuscript would benefit considerably from the following:

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Climate hazards → vulnerability → policy planning → finance allocation → implementation → integrity → adaptation outcomes

Table 1. Major climate-policy milestones in Bangladesh 2005–2026.

Table 2. Three-ledger analytical framework

Hazard, fiscal and integrity indicators.

Table 3. Climate-finance requirements versus allocations

Annual/period-wise comparison.

Table 4. Climate-finance allocation versus vulnerability

District-level comparison.

Table 5. Integrity and delivery indicators

Audit coverage, delays, project evaluation, procurement irregularities and estimated leakage.

Table 6. Evidence strength

Peer-reviewed / government / international organization / civil-society / media.

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These additions would make the proposed framework much more transparent and persuasive.

34. Overall Evaluation

The manuscript addresses an important and timely question: **why extensive climate-policy planning and increasing climate-related budgets do not necessarily translate into effective adaptation delivery in Bangladesh**. The proposed integration of hazard exposure, climate finance and institutional integrity is potentially novel and policy relevant.

The documentary evidence presented is substantial, and the manuscript identifies several potentially important patterns, including the gap between adaptation-finance requirements and allocations, weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation, delays in project implementation, and possible mismatches between vulnerability and resource distribution.

However, the manuscript currently reads partly as a **policy essay and partly as an empirical qualitative research article**. Its methodological foundation needs to be strengthened substantially. In particular, the authors must make the documentary-selection and coding procedure reproducible, operationalize the three-ledger framework, clarify what is actually meant by "delivery deficit," distinguish observed evidence from interpretation, carefully qualify corruption estimates, and avoid causal claims that cannot be established from the available documentary evidence.

The manuscript would also benefit from a more neutral academic writing style and a clearer separation between **results, interpretation and normative recommendations**.

Final Decision: MODERATE REVISION

The manuscript has publication potential, but substantial revision is required before it can be considered further. The strongest pathway would be to retain the three-ledger concept while converting it from a largely narrative framework into a clearly defined, reproducible qualitative analytical framework supported by transparent documentary selection, coding criteria, evidence grading and quantitative summaries of the available fiscal and governance data.