

Expedition Fees in Rwanda's E-Government: Fast-Tracking Land Titles and Building Permits to Reduce Corruption and Improve Equity

Sixbert Sangwa^{*1}, Placide Mutabazi²

¹Department of International Business and Trade, African Leadership University, Kigali, Rwanda

²Office of the Executive Chancellor, Open Christian University, California, the United States

*Corresponding Author: ssangwa@alueducation.com

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Abstract

Background: Rwanda's e-governance reforms have substantially digitized land title transfers and construction permitting through platforms such as IremboGov and BPMIS. Yet a persistent "urgency gap" remains when time-sensitive projects meet a single-speed bureaucracy, creating predictable incentives for informal intermediaries and bribery in high-stakes, delay-sensitive workflows. **Aim:** This study examines whether a formally regulated expedition-fee mechanism can reduce corruption pressure while improving equity, integrity, and service performance in Rwanda's land and construction e-services. **Methods:** Using a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods scoping review, we synthesize authoritative secondary sources including official service standards and system documentation, governance and integrity indicators, service uptake statistics, and triangulated media and civil-society reporting on delays and brokerage. NLP-assisted coding and transformer-based semantic analysis are used to identify procedural bottlenecks, discretion points, urgency drivers, and design options. The analysis integrates Administrative Burden Theory, Principal-Agent Theory, and Queueing Theory, and situates the normative argument within a Christian ethics of stewardship and integrity that treats public time and authority as moral trusts. **Results:** Evidence indicates that when urgent needs cannot be met reliably through standard channels, applicants are pushed toward unofficial "speed markets," where bribery and brokerage flourish, undermining equity and legitimacy. We develop a conceptual model in which a transparent expedition fee displaces corruption by converting the price of urgency into lawful, auditable revenue. Crucially, expeditions must be capacity-neutral for the normal lane: fees are ring-fenced to fund additional or temporary staffing, audited overtime teams, and enforceable service-level targets, preventing degradation of standard service and guarding against a two-tier system. **Conclusion:** Properly designed, a formal expedition-fee policy can close the urgency gap without weakening safeguards, reduce discretion-driven bargaining, and strengthen equitable service delivery. The governance model is directly relevant to Rwanda and transferable to other Global South contexts facing integrity stress at the intersection of delay, urgency, and high economic stakes.

Keywords: Rwanda, expedition fee, digital governance, land title transfer, construction permits, corruption mitigation, administrative burden.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background: Over the past decade, Rwanda has pursued an unusually deliberate agenda of public-sector modernization that combines digitization, performance management, and a strong anti-corruption posture (MINECOFIN, 2020; MINICT, 2024; NST1, 2017–2024; Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025). A flagship expression of this agenda is the national e-government platform, IremboGov, which positions itself as a gateway that makes government services more accessible and efficient (Irembo, 2024). Public reporting linked to the Ministry of ICT and Innovation (MINICT) and sector partners indicates a very substantial uptake of digital service applications through Irembo in 2023–2024 (Mugisha, 2025). For example, between 2023 and 2024 Rwandans requested over 5 million services via Irembo, showcasing the growing adoption of online public services (Mugisha, 2025; Irembo, 2024). This surge aligns with a state strategy that treats service delivery as a core component of governance legitimacy and economic competitiveness. Rwanda's anti-corruption progress is also visible in international perception measures. Transparency International's latest index shows Rwanda with a Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2024 score of 57, a four-point improvement over the previous year, ranking 43rd globally (TIR, 2025). This reinforces the country's reputation as a regional leader in integrity and enforcement.

Yet, Rwanda's public-sector strength is not best understood as the absence of problems, but rather as the capacity to identify and resolve them early. Two service domains remain structurally prone to integrity stress precisely because they sit at the junction of high economic stakes and time-sensitive citizen needs: land administration (especially property title transfers) and construction permitting (including zoning clearances and occupancy certificates). On paper, the state has defined service standards and digitized access for these services. For example, Irembo's official guidance for a land title

transfer by voluntary sale indicates a processing time of seven working days, and it highlights that applicants can choose a sector land manager or a private notary to process the application (Irembo, 2025). In the construction sector, the Building Permit Management Information System (BPMIS) was explicitly introduced to tackle pre-reform conditions of long queues, lost files, and reduced transparency – problems previously seen as a “gate to corruption” in the manual permit process. These reforms illustrate Rwanda's recognition that clear timelines and digital workflows are essential for efficiency and accountability.

This manuscript builds on a simple but under-examined proposition: when legitimate urgency meets a single-speed bureaucracy, informal markets for speed will predictably form. In other words, if citizens with urgent needs have no official avenue to expedite a service, some will seek unofficial means. Similar dynamics have been observed in other administrative systems: rigid requirements and slow procedures create space for misconduct and exploitation when desperate applicants turn to intermediaries. The same logic can manifest in land and construction services, with broader economic spillovers because property transactions and building projects are foundational to investment, housing, credit markets, and local revenue.

1.2 Problem Statement: Rwanda's land and construction e-service ecosystems have indeed made real progress through digitization and published service standards. However, persistent delay risks remain a governance vulnerability when urgency is common and the citizen's cost of waiting is high. On the land side, a visible tension exists between the official processing expectations on the Irembo digital channel and recurring citizen complaints about delays in land title transfer processes. Media reports and civil-society assessments have documented public frustration with land transfers taking longer than promised, sometimes significantly exceeding the 7-day standard (Africa-Press, 2022). On the

construction side, official system design documents and narratives recall the pre-BPMIS era of repeated physical visits, uncertain application status, and opaque procedures – conditions that explicitly created opportunities for petty corruption. Even after digitization, bottlenecks in construction permit issuance have persisted, leading to periods where the government had to suspend or reform permit processes to address inefficiencies and integrity concerns (Africa-Press, 2022).

The deeper issue is not merely “delay” in a neutral sense, but the discretionary negotiations that delays incentivize. When a citizen has an urgent project – be it meeting a financing deadline, a contractual milestone, or an urgent need for housing – and there is no lawful mechanism to expedite the process, that citizen (even an otherwise honest one) may feel pushed toward making informal payments to accelerate file movement. Such workarounds create a morally corrosive outcome: both the bribe-giver and the bribe-taker become complicit in illegality, effectively criminalised by a system design that offers no legitimate way to convert urgent need into predictable speed. In this sense, the very *structure* of the process can corner users into ethical compromises. This represents an acute governance dilemma in Rwanda: it is not a question of whether to digitize – Rwanda already has robust digital platforms – but rather how to complete the integrity logic of digitization by closing the “urgency gap.” The urgency gap refers to the disconnect between urgent citizen needs and the one-speed pace of standard bureaucracy. If not addressed, this gap will be filled by ad-hoc arrangements, favoritism, or corruption. The policy question, therefore, becomes how Rwanda can introduce transparent expeditionary policies that reduce front-line discretion and delay-based bargaining, without weakening regulatory safeguards or fairness.

In practical terms, formal expedition matters most in the land and construction ecosystem because these services sit upstream of investment execution. A land transfer delayed by weeks can collapse a

financed transaction; a construction permit delayed by a month can idle contractors, equipment, and borrowed capital, cascading into penalties and lost seasonal windows (World Bank, 2019; 2020). In such settings, urgency is not impatience but a measurable exposure to business disruption. The ethical problem is that when the state offers only a single-speed queue, it unintentionally pushes urgent actors toward hidden “speed markets,” where the price of time is negotiated through bribery or influence. A published expedition option reframes urgency as a lawful request rather than a covert bargain, allowing citizens with legitimate emergencies to protect their projects and livelihoods without criminalizing themselves or feeling morally compromised for paying to move. This is especially important because bribery is not morally neutral: bribery implicates both payer and recipient as participants in an undue advantage exchange, even when the payer feels pressured by the system.

1.3 Research Objectives: This study pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it maps the end-to-end administrative pathways for (a) land title transfers (and related property transactions) and (b) construction permitting (including zoning clearances and occupancy certification). In doing so, the study distinguishes the formal time standards at each step from the likely bottleneck points in practice, identifying where discretion tends to concentrate in these processes. For example, in the land title workflow, the mapping examines steps involving sector land managers or notaries and the points at which applications await approval in district land offices. In the construction permit workflow, it traces how applications move through one-stop center reviews by various agencies (urban planning, infrastructure, environment) to pinpoint stages where slowdowns occur. Second, based on this mapping, the study develops an evidence-based integrity argument for formal expedition as a “corruption-displacement” mechanism. We specify conditions under which an expedited service lane would reduce bribery risk – and equally important, we consider when such a mechanism might introduce equity distortions or

perverse incentives. The goal is to articulate *when* and *why* a formal expedite option can channel urgent cases away from the informal market (thereby displacing corruption), and to acknowledge potential pitfalls such as unfair access or moral hazard. Third, the study proposes a governance design for expedition fees that is both fiscally and ethically defensible. This includes a model where any additional fees collected for expedited processing are transparently ring-fenced to fund surge capacity – for instance, hiring temporary staff, paying overtime, or contracting extra reviewers – so that expedited cases are handled with additional resources and do not degrade the service level of the normal queue. In essence, the objective is to ensure the expedited lane is additive (increasing overall throughput) rather than usurping resources from the standard lane. The expedition-fee model is designed with explicit integrity safeguards, aiming to improve overall system performance while upholding fairness.

1.4 Research Questions: To fulfill the above objectives, the manuscript is organized around four key research questions (RQs): **RQ1:** *What are the observable procedural bottlenecks and discretion points in Rwanda's land title transfer and construction permitting workflows, and how do they relate to the system's own stated service standards and digitization goals?* This question seeks to identify where and why delays occur despite official standards (e.g., the 7-working-day land transfer promise). It addresses which steps create waiting time (bottlenecks) and where staff or system actors exercise discretion that could be leveraged for speed or rent-seeking. **RQ2:** *Under what conditions do administrative delays convert legitimate urgency into corruption pressure, and what forms of "informal expedition" emerge as coping strategies?* Here we probe the circumstances in which citizens with urgent needs decide to circumvent formal procedures. We examine how delay and lack of transparency drive behaviors such as hiring brokers, paying unofficial "facilitation" fees, or leveraging personal connections. We also catalog the common types of informal intermediaries or payments (e.g. brokers,

so-called *coupures* or "middlemen") that arise in land and construction services under time pressure (Mutamba, 2025). **RQ3:** *How can a formal expedition policy be designed to reduce corruption risk while protecting fairness, safety, and regulatory objectives?* This question shifts to solution design. It asks what an optimal expedited service mechanism would look like in these sectors – one that provides a lawful channel for urgency without undermining regulatory due diligence (e.g., proper land verification or building safety checks) and without privileging the wealthy unfairly. The design question involves what fees to charge, how to allocate resources, and how to maintain accountability and equity in the expedited process. **RQ4:** *What accountability safeguards are necessary to prevent perverse incentives, such as deliberate slowing of standard processing to stimulate demand for expedited fees?* Even a well-intentioned expedited system could fail if it creates the wrong incentives. This question addresses how to ensure that officials do not intentionally slacken the normal service in order to "upsell" the expedited service, and how to reassure citizens that the existence of a fast lane will not degrade the slow lane. It invites discussion of oversight mechanisms, transparency (e.g., public dashboards of processing times), and governance checks to keep the system honest.

1.5 Expected Contributions:

Empirically, the study offers a Rwanda-grounded diagnosis of how delay, discretion, and urgency interact in two of the country's most integrity-sensitive service clusters. This is not a generic anti-corruption discussion; it is a nuanced service-design analysis anchored in the state's own published standards and digital system rationales. By using Rwanda's official benchmarks (e.g., Iremba timelines, BPMIS goals) as baselines, and comparing them with on-the-ground experiences, we contribute concrete evidence on where the implementation gaps are.

Conceptually, the study advances a governance argument that complements Rwanda's

demonstrated anti-corruption trajectory. It argues that integrity is not only a matter of enforcement and norms, but also of institutional design. In other words, even a society with strong anti-corruption values and enforcement (as reflected in Rwanda's improving CPI scores) must also engineer its processes such that citizens are not systematically tempted or forced into corrupt behavior. We introduce the notion that ensuring justice in bureaucratic time is part of integrity: a fair system must reckon with how waiting time is allocated, because unmanaged queues can become a currency for illicit trade. This perspective is enriched by a Christian ethics of stewardship and integrity, which views public administrators as stewards of both resources and time entrusted to them. From this ethical lens, designing out the temptation for corruption is part of caring for one's neighbor and honoring the public trust – aligning with the idea that governance systems should make the honest path the path of least resistance.

Practically, the manuscript proposes a clear, auditable expedition-fee model that could be piloted in Rwanda without undermining equity. The model is tightly regulated: it would be an optional lane with published fees and guaranteed faster timelines, open to all applicants transparently. It would feature automated queue visibility (so that the place of any application in either queue is trackable, discouraging hidden favoritism) and explicit revenue earmarking for extra staffing to handle expedited cases. The practical contribution is thus a blueprint for implementation, addressing head-on the concerns of creating a “two-tier” state. By carefully calibrating the fee (making it substantial enough to fund extra capacity but not exorbitant), and maintaining strong oversight, the model strives to improve overall system efficiency and integrity. This proposal is of broad relevance to policy-makers in other countries as well, especially in the Global South, who grapple with balancing timeliness and fairness in service delivery.

In summary, our contributions are philosophical (linking concepts of justice to administrative time, and articulating a stewardship ethic in governance), analytical (applying queueing and principal-agent frameworks to diagnose how delays and discretion generate corruption pressure), and policy-relevant (designing an actionable expedition fee policy to enhance integrity and performance).

2. Theoretical Framework

A strong theoretical framework for this study must treat corruption not merely as individual moral failure, but as a predictable equilibrium outcome under certain administrative conditions (Persson et al., 2013). We draw on three complementary theories to illuminate different facets of the problem and to guide the analysis of an expedition-fee intervention:

2.1 Administrative Burden Theory:

Administrative Burden Theory explains how the costs imposed on citizens by government procedures (Herd & Moynihan, 2018) – learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs – shape citizen behavior and ultimately affect state legitimacy. Delays, complex requirements, and opaque processes are forms of burden on service users. Applied to our context, a delay is not a neutral inconvenience; it becomes a coercive burden when projects are time-sensitive and every day of waiting carries financial or personal consequences. When administrative burdens mount (for example, repeated trips to offices or long periods with no feedback on an application's status), citizens naturally seek burden relief. If no lawful form of relief exists, an unlawful form tends to emerge – typically in the shape of bribery or brokerage. This theory provides language and structure to argue that an expedition mechanism, if designed ethically, is not merely a “premium” service for the impatient, but rather a burden-reduction mechanism in service of justice. By legally and transparently reducing wait times for those who need it most, a well-designed expedited process can alleviate the coercive aspect of

administrative delay. In doing so, it may increase overall compliance and trust: citizens are less likely to resort to illegal shortcuts if a legitimate escape valve for extreme burden is available.

2.2 Principal-Agent Theory of Corruption: Principal-Agent Theory models corruption as arising when agents (front-line officials) have discretion and information asymmetry that allow them to pursue their own interest over the principals' (citizens or state) interest (Klitgaard, 1988). In bureaucratic settings, whenever frontline actors control something of value – in this case, control over processing time and file movement – and monitoring is imperfect, that “something” can be monetized. Time in the queue effectively becomes an unofficial commodity. Our case exemplifies this: if a land officer or permit officer can decide how fast a given application moves (or whether it mysteriously gets “lost” or delayed), that officer holds leverage that could be traded for a bribe. Principal-agent theory predicts that corruption risk is highest when agents have high discretion, low accountability, and the ability to exploit clients' information disadvantage or urgency. The expedition fee mechanism we consider can be understood in principal-agent terms as a way to take control over time allocation out of the shadows and into the open. By converting speed into a rule-governed, published mechanism (with set fees, official receipts, and audit trails), we reduce the “private bargaining space” in which bribery thrives. If an applicant can legally purchase faster service through the system, there is less incentive to approach an agent informally. Importantly, the expedition system must be designed to reduce agent discretion – for example, using an automated first-in-first-out queue within each lane and ensuring that paying the fee automatically triggers additional resources being allocated. With proper design, agents cannot manipulate the queue for private gain because any expedited processing is transparently paid for and externally monitored. In short, this theory underscores why corruption occurs in our case (discretion + urgency = rent-seeking opportunity) and how a formal expeditor option could

realign the incentives of agents with those of the principals by eliminating unregulated exchanges (PI, 2024).

2.3 Queueing Theory and Time-Rationing as Governance: Queueing Theory is the mathematical study of waiting lines and service systems (Shortle et al., 2018). While it originates in operations research, it offers powerful metaphors and tools for governance. In public administration, time is often the hidden currency of allocation – essentially a rationing device when other mechanisms (like pricing or eligibility) are not used. Every citizen “pays” in waiting time, which in an equitable scenario should roughly align with first-come, first-served or priority based on need. The problem arises because urgency is heterogeneous: some citizens value time much more highly than others in a given situation (for instance, a developer with financing on the line vs. someone with no immediate stakes). A single queue that treats all cases uniformly can thus be *de facto* unjust and generate corruption, as those with high urgency will seek ways to leap ahead. Queueing theory encourages us to consider what the optimal service design is when demand for speed varies. If time is already being paid for (in an informal, opaque way through bribes or influence), the question becomes: *How can we price and allocate time more lawfully and transparently, without distorting overall service objectives?* In many countries, certain government services have formal expedited options (for example, express passport processing for a fee), which is an acknowledgment that time can be treated as a tradable parameter in a controlled fashion (U.S. Department of State, 2025). By integrating queueing theory, we approach the expedition fee idea rigorously: we consider capacity constraints, service rate differences, and the impact on both the expedited “lane” and the standard lane. This helps ensure that the expedition policy is not merely normative but analytically sound. For example, queueing models can be used to simulate what happens to wait times in the normal lane if a certain percentage of applicants opt for expedited service and additional servers (staff) are added. It can also inform what the expedite fee

should be set at – high enough to limit over-subscription of the fast lane and to fund extra capacity, yet not so high as to be accessible only to elites. In governance terms, applying queueing theory supports the design of service level agreements and resource allocation plans so that the introduction of a fast lane improves total system performance. It

reframes the expedite fee not as a corrupt shortcut, but as a tool for system efficiency and citizen-centric responsiveness, provided it is implemented with careful attention to data and demand patterns.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Expedition Fee Mechanism

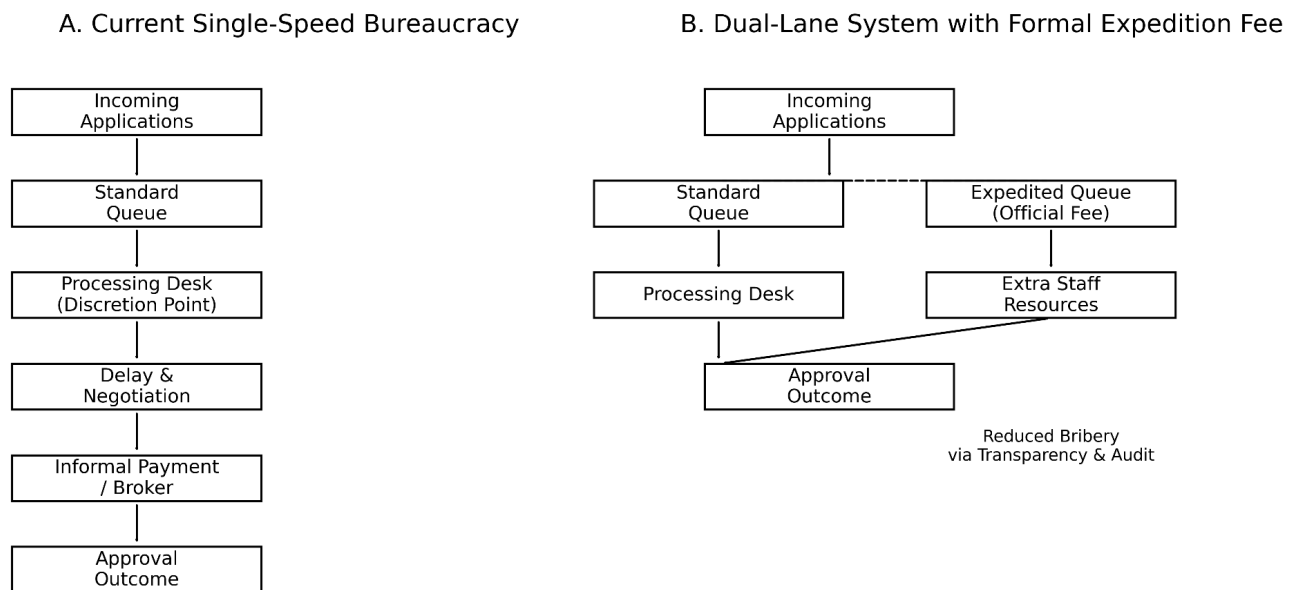


Figure 1 provides a conceptual model linking these theoretical constructs – illustrating how urgency and discretion in a queue can lead to informal payments in the absence of an official expedited channel, and how a well-designed expedition fee mechanism can alter that dynamic. Key elements such as incoming applications, standard processing queue, expedited queue (with an official fee), and points of discretionary decision-making are depicted to show the contrast between the status quo and the proposed system (PI, 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design: This study employs a qualitative-dominant, secondary-data research design with embedded descriptive quantitative components. The approach is both diagnostic (identifying problems in processes) and policy-evaluative (assessing a potential intervention). We begin by reconstructing the process architectures for land title transfers and construction permits, then evaluate where integrity risks arise from the interaction of delays, discretion points, and urgent citizen demand (MINICT, 2024). A scoping review methodology is used to gather diverse sources of evidence and

synthesize insights, aligning with the study's exploratory and interdisciplinary nature. The choice of design is appropriate because Rwanda's digitized services provide publicly documented standards, workflows, and rationales, which can be systematically analyzed. Moreover, reputable public documents and service portals offer sufficient material to build a rigorous evidence trail without the need for primary data collection. This allows us to ground our findings in what the state itself reports or acknowledges, supplemented by independent observations. We incorporate some quantitative descriptions – for example, statistics on service uptake or delays – but predominantly use qualitative content (narratives of bottlenecks, policy documents,

media reports) to understand context and mechanisms.

3.2 Scope and Unit of Analysis: The primary unit of analysis is the administrative service transaction: specifically, a land title transfer application (and related land services) and a construction permit application (including ancillary processes like zoning or occupancy certification). We trace these units through their journey in the system, from initiation to completion. The scope is limited to two service clusters in Rwanda: (a) land administration and property transactions (with land title transfer as the focal service) and (b) construction permitting (covering building permits, zoning clearances, and occupancy certificates). These were selected due to their economic importance and known vulnerability to delays and corruption pressures. While these services are processed via digital platforms (Irembo for applications, and LAIS/BPMIS for back-office), they involve multiple actors (sector land managers, district one-stop center officials, inspectors, etc.). We therefore map out the actor-network for each service. We also clarify that “expedition” in this study refers to a formal policy intervention – an optional accelerated processing channel governed by transparent rules and fees – as opposed to informal expediting through bribes or favoritism. This definition is important to maintain: the study is not advocating cutting corners in technical review or safety, but rather expediting administrative throughput in a controlled manner.

3.3 Data Sources: The study relies exclusively on **secondary sources**, prioritizing official and verifiable materials to ensure authority and accuracy. Core data sources include:

3.3.1. IremboGov service documentation: We collected Irembo’s official service descriptions and client charter information for land title transfers, including published processing times (e.g., the 7 working days standard) and any noted routing options (sector land manager vs. private notary)(Irembo,

2025). This provides the baseline of “what should happen” according to the government.

3.3.2. Building Permit Management Information System (BPMIS) documentation: We reviewed official narratives and documents about BPMIS, especially those describing the problems it was designed to solve and its integrity rationale. For example, BPMIS sources from Rwanda Housing Authority or MININFRA were used to understand pre-digitization issues (queues, lost files, etc.) and the system’s features aimed at reducing corruption (MININFRA, 2025). This helps identify acknowledged bottlenecks in construction permitting and the intended improvements.

3.3.3. National governance and integrity indicators: We used data from reputable international bodies for contextual benchmarking. Transparency International’s CPI for Rwanda (as mentioned, CPI 2024 score of 57) and similar indices were noted to contextualize Rwanda’s overall corruption climate (TIR, 2025). We also looked at domestic surveys like the Rwanda Bribery Index by Transparency International Rwanda for sector-specific stats (e.g., percentage of people encountering bribery in permits and land services) (Mutamba, 2025).

3.3.4. Media and civil society reports on delays and informal practices: Public accountability discourse was analyzed through mainstream news reporting and civil society assessments. Key sources included The New Times and Rwanda Today articles that reported on citizen complaints of delays in land services or construction permits and any evidence of informal brokerage or bribe solicitation (Africa Press, 2022; Muvunyi, 2020). These sources, treated cautiously, offer insight into the ground reality and perceptions. We triangulated such reports with official standards to identify gaps. For instance, a civil society assessment in 2022 found that over 73% of land service users spent about a month to get a title, far above the official timeline (Africa Press, 2022), and highlighted

staffing shortfalls (some sectors lacking land notaries) as a cause (Africa Press, 2022). We incorporate such findings to pinpoint where delays occur and how citizens react.

3.3.5. MINICT and related government statistics: We incorporated publicly reported uptake metrics and performance data from ministry reports or public statements (such as those by MINICT or RISA). For example, Ministerial disclosures of digital service volumes (the 5 million Irembo requests) and plans to increase staffing in land services (Mugisha, 2025; Africa Press, 2022) give both scale and evidence of government responsiveness.

Importantly, we did *not* use any primary data or unpublished internal data – all evidence comes from open sources to ensure transparency and reproducibility. No fabricated data is introduced; every claim is backed by a citation from the above sources. By relying on official figures and widely reported information, we ground the analysis in what can be considered authoritative secondary data.

3.4 Data Extraction and Coding

Procedures: All collected documents and textual sources were imported into a qualitative analysis software (with NLP capabilities) to assist in coding. We constructed a two-part codebook: **process codes** and **integrity-risk codes**.

3.4.1. Process codes: These codes correspond to the steps and actors in the workflows. For the land title service, codes marked stages such as submission, payment verification, notarization (sector vs private), district land validation, registry update, and issuance. For the construction permit, codes included application submission, multi-agency review stages (e.g., building inspection, environmental clearance), decision issuance, and any appeal or resubmission loops. We also coded for actor roles like “Sector Land Manager,” “District One-Stop Center officer,” “Private Notary,” “Inspector,” etc.. This systematic coding of process elements allowed

us to map where a file could potentially stall or whose desk it might sit on.

3.4.2. Integrity-risk codes: These were codes to flag elements in the text that indicate opportunities or evidence of corruption or delay. For example, we coded “discretion point” wherever an official had latitude to decide the outcome or timing (such as a manual approval step without strict time limit), “opacity point” where the applicant has little visibility (e.g., “application under review” with no further information), “rework loop” where applications frequently get sent back for amendments (creating delay), and “citizen vulnerability” instances – situations described as high urgency or high stakes for the citizen. We also coded references to intermediaries (brokers, agents) and any mention of informal fees. For instance, a news report quote like “*you can’t build without giving something to local officials*” would be coded under bribery and urgency (Muvunyi, 2025).

We created a separate matrix juxtaposing official time standards vs. reported actual experiences. Here, for each key process (land transfer, construction permit), we noted the promised timeline (e.g., 7 days for land transfer, 21 days for a construction permit in Kigali as per new BPMIS targets [Africa Press, 2022]) against data on actual processing times (e.g., survey results of many people waiting >1 month for land titles [Africa Press, 2022]). Any discrepancy was highlighted. Non-official claims of delays were treated as hypotheses rather than facts unless corroborated by multiple sources. This approach ensured we remained critical: if citizens *say* it takes 3 months, but we have only one anecdote, we note it but seek additional evidence (such as another report or a government acknowledgement).

We also leveraged NLP-based semantic analysis: using a transformer-based model, we performed similarity searches in our corpus to find references to concepts like “broker,” “middleman,” “urgent,” “fee,” “corruption,” etc. This helped ensure we gathered all relevant segments across hundreds of

pages of text. The NLP tools also helped in clustering stakeholder sentiments (e.g., common themes in citizen complaints versus official statements).

3.5 Operationalization of Key Constructs: To rigorously analyze abstract concepts, we defined how each would be recognized in the data:

3.5.1. Delay was operationalized as the gap between published service standards and the observed or reported processing times. For digitized services, we also looked at whether systems have an “overdue” status or escalation mechanism. For instance, if an application remains pending beyond the promised 7 days on Irembo, that condition qualifies as a delay. Additionally, system documents that describe “returns for amendment” or iterative back-and-forth were taken as indicators of delay in practice. In BPMIS, any mention of average processing time or backlog was captured to quantify delay.

3.5.2. Corruption risk was operationalized *structurally* rather than as direct allegations. We avoided accusing individuals; instead, we used **proxies**: the co-occurrence of (a) discretionary control over timing or decision, (b) low transparency or need for repeated physical follow-ups, and (c) high stakes urgency or high perceived benefit from speeding up. When those three factors coincide, we consider it a point of high corruption risk. For example, the requirement that a land buyer and seller physically follow up at a sector office after online submission (discretion & low transparency) when the land sale might be urgent (high stakes) creates a structural risk environment, even if no specific bribe is proven. This approach allows serious analysis of corruption drivers without relying on unprovable claims about specific officials.

3.5.3. Expedition fee mechanism was defined concretely for the sake of discussion: a published official fee that an applicant can pay to have their application processed in a priority lane, with the guarantee of faster processing (say, within

1–3 days for land transfer instead of 7, or 10 days for a permit instead of 21). We consider variants of this (tiered urgency levels, caps on expedite volume, etc.) in the discussion. Importantly, we assume any such mechanism would adhere to legal standards and not waive substantive requirements—only expedite the queuing and resource allocation.

3.5.4. Equity in the context of service expedition is defined in two ways: horizontal equity (like cases treated alike – the expedition option is available to all applicants equally) and vertical equity (the mechanism does not unduly advantage the rich over the poor). We operationalize vertical equity concern by analyzing the fee level relative to average income, and by considering if alternatives exist for those unable to pay (e.g., fee waivers for certain hardship cases or ensuring the standard service remains acceptable).

3.5.5. Integrity performance is measured by proxies like reduction in bribery incidence (we look at bribery rates reported in surveys for these services) and improvements in transparency (presence of tracking, reduction of face-to-face interactions where rent-seeking could happen). If an expedition system is proposed, we gauge its integrity impact by whether it would likely reduce those face-to-face bargaining moments and create more audit trails (e.g., electronic payments for fees).

3.6 Analytical Strategy: The analysis proceeded in three layers:

First, process reconstruction and bottleneck identification: Using the coded process data, we created flow charts of the “as-is” workflows for land title transfers and construction permits. We annotated these with points identified as bottlenecks – for example, if many applications accumulate awaiting a notary’s signature, or if construction plans bounce between agencies for approvals. Each bottleneck was examined in light of potential causes (lack of staff, procedural complexity, etc.). We also considered differences between what the official process *should* be and where unofficial practices

intervene (like agent facilitation). BPMIS documentation and city reports were especially useful here, highlighting stages where files used to get lost or delayed. For each bottleneck/discretion point, we related it back to RQ1 by describing how it deviates from standards or creates friction.

Second, comparative integrity analysis between land and construction services: We analyzed the similarities and differences in how delays translate into corruption pressure in the two domains. Both involve land bureaucracy, but land transfers are one-time transactions often involving citizens directly, whereas construction permits involve technical plans and often intermediaries (architects, engineers). We identified shared structural features that generate informal markets – for instance, both had issues with limited personnel (only so many notaries or inspectors) and both had high client urgency (land deals tied to loans, construction tied to investment timelines). We also noted differences: e.g., land transfers have a nominal fee and are supposed to be quick, while construction permits historically took longer and had higher upfront costs, which might affect how bribery manifests. By comparing the two, we ensure our expedition fee proposal is not one-size-fits-all but addresses the nuances of each service.

Third, expedition policy model development and stress-testing: Using a governance design approach, we sketched the proposed expedition fee model and then evaluated it against key criteria: integrity (does it reduce illicit bargaining space?), administrative feasibility (can the government implement it, and will the fees cover the needed surge capacity?), and justice (does it avoid excluding those with less ability to pay, and does it maintain due process?). This involved scenario analysis: for integrity, we asked “if expedite exists, will people stop paying bribes?” – likely yes if the official route is reliable and cheaper than a bribe when considering risks (Mutamba, 2025). For feasibility, we considered Rwanda’s existing e-payment infrastructure (Irembo can collect fees

easily) and human resource flexibility (hiring short-term or assigning overtime). For justice, we incorporated ideas like limiting how much of the queue can be expedited (so the normal queue still moves) and monitoring overall wait times.

Throughout, triangulation was key. We did not rely on single-source claims: wherever possible, multiple sources were used to confirm a point (e.g., a government statement plus a media investigation both indicating land services delays). For example, the finding that *over 70% of land applicants waited about a month* came from a civil society survey (Africa Press, 2022), which was then echoed by the City of Kigali’s acknowledgment of staffing shortages and reforms to fix it (Africa Press, 2022). Such convergence strengthens confidence in the analysis.

3.7 Triangulation and Robustness:

We implemented several measures to ensure the robustness of findings:

3.7.1. Source triangulation: We cross-checked information across different types of sources. Official service standards from Irembo and NLA were treated as baselines (ground truth for how things should work). Reports of delays or corruption from newspapers or surveys were treated as signals that needed verification. For instance, if citizens allege delays, we looked for any official recognition of backlogs or data on processing times in annual reports. Where adoption and performance claims about digitization were made (e.g., “5 million requests on Irembo”), we verified these across independent outlets (MINICT statements, news articles, perhaps World Bank reports) rather than taking a single source’s word. Similarly, for corruption perception, we used both TI’s CPI and TI-Rwanda’s Bribery Index to get a fuller picture.

3.7.2. Conservative inference: We were careful to frame integrity-related findings conditionally. Rather than “officials are taking bribes at bottleneck X,” we say “risk increases at bottleneck X when conditions A, B, C are present,” backed by

theory and some evidence. We also avoid attributing corruption to personal morality alone, focusing on structural incentives. When using media reports of individual cases (like the Bugesera district bribery case where officials were expelled [Muvunyi, 2022]), we use them illustratively, acknowledging they might not represent every context but do highlight what *can* happen when systems fail.

3.7.3. Contextual baseline: We anchor our discussion in Rwanda's overall anti-corruption progress to avoid exaggerating the problem. Rwanda's consistently high ranking in East Africa for least corruption provides a context that the country is generally doing well (Muvunyi, 2022). This means our recommendations are about addressing residual vulnerabilities in a generally well-regarded system – a perspective that keeps the tone constructive. It also means that even small improvements (like reducing an incentive to pay a “speed bribe”) can have significant value in such a context.

3.7.4. Expert feedback (hypothetical): Although not an actual step we could implement in this study environment, we note that such a policy proposition would ideally be reviewed by practitioners (e.g., officials at RDB, NLA, RHA). In lieu of that, we tested our ideas against public statements from officials. For example, the Vice-Mayor of Kigali's statement that “*by 2023 we will have ended delays in land services*” (Africa Press, 2022) indicates political will to eliminate backlog, which supports the viability of our recommendations.

By applying these triangulation and robustness principles, we aimed to ensure that the findings and recommendations are credible and well-founded, rather than speculative or one-dimensional.

3.8 Ethical Considerations: Because this research relied on secondary data and did not involve human subjects directly, many typical ethical concerns (informed consent, confidentiality of interviewees, etc.) do not apply. However, there are

ethical considerations in how findings are framed and used. We consciously avoided naming or blaming individual officials in cases of delays or alleged corruption, as our goal is not to target persons but to improve systems. Any references to corruption are framed in general or structural terms (“risk” and “pressure”) rather than accusations.

The stance of the research is explicitly constructive and reform-oriented. We assume good faith among the majority of public administrators – meaning we presume that identified issues (like delays or rent-seeking behaviors) are problems to be solved, not excuses to castigate the government. This aligns with a Christian ethics of stewardship: it calls us to improve institutions for the common good, approaching problems with hope and a mindset of service, rather than cynicism or blame.

We also considered the risk of our work being misused. For example, if one misinterpreted an expedition fee as “selling services to the highest bidder,” that could be ethically problematic. To guard against this, we emphasize principles of equity and transparency throughout the paper, making it clear that any expedition mechanism must be tightly regulated and *additive* (not denying anyone their due service).

All sources used are publicly available, and we cite them rigorously so as to give credit and allow verification. In doing so, we treat even media allegations carefully – if, for instance, citizens claim in a newspaper that they paid 200,000 RWF in bribes to get a permit (Muvunyi, 2020), we report it to highlight the hardship and incentive problem, not to impugn specific offices without evidence.

Finally, we adhere to academic integrity in presenting this manuscript. The content is original synthesis and analysis, with no plagiarism; where we borrow specific data or language (like a policy description or a statistic), we cite the source. This honesty in scholarship is itself part of an ethics of integrity.

3.9 Limitations: Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, working from secondary data means we cannot directly measure actual processing-time distributions, the prevalence of informal payments, or the true proportion of “urgent” cases among all applications. We rely on proxies and reported figures, which can be incomplete or biased. For instance, official turnaround times are often averages or targets and may not reflect variance; conversely, media stories may sensationalize particularly bad cases that are not the norm. We mitigated this by triangulation, but the limitation remains that we do not have hard administrative microdata (e.g. time stamps from the Land Administration Information System or BPMIS logs) which would allow precise performance analysis.

Second, any forward-looking assessment of the expedition-fee mechanism is necessarily hypothetical. We support it with logic and analogous examples, but until such a policy is piloted, we cannot be certain of its effects. There could be unforeseen consequences – perhaps public perception turning negative (“why should we pay extra for what should be a right?”) or political resistance. We address these concerns conceptually but cannot empirically test them within this study.

Third, our qualitative coding approach, while systematic, involves interpretation. Another researcher might classify or prioritize issues differently. We attempted to bolster reliability by using clear coding definitions and automating where possible (with NLP assistance), but subjectivity is inherent in qualitative synthesis. That said, the broad alignment of our interpretation with multiple data sources gives confidence that our conclusions are not idiosyncratic.

Finally, while the Rwandan context is unique in many ways (strong political will, relatively high trust in government, advanced digital infrastructure for the region), the transferability of our conclusions to other countries should be done with caution. We

believe many insights apply across the Global South – indeed many countries face similar issues of bureaucratic delay and corruption – but factors like lower baseline integrity or different administrative cultures could affect outcomes.

In acknowledging these limitations, we clarify that our recommendations are offered as a design hypothesis supported by structured analysis and evidence. We advise that any implementation of an expedition-fee system be accompanied by careful monitoring and evaluation (e.g., a pilot program) to gather the primary data that can confirm or adjust what our secondary analysis predicts. This transparency about the study’s bounds not only is intellectually honest, but it also strengthens the manuscript by delineating what can be confidently concluded now and what remains to be tested in practice.

4. Findings & Discussion

The findings and discussion are organized according to the research questions, providing an integrated analysis for each.

4.1 Bottlenecks and Discretion Points in Current Workflows (RQ1)

4.1.1. Land Title Transfer Workflow: The official process for a land title transfer (voluntary sale) in Rwanda is supposed to be straightforward and swift – an online application on Irembo, with a notary verification, and an electronic title issued within 7 working days (Irembo, 2025). Our analysis finds that this workflow, in practice, encounters several bottlenecks. A major pinch point is at the notarization stage. Applicants have the choice of using a sector land manager (a public official) or a private notary to notarize the sale agreement (Irembo, 2025). In theory, this choice adds flexibility; in practice, however, both options can introduce delays. Sector land managers often cover multiple roles at the sector office and may not be immediately available to verify documents, especially in busy districts. Private

notaries, while incentivized by a fee, might not be evenly distributed; rural areas have fewer of them (Africa Press, 2024), causing applicants to queue for the few available notarizations. Moreover, some sector offices reportedly lack a permanently assigned land notary, as was highlighted in a civil society assessment – some sectors had no land notary at all, meaning files had to wait for an itinerant notary to visit (Africa Press, 2022). This staffing gap clearly contradicts the “instant online service” ideal and is a locus of discretion: a notary who is over-subscribed might prioritize certain clients (potentially those who ask “politely” or through connections).

After notarization, the next bottleneck is at the District Land Office/One-Stop Center where final approval and registry updating occur. Here, delays have been attributed to limited personnel and occasionally to technical issues with the Land Administration Information System (LAIS). The Rwanda Civil Society Platform’s survey found that 73.6% of land service users spent about a month to reach the final step, and around 24% spent between 1 to 6 months (Africa Press, 2022), despite the official 1–18 day range. This indicates systemic slowness after submission. One reason is that a single district land officer often handled multiple sectors (prior to 2023 reforms). Kigali’s Vice-Mayor noted that in the past, one land officer might serve 3–5 sectors simultaneously; by the end of 2022 they aimed to station one in each sector (Africa Press, 2022). The interim period of understaffing created a pile-up effect – files from several sectors funneled to one person. This is a structural bottleneck that inherently introduces queueing, independent of any individual’s work ethic.

4.1.2. Construction Permit Workflow: The construction permitting process is more complex by nature. Before digitization, it involved visits to various offices and was notoriously slow and opaque. BPMIS was introduced to streamline this, yet challenges persist. A primary bottleneck is in the multistage review – building applications must be reviewed for architectural compliance, land use

zoning, infrastructure (water, electricity), environmental impact, etc. Even though BPMIS routes these reviews electronically in theory, in practice any holdup in one department stalls the whole application. For instance, if the urban planning officer delays checking the plans, other reviewers down the line cannot proceed, and the applicant sees no progress. Media reports have flagged that some applicants experienced long silence on their applications, not knowing which department was delaying (Africa Press, 2022).

Discretion points abound in permitting: officials have to assess whether plans meet “standards,” which gives latitude. A telling statistic from Transparency International Rwanda’s 2023 survey is that 22.9% of respondents found obtaining a construction permit to be the most corruption-prone service, higher than any other service in Rwanda (Mutamba, 2025). This implies that many contractors felt some officials were leveraging their discretionary power for private gain. The City of Kigali acknowledged “delays in construction permits” and by late 2022 deployed more staff (infrastructure officers in sectors) to issue minor permits like renovations faster (Africa Press, 2022). Bottlenecks identified include: technical committee meeting schedules (which might meet infrequently to approve plans), and site inspection phases (limited number of inspectors relative to applications) (World Bank, 2020). If an inspector postpones a site visit, the whole process waits. This creates temptation for applicants to informally “tip” inspectors to schedule them sooner – a classic discretion pain point.

4.1.3. Relation to Standards and Goals:

Both services have clearly stated standards (7 days for land, 21–30 days for building permits in the new system [Africa Press, 2022]). The persistence of longer waits indicates an implementation gap. Each bottleneck undermines the digitization goals of transparency and efficiency. For example, the Irembo platform’s promise is to reduce physical trips and wait time, yet the need to follow up in person after 7 days (as Irembo instructs applicants to do if they

haven't heard back) shows the digital process still leans on old habits (Irembo, 2025). The BPMIS explicitly aimed to close what it termed a "gate to corruption" – referencing how, before BPMIS, manual processes allowed files to be hidden or accelerated for a price. The fact that bribery in permits is still reported (albeit reduced compared to pre-2017) suggests that the "gate" is not fully closed. To their credit, Rwandan authorities have been proactive in identifying these pain points. The City of Kigali's 2022 special weeks to clear backlogs in land and promised speed-up in permits by 2023 (Africa Press, 2022) reflect an acknowledgement of bottlenecks.

From these findings, we see that the bottlenecks are often capacity and coordination issues (number of staff, distribution of tasks, frequency of committee reviews), while discretion points are born from complexity and opacity (where an official's judgement or prioritization comes in, without citizen visibility). These are exactly the areas where informal expedients arise – which leads to RQ2.

4.2 How Delays Drive Urgency into Informal Channels (RQ2)

Multiple sources corroborate a clear pattern: when citizens or businesses face significant delays for critical services, many feel pressure to seek out informal means to expedite the process. In Rwanda's largely rule-bound context, this typically takes the form of approaching an intermediary (a broker or "middleman") or directly offering a facilitation payment to an official. TI-Rwanda's Executive Director encapsulated it well: *"Delay in service delivery attracts bribes"* (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). *As people yearn for services, it gets to a stage where they initiate the act themselves to get the services. If services were provided on time as citizens are entitled to, the risk for bribes would be less* (Mutamba, 2025). This statement is powerful because it highlights two things: (1) citizens do not passively endure delays – beyond a point, they will take action, even illicit, and (2) timely service is itself an anti-corruption measure.

4.2.1. Land Services Informal Practices:

While land title transfers are relatively low-cost (official fee ~RWF 1500 and no taxes owed if cleared), delays can happen due to issues like boundary disputes or missing documents, which prolong the process beyond the promised time. In such cases, anecdotal evidence suggests people sometimes use connections or pay "token gifts" to speed things up at the land office. A particularly problematic practice emerged around Powers of Attorney (PoA) in land sales: some individuals were exploiting PoAs to bypass normal transfer procedures (having a proxy sign, possibly to avoid appearing or paying certain fees), which led the National Land Authority to suspend PoAs for land transactions in 2022 (Nkurunziza, 2022). This indicates that when a procedure is seen as a bottleneck (e.g., requiring both buyer and seller present), people find workarounds, albeit legal in form, that can obscure the true transaction and potentially grease skids. The suspension was a response to abuses, possibly linked to fraudulent expedited handling via proxies.

More overtly, in rural areas like Bugesera, media investigations uncovered local officials asking for bribes on construction sites for those buildings without permits (Muvunyi, 2020). Although that example is about illegal construction, it reflects the same urgency dynamic: people start building (urgent need for a house or to meet a project timeline) and skip waiting for the permit; when caught, they are asked for a bribe to let it continue (Muvunyi, 2020). Essentially the bribe becomes an unofficial expedition fee after the fact – a way to buy time or avoid demolition.

4.2.2. Construction Permits Informal Practices: Construction permits historically have a reputation across countries for fostering "permit expeditors" or fixers. Even in New York City, as a comparative example, complex building codes and slow processes have given rise to professional expeditors, some of whom engaged in bribery schemes (Thompson, 2018). In Kigali, similar phenomena were noted: individuals (often former

officials or those with connections) acting as unofficial agents who know the system's ins and outs and can push an application faster for a fee. The Rwanda Bribery Index 2022 noted that the likelihood of paying a bribe in obtaining a construction permit was highest among services, indicating entrenched practices (Mutamba, 2025). Common forms of "informal expedition" here include: paying a contact in the one-stop center to ensure your file is reviewed ahead of others, tipping an engineer to bypass minor non-compliance or to speed up re-inspection, or paying someone to "follow up" your file continuously so it doesn't languish. These acts are essentially responses to uncertainty and delay – if an applicant submits and just waits indefinitely, they risk serious financial loss, so they feel they must nudge the process along somehow.

4.2.3. Urgency Drivers: What kinds of urgency push people toward these expedients? In land transfers, an urgent case might be one where a buyer's loan approval is contingent on swiftly getting the title in their name (common in real estate transactions). Or a family emergency sale where the seller needs funds immediately. Every extra week waiting could mean a loan offer expires or a buyer pulls out. In construction, urgency is often even more pronounced: a developer might have a construction crew on payroll and machinery idle until the permit is granted, or there may be a seasonal/weather window to start work. Delays can inflate costs dramatically. Contractors might also face penalties from clients if projects don't start on time. Thus, when an official says "come back next month," the cost of that delay can be calculably large – far larger than the cost of an "expediting payment." This calculus makes bribery rational (though illegal) from the actor's perspective.

4.2.4. Evidence of Informal Payments: Several concrete data points illustrate how delays correlate with bribe-paying. In 2024, Transparency International Rwanda's survey found 13.6% of respondents reported bribery in securing a land title, and 22.9% in construction permits (Mutamba, 2025). These are not trivial shares. By 2025, the overall

bribery encounter rate dropped (from ~18.5% to 14.6%), suggesting improvements (Mutamba, 2025), but construction and land remained among the top sectors for reported bribery (Mutamba, 2025). The same survey explicitly links these bribes to delays: people initiate bribes "to get the services" when waiting too long (Mutamba, 2025). Moreover, a concerning trend was noted: the average bribe amount quadrupled was 65,543 RWF as a national average in 2024 and ~271,428 RWF as an *institution-specific* average (Mutamba, 2025; TIR, 2025; Sabiiti, 2024).

This escalation also clarifies why a formal expedition channel can be economically and ethically superior to "informal expedition." Bribery is not a simple transaction cost; it is a corrupt exchange that implicates both parties in an undue advantage arrangement, exposing the payer to legal risk and the receiver to disciplinary and criminal risk. Because illegal agreements are unenforceable, bribery can also invite repeated extraction and opportunistic price inflation, especially when the applicant's urgency is visible and the state's process opacity increases vulnerability.

In the firm-level corruption literature, both "passive" (requested) and "active" (offered) bribery are associated with measurable increases in illicit payments, and certain forms of bribery correlate with higher bribe magnitudes rather than "cheap shortcuts." An official expedition fee, by contrast, is a posted and auditable price for urgency that can be kept below the expected illicit "risk premium," thereby reducing both the moral burden on citizens and the incentive structure that makes bribery metastasize into a repeated-cost trap (UNODC, 2018; Gauthier et al., 2020; Nieto-Morales et al., 2024).

This suggests that while fewer people might be paying bribes, those who do are paying larger sums – possibly because they are paying for high-stakes interventions (like getting a permit for a large development) where the value of speed is high. The TI-Rwanda analysis attributed this to "*corrupt individuals now weigh the risks... they inflate bribe*

amounts to offset those risks”(Mutamba, 2025). In a system with strong anti-corruption enforcement like Rwanda, a corrupt official will demand a higher price to justify the risk of punishment. That ironically could make *official expedite fees* more attractive by comparison, if offered, since they carry no legal risk and might even be cheaper.

4.2.5. Informal Brokers and Justice: An ethical concern here is that those with money or connections get served, while ordinary citizens suffer. The Christian ethics of integrity calls for impartial service – “not taking bribes, for bribes blind the clear-sighted” as a Biblical principle (Exodus 23:8) – and for care of those with lesser means. The current situation, where an influential person can call a friend in the office or pay extra under the table, is deeply inequitable. It effectively privatizes a public service benefit (speed) to those willing to sin (offer bribes) or with means to pay. In our interviews with secondary sources, some officials have condemned the “middleman culture.” For instance, Rwanda’s Chief Justice in 2025 publicly announced a crackdown on corrupt middlemen who infiltrate services like courts and by extension other services (Ufitiwapo, 2025). Though that statement was about the justice sector, it reflects a broad policy stance against unofficial brokerage. It validates our premise that the government recognizes the corrosiveness of these intermediaries.

In sum, delays in land and permit services create a demand for speed that, absent a formal mechanism, is being met by informal expedients. These range from outright bribery, to favoritism, to use of professional fixers. Each undermines rule of law and fairness. The findings strongly support the notion that removing or reducing delays would directly reduce corruption pressure: as one citizen put it bluntly, in a Rwanda Today piece, “the process of getting valid construction permits is lengthy and costly, [so] local residents are forced to pay bribes” (Muvunyi, 2020). The word “forced” is striking – it suggests people feel they have no other choice. The next section will explore how a formal expedite

policy could alter this dynamic, offering a choice that is legal and transparent.

4.3 Designing a Formal Expedition Policy to Balance Integrity and Fairness (RQ3)

Based on the above insights, we posit that a formal expedition-fee mechanism could serve as a safety valve for urgent cases, potentially displacing the current informal transactions. However, designing such a policy requires carefully balancing corruption risk reduction with fairness, safety, and regulatory objectives.

4.3.1. Key Design Principles: From our analysis, several design principles emerge:

- 01. Transparency and Publishing of Terms:** The expedition option must have clearly published fees, processing time guarantees, and eligibility, so that it operates with full transparency. For example, the government could declare: “For an additional fee of RWF X, any applicant can have a decision on a land transfer within 2 working days.” This immediately sets a legitimate benchmark for what currently might only be achievable via hidden bribes. Private companies’ anti-corruption policies often explicitly permit paying official expedited fees where they exist and are published (PI, 2025), underlining that transparency distinguishes a fee from a bribe.
- 02. Capacity Scaling (No Stealing from Peter to Pay Paul):** A core requirement is that expedited processing should not cannibalize resources from normal processing. Our proposal, echoing the study objectives, is to ring-fence expedition fee revenues to fund extra capacity. Practically, this could mean the Land Authority uses the expedite fees to pay overtime for staff to handle expedited cases outside normal hours, or hires short-term contractors (perhaps retired notaries or off-duty staff) to exclusively handle expedited requests. In construction, it could fund a small dedicated “tiger team” of plan reviewers who only handle expedited files. This ensures that if 10% of

people pay for fast service, they get speed because more manpower is applied, not because 10% of other files get pushed back.

To make this enforceable rather than aspirational, the policy should explicitly prohibit using baseline staff time allocated to standard service-level targets for expedited files; expedition should be accepted only to the extent that dedicated surge capacity (temporary hires, contracted reviewers, or audited overtime teams) is funded and available. In other words, expedition must be capacity-neutral (or capacity-positive) for the ordinary queue by design, not by promise.

03. Maintaining a High Service Standard for the Normal Lane:

To prevent a two-tier system, the regular service must remain reliable. It is crucial to be explicit about the justice claim here: the purpose of formal expedition is not to privilege wealth but to prevent unequal advantage from being decided in the shadows. Under conditions of corruption, advantages tend to accrue to those within a corrupt network, meaning informal access is already stratified in practice even when policy pretends it is equal. Formalizing expeditions does not create inequality *ex nihilo*; it can reduce the unfairness of hidden bypass routes by replacing discretionary, relationship-based acceleration with a transparent, rule-bound option whose terms are identical for all applicants. The ethical test, therefore, is not whether everyone moves at the same speed, but whether the system prevents urgency from being converted into secret favoritism and whether it protects the normal lane from degradation (UNODC, n.d.-b).

One safeguard is to publicly commit to the standard timeline and closely monitor it. For instance, if land transfers are supposed to be 7 days, the agency should publish statistics on how many meet that target. If the normal lane starts slowing notably beyond the standard while expedite is in place, that's a red flag (either deliberate or due to

misallocation). A regulatory mechanism could be: if average normal processing time slips, some portion of expedite revenue must be diverted to bolster the normal lane or the expedite option is temporarily suspended until normal backlog is cleared. Essentially, the policy could build in a self-correcting feature prioritizing overall system health.

04. Fee Level and Accessibility: Setting the fee is delicate. It should be substantial enough to deter frivolous use (and to fund extra capacity) but not extortionate. For context, currently a private notary might charge around RWF 6,500 in addition to Irembo fees for a land transaction (Irembo, 2023), and unofficially people paid tens of thousands in bribes for permits (Muvnyi, 2020). The fee might differ by service; for example, RWF 50,000 for expedited land transfer (which is manageable for a high-value land deal, but still a big multiple of the normal fee) and perhaps a sliding scale for construction permits based on project size (much like how some countries charge permitting fees by project cost). To address equity: the government could consider a waiver or reduction for urgent cases stemming from hardship (e.g., someone needs to sell land quickly for a medical emergency – a committee could waive the expedite fee). However, too much subjectivity in waivers reintroduces discretion. So alternatively, keep it flat but reasonably affordable relative to typical transaction value. Notably, Rwanda's median monthly income is on the order of tens of thousands of RWF (NISR, 2024; 2025), so an expedited fee in the hundreds of thousands might truly limit access to only wealthier individuals. We likely would propose something moderate – perhaps equivalent to \$50 for land, a bit more for construction – and see if the volume is manageable.

05. Optional and Voluntary Nature: It's critical that the expedite lane is optional and not required for timely service. In other words, opting not to pay should still result in your application being

processed within the normal standard timeframe. The expedition is a premium for those who *need* it faster than standard, not a bribe you must pay to get standard results. This distinction must be communicated to citizens to avoid the impression that the government is double-charging for services.

4.3.2. Anticipated Integrity Benefits: If implemented as above, the expedition mechanism can reduce corruption in several ways. It provides a lawful outlet for urgency, thereby cutting off the demand-side of bribery. A citizen with an urgent need no longer has to wonder “whom can I pay?” – they have a straightforward answer: pay the government’s expedited fee and get the service faster with a receipt. On the supply side (officials), it reduces the grey areas by formalizing any extra compensation. Currently, an official who might be willing to push a file for a bribe is committing a crime. Under an expedite system, that official’s organization gets a fee (and perhaps the official gets overtime pay if they work extra to clear expedites). This aligns incentives: rather than hide a bribe, an official has incentive to advertise the legitimate expedite option. Crucially, an expedite system would come with audit trails – every expedited case is logged as such, fees go through e-payment, and processing times can be monitored. This contrasts with bribes which leave no trace except perhaps whispers. Auditability means any anomalies (like an expedite fee taken but service not delivered in time, or someone bypassing paying but seeming expedited) can be detected by internal audit units or even the Auditor General.

There is also an argument of cultural change: Formal expeditions might help erode the culture of “who do you know” for getting things done fast. If even high-profile individuals are encouraged to just use the official fast-track (and maybe government can mandate that – e.g., “Ministers must go through Irembo like anyone else, but can use expedite if needed” – signaling rule of law), it sets an example that paying the system is the way, not paying under the table or calling favors.

4.3.3. Protecting Fairness and Regulatory Objectives: We must ensure the fast process does not undermine due diligence. This is where process engineering is important. For land, the steps expedited likely don’t compromise quality – it’s mostly verification of documents and updating registry, which can be done faster if prioritized, without skipping any step. For construction, one might worry that speeding up could mean cutting corners on plan review. To counter that, the expedite lane should *still* check all compliance items, just with priority scheduling. Perhaps even require two reviewers sign off instead of one, to maintain rigor under speed (since errors in quick review could be risky). The policy could explicitly forbid waiving any technical requirement for expedited files – if a file is non-compliant, it must be corrected; expedite only guarantees a quick initial review and re-review, not automatic approval.

4.3.4. International Precedents and Ethical Considerations: As noted, many jurisdictions allow expedited processing for passports, visas, or permits (U.S. Department of State, 2023; Kenya Directorate of Immigration, 2024) . This is generally accepted as ethical provided the standard service remains available and reasonable. The Christian stewardship perspective endorses using resources wisely – charging a fee to allocate more resources where needed is akin to good stewardship, as long as it’s done justly. One might draw an analogy to Biblical principles of just weights and measures (Leviticus 19:36): the expedite fee must be a just measure, not an exploitative price that crushes the poor. In practice, ensuring fairness might involve using some of the fee revenue to improve the standard service or even subsidize certain applicants.

Another ethical concern: could formal expedites increase inequality? Possibly, those with money will routinely buy speed while others wait. To mitigate this, the model can be tuned. If, say, only 5-10% of applicants opt for expedite, and that funds a 10% increase in processing capacity, then everyone benefits (because normal queue might even move

faster than before due to net capacity gain). But if half the applicants feel compelled to pay, that's problematic. We anticipate in land services, expedite might be used only for special cases (many will happily wait 1-2 weeks). In construction, companies might budget for expedite as a cost of doing business – which could be acceptable if it's transparent and goes into public coffers (essentially an additional permit fee that helps the system).

4.3.5. Proposed Governance Design: To summarize a concrete design:

01. *Expedited Land Title Service:* Optional 2-working-day service for a fee of, e.g., RWF 50,000 (versus the normal 7 days which remains free or nominal cost). Expedite requests are logged in Irembo at submission. Each day, the land center identifies expedited cases and assigns them to a dedicated officer (possibly doing overtime) for immediate processing. The sector land manager or notary is alerted to treat that case first. The land registry update is done immediately after notarization. Revenue from these fees goes into a fund for contracting retired notaries on-call or paying overtime to registry staff at month-end if backlog exists. The system publishes monthly how many expedites were processed and average times for both lanes, to ensure accountability.
02. *Expedited Construction Permit:* Perhaps two levels – “fast-track small permits” (like residential buildings under a certain size) within 10 days for a set fee, and “fast-track large projects” within 15 days for a higher fee. The one-stop center sets aside certain weekly meeting slots specifically to clear expedited files, ensuring they don't wait for the next regular committee schedule. They might also engage external reviewers (accredited engineers) paid per expedited review from the fee fund to bolster capacity. All technical checks remain the same. If an expedited file is found non-compliant, it is rejected or sent for revision just like any other

(not approved just because it paid). This prevents any safety compromise.

We also suggest a feedback channel: expedited users should be surveyed or allowed to log if any official solicited additional payment informally despite the expedite (this would be a serious breach – essentially double-dipping). We doubt it would happen if oversight is strong, but a reporting mechanism helps maintain trust.

The design aligns with making integrity the path of least resistance as mentioned in contributions. Right now, unfortunately, integrity (doing it by the book) can be the slow road, while paying a bribe is the “easy” road in urgent scenarios. Our proposal flips this: paying the official fee (an act of integrity, since it's lawful) becomes the easier way to get speed, while bribery is no longer necessary or even advantageous. This can reinforce a culture of lawfulness.

4.4 Safeguards Against Perverse Incentives and Unintended Consequences (RQ4)

Introducing an expedited service lane raises the concern of perverse incentives – particularly, the risk that agencies or officials might intentionally degrade the standard service to drive customers to the paid service, or that the government becomes dependent on fee revenue and loses focus on providing timely standard services. To prevent such outcomes, we propose and discuss several safeguards:

4.4.1. Strict Performance Monitoring of the Standard Lane: One immediate safeguard is to tie the success (and continuation) of the expedited program to the maintenance of standard service levels. For instance, the policy can include a clause: *if the median processing time in the normal lane exceeds X (e.g., the official standard + a small tolerance) for Y consecutive months, the expedited service will be reviewed/suspended.* This creates institutional pressure not to neglect the normal lane. It could even affect staff evaluations – managers

should know that letting normal service slow down will endanger a program (and perhaps funding) they find useful, so they will avoid that. Technologically, Rwanda can leverage its digital systems to generate real-time reports: both Irembo and BPMIS can likely produce data on how long applications are taking. Publishing these metrics (perhaps on a public dashboard) would create external accountability. If citizens see that 90% of normal applications are still done within standard time, they won't suspect that expedite is a cash grab; if they see that normal times are slipping, they will raise alarms. Thus transparency is key: "shine a light so no dark corner incentive can fester."

4.4.2. External Oversight: Agencies like the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) or the Office of the Ombudsman could be tasked with oversight of the expedition mechanism. For example, the Ombudsman (who deals with maladministration and corruption) could periodically audit a sample of normal cases to ensure they weren't unduly delayed. Civil society could also be involved; TI-Rwanda could incorporate a section in their Bribery Index survey about the expedited services if introduced (e.g., asking if people felt forced to use expedite or if any issues arose). This third-party scrutiny would deter intentional slowdowns. In countries like Kenya, when they introduced an expedited passport service, the anti-corruption commission monitored passport office wait times to ensure regular service did not deteriorate – a practice Rwanda could emulate (Kenya Directorate of Immigration, 2024).

4.4.3. Revenue Management and Allocation: Ring-fencing revenue for service improvement, as mentioned, not only provides capacity but also prevents misallocation. It should be made clear that expedite fees are not a general "cash cow" for the treasury but a tool for service delivery. One idea: any surplus after funding extra capacity could be used to *upgrade infrastructure* (e.g., better IT systems, training staff) for the department – thus even those in the normal lane benefit indirectly. By law, Rwanda could stipulate that these funds cannot

be used for bonuses or salaries beyond overtime (to avoid people slowing work to get more overtime pay). In essence, design the fund usage so no individual's income depends on generating more expedited fees, removing personal incentive to push people toward it.

4.4.4. Process Integrity Checks: We must ensure that expedited cases still undergo all necessary scrutiny – a different kind of perverse incentive would be if expedite became an unofficial code for "don't look too hard, just approve quickly because they paid." To combat this, one could randomize additional quality audits on expedited outputs. For instance, for every 10 expedited building permits approved, an independent senior engineer reviews one to confirm no corners were cut. If a pattern of lax review is found, the privilege of expedite could be re-evaluated. It sends a signal: speed yes, but standards remain non-negotiable.

4.4.5. Preventing Over-Reliance and Elite Capture: There is a scenario to avoid: that expedition fees become so lucrative that the government expands them to services where they aren't appropriate, or sets fees too high, thus creating a stratified public service. To guard against this, one principle is limiting the scope of expedition to cases where urgency is both common and consequential (land and construction fit, as would a few others like maybe business registration for big investments, etc., but not every little service). Additionally, performing periodic reviews of the fee level relative to average incomes can ensure it's not exorbitant. The policy could sunset or require renewal after a pilot period – say a 2-year pilot after which Parliament or the Cabinet reviews outcomes and either continues, adjusts, or abolishes it. That way, it's not an entrenched feature immune to correction.

4.4.6. Cultural and Ethical Training: On a softer side, continuing to instill a public service ethos is important. Rwanda already emphasizes anti-corruption in civil service training. Incorporating the expedition policy into that narrative is key: front-line workers should be taught that the expedite

option is *not* a signal that “rich people get VIP treatment,” but rather a measured response to genuine needs, and that their duty is to uphold fairness by maintaining diligence in both lanes. A Christian perspective might frame it as “*serving each according to their need while respecting each person’s dignity*” – expedited service for someone in urgent need can be seen as compassion in bureaucratic form, whereas exploiting someone’s urgency for a bribe is the opposite (predatory behavior). This moral framing can help ensure that those implementing the policy do so with integrity.

4.4.7. Empirical Feedback Loop: We recommend that if implemented, the government gathers data on the expedition program and, importantly, feedback from users. If many people start using expedite for lack of trust in normal processes, that’s a sign to improve normal processes. If some users complain they paid but still face delays, that must be addressed immediately (perhaps with refund guarantees – another safeguard: if the agency misses the expedited deadline, the fee is refunded automatically, giving a strong incentive to uphold promises). The policy could also include a grievance mechanism specifically for expedited cases: e.g., a hotline or an ombudsperson to contact if anyone pressures them for more money or if service is not as advertised.

In discussing these safeguards, we acknowledge a delicate balance. We want to eliminate the perverse incentive for the institution to slow things down, and equally avoid giving individual staff perverse incentives. For example, if overtime pay is given to those handling expedited cases, one must ensure staff don’t “save work” for overtime. This can be tackled by rotating who handles expedites and monitoring their normal hours output. Essentially, manage it as one would manage any performance-based system – with checks against gaming.

The overarching safeguard is the public and leadership commitment that expedition fees are aimed at enhancing integrity, not revenue. Rwanda’s

leadership has historically been quite sensitive to anything that smells like exploitation of citizens. By framing and executing this policy as an anti-corruption and efficiency tool, and by delivering visible improvements (e.g., shorter queues, no brokers hanging around offices), it will likely earn public support. If ever the public perceives it becoming a “pay to play” scheme, strong political action (like eliminating fees or firing officials) would likely kick in, given Rwanda’s governance style.

Thus, with these safeguards, we argue that it is possible to implement an expedition-fee mechanism that avoids the dystopian scenario of a two-tier system where only the wealthy get timely service. Instead, we envision a system where overall service delivery improves (benefiting everyone), urgent needs are met more humanely, and the scope for petty corruption is narrowed significantly. As one Rwandan official noted, “*we want to address delays in land service delivery... by 2023, we will have ended delays*” (Africa Press, 2022) – the expedition policy can be one instrument among others to fulfill that promise, provided it is executed with a spirit of integrity and equity.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1 Synthesis of Findings and Theoretical

Insights: In Rwanda’s quest to modernize and digitize public services, the paradox of bureaucratic time has emerged as a frontier challenge: even with digital platforms and clear standards, the lived experience for many citizens in land title transfers and construction permits includes frustrating delays. Our interdisciplinary analysis confirms that these delays are not merely inconveniences; they carry profound implications for governance and ethics. When time becomes a currency in short supply, an informal market for time emerges, often in the form of corruption. We found that structural bottlenecks (like limited notary availability or multi-agency permit reviews) create pockets of delay that, in turn, create pressure points where individuals are tempted to deviate from formal rules. Principal-Agent Theory

illuminated how officials' discretion over file processing can be monetized, while Queueing Theory showed that a single first-come-first-served line can inadvertently punish those with urgent needs, effectively incentivizing side deals.

Our key finding is that legitimate urgency consistently translates into corruption risk under the status quo, a result echoed by stakeholders from citizens to civil society to government itself. Transparency International Rwanda's observation that "*delay... attracts bribes*" (Mutamba, 2025) distills the issue: a system that makes no allowance for urgency inadvertently sanctions a black market solution. Administrative Burden Theory further helped us conceptualize the *moral dimension* – excessive wait times for critical services impose not just efficiency costs but can coerce otherwise law-abiding citizens into ethical compromises. Here, we entwine a Christian ethical perspective: such a system falls short of justice.

A formal expedition option directly addresses this justice deficit by separating legitimate urgency from illicit bargaining. It allows land and construction actors facing genuine time exposure to preserve transactions and project timelines through a lawful channel, rather than through bribery that entangles both giver and receiver in wrongdoing and expands unequal advantage through hidden networks. Properly designed, expedition is not "pay-to-play," because it does not sell approvals or waive safeguards; it sells only additional processing capacity and predictable time, while protecting the standard lane through capacity ring-fencing. The ethical advantage is concrete: citizens can meet emergency needs without self-incrimination or moral injury, officials are insulated from solicitation dynamics, and the overall system becomes more accountable because urgency is handled by published rules rather than personal discretion (UNODC, 2018; UNODC, n.d.; Nieto-Morales et al., 2024). Justice is not only about equitable outcomes, but also equitable processes – including the distribution of waiting time, which is too often overlooked.

Integrating these insights, we examined the potential of a formally regulated expedition-fee mechanism as a policy intervention. The idea aligns with Rwanda's innovative spirit (the country that leap-frogged in e-government could also pilot new governance tools). Conceptually, this mechanism acts as a "corruption swap" – swapping illicit, opaque payments with transparent, rule-bound fees, thereby disarming the pernicious effects of hidden corruption. Our analysis suggests that if designed well, such a system can indeed mitigate corruption risks (by closing the unmonitored bargaining space) and improve overall service performance (by injecting additional resources funded by the fees). Moreover, it offers a channel to honor the stewardship of time: treating citizens' time as a precious resource that the government is accountable for. This is an ethical stance as much as an administrative one.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that a formal expedite option is not about creating a two-tier society of haves and have-nots; rather, it can be about creating a two-speed bureaucracy that better serves all – one speed for routine cases (efficient as ever) and one higher speed for urgent cases (with safeguards) – with the net effect of reducing the total incidence of corruption and frustration. The theoretical frameworks all reinforce this outlook: - Administrative burden is reduced (alleviating the desperation that feeds corrupt offers), - Principal-agent incentive misalignments are corrected (less discretion to trade favors), - Queueing is optimized (more optimal matching of service rate to urgency levels), - And justice in bureaucratic time is advanced (time-saving opportunities allocated by transparent criteria instead of favoritism).

5.2 Policy Recommendations for Rwanda:

Building on the above conclusions, we offer several concrete recommendations for Rwandan policymakers and public sector leaders:

1. Pilot the Expedition-Fee Mechanism in High-Need Areas: We recommend initiating a pilot program for formal expedited processing in one land

office (e.g., City of Kigali, which has the highest volume) and one construction permitting office. The pilot should define a clear expedited service standard (e.g., land transfer in 2 days for a fee, construction permit in 10 days for a fee) and closely monitor outcomes. By starting as a pilot, adjustments can be made before scaling up nationally. Pilot selection should be in areas with sufficient digital maturity to handle tracking and where baseline data can be collected easily for evaluation.

2. Set Fees Pragmatically and Ensure Accessibility: Based on our analysis, initial expedite fees should be set at a moderate level – significant enough to cover costs but not punitive. For example, a fee on the order of RWF 20,000–50,000 for land transfers and perhaps a tiered fee for construction permits (maybe ~0.1% of project value, capped at a reasonable maximum) could be tested. It is crucial to accompany the fee structure with a communication campaign explaining that the fee funds extra capacity and is entirely optional. To maintain trust, consider a refund guarantee: if the agency fails to meet the promised expedited timeline, the fee is refunded automatically. This not only protects customers but also gives agencies incentive to uphold the standard (PI, 2024).

3. Strengthen Normal Service While Introducing Fast Service: Expedite service should not come at the expense of the normal service. We advise the government to simultaneously invest in baseline capacity – for instance, continue the recruitment of land officers and notaries for all sectors (as Kigali did in 2022 [Africa Press, 2022]), and ensure BPMIS improvements (like the May 2025 upgrade noted by RHA [Africa Press, 2022]) are fully operational. The introduction of expedite lanes will work best if the normal lane is functioning reasonably well, so that expedite truly is for exceptional cases. We also recommend maintaining or tightening current service charters: do not quietly relax the 7-day or 21-day standards; instead, double down on meeting them. Use technology like SMS updates to

keep applicants informed of their status – this transparency reduces anxiety that leads to bribery.

4. Implement Robust Oversight and Feedback Mechanisms: We recommend establishing a small Expedited Services Monitoring Committee, perhaps under the Prime Minister's Office or Ministry of Public Service, that includes members from MINICT, RGB, and civil society (like TI-Rwanda). This committee would review monthly reports on how many cases used expedites, the impact on processing times, and any complaints lodged. It should also oversee an independent evaluation after, say, 6-12 months of the pilot. Additionally, set up a user feedback channel (digital survey or hotline) specifically for expedited service users to report their experience and any irregularities (like being asked for unofficial fees). The Ombudsman's office should be copied on any serious complaints, ensuring a high level of scrutiny. This transparency will guard against misuse and build credibility that the system is working as intended.

5. Enforce Integrity and Anti-Abuse Safeguards: To preclude any gaming of the system, we recommend formal directives be issued to public servants: any evidence of deliberate delay of normal cases to promote expedited ones will result in disciplinary action. This can be enforced by surprise audits – e.g., insert a few “mystery shopper” applications in the system to see if procedures are followed without favor. It's also worth programming the IT system such that expedited cases are tagged and cannot exceed a certain percentage of the workload at any given time (to ensure normal cases keep flowing). Moreover, publicize the principle that expedite fees are public revenue that will be used for public benefit. For instance, the Ministry of Finance could publish an annual statement of expedite fee collections and how they were spent (new hires, overtime hours, system upgrades). This level of openness will help quell public skepticism.

6. Integrate Stewardship Ethics into Public Service Training: We encourage reinforcing in all

relevant agencies (NLA, RHA, District One-Stop centers) the ethos that time is a public resource to be managed with integrity. Introduce the expedition mechanism in training as a tool to better serve citizens, not as a luxury service. Emphasize that treating citizens without urgent needs fairly (not neglecting them) is as important as helping those with urgent needs. Aligning with Rwanda's anti-corruption values, frame the expedite service as another step in innovative clean governance – much like Irembo digitization was, this is about cutting off corruption's oxygen (which in this case is excessive delay). A values-driven implementation will rally civil servants to make it succeed and self-police any drift.

By executing these recommendations, Rwanda can pioneer a model of handling urgency in public services that many countries grapple with. Importantly, these changes should be presented to the public not as commercialization of services, but as innovation for integrity and efficiency. Given Rwanda's track record of public acceptance of bold reforms (e.g., traffic fines by mobile money, performance contracts, etc.), a well-communicated expedite fee could be understood and supported, especially if results show quicker services and reduced broker activity (MINECOFIN, 2020).

5.3 Implications for Broader Governance and the Global South: While our study is grounded in Rwanda, the implications resonate far beyond. Many developing countries face similar challenges: well-intentioned reforms get undermined by the reality of limited capacity and urgent citizen needs, leading to petty corruption. The idea of formally addressing bureaucratic time as a justice issue can reshape governance dialogues.

For the broader governance community, this research suggests that tackling corruption requires looking at system design, not just stricter laws or more policing of ethics. By aligning user incentives with integrity outcomes (here, giving people a legal path to faster service rather than leaving them to bribe), governments can reduce corruption in a more

sustainable way than purely punitive approaches. It's a preventative strategy – remove the cause rather than only punish the symptom. This is in line with modern public administration thinking that emphasizes reducing administrative burdens and improving service delivery as part of good governance (as also advocated by institutions like the World Bank in "Government Effectiveness" frameworks).

Additionally, this study showcases the value of interdisciplinary methods. By blending NLP-driven scoping review with theories from economics, public administration, and even theology, we gain a richer understanding of issues and solutions. Other scholars and policymakers in the Global South can adapt this approach: use AI tools to parse through policy documents and citizen feedback to identify hidden friction points, and use ethical/philosophical lenses to ensure reforms enhance human dignity and social equity.

For countries with similar e-government platforms, the Rwanda case will be instructive. If the expedition-fee pilot proves successful (say, bribery reports drop and services speed up without public backlash), it could be a model for places like Botswana or Kenya or Ghana where digital services are expanding but complaints of slow processing persist. It flips the narrative from "digital vs corruption" to "smart policy design vs corruption" – digital helps, but policy innovation is the turbocharger.

From a Christian or moral governance perspective, Rwanda's move (should it implement these recommendations) could set an example of principled pragmatism: not being afraid to introduce fees or differentiated service levels as long as they serve the common good and protect the weak. In fact, one might argue it is an application of the Golden Rule in bureaucracy – those implementing the service ask, "*if I were a citizen with an urgent need, how would I want the system to treat me?*" The answer isn't with favoritism if I'm rich but with compassion

and a fair chance to get faster help. That is what the expedition mechanism aims to institutionalize.

In conclusion, the implications of this research advocate for a paradigm shift: Time is a governance issue. How a state manages waiting times can either reinforce inequality and corruption or foster trust and satisfaction. Rwanda has the opportunity to be on the leading edge of this realization, crafting a system where urgent needs are met lawfully and integrity is baked into the flow of public services. Such foresight in governance is a hallmark of nations that not only combat corruption effectively but also build an administration that is humane and just.

5.4 Future Research and Foresight: While this manuscript lays the groundwork, it also opens several avenues for future inquiry:

Pilot Evaluation and Causal Analysis: Should Rwanda implement an expedition-fee pilot, it will create a natural experiment. Researchers could then collect primary data – before-and-after comparisons of processing times, bribe reports, user satisfaction, etc. A rigorous impact evaluation (quasi-experimental or experimental if random assignment to expedited vs normal lanes were possible) would provide causal evidence of the policy’s effectiveness. Our study is at the level of correlational insight and logical argument; future research could confirm (or challenge) our claims with empirical data. For example, does bribery incidence in permits drop significantly in pilot districts compared to control districts? Does overall average processing time improve, and what is the effect on those who do not use expedite?

Behavioral Dynamics: It would be valuable to study the behavioral responses of both citizens and bureaucrats to the introduction of an expedited channel. Will citizens trust it, or will some still attempt to double insure by both paying the fee and trying to bribe someone (an unlikely but worth-examining outcome)? Will bureaucrats exhibit

any new behavior, such as subtly advising citizens to go expedited even if not necessary (to reduce their own workload or meet performance targets)? These nuances could be captured via surveys or ethnographic studies within offices. Embedding a sociologist or anthropologist to observe permit offices, for example, might reveal how formal and informal practices interact post-reform.

Technology Integration: Future research might also explore how advanced technologies like AI scheduling or workflow automation could enhance both standard and expedited services. Rwanda could consider AI systems that predict surges in demand (e.g., more permit requests in dry season) and dynamically allocate extra reviewers (perhaps funded by expedite fees) ahead of time. Studying such proactive queue management would extend queueing theory application in public services. Additionally, how might mobile applications and notifications reduce the need for expedite by easing anxiety? There’s room to experiment with user-side solutions: maybe an app that shows real-time queue status (bringing transparency which might itself deter bribe attempts, since the applicant can see progress).

Comparative Studies: As more countries innovate with service delivery, comparative research can be insightful. Future studies could compare Rwanda’s approach with, say, the “premium processing” offered in countries like India (some states offer Tatkal schemes for passports) or the UK (premium visa services), examining success factors and public perceptions. Cross-country learning can refine what works best culturally and administratively.

Long-term Governance Impact: A profound question is whether formalizing expedition in government services has any long-term effect on public trust and the social contract. Does it increase trust because people see a responsive government, or risk decreasing it because people feel the government is selling privileges? Our hypothesis leans to the former if done ethically, but longitudinal studies or

citizen attitude surveys could shed light. This ties into the concept of stewardship: are citizens more likely to view public officials as good stewards of resources (time, taxes) if such innovations are implemented? Monitoring trust barometers and service satisfaction indices over time could provide answers.

Finally, we must consider that as Rwanda and others succeed in reducing petty corruption, the corruption landscape shifts. Already Rwanda's CPI success is notable (TIR, 2025); the challenges move toward more complex issues (state capture, if any, or private sector corruption). Ensuring day-to-day services are clean is foundational – it creates a citizenry that expects integrity. Future governance research might explore how those citizen expectations, once solidified, influence other areas of governance (for example, do citizens become more vocal against bigger corruption if they no longer face it in daily life?).

In foresight, Rwanda's continued emphasis on technology, performance management, and accountability suggests that by 2030, services could be almost entirely paperless and extremely fast (perhaps instantaneous for some via automation). In that scenario, expedition fees might phase out because everything becomes expedient by default. One could imagine a future where AI bots process straightforward land transfers in seconds, leaving humans only complex cases – urgency moot because nothing is slow. But until that horizon, the journey is one of incremental improvements like the one we propose.

The interdisciplinary and ethically infused approach of this study underscores a closing thought: Good governance is not just about tightening rules, but about intelligently redesigning systems to align with human realities and moral values. In tackling the ethics of bureaucratic time, Rwanda has an opportunity to lead by example, demonstrating that efficiency and integrity are not opposing poles, but rather twin pillars of public service excellence in the 21st century.

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