IC-PAGSA 2026

NEPAL

International Conference on Public Administration and Governance in South Asia

ETHICS · INCLUSION · STATE CAPACITY



OFFICIAL CONFERENCE PUBLICATION

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME & BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

4–6 November 2026 | NASC, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur

Reimagining Public Administration in South Asia: Ethics, Inclusion and State Capacity

ORGANIZED BY

Nepal Administrative Staff College

Public Administration Association of Nepal

South Asia Network for Public Administration

KNOWLEDGE PARTNER

IC-PAGSA 2026

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA



NEPAL

Mount Everest

Conference Programme & Book of Abstracts

Photographic opener

PUBLICATION NAVIGATION / 3–6 NOVEMBER 2026

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Hosting Institutions & Knowledge Partner

Hosted by the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC), the International Conference on Public Administration and Governance in South Asia 2026 is jointly organized with the Public Administration Association of Nepal (PAAN) and the South Asia Network for Public Administration (SANPA), with The Asia Foundation as Knowledge Partner. NASC advances public-sector capacity through executive education, applied research and advisory services. PAAN brings together Nepal's public administration scholars and practitioners, while SANPA strengthens academic and professional exchange across South Asia. The Asia Foundation contributes knowledge partnerships and regional governance perspectives. Together, these institutions convene policymakers, researchers and practitioners to examine ethical governance, inclusion and state capacity, and to connect evidence with practical public-sector reform.

Conference Organizing Committee

ROLE	NAME	DESIGNATION / INSTITUTION
Conference Chair	**Ram Prasad Ghimire**	Executive Director, Nepal Administrative Staff College
Co-Chair	**PAkhlaque Haque**	President, SANPA; Professor, University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA
Co-Chair	**Madhu Raman Acharya**	President, PAAN; Former Secretary, Government of Nepal
Co-Chair	**Megh Raj Dangal**	Dean, Kathmandu University School of Arts
Conference Secretary	**Trilochan Pokharel**	Senior Director of Studies, NASC; Deputy Secretary-General, SANPA
Member	**Mohammad Mizanur Rahman**	Secretary-General, SANPA
Member	**Yaamina Salman**	Academic Affairs Secretary, SANPA; University of the Punjab, Pakistan
Member	**Fara Azmat**	Executive Committee Member, SANPA; Deakin University, Australia
Member	**Durga P. Chhetri**	Executive Committee Member, SANPA; Sikkim University, India
Member	**Dilip Raj Paudel**	General Secretary, PAAN

NATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

National Organizing Committee

Conference planning and on-site coordination

ROLE	NAME	DESIGNATION / INSTITUTION
Chair	**Achala Dahal**	Senior Director of Studies, Nepal Administrative Staff College
Member	**Shital Moktan Tamang**	Director of Studies, Nepal Administrative Staff College
Member	**Krishna Bahadur Thapa**	Training and Research Officer, Nepal Administrative Staff College
Member	**Sabik Neupane**	Training and Research Officer, Nepal Administrative Staff College
Member	**Ashma Bidari**	Training and Research Officer, Nepal Administrative Staff College
Member	**Saurav Koirala**	Training and Research Officer, Nepal Administrative Staff College
Member	**Anajali Verma**	Senior Assistant, Nepal Administrative Staff College

Conference Secretariat · conference2026@nasc.org.np

PART I / CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Conference Programme

Pre-conference Learning Lab · Tuesday 3 November 2026

PRITHIVI HALL • NASC

TIME	SESSION	LEAD RESOURCE PERSONS / NOTES
09:30–10:00	**Opening and framing**	Purpose and expectations for public-administration learning.
10:00–11:30	**Public Administration at a Turning Point**	Habib Zafarrullah [University of New England]; Roshani Bhujel [NASC]
11:45–13:15	**South Asian Public Administration Dynamics**	Prabhat Kumar Datta [Xavier Law School]; Shiva Hari Adhikari [NASC]
14:15–15:45	**Teaching Public Administration to Civil Servants**	Akhlaque Haque [University of Alabama at Birmingham]; Shailaja Upadhyaya [NASC]
16:00–17:30	**Research, Cases and Knowledge for Practice**	Yaamina Salman [University of the Punjab]; Anup Bhurtel [NASC]
15:00–17:00	Conference Registration	Exhibition Area

PROGRAMME Day 1 · 4 November 2026

Opening, keynote, parallel sessions, deliberative studios and Regional Reflection

TIME	SESSION / VENUE	NOTES
07:30–09:00	**Registration and Help Desk**	Registration area
09:00–09:50	**Opening Session — Brihaspati Hall**	Chair: Ram Prasad Ghimire; remarks from conference partners and organizers
09:50–10:30	**Keynote Session — Brihaspati Hall**	Mallika Shakya
10:30–11:00	**Tea Break**	Dining area
11:00–12:30	**Parallel Technical Sessions 01–11 and Panel 1**	See session cards below
12:30–13:30	**Lunch**	Dining area
13:30–15:30	**Deliberative Studios A–C**	Rara Hall, Prithivi Hall, Kasthamandap Hall
15:30–16:00	**Tea Break**	Dining area
16:00–17:30	**Regional Reflection**	Brihaspati Hall
17:30–19:30	**Reception Dinner**	NASC grounds

SESSION 01 Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 I	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KUMARI HALL

CHAIR
Hari Prasad Dhungana [Nepal Open University]

FACILITATOR
Nabina Malekar [NASC]

T106 [Virtual]
Local Governance in Lahore: Socio-Economic Reform Initiatives and Institutional Realities
Madiha Rehman Farooqi · Shajara Ul-Durar

T117 [Virtual]
Coherence Without Convergence: Assessing India's Institutional Architecture for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
Sandeep Inampudi

T107
Governance Challenges in Child Protection: Lessons from Early Marriage Among Marginalized Communities in Nepal
Kabita Khatiwada · Dilip Raj Paudel

T102 [Virtual]
National Suicide Prevention Policies in South Asia: An Assessment Against the WHO's LIVE LIFE Policy Guidelines
Anisur Rahman Khan

SESSION 02 Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 II	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	MALASHREE HALL

CHAIR
Md. Mizanur Rahman [Center for Strategic and Peace Studies, Bangladesh]

FACILITATOR
Alisha Devkota [NASC]

T116 [Virtual]
Postcolonial Governance and SDG Localisation Challenges: Evidence from Bangladesh
Md Mahmud Hasan

T120
A Decade of Nepal's Federal Transition: Evolving Jurisprudences and Operational Challenges (Lessons and Evolving Patterns from the World's Youngest Federation)
Prashuram Upadhyaya

T104 [Virtual]
Vertical Policy Synchronicity in Delivering Safe Drinking Water in Punjab, Pakistan
Seemi Waheed

T111
Women Police Stations in Punjab (Pakistan): A Need for Reform
Saffa Amjad

SESSION 03

Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 I	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	CHANDRAMA HALL

CHAIR
Durga P Chhetri [Sikkim University]

FACILITATOR
Ganesh Kumar Sah [NASC]

T407 [Virtual]

Pre-Demolition Conference (PDC) on Securing Just and Humane Demolition/Eviction Activities in the Philippines

John Patrick C. Olmedo

T413 [Virtual]

People's Participation and the Dynamics of Good Governance in Local Government: An Empirical Analysis of Selected Union Parishads in Chattogram District, Bangladesh

Nakibul Islam Chowdhury1 · Amir Mohammad Nasrullah2 · Muhammad Wahidur Rahman3 · Md. Sahadat Hosain3 · Shimul Tanchangya3

T408

One-Stop Service Delivery in Nepal: An Intergovernmental Approach to Citizen-Centric Governance at the Grassroots

Indra Bahadur Bhujel

T453 [Virtual]

The Impact of Citizens' Noncompliance in Co-Production: A Case Study of the Ban on Free Issuance of Polythene Bags in Sri Lanka

Mayuri Kularathne1 · Sanjana Nandasiri2

SESSION 04

Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 II	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KHAPTAD HALL

CHAIR
Mokbul Morshed Ahmad [Asia Institute of Technology]

FACILITATOR
Ankit Bhandari [NASC]

T441
Awareness, Access and Cashless Care: Beneficiary Experiences Under Ayushman Bharat-PM-JAY in Varanasi District
Parul Rai · Pradeep Kumar Singh

T444 [Virtual]
Exploring the Perceptions of Public Officials Regarding Citizen Engagement in Heritage Conservation and Management: A Case of Walled City of Lahore Authority, Pakistan
Syeda LalaRukh · Aisha Rizwan

T447 [Virtual]
Co-Production of Public Services Using Digital Technologies: Drivers and Barriers to the Use of Pakistan Citizen Portal
Sidra Irfan

T431 [Virtual]
Exploring the Nexus Between Decentralisation and Urban Local Development in Bangladesh
Mohammad Ishtiuq Hossain · Md Ahsanul Kabir

SESSION 05 Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 I | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KAILASH HALL

CHAIR
Nisha Onta [GovLab]

FACILITATOR
Prativa Paudel [NASC]

T623
Significance of Nepali Vernacular Architecture in Terms of Tradition, Modernity & Cultural Sustainability: Rethinking Indigenous Building Knowledge for Climate-Resilient and Inclusive Governance in Nepal
Saurav Koirala

T615 [Virtual]
Governing Climate Change in Bangladeshi Cities: Bureaucratic Superimposition and the Limits of Development-As-Usual
A.K.M. Fazlur Rahman · Md. Ahsanul Kabir

T603
Kathmandu Valley's Urban Governance Crisis: Climate Change and Flood Risk
Tej Karki

T614 [Virtual]
Beyond Industrial Circularity: Artisan Circularity as a Public Administration Framework for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Governance
Tapan Sharma

SESSION 06 Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 I | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | SWAYAMBHU HALL

CHAIR
Narayan Adhikari [Accountability Lab]

FACILITATOR
Surya Prakash Baral [NASC]

T327
Who Do Citizens Trust More? A Conjoint Experiment on Bureaucratic Recruitment in Pakistan
Abiha Zahra

T306 [Virtual]
Has the Right to Information Act, 2005 Strengthened Public Trust in India? Reassessing Democratic Accountability and Evolving Challenges of Transparency Activism
Shailendra Kumar1 · Anshuman Ankit2 · Pankaj Kumar Mishra2

T323
Policy Implementation Challenges in Developing Countries: The Case of an AI-Driven Traffic Management System in Bangladesh
Mumtaheenah Jashim1 · Hasan Muhammad Baniamin

T302
Mimicry of Reform and the State of Anti-Corruption in Bangladesh
Nurul Huda Sakib

SESSION 07 Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 III	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	RARA HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Sameen Mustafa [University of Karachi]	Raju Pangeni [NASC]

T448 **Challenges and Way Forward of Universal Health Insurance in Bangladesh**
K M Kabirul Islam1 · Md. Sakib Mahmud

T433 **Citizens' Perceptions of Governance Reform in Nepal: A Comparative Study of Pre-and Post-2015 Constitutional Governance in Kaski District**
Mohan Kumar Paudel1 · Aayushma Pangeni

T403 [Virtual] **Performances of Standing Committees of Union Parishad (UP) in Bangladesh: A Descriptive Analysis**
Mohammed Mamun

T430 **Reintegrating Returnees: A Qualitative Study of Post-COVID Labor Migration in Nepal**
Bimba Panthi

SESSION 08 Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 I	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	PRITHVI HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Binayak Krishna Thapa [Kathmandu University]	Sebika Thapa [NASC]

T514 **Administrative Power and Public Resistance: Social Movements, Governance, and State Transformation in Nepal**
Narendra Raj Paudel

T513 **Narrative Governance in the Age of AI: Reimagining Public Trust Through Algorithmic Communication in South Asia**
K M Baharul Islam · Ashfaque Ahmad Shovon

T506 **Strengthening State Capacity in Post-Disaster Recovery: From Bottlenecks to Reform Through Legal Clinics and Disaster Management Framework Review in Sri Lanka**
D S C T R Dissanayake

T544 **How Do Digital and Intelligent Technologies Shape Public Employees' Felt Accountability? A Technology Enactment-Psychological Perception Perspective**
Jiusheng Tan · Yunxue Deng · Yulong Yun

SESSION 09

Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 II	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	ANNAPURNA HALL

CHAIR
Bishnu Raj Upreti [Nepal Center for Contemporary Research]

FACILITATOR
Smriti Pradhan [NASC]

T510 **Andragogy in Public Policy Education: An Autoethnography of Building State Capacity Among Civil Servants**
Vishal Narain

T536 **Emotional Inclusion in the Workplace: Representation and Exclusion Experiences of Gender and Ethnic Minorities in Nepal's Civil Service**
Baburam Bhul

T525 **Building Governance Capability at the Last Mile: Training Elected Urban Local Representatives for Citizen-Centric Service Delivery - Evidence from Maharashtra**
Vishal Dole · Manjiri Dhawade

T541 **Digital Governance and the Transformation of Public Service Delivery in India**
Mary Bal

SESSION 10 Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 III	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	LUMBINI HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Prakash Regmi [Freelance]	Chandni Kayastha [NASC]

T517 Enhancing Public Service Delivery Through Digital Transformation and MIL
Sahishnu Poudyal1 · Nirmala Mani Adhikary

T523 [Virtual] From Revolution to Reform? Bangladesh's Politicised Civil Bureaucracy After July 2024
Md Shafiul Islam

T512 Does Public Policy Challenge Caste? Examining Entrepreneurship Initiatives for Scheduled Caste Women in India
Wajahat Mazahar Khan

T527 [Virtual] Governing the Intersection: Institutional Challenges and Driver Compliance in Dhaka's AI Based Traffic Enforcement System
Md. Lutful Nasif

SESSION 11 Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 II	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	PATHIVARA HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Ngamindra Dahal [NWCF]	Lila Nath Sapkota [NASC]

T611 Drought-Induced Internal Displacement in Bangladesh: A Review of Public Policies and Administrative Response
Sujan Kanti Dey · Mokbul Morshed Ahmad

T622 The Institutional Determinants of Women's Health and Their Role in Inclusive Growth
Salineeta Chaudhuri1 · Shalini Singh · Vivek Shukla

T625 Political Adaptation of Climate-Induced Internally Displaced Population in Bangladesh: A Stakeholder-Based Analysis
Sodip Roy

T610 Gender-Responsive Urban Climate Adaptation: Governance Pathways for Inclusive and Low Carbon Cities
Ruth Shraboni Joydhor1 · Romana Akter

PANEL 1 Institutional Innovations for Inclusive Development: Collaborative Governance for Public Service Delivery in South Asia

Panel Session	4 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	ARANIKO HALL

CHAIR
Md. Ehtesham Khan [Magadh University]

FACILITATOR
Shailendra Prasad Bhatt [NASC]

Discussant Kumari Shakhi [Magadh University]

P1.1 **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) as a Catalyst for Good Governance: A Comparative Study of Bihar (India) and Nepal**
Avinash Kumar Singh · Avinash Kumar Sonu

P1.2 [Virtual] **Corporate Partnerships for WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) Governance: From Statutory Compliance to Public Value Creation under India's Mandatory CSR Framework (2014–2024)**
Anshuman Ankit

P1.3 **Ethical Street-Level Bureaucracy and Inclusive Public Service Delivery: A Study of Institutional Innovations for Last-Mile Governance in Bihar**
Kundan Kumar · Deepak Kumar

P1.4 [Virtual] **Beyond Self-Help Groups: Social Capital and Community Institutions for Inclusive Rural Development – Evidence from JEEViKA, Bihar**
Pankaj Kumar Mishra

PROGRAMME

Day 2 · 5 November 2026

Plenary, parallel sessions, learning labs and Nepal Dialogue

TIME	SESSION / VENUE	NOTES
09:00–10:30	**Plenary Session — Brihaspati Hall**	Modernizing the State for Citizens, Not Just Efficiency?
10:30–11:00	**Tea Break**	Dining area
11:00–12:30	**Parallel Technical Sessions 12–22 and Panels 2–3**	See session cards below
12:30–13:30	**Lunch**	Dining area
13:30–15:30	**Learning Labs A–D**	Kasthamandap, Prithivi, Rara and Khaptad halls
15:30–16:00	**Tea Break**	Dining area
16:00–17:30	**Nepal Dialogue — Brihaspati Hall**	Nepal's governance trajectory, public trust, state capacity and reform momentum

SESSION 12 — Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 IV	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KUMARI HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Prakash Bhattarai [Centre for Social Change (CSC)]	Seejan Poudel [NASC]

T516 [Virtual]

When Algorithms Meet Bureaucracy: Human-AI Leadership, Skills, and Job Quality in South Asian Public Administration

Yohan Perera1 · Sachithra Jayavindi2

T538 [Virtual]

Beyond Digitization: A Supply Chain Case Study of Multi-Agency Integration in Public Sector Land Management

Md Faisal Bin Nasir

T531 [Virtual]

Integrating Artificial Intelligence for Efficiency in Pakistan's Judicial Governance and Policy Pathway

Mashriq Khan

T504

Role of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) in Enhancing Bureaucratic Capacity

Shamim Hosen

SESSION 13 Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 V	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	MALASHREE HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Dinesh Panta [Former Executive Director, NASC]	Ashma Bidari [NASC]

T518 [Virtual]
Institutional Constraints in Implementing Civil Service Neutrality Policy: Evidence from Indonesia's 2024 Regional Elections
Riza Puji Wahyuni

T524 [Virtual]
Leveraging E-Governance for SDG-Focused Public Service Delivery in Bangladesh: Assessing the Role of the Bangladesh Civil Service
Md Shafiul Islam

T533
Governing the Algorithmic State: Reimagining Public Administration for the Age of AI
Mustafa Hyder · Sameen Mustafa

T515 [Virtual]
Governing Through Databases: Familial Datafication and Welfare Automation in India
Nadha Noureen C K

SESSION 14 Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 IV	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	CHANDRAMA HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Aly Shameem [Maldives National University]	Rhicha Karn [NASC]

T402 [Virtual]
Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery: Rebuilding Trust Through Inclusive and Responsive Public Administration in South Asia
Jannatul Ferdous

T414 [Virtual]
Can Diversity in Workforce Influence Public Service Delivery in the Developing Countries: Evidence from Sri Lanka
Ramesh Ramasamy · Dhammika Herath

T449
Strengthening Public Administration Through NGO Governance Reform: Addressing Administrative Bottlenecks in Bangladesh
M. Mizanur Rahman · Zobayer Ahmed · Ayub Ali

T450 [Virtual]
Rethinking Local State Capacity in Service Delivery: State-Community Partnerships in Rural India
Gaurav Nayak

SESSION 15

Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 V	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KHAPTAD HALL

CHAIR
Amir Mohammad Nasrullah [University of Chittagong]

FACILITATOR
Ashrita Dhital [NASC]

T439
Beyond Technology: Reimagining Digital Public Infrastructure Through Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Inclusive Governance in India and Nepal
Avinash Kumar Singh1 · Md. Ehtesham Khan2

T428 [Virtual]
Citizen-Centric Governance Through Co-Design: Reimagining Urban Solid Waste Service Delivery in India - Evidence from Varanasi
Abhinav Sharma

T437
Effect of Leadership Role of Women on Citizen Engagement in the Public Sector
Zahra Sajid Iqbal Jadoon (Zahra Shoaib) · Amani Moazzam

T426 [Virtual]
Assessing E-Service Accessibility in Bangladesh's Local Government: Barriers and Opportunities for All Citizens
Md. Ruhul Amin

SESSION 16

Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 III	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KAILASH HALL

CHAIR
Nawaraj Khatiwada [NDRI]

FACILITATOR
Prativa Paudel [NASC]

T605

Strengthening Climate Resilience Through Sustainable and Inclusive Governance: Perspectives from Nepal

Meen Bahadur Poudyal Chhetri

T620
[Virtual]

Democratic Accountability and Climate Governance: Evaluating Public Institutional Responses to SDG 13 in the Global South

Richa Yadav · Faisal Ansari

T619
[Virtual]

Effectiveness of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) for Managing Ecologically Critical Areas in Dhaka Surrounding Rivers in Bangladesh

Sakib Mahmud1 · K. M. Kabirul Islam

T609
[Virtual]

Reassessing the Jhum Cultivation-Deforestation Nexus in the Context of Climate Adaptation: A Study of Sustainable and Inclusive Governance in Bandarban, Bangladesh

Muhammad Wahidur Rahman · Shimul Tanchangya

SESSION 17 Public Administration in Post-LDC and Transitional Economies

TRACK 2	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	SWAYAMBHU HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Jagadish C. Pokharel [Former Vice Chairman, NPC]	Krishna Bahadur Thapa [NASC]

T205 **What Makes Asia Distinctive? A Comparative Study of Asian Executive Triangle**
Abiha Zahra · Jan Meyer Sahling · Zehavit Levitats · Levent Demirelli · Fanni Toth

T220 **Who Counts? Bureaucracy, Belonging, and the Administrative Constitution of the Electorate: Evidence from the Indian State of West Bengal**
Maheen Sajjad · Abdul Matin

T202 **Bureaucratic Path Dependency in a Transitional State: Mapping Public Administration Persistence in Post-LDC Nepal (1990-2026)**
Rajendra Adhikari

T201 **Assessing Citizen-Centric Governance and Public Service Delivery in Pakistan: A Provincial Analysis of Administrative Capacity and Inclusion**
Kamila Mariam Iftikhar

SESSION 18 Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 III	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	RARA HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Daya Sagar Shrestha [NACASUD]	Saurav Koirala [NASC]

T119 **Assessing the Availability of Safe and Affordable Drinking Water in Selected Divisional Secretariat Areas of Colombo District, Sri Lanka: A Localized Evaluation of SDG 6 Targets**
R. Lalitha S. Fernando

T112 **From Emergency Response to Sustainable Governance: Assessing India's Dial 112 as a Public Administration Innovation for Advancing SDG 16**
Utkarsh Mishra1 · Alok Kumar Gaurav2 · Saurabh Yadav2

T105 **Public Administration's Contribution Health and Wellbeing in Pakistan**
Naveeda Nizam

T118 **From ISO Certification to Citizen-Centered Service Standards: The DAP Experience in Institutionalizing Quality Governance**
Jaymee A. Cabangbang1 · Catherine S. Luzuriaga2

SESSION 19

Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 II	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	ANNAPURNA HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Bishnu Adhikari [The Asia Foundation]	Lokesh Sharma [NASC]

T329 [Virtual]

Strengthening Ethical and Inclusive Local Governance in Bangladesh: Assessing the Effectiveness of Standing Committees and Ward Shavas in Enhancing Transparency and Accountability at the Union Parishad Level

Md Atiar Rahman

T313

Value Co-Destruction in State-Managed Faith-Based and Philanthropic Institutions in Pakistan

Aisha Azhar · Seemi Waheed

T328

A Phenomenological Inquiry of Officers' Experiences of Ethical Environment at Workplace: Study of Armed Police Force, Nepal

Suraj Paudel

T301

When Reform Undermines Trust: Political Economy and Governance Failures in Nepal's School Education Reform

Shalav SJB Rana

SESSION 20 Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 III	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	LUMBINI HALL

CHAIR
Megh Raj Dangal [Kathmandu University]

FACILITATOR
Ayushma Pangeni [NASC]

T311 **Reimagining Open Government, Transparency, and Right to Information in South Asia: Post-Gen Z Governance in the Post-Truth AI Era**
Trishna Acharya

T320 **Mapping the Expectation Gap: A Systematic Review of Public Perceptions of Ethics and Institutional Performance in Bangladesh**
Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Hossienie

T325 **Digitalisation of Government-to-Person (G2P) Payments and the Challenges of Social Inclusion in Bangladesh**
Hamza Asadullah · Md. Mahmud Hasan

T312 **Ethical Governance in Humanitarian Settings: Understanding Land and Shelter Conflicts Among Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh**
Soncita Dey · Mokbul Morshed Ahmad · Sujan Kanti Dey

SESSION 21 Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 VI	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	PATHIVARA HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Suman Dahal [Government of Nepal]	Akriti Shakya [NASC]

T429 [Virtual]

Reimagining Local Public Administration for Citizen-Centric Governance: Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions and Inclusive Service Delivery in Rural India

A. Ranjithkumar

T420

Towards an Integrated Social Security Governance System in Nepal: Digital Transformation, Institutional Coordination, and State Capacity

Dilip Raj Paudel1 · Ramesh Kumar KC2

T410

Assessing Citizen Use Behavior of Digital Land Services in Bangladesh: The Mediating Role of Public Trust and Satisfaction in a Service Quality Model

Bikram Biswas1 · Mohammad Nur Ullah2 · Nahida Shaulin2 · Anas Al Masud2 · Falguni Roy · Mandeep Pokharel

T423

Governing Social Protection in South Asia: Colonial Legacies and Final-Mile Welfare Delivery

Farah Naz

SESSION 22 Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 VI	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	PRITHVI HALL

CHAIR
Uddhav Pyakurel [Kathmandu University]

FACILITATOR
Asthadeep Dhakal [NASC]

T509 **AI, Bureaucratic Rationality, and Decision-Making Behaviour in Pakistan's Public Administration: Revisiting Weber's Iron Cage in the Age of Algorithmic Governance**
Muhammad Uzair Hashmi

T508 [Virtual] **Artificial Intelligence and State Capacity in India: Reimagining Public Administration in the Digital Era**
Prabakaran Selvaraj

T521 [Virtual] **Fiscal Equalization Grants and Local Fiscal Effort in Nepal: Evidence from a Five-Year Nationwide Panel Study**
Manju Kumari Jaisi

T540 [Virtual] **Citizens' Cyber Security Awareness and Practices Amid Legislative Transitions: Quantitative Evidence from Sylhet City**
Syeda Tasnia Tahia

PANEL 2 State Capacity, Public Policy and Governance: The Context of Bangladesh

Panel Session	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	ARANIKO HALL

CHAIR
H.E. Md. Shafiqur Rahman, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Nepal

FACILITATOR
Lila Nath Sapkota [NASC]

P2.1 [Virtual] **State Capacity and Governance Outcomes: A Review of Policy Implementation Challenges in Developing Countries**
Shirin Sultana · Md. Mominur Rahman

P2.2 **State Capacity, Public Policy Formulation and Governance in Bangladesh: A Critical Review**
Zobayer Ahmed

P2.3 **State Capacity and Public Policy in Bangladesh: A Comparative Analysis between Academic Focus and Practitioners' Perspectives**
Tasfia Tasneem Ahmed

PANEL 3

Public Administration in South Asia: Migration, Inclusion, and Citizen-Centred State Capacity

Panel Session	5 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KASTHAMANDAP HALL

CHAIR
Shameem Haider Patwary [Dhaka International University]

FACILITATOR
Smriti Pradhan [NASC]

P3.1 **Migration, Mobility, and Citizen-Centred State Capacity in South Asia: Rethinking Public Administration in an Age of Displacement**
AKM Ahsan Ullah

P3.2 **Role of Public Administration in Ensuring Citizen-Centred Governance and Service Delivery: The Case of Rohingya Refugee Management in Bangladesh**
Md. Shariful Alam

P3.3 **Climate Vulnerability, Administrative Exclusion, and the Limits of State Capacity: Subaltern Communities in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide**
Mili Rahman

P3.4 **Administrative Coordination and Community Resilience in Climate-Induced Internal Displacement**
Md. Touhiduzzaman

PROGRAMME Day 3 · 6 November 2026

Climate Justice plenary, parallel sessions, Policy Lab and synthesis

TIME	SESSION / VENUE	NOTES
09:00–10:30	**Plenary Session — Brihaspati Hall**	Climate Justice and Public Policy in South Asia: Governing for Inclusion and Resilience
10:30–11:00	**Tea Break**	Dining area
11:00–12:30	**Parallel Technical Sessions 23–33 and Panel 4**	See session cards below
11:00–13:00	**Policy Lab — Annapurna Hall**	Integrated Digital Public Services and Citizen Experience in South Asia [closed session]
13:30–15:00	**Synthesis Session — Brihaspati Hall**	Reimagining Public Administration in South Asia: Key Messages and Policy Directions
15:00–15:30	**Farewell Tea**	Dining area

SESSION 23 Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 IV	6 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KUMARI HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Narayan Prasad Sharma Duwadi [Government of Nepal]	Sebika Thapa [NASC]

T322 — **Ethical Governance in Pakistan: Assessing Integrity and Accountability Through World Governance Indicators (1996-2024)**
Ayesha Hanif

T326 — **Rebuilding Citizen Trust in Public Institutions: A Case Study of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC)**
Gunjan

T315 — **Impact Assessment of the Right to Public Services Commission, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Lessons for Reimagining Public Service Delivery in South Asia**
Saif Ullah Khalid

T324 [Virtual] — **E-Service Quality, Trust, and Citizen Satisfaction in South Asian Public Administration: Evidence from NADRA in Pakistan**
Fatima Khalid · Aisha Rizwan

SESSION 24 Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 VII | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | MALASHREE HALL

CHAIR
Prakash Chandra Bhattarai [Kathmandu University]

FACILITATOR
Alisha Devkota [NASC]

T406 [Virtual]
Assessing the Impact of Salary Grant Cuts and Fiscal Empowerment on Service Delivery in Local Government Institutions in Sri Lanka
Wasala Mudalige Priyantha1 · N Wasantha Ariyarathne2

T452
Gender and Leadership in Nepal's Local Governments: Why Are Women Underrepresented as Chief Administrative Officers?
Shailaja Upadhyaya

T451 [Virtual]
Women-Centric Nutrition Policies in South Asia: A Comparative Assessment of India's POSHAN Abhiyaan and Nepal's Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan
Vijay Prakash · Pradeep Kumar Singh

T421 [Virtual]
Bureaucratic Discretion in Indigenous Communities' Rights Recognition: A 13 Year Case Study of Implementing India's Forest Rights Act
Santosh Gedam

SESSION 25 Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 VIII | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | CHANDRAMA HALL

CHAIR
Durapada Sapkota [Government of Nepal]

FACILITATOR
Ashrita Dhital [NASC]

T415 [Virtual]
Total Quality Humane Governance (TQHG): A New Model for Citizen-Centered Public Administration
Amir Mohammad Nasrullah

T412
Continuity and Change in Participatory Urban Governance: Revisiting Community-Driven Development (CDD) in Bangladesh, 2010-2025
Parvaz Azharul Huq

T427
Social Security Benefits and Livelihood Strategies of Dalit Households in Koshi Rural Municipality, Nepal: A Mixed-Methods Analysis
Pratik Poudel · Mokbul Morshed Ahmad

T401 [Virtual]
Informal Governance Systems in Urban Slums: The Case of Korail Slum
Lamia Mohsin

SESSION 26

Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 VII	6 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KHAPTAD HALL

CHAIR
Bharat Singh Thapa [Tribhuvan University]

FACILITATOR
Sabik Neupane [NASC]

T519 [Virtual]
Reimagining Public Administration in Pakistan: An Integrated Theoretical Framework of Innovation, Adaptive Governance, and Administrative Resilience
Abdul Quyyam · Amani Moazzam

T501 [Virtual]
Rebuilding the State Around Citizens: Ethical and Inclusive Public Sector Modernization in Bangladesh
Jannatul Ferdous

T627
Climate-Responsive Fiscal Federalism: An Institutional Assessment of Nepal's Climate Finance Governance Framework
Narayan Kumar BC

T535 [Virtual]
From Digital Co-Production to Institutional Decline: The Changing Role of Union Digital Centres in Bangladesh
Md. Shafayat Jamil · Zayeda Sharmin · Most. Mim Khatun · Md. Noor Hasnat Emon

SESSION 27

Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 IV	6 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	KAILASH HALL

CHAIR
Rachana Upadhyaya [University of Bristol]

FACILITATOR
Ashma Bidari [NASC]

T617 [Virtual]
Gender-Responsive Climate Change Adaptation Services and Women's Agency in Agrarian Households: A Case Study of Northern Bangladesh
Ma Ariz-Un-Elma · Mokbul Morshed Ahmad

T612 [Virtual]
Governing Climate Adaptation Finance: Accountability, Allocation, and Oversight Across Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka
Wenjian Chen

T608
Plans and Policies Related to Climate Change in Bangladesh: Emerging Challenges
Mahfuzul Haque

T626 [Virtual]
Climate Finance Governance for Climate Adaptation: Strengthening State Capacity and Public Institutions in South Asia
Karri Manikanteswara Reddy

SESSION 28 Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 IV | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | SWAYAMBHU HALL

CHAIR
Tehmina Faisal [University of Karachi]

FACILITATOR
Roshani Bhujel [NASC]

T110 **Poverty Alleviation: A Re-Examination of Government Interventions and Socioeconomic Realities in Sri Lanka**
Upali Weerakoon

T113 [Virtual] **The Role of Media Campaigns in Changing Perception & Engagement of Menstrual Hygiene Management Among Students in Bangladesh**
Ramis Tarannum

T101 **Bureaucratic Compliance or Technocratic Rigor? Determinants of Gender-Responsive Budget Prioritization in the Local Governments of Nepal**
Anil Kumar Gupta

T114 **Localising the Sustainable Development Goals Through Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu: An Empirical Assessment of Institutional Capacity and Rural Development Outcomes**
Prema Devarasu · Asha Sundaram

SESSION 29 Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 IX | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | RARA HALL

CHAIR
Bishnu Sapkota [University of Notre Dame]

FACILITATOR
Surya Prakash Baral [NASC]

T438 **Opinion of Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery of Ward Offices in Kathmandu Valley**
Rashesh Vaidya1 · Sanita Mastran2 · Prakash Kaji Tamrakar2 · Dipendra Kumar Chaudhary1

T434 **Citizen Trust, Digital Governance and State Capacity: An Empirical Study of E-Sevai Service Delivery in Tamil Nadu, India**
N. Muthukumar · K. Elango

T442 **AI Adaptation in Bangladesh Public Administration: Challenges and Prospects**
Zayeda Sharmin1 · Ashfaque Ahmad Shovon2

T454 **Citizen-Centric E-Government for Improving Public Service Delivery in Nepal**
Shyam Krishna Adhikari · Sambed Timilsina

SESSION 30

Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 X | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | PATHIVARA HALL

CHAIR
Nurul Huda Sakib [Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh]

FACILITATOR
Anup Bhurtel [NASC]

T443
From Policy-Induced Inequalities to Citizen-Centric Governance: Rethinking Public Service Delivery in South Asia Through the Indian Experience
Shashi Kant Pandey1 · Alok Kumar Gaurav2 · Aisha Zaheer

T432 [Virtual]
Exploring the Dynamics of Social Safety Net Distribution: A Case Study on Khulna, Bangladesh
Md. Abrar Hasan · Rabeena Sultana Ananna

T417
From Colonial Bureaucracy to Citizen-Centric Governance: Reimagining Ethical State Capacity in South Asia
Janak Singh Meena · Meenakshi

T416 [Virtual]
Public Value Creation through Digital Procurement Governance: A Decadal Assessment of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM)
Anshuman Ankit

SESSION 31

Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 VIII	6 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	LUMBINI HALL

CHAIR
Chandra Dev Bhatta [Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung]

FACILITATOR
Aakriti Shakya [NASC]

T507 **Shaping the Future of Governance in Nepal: Public Administration Reform Through Inclusion, Accountability, and Digital Innovation**
Meen Bahadur Poudyal Chhetri

T520 **Behavioural Framework for Policy Implementation in Bangladesh: A Macro-Meso-Micro Analysis**
Mohammad Rezaul Karim · Rizwan Khair

T522 **Beyond Nudging: Towards Neuro-Behavioural Public Administration for Inclusive and Adaptive Governance in South Asia**
Alok Kumar Gaurav1 · Vaishali Saxena2 · Astha Arora1 · Shashikant Pandey3

T511 **Reimagining Public Education Governance Through Human-Centered AI: A Framework for Ethical, Inclusive, and Capacity-Driven Education Systems in South Asia**
Huma Salman1 · Atika Imran2

SESSION 32

Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 IX	6 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	PRITHVI HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Deepak Kumar Khadka [Policy Research Institute (PRI)]	Raju Pangeni [NASC]

T537

Digital Government, Artificial Intelligence, and Sustainable Development: Evidence for Strengthening Public Administration in OECD Countries

Ayub Ali

T539

Everyday Administration: Political Complexities, Patronage and Relationality in Nepali Bureaucracy

Tulasi Sharan Sigdel

T503

Student Participation, Institutional Governance, and Social Responsibility in Higher Education: A Social Work Perspective on Administrative Challenges and Innovation in South Asia

Srinivasa D · Kiran M · Pramita Nayak

T502

Digital Transformation or Resource Drain? Technostress, Work-Life Balance, and Governance Gaps in South Asian Public Hospitals

Sobia Jamil1 · Mustafa Hyder2

SESSION 33 Public Administration and the SDGs / Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 1 V / TRACK 6 V	6 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	JANAKI HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Nirmal Kumar Raut [Tribhuvan University]	Aasthadeep Dhakal [NASC]

T616 **Climate Adaptation in a Multi-Level Governance Context: Policy Localisation, Public Trust, and Indigenous Knowledge in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh**
Fahim Shahriar

T618 [Virtual] **Inclusive Governance and Climate Justice: Reframing Child Marriage as Non-Economic Loss and Damage in Northern Bangladesh**
Abu Muhammad Jarrah · Mokbul Morshed Ahmad

T108 **Localising the Sustainable Development Goals: Assessing the Status of SDGs in Kerala, India**
Mohammed Safvan K

T103 [Virtual] **Men's Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence in Bangladesh**
Anisur Rahman Khan

PANEL 4 Public Perception, Governance and Public Administration: Turning Evidence into Trust, Inclusion, Responsiveness and State Capacity

Panel Session	6 NOV 2026	11:00–12:30	ARANIKO HALL

CHAIR	FACILITATOR
Meghan Nalbo [The Asia Foundation]	Pratibha Dhungana [NASC]

P4.1 **Survey of Nepali People (SNP): Citizen Perceptions of Government and Public Administration**
Uddhab Pyakurel

P4.2 **Nepal: The State of Federalism Report 2025 — Institutional Capacity and Responsiveness**
Dilaram Panthi

P4.3 **Institutional Beliefs, Inclusion and Investments in State Capacity**
Chandra Bhandari

P4.4 **Gauging Elite Perceptions: Governance, Power and Decision-Making**
Sudeshna Thapa

IC-PAGSA 2026

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA



Lumbini, Fountain of Peace

DAY 01

Day 1 Abstracts

Wednesday 4 November 2026

IC-PAGSA 2026

Session 01 / Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 I | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KUMARI HALL

CHAIR Hari Prasad Dhungana [Nepal Open University] FACILITATOR Nabina Malekar [NASC]

T106 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Local Governance in Lahore: Socio-Economic Reform Initiatives and Institutional Realities

Madiha Rehman Farooqi[1] · **Shajara Ul-Durar** · **Marco De Sisto**

[1] *University of Education*

ABSTRACT

The local governance system in Pakistan has traditionally been centralised, bureaucratic, and lacked autonomy at sub-national levels of governance. Despite the enactment of a number of legislations over the years, including the Local Government Ordinance 2001, the Punjab Local Government Acts 2013, 2019, 2022, and 2025, decentralisation has not been achieved in a meaningful way. This research explores local government reform efforts in Lahore and Punjab focusing on the role of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab (PAP) Local Governments Caucus as a new institutional platform for the consolidation of local government reform and advocacy for reform in the legislature. The prime purpose of the study is to examine the potential of proposed reform measures, focused on constitutional protection of local governments, fiscal devolution, and timely local elections, to increase citizen participation and to improve access to basic services, specifically waste management and water and sanitation delivery. The study also examines the institutional, political and fiscal constraints that have historically hindered the effective decentralisation in Pakistan. The research methodology used in this study is descriptive qualitative with the epistemology of interpretivism and social constructionism. The data are derived from six types of secondary sources: constitutional and legal documents, policy documents, think tank and civil society reports, peer-reviewed academic literature, international comparative analysis, and investigative journalism. Analytical tools comprise of constitutional and legal text analysis, institutional analysis based on new institutionalism, structured comparative policy analysis (with reference to India, Kenya, Ghana and Finland) and human development assessment using Sen's capability approach and the UNDP Human Development Index. According to key findings, the most significant institutional obstacle is the structural weaknesses of Article 140-A, which assigns the definition of the powers, fiscal arrangements, and election timing of local governments to the discretion of provinces, a provision that is just 41 words in length. The PAP Local Governments Caucus is a qualitative leap in the form of the first formally established legislative forum for the promotion of local governance within the Punjab Assembly. The study provides empirical evidence of the relationship between fiscal decentralisation and better education and infrastructure outcomes at the district level and shows that the lack of services in the areas of waste management and water, and sanitation in Lahore is not a matter of lack of resources but a matter of governance failure. The governance–development nexus is also supported by the internal disparities in HDI values in Punjab, ranging from 0.743 in Lahore to 0.492 in Rajanpur. The findings are directly applicable to the public administration of South Asia, where the trade-off between the constitutional requirement for decentralisation and strong political economy pressures on local autonomy is a common governance challenge. The study provides an evidence-based reform framework in line with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) with policy implications for constitutional reform, fiscal architecture, electoral integrity and participatory governance across the region

Keywords: Local governance reform; fiscal decentralization; citizen engagement; human development; SDG 11; SDG 16

T117 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Coherence Without Convergence: Assessing India's Institutional Architecture for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development

Sandeep Inampudi
Central University of Karnataka

ABSTRACT

India's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are supported by a framework designed to synchronize national priorities with state-level execution and local governance. NITI Aayog serves as the central agency for implementing the SDGs, overseeing the SDG India Index, and coordinating with ministries, states, and international reporting requirements. State governments have set up SDG Cells within planning departments or the offices of chief ministers to address sectoral disputes and integrate SDG targets into planning processes. At a more localized level, the Localisation of SDGs framework connects Panchayati Raj Institutions to nine thematic areas, thereby extending the framework to service delivery. This paper contends that, although the design appears formally coherent, the framework fails to achieve the substantive coherence described in the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development literature, which involves aligning policy goals, financial tools, and accountability mechanisms across different levels of governance. Utilizing the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's framework for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, this paper explores India's governance structure for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by focusing on three categories of coherence instead of individual programme-level case studies. The assessment of coherence across different levels is conducted through the role of NITI Aayog and the SDG India Index, which connects national and sub-national reporting. Horizontal coherence is evaluated by examining the positioning and authority of State SDG Cells in conflict resolution. Vertical coherence is analyzed through the Localisation of SDGs framework, considering whether Panchayati Raj Institutions possess the fiscal autonomy, administrative capability, and data infrastructure necessary to convert national and state coherence into local coordination, beyond mere reporting compliance. The paper contends that coherence diminishes as it moves down the hierarchy, being most robust at the top and weakest at the Panchayat level, where limited fiscal power and accountability reduce localisation efforts to mere reporting. This paper adds to the discussion on policy coherence and whole-of-government strategies by placing the Indian scenario within the context of the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development literature. This literature has primarily focused on industrialized nations and has been insufficiently applied to large federal developing countries with diverse sub-national governance. Instead of viewing coherence as a simple binary state, the paper examines it as a characteristic that varies across different governance levels within a system. This approach provides a framework applicable not only to India but also to other federal and quasi-federal states aiming to implement the SDGs through multi-tiered institutions. The paper concludes by exploring necessary institutional reforms, such as fiscal devolution and the enhancement of data infrastructure at the Panchayat level, to address the identified coherence gap.

Keywords: Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development; Whole of Government Governance; SDG Localisation; NITI Aayog; Panchayati Raj Institutions; Public Administration Reform

T107 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Governance Challenges in Child Protection: Lessons from Early Marriage Among Marginalized Communities in Nepal

Kabita Khatiwada[1] · **Dilip Raj Paudel**[2]

[1] *Pokhara University* · [2] *PAAN*

ABSTRACT

The Child marriage remains a persistent social and governance challenge in Nepal despite constitutional guarantees, legal provisions, and international commitments aimed at protecting children's rights. The practice is particularly prevalent among marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, where poverty, limited educational opportunities, gender inequality, cultural norms, and weak institutional enforcement continue to perpetuate the cycle of early marriage. This study examines the governance challenges associated with child protection by exploring the experiences of marginalized communities affected by early marriage in Nepal. The study adopts a qualitative case study approach drawing on secondary literature, policy documents, government reports, and empirical evidence from marginalized communities. It analyzes the effectiveness of existing child protection mechanisms, local governance structures, and inter-agency coordination in preventing child marriage and safeguarding children's rights. Particular attention is given to the role of local governments, schools, community organizations, and social protection programs in addressing the underlying drivers of early marriage. The findings reveal that although Nepal has established a comprehensive legal and policy framework to combat child marriage, implementation gaps remain significant. Weak coordination among stakeholders, inadequate monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, limited public awareness, insufficient resource allocation, and socio-cultural resistance continue to undermine policy effectiveness. The study further highlights disparities in access to education, health services, and social protection among marginalized groups, which increase children's vulnerability to early marriage and related forms of exploitation. The paper argues that strengthening child protection requires a more integrated governance approach that combines legal enforcement, community engagement, gender-responsive policies, educational empowerment, and targeted social protection interventions. Enhancing local government capacity, improving accountability mechanisms, and promoting inclusive participation of communities are critical for achieving sustainable outcomes. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on public administration and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), by demonstrating how effective governance can play a transformative role in protecting children and advancing inclusive development in Nepal.

Keywords: Child Protection; Child Marriage; Governance; Public Administration; Marginalized Communities; Gender Equality

T102 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

National Suicide Prevention Policies in South Asia: An Assessment Against the WHO's LIVE LIFE Policy Guidelines

Anisur Rahman Khan
East West University

ABSTRACT

Each year, approximately 700,000 people die by suicide worldwide, with nearly 77 percent of these deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. The reduction of suicide by one-third by 2023 is a key indicator under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: 3.4.2. South Asia, home to almost one fourth of the global population, bears a substantial share of the global suicide burden. Despite suicide being a major public health concern in the region, religious and sociocultural stigma, combined with weak civil registration and death reporting systems, contribute to significant underreporting across South Asian countries. Several countries in the region, including India, Bhutan, and Afghanistan, have developed national level suicide prevention strategies. The World Health Organization's LIVE LIFE Implementation Guide for Suicide Prevention in Countries, published in 2021, provides an important reference point for guiding national suicide prevention efforts. The LIVE LIFE framework is organized around core pillars, including situational analysis, multisectoral collaboration, awareness raising and advocacy, capacity building, financing, and surveillance, monitoring, and evaluation, alongside a set of evidence-based interventions. This policy analysis examines national suicide prevention strategies in selected South Asian countries using the WHO LIVE LIFE framework as an analytical lens. The findings suggest that most core pillars and intervention elements of the framework are reflected to varying degrees within these national policies, although they are not always explicitly articulated. Stronger alignment of future policy development and revisions with the LIVE LIFE framework will be essential to sustain and strengthen suicide prevention efforts across South Asia. Currently, several South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka do not have a single, fixed-term national suicide prevention policy. Countries in South Asia without dedicated national policies may consider adopting the WHO LIVE LIFE framework as a starting template, rather than addressing suicide prevention through fragmented mental health initiatives. The LIVE LIFE framework offers a flexible and context-sensitive structure that enables countries to prioritize feasible actions while progressively strengthening surveillance systems, service delivery, and multisectoral coordination.

Keywords: Afghanistan; Bhutan; India; South Asia; Suicide Prevention; Policy Analysis

Session 02 / Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 II | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | MALASHREE HALL

CHAIR Md. Mizanur Rahman [Center for Strategic and Peace Studies, Bangladesh]

FACILITATOR Alisha Devkota [NASC]

T116 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Postcolonial Governance and SDG Localisation Challenges: Evidence from Bangladesh

Md Mahmud Hasan

Shahjalal University of Science and Technology

ABSTRACT

Bangladesh, having successfully achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is now endeavouring to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Bangladesh inherited a postcolonial governance system where local government has historically been deliberately weakened and utilised for political mobilisation rather than empowered to serve the community effectively. However, for the successful implementation of the SDGs, it is imperative to strengthen local-level implementation, especially in rural areas, where approximately 68% of the population resides. Recognising that 12 of the 17 SDGs are directly reliant on local participation, the Local Government Institutions (LGIs) have introduced 39+1 priority indicators and established SDG implementation and coordination committees at the sub-district (Upazila) level. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these mechanisms remains limited. This study explores the challenges related to the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh through a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data were gathered through 45 in-depth interviews conducted with Union Parishad (UP) Chairmen, Upazila Chairmen, UNOs, and UP Secretaries. In addition, a survey comprising 136 respondents was administered across 16 UPs, 8 Upazilas from 4 districts, including UP Chairmen, members, Upazila Vice Chairmen, relevant government officials, and civil society representatives. The findings indicate that UP representatives participate in activities supporting SDG targets without being aware of the goals themselves, whereas field administration officials exhibit greater awareness and assume a more significant role. Upazila SDG committees are primarily non-functional, with members largely unaware of their responsibilities, and Upazila Chairmen express frustration regarding their limited authority. Despite formal inclusion, civil society members frequently lack substantive engagement, thereby further undermining participatory governance. The study concludes that these challenges are rooted in postcolonial governance structures that have historically marginalised LGIs and entrenched the dominance of field administration. Addressing this imbalance necessitates revitalising Upazila coordination committees, clarifying institutional roles, and empowering local representatives to serve as genuine agents of development. By situating these findings within the broader South Asian context, the study contributes to debates on decentralisation, state capacity, and postcolonial governance, providing valuable insights for other transitional economies confronting similar legacies.

Keywords: SDGs; Localisation; Bangladesh; Local Governance; Field Administration; Civil Society; Postcolonial Governance

T120 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

A Decade of Nepal's Federal Transition: Evolving Jurisprudences and Operational Challenges (Lessons and Evolving Patterns from the World's Youngest Federation)

Prashuram Upadhyaya
The Asia Foundation

ABSTRACT

This presentation reflects on Nepal's ten-year journey of constitutional and institutional evolution, exploring its complex transition from a centralized unitary system to a devolved federal state. Against the backdrop of this historic milestone, the analysis details critical structural challenges, beginning with a cooperative model of functional, fiscal, and administrative power-sharing that remains heavily guided by federal discretion. Additionally, the presentation examines the shared rule practices of power sharing, where decision-making authority stays concentrated at the center, implementation responsibilities fall largely on local governments, and the provincial level is left squeezed for resources and capacity. It highlights the operational realities of the functional unbundling process, illustrating how central oversight and federal incentives frequently slow devolution, create coordination gaps, and limit meaningful local self-rule and shared governance. Furthermore, the session dives into contemporary constitutional jurisprudence, contrasting a maximalist "Pith and Substance" judicial approach with a minimalist application of genuine self-rule. This legal friction, combined with bureaucratic resistance, has directly delayed the institutionalization of daily federal practices. Ultimately, this presentation aims to bridge the gap between a progressive constitutional text and the practical realities of subnational governance. By offering an honest critique of the past decade, it synthesizes core institutional lessons for an audience of academics and practitioners. Concluding with action-oriented reform considerations, the session provides strategic recommendations to strengthen functional relations across federal units and deepen democratic consolidation in emerging federations.

T104 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Vertical Policy Synchronicity in Delivering Safe Drinking Water in Punjab, Pakistan

Seemi Waheed

University of Management and Technology

ABSTRACT

Policy design literature conceptualizes integration of policy goals with the means that governments employ to implement policies (Howlett, 2014) to achieve desired outcomes (Van Geet et al., 2021). The literature asserts compliance with the legislated policy for goal achievement and coherence between the legislated policy and implementation policies (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980), which face scale and level of fragmentation, less dialogue for alleviating conflict in general and water policy in particular (Edelenbos et al., 2013). In these noted challenges, inter-policy design synchronicity has largely been peripheral and underexplored in theoretical and empirical policy design literature. The paper parses institutional statements of the enacted Punjab Water Act (TPWA) 2019 and the operational-level policy, the Manual 2010, to understand the synchronicity between the two water policies in terms of purpose, actor, action, and implementation effectiveness for community-managed rural water supply (RWS) Systems in Punjab, Pakistan. Using the Institutional Grammar (IG) 2.0 within the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, 166 institutional statements from the policies were deconstructed and analysed. Interviews with senior and operational staff from the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) and the Irrigation Department complemented this analysis. Findings reveal a significant lack of synchronicity between the policies, negatively impacting RWS governance at the operational level. The study recommends enhancing synchronicity between the collective and operational levels to improve water governance. This alignment is essential for coherent and effective water resource management

T111 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Women Police Stations in Punjab (Pakistan): A Need for Reform

Saffa Amjad
University of the Punjab

ABSTRACT

Effective public administration is fundamental to achieving sustainable and inclusive development by ensuring that public institutions deliver accessible, accountable, and citizen-centred public services. In Pakistan, Women Police Stations (WPS) were established to provide women with a safe and gender-sensitive mechanism for reporting crimes and accessing justice. Despite this institutional initiative, Physical Women Police Stations continue to face challenges such as limited geographical coverage, inadequate institutional capacity, resource constraints, operational inefficiencies, and socio-cultural barriers that restrict women's access to justice. To address these limitations, the Government of Punjab introduced Virtual Women Police Stations (VWPS) as part of its broader digital governance initiatives to improve accessibility and strengthen citizen-centred public service delivery. This study examines the transformation from physical to virtual complaint mechanisms in Punjab and evaluates their effectiveness in improving institutional performance, accessibility, and accountability within the policing system. The study adopts a mixed-methods research design by integrating an extensive review of relevant literature with comparative analysis of official Punjab Police administrative data (2021–2025) and qualitative evidence collected through field visits and interviews with police officials and other relevant stakeholders. Using both quantitative and qualitative evidence, the research compares the performance of physical and virtual Women Police Stations in terms of complaint registration, case resolution, arrest rates, accessibility, institutional coordination, and service delivery. The findings reveal that Virtual Women Police Stations have substantially expanded women's access to complaint registration by reducing geographical, cultural, and social barriers that traditionally discouraged reporting. The digital complaint mechanism has significantly increased reporting volumes and enhanced administrative responsiveness. However, the study also finds that increased accessibility has not been accompanied by equivalent improvements in justice outcomes. Virtual Women Police Stations remain dependent on conventional policing structures for investigation, evidence collection, arrests, and prosecution, creating persistent gaps between accessibility and institutional accountability. Furthermore, fragmented coordination between digital and physical policing systems, limited investigative authority, resource constraints, uneven technological capacity, and continuing socio-cultural barriers reduce the overall effectiveness of the hybrid policing model. The research argues that digital innovation should complement rather than replace institutional reform. It recommends strengthening coordination between physical and virtual policing systems through integrated case-management mechanisms, enhancing institutional capacity, improving monitoring and accountability, investing in digital infrastructure and specialized training, and clarifying the operational responsibilities of Virtual Women Police Stations. These reforms would strengthen public administration by improving citizen-centred service delivery, institutional effectiveness, and equitable access to justice. As a case study from Punjab, Pakistan, the paper contributes to policy discussions on public administration reform by identifying institutional challenges and proposing evidence-based measures to strengthen administrative effectiveness, coordination, accountability, and equitable access to justice. The findings are relevant to the broader objectives of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by illustrating how institutional reforms can strengthen public institutions and improve women's access to justice.

Keywords: Public Administration; Women Police Stations; Digital Governance; Public Service Delivery; Institutional Reform

Session 03 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 I | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | CHANDRAMA HALL

CHAIR Durga P Chhetri [Sikkim University] FACILITATOR Ganesh Kumar Sah [NASC]

T407 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Pre-Demolition Conference (PDC) on Securing Just and Humane Demolition/Eviction Activities in the Philippines

John Patrick C. Olmedo
Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor

ABSTRACT

Despite the legal protections established by the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992, underprivileged urban populations in the Philippines continue to face forced evictions that lack adequate social safeguards. This paper addresses the systemic failure in securing "just and humane" evictions, specifically focusing on the non-compliance of local government units with mandatory relocation and assistance protocols. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-Demolition Conference (PDC) as a procedural tool for upholding the rights of marginalized citizens. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research analyzes administrative data from the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP) alongside a qualitative review of existing policy frameworks. Key findings indicate a significant implementation gap: while the PDC serves as a vital platform for dialogue, the PCUP lacks the enforcement mandate to ensure compliance, resulting in a mandatory assistance rate. The study identifies persistent illegal practices, such as the absence of government representatives during evictions and the failure to provide adequate relocation sites. This research contributes to the broader discourse of Public Administration in South Asia and Southeast Asia by examining the tensions between urban development and social equity. By grounding the analysis in New Public Administration (NPA) principles, the paper highlights the state's ethical obligation to transition from mere procedural compliance to substantive social justice. It offers a scalable framework for strengthening institutional accountability and protecting the human right to housing in rapidly urbanizing developing nations.

Keywords: Just and Humane Demolition/Eviction; UDHA or RA 7279; underprivileged and homeless; Adequate Consultation

T413 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

People's Participation and the Dynamics of Good Governance in Local Government: An Empirical Analysis of Selected Union Parishads in Chattogram District, Bangladesh

Nakibul Islam Chowdhury[1] · **Amir Mohammad Nasrullah**[2] · **Muhammad Wahidur Rahman**[3] · **Md. Sahadat Hosain**[3] · **Shimul Tanchangya**[3]

[1] *Bandarban University and University of Chittagong* · [2] *University of Chittagong* · [3] *Bandarban University*

ABSTRACT

People's participation is widely recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for ensuring good governance in local government institutions. However, in developing countries such as Bangladesh, effective citizen participation in local governance processes remains limited and often ineffective. This study examines the nature and extent of public participation in local government activities, with particular reference to two Union Parishads-Saroatli Union and 7 no. Betagi Union-located in the Chattogram District. Grounded in the constitutional provisions of Articles 59 and 60 of the Constitution of Bangladesh and guided by the principles of good governance articulated by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the study adopts a mixed-methods research design integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected from 200 respondents across the selected Union Parishads. The findings reveal a significantly low level of public awareness and participation in major participatory mechanisms, including Open Budget Meetings, Ward Shavas, and Village Courts. The study further identifies several structural and institutional barriers that hinder participatory governance, such as weak communication between citizens and elected representatives, bureaucratic inefficiency, political interference, and prevailing socio-cultural constraints. At the same time, respondents expressed strong support for enhanced civic education, greater transparency, accountability, and more inclusive decision-making processes at the local level. The study concludes by proposing a number of policy recommendations aimed at strengthening participatory governance in rural Bangladesh. These include the introduction of digital and community-based awareness initiatives, stricter enforcement of participatory legal provisions, improved institutional transparency, and targeted civic engagement programs. The findings contribute to both academic discourse and policy debates concerning the promotion of good governance, democratic decentralization, and citizen-centered local governance in Bangladesh.

Keywords: People's Participation; Good Governance; Union Parishad; Civic Engagement; Open Budget Meeting; Ward Shava; Village Court; Participatory Governance

T408 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

One-Stop Service Delivery in Nepal: An Intergovernmental Approach to Citizen-Centric Governance at the Grassroots

Indra Bahadur Bhujel
PLGSP

ABSTRACT

Nepal's transition to a federal system of governance following the Constitution of 2015 has fundamentally reconfigured the architecture of public service delivery, vesting local governments with constitutional mandates over an expansive range of citizen services. Yet this structural devolution has not automatically translated into substantive service reform. Municipal wards—constitutionally designated as the first-mile interface between the state and citizens—continue to operate within fragmented, paper-intensive, and procedurally inconsistent systems. Citizens routinely navigate multiple offices, endure extended waiting times, and face opaque processes that privilege bureaucratic convenience over user experience. These structural failures are unevenly distributed, bearing most heavily on women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and geographically remote communities. This paper examines the design, piloting, and early implementation of Nepal's Digital One Stop Service Delivery (OSSD) system of intergovernmental coordination in the service of citizen-centric governance. Specifically, it interrogates how the OSSD model negotiates the vertical integration of ward offices, municipal offices, and District Administration Offices (DAOs) into a unified service architecture; how digital workflows, Business Process Reengineering (BPR), and standardized operating procedures mediate between institutional inertia and reform imperatives; and whether the model constitutes a durable transformation of state-citizen relations at the grassroots or risks replicating, in digital form, the exclusions embedded in pre-existing bureaucratic practice. The paper adopts a qualitative, ethnographically informed methodology drawing on field observations, key informant interviews, and participatory workshops conducted across pilot municipalities spanning Nepal's seven provinces. The study's analytical framework draws on two convergent theoretical traditions. First, James C. Scott's (1998) concept of legibility and the high-modernist state illuminates how the OSSD model's impulse toward standardization, workflow automation, and centralized data management can simultaneously simplify state-citizen transactions and render local administrative diversity illegible, producing new forms of institutional exclusion when standardized templates encounter context-specific service realities. Second, Akhil Gupta's (2012) ethnography of the postcolonial state draws attention to how bureaucratic form, documentary practices, and routine discretion constitute the substance of governance rather than merely its surface. Gupta's framework is particularly apposite for interrogating whether digital transformation in Nepal's wards displaces the deeply sedimented practices of manual recommendation, gatekeeping, and documentary discrimination that have historically mediated state-citizen encounters. This article indicates that the OSSD model generates measurable efficiency gains—reduced service processing times, diminished citizen footfall, and enhanced transparency through real-time dashboards—while simultaneously surfacing significant implementation tensions. Resistance among frontline bureaucrats, uneven digital infrastructure across provinces, and the partial interoperability of existing systems limit the realization of seamless, faceless service delivery. Critically, the three-tier vertical integration of ward, municipal, and district services, while architecturally innovative, reproduces intergovernmental coordination challenges that digital platforms alone cannot resolve. The paper argues that the OSSD initiative is most productively understood not as a technological solution to governance failure but as a site of political negotiation among multiple institutional actors—federal, provincial, and local—whose interests, capacities, and conceptions of service reform are neither uniform nor easily aligned. Its long-term success will depend less on system configuration than on whether it catalyzes a durable shift in the political economy of local governance.

Keywords: One-Stop Service Delivery; Intergovernmentalism; Digital Governance; Citizen-Centric Services; Federalism; Business Process Reengineering; Legibility; Bureaucratic Practice; Local Government; Nepal

T453 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

The Impact of Citizens' Noncompliance in Co-Production: A Case Study of the Ban on Free Issuance of Polythene Bags in Sri Lanka

Mayuri Kularathne[1] · **Sanjana Nandasiri**[2]

[1] *University of Ruhuna* · [2] *Asia e University*

ABSTRACT

Across successive waves of public administrative reforms, the citizens' role has shifted from 'recipient to 'customer' and then to 'co-producer' with the ultimate intention of forming a better administrative system for implementing policies. Even though administrative reforms envision citizens actively collaborating in policy implementation in the contemporary third wave, they continue to behave as passive recipients. In a context where there is a lack of supportive mechanisms, certain policies, such as environmental protection, have stalled and caused numerous issues. The government has employed an incremental policy approach by imposing a ban on the free issuance of polythene bags in Sri Lanka with the intention of minimizing polythene consumption. However, it remains important to examine whether this policy has produced the intended outcome and, if not, why. Thus, this research mainly focuses on exploring the formation of co-production for the implementation of environmental protection policy via the polythene ban in Sri Lanka. This study contributes to extending the existing body of knowledge regarding the impact of citizen non-compliance on the co-production of environmental protection. This qualitative research design employed the case study method and collected data through semi-structured and in-depth interviews using a purposive sampling technique. According to the findings, the free issuance of polythene has ended in the supermarkets and boutiques in this city area. However, no significant changes were reported in citizens consumption behaviour. A higher number of customers purchase polythene bags since the low cost of buying polythene doesn't seem to affect the change in their consumption patterns. Although the government decision banned the free distribution of polythene bags, they continued to be available to purchase at a low cost. Moreover, the unavailability of viable alternative bags at sales points has limited the policy's effectiveness. The majority have no clear idea about the government's main intention regarding the free-polythene bag ban. Thus, the decision of the government that has taken to ban the free issuance of polythene has indirectly given sellers a chance to increase profit from selling polythene. Further, this implied that there is an 'intention-action' gap between the government decision and the real-world outcome in minimising the use of polythene. Although the scholarly mindset expected the citizenry role to be transformed across different dimensions, its practical implementation is hard to see, especially in contexts where administrative reforms are not fully adopted. The results of the study highlight that to reach intended policy goals, the 'Policy-Providers-Partners' approach through co-production should be strongly established in the policy implementation. This provides an implication for policymakers that achieving environmental objectives requires not mere regulations but the coloborative enforcements through co-production of policy implementation.

Keywords: Co-production; Citizen Role; Environmental Protection; Polythene Bags; Policy Implementation

Session 04 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 II | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KHAPTAD HALL

CHAIR Mokbul Morshed Ahmad [Asia Institute of Technology] FACILITATOR Ankit Bhandari [NASC]

T441 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Awareness, Access and Cashless Care: Beneficiary Experiences Under Ayushman Bharat-PM-JAY in Varanasi District

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[1] *Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University*

ABSTRACT

The Ayushman Bharat–Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) was introduced to enhance healthcare access and offer financial risk protection to India's poorer populations. There is still little empirical evidence at the district level, despite the fact that numerous studies have looked at the program at the federal and state levels. The Varanasi district offers a good environment for evaluating PM-JAY awareness and outreach at the local level because of its combination of public and private empanelled hospitals. The intends study intends to investigate the awareness level and sociodemographic characteristics of PM-JAY beneficiaries in the Varanasi district. Additionally, it aims to determine the sources of awareness, comprehend registration status, and evaluate the variables affecting Ayushman cardholders' access to PM-JAY-empanelled healthcare institutions. The study adopted a quantitative and descriptive research design using both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 200 respondents holding valid Ayushman cards through a structured questionnaire administered at selected PM-JAY empanelled hospitals in Varanasi district. Secondary data were gathered from scheme documents and hospital records. The study focused on beneficiaries who had accessed inpatient healthcare services. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The findings indicate that most respondents were middle-aged or older, belonged to rural areas, and had low levels of formal education. Awareness of PM-JAY was found among all surveyed respondents, with hospitals and healthcare staff being the major sources of information. A higher proportion of beneficiaries accessed private empanelled hospitals than public hospitals. Most respondents reported receiving cashless treatment, suggesting reduced financial burden. The study concludes that PM-JAY has improved awareness and enrolment among beneficiaries in Varanasi district. However, continued community outreach, beneficiary education, and institutional monitoring are essential for effective utilisation and long-term financial protection.

T444 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Exploring the Perceptions of Public Officials Regarding Citizen Engagement in Heritage Conservation and Management: A Case of Walled City of Lahore Authority, Pakistan

Syeda Lalarukh[1] · **Aisha Rizwan**[1]

[1] *University of the Punjab, Lahore*

ABSTRACT

Heritage conservation in the contemporary world sits at the intersection of cultural preservation, citizen participation, and urban governance. As heritage sites increasingly become spaces where state-led conservation efforts encounter local community interests, understanding public officials' perceptions and citizen engagement practices have become essential for effective heritage governance. This study addresses a governance issue of how to shift from short-term conservation initiatives to sustainable and community-driven management of cultural heritage. It explores public officials' perceptions of citizen engagement in heritage management at the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA), a densely populated "living heritage" site in Pakistan. The study is theoretically grounded in citizen engagement theory and participatory governance frameworks, while exploring the perspective of the public officials. The research employs qualitative case study design, drawing on semi-structured interviews with eleven public officials of WCLA, including assistant directors, tour guides, digital archivists, and librarians, selected through purposive sampling. Data was analyzed using Braun and Clarks six phase process of Thematic Analysis of the interview transcripts which generated six overarching themes capturing officials' perceptions of citizen engagement, including success stories, persistent challenges, and recommendations for fostering transformative engagement in heritage management and conservation. Findings indicate that although WCLA has established foundational engagement mechanisms, such as social mobilization wings, community meetings, and local hiring, meaningful participation remains constrained by deep-rooted mistrust stemming from past conservation efforts and fears of displacement, overlapping political and bureaucratic jurisdictions, limited representation of marginalized groups, and inadequate digital infrastructure. The study contributes to public administration scholarship by demonstrating that effective heritage governance requires a shift toward transformative models, ones that address structural inequalities, build institutional trust, and reposition heritage as a site of co-production between state and citizens. Based on these findings, the study recommends establishing heritage grant systems for low-income residents, depoliticizing conservation projects, strengthening digital and social media platforms for engagement, and institutionalizing citizen advisory mechanisms. It also suggests that participatory governance, economic stability, frameworks for trust building and organizational capacity building should be prioritized along with physical heritage restoration. Lastly, a huge gap is highlighted in the participatory governance theory by the continuous exclusion of children and women, emphasizing the need for more gender and age-sensitive frameworks of citizen engagement and coproduction. This research offers critical insights for public administration across South Asia, a region shaped by post-colonial bureaucratic legacies, fragile state-citizen trust, and rapid urbanization of areas rich in heritage landscapes. Home to a remarkable diversity of historical architecture, South Asia's heritage sites demand innovative, context-sensitive governance structures that prioritize citizen engagement and position residents as co-stewards of heritage for the future.

Keywords: Citizen Engagement; Heritage Governance; Public Administration; Participatory Governance; Walled City of Lahore Authority; Pakistan

T447 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Co-Production of Public Services Using Digital Technologies: Drivers and Barriers to the Use of Pakistan Citizen Portal

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ABSTRACT

The use of digital technologies for co-production of public services and citizen engagement has gained an extensive interest in recent years in the scholarly debates and practice of public sectors around the world. There are certain benefits of using digital technologies in the delivery of public services such as empowering communities, achievement of targeted performance and governance results, reducing the unusual delays and inefficiencies, facilitating open governance initiatives, value creation and transparency of government and its affairs etc. Nevertheless, there are tremendous challenges associated with the use of digital technologies for co-production and there is a lack of evidence on their actual impact. Developing countries face a greater challenge in the use of digital technologies for citizen engagement and co-production of public services and despite their use the communication flow has remained to be unidirectional, i.e., from government to the people. There is also greater digital divide where a considerable number of people either do not have access to the ICT or do not show the motivation to use it. In the past few years, policy initiatives in Pakistan are focusing on improving the public service delivery by developing citizen-centric e-governance initiatives. The government of Pakistan has implemented various e-governance platforms to provide the masses with better service delivery with the purpose to ensure efficient solution to their problems. There is a need to study how effective these platforms had been able to serve the purpose. This research focuses on one of these platforms, Pakistan Citizen Portal, to study which drivers and barriers influenced the performance of this initiative. Using semi-structured interviews with government officials and users of Pakistan Citizen Portal, this paper aims to systematically examine the facilitators and barriers from the perspectives of the government and citizens. There has been little research that systematically investigates drivers and barriers to citizen engagement and co-production via app-facilitated e-governance from both the government and citizens' perspectives, particularly in the context of Pakistan. This research aims to fill this gap through a case study on Pakistan Citizen Portal. The country context adds another important dimension to the study. The scale of problems that policy initiatives in countries such as Pakistan are seeking to tackle means that it is important to study the use of digital technologies and its effects on co-production and citizen engagement in these contexts too. The study reveals that the Pakistan Citizen Portal acts as a vital tool for e-governance by enhancing public official accountability, reducing red-tapism and providing citizens with direct, cost-effective access to public authorities. However, its long-term success is hindered by significant barriers, including a stark digital divide, low literacy rates in rural areas and a lack of public awareness, alongside departmental challenges like rigid budget constraints, jurisdictional limitations regarding private organizations and political disruptions caused by changing regimes. Furthermore, a notable gap exists where official data shows a complaint resolution rate above 95% but citizen satisfaction remains below 50%, an issue often exacerbated by anonymous entries that prevent official follow-ups and vague negative feedback.

Keywords: Co-production; digital technologies; e-governance; citizen participation; Citizen-Centric Governa

T431 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Exploring the Nexus Between Decentralisation and Urban Local Development in Bangladesh

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[1] *Khulna University*

ABSTRACT

Decentralisation is widely recognised as a governance strategy in developing countries to improve service delivery, transparency, accountability, and local development. In Bangladesh, constitutional provisions and successive policy reforms have emphasised the importance of local government institutions (LGIs) in the development of decentralised governance. However, the effectiveness of decentralisation in achieving meaningful local development outcomes remains contested. This paper critically explores the relationship between decentralisation and local development practices in Bangladesh by analysing relevant policy frameworks and empirical evidence. It also evaluates the effectiveness of decentralised governance structures in enhancing efficiency, transparency, accountability and citizen participation at the local level. The paper reveals that decentralisation in Bangladesh, despite formal institutional arrangements, is largely characterised by deconcentration and delegation rather than genuine devolution. As a result, urban local government institutions face noteworthy constraints, including limited fiscal autonomy, overlapping functional mandates, weak institutional capacity, and insistent central government control. These structural constraints undermine urban local governments' ability to prepare development plans and to implement and manage development initiatives effectively. It further identifies key challenges of local government, such as regional disparities, inadequate resource mobilisation, feeble citizen participation, and authoritative central–local government relations, which collectively hinder the realisation of decentralisation's intended benefits. This paper argues that without meaningful authority, financial resources, and decision-making power for the urban local government, decentralisation practices remain largely pretentious. The paper concludes by presenting policy recommendations that emphasise strengthening institutional capacity, deepening fiscal decentralisation, improving vertical and horizontal intergovernmental coordination, and fostering inclusive community participation to enhance the effectiveness, accountability, and responsiveness of urban local government institutions. The findings of the study contribute to the wider scholarly discourse on governance reform by demonstrating the importance of transitioning from symbolic decentralisation to substantive devolution as a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive urban development in Bangladesh and across the South Asian countries.

Keywords: Decentralisation; Urban local government; Local development; Bangladesh; Community participation; Sustainable development

Session 05 / Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 I | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KAILASH HALL

CHAIR Nisha Onta [GovLab] FACILITATOR Prativa Paudel [NASC]

T623 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Significance of Nepali Vernacular Architecture in Terms of Tradition, Modernity & Cultural Sustainability: Rethinking Indigenous Building Knowledge for Climate-Resilient and Inclusive Governance in Nepal

Saurav Koirala
Nepal Administrative Staff College

ABSTRACT

These are exciting times for the studies and exploration of vernacular architecture across the world. The world today is 56% urbanized and the UN expects a continued rise of urbanization to 68% of global population living in cities by 2050. With increasing attraction for urban, some people are choosing to live within suburbs for refreshment, isolated living and more private living to improve their quality of life. These paradigm shifts are opening amazing opportunities to study and explore importance and characteristics of vernacular architecture of locality and to invite further exploration in terms of development and innovation of its spatial use and construction methods relevant to contemporary time. Nepal is (could be) fascinating place for us (if taken seriously) and South Asia in larger context. Nepal have seen many socio-economic changes over the past period in dramatic way. It created the challenges of redefining our identity in personal, regional and sometimes on a national level. Our sense of identity partly comes from the environment we live in. Aim to inspire the developing interest in sense of curiosity about this is the subject of this proceeding. So that, we can pay attention to the things in our living environment that we might not otherwise have noticed. Trying and looking around where we live in, thinking about our valuable assets arises a question, how do they affect our sense of identity? Can we do something about the changes that are happening where we live in? Nepal is country rich in cultural diversity; it has rich history and ancient civilization. Also has major religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Kirat, Muslim, just to name of few. We have regional diversity in climate, geography, topography, and landscapes. And all intangibles, there are different forms of customs, festivals, the ways people cook, the ways people dress, and ways worship local deities. Place of living heritages, where people are still living in it, they are not archaeological sites yet. Some influenced by other cultures, for instance colonialism or neo-classicism and overlaid by the movement of people in the form of migration. Nepal being on the lap of Himalayas, is the ideal place to study domestic/ vernacular/ indigenous architecture. Ranging from an altitude of 100 to more than 8,000 meters, stretching over 800 km between the high Tibetan plateau of Central Asia and the tropical plains of the Indian sub-continent, it covers a vast array of environments (an extremely wide range of ecological milieux) and offers an infinite variety of house types. Up to an elevation of about 4,500 meters, Nepal is home to numerous kinds of dwellings that are determined by the availability of natural resources and by climatic conditions. Double sloping roofs, inclined to varying degrees, or flat roofs; roofing in thatch, tiles, roofing stone, shingle or mats; mud, brick or stone walls, simple mat or thatch screens; single level horizontal buildings or vertical buildings with two, three, four storeys, etc.: the differences within this single zone are immense. These are foundations for discussion, the concepts and ideas we can discuss. It has huge aspects so couldn’t be able to cover every corner at very first stage. But we should start with reference to few things, places which could be fascinating for discussion.

T615 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Governing Climate Change in Bangladeshi Cities: Bureaucratic Superimposition and the Limits of Development-As-Usual

A.K.M. Fazlur Rahman[1] · **Md. Ahsanul Kabir**[1]

[1] *Khulna University*

ABSTRACT

Urban areas in Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to climate change, but cities focus mainly on development priorities such as housing, water, sanitation, and transport. The core governance puzzle is how urban bureaucracies integrate climate change responses when their mandates, budgets, and institutional routines are centred on a 'development-first' logic. This paper explores how Bangladeshi cities perform climate adaptation within their existing development mandates. It aims to identify prevailing bureaucratic practices that influence urban climate action. It also explores the governance trade offs that arise, especially when balancing the demands of long term climate adaptation with the need for social inclusion. The study employs systematic document analysis. Sources include scholarly articles, city development plans, Annual Development Programme (ADP) project records, municipal budgets, national policy documents, and donor-funded project appraisals, etc. This paper extends the concept of bureaucratic superimposition, originally developed in the Indian urban context. It looks at how city bureaucracies in Bangladesh juggle climate imperatives while still being anchored in long standing development priorities. It applies the framework to a new national and methodological context, using documentary evidence to identify dominant bureaucratic practices that shape urban climate action across Bangladesh. The study points to five interconnected patterns shaping climate action in Bangladeshi cities: reliance on centrally defined ADP project cycles; the dominance of 'development' as the guiding administrative mandate; a tendency toward quick win interventions; a focus on highly visible projects; and a strong dependence on donor driven, climate finance ready initiatives. While this layering makes climate action politically feasible, it also brings trade offs—most notably sidelining long term adaptation, excluding vulnerable urban groups, and underfunding essential but often overlooked infrastructure. The paper argues that without reforms—more local fiscal autonomy, justice principles, and participatory planning—climate governance will continue reproducing inequity under bureaucracy. These findings have clear relevance for public administration in South Asia, where central control, capacity gaps, and development first agendas pose similar barriers to building transformative and inclusive climate responses.

Keywords: Climate change adaptation; urban governance; bureaucracy; superimposition; inclusive governance

T603 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Kathmandu Valley's Urban Governance Crisis: Climate Change and Flood Risk

Tej Karki
Kathmandu University

ABSTRACT

Disasters are a litmus test of a governance system. They reveal weaknesses often hidden under normal conditions. This paper uses the 2024 flood event in Kathmandu Valley (KV) as a case study to examine how such disasters expose urban governance weaknesses in Nepal. It evaluates the extent to which institutional responses and regulatory measures were able to cope with and adapt to flood impacts. It examines the impacts of the Nakhu River flooding on urban settlements in Lalitpur Metropolitan City and analyses government rescue and response efforts in the affected areas. It also evaluates the land use regulatory shortcomings that allowed urban development in flood-prone zones. The study situates flooding in KV within the context of climate change and urban ecological transformation and draws on international literature on disaster governance and land use regulation to inform the analysis. Studies indicate that by 2050, approximately 29% of the total built-up area in Kathmandu Valley will be located in flood-prone areas, implying a steadily increasing population exposure to flood risk. Assessing these governance challenges provides important insights for policymakers to strengthen institutional capacity for managing disasters and broader urban risks. The findings show that the flood response and rescue to save lives were delayed due to weak institutional coordination. Land use regulatory governance was unable to effectively prevent urban expansion on floodplains. Building bylaws and zoning maps remained insufficiently risk-sensitive, with several flood-prone areas still designated as residential zones. Furthermore, existing regulations have failed to control deforestation and quarrying activities in the surrounding hills, contributing to increased surface runoff into the valley. The study concludes that without risk-sensitive land-use planning and stronger regulatory enforcement, efforts to reduce flood risk in Kathmandu Valley will remain limited in effectiveness.

Keywords: Urban Flooding; Institutional Capability; Disaster Response; Land Use; Enforcement

T614 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Beyond Industrial Circularity: Artisan Circularity as a Public Administration Framework for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Governance

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Ministry of Textiles, Government of India

ABSTRACT

Circular economy policy has emerged as a central strategy for addressing environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and climate change. However, prevailing policy frameworks remain largely oriented toward industrial systems of recycling, resource efficiency, and waste management. While these approaches have generated significant environmental benefits, they often overlook decentralized artisan production systems that transform discarded materials into value-added products while simultaneously generating livelihoods, preserving traditional knowledge, and strengthening community resilience. This paper proposes the concept of Artisan Circularity as a complementary public policy framework that expands conventional understandings of circular economy outcomes. Drawing upon experiences from government-supported handloom and craft-based recycling initiatives in India, the paper examines how artisan production systems convert textile waste, plastic packaging waste, agricultural residues, and other locally available materials into marketable products through skill-intensive, low-carbon production processes. Unlike industrial circularity, which primarily focuses on material recovery and resource efficiency, artisan circularity generates multiple forms of public value, including employment creation, women's economic participation, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and climate adaptation. The paper develops a conceptual model linking waste recovery systems, community-based production networks, traditional skill ecosystems, and adaptive governance mechanisms. It argues that artisan circularity represents an underexplored dimension of policy capacity, particularly in developing economies where informal production systems continue to support millions of livelihoods. By integrating environmental objectives with social and economic outcomes, artisan-based circular systems offer a pathway toward inclusive and locally embedded sustainability transitions. The study contributes to contemporary debates on collaborative governance and social innovation by demonstrating how public institutions, artisan communities, civil society organizations, and market actors can jointly create public value through decentralized circular economy initiatives. The framework also provides insights into the role of public administration in designing policies that recognize and support non-industrial forms of circular production. The paper concludes that incorporating artisan circularity into circular economy policy can enhance both environmental performance and societal resilience, particularly in resource-constrained regions of the Global South. As governments seek more inclusive approaches to sustainable development, artisan production systems offer valuable lessons for integrating ecological objectives, livelihood security, and social innovation within broader public policy frameworks.

Session 06 / Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 I | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | SWAYAMBHU HALL

CHAIR Narayan Adhikari [Accountability Lab] FACILITATOR Surya Prakash Baral [NASC]

T327 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Who Do Citizens Trust More? A Conjoint Experiment on Bureaucratic Recruitment in Pakistan

Abiha Zahra[1] · **Kohei Suzuki**[2] · **Jan Meyer Sahling**[3]

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ABSTRACT

Trust is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, particularly in the context of governance (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005). It has significant implications for the quality of democracy and the perceived legitimacy of public institutions (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001). Citizens entrust elected officials with the responsibility of pursuing collective interests and, in Wilson's words, "accomplish[ing] the objectives of organized society" (Clements, 1998) through the provision of public goods and services. The effective fulfilment of these responsibilities depends, in part, on how governments mobilize and deploy resources through sound public management practices (Lane, 2005). Against this backdrop, this study examines how public sector recruitment practices influence citizen trust in government institutions. It argues that recruitment mechanisms shape the composition and capabilities of public sector leadership and, consequently, may influence organizational performance, institutional credibility, and the legitimacy of governance. Drawing on Majone (2001), the study conceptualizes recruitment as a mechanism through which political principals seek to strengthen institutional legitimacy in the eyes of citizens, who ultimately assess and confer legitimacy on public institutions. Empirically, the study employs a conjoint experimental design involving more than 400 randomly selected respondents in Pakistan. Respondents will evaluate hypothetical leadership profiles across different types of public organizations, including service-oriented agencies, regulatory bodies, welfare institutions, and public enterprises. The profiles vary across key attributes, including educational background, recruitment model, and professional experience. In particular, the study compares generalist and specialist or technocratic recruitment approaches, drawing on the distinction between Weberian bureaucratic principles and New Public Management (NPM)-oriented approaches. Regression modelling will be used to estimate the relative effects of these attributes on citizens' perceptions of leadership trustworthiness and institutional trust. By examining how citizens respond to different combinations of leadership characteristics and recruitment mechanisms, the study seeks to contribute to the broader debate on merit-based recruitment, administrative professionalism, and public sector reform. It further aims to advance understanding of how Weberian and NPM-oriented recruitment models shape public perceptions of administrative credibility and, ultimately, the legitimacy of governance in Pakistan.

Keywords: Citizen Trust; Public Sector Recruitment; Public Sector Leadership; Conjoint Experiment; New Public Management (NPM); Weberian Bureaucracy; South Asia; Pakistan

T306 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Has the Right to Information Act, 2005 Strengthened Public Trust in India? Reassessing Democratic Accountability and Evolving Challenges of Transparency Activism

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ABSTRACT

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 a landmark legislation, leading to India's most transformative democratic governance reforms, by institutionalizing transparency and citizen oversight within public administration. By the end of two decades the RTI framework has immensely shaped the citizen-state relations by enabling fundamental right to access public information and improving administrative accountability simultaneously empowering citizens to proactively engage in governance. According to data from the Central Information Commission (CIC), on average, over 4,800 RTI applications are filed every single day and over 35 million RTI applications since its operationalization. The increasing digitization of RTI systems and online disclosure mechanisms of investigative and usual RTI applications have played a dominant role in exposing irregularities in welfare delivery, recruitment, wrongful land allocations & procurement, land administration, and local governance, forcing immediate governmental corrective action. Despite, RTI has strengthened good governance paradigm by empowering millions still it faces growing institutional, political, and operational challenges that raise critical questions regarding the sustainability of transparency governance and democratic accountability. Evolving patterns of mounting case backlogs, information commissioners vacancies, weak enforcement of penalties, and threats to RTI activists including institutional bypass of act's real intent have been severely criticized over the years. Particularly the RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019, which altered the tenure and service conditions of Information Commissioners, has generated concerns regarding the weakening of institutional autonomy and oversight capacity and increasing tendencies toward bureaucratic opacity have contributed to renewed debates on the shrinking space for transparency within governance institutions. In the above context current study critically examines: Can Transparency Alone Build Public Trust? Further study adopts a mixed qualitative methodology combining doctrinal and empirical approaches by secondary analysis of CIC data & official reports, judicial decisions, parliamentary committee observations, and civil society reports. The study prominently incorporates primary responses from 150 respondents based on semi-structured interviews and perception-based analysis to assess citizens experiences, including investigative journalists and RTI activists who experienced retaliation or intimidation linked to information disclosure efforts. Preliminary findings reports that nearly 72% of respondents believe RTI has improved transparency and responsiveness in public institutions, while approximately 64% reported using RTI mechanisms for grievance redress and access to welfare entitlements. Official data reports high processing rates of about 95% RTI applications, despite over 58% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction regarding delays, pending appeals, incomplete disclosure, and bureaucratic non-cooperation. Interviews with activists and applicants revealed growing digital divide, concerns regarding intimidation, procedural complexity, and institutional fatigue within Information Commissions. Findings of the study highlights the paradox that while RTI has substantially empowered citizens and deepened democratic engagement, expanding demands for transparency have simultaneously intensified contestation between citizens and state institutions over information control and accountability boundaries. Overall the study contributes to broader debates on ethical governance, institutional integrity, government accountability, and citizen-centric public administration in South Asia. The paper emphasizes that transparency reforms cannot sustain democratic legitimacy in the absence of institutional independence, administrative responsiveness, protection for activists, and balanced safeguards against both opacity and frivolous information practices.

Keywords: RTI; Transparency; Governance; Democratic Accountability; Public Trust; Activism

T323 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Policy Implementation Challenges in Developing Countries: The Case of an AI-Driven Traffic Management System in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Governments worldwide are increasingly adopting artificial intelligence (AI) to deliver public services more efficiently and with reduced human discretion. However, developing countries face different challenges in integrating these technologies into fragile institutional frameworks, where the foundational systems AI is intended to support often remain incomplete or weakly enforced. This paper investigates the policy challenges of introducing AI in Bangladesh's traffic management system. Using a qualitative approach on digital platforms and public discourse, including citizen commentary, news coverage, and stakeholder reflections, the study identifies eight key implementation barriers. The Unregistered-Vehicle Problem captures the difficulty of detecting unregistered vehicles through automated systems, leaving registered and taxed vehicles to absorb the bulk of enforcement while much of the informal transport sector remains unrecognized. Weaknesses in driver licensing and training systems indicate upstream regulatory gaps that automation alone cannot address. Infrastructure and Sequencing Deficits underscore the absence of essential preconditions at the time enforcement was initiated, illustrated by citizen remarks such as, "the left lane has not been given a green signal light, this is a failure of the traffic department; all the signal lights should be fixed first, and only then should cases be issued." Institutional distrust reflects skepticism that entrenched rent-seeking behaviors will persist within the new system rather than be eliminated. Protecting AI surveillance assets raises concerns about camera theft, vandalism, and the physical security of the enforcement network. Driver evasion tactics and counter-compliance behaviors demonstrate the strategies road users employ to circumvent automated detection. Identification and Traceability Challenges reveal uncertainty about the delivery of case papers to outdated addresses or inactive mobile numbers. Digital fraud and emerging cyber-risks are exemplified by citizens receiving SMS notices for vehicle cases despite not owning a vehicle and possessing only a driving license. Addressing these interconnected barriers concurrently is essential for realizing the full potential of AI-driven traffic enforcement in Bangladesh and similar Global South contexts.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; traffic enforcement; policy implementation; developing countries; Bangladesh; algorithmic governance; institutional trust; smart mobility; road safety policy

T302 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Mimicry of Reform and the State of Anti-Corruption in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the disparity between anti-corruption measures and their actual results in Bangladesh, emphasizing the concept of “isomorphic mimicry”—the implementation of formal institutional frameworks devoid of adequate functional capability. Utilising modern institutional theory, namely the concept of 'isomorphic mimicry', the article contends that Bangladesh's anti-corruption framework exemplifies a trend of superficial adherence rather than genuine reform. Institutions like the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), inspired by successful entities in Hong Kong and Singapore, exhibit robust formal structure but lack operational autonomy and efficacy. The study employs a qualitative analytical technique to examine how political incentives, bureaucratic practices, and elite alliances influence reform trajectories. It underscores the enduring presence of a “iron triangle” of politicians, bureaucrats, and commercial entities, which frequently obstructs substantial structural reforms. Empirical evidence indicates that the majority of reform projects falter within the initial stages of implementation, with around 80 percent failing to go beyond the preliminary phases. The research analyses procedural compliance methods that generate a façade of accountability while limiting genuine enforcement. The findings underscore that corruption in Bangladesh transcends legal or administrative concerns, being fundamentally entrenched in the political economy. Effective reform demands more than legislative stipulations; it requires institutional independence, enduring political dedication, and contextually appropriate solutions. The study indicates that unless underlying power structures are addressed and true implementation is ensured, anti-corruption measures would provide only symbolic rather than substantive results.

Keywords: New Institutionalism; Mimicry; Anti-Corruption; Reform; Bangladesh

Session 07 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 III | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | RARA HALL

CHAIR Sameen Mustafa [University of Karachi] FACILITATOR Raju Pangeni [NASC]

T448 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Challenges and Way Forward of Universal Health Insurance in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Health insurance or medical insurance is generally understood as an insurance that covers the whole or a part of the risk of a person incurring medical expenses. As with other types of insurance, risk is shared among many individuals. Universal health insurance in Bangladesh, like in many countries, indeed confronts various challenges. Some common issues that might encounter: financial capability and sustainability of the poor; limited coverage; quality of care; health infrastructure; administrative and technical capacity; public awareness and participation; and healthcare costs and inflation. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, reports from the World Bank denoted that out-of-pocket health expenditures as a percentage of current health expenditures in Bangladesh stood at 74% in 2018 recording an uptick at an annual rate of 1.21% on average from the previous year. The objectives of this study are to explore the existing health insurance services are in place in Bangladesh; identify the challenges/problems of health insurance services; and draw some policy recommendations relating to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in regarding to 'ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages' in Bangladesh. This study reveals that addressing the challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving collaboration between government, healthcare providers, insurers, and civil society organizations. It also requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of policies to ensure that the goals of universal health insurance are achieved effectively and sustainably to meet up the targets of SDG- 3. This study adopted a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis. In-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion methods were used to collect primary data. Secondary data from different literature such as books, journals, newspapers, policy documents etc. were also collected.

Keywords: Health; Insurance; SDG; Poor; Bangladesh

T433 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Citizens' Perceptions of Governance Reform in Nepal: A Comparative Study of Pre-and Post-2015 Constitutional Governance in Kaski District

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ABSTRACT

Nepal's new Constitution of 2072 (2015) marked a historic transition from a centralized governance structure to a federal democratic system intended to improve decentralization, citizen participation, accountability and local service delivery. More than a decade after the constitutional transition, questions remain regarding how citizens perceive these governance reforms and whether the expected benefits have been realized at the local level. Understanding public perceptions is particularly important for assessing the effectiveness, legitimacy and state capacity of federal governance arrangements in emerging democracies across South Asia. This study examines citizens' perceptions of governance systems before and after 2072 and explores the factors influencing these perceptions in Kaski District, Nepal. The study seeks to assess public attitudes toward governance reforms and identify the opportunities and challenges associated with decentralized governance from the perspective of local citizens. The study employs a mixed-methods approach based on primary data collected through a field survey conducted in 2025. Quantitative data were obtained from 111 respondents across Pokhara Metropolitan City, Annapurna, Machhapuchchhre, Madi and Rupa Rural Municipalities. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyze survey responses while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents (59 out of 111) prefer the post-2072 governance system, particularly in Pokhara Metropolitan City, Annapurna Rural Municipality and Madi Rural Municipality. Respondents generally associated the federal system with improved accessibility of government services, greater transparency, and enhanced opportunities for citizen participation in local decision-making processes. However, perceptions were not uniform across the district. Machhapuchchhre Rural Municipality emerged as an exception where a larger proportion of respondents favored the pre-2072 governance structure. Findings further reveal that concerns regarding increased taxation, limited employment opportunities, unequal development outcomes and constraints in local institutional capacity continue to undermine public satisfaction and trust in governance reforms. The study concludes that while Nepal's federal governance system has strengthened citizen-centric governance and democratic participation, its long-term legitimacy depends on the state's ability to deliver equitable socioeconomic outcomes and responsive public services. The findings contribute to ongoing debates on decentralization, public trust, and state capacity and offer important lessons for public administration reforms in Nepal and other South Asian countries undergoing governance transitions. This study may be useful for future researchers, students and local bodies.

Keywords: Federalism; Citizen-Centric Governance; Public Trust; Service Delivery

T403 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Performances of Standing Committees of Union Parishad (UP) in Bangladesh: A Descriptive Analysis

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University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

The Union Parishad (UP), the lowest layer of local government in Bangladesh, is a well-known formal institution among rural people. This study evaluates the effectiveness of all Standing Committees (SCs) within two UPs, focusing on three core dimensions: knowledge, participation, and practical engagement. Data were collected through interviews with 25 UP representatives (19 males and 6 females) in 2024. Findings reveal suboptimal performance across all dimensions, with average scores (on a 5-point Likert scale) for knowledge (2.6 and 2.1), participation (2.3 and 1.8), and practice (2.1 and 1.7) in the two UPs, respectively. The study identifies a range of barriers that undermine the effective functioning of Standing Committees (SCs). These are external (e.g., political interference from Members of Parliament and bureaucrats, dominance of local powerbrokers) and internal (e.g., negligence, apathy, limited institutional capacity, and nepotism). The paper concludes with action-oriented, context-specific recommendations aimed at enhancing the operational performance and accountability of SCs in rural governance structures.

Keywords: Bangladesh; local government; standing committee; performance; wellbeing

T430 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Reintegrating Returnees: A Qualitative Study of Post-COVID Labor Migration in Nepal

Bimba Panthi
Georgetown University

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that Nepal's post-COVID reintegration policies operate primarily as programmatic and symbolic governance tools rather than effective mechanisms for citizen-centred service delivery and sustainable labour reintegration. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork conducted across urban, peri-urban, and rural localities, including 15 semi-structured interviews with returnee migrant workers and key informants, the study examines the disconnect between reintegration policy design, implementation, and the lived experiences of returnees navigating post-pandemic recovery. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal introduced reintegration initiatives emphasizing sustainable livelihoods, skills development, entrepreneurship, and employment facilitation for returning migrant workers. These policy frameworks present reintegration as a comprehensive governance response to large-scale return migration. However, the findings reveal significant implementation gaps characterized by weak institutional capacity, fragmented intergovernmental coordination, inadequate local outreach, and limited accessibility of public services. A substantial proportion of respondents reported little or no awareness of existing reintegration programs despite official claims of dissemination, highlighting a disconnect between policy intent and citizen experience. For many returnees, reintegration ultimately meant entering precarious informal employment, relying on personal networks rather than state support, or facing renewed pressure to migrate abroad due to persistent economic insecurity and limited domestic opportunities. Rather than functioning as accessible public services capable of supporting long-term reintegration, government interventions often remained administrative commitments with minimal practical impact at the community level. Situating these findings within the broader context of post-COVID global labour disruption and Nepal's longstanding dependence on foreign labour markets, particularly in the Gulf region, the paper argues that reintegration policies have not substantially reduced labour out-migration. Instead, implementation failures reproduce cyclical migration by preventing policy frameworks from translating into meaningful support systems for returning citizens. Reintegration therefore functions less as a transformative development strategy and more as an indicator of uneven state capacity operating within a global labour hierarchy that continues to externalize employment opportunities. By centring the perspectives of returnee migrants, this study contributes to debates on citizen-centred governance by demonstrating how service delivery failures shape migration trajectories and public trust in state institutions. It ultimately reframes reintegration not simply as a post-crisis recovery process but as a governance challenge requiring stronger institutional coordination, locally accessible services, and implementation mechanisms that place citizens' lived realities at the centre of policy design.

Keywords: Labour migration; Reintegration governance; State capacity; Post-COVID recovery; Migration dependency

Session 08 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 I | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | PRITHVI HALL

CHAIR Binayak Krishna Thapa [Kathmandu University] FACILITATOR Sebika Thapa [NASC]

T514 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Administrative Power and Public Resistance: Social Movements, Governance, and State Transformation in Nepal

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Tribhuvan University

ABSTRACT

Nepal has transitioned from a unitary to a federal political system with the aim of promoting nation-building and social transformation. However, these goals continue to face significant obstacles due to corruption and the absence of strong governance mechanisms. On the other hand, various social and political movements—such as the Restoration of Democracy, the Maoist Insurgency, the Terai Movement, the Gen Z Movement, and others—have consistently raised their voices against corruption, emphasizing that eliminating it is essential for achieving national development and social change. While most of these movements had organized leadership structures, the Gen Z movement was unique in lacking formal leadership and organization. Nepal has observed some outcomes of the nation-building and social change process. However, the general election of 2082 (2026) was conducted under the influence of the Gen Z movement, which demanded political accountability and transparency. As a result, the new government is expected to be formed by newly established political parties rather than the traditional parties that led past political movements and introduced federalism. In this context, the key concern is how Nepal's unfinished tasks of nation-building and social transformation can be achieved-particularly through the eradication of corruption on one hand and the establishment of good governance on the other. In this purview, this paper aims to explore the reasons that cause mass movement for the social change in Nepal. Also, this paper discusses whether the reasons were addressed by the successive government or not. The paper adopts discourse analysis methodology to explore the reasons of mass movements in Nepal. Administrative power and regime ideology were the basis for the discussion. The major drivers of mass movement happened to eradicate corruption and establishment of good governance for the better livelihood of the Nepali citizens. However, these tasks were partially addressed but not settled yet.

Keywords: Mass movements; Gen-Z; good governance; corruption; administrative power; regime; Nepal etc

T513 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Narrative Governance in the Age of AI: Reimagining Public Trust Through Algorithmic Communication in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

This paper advances the conceptual framework of narrative governance to interrogate the evolving terrain of public administration in South Asia, wherein the production and legitimation of state authority are increasingly mediated not solely through formal policies and bureaucratic institutions, but through digitally constructed narratives circulated via artificial-intelligence-enabled communication systems. Amid accelerating digitalization, the convergence of social media platforms, automated information infrastructures, and generative AI is reconfiguring the modalities through which governments communicate, citizens interpret governance, and public trust is constituted or eroded. Situated within the conference's thematic preoccupations with ethics, inclusion, and state capacity, the study contends that contemporary governance operates within a hybrid ecology comprising conventional administrative processes and algorithmically mediated communicative infrastructures. While AI-enabled systems hold demonstrable potential to enhance transparency, optimize service delivery, and facilitate participatory engagement, they concurrently introduce significant risks, including the amplification of misinformation, the reinforcement of structural biases, and the production of asymmetries in epistemic visibility and democratic voice. To address these tensions, the paper proposes a Narrative Governance Framework that integrates ethical AI-mediated communication, participatory media ecosystems, and inclusive digital storytelling as constitutive elements of contemporary public administration. The framework foregrounds the imperative of multilingual, culturally situated communicative practices attuned to the plural socio-linguistic realities of South Asia, thereby ensuring equitable representation and citizen-centric governance. By repositioning communication as a foundational pillar of administrative capacity rather than an ancillary function, the study contributes to a re-theorization of governance as a dynamic, trust-mediated process co-produced by institutional actors and intelligent media systems.

Keywords: narrative governance; algorithmic communication; artificial intelligence and public administration; digital trust; South Asian governance

T506 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Strengthening State Capacity in Post-Disaster Recovery: From Bottlenecks to Reform Through Legal Clinics and Disaster Management Framework Review in Sri Lanka

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Ministry of Science and Technology, Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

The modernization of public administration in developing contexts increasingly depends on strengthening state capacity to manage complex implementation environments characterized by institutional fragmentation, legal pluralism, and administrative overload. In Sri Lanka, post–Cyclone Ditwa recovery provides an illustrative case of how such constraints affect frontline governance performance. Despite fiscal allocations exceeding LKR 650 billion, recovery outcomes—particularly in land administration, resettlement, and housing reconstruction—have been uneven, reflecting a persistent gap between policy formulation and implementation capacity. These governance challenges reflect structural conditions commonly observed in South Asian administrative systems, where centralized legal frameworks and decentralized execution structures interact under conditions of institutional stress and crisis recovery. Using a mixed case study design, this research examines state capacity constraints through two interconnected dimensions of public administration reform: (i) the ongoing review of the Disaster Management Act No. 13 of 2005 and associated institutional restructuring processes, and (ii) an applied Law Clinic Initiative designed as a governance innovation to address administrative and legal bottlenecks in post–disaster recovery.The institutional analysis identifies deep–rooted structural constraints in the legal–administrative system. Approximately 90 percent of divisional–level legal instruments remain based on outdated frameworks originating in the colonial era, limiting adaptive governance capacity. Institutional fragmentation is further evidenced by the issuance of 77 circulars and guidance notes from 19 agencies following Cyclone Ditwah, resulting in regulatory duplication, coordination deficits, and procedural uncertainty at the sub–national level. These challenges are compounded by persistent land governance constraints, including complex state land allocation systems, unauthorized settlements, and legal restrictions on private land contributions, all of which impede service delivery and recovery efficiency. To address these constraints, a Law Clinic Initiative was implemented across 17 disaster-affected districts through a multi-institutional governance arrangement involving key state agencies and development partners. The initiative covered 301 officers responsible for disaster management, including 218 Divisional Secretaries (63.9%). It was designed based on a nationwide needs assessment encompassing 341 Divisional Secretariats, 2,042 executive-grade officers, and more than 72,000 frontline officers. Functioning as a hybrid coordination mechanism, the initiative strengthens administrative problem-solving capacity at the local level. The intervention remains ongoing and has received strong positive feedback from frontline officers. To date, it has resolved more than 500 longstanding land-related cases, thereby accelerating resettlement, compensation, and housing reconstruction processes, while also improving inter-agency coordination and administrative responsiveness. In addition, the initiative has contributed to emerging legal and institutional reform processes at Cabinet level. The study argues that strengthening state capacity in post–disaster contexts requires both structural reform of legal–institutional frameworks and the adoption of hybrid governance innovations that bridge implementation gaps. Law Clinics demonstrate how adaptive, coordination-intensive mechanisms can enhance administrative effectiveness in complex governance environments. The findings contribute to public administration scholarship on state capacity, implementation gaps, and institutional reform, with particular relevance to governance modernization debates in South Asia.

Keywords: State capacity; Public administration reform; Institutional fragmentation; Post–disaster governance; Hybrid governance mechanisms

T544 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

How Do Digital and Intelligent Technologies Shape Public Employees' Felt Accountability? A Technology Enactment-Psychological Perception Perspective

Jiusheng Tan[1] · **Yunxue Deng**[1] · **Yulong Yun**[1]

[1] *Xiangtan University*

The deep integration of digital and intelligent technologies is transforming the operations of public organizations and reshaping public employees' felt accountability in the performance of their duties. Drawing on Technology Enactment Theory and Self-Determination Theory, this study develops a "technology enactment–psychological perception" framework and combines a scenario-based experiment with a three-wave survey to examine the effects of digital and intelligent technologies on public employees' felt accountability. The results show that digital and intelligent technologies significantly strengthen public employees' felt accountability. Job autonomy mediates this relationship. Specifically, by imposing stronger procedural constraints on work processes, digital and intelligent technologies reduce public employees' perceived job autonomy, thereby heightening their attention to external evaluations and potential accountability consequences. Algorithmic explainability negatively moderates the effect of digital and intelligent technologies on felt accountability. A higher level of algorithmic explainability enhances the transparency of accountability criteria, clarifies the boundaries of responsibility, and reduces uncertainty regarding responsibility attribution, thereby mitigating the reinforcing effect of digital and intelligent technologies on felt accountability. This study reveals the psychological pathway and boundary condition through which digital and intelligent technologies shape felt accountability, providing empirical evidence for improving the enactment of digital and intelligent technologies and accountability governance in the public sector.

Keywords: Digital and intelligent technologies; Felt Accountability; Job Autonomy; Algorithm Explainability; Public Employee

Session 09 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 II | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | ANNAPURNA HALL

CHAIR Bishnu Raj Upreti [Nepal Center for Contemporary Research] FACILITATOR Smriti Pradhan [NASC]

T510 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Andragogy in Public Policy Education: An Autoethnography of Building State Capacity Among Civil Servants

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Management Development Institute, India

ABSTRACT

There has been a phenomenal growth of public policy education programmes in South Asia in general and in India in particular. However, public policy as a discipline is still evolving without a clear consensus about what public policy education curriculum should comprise. The content of public policy education is shaped by the knowledge, skills and training of those imparting policy education rather than an assessment of policy capacity needs of those receiving it. Andragogy, a term popularized by Malcolm Knowles, is an approach used to describe the education of adults, as distinguished from pedagogy, that focuses on the teaching of young learners, especially children. This paper describes specific principles of andragogy that are relevant in building state capacity of practicing civil servants. Methodologically, it uses an approach of auto-ethnography, drawing on the experience of the author in imparting public policy education to mid-career civil servants across eighteen batches at a premier management institute in India. These principles include creating space for experiential learning; promoting peer learning; deconstructing and demystifying abstract social science concepts; creating space for reflexivity and internalization; and using the class-room as a policy lab to create knowledge on public policy processes in the context of the global south. Most participants have a background in engineering and the natural sciences and are new to the social sciences. The first challenge is in producing teaching material grounded in the context of the global south; most of the public policy literature has been developed by scholars of the global north in the context of the global north. Since participants are new to the subject, the public policy literature needs to be demystified and presented in a form that does not intimidate them. Unlike fresh graduates or undergraduate students who have no prior experiences with public policy making and implementation, practicing civil servants simply see the courses taught as providing a framework to articulate their experiences with the policy process. Concepts such as street level bureaucracy give them space to be reflective of their own experience and role in shaping policy outcomes. It is necessary to create in class enough space for participants to allow peer-learning; this is an important principle of andragogy. Andragogy involves two way learning in the class-room. The mutual exchange of concepts, theories and models of the policy process and of institutional development creates conditions of a policy lab. There is a constant effort on the part of participants to reflect on their experiences in light of the theories and concepts taught in class. This provides fertile ground to build a body of knowledge on policy processes located in the global south and theorize about them. This can lead to alternative theories of the policy process grounded in the unique context of the global south; and with a specific focus on South Asia that is experiencing the combined effects of multiple parallel processes: global environmental change, rapid digital transformation, and heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

T536 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Emotional Inclusion in the Workplace: Representation and Exclusion Experiences of Gender and Ethnic Minorities in Nepal's Civil Service

Baburam Bhul

Office of the Auditor General, Kathmandu Nepal

ABSTRACT

The study explores the dynamics of emotional inclusion in Nepal's civil service organizations, focusing on the representation and workplace experiences of women and ethnic minorities in their work environments. Over the last 18 years, a rise in numerical representation has ensued within the civil service due to constitutional provisions and reservation policies, leading to 26,274 women and members of ethnic and marginalized communities being represented, but substantive inclusion remains incomplete in the workplace, as many still face barriers to advancement and equal opportunities. The study utilizes qualitative analysis techniques to integrate insights from more than 60 existing literature along with seven semi-structured interviews involving civil service personnel from women, Dalit, Madhesi, and Adivasi Janajati communities. Thematic analysis uncovers ongoing challenges, including the glass ceiling, a patriarchal institutional culture, caste-based stigma, implicit bias, microaggressions, and exclusion from informal caste and power-induced networks, all of which hinder employees' ability to feel a sense of belonging, psychological safety, and respectful engagement in decision-making process. The findings indicate that workplace practices evolve from official policy pledges and highlight the necessity of DEIBA-focused solutions for implementing training programs that address unconscious bias and promote equitable opportunities for all employees. The research reveals that organizations should go further than just numerical diversity to foster emotional inclusion, which is essential for genuine representation. Nepal's Civil Service must create frameworks that promote inclusive leadership, mentorship initiatives, and emotional support for the marginalized employee to boost their engagement and institutional effectiveness, and public service logic.

T525 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Building Governance Capability at the Last Mile: Training Elected Urban Local Representatives for Citizen-Centric Service Delivery - Evidence from Maharashtra

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[1] *Savitribai Phule Pune University, India*

ABSTRACT

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) established urban local bodies as constitutionally recognised institutions of democratic governance, placing elected councillors at the forefront of citizen engagement and municipal decision-making. Despite this institutional transformation, capacity-building efforts have remained largely focused on municipal officials, while elected representatives continue to assume office with limited preparation for the statutory, financial and governance responsibilities expected of them. This persistent capability gap raises important questions about the effectiveness of decentralisation in delivering responsive and citizen-centric public services. This paper examines how structured capacity-building programmes can strengthen the governance capabilities of elected urban local representatives and identifies the key competency domains required for effective municipal governance. Using Maharashtra as a qualitative case study, the research draws on policy and training documents, the literature on local governance capacity, and thematic analysis of participant feedback collected during a governance capability development programme for elected urban local representatives. The study analyses participants' perceived knowledge gaps, learning priorities, and reflections on the relevance of training for their representative responsibilities. The findings indicate that capability deficits extend beyond technical knowledge and encompass four interconnected domains: (i) understanding statutory roles and municipal procedures; (ii) municipal finance, budgeting and fiduciary oversight; (iii) oversight of the executive and institutional accountability; and (iv) citizen grievance redress and participatory engagement. Participants consistently identified the need for practical, role-specific training tailored to elected representatives rather than programmes primarily designed for municipal administrators. The analysis further suggests that demand-responsive and context-specific learning approaches are perceived as more relevant than conventional classroom-based administrative training. The paper argues that the governance capability of elected representatives constitutes a distinct yet underexplored dimension of decentralised governance, separate from bureaucratic capacity and existing Panchayati Raj training frameworks. It proposes a diagnostic framework linking representative capability to four core governance functions—deliberation, executive oversight, fiduciary stewardship and citizen engagement—to guide the design and evaluation of future capacity-building initiatives. By positioning Maharashtra's experience within broader debates on decentralisation and governance capability, the paper contributes to emerging scholarship on local democratic institutions and offers practical recommendations for state training institutions seeking to strengthen citizen-centric urban governance in India and other decentralised contexts.

Keywords: Capacity building; Citizen-centric service delivery; Elected representatives; Local government; Maharashtra; Urban governance; 74th Amendment

T541 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Digital Governance and the Transformation of Public Service Delivery in India

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ABSTRACT

Digital governance (DG) has emerged as a critical component in the transformation of government institutions worldwide. In the contemporary digital era, governments increasingly deploy information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance administrative efficiency, improve transparency, and broaden opportunities for public participation in decision-making. The dynamics of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, combined with rapid digital innovation, have further compelled governments to leverage technological tools to strengthen public service delivery and elevate the overall quality of administrative functions, thereby contributing to societal well-being. Scholars and practitioners in public administration and public policy conceptualize this evolution as 'digital governance', a term that has expanded from its initial emphasis on the use of ICT in government operations to a broader understanding of how information and technology shape administrative, managerial, and governance processes. India's Digital India programme represents a very important model of national digital transformation. The country has focussed on developing large-scale digital public infrastructures such as Aadhaar, DigiLocker, and direct benefit transfer platforms to enhance the delivery of services and promote social inclusion. Despite the importance of these initiatives on a global scale, there is a lack of comprehensive research that thoroughly examines how the institutional architecture and implementation mechanism of the Digital India influences the effectiveness of public service delivery. The study has three main objectives: first, to look into the institutional architectures that support the Digital India programme; second, to explore how institutional, political, and administrative factors influence the design and implementation of digital governance projects; and third, to evaluate how these institutional arrangements impact the accessibility, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of public service delivery. The study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on the analysis of policy documents, government reports, and relevant academic literature. The theoretical perspectives of Digital Era Governance, institutional theory, and platform governance guide the analysis. The study contributes to the theoretical and empirical literature on digital governance by exploring the role of institutional dynamics in shaping digital transformation within public administration.

Keywords: Digital governance; digital India; service delivery; public administration

Session 10 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 III | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | LUMBINI HALL

CHAIR Prakash Regmi [Freelance] FACILITATOR Chandni Kayastha [NASC]

T517 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Enhancing Public Service Delivery Through Digital Transformation and MIL

Sahishnu Poudyal[1] · **Nirmala Mani Adhikary**

[1] *Kathmandu University*

ABSTRACT

Civil servants in Nepal are often charged not providing effective services though they have sufficient resources and technological knowhow (Giri et al., 2018). The Nepalese civil services sector has increasingly become dysfunctional, fragmented, poorly organised, and incapable of performing at a level acceptable to the public. (Shakya, 2009) Globally, governments are accelerating the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) to enhance service delivery, transparency, and public participation (Charalabidis et. al., 2020). Public sector officials play a crucial role in ensuring that government agencies effectively use digital technologies to improve service delivery and increase transparency in government (Waldt, 2033). This study explores the current status of digital public service delivery in Nepal, focusing on three key dimensions; responsiveness, e-readiness and e-participation at the local government level. The research is situated within the Government of Nepal broader ambition to modernize governance through digital transformation. Specifically, the study will explores the extent to which digitized public service have been implemented in Kathmandu Metropolitan office and evaluates country's readiness for broader digital transformation initiatives. This study investigates existing digital infrastructures, institutional capacities, policy frameworks and adoption of digital technologies within the public sector. It also analyses the opportunities associated with digital governance, including improved efficiency, transparency, accessibility and citizen centered service delivery. Furthermore, the study considers the role of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in enabling both public officials and citizens to effectively engage with digital platform and services. The study will adopt qualitative case study approach to examine the implementation of digital public service in Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Data will be collected through semi structured interviews with Metropolitan officials, ICT officers, administrative staffs and citizens using digital services and analysis of policy documents, government reports, digital government initiatives and other relevant and secondary sources. The study will employs thematic analysis to explore both the achievements and challenges of Nepal's ongoing digital governance transformation. The findings suggest that while Nepal has made significant advancement in introducing digital public services, substantial gaps remain in institutional coordination, Media and Information literacy, and infrastructure development. The study concludes that successful digital transformation requires long-term investment, policy consistency and strengthened institutional capacity and enhanced MIL to promote transparent accountable and citizen centered governance while strengthening state capacity for effective public service delivery.

Keywords: Digital transformation; Media and Information Literacy; Public Service Delivery; Civil Servants

T523 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

From Revolution to Reform? Bangladesh's Politicised Civil Bureaucracy After July 2024

Md Shafiul Islam
Rajshahi University

ABSTRACT

The revolution in Bangladesh in July 2024 has provided an opportunity to examine whether its civil bureaucracy is moving from a politicised, patronage-oriented order towards a professional, democratic institution. Reported personnel practices—including non-merit promotions, contractual appointments to senior posts, political-colour tagging in promotion, punitive postings or Officer on Special Duty (OSD) placements—raise questions about whether institutional rules have changed or whether political beneficiaries have simply been rearranged. These practices can undermine the security of tenure, impartiality, and public confidence in the Bangladesh civil bureaucracy. This paper investigates the post-July state of Bangladesh's civil bureaucracy and asks whether it has been genuinely depoliticised or remains structurally politicised. It examines how serving and former senior officials and mid-level officers perceive continuity and change in merit, neutrality, integrity, accountability, administrative discretion, performance, and citizen responsiveness. The analysis integrates three perspectives: Weberian bureaucracy, which establishes standards of legal-rational authority, merit, hierarchy, rule-bound decision-making, and impartiality; New Public Management (NPM), which foregrounds performance, managerial accountability, measurable results, and service quality; and New Public Governance (NPG), which stresses networked collaboration, transparency, deliberation, citizen engagement, and the co-production of public value. The combined framework assesses both internal integrity and relationships with political actors, citizens, civil society, and governance networks. However, this study finds that the existing Bangladeshi civil bureaucracy falls into none of the fully Weberian, NPM, or NPG arenas. The study uses a qualitative-dominant design. It draws on key informant interviews with serving and former senior bureaucrats and focus group discussions with mid-level officials. These data are triangulated with constitutional and civil-service rules, reform-commission reports, policy documents, governance assessments, credible public records, and scholarly literature. Thematic analysis identifies personnel-management patterns, institutional constraints, reform possibilities, and areas of bureaucratic resilience. The paper argues that political transition alone cannot create a neutral, merit-based, and citizen-centred bureaucracy. Sustainable reform requires enforceable promotion and posting rules; the exceptional and transparent use of contractual appointments; protection against political vetting and punitive transfers; independent ethics, asset disclosure, and accountability mechanisms; performance systems linked to public outcomes; and institutionalised dialogue with citizens and civil society. The study offers empirically grounded lessons for rebuilding democratic state capacity, administrative integrity, and citizen trust in civil bureaucracy in Bangladesh and comparable South Asian transitional settings.

Keywords: Civil bureaucracy; politicisation; meritocracy; personnel management; administrative reform; democratic accountability; Weberian bureaucracy; New Public Management; New Public Governance

T512 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Does Public Policy Challenge Caste? Examining Entrepreneurship Initiatives for Scheduled Caste Women in India

Wajahat Mazahar Khan
O P Jindal Global University

ABSTRACT

Caste has changed its structure in a completely new way after the establishment of Indian independence. It stopped being a static hierarchical system where a person occupies one and the same social status throughout his/her whole life. At present, caste has become an actively functioning socio-political institution. Instead of belonging to a certain social class, castes have turned into strategically acting groups, which interact with government agencies in the course of democratic elections (Choragudi et al., 2023). Nevertheless, political freedom does not always bring economic autonomy. According to Ambedkar (1936), political changes often do not manage to destroy economic domination. Nowadays, caste functions as a very strong informal institution in India. Caste decides who obtains credit, business connections, open market, and jobs via social networking based on heredity (Bapuji et al., 2024; Thorat & Newman, 2010). Caste endures due to the fact that it exists not only thanks to the unequal distribution of material resources but also due to its spiritual and psychological basis linked to purity, social identity, and religion. Consequently, caste is resilient to any attempts to reform it on behalf of state institutions (Chrispal et al., 2021). Iyer et al. (2013) analyze thirty years' of Economic Census data and find that the Scheduled Castes are consistently underrepresented in terms of business ownership in India. What is especially important to consider in this regard is that this marginalization has persisted despite times of fast economic growth, which means that market growth itself is unable to eradicate the caste disparities in entrepreneurship. Expanding on this point, Raj et al. (2024) found that entrepreneurs belonging to the stigmatized castes earn about 16% less than their counterparts who do not belong to such disadvantaged castes. However, more importantly, this difference in earnings becomes even larger for those with high levels of social capital. Moreover, this economic inequality cannot be attributed to any difference in qualification. Deshpande and Sharma (2016) found that income penalty on account of caste membership for self-employed people was observed despite equal levels of education and skills among people. This clearly shows that disadvantages resulting from caste membership can exist irrespective of human capital. The intersectionality of caste and gender adds a further dimension to this problem. According to Deshpande and Sharma (2013), lower caste females tend to opt for self-employment primarily due to economic compulsion and not entrepreneurship, meaning they do it as a means of survival rather than earning. Thus, for many such women, engaging in entrepreneurship means merely a way of surviving amidst severe structural exclusion. In order to fill in these structural voids, the Indian government formulated the “National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship,” which specifically focuses on Scheduled Castes and Tribes, in 2015. But it remains to be analyzed how much impact these policies have had on the targeted groups. This paper focuses on the research question, do state policies empower Scheduled Caste women entrepreneurs, or do they inadvertently reproduce existing caste-based inequalities under the guise of policy support? Caste and Indian public policies cannot be viewed separately from each other; rather, there exists a dynamic interaction between the two. First, caste determines the nature of political and resource claims made upon the state by certain communities. Secondly, the application of these policies is in turn reactive to the changing society, influencing castes and other institutions within it, as well as collective identities in society(Choragudi et al 2023). State-sponsored entrepreneurship initiatives are not carried out in a context free of social stratification. Rather, they get mediated by deeply-rooted caste hierarchies which keep influencing who gets access to the institutions, professional networks, and critical resources involved (Bapuji et al., 2024; Thorat & Newman, 2010). Formal inclusion in policy thus fails to translate into empowerment in practice. This fundamental gap between theory and practice justifies why thorough causal analyses must be done of these programs. Since caste discrimination is embedded so profoundly into economic institutions, the accurate assessment of policy impact goes way beyond simple correlation study. A participant's business performance is not determined solely by a particular policy, but it depends on multiple interconnected factors, such as their network, accumulated wealth, and institutional advantages. Since all these factors become so intertwined, conventional designs are simply unable to provide accurate results due to multiple

research biases, such as endogeneity, reverse causality, and selection bias (Anderson et al., 2022; Hsu et al., 2017). This issue is of special importance in policy evaluation due to selection bias. As noted before, women who benefit from the support of policies might be different from women who do not simply because they were more successful in their lives or came from more supportive families, had better education or networking connections, etc. To minimize the impact of selection bias, PSM is employed in the study to match beneficiaries to non-beneficiaries, controlling for important characteristics (Lyngdoh & Pati, 2013). The empirical analysis utilizes primary data collected from a sample of 503 women entrepreneurs that consists of 98 policy beneficiaries and 405 non-beneficiaries.For analysis , the matching process was carried out with regard to the Conditional Independence Assumption, while the 'common support' area was meticulously examined prior to estimating the effect of any treatments.The use of such a matched sample allows the study to estimate the ATT separately for the two types of empowerment that it identifies, economic empowerment and social empowerment.

T527 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Governing the Intersection: Institutional Challenges and Driver Compliance in Dhaka's AI Based Traffic Enforcement System

Md. Lutful Nasif

Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University

ABSTRACT

Dhaka is one of South Asia's most congested megacities where weak enforcement of traffic rules has heavily compromised road safety and discipline. On 7 May 2026, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) introduced an AI-based system that automatically detects traffic rule violations. This does not replace officers on the street but rather supplements them at major intersections through algorithmic detection and prosecution. As the system currently runs in only a few locations, any improvement in compliance there may not reflect a real change in driver attitudes. It could just mean drivers are more careful where the cameras are. Existing research on AI-based traffic enforcement rarely looks at either the implementing institution or the affected citizens. This study addresses that gap by examining the DMP's perspective alongside the experience of frequent drivers in Dhaka. The objectives of this study are to identify the structural challenges of the system perceived by DMP officials; to explore frequent drivers' perceptions of the system and how these influence their compliance with traffic rules in AI-monitored areas; and to propose recommendations for improving the system's effectiveness based on both groups' perspectives. The study employs a qualitative case study design within an interpretivist paradigm. This treats the DMP's AI enforcement system as a single case studied through two interconnected participant groups: key informant interviews with 8-12 DMP officials and traffic police, and in-depth interviews with 15-20 frequent drivers in AI-monitored areas, both purposively sampled. Data will be analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, with themes generated inductively. Themes will be interpreted through two lenses: Socio-Technical Systems Theory for the institutional challenges, and Procedural Justice Theory for how driver perceptions influence compliance. This study is expected to be one of the first qualitative studies of AI-based traffic enforcement in Bangladesh to examine institutional and citizen perspectives together. Moreover, the study offers evidence-based insight into whether the system builds genuine compliance or only camera-based temporary compliance. These insights will be translated into practical recommendations for the DMP and similar agencies elsewhere in South Asia trying to modernize enforcement without losing citizens' trust.

Keywords: AI-based traffic enforcement; institutional challenges; driver compliance; digital urban governance

Session 11 / Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 II | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | PATHIVARA HALL

CHAIR Ngamindra Dahal [NWCF] FACILITATOR Lila Nath Sapkota [NASC]

T611 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Drought-Induced Internal Displacement in Bangladesh: A Review of Public Policies and Administrative Response

Sujan Kanti Dey[1] · **Mokbul Morshed Ahmad**[1]

[1] *Asian Institute of Technology*

ABSTRACT

Climate change acts as a severe risk multiplier in South Asia, with slow-onset disasters like droughts increasingly triggering involuntary internal displacement. In Bangladesh, while significant policy attention has historically targeted coastal flooding and cyclones, the severe droughts in the northern and western arid zones have quietly catalyzed massive rural-to-urban migration, straining urban infrastructure and challenging local governance frameworks. This paper evaluates Bangladesh's public policy and administrative readiness to manage drought-induced internal displacement. Utilizing a comprehensive review of existing national frameworks including the National Strategy on Internal Displacement, the Standing Orders on Disaster (SOD), and the Delta Plan 2100, this study assesses the state capacity of public institutions to transition from reactive disaster relief to proactive, climate-responsive administrative management. The findings reveal a critical governance gap: a lack of institutional coordination between central policy formulation and local-level bureaucratic execution, coupled with a lack of specific administrative mandates to safeguard the socio-economic rights of drought-displaced populations. Furthermore, local government institutions (LGIs) frequently lack the fiscal autonomy and resources to deliver citizen-centric services or sustainable livelihood alternatives to incoming climate migrants. By analyzing these systemic bottlenecks through the lens of adaptive governance, this paper argues for a paradigm shift in South Asian public administrationone thatintegrates climate-induced mobility into core national development planning. Ultimately, the study provides actionable policy recommendations to enhance institutional resilience, bridge inter-agency coordination gaps, and foster inclusive, rights-based administrative responses to climate migration in developing economies.

Keywords: Drought-Induced Displacement; Internal Displacement; Public Policy; State Capacity; Climate Governance; Administrative Response

T622 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

The Institutional Determinants of Women's Health and Their Role in Inclusive Growth

Salineeta Chaudhuri[1] · **Shalini Singh** · **Vivek Shukla**

[1] *CHRIST University*

ABSTRACT

Strengthening institutions is a foundational pillar for achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth, yet its relationship with women's health remains an underexplored dimension of development policy. This study examines how institutional quality—encompassing governance frameworks, healthcare delivery systems, legal protections, and social safety nets—shapes women's health outcomes and, in turn, their economic participation. Weak institutions often perpetuate cycles of poor maternal and reproductive health, limited access to healthcare services, and gender-based disparities in resource allocation, which constrain women's labor force participation, productivity, and entrepreneurial capacity. Conversely, robust institutions that ensure accountable governance, equitable healthcare financing, enforcement of women's rights, and gender-responsive policy design can significantly improve health outcomes for women, thereby unlocking their full economic potential. This paper argues that inclusive economic growth cannot be achieved without addressing the institutional barriers that limit women's access to quality healthcare, particularly in reproductive health, maternal care, and occupational safety. Drawing on cross-country evidence and case studies, the analysis highlights how targeted institutional reforms—such as universal health coverage, workplace health protections, and decentralized health governance—correlate with improved female labor force participation and reduced gender income gaps. The paper further explores the bidirectional relationship: while strong institutions improve women's health, healthier women also contribute to stronger institutions through increased civic and economic engagement. The findings underscore the need for policymakers to integrate gender-sensitive health considerations into institutional reform agendas, positioning women's health not merely as a social welfare concern but as a critical enabler of inclusive, sustainable, and broad-based economic growth.

Keywords: Institutional strengthening; inclusive economic growth; women's health; gender equity; governance; healthcare policy

T625 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Political Adaptation of Climate-Induced Internally Displaced Population in Bangladesh: A Stakeholder-Based Analysis

Sodip Roy
Bangladesh Open University

ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is the most affected country of climatic hazards, whereby migration from the habitual residence remains the ultimate survival strategy for the victims. IOM recorded that the number of climate induced internally displaced population (IDP) has reached to approximately 5 million in 2025. While existing studies mainly examined the socio-economic adaptation of climate IDPs in different regions of the country, this study investigates the process and predicaments of political participation in the relocated area for better integration into society. It puts the focus on main stakeholders—climate IDPs, local authority and local political leaders—of this trajectory in understanding the dynamics, processes, and benefits of deliberate political engagement towards their sustainable integration. A qualitative design of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was conducted among the climate victims and other actors in the two different Ashrayan (Shelter) Projects in two different Upazila (Dumuria and Paikgachcha) of Khulna district- the most affected region of the country. The investigation yielded mixed findings. Most of the migrants lack civic education about political participation, while another portion become used in informal political participation occasionally. Perception about political engagement varies to these three stakeholders, and eventually, most of the climate IDPs cannot integrate into society due to political disenfranchisement.However, some humanitarian organizations mobilize them; lack of government efforts and monitoring resulted in a disappointing situation for the forcibly displaced people. Therefore, insights of this research can provide impetus for filling the 'governance void' of sustainable integration of climate IDPs across the globe.

Keywords: climate change; forced displacement; vulnerabilities; inclusive; political rights

T610 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Gender-Responsive Urban Climate Adaptation: Governance Pathways for Inclusive and Low Carbon Cities

Ruth Shraboni Joydhor[1] · **Romana Akter**

[1] *GIZ, Bangladesh*

ABSTRACT

Cities across South Asia are increasingly facing climate-related risks such as extreme heat, flooding, waterlogging, and infrastructure disruption. Although climate adaptation has become a growing policy priority, many adaptation initiatives continue to focus primarily on technical and infrastructure-based solutions. As a result, the differentiated experiences and needs of women and other marginalized groups often receive limited attention in planning and implementation processes. Gender and social inequalities influence access to resources, services, information, mobility, and decision-making, shaping how people experience and respond to climate risks. When these realities are overlooked, adaptation policies may unintentionally reproduce existing inequalities rather than strengthen resilience for all urban residents. This study aims to examine how urban climate adaptation can be governed in ways that promote both climate resilience and social inclusion. Specifically, it seeks to explore how gender and social inclusion are incorporated into adaptation planning and implementation, identify governance arrangements that shape adaptation priorities and outcomes, and develop policy recommendations for more inclusive and gender-responsive urban adaptation in low- and middle-income city contexts. The study adopts a qualitative and governance-focused research approach. It will draw on policy and planning documents, adaptation strategies, and implementation guidelines to examine how gender and social inclusion are reflected in urban climate adaptation processes. In addition, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with policymakers, local government representatives, development practitioners, and community stakeholders. The analysis will focus on institutional coordination, participation, accountability, and decision-making processes to understand how adaptation priorities are established and translated into practice. The study is expected to identify key governance barriers that limit inclusive adaptation outcomes, including fragmented institutional responsibilities, weak coordination mechanisms, limited representation of marginalized groups, and insufficient attention to equity in monitoring and evaluation processes. It is anticipated that the findings will demonstrate the importance of integrating gender and social inclusion throughout the adaptation cycle and highlight practical governance pathways for strengthening equitable urban resilience. The paper contributes to ongoing discussions on climate-responsive public administration in South Asia by emphasizing that effective climate adaptation is not only a technical challenge but also a governance challenge. The findings will provide policy-relevant insights for local governments, public institutions, and development partners seeking to design adaptation strategies that are inclusive, accountable, and responsive to the needs of diverse urban populations.

Panel 1 / Institutional Innovations for Inclusive Development: Collaborative Governance for Public Service Delivery in South Asia

Panel Session | 4 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | ARANIKO HALL

CHAIR Md. Ehtesham Khan [Magadh University] **FACILITATOR** Shailendra Prasad Bhatt [NASC]

DISCUSSANT Kumari Shakhi [Magadh University]

P1.1 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) as a Catalyst for Good Governance: A Comparative Study of Bihar (India) and Nepal

Avinash Kumar Singh[1] · **Avinash Kumar Sonu**[1]

[1] *Magadh University*

ABSTRACT

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is shaping governance, making public services more efficient, transparent, and focused on citizens' needs. Although India's DPI framework has earned international praise, research on its application at regional levels and its importance for nearby areas with similar socio-economic backgrounds is still limited. This paper explores how DPI drives better governance by comparing Bihar (India) and Nepal-two neighbouring regions with an open border, strong cultural ties, and shared developmental issues. This study employs a comparative qualitative case study methodology, drawing on policy documents, government reports, digital governance indices, and secondary literature. It systematically evaluates Bihar's implementation of Digital Public Infrastructure through initiatives such as Aadhaar-enabled service delivery, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), the electronic Public Distribution System (e-PDS), digital land records, online grievance redressal mechanisms, and Panchayati Raj digital platforms. These efforts are contrasted with Nepal's digital governance strategies, including the National Identity Card programme, the Nagarik App, digital payment systems, and the expansion of e-governance services designed to enhance administrative efficiency and facilitate citizen access. Using good governance principles as a framework, the paper assesses Digital Public Infrastructure's impact on state capacity and public service delivery in Bihar and Nepal. It finds that Bihar's advanced digital ecosystem has improved welfare delivery, financial inclusion, and transparency, while Nepal has progressed in digital identity and service digitization despite infrastructure and access challenges. Bihar's approach offers valuable lessons for Nepal in scaling digital platforms, last-mile delivery, and inclusion. The paper concludes that Digital Public Infrastructure is more than a technological innovation; it represents a governance paradigm capable of fostering inclusive, accountable, and resilient public institutions. By comparing Bihar and Nepal, the study highlights opportunities for cross-border policy learning, regional cooperation, and knowledge exchange in digital governance. It contributes to the growing scholarship on Digital Public Infrastructure by demonstrating how localized governance experiences can inform broader strategies for sustainable and inclusive development across South Asia.

Keywords: DPI; Good Governance; E-Governance; Public Administration

P1.2 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Corporate Partnerships for WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) Governance: From Statutory Compliance to Public Value Creation under India's Mandatory CSR Framework (2014–2024)

Anshuman Ankit
Magadh University

ABSTRACT

The enactment of Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 positioned India as the first country to mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), transforming corporate philanthropy into a statutory instrument of inclusive governance by ensuring corporates to spend 2% of its average net profits of the last three financial years on list of social activities. Abiding by the profit sharing concept of business among its stakeholders CSR aims to go beyond the bounds of the law to encourage philanthropy, social reporting, and ethical practice. As per India CSR Outlook Report 2024, India's CSR ecosystem has witnessed remarkable expansion, with annual CSR expenditure increasing from approximately ₹10,065 crore in FY 2014-15 to a record ₹34,909 crore in FY 2023-24, while cumulative investments exceeded ₹2.21 lakh crore through nearly 60,000 development projects implemented by more than 27,000 companies. Within this expanding CSR landscape, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) has consistently remained dominant and one of the priority sectors, complementing national flagship programmes such as the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). Persistently the number of companies and projects has seen upward trends with government regularly directing the CSR to diversity of sectors as a supplementary unit. In fact existing research and scholarship has predominantly analysed and examined CSR from legal, managerial and sustainability perspectives, while comparatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding CSR as a governance instrument capable of strengthening collaborative public service delivery. Addressing this gap, the paper critically evaluates the evolution of corporate partnerships in WASH governance between 2014 and 2024, moving beyond expenditure-based assessments to examine how corporate participation contributes to institutional convergence, community participation, behavioural change, service sustainability, and public value creation. Study makes an attempt to derive outcome perspective of CSR spending by private companies to answer: whether mandatory CSR generated measurable public value through collaborative WASH governance, or has it largely remained a statutory compliance exercise? Methodologically, it adopts a qualitative policy evaluation supported by longitudinal secondary data analysis of reports from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the National CSR Portal, company sustainability disclosures, SBM, JJM, policy documents, and scholarly literature. The empirical analysis focuses on the five largest corporate CSR contributors over the last decade, examining their WASH investments, partnership models, implementation strategies, governance innovations, and developmental outcomes across different states. Preliminary evidence suggests substantially expenditure by corporates in WASH, but governance outcomes remain uneven & unequitable. CSR investments continue to exhibit significant regional concentration, with more than 40 per cent of total CSR expenditure accruing to five heavily industrialised states, while project-based implementation, weak convergence with local governments, limited outcome measurement, and inadequate post-project sustainability continue to constrain long-term public value creation. The study argues that effective WASH governance requires stronger institutional collaboration among government agencies, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Urban Local Bodies, corporate entities, civil society organisations, and local communities, rather than isolated project financing and execution by NGOs. The paper contributes by demonstrating how into a strategic corporate-government partnerships can transform mandatory CSR into a collaborative governance mechanism for advancing inclusive development and sustainable public service delivery in developing economies of South Asia.

Keywords: CSR; WASH; Collaborative Governance; Public Value; Companies; Expenditure

P1.3 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Ethical Street-Level Bureaucracy and Inclusive Public Service Delivery: A Study of Institutional Innovations for Last-Mile Governance in Bihar

Kundan Kumar[1] · **Deepak Kumar**[1]

[1] *Magadh University*

ABSTRACT

Inclusive public service delivery in rural areas depends not only on the design of welfare policies but also on how frontline public servants interpret, prioritize, and implement them. This study analyzes the role of ethical street-level bureaucracy in rural Bihar and seeks to understand how administrative discretion, impartiality, integrity, transparency, accountability, and citizen responsiveness influence equitable access to public services and institutional trust. The study aims to examine whether institutional and digital innovations are sufficient in themselves, or if their success ultimately hinges on the ethics of the frontline officials who put these systems into practice. The findings indicate that innovations such as digital service delivery, grievance redressal, decentralized governance, social accountability, and procedural transparency can curb arbitrary discretion. However, technological innovations are effective only when accompanied by human sensitivity, integrity, and accountability.

Keywords: Street-level bureaucracy; ethical administration; administrative discretion; public service delivery; institutional innovation; rural Bihar; last-mile governance; citizen trust

P1.4 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Beyond Self-Help Groups: Social Capital and Community Institutions for Inclusive Rural Development – Evidence from JEEViKA, Bihar

Pankaj Kumar Mishra
Magadh University

ABSTRACT

Since its launch on 2 October 2007, Bihar's JEEViKA (Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society) has evolved from a Self-Help Group (SHG)-based livelihood programme into one of the world's largest women-led community institution models. Initially supported by the World Bank and later integrated with the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), JEEViKA has mobilized over 1.4 crore rural women into nearly 10 lakh Self-Help Groups, supported by around 70,000 Village Organizations (VOs) and more than 1,600 Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) across all 38 districts of Bihar. This institutional expansion has transformed JEEViKA from a financial inclusion programme into a governance mechanism that strengthens women's leadership, community participation, and inclusive rural development. This paper examines how JEEViKA has moved beyond the traditional SHG model to build sustainable community institutions that contribute to institutional transformation and public governance in rural Bihar. The study seeks to analyse the role of JEEViKA in strengthening women's agency, promoting participatory decision-making, enhancing access to public services, and improving livelihood opportunities. It also identifies the institutional and policy lessons that Bihar's experience offers for strengthening community-driven development across South Asia. The paper adopts a qualitative case study approach based entirely on secondary data. The analysis draws upon reports and publications of the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS), the Government of Bihar, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, the World Bank, NITI Aayog, and peer-reviewed academic literature. Institutional Theory and Participatory Governance perspectives are employed to examine the relationship between community institutions, state capacity, and inclusive rural development. The study finds that JEEViKA has significantly strengthened women's collective leadership by expanding the role of community institutions beyond savings and credit. These institutions facilitate livelihood diversification, financial inclusion, social mobilization, access to government welfare programmes, digital inclusion, and local accountability. The federated institutional structure has improved coordination between rural communities and public agencies while fostering greater participation of marginalized women in local governance. However, challenges relating to market integration, regional disparities, digital capacity, and long-term institutional sustainability continue to influence programme effectiveness. The paper argues that Bihar's JEEViKA represents an important model of institutional transformation in public administration, demonstrating how community - based institutions can complement state capacity in delivering inclusive rural development. The findings contribute to policy debates on decentralized governance and women's empowerment and offer practical lessons for South Asian countries seeking to strengthen community-led institutions for sustainable and inclusive development.

Keywords: JEEViKA; Bihar; Community Institutions; Women's Empowerment; Inclusive Rural Development; Participatory Governance; Public Administration; South Asia

IC-PAGSA 2026

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA



DAY 02

Day 2 Abstracts

Thursday 5 November 2026

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Session 12 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 IV | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KUMARI HALL

CHAIR Prakash Bhattarai [Centre for Social Change (CSC)] FACILITATOR Seejan Poudel [NASC]

T516 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

When Algorithms Meet Bureaucracy: Human-AI Leadership, Skills, and Job Quality in South Asian Public Administration

Yohan Perera[1] · **Sachithra Jayavindi**[2]

[1] *University of Colombo* · [2] *Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA)*

ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence is increasingly entering public administration across South Asia, but its implications for public employees, institutional capacity, job quality, and ethical governance remain insufficiently understood. Future-of-work scholarship shows that AI reshapes tasks, skill demand, and work organization rather than producing uniform employment effects (Autor, 2015; Acemoglu et al., 2022), while public administration research has examined AI implementation and digital government reform (Mergel et al., 2023). However, less attention has been given to how AI-enabled systems reshape everyday public sector work, discretion, dignity, accountability, and service capacity in resource-constrained South Asian settings. This gap is relevant to reimagining public administration through ethics, inclusion, and state capacity. This study examines AI-enabled work transformation in public sector organizations across Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives. It asks how AI-enabled systems reshape skills development, work design, and job quality, as well as how institutional capacity and leadership governance facilitate consequences for discretion, accountability, and public service capacity. The study adopts a qualitative interpretive design based on 44 semi-structured interviews with public sector leaders, managers, and frontline employees exposed to AI-enabled or algorithmic systems. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to examine how AI systems were introduced, governed, interpreted, and experienced in administrative work. The findings show that AI does not automatically strengthen public administration. Instead, its effects are facilitated through organizational practices, institutional readiness, and leadership governance. Five themes emerged. First, AI produced a skills paradox, where employees acquired new digital and practical competencies through informal learning, but these skills were not always recognized through mobility, authority, or career progression. Second, AI systems rewrote administrative work through dashboards, alerts, workflow platforms, and algorithmic recommendations, reflecting concerns about algorithmic management and work design (Jarrahi et al., 2021; Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2022). Third, AI created fragile dignity at work, as employees felt that professional judgment, voice, and public service identity were weakened when system outputs carried more authority than human experience. Fourth, AI was often institutionalized without sufficient capacity, producing symbolic modernization when systems were introduced without adequate infrastructure, training, workflow redesign, or clear accountability. Fifth, Human-AI leadership emerged as a meso-level governance mechanism. Leaders shaped whether AI outputs were treated as advisory or final, whether employees felt protected or exposed, and whether accountability was clarified or shifted downward, extending research on trust and human judgment in AI-supported settings (Glikson & Woolley, 2020). The study contributes to debates on AI, algorithmic management, public administration, and the future of work by showing that AI-enabled transformation is not merely technical, but a governance challenge. For South Asia, where public sectors operate within uneven infrastructure, hierarchical work arrangements, and constrained training capacity (Cooke et al., 2020), responsible AI adoption requires institutional capacity, workforce recognition, and leadership practices that preserve human judgment in public service.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence; Human-AI leadership; job quality; public administration; South Asia

T538 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Beyond Digitization: A Supply Chain Case Study of Multi-Agency Integration in Public Sector Land Management

Md Faisal Bin Nasir
Ministry of Land, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

The transformation of public administration is not only the process of transferring paper documents to digital databases but involves much more - the rethinking of how government organizations work together, exchange data or documents and provide services to the people. In Bangladesh, land administration system offers a practical example of how digitalization changes the functioning of public sector. While the attempts are being made to digitize all processes in this sector, some "information gaps" still remain between Sub-registry office where the deeds are being performed and Land Administrative office where the records of the lands are stored. This study looks at these "gaps" in the framework of supply chain management. Using my double perspective, being a practitioner dealing with the ground realities of land administration in Bangladesh and also a professional having 4.5 years of experience in pharmaceutical supply chain management, I would like to point out that the main problem of proper land governance does not solely lie in the absence of technology, but rather in the non-integration of institutions and administrative processes. Utilizing the industrial standard supply chain concept, this paper seeks to investigate how Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)-based digital platform can revolutionize land administration by replacing disjointed administrative processes with an integrated system through connecting deed registration with updated land records. Thus, it would be possible to increase “administrative resilience” and improve service delivery, eventually restoring trust of citizens. This study makes an effort to add to the literature on the improvement of public administration by demonstrating the benefits of the use of digital technologies where there is cooperation between the relevant public institutions in order to ensure a more balanced and inclusive provision of public services. In general, this paper shows that in case the implementation of digital technologies is based on the principles of transparency and public values, there will be no barriers in the area of public administration.

T531 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Integrating Artificial Intelligence for Efficiency in Pakistan's Judicial Governance and Policy Pathway

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's judiciary faces a backlog exceeding two million pending cases, a crisis the Supreme Court directly addressed in its March 2025 ruling in Ishfaq Ahmed v. Mushtaq Ahmed, (PLD 2025 SC 582) which endorsed Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool to enhance judicial efficiency while drawing a firm constitutional boundary: AI must support, not supplant, human judicial reasoning. The Federal Judicial Academy's subsequent rollout of Judge-GPT, an AI drafting and research assistant now used by over 1,500 district judges, marks Pakistan's first large-scale judicial AI deployment and signals an urgent need for governance frameworks to keep pace with adoption on the ground. This study examines how AI can be responsibly integrated into Pakistan's judicial governance to improve efficiency, access, and fairness in justice delivery. Guided by a socio-technical systems (STS) framework, the research treats technical infrastructure, human professional capacity, and institutional governance structures as interdependent subsystems shaping readiness and outcomes. The study employs a qualitative case study design comprising semi-structured interviews across eight participant categories, including sitting and former superior court judges, district and sessions court judges, senior advocates, IT officials from PITB and e-court initiatives, policy officials from the Ministry of Law and the Supreme Court's Policy Wing, court administrators, and legal technology researchers, supported by document analysis of judicial policy, case law, and comparative international frameworks. An optional supplementary survey extends the readiness assessment to a broader stakeholder base. The research is structured around four questions addressing where AI can meaningfully reduce procedural bottlenecks, which international governance models are transferable to Pakistan's constitutional context, what conditions of human and institutional readiness must precede deployment, and what accountability mechanisms are required for legitimate use. Particular attention is given to risks already identified in Pakistan's judicial AI experience, including automation bias, AI hallucination in legal citation, opacity in algorithmic outputs, and compatibility with the right to a fair trial under Article 10-A of the Constitution. Findings will inform a context-specific policy roadmap addressing pilot design starting with high-volume, lower-stakes case categories, independent oversight and redress mechanisms, data protection and judicial data sovereignty, capacity-building priorities for judges and court staff, and indicators for measuring impact. By connecting empirical evidence from Pakistan's courts with comparative governance models from India, Brazil, China, and the European Union, this study offers practical, evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, judicial actors, and oversight bodies seeking to adopt AI tools that strengthen court performance while safeguarding due process, judicial independence, and public trust.

Keywords: Judicial AI governance; Pakistan judiciary; socio-technical systems; algorithmic accountability; access to justice

T504 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Role of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) in Enhancing Bureaucratic Capacity

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ABSTRACT

The capacity of the state is largely based on the effectiveness of the systems of public administration in developing countries. Training institutions are important to enhance the skills, knowledge and attitudes (KSA) of civil servants, so that the government can work better. The study investigates the role of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) to improve bureaucratic capacity. The study adopts a mixed method approach comprising survey data collected by trained civil servants, key informant interviews and document analysis. The study draws on the theoretical frameworks of state capacity and human resource development. It looks at the extent to which BPATC training programs improve job performance, leadership, ethics, and adaptability of individuals. The study also looks at how training is perceived to affect policy implementation and the provision of services focused on the needs of citizens. The results indicate that BPATC is very important for the improvement of the capacity of the bureaucracy. It provides to the civil servants the needed management and analytical skills and promotes the values of public service. Participants report improved decision-making skills, greater confidence in their work and increased awareness of governance problems. However, the study identifies several limitations affecting training outcomes such as gaps in curriculum relevance, insufficient emphasis on practical and experiential learning, and limited post-training evaluation mechanisms. Organizational culture, incentive structures and administrative constraints are institutional factors that also shape the extent to which learned skills are applied. The study finds BPATC is an important capacity building tool in Bangladesh but it will work better if training programs are better linked to larger changes in governance. To get the most out of something, you need to improve the design of the curriculum, strengthen the faculty's skills and make monitoring and evaluation systems part of the institution. The study underscores the need for training institutions to build competent ethical and responsive bureaucracies for the promotion of sustainable national development.

Keywords: Bureaucratic Capacity; Training of Public Administration; Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS); Governance and Service Delivery

Session 13 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 V | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | MALASHREE HALL

CHAIR Dinesh Panta [Former Executive Director, NASC] FACILITATOR Ashma Bidari [NASC]

T518 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Institutional Constraints in Implementing Civil Service Neutrality Policy: Evidence from Indonesia's 2024 Regional Elections

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ABSTRACT

The political neutrality of the civil service is a fundamental principle of democratic governance, ensuring that public administration operates impartially and professionally during electoral processes. Despite an extensive legal framework regulating the neutrality of Indonesia's State Civil Apparatus (ASN), violations continue to occur in every electoral cycle, particularly during regional elections. This persistent pattern raises concerns regarding the effectiveness of policy implementation and the institutional capacity of electoral oversight bodies rather than the adequacy of existing regulations. This study examines how the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) of East Java implemented the civil service neutrality policy during Indonesia's 2024 Regional Elections and identifies the institutional and political factors that influenced implementation outcomes. This research adopts Mazmanian and Sabatier's policy implementation framework, focusing on three analytical dimensions: problem tractability, the statutory capacity to structure implementation, and non-statutory variables. A qualitative case study approach was employed through in-depth interviews with officials of Bawaslu East Java, supported by document analysis of legislation, institutional reports, and verified media sources. The analytical framework enables a systematic assessment of both formal institutional arrangements and contextual political dynamics affecting implementation. The findings reveal three major structural constraints. First, the implementation process is challenged by hierarchical dependency between civil servants and incumbent regional leaders, who simultaneously exercise authority over bureaucratic career advancement, creating incentives for political partisanship. Second, fragmented regulatory arrangements, limited human resources, insufficient organizational capacity, and Bawaslu's lack of executorial authority significantly weaken policy enforcement despite procedural compliance. Third, broader socio-political conditions reinforce bureaucratic patronage and discourage neutrality because the perceived career risks of remaining impartial frequently exceed the administrative sanctions imposed for violating neutrality regulations. The study argues that Bawaslu successfully fulfills its procedural responsibilities in receiving, investigating, and processing reported violations; however, its institutional design prevents the organization from generating substantive deterrent effects because enforcement authority remains dispersed across multiple government institutions. Consequently, the effectiveness of civil service neutrality policy depends not only on regulatory compliance but also on institutional capacity, coherent legal frameworks, and effective inter-agency coordination. This research contributes to the public administration literature by demonstrating that legal enforcement capacity constitutes a critical yet underemphasized determinant of policy implementation effectiveness within electoral governance. It further suggests that strengthening democratic governance requires institutional reforms that integrate fragmented regulations, enhance organizational capacity, and establish stronger enforcement mechanisms. As many South Asian democracies continue to confront bureaucratic politicization, institutional fragmentation, and challenges to administrative neutrality during elections, the Indonesian experience offers relevant comparative insights for advancing democratic public administration across the region.

Keywords: Civil Service Neutrality; Policy Implementation; Institutional Capacity; Election Governance; Indonesia

T524 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Leveraging E-Governance for SDG-Focused Public Service Delivery in Bangladesh: Assessing the Role of the Bangladesh Civil Service

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ABSTRACT

Digital governance is increasingly becoming central to improving public-service delivery and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh. Yet the effectiveness of digital platforms depends not only on their technical design but also on the administrative actors who coordinate different institutions, resolve implementation bottlenecks, support citizens, and above all, ensure accountability. Existing Bangladesh-focused studies largely examine individual platforms or users' satisfaction, leaving insufficient empirical attention to how the Bangladesh Civil Service transforms e-governance systems into citizen-centred and SDG-aligned public value. This paper examines the role of the Bangladesh Civil Service, particularly district-level officers, in enabling e-governance-based public service delivery. It asks how major platforms—including myGov, the Grievance Redress System, e-Nothi, e-procurement, e-Mutation, and performance-monitoring arrangements—contribute to efficiency, transparency, accessibility, responsiveness, inclusion, and accountability. It further investigates the institutional, technical, and operational conditions that enable or constrain civil servants' capacity to deliver these outcomes. Guided by a public-value perspective on digital governance, the study adopts a mixed-methods, cross-sectional design. It combines a structured survey of the users of selected public services with key-informant interviews of civil servants, field-level service providers, and technical implementation actors, supplemented by non-participant observation and document review. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and comparative techniques, while qualitative evidence will be thematically analyzed to explain how leadership, inter-agency coordination, staff capability, monitoring, local problem-solving, and citizen support influence service performance. The paper puts emphasis on an administrative and technology-centred account of digital transformation. It conceptualises civil servants as the institutional pathway linking digital tools to SDG-oriented service outcomes. The study identifies both enabling practices and persistent barriers, including interoperability gaps, uneven digital literacy, unequal access, inadequate organizational readiness, and inconsistent follow-up. It proposes directions for reform to strengthen civil-service capability, cross-agency coordination, inclusive user support, grievance responsiveness, and performance monitoring. By situating digital service delivery within broader questions of ethics, inclusion, and state capacity, the paper offers evidence and lessons relevant to public administration reform across South Asia.

Keywords: E-governance; Bangladesh Civil Service; SDG implementation; citizen-centric service delivery; digital governance; state capacity

T533 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Governing the Algorithmic State: Reimagining Public Administration for the Age of AI

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping public administration beyond the digitization of government services, accelerating the emergence of an Algorithmic State in which intelligent systems increasingly influence administrative decision-making, policy implementation, public service delivery, and citizen–state interactions. While AI-enabled public administration offers unprecedented opportunities to enhance administrative efficiency, service responsiveness, and state capacity, it simultaneously raises fundamental governance challenges concerning democratic legitimacy, transparency, accountability, ethical responsibility, equity, and citizen trust. Existing public administration paradigms, largely developed for bureaucratic and digital governance environments, provide limited guidance for governing public institutions in this evolving context. The central policy challenge is therefore no longer the adoption of artificial intelligence itself, but the governance of algorithmically mediated public administration in ways that sustain public value while strengthening democratic institutions. Addressing this challenge requires a governance paradigm that places ethics, trust, transparency, accountability, and institutional adaptability at the centre of AI-enabled public administration rather than treating them as secondary considerations. The Algorithmic Public Value Governance (APVG) Framework is introduced as a policy-oriented governance architecture for the Algorithmic State. The framework is operationalized through five interconnected design principles: Human-Centered Governance, Explainable and Transparent Decision Systems, Ethical Accountability, Adaptive State Capacity, and Trust-by-Design, providing a coherent foundation for designing, implementing, governing, and continuously adapting AI-enabled public institutions. Methodologically, the paper adopts an integrative conceptual policy analysis that synthesizes contemporary public administration theory, digital governance scholarship, AI governance discourse, and emerging policy developments relevant to AI-enabled public administration to develop the APVG Framework. As a conceptual policy paper, the framework is advanced as a normative governance architecture intended to inform policy design, institutional reform, and future empirical validation. The proposed governance architecture contributes to the emerging discourse on reimagining public administration for the Age of AI by positioning public value, citizen trust, and democratic legitimacy as the defining measures of success for the Algorithmic State. Beyond its immediate policy relevance, the APVG Framework establishes a foundation for future operationalization through governance assessment tools, empirical validation across diverse administrative contexts, and comparative evaluation of algorithmic governance systems.

Keywords: Algorithmic State; Algorithmic Governance; Artificial Intelligence in Public Administration; Public Value; State Capacity

T515 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Governing Through Databases: Familial Datafication and Welfare Automation in India

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ABSTRACT

The studies on digital governance have focused on biometric identification, algorithmic decision-making and data-driven exclusion, largely built on individual-centric identification and classification. Often overlooked are the growing investments in household-level digital infrastructures that administer public welfare and services, treating “the family” as the primary administrative unit. This paper examines a digital family identification system designed to integrate household data, automate eligibility assessment and facilitate proactive welfare delivery implemented in the state of Haryana in India, that is, Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP). Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Gurugram and Jind, the paper explores the socio-technical frictions that arise when dynamic, complex social relations are codified as fixed administrative categories. Two processes, observed in the field, are analysed here: familial datafication and proxy-based welfare classification. Familial datafication implies how the administration considers family as a stable and governable unit of data, although when it is marked by the fluid and negotiated nature of kinship, co-residence, and dependency. Proxy-based classification refers to the dependence on indicators such as electricity consumption, vehicle ownership data, and tax records for determining welfare eligibility in place of a standard system of socio-economic verification. Exclusions emerge largely when these two processes interact within the system. As welfare delivery is organised around the centralised family profile, any discrepancy, even a minor one, can affect the eligibility status of multiple members simultaneously. Families are highly flexible. They change composition very often due to marriage, employment, migration and separation. The fieldwork in Haryana highlighted that dependency seen among the adult sons in a family has created problems in welfare delivery. Also, concerns related to separate electricity connections (an eligibility assessment criterion) and ownership arrangements have created practical difficulties in determining where one family ends and another begins. These confusions lead to collective welfare exclusion and the erasure of entitlements. Because arbitrary proxy metrics (such as a shared electricity meter inflating billing records) are algorithmically bound to a centralised family ID rather than an individual, a single data anomaly penalises the entire kinship unit. By highlighting the site of family as the key to present-day welfare governance seen in countries like India, the paper seeks to explore debates on technology in relation to policy, state capacity, and state-citizen relationships. It demonstrates how automated welfare systems increasingly shift citizens' efforts away from demonstrating socio-economic need and toward the continuous reconciliation of administrative records distributed across multiple databases. Under family database models of welfare, families must collect documents, seek corrections, and repeatedly defend the integrity of their family record. Once welfare eligibility becomes dependent on continuously updated family records, verification itself becomes a permanent feature of welfare administration. The findings suggest that household-level welfare automation not only reconfigures eligibility determination but also reshapes the relationship between citizens, families, and the welfare state.

Keywords: Welfare Automation; Family Databases; Datafication; Proxy-based Classification; Policy; Technology; Exclusion

Session 14 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 IV | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | CHANDRAMA HALL

CHAIR Aly Shameem [Maldives National University] FACILITATOR Rhicha Karn [NASC]

T402 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery: Rebuilding Trust Through Inclusive and Responsive Public Administration in South Asia

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Comilla University

ABSTRACT

Citizen-centric governance has become an important paradigm that can transform the relationship between the state and its citizens through rising aspirations, increasing disparities, and enhanced digital communication. In this regard, this paper attempts to explore how service delivery acts as the major channel through which the legitimacy, responsiveness, and integrity of public institutions are evaluated by the citizens. Rather than focusing on policy rhetoric alone, this work suggests that interactions with administrative mechanisms during service access and redress act as the bedrock of public trust. In this context, the paper employs qualitative secondary data approach and draws on relevant information from policies and governance studies. Particularly, case studies from Bangladesh are also included in the paper. The study focuses on the following aspects in relation to service delivery: first, whether service delivery systems are designed on the basis of citizen needs and concerns; second, whether administrative processes are inclusive in covering marginalized communities; third, whether feedback and accountability mechanisms, such as grievances and social accountability, work effectively. The study finds a consistent discrepancy between the ideals of citizen-centric governance and the practicalities of delivering services in the face of rigid bureaucracies, digital inequalities, and varied institutional capabilities. While new measures such as digital service delivery mechanisms and participatory programs have increased access and visibility, there is a danger that these may perpetuate inequality without overcoming underlying infrastructure and literacy barriers. The study adds value to contemporary discourse by situating citizen-centric service delivery as more than a pragmatic reform effort, but rather a critical political and institutional process necessary for restoring citizen trust and democracy. The study ends with a discussion on context-specific approaches to enhancing citizen-centric service delivery in South Asia.

Keywords: governance; service delivery; trust; inclusion

T414 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Can Diversity in Workforce Influence Public Service Delivery in the Developing Countries: Evidence from Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Existing scholarship demonstrates that the socio-demographic factors of stratification such as ethnicity, religion, gender, caste, disability, sexuality and language and social norms are more likely to influence citizens' ability and capability to gain access to legally mandated public services in the South Asian context. Such practices enable or inhibit citizens from enjoying public services, often inhibiting citizens from socially disadvantaged communities, although there are constitutional mandates ensuring rights and entitlements to legally mandated public services. It is argued that when the public bureaucracy, namely, the street-level bureaucracy, does not reflect the diversity in the workforce in terms of ethnicity, language and religion, it is likely to have an impact on access to services for ethnic minorities and underprivileged communities. This pattern leads to a dysfunctional relationship between the state and citizens, and eventually, it impairs responsive, fair and accountable governance. This paper explores the impact of diversity in the bureaucracy on service delivery in Sri Lanka. The paper has been written based on a research study on building inclusive governance and social cohesion in Sri Lanka, funded by the Alinea International, a Canadian organization. There were several aspects of the study, including diversity management, so the paper focuses largely on diversity management and its impact on public service delivery. The study employed a mixed-method approach and data were collected through a questionnaire survey, FGDs and KII. The study involved 15 public institutions in seven districts of Sri Lanka and 200 respondents participated in the survey, 72 KIIs were conducted followed by six FGDs. The study finds that Sri Lanka's public service lacks diversity in the workforce in terms of ethnicity, language and religion, which is key to ensuring equitable, inclusive, and accountable service delivery to all segments of society. Sinhala speakers predominate public institutions in the majority of the targeted institutions including those located in areas where ethnic Tamils are the dominant population, leading to a situation in which the staff profile mismatches the communities being served. While one can argue that the ethnicity of a public servant is immaterial for public services, ethnicity is inherently connected with the language spoken. Sociologically, ethnicity also has a wider impact on how state services are perceived by the public as friendly or unfriendly towards minorities and has a significant impact on public trust towards the government institutions, which is critically important in a post-conflict society like Sri Lanka. The discrepancy remains extremely high in executive positions where ethnic minorities are being excluded, leading to dysfunctional relationship between the public institutions and the citizens of ethnic minority communities. The study claims that there has been a causal connection between diversity in workforce and efficiency and effectiveness of the public institutions in Sri Lanka. Further, the study finds a strong connection between diversity and public service delivery in the following manner: diversity fosters trust and legitimacy of public service, institutions and officials, advances reconciliation and social cohesion in the post-war context, representative public institutions support ensuring equitable and responsive service delivery, prevent institutional discrimination and abuse of power, and after all diversity supports sustainable peace and conflict transformation. The study suggests the importance of having either a national or a provincial and district level quota system for public sector employment, which is more likely to ensure representation of all groups, not only ethnic, but also other vulnerable groups in the public service. The study concludes that, in many cases, public institutions tend to be monoethnic, monolinguistic and monocultural, leading to exclusion of certain minority groups in the public institutions, which in turn impacts access to services, service quality, satisfaction, institutional trust, and legitimacy, among others. The paper argues that citizens' are likely to accept institutional actions in diverse societies like Sri Lanka, if the demographic composition of these institutions is similar to that of society. If so, a representative workforce or bureaucracy is more likely to provide an avenue for citizens to feel a connection with government institutions to fulfil their needs and desire reflected in those institutions. This explains that representation of various groups in the bureaucracy can minimise prejudices in service provision in developing societies.

Keywords: diversity management; public service delivery; public bureaucracy; Sri Lanka

T449 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Strengthening Public Administration Through NGO Governance Reform: Addressing Administrative Bottlenecks in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

An effective partnership between government and civil society is fundamental to achieving inclusive governance and sustainable development. In Bangladesh, the voluntary sector plays a critical role in delivering social services, promoting community development, and supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, persistent administrative and regulatory bottlenecks continue to constrain the operational effectiveness of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and weaken state–civil society collaboration. This study examines the institutional and administrative challenges affecting NGO governance in Bangladesh, focusing on registration procedures, regulatory compliance, financial restrictions, legal fragmentation, and governance mechanisms. Using secondary data and qualitative content analysis, the study reveals that NGO registration is characterized by a complex multi-layered regulatory framework involving multiple authorities, including the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC), with overlapping mandates and inconsistent administrative requirements. Excessive documentation, prolonged approval processes ranging from six months to more than two years, and unpredictable regulatory decisions disproportionately discourage smaller local organizations. The study further identifies unequal regulatory treatment of foreign and faith-based NGOs, fragmented legal provisions under multiple outdated laws, limited institutional coordination, overlapping audits, and the absence of effective grievance redress mechanisms, all of which undermine transparency, accountability, and administrative efficiency. These governance deficiencies reduce the effectiveness of public service delivery and limit the contribution of civil society to national development. To strengthen public administration and collaborative governance, the study proposes seven policy reforms, including streamlining registration procedures, reducing administrative delays, modernizing legal frameworks, enhancing regulatory transparency, ensuring equitable treatment of NGOs, improving inter-agency coordination, and establishing stronger accountability and grievance mechanisms. The study concludes that comprehensive governance reforms supported by digital administrative systems, legal harmonization, and stronger state–civil society partnerships can enhance institutional capacity, improve public accountability, and create an enabling environment for more effective NGO participation in sustainable development and SDG implementation in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Public Administration; NGO Governance; Administrative Reform; Collaborative Governance; Civil Society; Bangladesh; SDGs

T450 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Rethinking Local State Capacity in Service Delivery: State-Community Partnerships in Rural India

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ABSTRACT

Historically, in India, waste management has not been given much importance in rural areas. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992) devolved administrative power to Gram Panchayats (rural local bodies) over several areas of service delivery, including village sanitation. There is a consensus that decentralised services depends on local government's 'capacity' which is its ability to take and implement decisions for providing effective services to the people. Despite devolving more powers to Gram Panchayats, waste management in rural areas continues to be ineffective and unorganised. These rural local bodies face several challenges in managing locally generated waste due to factors such as lack of sanitation personnel, limited financial resources, and inadequate community support. In several Indian cities, urban local bodies have outsourced management to private waste management companies under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, but this has not been adopted in rural areas due to resource constraints. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of decentralised service delivery is dependent on the extent to which local state institutions engage and respond to the social structures within which they are embedded. Following this, there is a case for Gram Panchayats to engage in partnerships with citizens and civil society to make local action more effective. The convergence model linking Gram Panchayats and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in implementing solid waste management in rural Karnataka, a state in southern India, demonstrates the potential of gender mainstreaming in local governance. While on the one hand it aims to use the services of SHGs to enhance the capacity of Gram Panchayats to deliver waste management services, it also promotes empowerment of women in rural areas by generating local economic opportunities. This approach is based on the idea that governance can be strengthened through partnerships between the state and community-based groups, where both make meaningful resource contributions. In this context, the convergence model not only strengthens the local government's capacity to deliver services but also promotes women as active agents in governance. However, it is important to recognise that this model is shaped by the broader social forces within which it operates. Two factors mediate the functioning of this model: first, the intersection of gender and class, given that SHG women predominantly come from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds; and second, the unequal power relationship between the Gram Panchayats and SHGs. Drawing on qualitative field insights from 40 Gram Panchayats across 10 districts of Karnataka, this paper demonstrates how these factors shape the convergence model in service delivery, with particular attention to access to resources, decision-making power, and negotiation between the stakeholders involved. In doing so, the paper argues that local service delivery should not be understood merely as an administrative attribute, but as a relational outcome shaped by interactions between the state and community, with broader implications for how decentralisation service delivery is designed and implemented in India.

Session 15 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 V | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KHAPTAD HALL

CHAIR Amir Mohammad Nasrullah [University of Chittagong] FACILITATOR Ashrita Dhital [NASC]

T439 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Beyond Technology: Reimagining Digital Public Infrastructure Through Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Inclusive Governance in India and Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) has emerged as a foundational pillar of digital governance, enabling governments to deliver public services that are efficient, transparent, interoperable, and citizen-centric. While global discourse on DPI has predominantly focused on technological innovation, digital identity, digital payments, and data governance, comparatively less attention has been devoted to the role of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in shaping inclusive and culturally responsive digital ecosystems. This paper argues that the long-term success of Digital Public Infrastructure depends not only on technological sophistication but also on its ability to integrate local knowledge, community participation, and indigenous governance practices into the design and delivery of public services. Adopting a comparative qualitative approach, the study examines India and Nepal as two culturally interconnected South Asian countries with rich indigenous knowledge traditions and evolving digital governance ecosystems. India has increasingly emphasized the revitalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems through policy initiatives under the National Education Policy (2020), digital knowledge repositories, and expanding Digital Public Infrastructure, including digital identity, digital payments, and interoperable public service platforms. Nepal, with its diverse indigenous communities and community-based governance traditions, is simultaneously advancing digital transformation through initiatives such as the National Identity Card, the Nagarik App, digital payment systems, and e-governance reforms. Despite these advances, both countries continue to face challenges related to digital exclusion, uneven technological access, linguistic diversity, institutional capacity, and the limited incorporation of indigenous knowledge into digital governance frameworks. The paper develops a conceptual framework that positions Indigenous Knowledge Systems as an essential component of Digital Public Infrastructure rather than a peripheral cultural resource. It proposes that integrating indigenous knowledge into digital platforms through multilingual interfaces, community-led knowledge repositories, participatory digital governance, ethical data stewardship, and locally informed service design can strengthen transparency, accessibility, citizen trust, and administrative responsiveness. Such an approach transforms Digital Public Infrastructure into a socially embedded public good that reflects the lived realities, cultural diversity, and governance traditions of local communities. The study concludes that reimagining Digital Public Infrastructure through Indigenous Knowledge Systems offers a pathway towards more inclusive, participatory, and resilient public administration in India and Nepal. By bridging technological innovation with indigenous wisdom, both countries can develop governance models that are not only digitally advanced but also culturally legitimate, socially equitable, and responsive to the aspirations of diverse communities. The proposed framework contributes to the emerging discourse on knowledge-centred digital governance and provides policy insights for designing Digital Public Infrastructure that promotes democratic governance, sustainable development, and regional cooperation across South Asia.

Keywords: Digital Public Infrastructure; Good Governance; Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Public Administration etc

T428 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Citizen-Centric Governance Through Co-Design: Reimagining Urban Solid Waste Service Delivery in India - Evidence from Varanasi

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Banaras Hindu University

ABSTRACT

Rapid urbanisation, increasing citizen expectations and mounting environmental pressures have exposed the limitations of hierarchical approaches to municipal service delivery across South Asia. Although governments have invested considerably in strengthening urban sanitation and municipal infrastructure, relatively less attention has been paid to institutional mechanisms that enable citizens to participate meaningfully in designing public services. This paper argues that co-design provides an effective governance approach for advancing citizen-centric public administration by embedding citizens within the processes of public service design, implementation and continuous improvement. Rather than treating municipal solid waste management as a technical or operational activity, the paper conceptualises it as a collaborative governance challenge that requires sustained interaction among municipal institutions, frontline workers, citizens and community organisations. The paper develops an integrated conceptual framework by synthesising scholarship on New Public Governance, collaborative governance, co-production, co-design and public value. It employs urban solid waste service delivery in Varanasi as an empirical governance context to examine how institutional arrangements for door-to-door waste collection illustrate the relationships among administrative responsiveness, inclusive participation, collaborative co-production, ethical accountability and state capacity. The analysis focuses on governance processes and institutional relationships rather than operational performance, demonstrating how collaborative service design can improve public trust, organisational learning and responsive public administration. The principal contribution of the paper is the development of a Citizen-Centric Co-design Governance Framework, which conceptualises citizen-centred governance as an institutional capability comprising five mutually reinforcing dimensions: administrative responsiveness, inclusive participation, collaborative co-production, ethical accountability and state capacity. Building on this framework, the paper advances five analytical propositions that explain the causal pathways through which co-design strengthens public service delivery by enhancing organisational learning, institutional legitimacy and adaptive governance. The paper contributes to contemporary public administration by integrating concepts that are frequently examined independently and by repositioning municipal solid waste management as a governance challenge rather than merely a technical service. Although grounded in the experience of Varanasi, the proposed framework offers broader insights for municipalities across South Asia seeking to strengthen citizen-centred governance, improve service delivery and build institutional capacity through collaborative public management.

Keywords: Citizen-centric governance; Co-design; Collaborative governance; Urban public service delivery; State capacity

T437 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Effect of Leadership Role of Women on Citizen Engagement in the Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

As women have become a prominent part of the public sector leadership, there has been a growing interest in the scholarly literature to understand how women leadership has an impact on citizen engagement, trust and participative governance. Although there exists a lot of literature on the impact of women leadership (as regards their political capacity in the governments of their respective countries) on citizen governance, not much work is there internationally when it comes to the relationship between women leadership (as regards bureaucracy) and citizen participation. This kind of literature is also yet to be seen in the context of public sector of Pakistan that has not been much explored. To fill this gap, the current study will assess the impact of women leaders on citizen participation in the public sector of the Punjab province in the local governance domain. This study seeks to explore the impact of female leadership on citizens' perception of responsiveness and the challenges they face, accessibility of governance, as well as their interest in interacting with public institutions and participating in administrative processes taking into account their trust in the women leadership. The study recognizes that leadership, gender, and citizen participation are socially constructed processes and influenced by institutional dynamics, cultural norms, and lived experiences. It is based on constructivist ontological approach and interpretivist epistemological position. The method for the research will be qualitative initially, followed by quantitative, leading to mixed methods depending on the progress of our study. In the first stage, data collection shall be done using the semi-structured interviews from the public officials in the field as well on the administrative posts with varying BPS ranging from 17 till 20 within Punjab province. With the use of NVivo software, the gathered data will be transcribed so as to conduct thematic analysis. The second phase of the study will focus solely on the citizens and will be conducted using structure questionnaires to measure citizen engagement and trust. Keeping in view the population sample for this study that would be around 15-20 interviews from the public officials from both the genders (i-e male and female) in the first part of our study, it will provide valuable exploratory findings related to the dynamics of citizen engagement and women's leadership in the public sector in Pakistan. In the second phase the population will be the major cities of the province Punjab from where the citizens' perception would be measured using cluster sampling to ensure regional representativeness. By providing context-specific knowledge of women's leadership in public administration, the study will add to the expanding body of literature on gender, governance and representative bureaucracy in particular. Moreover, it will also pave the way for a more in-depth mixed methodology studies in future in other bureaucratic domains which could explore the relationship between citizen trust, women's leadership and participatory governance in administrative settings such as Pakistan. Keywords: Women leadership, citizen engagement, representative bureaucracy, public administration, citizen trust

T426 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Assessing E-Service Accessibility in Bangladesh's Local Government: Barriers and Opportunities for All Citizens

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ABSTRACT

Although digital public services are rapidly expanding in Bangladesh, the majority of citizens are struggling to reach the digital public services provided by local government institutions. These challenges include lack of internet access, low digital literacy, language barriers, usability barriers and poor accessibility for people with disabilities. Accessibility gap is a key element in understanding what it is and its extent, and it is essential to guarantee the promise of e-service to facilitate inclusion and citizen empowerment. Barriers and opportunities are identified at local government level, as these are often the first point of contact for many public services and targeted interventions at this level can help to improve service delivery, transparency and participation. To evaluate the level of access and inclusiveness in using e-services of the local government in Bangladesh and to find out the major obstacles and possibilities to ensure equality of access to all citizens. The methodology used in the research is mixed methods. The audit will be carried out systematically, based on the WCAG 2.1 criteria and a checklist with local government specific parameters (language, mobile friendly, offline-friendly). Second, access, ownership, digital skills and patterns of use will be measured through a household survey (n = 400) in 4 districts (2 urban, 2 rural). Third, 24 semi-structured interviews and 8 focus groups will be used to investigate lived experiences and institutional constraints with marginalized users (older adults, persons with disabilities, women, low-income households) and local officials. Descriptive and inferential statistics will be a method of analyzing quantitative data, while qualitative data will be thematically coded to triangulate the findings. Tentative Findings: It appears that most local portals are not WCAG compliant and that usability is inconsistent on mobile devices and Bengali is not widely used across all portals. The survey results show that there are big differences in access between urban and rural people and that older people and those with disabilities are less likely to use them. Bureaucratic, financial and capacity challenges are reflected in interviews which are undertaken at the local level, as are community desires to be involved in co-design and digital training programmes. Commitments made at the local government level for the implementation of e-services have potential to improve citizen empowerment while at the moment they continue to deepen digital exclusion for certain groups. Recommendations for policy include: accessibility standards; capacity building in the local area, providing alternatives that do not rely on internet bandwidth; multilingual options; and involvement in co-design with communities. The study concludes that e-services have significant potential to empower citizens; however, the achievement of that potential will require coordinated investments in e-service infrastructure, ease of design, capacity building, and outreach. Implementing accessibility requirements, community digital facilitators support and tracking use across gender, age, disability and geographic areas to ensure everyone is not being left behind.

Keywords: Accessibility; Bangladesh; Digital Inclusion; E-Government Services; Local Government

Session 16 / Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 III | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KAILASH HALL

CHAIR Nawaraj Khatiwada [NDRI] FACILITATOR Prativa Paudel [NASC]

T605 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Strengthening Climate Resilience Through Sustainable and Inclusive Governance: Perspectives from Nepal

Meen Bahadur Poudyal Chhetri
PAAN

ABSTRACT

Climate change driven by global warming is seriously affecting livelihoods, ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources all over the world. The rapid retreat of Himalayan glaciers, erratic rainfall patterns, floods, landslides, and droughts are threatening sustainable development and human security in Nepal and beyond. Nepal, ranked fourth among the countries most vulnerable to climate change (World Bank, 2011), faces serious challenges due to its fragile mountain ecosystems, limited infrastructure, and weak institutional capacities. The rapid retreat of Himalayan glaciers, which feed nine major Asian rivers and support over 1.3 billion people, is clear indication of climate change crisis. The increasing concentration of greenhouse gases caused by fossil fuel consumption, environmental degradation, deforestation, and industrial pollution has intensified global warming. At the national and subnational governance levels, Nepal's frameworks for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction remain fragmented and inadequately supported. Although climate considerations have been partially integrated into public administration and sectoral planning, gaps persist in coordination, coherence, and implementation across various government levels. Limited institutional capacity, weak policy implementation, insufficient financing, and inadequate stakeholder coordination continue to hinder effective climate action. These weaknesses are evident in addressing water-induced disasters such as floods, landslides, and Glacier Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) which are increasing due to temperature rise. Between 1977 and 1999, Nepal's average maximum temperature rose by 0.9°C, outpacing the global average (Shrestha et al., 1999). Promoting climate equity is vital, as vulnerable mountain and rural communities face disproportionate risks despite minimal emissions. Community-led traditional ecological knowledge is a valuable yet often neglected resource for building resilience, especially in fragile Himalayan environments. Therefore, inclusive governance approaches that ensure community participation, local knowledge integration, gender sensitivity, and equitable access to resources are essential for building sustainable climate resilience. Hence, institutional capacities for climate adaptation and disaster preparedness require significant strengthening through enhanced technical expertise, legal frameworks, and evidence-based planning. Strengthening climate resilience and sustainable development requires inclusive and climate-responsive governance supported by strong coordination among governments, communities, civil society, and the private sector. Public-private partnerships, digital innovation, and sustainable financing mechanisms can enhance resilience-building initiatives and environmental sustainability. Additionally, regional cooperation on transboundary environmental governance must be prioritized. Robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential to assess progress, promote transparency, and fulfill commitments under international climate agreements, particularly the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.

Keywords: Environment; Climate Change; Global Warming; Green House Gases; Regional Cooperation; Kyoto Protocol; Paris Accord

T620 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Democratic Accountability and Climate Governance: Evaluating Public Institutional Responses to SDG 13 in the Global South

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[1] *University of Lucknow*

ABSTRACT

For this reason, SDG 13 is an urgent governance priority, given the disproportionate burden of climate risks in the Global South. But the translation of international climate mandates into localised action is sometimes undermined by the institutional constraints and competing developmental agendas of state institutions. Despite the rapid growth in the number of national climate policies, we know little about the role of administrative capacity and democratic accountability in the implementation of such policies in resource-constrained contexts. The study employs secondary data from global governance indices (e.g., the Worldwide Governance Indicators and ND-GAIN), voluntary national reviews (VNRs), and a systematic review of the public administration literature to evaluate public sector climate strategies across the developing contexts. The study looks at how climate action is mainstreamed horizontally across ministries and vertically down to implementation at municipality level through administrative frameworks. The results show that successful climate governance in the Global South does not so much depend on specialised environmental agencies, but rather on the integration of SDG-13 objectives in key administrative and financial activities. Perhaps even more important for reducing bureaucratic friction and improving policy results is the capacity for democratic accountability through climate budgeting, decentralised decision-making and civic vigilance. The study concludes that climate resilience in developing economies needs a reengineering of institutional structures that prioritizes administrative transparency along with technical capacity and provides a tailored framework for assessing institutional climate readiness in the Global South.

Keywords: Global South; public administration; SDG 13; democratic accountability; climate governance; institutional capacity

T619 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Effectiveness of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) for Managing Ecologically Critical Areas in Dhaka Surrounding Rivers in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh surrounded by Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Balu, Turag Tongi Khal and Dhaleshwari rivers. These are vital lifeline for the people and economy in supporting the city. Rapid growth of Dhaka's population and economy have caused unplanned development of Dhaka. This urbanization has threatened its unique riverine morphology. Besides, encroachment of rivers and canals, dumping of solid waste, discharging industrial wastes, untreated sewage into these rivers and khals has made water quality unusable, as well as impacting negatively the health and quality of life of the people living along the rivers. Regular basis water quality testing shows the river is losing its e-flow. The Restoration of Dhaka Rivers is a complex challenge, requiring an integrated and well-coordinated approach on a large scale. This is a long-term, steady process, in which steps were already taken by the Government of Bangladesh. The Government declared Dhaka surrounding rivers as Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 2009 to improve the ecosystems. Several departments and agencies are entrusted to manage the rivers. Current literature suggests that lack of coordination among the relevant departments has arrived as a prime issue. To address this gap, this study objectively evaluates the structural and socio-institutional barriers to inter-agency coordination within the current regulatory framework. Additional efforts are needed to set an integrated urban-water development focusing climate change; support institutional strengthening and coordination for efficient development and sustainable management. Therefore, there is a pressing need to step up the efforts towards the recovery of the Dhaka Rivers, and restoration of its public services. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) along with existing priority based governmental regulation would be a way forward for the rivers' ecological restoration. By identifying these operational gaps, the paper expects to contribute a scalable multi-sectoral governance model that can enhance administrative state capacity for sustainable urban river basin management across deltaic South Asia. The methodology developed in this study is based on primary and secondary data for checking field level ECA status. For testing the water quality of Dhaka surrounding rivers, laboratory report will be used and in-depth interviews as well as focus group discussions will be conducted for collecting primary data on management issues.

Keywords: Integrated Water Resources Management; Ecologically Critical Areas; water quality; pollution; rivers; E-flow; Restoration; Coordination

T609 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Reassessing the Jhum Cultivation-Deforestation Nexus in the Context of Climate Adaptation: A Study of Sustainable and Inclusive Governance in Bandarban, Bangladesh

Muhammad Wahidur Rahman[1] · **Shimul Tanchangya**[1]

[1] *Bandarban University*

ABSTRACT

Jhum cultivation, a traditional slash-and-burn agricultural practice widely practiced in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, has long been associated with land-use change and forest degradation. This study assesses the nexus between jhum cultivation and deforestation by examining the socio-economic, environmental, and institutional factors influencing shifting cultivation practices in the region. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the study employed Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and field observations to collect primary data from indigenous communities, local leaders, agricultural officials, and environmental stakeholders across selected areas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The findings reveal that increasing population pressure, shortening fallow periods, insecure land tenure systems, and limited access to alternative livelihoods have intensified dependence on jhum cultivation, thereby accelerating deforestation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation. Participants reported significant declines in soil fertility and agricultural productivity, alongside growing livelihood insecurity among indigenous households. The study further identifies weak institutional coordination and inadequate implementation of sustainable land management policies as major challenges in balancing environmental conservation with traditional livelihood practices. The research emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive and community-based policy interventions, including the promotion of agroforestry, sustainable farming techniques, participatory forest management, and secure land rights for indigenous populations. By integrating local knowledge with environmental governance strategies, the study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable land-use management and forest conservation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Keywords: Jhum cultivation; deforestation; Chittagong Hill Tracts; slash-and-burn; soil erosion; biodiversity loss; agroforestry; land tenure; sustainability; indigenous communities

Session 17 / Public Administration in Post-LDC and Transitional Economies

TRACK 2 | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | SWAYAMBHU HALL

CHAIR Jagadish C. Pokharel [Former Vice Chairman, NPC] FACILITATOR Krishna Bahadur Thapa [NASC]

T205 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

What Makes Asia Distinctive? A Comparative Study of Asian Executive Triangle

Abiha Zahra[1] · **Kohei Suzuki**[2] · **Jan Meyer Sahling**[3] · **Zehavit Levitats**[4] · **Riffat Mahmud**[3] · **Rahime Süleymanoğlu Kürüm**[5]

[1] *Information Technology University* · [2] *Leiden University* · [3] *University of Nottingham* · [4] *Bar Ilan University* · [5] *Bahcesehir University*

ABSTRACT

The literature on politics and administration has largely focused on Western democracies. Literature on the Executive Triangle that studies the relationship between politics, bureaucracy and advisors has received comparatively little attention, with a pronounced gap for the Asian region. Is the Asian Executive Triangle distinct from the West or Latin America? The Asian continent is large and geographically diverse, ranging from East Asia to South Asia and many bordering countries. With different colonial past, regime types, and career patterns for politicians and administrative elites- Asian countries vary a lot. This article asks whether a distinct Asian model of executive governance exists or region's diversity precludes such generalization. Drawing on administrative traditions literature on Asian countries, we will use the empirical data from five countries- Japan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Israel and Turkey. The original biographical data on executive education, career experience and politicization patterns, collected as part of the COST Action project (CoREx: Comparative Research on the Executive Triangle). The article will extend the administrative traditions literature beyond West and mere East-Asian and South-Asian division with a systematic comparison across Asia.

Keywords: Politics; Administration; Advisors; Executive Triangle; Asia; Careers; Politicization

T220 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Who Counts? Bureaucracy, Belonging, and the Administrative Constitution of the Electorate: Evidence from the Indian State of West Bengal

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[1] *IIT-Gandhinagar* · [2] *Jadhavpur University*

In liberal electoral democracies, it is assumed that elections begin on polling day, but on the ground, it figures in differently. Elections happen before elections with the administrative production of the electorate itself. The recent SIR (Special Intensive Revision)-related voter deletions in West Bengal shows that the electoral roll, more than an administrative backdrop of elections, is, in essence, a site of political conundrum. Existing scholarship has approached SIR through legal, constitutional, journalistic, or mathematical perspectives, paying little to no attention to the bureaucratic processes through which electoral rolls are revised and citizens are made visible or invisible, electorally. This paper intervenes in that gap by looking at the 2026 SIR in West Bengal as a bureaucratic process through which the electorate is administratively constituted. Drawing on Tanweer Fazal's Practices of the State (2024) and Hansen and Srirupa Roy's Saffron Republic (2022), it analyses SIR within broader debates on state formation, governance, and citizenship. The study uses a comparative mixed-methods design and combines constituency-level quantitative analysis of SIR deletions (294 AC's) with qualitative case studies and fieldwork in purposively selected constituencies (3).The analysis identifies spatially uneven patterns of voter deletions that intersect with demographic composition and electoral competition, producing differentiated experiences of electoral inclusion and exclusion. The paper challenges the assumption of administrative neutrality and argues that SIR functions as a bureaucratic practice through which the state differentially constitutes the electorate. It contributes to debates on the administrative production of citizenship, democratic participation, and state power in contemporary India.

Keywords: Special Intensive Revisions (SIR); Citizenship; Democracy; Voting; West Bengal; Muslim Minority

T202 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Bureaucratic Path Dependency in a Transitional State: Mapping Public Administration Persistence in Post-LDC Nepal (1990-2026)

Rajendra Adhikari
Nepal Administrative Staff College

ABSTRACT

Nepal's evolution from a centralized monarchy to a federal republic serves as a typical case study for public administration in post-LDC and transitional economies. This paper investigates a persistent paradox in Nepal's state-building journey: while political regimes have changed with remarkable frequency over the last three and a half decades, the core features of the administrative state have remained deeply entrenched in historical legacies. Through a comprehensive analysis of major political ruptures—including the 1990 restoration of democracy, the 2006 peace process, the 2008 republican transition, and the 2015 federal restructuring—this study explores why administrative functions, accountability systems, and bureaucratic behaviors exhibit such high levels of persistence despite radical constitutional shifts. Drawing on Historical Institutionalism and Political Economy Analysis (PEA), the research argues that Nepal's governance crisis is rooted in bureaucratic path dependency. Despite transformations in sovereignty and representation, the administrative state continues to operate under a centralized, hierarchical, and procedural culture inherited from the Panchayat era. This creates a "structural contradiction" where political legitimacy is modernized, but state capability remains hampered by informal patronage networks, weak performance incentives, and a focus on upward accountability rather than citizen-centered service delivery. The study focuses specifically on the 2026 political transition, which signals a strategic pivot from ideology-based politics to a narrative of performance-based governance. By evaluating the new government's early reform initiative, including the de-politicization of public institutions and aggressive enforcement actions, the paper assesses whether this "governance-centered" approach can finally break the cycle of institutional frustration. Ultimately, this research provides a framework for understanding state capability in transitional states, suggesting that modernization requires addressing the underlying incentive structures and informal power relations that resist formal constitutional change

Keywords: Transitional Economies; Administrative Path Dependency; State Capability; Performance-based Governance; Institutional Reform

T201 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Assessing Citizen-Centric Governance and Public Service Delivery in Pakistan: A Provincial Analysis of Administrative Capacity and Inclusion

Kamila Mariam Iftikhar
University of Karachi

ABSTRACT

Public administration in Pakistan is gradually shifting toward governance models that place citizens at the center of policy and service delivery. Growing public expectations, governance pressures, and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have encouraged both federal and provincial institutions to improve transparency, accessibility, and administrative performance. However, unequal service delivery across provinces continues to create challenges for effective governance and public confidence in state institutions. This study explores how citizen-centric governance can strengthen ethical, inclusive, and responsive public administration in Pakistan. Using secondary sources, government reports, and comparative provincial analysis, the research examines administrative capacity, SDG implementation, grievance redress systems, and public service reforms across different regions of the country. The study finds that digital governance initiatives and administrative reforms, particularly in Punjab and Sindh, have improved access to several public services and increased institutional responsiveness. In contrast, many areas of Balochistan and remote districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continue to face infrastructural limitations, weak administrative coordination, and limited citizen participation, which restrict inclusive governance practices. The paper highlights the importance of strengthening accountability mechanisms, encouraging participatory decision-making, and expanding decentralized service delivery systems to improve citizen trust and administrative effectiveness. It further suggests that sustainable governance reforms in Pakistan require not only technological advancement but also stronger institutional integrity and equal policy implementation across provinces. The study contributes to the broader discussion on governance reform by presenting practical insights for developing a more inclusive, citizen-oriented, and accountable public administration system in Pakistan.

Keywords: Public Administration; SDGs; Pakistan; Citizen-Centric Governance; Public Service Delivery; Administrative Capacity; Inclusion; Governance Reform

Session 18 / Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 III | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | RARA HALL

CHAIR Daya Sagar Shrestha [NACASUD] FACILITATOR Saurav Koirala [NASC]

T119 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Assessing the Availability of Safe and Affordable Drinking Water in Selected Divisional Secretariat Areas of Colombo District, Sri Lanka: A Localized Evaluation of SDG 6 Targets

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University of Sri Jayewardenepura

ABSTRACT

Safe and affordable drinking water is the first target of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6). However, Sri Lanka faces significant disparities achieving this target. This study assesses the availability of safe and affordable drinking water in two selected Divisional Secretariat areas (Homagama, and Padukka) of Colombo District in Sri Lanka. It focuses on public awareness, drinking water treatment methods, challenges, strengths and weaknesses and the level of preparedness for achieving SDG 6 by 2030. A qualitative research approach was used to collect data through semi-structured interviews with 30 households, officers from National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB) and the Department of National Community Water Supply, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The study revealed a low awareness regarding safe water, water quality and tariffs. While boiling and filtration were the primary home treatment methods, there remains an overall lack of proper water treatment solutions. Seasonal water shortages, contamination, intermittent supply, and unaffordable tariffs are the major challenges faced by households. Meanwhile, CBOs faces issues with chlorination and high-water quality testing fees. Furthermore, Institutional arrangements structured to provide safely managed drinking water and quality monitoring exhibit both strengths and weaknesses. Overall preparedness to meet SDG 6 targets by 2030 is hindered by a combination of different challenges; limited institutional capacity, underdeveloped infrastructure, inadequate water treatment, financial and investment constraints, and affordability issues, low community engagement, and insufficient risk preparedness. Ensuring safe and affordable drinking water in the Homagama and Padukka areas requires collective effort among government institutions, community-based organizations, and local households. This research mainly relates to core concepts in Public Administration in South Asia, particularly regarding public service delivery, local governance, policy implementation, and also achieving sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; SDG 6; Safe and Affordable drinking water; Colombo; Sri Lanka

T112 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

From Emergency Response to Sustainable Governance: Assessing India's Dial 112 as a Public Administration Innovation for Advancing SDG 16

Utkarsh Mishra[1] · **Alok Kumar Gaurav**[2] · **Saurabh Yadav**[2]

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the capacity of public administration systems to provide citizen- centred, resilient and accountable public services has been increasingly a key enabler for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially following a series of global crises. The SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) centers on the importance of accessible institutions, responsive governance and public trust as necessary foundations for sustainable development among the seventeen SDGs. One of the most important innovations in public administration that has enhanced citizen security and responsiveness in the Indian context is the nationwide Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) also popularly known as Dial 112. The paper explores how Dial 112 has helped achieve SDG 16, based on empirical evidence from a multi-state assessment in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. The study assesses the perception of the citizens on the quality of service based on SERVQUAL, which includes the following dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility. The analysis shows that technology-based emergency response systems have significantly lowered the obstacles to police services, enhanced co-ordination between various emergency responding organisations, and boosted citizens' trust in public institutions. The results also indicate that responsiveness and procedural fairness are key factors affecting public trust and thus reinforce the legitimacy of state institutions. In addition to the service delivery, the paper aims to outline how digital public administration can operationalise SDG localization principles by bringing global governance commitments to the table and making measurable changes in a citizens' everyday lives. The platform reflects a whole-of-government approach through the use of a single governance model that incorporates police, fire and medical emergency services, real time communication technologies, one stop command and control centres and standardised operating procedures. However, uneven service quality, infrastructure constraints, digital disparities and institutional differences remain to be a challenge for equitable implementation of services at state-level, which calls for on-going administrative reforms and evidence-based monitoring of services' performance. In this way, the paper adds to the conversation on the different roles of public administration and sustainable governance, since it considers emergency service delivery as a key governance tool alongside policing and not always, and not exclusively, as a policing tool. It proposes to measure SDG progress in the context of the socio-emotional aspects of governance, including citizen experience, service quality and institutional trust, as complementary metrics. The Indian journey with Dial 112 is of great significance for South Asian countries aiming to improve state capacity, bolster human security and decentralize SDG implementation through the reforms of public administration using digital technologies.

Keywords: SDG 16; Emergency Response Support System (Dial 112); Citizen Trust; Service Quality; Sustainable Development Goals; Human Security

T105 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Public Administration's Contribution Health and Wellbeing in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Public administration plays a central role in promoting health and well-being in Pakistan through governance, policy implementation, public service delivery, and institutional coordination. This paper critically examines the contribution of public administration to strengthening healthcare systems, improving social welfare, and advancing Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) within the Pakistani context. The study highlights the administrative role of federal and provincial governments in healthcare planning, hospital management, disease prevention, emergency response, and collaboration with international organizations and non-governmental stakeholders. The paper explores major public health initiatives including immunization campaigns, maternal and child healthcare services, preventive health programs, and poverty alleviation measures aimed at improving citizens' quality of life. Special attention is given to provincial disparities in healthcare governance, urban-rural inequalities, and the challenges faced by densely populated cities such as Karachi. Despite notable progress in selected health indicators, the effectiveness of public administration continues to be constrained by limited financial resources, administrative inefficiency, corruption, rapid population growth, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and unequal access to essential services. Using a qualitative and policy-oriented analytical approach, the study argues that efficient governance, transparency, institutional accountability, administrative reforms, and increased investment in the public health sector are essential for strengthening Pakistan's healthcare system and ensuring sustainable development. The paper concludes that responsive and citizen-centric public administration remains a critical instrument for improving public health outcomes, social protection, and overall well-being in Pakistan.

Keywords: Public Administration; Health Governance; Well-Being; Pakistan; Healthcare Policy; Sustainable Development Goals; Public Health Administration

T118 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

From ISO Certification to Citizen-Centered Service Standards: The DAP Experience in Institutionalizing Quality Governance

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ABSTRACT

Public institutions across South Asia face increasing demands to deliver services that are efficient, reliable, and responsive to citizens' needs. The Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), as the national productivity and development institution, has embarked on a service quality development journey that integrates international quality management frameworks with locally grounded standards of excellence. Building on its ISO 9001:2015 certification, DAP developed Service Quality Standards (SQS) to institutionalize citizen-centered benchmarks for service delivery. This paper examines the process of formulating DAP's SQS, highlighting the use of stakeholder consultations, importance-satisfaction matrices, and client satisfaction surveys to identify core service dimension responsiveness, accessibility, staff performance, and integrity. By embedding these standards into its training, technical assistance, and research services, DAP demonstrates how quality management systems can be adapted to strengthen governance outcomes. The study underscores the role of structured feedback loops, including annual Customer Satisfaction Surveys with consistently high ratings (97% satisfaction from 2019–2021), in refining service priorities and addressing areas for improvement such as digital presence and training materials. The DAP case illustrates how public institutions can move beyond compliance with ISO processes to co-create standards that resonate with citizen expectations and governance imperatives. The findings contribute to regional discourse on institutional effectiveness (SDG 16) and align with the Philippine Development Plan's emphasis on efficient, citizen-focused public service. Lessons from DAP's experience offer a replicable model for South Asian institutions seeking to institutionalize service quality as a foundation for trust, accountability, and sustainable governance.

Session 19 / Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 II | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | ANNAPURNA HALL

CHAIR Bishnu Adhikari [The Asia Foundation] FACILITATOR Lokesh Sharma [NASC]

T329 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Strengthening Ethical and Inclusive Local Governance in Bangladesh: Assessing the Effectiveness of Standing Committees and Ward Shavas in Enhancing Transparency and Accountability at the Union Parishad Level

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GIZ Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

Bangladesh has introduced a series of decentralization reforms to strengthen local govt, ensuring transparency, accountability, and meaningful public participation at the grassroots level remains a continuing challenge. The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act 2009 established institutional arrangements, including Standing Committees and Ward Shavas, to encourage participatory governance and strengthen horizontal accountability. But, little empirical evidence exists on how effectively these bodies perform their intended functions. This study explores the contribution of these institutions to ethic governance, inclusive decision making, and institutional effectiveness within Union Parishads. The study integrates both qualitative and quantitative data using a mixed methods case study design. 100 locals participated in a questionnaire survey, and members of Project Implementation Committees (PICs), elected officials, and chairman of Union Parishads were interviewed. In order to bolster the analysis, the results of the survey and the interviews were compared, and further information was gleaned from policy documents, academic publications, government reports, and pertinent legal provisions. The results imply that the Union Parishad Act's intended participatory mechanisms have not yet been fully implemented. Standing Committees and Ward Shavas frequently hold sporadic meetings or do nothing at all, which restricts their capacity to promote open and responsible local governance. Inadequate institutional knowledge among elected officials, limited administrative capacity, and financial reliance on the central government, poor agency coordination, and political influence over local decision making all further limit their effectiveness. Because of this, there are still few opportunities for citizens to participate in planning, oversight, monitoring, and which lowers accountability and public service responsiveness. The results signify that the Union Parishad Act's intended participatory mechanisms have not been fully implemented yet. Standing Committees and Ward Shavas frequently hold sporadic meetings or not doing anything at all, which restricts their capacity to promote open and responsible local governance. Inadequate institutional knowledge among elected officials, limited administrative capacity, financial reliance on the federal government, and political influence, poor agency coordination, over local decision-making all further limit their effectiveness. Hence, there are still few opportunities for citizens to participate in planning and open budgeting, oversight and monitoring, which lowers public service responsiveness and accountability.

Keywords: Local Governance; Standing Committees and Ward Shavas; Transparency and Accountability; Union Parishad

T313 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Value Co-Destruction in State-Managed Faith-Based and Philanthropic Institutions in Pakistan

Aisha Azhar[1] · **Seemi Waheed**[1]

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ABSTRACT

The Zakat system in Pakistan represents one of the world's largest faith-based welfare mechanisms, designed to alleviate poverty and support humanitarian relief through Islamic principles of equity and compassion. If coordinated effectively, it can mobilize PKR 300–400 billion annually for social welfare and post-disaster recovery (Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, 2023). However, only 9–10% of eligible contributors' give Zakat to the state, while over 80% prefer direct giving to religious or private charities such as Akhuwat, Alkhidmat Foundation, and Saylani Welfare Trust. This dramatic shift reflects a serious deterioration of public trust in government-run Zakat and Auqaf institutions, which are generally viewed as corrupt, inefficient and politically influenced, especially during humanitarian crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and 2022 floods. According to Public Administration scholarship, public value co-creation refers to the creation of social value through collaboration among government, communities, and nonprofits. On the other hand, value co-destruction occurs when these actors, despite shared goals, produce negative outcomes due to lack of coordination, misaligned incentives, duplication, and distrust (Osborne, 2020; Järvi et al., 2018). In Pakistan, collaborations between faith-based and philanthropic institutions, which are intended to enhance welfare, have paradoxically led to inefficiency and fragmentation, turning co-creation into co-destruction. This study examines how and why value co-destruction occurs in Pakistan's faith-based and philanthropic humanitarian collaborations, focusing on Zakat, Auqaf, nonprofit institutions and disaster relief systems. Using a qualitative exploratory design, the study intends to use semi-structured interviews and content analysis of policy documents, institutional reports, and NGO publications. The sample includes public Zakat and Auqaf officials, faith-based NGO leaders, Islamic scholars, and informed citizens across Lahore, the largest urban and most cosmopolitan city of Pakistan. Preliminary findings from 8 interviews reveal that trust deterioration, lack of transparency, duplication of relief activities, and weak digital coordination are central to value co-destruction. Respondents highlighted that while the government lacks credibility and visibility, non profit institutions maintain public confidence through quick response, transparency, and community-based engagement. Gathering More data will deepen analysis and identify avenues for rebuilding trust through collaborative governance, co-created accountability frameworks, and digital transparency tools, enabling Pakistan's faith-based institutions to restore public value and strengthen humanitarian resilience.

Keywords: Zakat governance; public trust; value co-destruction; collaborative humanitarianism; faith-based welfare; Pakistan

T328 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

A Phenomenological Inquiry of Officers' Experiences of Ethical Environment at Workplace: Study of Armed Police Force, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Trust is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, particularly in the context of governance (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005). It has deep implications for both the quality of democracy and the perceived legitimacy of public institutions (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001). Elected officials are entrusted by citizens to act as agents of collective interest and, in Wilson's words, to "accomplish the objectives of organized society" (Clements, 1998) through the delivery of public goods and services. Effective performance, however, depends on how governments manage and deploy resources through sound public management practices (Lane, 2005). This study investigates how public sector recruitment practices influence citizen trust in government institutions, arguing that recruitment mechanisms—by ultimately shaping organizational performance—play a crucial role in sustaining institutional legitimacy. Building on Majone's (2001) work, the study conceptualizes recruitment as a means through which political principals seek to enhance legitimacy in the eyes of citizens–the ultimate principals. Empirically, the study employs a conjoint experimental design with over 400 randomly selected respondents. The experiment presents respondents with leadership profiles across different public organizations—service-oriented agencies, regulatory bodies, welfare institutions, and public enterprises—to assess variations in citizen perceptions of trust. Key attributes include educational background, type of recruitment (generalist vs. specialist/technocrat/ Weber vs NPM), and job experience. The analysis will apply regression modeling to examine the relative effects of these attributes on perceived trustworthiness. The study aims to contribute to the understanding of how recruitment models—Weberian versus NPM type—shape public perceptions of administrative credibility and, ultimately, the legitimacy of governance in Pakistan.

Keywords: Citizen Trust; Public Sector Recruitment; Leadership; Conjoint Experiment; NPM; Weber; South Asia; Pakistan

T301 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

When Reform Undermines Trust: Political Economy and Governance Failures in Nepal's School Education Reform

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ABSTRACT

Why do well-designed reforms end up weakening people's trust in government rather than strengthening it? This paper examines that question through Nepal's decision to move Grades 1 to 5 away from formal examinations and toward continuous assessment. The intention was sound, to reduced stress on young children, encourage broader learning, and move away from rote memorization. But the policy was announced without procedural guidelines. Nepal's new academic year begins in May 2026, schools and local governments remain uncertain about what they are actually supposed to do. This is not simply a communication problem. Nepal has run the Continuous Assessment System in Grades 1 to 3 for over a decade. Its effectiveness has been consistently low. That experience offers a signal about what the broader reform is likely to produce, because the governance conditions needed to make it work are not yet in place. The paper argues these problems run deeper than policy design. They are rooted in how accountability is structured across Nepal's three tiers of government, and in what incentives actually shape the behavior of people responsible for delivery. The analysis draws on education sector policy documents and government reports spanning 2010–2026, including the School Sector Reform Plan, the School Sector Development Plan, and the current School Education Sector Plan, alongside structured practitioner observation within Nepal's federal education system, read through a political economy and governance lens. Three governance failures stand out. First, provincial monitoring is too weak to distinguish real implementation from reported implementation. This will allow local governments to say the policy is running while classroom practice stays largely unchanged. Second, accountability is fragmented across all three tiers. There is no single tier clearly responsible for making the reform work on the ground. Third, there are weaknesses in teacher recruitment, deployment, and performance management. This reform is dependent on people whose incentives and working conditions were never aligned with its demands. The result is predictable. Rather than genuine change, the system produces surface-level compliance. Schools go through the motions while learning suffers. Parents and communities notice the gap between what was promised and what they see. Trust erodes accordingly. This paper places these findings within a wider conversation about governance and integrity in South Asia. Trust failures are too often traced to corruption or lack of transparency alone. What receives less attention is how accountability structures and incentive systems determine whether a reform is genuinely implemented or simply reported as such. The paper also examines the tension between assessment reform as a dignity intervention and its unintended consequences for learning accountability, arguing that without functioning accountability mechanisms and aligned incentives, shifting discretionary power away from exams does not empower students but simply moves the barrier closer to the classroom door. The findings point to two priorities: how accountability is organized across Nepal's three tiers of government, and how teacher management is treated as a reform condition rather than an afterthought.

Session 20 / Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 III | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | LUMBINI HALL

CHAIR Megh Raj Dangal [Kathmandu University] FACILITATOR Ayushma Pangeni [NASC]

T311 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Reimagining Open Government, Transparency, and Right to Information in South Asia: Post-Gen Z Governance in the Post-Truth AI Era

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the emerging crisis of transparency and accountability in South Asian public administration in the context of AI-driven governance and post-truth digital politics. While open government and Right to Information (RTI) frameworks were originally institutionalized to strengthen democratic participation and administrative accountability, contemporary governance increasingly operates through opaque digital infrastructures, algorithmic decision-making, platform-mediated communication, and surveillance-oriented data regimes. Right to Information (RTI) laws across South Asia—such as Nepal (RTI Act, 2007, Art. 27), India (RTI Act, 2005, Art. 19), Sri Lanka (RTI Act, 2016, Art. 14A), Pakistan (Access to Information Act, 2017, Art. 19A), Bangladesh (RTI Act, 2009, Art 39), Bhutan (RTI Act, 2014, Art 7 Section. 3), Maldives (RTI Act, 2014, Art 29), and Afghanistan (Access to Information Law, 2014, Art 50)—are constitutionally and legally grounded instruments that collectively aim to promote transparency and accountability. Although as per UNESCO SDG Indicator 16.10.2, their overall implementation remains uneven and often constrained by administrative culture, weak enforcement institutions, and limited proactive disclosure mechanisms making South Asia a classic case of “normative compliance but operational deficit”. Except for Afghanistan, most South Asian countries—including Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Maldives—are at different stages of developing or adopting national AI policies and strategies. Still, only Nepal and Pakistan have formally approved comprehensive national AI policy frameworks. This has created a widening gap between formal transparency mechanisms and the actual accessibility, credibility, and verifiability of public information. It argues that existing RTI and transparency frameworks are structurally inadequate for addressing the challenges posed by AI in the context of post-Gen Z political communication cultures. It adopts a critical research philosophy and qualitative methodology, integrating Frank Fischer’s Critical Policy Studies and Van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis with SDG 16.10.2 indicators to examine the discourse and implementation of RTI and transparency policies in South Asia. The research examines RTI laws, digital governance policies, AI governance frameworks, and transparency discourses across South Asia. Transparency in the post-truth AI era is not merely access to information; rather, it must be reimagined as an adaptive, participatory, and algorithmically accountable governance process. The study proposes an AI-aware framework for democratic transparency that integrates digital accountability, epistemic integrity, civic participation, and institutional responsiveness within contemporary public administration.

Keywords: accountability; artificial intelligence; policy analysis; right to information; transparency

T320 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Mapping the Expectation Gap: A Systematic Review of Public Perceptions of Ethics and Institutional Performance in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, Bangladesh has pursued wide-ranging governance reform through establishing an anti-corruption commission, enacting right-to-information legislation, decentralizing service delivery across a multi-tiered local government structure, and expanding digital government. Notwithstanding these efforts, public perceptions of ethics and institutional performance remain persistently poor, producing a gap between what citizens expect of public institutions and what they perceive those institutions to deliver. This expectation gap carries direct consequences for institutional trust, legitimacy, and the prospects of reform. This review maps how existing literature has conceptualized, measured, and explained the gap between public expectations of ethical conduct and perceived institutional performance in Bangladesh. Although the research base has grown steadily, it has never been synthesized; it remains scattered across public administration, political science, development studies, and public health, with inconsistent definitions, measures, and theoretical anchors. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a systematic search was conducted across five databases (Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, PubMed, and ProQuest Public Affairs Index) for peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2024. From 1,258 identified records, 64 studies met the inclusion criteria. Study quality was appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool, and the evidence was combined through thematic synthesis organized into five analytical themes.Taken together, the findings reveal five patterns. First, the expectation gap is real but uneven: dissatisfaction is sharpest for local government and the police, while national institutions retain surprisingly high trust despite comparable or worse performance. Second, the literature is conceptually narrow, treating ethics almost entirely as the absence of corruption and leaving procedural fairness, transparency, responsiveness, and ethical organizational culture largely unexamined. Third, an institutional trust paradox runs through the evidence: survey-based trust stays high despite weak governance indicators, a pattern better explained by power distance orientation than by performance satisfaction. Fourth, the evidence base is methodologically constrained, dominated by cross-sectional, perception-based surveys, and nearly devoid of longitudinal, experimental, and supply-side data. Fifth, major domains of citizen-state contact, particularly health and education, remain severely underexplored. This review offers the first systematic synthesis of public perceptions of ethics and institutional performance in Bangladesh. Theoretically, it shows that performance-based models of citizen trust, including Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory, require revision for settings where cultural deference moderates the link between performance and expressed attitudes. In practice, this indicates that anti-corruption measures alone will not close the gap. Rather, closing it also depends on how institutions treat citizens and on the flow of information between the government and the public. The review sets out a structured research agenda, spanning longitudinal and experimental designs, the supply side of institutional ethics, and ethics beyond corruption, to guide both scholars and the institutional reform commissions formed in the wake of the 2024 transition.

Keywords: Expectation gap; institutional trust; public ethics; institutional performance; Bangladesh

T325 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Digitalisation of Government-to-Person (G2P) Payments and the Challenges of Social Inclusion in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh has recently undertaken a significant policy modification by digitalising Government-to-Person (G2P) payments within social protection programs. This initiative aims to reduce leakages, improve transparency, and build public trust. While this transition from manual paperwork to digital documentation has mitigated operational inefficiencies, it has also posed new challenges. This study explores whether digitalisation promotes social inclusion and transparency in program delivery, and examines unintended consequences arising from this reform. Employing a qualitative approach, the study was conducted across eight Upazilas in four divisions of Bangladesh. In-depth interviews were conducted with field administration officials and political representatives, including Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs), Union Parishad Chairmen, Union Secretaries, and Upazila Social Services Officers (USSOs). Thematic analysis was utilised to identify recurring patterns and governance issues. The findings indicate that digitalisation has streamlined application and payment procedures, reduced time delays, and minimised excessive paperwork. Nonetheless, structural issues persist. Patron-client politics continues to influence beneficiary selection, with lists frequently manipulated to serve political interests. Furthermore, the digital transition has not eliminated intermediaries; instead, it has fostered a new cadre of technologically proficient actors- such as computer shop operators and brokers- who exploit beneficiaries' limited digital literacy by charging exorbitant fees or by directly accessing mobile financial service (MFS) accounts. Vulnerable citizens are also at risk of phishing, hacking, and intra-household exploitation, leading to exclusion errors and denial of entitlements. The study concludes that technological reforms alone are insufficient to eradicate systemic corruption and political nepotism. Ensuring integrity within the G2P system necessitates multi-layered verification processes, effective grievance redress mechanisms, and localised digital literacy initiatives. Additionally, stricter regulation of third-party intermediaries is imperative. Ultimately, attaining equity and fulfilling the democratic commitment of "leaving no one behind" require dismantling the cycle of political patronage, ensuring institutional accountability, and enhancing digital capacities within marginalised communities.

Keywords: G2P payments; Digitalisation; Social Protection; Bangladesh; Transparency; Social Inclusion; Patron-Client Politics

T312 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Ethical Governance in Humanitarian Settings: Understanding Land and Shelter Conflicts Among Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, represent one of the world's largest protracted displacement settings, where access to land and shelter remains a persistent source of tension and insecurity. Despite the centrality of Housing, Land and Property (HLP) concerns to refugee protection and social stability, land–shelter conflicts are frequently approached as operational or humanitarian management challenges rather than as issues of governance, rights, and public administration. This article addresses the gap of ethical governance by examining the consequences of land and shelter related conflicts and coping mechanisms practiced by the Rohingya refugees. The study identifies (1) the violent and non-violent conflicts related to land–shelter among Rohingya refugees in the refugee camps; (2) the parameter of formal governance mechanisms and mitigation measures of land and shelter related conflicts; and (3) how governance arrangements and institutional limitations are shaped by everyday' s coping mechanisms through which refugees negotiate, manage, and resolve these disputes in the absence of ethical governance systems. Methodologically, the research employs a qualitative case study approach. Data was collected through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and participatory rural appraisal exercises conducted with refugee community members and relevant stakeholders in selected camps of Cox's Bazar. The analysis draws on perspectives from governance studies, HLP rights, and everyday governance theory to examine the interaction between formal humanitarian structures and informal community practices. The findings indicate that land–shelter conflicts are closely linked to ambiguities in plot allocation, shelter expansion, inheritance claims, family disputes, and unequal access to resources. These conflicts generate both violent and non-violent consequences, including economic exploitation, eviction threats, social exclusion, family separation, and heightened protection risks. In response, refugees frequently rely on informal mediation, negotiated compliance, community-based dispute resolution, and localized coping strategies. These practices function as forms of everyday governance, filling institutional gaps left by fragmented and often inaccessible formal mechanisms. The study contributes to the growing literature on displacement governance by demonstrating how HLP rights and informal governance intersect in refugee contexts. For public administration in South Asia, the research highlights the importance of integrating rights-based governance approaches into humanitarian programming, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and promoting protection-sensitive shelter and land management systems. The findings offer policy-relevant insights for governments, humanitarian agencies, and development actors seeking to enhance conflict mitigation, social cohesion, and governance effectiveness in protracted displacement settings.

Session 21 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 VI | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | PATHIVARA HALL

CHAIR Suman Dahal [Government of Nepal] FACILITATOR Akriti Shakya [NASC]

T429 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Reimagining Local Public Administration for Citizen-Centric Governance: Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions and Inclusive Service Delivery in Rural India

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ABSTRACT

Citizen-centric governance has become a central pillar of public administration reforms across South Asia. Despite significant decentralization through the Panchayati Raj system, rural local governments in India continue to encounter institutional, administrative, and financial constraints that limit their capacity to deliver inclusive, responsive, and equitable public services. Challenges such as weak administrative capacity, digital exclusion, inadequate citizen participation, fragmented governance, and accountability deficits reduce public trust and hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Addressing these governance challenges is essential for strengthening state capacity and improving service delivery at the grassroots level. This paper aims to examine the institutional barriers affecting citizen-centric governance in rural India and to explore how strengthening local public administration can enhance state capacity through inclusive and responsive service delivery. It further seeks to identify governance reforms that improve administrative effectiveness, citizen participation, transparency, and accountability within local government institutions. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on a comprehensive review of secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents, publications of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, NITI Aayog reports, Rural Development Ministry documents, and recent academic literature on decentralization, public administration, and governance reforms. The analysis is informed by the theoretical perspectives of citizen-centric governance, collaborative governance, decentralization, and state capacity. The study finds that strengthening state capacity requires a governance approach that extends beyond administrative efficiency to embrace ethical leadership, institutional accountability, participatory decision-making, digital inclusion, and evidence-based policymaking. Although initiatives such as e-governance platforms, Gram Sabhas, social audits, and digital public services have improved transparency and accessibility, substantial disparities in institutional capacity, fiscal decentralization, technical expertise, and digital infrastructure continue to impede effective service delivery. The paper proposes policy recommendations, including strengthening local administrative capacity, expanding digital inclusion, institutionalizing citizen feedback mechanisms, enhancing fiscal empowerment, and promoting collaborative governance to improve the quality and inclusiveness of public services. The study contributes to contemporary debates on public administration reform by demonstrating how citizen-centric local governance can strengthen state capacity and democratic accountability in developing contexts. Its findings offer practical lessons for South Asian countries pursuing decentralization, ethical governance, inclusive service delivery, and SDG implementation. The paper provides a policy-oriented framework that is relevant to governments, public administrators, researchers, and development practitioners seeking to build resilient, accountable, and citizen-focused public institutions across the region.

Keywords: Citizen-Centric Governance; Local Public Administration; State Capacity; Inclusive Service Delivery; Rural India

T420 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Towards an Integrated Social Security Governance System in Nepal: Digital Transformation, Institutional Coordination, and State Capacity

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[1] *PAAN* · [2] *Government of Nepal*

ABSTRACT

Nepal's social security landscape has expanded considerably over recent decades through contributory and non-contributory schemes administered by multiple public institutions. Despite this expansion, the system remains fragmented, institutionally dispersed, and administratively uneven, resulting in duplication, inefficiencies, limited interoperability, and unequal access to social protection services. In the context of Nepal's post-LDC transition and broader public administration modernization, the need for an integrated, citizen-centric, and digitally enabled social security governance system has become increasingly urgent. This paper examines the governance and administrative challenges of Nepal's social security system and explores pathways for institutional integration through digital transformation and coordinated public administration reform. Drawing upon the governance principles and administrative guidelines promoted by the International Social Security Association (ISSA) particularly those related to good governance, service quality, digital administration, and institutional coordination the paper critically analyzes the existing architecture of Nepal's social security administration, including pension systems, Employees Provident Fund, Citizen Investment Trust, Social Security Fund, social assistance programs, and contribution-based protection mechanisms. Using a qualitative and policy-analytical approach, the study reviews policy documents, legislative frameworks, institutional practices, ISSA governance standards, and comparative social security experiences to evaluate gaps in coordination, data management, service delivery, transparency, and administrative accountability. Particular attention is given to fragmented beneficiary databases, overlapping institutional mandates, limited digital interoperability, and disparities in access between formal and informal sector populations. The paper argues that social security governance in Nepal requires a transition from fragmented institutional arrangements toward an integrated digital governance framework aligned with internationally recognized principles of good governance, inclusiveness, accountability, and administrative efficiency. It further emphasizes that digital transformation alone cannot ensure effective reform unless supported by stronger institutional coordination, interoperable digital infrastructure, governance accountability, regulatory clarity, and enhanced state capacity. The study proposes a strategic framework for integrated social security governance based on interoperability, unified beneficiary management systems, digital public infrastructure, inter-agency coordination, and citizen-centric governance principles. The findings contribute to regional discourse on social protection modernization and public administration reform in South Asia while offering policy insights for strengthening inclusive and resilient governance systems in transitional economies.

Keywords: Social Security Governance; ISSA Guidelines; Digital Governance; Integrated Social Protection; Administrative Reform

T410 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Assessing Citizen Use Behavior of Digital Land Services in Bangladesh: The Mediating Role of Public Trust and Satisfaction in a Service Quality Model

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the factors affecting citizen behavior toward using Digital Land Services (DLS) in Bangladesh. The study is basically cross-sectional quantitative research using the survey method based on a structured questionnaire. The data collected from 448 primary users of DLS were considered for the analysis, where the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), run by Smart-PLS and M-plus, was used for testing the research model containing several hypotheses. This study reveals that Service Quality (SQ) significantly impacts Public Trust (PUBT) and Satisfaction (SAT), and PUBT and SAT directly influence Use Behavior (USEB). The mediation analysis furthermore highlights that PUBT and SAT as important mediators between SQ and USEB. Total effects analysis underscores SQ, PUBT, and SAT as the most influential constructs in determining the USEB of DLS service recipients in Bangladesh. This study introduces a novel research model aimed at understanding citizen use behavior of DLS, which is one of the pioneering works to combine a service quality model with satisfaction and public trust. Moreover, it marks the first instance in the e-service domain to utilize public trust as a mediator alongside satisfaction.

Keywords: Service Quality; Public Trust; Satisfaction; Use Behavior; Digital Land Service; Bangladesh

T423 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Governing Social Protection in South Asia: Colonial Legacies and Final-Mile Welfare Delivery

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ABSTRACT

Many countries across South Asia have formulated progressive social protection policies on paper, but the actual delivery of these welfare benefits frequently encounters significant bottlenecks at the local level. This paper examines whether colonial administrative legacies continue to shape contemporary welfare delivery systems in South Asia and contribute to persistent implementation gaps in social protection programmes. We argue that a fundamental institutional mismatch exists when modern, rights-based welfare initiatives are executed through an administrative apparatus historically structured for revenue extraction and social control. Drawing on historical institutionalism, policy documents, administrative reports, and secondary scholarship on welfare governance across the region, this study evaluates how a shared colonial bureaucratic heritage influences the everyday governance of social protection. The paper does not seek to provide a country-by-country comparison; rather, it identifies common institutional patterns that emerge across welfare governance literature in South Asia. Rather than attributing implementation failures solely to colonial inheritance, the paper argues that colonial administrative norms continue to interact with contemporary governance practices, reinforcing exclusionary tendencies in welfare delivery. The literature reviewed in the paper suggests that frontline administrative practices often reflect patterns of rationing, excessive verification, and institutional distrust, creating structural barriers to effective welfare delivery that disproportionately exclude vulnerable populations. The paper also addresses contemporary digital interventions, demonstrating that technocratic reforms often automate established bureaucratic habits without altering underlying administrative mindsets. Ultimately, the paper argues that administrative reform must move beyond technological modernization and address deeper institutional norms inherited from colonial governance traditions, reframing final-mile delivery as a critical measure of state capacity and democratic legitimacy. In doing so, the paper contributes to contemporary debates on state capacity, administrative reform, and citizen-centric governance in South Asia.

Keywords: Social Protection Governance; Colonial Legacy; Implementation Gap; Welfare Delivery; South Asia

Session 22 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 VI | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | PRITHVI HALL

CHAIR Uddhav Pyakurel [Kathmandu University] FACILITATOR Asthadeep Dhakal [NASC]

T509 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

AI, Bureaucratic Rationality, and Decision-Making Behaviour in Pakistan's Public Administration: Revisiting Weber's Iron Cage in the Age of Algorithmic Governance

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ABSTRACT

The growing integration of AI into governance and administrative systems is reshaping bureaucratic decision making across the world. While AI is frequently promoted as a tool for improving efficiency, objectivity, and evidence based governance, its integration into bureaucratic structures raises important questions concerning administrative discretion, accountability, procedural rigidity, and institutional power. These concerns become particularly significant in post-colonial bureaucratic systems such as Pakistan, where state institutions continue to exhibit strong legacies of colonial administration, hierarchical control, and excessive procedural rationalization. Drawing upon Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy and his concept of the "Iron Cage," this study examines how the use of AI by public servants affects decision making behaviour within Pakistan's public administration. Weber con-ceptualized bureaucracy as a rational, impersonal, rule bound, and hierarchical administrative system; however, he also warned that excessive rationalization could transform individuals into "little cogs" trapped within rigid administrative machinery. The study builds upon the author's earlier work on Weber's Iron Cage in the Pakistani bureaucracy, which identified enduring patterns of bureaucratic rigidity, procedural dominance, and colonial administrative continuities inherited from the British colonial state. The paper argues that AI adoption within bureaucratic institutions may not merely modernize governance, but could po-tentially reinforce mechanistic administration and procedural domination. In highly centralized administrative cultures, AI assisted governance may deepen dependence on data driven rationalities, reduce discretionary judgment, and further institutionalize impersonal modes of governance. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative semi structured in-terviews with public servants in Pakistan, analyzed through thematic and interpretive analysis. The study contributes to debates on digital governance, ethical modernization, and the future of public administration in South Asia by critically examining the interaction between AI and historically entrenched bureaucratic cultures.

T508 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Artificial Intelligence and State Capacity in India: Reimagining Public Administration in the Digital Era

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Central University of Karnataka

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital governance systems has significantly altered contemporary public administration globally. In developing democracies like India, AI is emerging as a crucial mechanism for enhancing state capacity, administrative coordination, and public service delivery. The integration of AI into governance reflects a shift from conventional bureaucracy to data-driven, digital systems. India has positioned itself as a major experiment in digital governance with initiatives like Digital India, Aadhaar-enabled service delivery, DigiLocker, CoWIN, AI-enabled grievance systems, and platform-based public services to improve administrative efficiency and citizen accessibility. This paper examines the relationship between Artificial Intelligence and state capacity in India, focusing on how AI-driven governance reshapes public administration in the digital era. The study argues that AI has enhanced the Indian state's operational capacity by improving administrative responsiveness, accelerating service delivery, enabling large-scale data integration, and strengthening governance coordination across sectors. Digital platforms have contributed to procedural standardisation, real-time monitoring, and expanded governance outreach in welfare delivery, health governance, digital identity systems, and public grievance management. AI-driven governance is viewed as a capacity multiplier for a state managing governance at an unprecedented demographic scale. The paper argues that AI-enabled governance poses challenges for public administration, raising concerns about ethical governance, privacy, accountability, and transparency. Technological growth often outpaces institutional safeguards. Issues like digital exclusion, unequal access, bureaucratic dependence, algorithmic opacity, and reduced human discretion are evident, especially in India's diverse society where digital inequality affects service access. The study uses a qualitative and analytical approach from secondary sources like government reports, policy documents, academic literature, and digital governance frameworks. It situates the discussion in governance transformation, digital-era public administration, and ethical governance. The paper concludes that while AI possesses significant potential to strengthen governance capacity and improve public administration in India, its long-term legitimacy depends upon the ability of democratic institutions to ensure ethical, inclusive, transparent, and human-centered governance practices. The future of public administration in India, therefore, lies not in replacing human administration with technological systems, but in developing a balanced governance model where AI strengthens administrative effectiveness while preserving democratic accountability, social inclusion, and public trust.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; State Capacity; Digital Governance; Public Administration; Ethical Governance; AI-Driven Governance; Public Service Delivery; Digital India; Administrative Transformation; Inclusive Governance

T521 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Fiscal Equalization Grants and Local Fiscal Effort in Nepal: Evidence from a Five-Year Nationwide Panel Study

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ABSTRACT

Fiscal equalization grants are designed to reduce horizontal fiscal disparities and ensure quality public service delivery across local governments. While these grants play an important redistributive role, an important policy question remains unresolved: do fiscal equalization transfers strengthen or weaken incentives for local governments to mobilize their own-source revenue? Despite the rapid implementation of fiscal federalism after 2017, no nationwide longitudinal study has systematically examined whether fiscal equalization grants affect own-source revenue mobilization across Nepal's local governments. The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between fiscal equalization grants and own-source revenue mobilization across local governments and to assess whether fiscal equalization transfers create incentives or disincentives for local fiscal effort. This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design. The analysis employs a balanced panel dataset constructed from official administrative sources, covering all 753 local governments over five fiscal years (FY 2077/78–2081/82). The dataset includes annual fiscal equalization grants, own-source revenue, local population, and local poverty rates. The empirical analysis applies panel data techniques with local government and year fixed effects to account for unobserved heterogeneity and common time shocks, thereby exploiting within-local-government variation over time. The study is grounded in the theory of fiscal federalism and the flypaper effect, which suggests that intergovernmental transfers may either encourage local fiscal capacity by relaxing resource constraints or discourage local tax effort by creating grant dependency. By providing one of the first nationwide panel analysis of Nepal's local governments, this research offers empirical evidence on how fiscal equalization grants are associated with local revenue mobilization under Nepal's evolving federal system. The study is expected to generate evidence on whether Nepal's fiscal equalization grant system supports or undermines local revenue mobilization and to identify policy implications for improving the incentive structure of intergovernmental fiscal transfers. The findings will contribute to ongoing policy debates on the design of Nepal's intergovernmental fiscal transfer system and provide practical evidence for the government. The findings offer practical lessons for South Asian countries pursuing fiscal decentralization, intergovernmental fiscal reforms, and stronger local government accountability.

T540 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Citizens' Cyber Security Awareness and Practices Amid Legislative Transitions: Quantitative Evidence from Sylhet City

Syeda Tasnia Tahia

Shahjalal University of Science and Technology

ABSTRACT

The rapid digitalization of public administration across South Asia requires robust regulatory architectures to safeguard citizen data and maintain state security. In Bangladesh, this regulatory landscape has undergone massive restructuring, highlighted by the interim government's repeal of the controversial Cyber Security Act 2023 and its replacement with the newly promulgated Cyber Security Ordinance. While top-down institutional overhauls aim to align cyberspace regulation with civic rights, the practical success of any digital governance mechanism relies fundamentally on grassroots public awareness and localized behavioral compliance. Assessing citizen readiness during such pivotal legal transitions is critical for determining the long-term sustainability of developing digital ecosystems. This study evaluates the precise levels of cyber security awareness, safety habits and legal literacy regarding state digital regulations among residents in Sylhet City, Bangladesh. Through a quantitative survey design, empirical field data was collected from a diverse sample of 100 citizen respondents within the Sylhet City Corporation area between February and April 2026, capturing critical baseline public responses directly following national legal reforms. The data was processed and systematically analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying descriptive statistics, correlational analyses and index calculations to evaluate patterns of citizen security compliance. The statistical results reveal a massive structural gap between high daily internet exposure and actual legal awareness. While 72% of the respondents utilize the internet on a daily basis, an overwhelming 78% demonstrated zero familiarity with the shifting provisions of the state's primary cyber legislations and 87% did not understand their core regulatory purpose. This lack of structural literacy resulted in a critically low mean Awareness Index of 1.96 out of 5.00. Furthermore, proactive cyber safety habits remain weak among the urban masses, yielding a low overall Practice Index of 2.43. Notably, 60% of citizens fail to actively protect their personal information online and 69% lack basic knowledge regarding procedures for reporting local cyber threats. Inferential analysis indicates that educational attainment serves as the strongest statistical predictor of cyber hygiene compliance. These findings underscore a vital lesson for public administration in South Asia-legislative updates are entirely ineffective without grassroots technology integration. Municipal authorities and public tech bodies must move past simply deploying legal mandates and instead launch aggressive, data-driven, community-level digital literacy campaigns. Public sector platforms can only achieve successful citizen adoption and cultivate institutional trust if the state actively educates users to navigate a changing cyberspace safely.

Keywords: Digital Governance; Cyber Security Awareness; Cyber Security Ordinance; Bangladesh; SPSS Analysis

Panel 2 / State Capacity, Public Policy and Governance: The Context of Bangladesh

Panel Session | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | ARANIKO HALL

CHAIR H.E. Md. Shafiqur Rahman, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Nepal

FACILITATOR Lila Nath Sapkota [NASC]

P2.1 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

State Capacity and Governance Outcomes: A Review of Policy Implementation Challenges in Developing Countries

Md. Mominur Rahman[1] · **Shirin Sultana**[1]

[1] *Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management*

ABSTRACT

State capacity has become a central analytical lens for understanding why governments vary widely in their ability to design, implement, and sustain effective public policies. Despite growing scholarly attention, the concept remains fragmented across administrative, fiscal, political, legal, and increasing digital dimensions, making it difficult to synthesize its implications for governance outcomes. This review examines the relationship between state capacity and governance performance in developing countries, with particular emphasis on policy implementation challenges and the variability of outcomes. Drawing on a systematic review of interdisciplinary literature in public administration, political science, and development studies, the paper conceptualizes state capacity as a multidimensional construct that shapes the quality of policy implementation processes, including coordination, bureaucratic competence, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement. It further explores how these implementation mechanisms translate into key governance outcomes such as service delivery effectiveness, accountability, transparency, public trust, access to justice, and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. The review highlights that weak institutional structures, fiscal constraints, political instability, corruption, administrative inefficiencies, and digital divides continue to undermine effective state functioning in many developing contexts. At the same time, emerging evidence suggests that improvements in digital governance, collaborative governance arrangements, and institutional reforms can partially offset capacity deficits and strengthen implementation performance. Finally, the paper proposes an integrated conceptual framework linking state capacity to governance outcomes through policy implementation quality as a mediating mechanism. It concludes that strengthening state capacity is not merely a technical exercise but a deeply political and institutional process, requiring coordinated reforms across administrative systems, governance structures, and citizen-state relationships in order to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

Keywords: State Capacity; Governance Outcomes; Policy Implementation; Public administration; Developing Countries; Government Effectiveness

P2.2 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

State Capacity, Public Policy Formulation and Governance in Bangladesh: A Critical Review

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Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management

ABSTRACT

This review critically examines the evolution of state capacity in Bangladesh and its implications for public policy formulation and implementation. Drawing on both academic literature and practitioner perspectives, the study highlights how institutional reforms since independence—ranging from nationalization in the 1970s to liberalization, structural adjustment, and digital transformation in subsequent decades—have shaped the country's capacity and governance path. The analysis reveals that, while sectoral successes such as the rise of the ready-made garment industry, the institutionalization of microfinance, and the development of mobile financial services demonstrate the potential of "institutional havens," systemic weaknesses persist. Political interference, bureaucratic politicization, weak coordination, and limited stakeholder engagement continue to undermine policy effectiveness. The review identifies significant knowledge gaps, including the lack of empirical evidence linking state capacity to policy outcomes, insufficient exploration of the formulation–implementation nexus, and limited attention to local institutions and knowledge systems. Future research should focus on bridging these gaps through empirical case studies, comparative analyses, and interdisciplinary approaches that integrate evidence-based policymaking and participatory governance. Overall, the study concludes that Bangladesh's progress toward upper-middle-income status will depend on strengthening institutional resilience, enhancing bureaucratic professionalism, and embedding accountability and inclusivity in the policy process. By addressing these structural constraints, the state can transform policy ambition into sustained development outcomes.

Keywords: State Capacity; Public Policy; Policy Formulation; Governance; Bangladesh

P2.3 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

State Capacity and Public Policy in Bangladesh: A Comparative Analysis between Academic Focus and Practitioners' Perspectives

Tasfia Tasneem Ahmed
Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a critical literature review of state capacity and the public policy process in Bangladesh, drawing on two distinct but complementary bodies of evidence: peer-reviewed academic scholarship and the autobiographical accounts of senior Bangladeshi policymakers, civil servants, and central bank officials. While academic literature has examined state capacity through proxies such as governance indicators, bureaucratic performance, and implementation deficits, it has rarely disaggregated capacity dimensions across policy process stages or triangulated its findings against insider knowledge of how policy works. This review addresses that gap by systematically analyzing both bodies of evidence and subjecting them to critical synthesis. The review finds that Bangladesh's state capacity is neither uniformly weak nor uniformly strong, but conditional: it activates under specific combinations of technocratic leadership, political commitment, and institutional protection, and breaks down when political dynamics override technical work, personnel disruption erodes institutional memory, or commitment collapses between the formulation and implementation stages. Academic literature and practitioner accounts converge on the centrality of political interference and the formulation–implementation gap as core governance constraints but diverge significantly in their explanatory emphasis. Where academic scholarship stresses structural and institutional factors, practitioners highlight dynamics such as the decisive role of informal networks, individual agency, and political timing that formal analysis systematically underestimates.

Keywords: State Capacity; Public Policy; Academic Focus; Practitioners' Perspectives; Bangladesh

Panel 3 / Public Administration in South Asia: Migration, Inclusion, and Citizen-Centred State Capacity

Panel Session | 5 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KASTHAMANDAP HALL

CHAIR Shameem Haider Patwary [Dhaka International University] FACILITATOR Smriti Pradhan [NASC]

P3.1 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Migration, Mobility, and Citizen-Centred State Capacity in South Asia: Rethinking Public Administration in an Age of Displacement

AKM Ahsan Ullah
University of Brunei Darussalam

ABSTRACT

Migration and displacement have become central tests of public administration in South Asia. Across the region, states are required to respond to labour migration, refugee movements, climate-induced displacement, urban informality, gendered vulnerabilities, and cross-border mobility, often within contexts of limited resources, bureaucratic fragmentation, and uneven democratic accountability. Yet migration is still frequently treated as a sectoral, humanitarian, or security issue rather than as a core question of state capacity and citizen-centred governance. I argue that migration provides a critical lens through which to rethink public administration in South Asia. The paper develops a conceptual framework linking mobility, inclusion, and administrative responsiveness. It shows that the governance of migration is not only about managing movement but also about determining who is visible to the state, who receives services, whose rights are protected, and whose voices are heard in policy processes. The paper examines how administrative systems often reproduce exclusion through documentation requirements, fragmented mandates, centralised decision-making, and weak local-level implementation. At the same time, it highlights opportunities for more inclusive governance through decentralised service delivery, inter-agency coordination, community participation, gender-responsive policy design, and rights-based administrative reform. The paper contributes to debates on public administration and governance by positioning migration as a core indicator of state capacity in South Asia. It argues that citizen-centred public administration must move beyond formal citizenship alone and engage with the lived realities of mobile, displaced, and precarious populations.

Keywords: Migration governance; public administration; state capacity; citizen-centred governance; South Asia

P3.2 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Role of Public Administration in Ensuring Citizen-Centred Governance and Service Delivery: The Case of Rohingya Refugee Management in Bangladesh

Mohammad Shariful Islam
Dhaka International University

ABSTRACT

The Rohingya refugee crisis presents a major test for public administration in Bangladesh, particularly in relation to citizen-centred governance, inclusive service delivery, and state capacity in a resource-constrained humanitarian setting. This paper examines the role of public administration in ensuring equitable, responsive, and dignified services for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. It focuses on key dimensions of citizen-centred governance, including administrative inclusion, accessibility, responsiveness, coordination, and participation. The paper argues that Bangladesh has demonstrated significant administrative commitment in managing large-scale humanitarian operations, particularly through the delivery of food, shelter, health care, and basic services. These services are provided through a form of hybrid governance involving state agencies, international organisations, and non-governmental actors. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these arrangements remain constrained by resource scarcity, legal limitations, bureaucratic complexity, and weak mechanisms for refugee participation. These constraints limit the capacity of both state and non-state actors to design and implement long-term, inclusive, and sustainable policies for displaced populations. The paper argues that citizen-centred governance in refugee settings requires more than emergency service delivery. It also requires institutional arrangements that recognise the dignity, agency, and voice of displaced communities. By placing the Rohingya case within wider debates on public administration and state capacity in South Asia, the paper contributes to the growing literature on governance in crisis contexts. It also offers policy-relevant lessons for strengthening administrative responsiveness, coordination, and inclusive service delivery in comparable humanitarian settings.

Keywords: Citizen-centred governance; public administration; Rohingya refugees; service delivery; state capacity

P3.3 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Climate Vulnerability, Administrative Exclusion, and the Limits of State Capacity: Subaltern Communities in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide

Mili Rahman
Dhaka International University

ABSTRACT

Climate vulnerability in ecologically fragile regions presents significant challenges for public administration, particularly in relation to inclusive governance, administrative responsiveness, and equitable service delivery for marginalised communities. This paper examines the relationship between climate risk, administrative exclusion, and state capacity through a critical reading of subaltern communities in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide. By focusing on the Sundarbans as a climate-sensitive and politically marginalised space, the paper explores how environmental insecurity is mediated by administrative institutions and how gaps between state presence and effective governance shape the lives of vulnerable populations. The paper argues that the lived realities of marginalised communities in climate-sensitive areas such as the Sundarbans are often inadequately addressed by formal governance systems. Administrative exclusion appears through limited institutional responsiveness, restricted access to services, weak recognition of local needs, and the marginalisation of indigenous and community-based knowledge systems. These failures deepen vulnerability and reveal the limits of state capacity in addressing complex environmental and social problems. The paper also shows that literary narratives can illuminate forms of exclusion and governance failure that may remain underexamined in conventional policy analysis. By linking environmental humanities with public administration, this study contributes to interdisciplinary debates on climate governance in South Asia. It argues that The Hungry Tide offers important insights into the socio-political dimensions of climate vulnerability, particularly where subaltern voices are neglected by formal administrative systems.

Keywords: Climate vulnerability; state capacity; administrative exclusion; subaltern communities; citizen-centred governance

P3.4 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Administrative Coordination and Community Resilience in Climate-Induced Internal Displacement

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Dhaka International University

ABSTRACT

Frequent storms, flooding, river erosion, and saline intrusion are increasingly threatening livelihoods and habitability in the coastal regions of South Asia, where climate change is driving internal displacement and planned or unplanned relocation. Although climate-induced displacement and community resilience have received growing scholarly attention, the role of administrative coordination in shaping resilience outcomes remains underexplored. Fragmented governance structures, overlapping institutional mandates, weak vertical coordination, and limited local capacity often delay policy implementation and reduce the ability of communities to adapt effectively to climate-related shocks. This study examines the role of administrative coordination in strengthening community resilience among South Asian coastal communities affected by climate-induced internal displacement. Using a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA methodology, the paper synthesises peer-reviewed and policy literature on climate displacement, governance, and resilience. The findings show that unclear institutional roles and poor coordination between national and local agencies contribute to uneven resource distribution, delayed disaster response, and weak long-term adaptation planning. Local governments often act as first responders but lack adequate operational capacity, fiscal resources, and decision-making authority. In addition, the limited integration of community-based organisations weakens the inclusiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability of resilience initiatives. The paper argues that effective administrative coordination is a key condition for building community resilience. Institutional coordination platforms, decentralised governance, participatory planning, and stronger local administrative capacity can improve resettlement outcomes, accelerate recovery, and enhance access to resources. Despite limitations related to secondary data and uneven geographical coverage, the study demonstrates that resilience is not only a community attribute but also an administrative outcome shaped by the quality of governance.

Keywords: Climate change; internal displacement; administrative coordination; community resilience; South Asia

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DAY 03

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Session 23 / Ethical Governance, Integrity, and Public Trust

TRACK 3 IV | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KUMARI HALL

CHAIR Narayan Prasad Sharma Duwadi [Government of Nepal] FACILITATOR Sebika Thapa [NASC]

T322 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Ethical Governance in Pakistan: Assessing Integrity and Accountability Through World Governance Indicators (1996-2024)

Ayesha Hanif
University of the Punjab

ABSTRACT

Pakistan continues to face persistent governance challenges that affect institutional integrity, administrative accountability, and the effective delivery of public services. As demands for transparency, ethical conduct, and accountable governance continue to increase, understanding the evolution of governance quality has become essential for strengthening public institutions and rebuilding citizens' confidence in government. This study assesses the trajectory of ethical governance in Pakistan using the World Governance Indicators (WGI) over the period 1996–2024. The analysis focuses on governance dimensions most closely associated with ethical governance, namely Control of Corruption, Rule of Law, Voice and Accountability, Government Effectiveness, and Regulatory Quality. Using secondary data obtained from the World Bank, the study employs descriptive trend analysis, correlation analysis, and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to examine patterns of governance performance and identify the dimensions that contribute most significantly to institutional integrity and accountability. The study further compares governance performance across major political and administrative transitions to explore whether governance reforms have been associated with measurable improvements in ethical governance indicators. The study is expected to demonstrate that while selected governance dimensions have shown incremental improvements over time, persistent weaknesses in accountability, corruption control, and the rule of law continue to constrain the development of a robust ethical governance framework in Pakistan. The findings contribute to the growing literature on governance quality by providing an evidence-based assessment of institutional integrity using internationally comparable indicators. The study also offers policy recommendations for strengthening transparency, accountability mechanisms, and ethical public administration, thereby contributing to ongoing debates on rebuilding public trust and enhancing governance capacity in South Asia.

Keywords: Ethical Governance; Integrity; Accountability; World Governance Indicators; Pakistan

T326 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Rebuilding Citizen Trust in Public Institutions: A Case Study of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC)

Gunjan
Siddharth University Kapilvastu

ABSTRACT

Citizen trust in local governance institutions is essential for effective urban service delivery, civic compliance, and democratic accountability. The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), which governs the administrative heart of India's capital and delivers essential civic services—including electricity, water supply, sanitation, property taxation, and public health—to a resident population that swells considerably during working hours due to daytime commercial and administrative influx, offers a distinctive case for examining institutional trust at the municipal level. Despite its relatively well-resourced structure, NDMC has faced recurring challenges to public confidence, including past incidents where officials were suspended following sting operations that uncovered evidence of corruption and unethical behavior, alongside periodic scrutiny over sanitation standards, encroachments, and service gaps in areas under its jurisdiction. Compounding this, Delhi's fragmented governance architecture—spanning multiple authorities such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, NDMC, the Public Works Department, and the Delhi Development Authority, each reporting to different departments and ministries—has historically made it difficult for citizens to identify which institution is accountable for a given service failure, further straining public trust. This paper examines the institutional and administrative reforms NDMC has undertaken to rebuild citizen confidence, including its adoption of a trust-based governance model aligned with the Jan Vishwas Bill, which decriminalizes a large number of minor offenses to encourage voluntary compliance rather than punitive enforcement, and its expanding digital governance infrastructure through platforms such as the NDMC-311 mobile application, which enables citizens to register complaints with photographic evidence, make payments, and access real-time civic services directly from their phones. The analysis further considers NDMC's ongoing infrastructure and transparency initiatives, including its recent arterial road revamp projects and long-term sub-city development planning aimed at heritage-sensitive modernization, as mechanisms for demonstrating institutional responsiveness and competence. The paper argues that rebuilding trust in a hyper-local municipal body like NDMC depends on three interlinked pillars: (i) administrative accountability, through stronger internal audit and anti-corruption mechanisms; (ii) service performance, through timely, transparent, and accessible civic service delivery; and (iii) citizen participation, through digital grievance redressal and greater public communication. It concludes that while technological and legislative reforms have improved procedural trust, sustained legitimacy will require deeper structural clarity in Delhi's multi-authority governance system and consistent, visible follow-through on accountability commitments.

Keywords: Citizen trust; NDMC; municipal governance; public institutions; accountability; e-governance; Delhi urban governance

T315 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Impact Assessment of the Right to Public Services Commission, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Lessons for Reimagining Public Service Delivery in South Asia

Saif Ullah Khalid
National School of Public Policy

ABSTRACT

Good governance and public trust are interdependent pillars of effective state–citizen relations, yet in many South Asian countries, including Pakistan, persistent corruption, clientelism, and weak accountability mechanisms have eroded confidence in public institutions and undermined the quality of service delivery. This paper presents an impact assessment of the Right to Public Services (RTS) Commission, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) — a provincial institutional innovation established under the KPK Provincial Assembly Act 2014 — as a case study in reimagining public administration through ethics, inclusion, and enhanced state capacity. The RTS Commission was created to ensure timely, transparent, and efficient delivery of notified public services. Over time, its mandate has expanded from five to forty-three notified services, and it has evolved into a robust grievance redressal institution that holds line departments accountable through steering committees, financial penalties, and reprimand orders. The paper assesses how this accountability architecture has contributed to a measurable reduction in service delivery delinquencies — from 61 percent to just 5 percent — thereby restoring public trust in state institutions and giving voice to underserved citizens. Drawing on governance theory and empirical findings from the Commission's performance data, the paper argues that institutionalised accountability mechanisms, competitive performance incentives, and structured integration with line departments are critical enablers of improved service delivery. It also identifies capacity constraints at the district level as a limiting factor requiring targeted investment and reform. The paper concludes with transferable lessons for South Asian states seeking to strengthen public administration through ethical governance, inclusive service delivery, and responsive institutional design — themes central to the regional dialogue on reimagining public administration.

Keywords: Right to Public Services; KPK; Good Governance; Public Trust; Service Delivery; Accountability; South Asia; Pakistan

T324 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

E-Service Quality, Trust, and Citizen Satisfaction in South Asian Public Administration: Evidence from NADRA in Pakistan

Fatima Khalid[1] · **Aisha Rizwan**[1]

[1] *University of the Punjab*

ABSTRACT

In the digital governance era, ensuring the quality of electronic public services has become a strategic imperative for fostering citizen trust and satisfaction in government institutions. While e-government initiatives have expanded rapidly across developing nations, empirical evidence examining the interplay between e-service quality, user trust, and citizen satisfaction within public sector contexts remains limited, particularly in South Asian transitional economies. By generating empirical evidence from within this specific context, the study helps correct an imbalance in existing scholarship and provides insights more transferable to comparable administrative settings across South Asia. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the influence of e-service quality (E-SQ) on user satisfaction and explores the partial mediating role of user trust in the context of Pakistan's National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), one of the country's most prominent digital public service institutions. The study draws on a comprehensive theoretical framework integrating the E-SERVQUAL model and Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) to evaluate citizens' assessments of digital public service delivery. Methodologically, grounded in a positivist research philosophy with a deductive approach, a quantitative cross-sectional design was employed. Primary data were collected from 200 NADRA e-service users through a structured questionnaire administered via purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, encompassing descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) to rigorously assess the mediating effect of user trust. The findings reveal that e-service quality significantly and positively enhances both user trust and user satisfaction. Specifically, reliable, responsive, secure, and personalized digital services not only directly improve citizens' service experiences but also strengthen institutional trust, which in turn augments overall satisfaction. Moreover, user trust was found to exert a significant partial mediating effect on the relationship between e-service quality and user satisfaction, confirming its strategic role as a bridge between service performance and citizen outcomes. Thus, the results accentuate trust as a strategic institutional asset in public digital service delivery. Theoretically, this study extends the application of the E-SERVQUAL framework to Pakistan's public sector, enriching the growing literature on digital governance and public administration with context-specific empirical evidence. For public administration scholars and practitioners across South Asia, the study presents an evidence-based framework for prioritizing investment in digital service attributes, instrumental for governments to demonstrate the value of costly e-governance reforms with inadequate public resources. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for policymakers and public administrators, demonstrating that cultivating trust through high-quality digital service delivery is fundamental to strengthening state capacity and advancing citizen-centered governance in transitional South Asian economies.

Keywords: E-Service Quality; User Trust; User Satisfaction; E-Government; Digital Governance; Public Administration; NADRA; Pakistan

Session 24 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 VII | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | MALASHREE HALL

CHAIR Prakash Chandra Bhattarai [Kathmandu University] FACILITATOR Alisha Devkota [NASC]

T406 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Assessing the Impact of Salary Grant Cuts and Fiscal Empowerment on Service Delivery in Local Government Institutions in Sri Lanka

Wasala Mudalige Priyantha[1] · **N Wasantha Ariyarathne**[2]

[1] *Sri Lanka Institute of Sri Lanka Local Governance* · [2] *Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils & Local Government, SriLanka*

ABSTRACT

Local governments (Municipal Councils, Urban Councils, and Pradeshiya Sabhas) in Sri Lanka, m play a critical role in delivering essential public services at the grassroots level, with a total of 341 institutions operating across the country. These institutions are generally financially constrained, and their effectiveness is increasingly challenged, particularly due to reductions in central government salary grants and limited fiscal autonomy. The objective of this study is to assess the impact of cuts to central government salary grants and the level of fiscal empowerment on service delivery in local government institutions in Sri Lanka. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights gathered from key stakeholders, including local officials and community representatives within local government institutions. The findings reveal that reductions in salary grants lead to declining administrative capacity, staff shortages, lower morale, and delays in service delivery. This situation also affects governance and public trust, leading to dissatisfaction among citizens and a decline in confidence in local government institutions. The impact on service delivery in financially weaker (low-income) local government institutions is particularly severe. The negative effects on local government development activities are also rapidly increasing. As a recommendation, the central government should be urged to restore adequate salary grants, especially for financially weak local government institutions. In addition, fiscal decentralization should be strengthened by granting local governments greater authority over revenue generation. The revenue mobilization capacity of local governments should be enhanced through the introduction of modern tax collection systems, and officials should be appropriately trained to manage these systems. Furthermore, performance-based grant mechanisms should be introduced at the local government level. Moreover, human resource capacity should be strengthened, particularly in areas such as planning, budgeting, and service delivery. Since citizen participation is essential for effective service delivery, efforts should be made to establish participatory budgeting mechanisms and strengthen community consultation in planning and monitoring local services. Furthermore, greater emphasis should be placed on the adoption of technology, including the promotion of e-governance systems. Finally, collaboration between central, provincial, and local governments should be improved.

Keywords: E-governance; Fiscal Decentralization; Fiscal empowerment & Salary grants

T452 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Gender and Leadership in Nepal's Local Governments: Why Are Women Underrepresented as Chief Administrative Officers?

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Nepal Administrative Staff College

ABSTRACT

Public institutions are more representative when leadership reflects the diversity of the populations they serve. However, women remain significantly underrepresented in the position of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) in local governments in Nepal. This fact prevails despite strong policy commitments to gender equality and inclusive governance. Based on qualitative interviews with women and men civil servants, current and former CAOs, senior government officials, and policy stakeholders, this study examines the institutional, organizational, political and socio-cultural barriers shaping women's access to the CAO position. It explores how recruitment systems, workplace culture, gender stereotypes, informal networks, leadership opportunities, and work–life expectations influence women's progression into the CAOs roles. The study argues that inclusive service delivery at local government requires more than gender-responsive legislation; it also depends on institutional practices and organizational cultures that enable women's meaningful participation and encourage women to occupy challenging roles. By identifying the disconnect between policy commitments and leadership outcomes, the research contributes to debates on inclusive public service and offers evidence-based recommendations for strengthening gender-friendly office culture, feminist leadership development, and institutional accountability in local government administration.

T451 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Women-Centric Nutrition Policies in South Asia: A Comparative Assessment of India's POSHAN Abhiyaan and Nepal's Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan

Vijay Prakash[1] · **Pradeep Kumar Singh**[1]

[1] *Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University*

ABSTRACT

Maternal malnutrition remains a major public health and development challenge in South Asia, with detrimental consequences for women's health, child survival, and the long-term development of human capital. Governments in the region have implemented targeted policy actions to combat malnutrition through integrated and multisectoral approaches. The crucial role of women in achieving nutritional security has been recognized. The present study compares the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan (MSNP) of Nepal with the POSHAN Abhiyaan of India with respect to their implementation strategies, governance structures, policy designs and efficacy in improving the nutritional outcomes of the women. The study is guided by a policy and governance lens that emphasizes institutional convergence, decentralized implementation, community engagement and monitoring systems. The study adopts a qualitative comparative approach and includes detailed analysis of national nutrition surveys, government reports, policy documents, and publications of global organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization (WHO). The analysis looks at key elements between the two programs, including policy goals, target groups, institutional coordination, service delivery mechanisms, digital monitoring and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The results show that although both countries use multisectoral approaches to address maternal and child nutrition as priorities, their institutional arrangements and implementation approaches are different. The MSNP in Nepal emphasizes coordinated planning through the National Planning Commission and strong community participation via local governments and community health volunteers, while India's POSHAN Abhiyaan is characterized by a mission-mode structure supported by digital monitoring tools and convergence of key welfare programs. Progress in scaling up nutrition services has been measured, but both programs continue to face challenges related to anemia, geographic variations, resource constraints, quality of monitoring, and sustained behavior change. The report argues that to improve women's nutritional outcomes, it is vital to strengthen intersectoral governance, improve accountability mechanisms, invest in frontline workers and promote the implementation of evidence-based policy. The study compares two well-known nutrition policy frameworks in South Asia and adds to the body of knowledge on nutrition governance and offers policy recommendations for developing more inclusive, efficient and gender-responsive nutrition systems in developing countries.

Keywords: POSHAN Abhiyaan; Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan; Women-Centric Nutrition Policies; Nutrition Governance; Maternal Nutrition; Comparative Analysis

T421 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Bureaucratic Discretion in Indigenous Communities' Rights Recognition: A 13 Year Case Study of Implementing India's Forest Rights Act

Santosh Gedam
IIM Sirmaur

ABSTRACT

Recognizing the co-dependence of forests and Indigenous communities (ICs), conservation organizations and policymakers increasingly support recognizing their rights. Responding to this call, globally, several countries adopted forest tenure reforms. While the structure of the legal framework intended to recognize rights has varied across countries, their implementation has been reported to be slow and disappointing. India also enacted Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA) to undo historical injustice on ICs and recognize rights on their customary forest through community forest resource rights (CFRR). But its implementation is also reported to be slow and uneven across Indian States. It is puzzling how the CFRR recognition has progressed in only a few sites in India. The objective of this paper is to resolve the stated puzzle by studying sites of relatively better recognition of CFRR in India. Based on the review of the FRA literature, I have studied CFRR recognition in India's Gadchiroli District for 13 years – a leading district in CFRR recognition. I analyzed FRA and its rules, state and central government documents, district-level documents issued to operationalize implementation, CFRR claims, and recognized CFRR data. Additionally, I draw on interviews with government actors, FRA managers/coordinators, NGO members, civil society volunteers, village-level committee members, villagers, and my personal experience working in the district. I analyzed the data using the thematic analysis method. I found that CFRR recognition in the district can be largely attributed to two of the eight District Collectors' initiatives. These high-performing District Collectors adopted innovative and citizen-centric practices for CFRR claim preparation, verification, and recognition. High-performing practices were partly motivated to reach marginalized communities perceived to be facing administrative burdens. Setting claim targets, suggesting enabling procedures, blurring administrative boundaries, and capacity building of field actors are associated with high outputs. While contributing to strands of literature on implementing forest tenure reforms and the widespread exercise of discretion by mid-level actors, particularly in the context of the Global South, the paper highlights idiosyncratic ways of making decisions and exercising authority in administrative institutions in South Asia.

Keywords: India; forest rights act; district collectors; discretion; Indigenous communities

Session 25 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 VIII | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | CHANDRAMA HALL

CHAIR Durapada Sapkota [Government of Nepal] FACILITATOR Ashrita Dhital [NASC]

T415 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Total Quality Humane Governance (TQHG): A New Model for Citizen-Centered Public Administration

Amir Mohammad Nasrullah[1] · **Muhammad Wahidur Rahman**[2] · **Md. Sahadat Hosain**[2]

[1] *University of Chittagong* · [2] *Bandarban University*

ABSTRACT

Governance remains a perilous component for the growth, development, and stability of societies, yet governance catastrophes continue to erupt in both developing and developed nations. The rapid evolution of governance models in the 21st century has underscored the need for a comprehensive and human-centered approach to public administration. Notwithstanding the acceptance of numerous governance models such as New Public Management (NPM), Good Governance, and Collaborative Governance, countries around the globe continue to struggle with systemic misgovernance issues and challenges. The persistent challenges include corruption, inefficiency, lack of accountability, absence of the rule of law, and political instability, especially in the Global South. Using case studies from Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Brazil, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, this paper explores how these governance challenges are apparent in the Global South, and how a new model can offer solutions to address those. In this backdrop, this paper introduces the concept of Total Quality Humane Governance (TQHG), a novel and comprehensive governance framework that combines the Total Quality Management (TQM) principles with the emphasis on ethical leadership, social equity, and human well-being. TQHG advocates for a balance between operational excellence and humane values in the governance system. By integrating continuous improvement with active engagement of the citizen, transparency, and sustainability, TQHG offers a robust model for addressing contemporary challenges in public administration, both in developing and developed nations. This qualitative paper also explores the theoretical bedrocks, key principles, practical applications, and latent implications of TQHG in nurturing effective, inclusive, and ethical governance.

Keywords: Total Quality Management; Humane Governance; Public Administration; Ethical Leadership; Citizen Engagement; Social Equity; Sustainability

T412 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Continuity and Change in Participatory Urban Governance: Revisiting Community-Driven Development (CDD) in Bangladesh, 2010-2025

Parvaz Azharul Huq
University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

Over the last two and a half decades, donor-funded Community-Driven Development (CDD) interventions in Bangladesh have sought to reduce urban poverty by channeling resources through community self-help groups and to promote participatory urban local governance. Whether such interventions transform the underlying relationships between the urban poor and local government, or merely reproduce them in a new form, remains contested—particularly in the South Asian context. This paper revisits that question in slum communities under the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) in Bangladesh after a fifteen-year interval. Its objective is two-fold: firstly, to examine how the spaces, actors and factors shaping community participation in urban local governance have shifted between the UNDP–DFID-funded Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) project and its successor, the Livelihoods Improvement of Urban Poor Communities (LIUPC) project; and secondly, to draw out what these continuities and changes imply for citizen-centric service delivery in South Asian cities. The study adopts a qualitative, longitudinal case-study approach within an interpretivist position. The first phase draws on the author's doctoral fieldwork of 2009–2010 in four UPPR project communities, where in-depth semi-structured interviews with different categories of respondents, for example, community group members, non-participant residents, project officials, elected representatives, local government experts, civil society activists and political leaders, were triangulated with direct observation and documentary analysis. The second phase in 2025 continues in those four communities under LIUPC project, while maintaining these instruments, in order to explore gendered leadership, political participation, financial inclusion, loan recovery, and post-project sustainability issues. The findings indicate substantial continuity in the logic of governance: patron–clientelist mediation by ward councilors, elite capture of office-bearer positions, partial inclusion of the ultra-poor, and the persistent reluctance of "invited" spaces to evolve into "claimed" ones. Alongside this continuity, the data reveal meaningful positive changes, including improved physical infrastructure, a broader vocational training portfolio, greater financial inclusion of women, and the emergence of women-led collective action despite the persistent lack of leadership development, loan-recovery challenges, and political interference. The paper advances the scholarship of public administration in South Asia by demonstrating that CDD, even over time, creates material and gendered improvements without disrupting the patron–clientelist sub-structure of urban local governance and further emphasizing the need for complementary pro-democratic institutional reform at the municipal and national levels to enable citizen-centric service delivery in the region.

Keywords: Community-Driven Development; participatory urban governance; Community Development Committee (CDC); patron–clientelism; Bangladesh

T427 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Social Security Benefits and Livelihood Strategies of Dalit Households in Koshi Rural Municipality, Nepal: A Mixed-Methods Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In the pursuit of inclusive governance, social security in Nepal serves as a critical mechanism for poverty reduction; however, Dalit communities remain disproportionately affected by systemic marginalization, landlessness, and gaps in institutional service delivery. This study evaluates the effectiveness of social security programs through an ethics and inclusion lens, examining how administrative processes impact the livelihood outcomes of Dalit households in the Koshi Rural Municipality. The research employs a robust mixed-methods framework to bridge academic research with administrative practice by integrating quantitative household surveys (N=200) with a predictive analysis using a Random Forest machine learning model applied to municipal social security data (N=3,186). The analysis reveals that 97% of the variance in benefit disbursement (EFT_AMT) is driven by specific socio-demographic indicators, with Dalit child allowances emerging as the most significant predictor (feature importance: 0.72). Furthermore, the study identifies that 80% of surveyed Dalit households suffer from landlessness, which acts as a structural barrier to accessing formal social protection, highlighting a critical disconnect in the current administration's targeting mechanisms. While social security programs reflect a commitment to equity, current bureaucratic barriers and documentation requirements continue to undermine their potential. The study concludes that enhancing state capacity requires targeted policy reforms that simplify documentation for landless populations and expand coverage. These findings offer actionable insights for local-level governance and the broader regional agenda on sustainable, citizen-centric social protection in South Asia.

T401 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Informal Governance Systems in Urban Slums: The Case of Korail Slum

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ABSTRACT

Over one-third of Dhaka's population resides in informal settlements, with the government meeting only a fraction of the annual housing demand. While the private sector serves middle-income groups, the urban poor are left to rely on slums where service delivery occurs through unofficial and often exploitative arrangements. Political actors, utility staff, and local powerbrokers, commonly known as slumlords facilitate access to basic utilities through informal networks, often leading to unsafe living conditions, systemic neglect, and governance exclusion. This paper examines the interdependent structures of slum governance in Dhaka, challenging the dichotomy between formal and informal authority. It argues that informal governance, encompassing political patronage, rent-seeking, and unofficial service delivery, is not merely a reflection of state absence but a coordinated system embedded within broader governance dynamics. Drawing on primary data from interviews with slum residents, informal leaders, government officials, and NGO actors, alongside secondary literature, the study introduces a "syndicate governance" model characterized by patron-client relations and street-level bureaucratic practices. By integrating theoretical insights from the iron triangle, patron-client theory, and informal institutionalism, the paper highlights how governance in slums is maintained through legal ambiguity and selective state enforcement. The findings underscore the need to recognize informal governance not as an aberration, but as a deeply rooted mechanism shaping access to services and citizenship in urban Bangladesh.

Keywords: informal governance; slums; syndicate governance; iron triangle; patron-client theory; informal institutionalism

Session 26 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 VII | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KHAPTAD HALL

CHAIR Bharat Singh Thapa [Tribhuvan University] FACILITATOR Sabik Neupane [NASC]

T519 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Reimagining Public Administration in Pakistan: An Integrated Theoretical Framework of Innovation, Adaptive Governance, and Administrative Resilience

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ABSTRACT

Public administration in Pakistan is facing numerous pressures for effective and efficient response to a dynamic, complex and uncertain governance landscape. Public institutions are constantly at trial in the wake of rapid technological advancements, financial constraints, climate related environmental issues and public expectations. Despite numerous institutional reforms, public sector continue to face challenges in terms of institutional fragmentation, bureaucratic procedures and centralized decision making culture. Consequently, public sector remains institutionally weak in terms of organizational learning, capacity building and adapting to emerging realities. During last two decades, innovation has been increasingly recognized as a core theme for institutional and societal development. However, repeated public sector reforms have pursued isolated, project based and fragmented innovation trajectories rather than a sustainable change. Likewise existing scholarship increasingly recognizes innovation, governance and resilience as separate areas of inquiry rather than offering an integrated and complementary framework view. This tendency has constrained theoretical understanding and coherent designing of frameworks capable of strengthening strategic governance mechanisms in the public sector. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an integrated theoretical framework capable of explaining innovation, adaptive governance and administrative resilience as a coherent framework for public sector reforms. The study postulates that innovation in public sector context should not be viewed merely as a technological intervention or administrative necessity, rather it should be envisioned as an institutional orientation for the development of adaptive, collaborative, and learning organizations capable of responding effectively to internal and external requirements. Anchoring in critically reviewing literature on innovation, adaptive governance, and administrative resilience and identifying institutional conditions enabling adaptive governance, the study proposes an Adaptive Innovation Governance Framework (AIGF) as an integrated conceptual model, capable of demonstrating and informing administrative reforms and public sector modernization in Pakistan. The study employs a qualitative research design based on integrated and interdisciplinary literature and theory-building approach. Bringing insights from multiple theoretical perspectives such as institutional theory, complexity theory, organizational learning theory and psychological safety theory the study offers a coherent conceptual framework capable of explaining how leadership, institutional arrangements, organizational learning, psychological safety and strategic flexibility interact to produce adaptive governance, administrative resilience and enabling environment for public sector innovation. The proposed framework argues that public sector responds to uncertainty, manage complexity and foster innovation through adaptive governance mechanisms and administrative resilience. Innovation, therefore, is an organizational capability to continuously adapt and demonstrate resilience in governance mechanisms rather than an isolated reform initiative. The framework illustrates that these organizational capabilities reinforce each other through continuous organizational learning, flexibility and collaborative leadership. Finally, the study contributes to public administration literature in three ways. First it integrates fragmented streams of scholarship on public administration into a coherent theoretical framework from innovation perspective. Second, it extends foundation for empirical research of public sector innovation. Third, it offers practical perspective of designing public administration reforms moving from procedural and cosmetic change to adaptive, learning-oriented

and resilient administration to support reimagining public administration and sustainable governance reforms in Pakistan.

T501 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Rebuilding the State Around Citizens: Ethical and Inclusive Public Sector Modernization in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

In the South Asian region as a whole, the emphasis of public sector reform has been on efficiency, procedural compliance, and technological advancements. In the case of Bangladesh, although public sector reforms have been effective in enhancing administrative efficiency and service delivery through technology, they have been wanting in terms of fostering public trust, integrity in governance, and citizen engagement. In this paper, the argument is made that for public sector modernization to be truly effective, there needs to be a paradigm shift from efficiency to a citizen-centric, integrity-based, and inclusive governance model. In this study, existing research on public sector administration reform, service delivery, e-governance, and institutional accountability in the context of Bangladesh is synthesized. Through thematic analysis of the existing body of research, the study seeks to understand the role of administrative practices in the experience of dignity for citizens. The analysis reveals areas of continued challenges such as uneven digital inclusion, fragmented accountability systems, bureaucratic discretion, and limited grievance redress systems that continue to erode trust in public institutions. At the same time, it reveals areas of reform innovations and best practices in trust-based governance. From this analysis, this paper proposes a comprehensive framework for public sector modernization by drawing on three interrelated pillars: ethical leadership and institutional integrity, participatory and inclusive service design, and citizen-centric performance management. By drawing on Bangladesh's experiences in the broader regional debates on democratic governance and state capacity, this paper contributes evidence-based insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars. Finally, it proposes practical steps towards rebuilding the social contract between citizens and the state by measuring modernization not just in terms of gains in efficiency but in legitimacy, equity, and trust.

Keywords: trust; governance; citizen; ethics; innovation

T627 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Climate-Responsive Fiscal Federalism: An Institutional Assessment of Nepal's Climate Finance Governance Framework

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ABSTRACT

Nepal's transition to a federal democratic republic under the Constitution of 2015 fundamentally restructured the country's governance system by devolving legislative, executive, and fiscal responsibilities to federal, provincial, and local governments. Concurrently, Nepal remains one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, requiring effective climate finance governance to support adaptation and resilience across all levels of government. While fiscal federalism has created new opportunities for decentralized climate governance, questions remain regarding whether the existing institutional and intergovernmental fiscal arrangements adequately support climate-responsive planning, budgeting, financing, and accountability. This study assesses Nepal's climate finance governance framework through the lens of climate-responsive fiscal federalism. Unlike previous studies that examine climate finance, decentralization, or fiscal federalism independently, this paper integrates these perspectives through an institutional governance framework to assess Nepal's climate finance governance under a federal system. Specifically, it examines the institutional architecture governing climate finance, expenditure and revenue assignments, intergovernmental fiscal transfer mechanisms, climate-responsive budgeting practices, and public financial management arrangements. The study aims to identify institutional strengths, governance gaps, and policy reforms required to strengthen climate finance governance within Nepal's federal system. The paper adopts a qualitative institutional assessment based on a comprehensive review of constitutional provisions, climate change policies and financing frameworks, fiscal federalism legislation, public financial management frameworks, climate change budget coding guidelines, intergovernmental fiscal transfer arrangements, federal budget (Redbook) documents, National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission (NNRFC) policies, and selected government budget and expenditure reports. The analytical framework draws on the principles of fiscal federalism, climate finance governance, and institutional analysis to assess the coherence and effectiveness of Nepal's climate finance governance framework. The assessment indicates that although Nepal has established important legal and policy foundations for climate-responsive governance, institutional fragmentation, vertical and horizontal fiscal imbalances, limited climate-responsive fiscal transfers and inadequate incorporation of climate vulnerability indicators into fiscal transfer formulas, weak intergovernmental coordination, inconsistent climate budgeting practices, and inadequate subnational institutional capacity continue to constrain the effective governance of climate finance. The analysis further suggests that existing fiscal transfer arrangements provide limited recognition of localized climate vulnerability and adaptation needs, thereby reducing the effectiveness and equity of climate finance allocation across provinces and local governments. The study argues that strengthening climate-responsive fiscal federalism requires integrating climate vulnerability into intergovernmental fiscal transfer systems, enhancing climate-responsive public financial management, improving institutional coordination among all three tiers of government, and strengthening subnational capacity for climate budgeting and financial accountability. Beyond climate finance, the paper demonstrates that building climate-responsive fiscal federalism is fundamentally a public administration challenge requiring stronger state capacity, collaborative intergovernmental governance, and accountable public financial management. The study contributes to the emerging discourse on climate-responsive fiscal federalism by providing an institutional assessment framework that can inform public administration and governance reforms, intergovernmental fiscal governance, and climate finance policies in Nepal and other South Asian countries pursuing decentralized governance.

Keywords: Climate-Responsive Fiscal Federalism; Climate Finance Governance; Fiscal Federalism; Public Financial Management; Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers; Institutional Assessment; Nepal

T535 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

From Digital Co-Production to Institutional Decline: The Changing Role of Union Digital Centres in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Union Digital Centres (UDCs) were introduced as one of Bangladesh's flagship digital governance initiatives to expand access to public services through local digital intermediaries. Although the UDCs were able to improve access to government services, there has been a significant reduction in the diversity of services, citizen reliance and institutional relevance in many of them. These challenges are generally attributed to administrative inefficiencies, inadequate resources and weak monitoring. This paper argues that the changing digital landscape itself has fundamentally reshaped the role of UDCs. Internet access, digital services and the proliferation of smartphones have led citizens to increasingly access public services directly, while many others rely on digitally literate family members, neighbours or local service providers instead of making the journey to UDCs. Based on digital governance and co-production theories, this conceptual paper explores how the diffusion of technology and the lack of entrepreneurial incentives and institutional adaptation have reduced the relevance of UDCs. The paper examines the implications of this shift for local governance and public service delivery in light of secondary literature and recent reports on the performance of UDCs. The paper contributes to the digital governance literature by arguing that institutions must adapt alongside changing patterns of citizen–state interaction if digital transformation is to remain effective.

Keywords: Union Digital Centres (UDCs); Digital Governance; Public Service Delivery; Co-production; Digital Transformation; Local Governance; Bangladesh

Session 27 / Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 6 IV | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | KAILASH HALL

CHAIR Rachana Upadhyaya [University of Bristol] FACILITATOR Ashma Bidari [NASC]

T617 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Gender-Responsive Climate Change Adaptation Services and Women's Agency in Agrarian Households: A Case Study of Northern Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh, as a hotspot for the climatic effects of the world, is experiencing drought and extreme temperatures due to the slow onset of climate change. The agrarian experience of the northern region of the country is shaped by this climate stress, accelerated groundwater depletion, recurrent livelihood insecurity due to yield gaps, where women are bearing disproportionate adaptation burden, unequal access to resources and services due to structural inequality, along with household-level power asymmetries. This study sets out to analyze how gender responsive access to agricultural and climate support services shapes women's agency in the face of a drought at the household level and how women's agency shapes the adaptive livelihood pattern in response to changing patterns of weather in Northern Bangladesh. It is based on secondary data, National Planning Documents, and assessment reports by NGOs and INGOs, anchoring theoretically in the IPCC Risk Framework and Feminist Political Ecology, and conceptualizes drought as a convergence of hazard exposure and structurally produced vulnerability, rather than a purely meteorological event. While rural women from agrarian households contribute least to the causes of climate change, their reality about climate change adaptation is not just and proportionately balanced. The scholarly work indicates that women are frequently positioned as the first responders to climate shocks, absorbing food insecurity, water scarcity, and livelihood instability at the household level. In drought-prone Northern Bangladesh, male-out migration expands women's role to managerial responsibilities in crop production without formal authority over innovation, credit, or market decisions. This adaptation gap is amplified by the structural disempowerment, restricted mobility, gendered division of labor, and limited control over productive and financial resources, positioning women in power metrics with a limited negotiation power. Agricultural extension services and climate support services are marked largely as gender-blind, with evidence of weak female representation among extension agents, male-centered delivery formats. The socio-cultural barriers such as 'Purdah' and restricted mobility limit women's access to information about climate, new knowledge about agricultural practices, and formal support systems. Nonetheless, some recent studies have projected that gender-responsive services have the potential to alter the scenario by expanding women's agency. Research identified that where support is delivered through local, trusted, and socially accessible channels, women are more likely to access the services and adopt practices like homestead gardening, poultry and livestock rearing, crop diversification, and climate-smart resource management. However, the legal exclusion is still a constraint for women, which hinders their recognition as a formal farmer and in turn restricts their authority over crop production. Nevertheless, literature indicates that access to agricultural extension services is positively associated with women's empowerment in agriculture and farm income. The analysis concludes that procedural and recognition justice is significant for moving beyond technocratic delivery to institutional reform where women will be acknowledged as a right-bearing climate actor and legitimate decision maker in household and policy dialogue.

Keywords: Climate Justice; Gender-responsive adaptation and services; Women's Agency; Drought; Northern Bangladesh

T612 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Governing Climate Adaptation Finance: Accountability, Allocation, and Oversight Across Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

South Asia bears a disproportionate share of global climate losses yet receives fragmented adaptation finance. Within the region, a critical governance challenge lies not merely in fund scarcity, but in the absence of transparent, accountable systems to govern fund sourcing, allocation, and oversight. Fragmented funding channels—spanning multilateral funds, bilateral partners, and domestic budgets—frequently bypass national public financial management systems, thereby weakening legislative oversight, subnational participation, and civic accountability. Crucially, this governance challenge manifests uniquely across different constitutional and administrative structures. This paper examines the governance architecture of climate adaptation finance across three structurally distinct South Asian states—Nepal (federal republic), Bhutan (constitutional monarchy, unitary), and Sri Lanka (unitary republic)—with three aims: (1) to map how adaptation funds enter and move through national public administration systems in each country; (2) to identify who holds effective decision-making authority over fund allocation—central ministries, subnational/local governments, or external donors—and how this varies with constitutional and administrative structure; and (3) to assess the strength and gaps in oversight and accountability mechanisms governing adaptation expenditure in each system. The paper uses a comparative qualitative case study approach across Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka, selected to hold regional climate exposure and LDC/post-LDC development context relatively constant while varying governance structure. Analysis draws on national climate finance policy documents, budget allocation records, National Adaptation Plans, and donor/multilateral reporting frameworks, structured around three governance dimensions: fund flow and allocation authority, institutional accountability mechanisms, and oversight/monitoring capacity. The paper expects to find that Nepal's federal structure creates formal subnational claims to climate finance authority that are not matched by corresponding fiscal capacity or oversight infrastructure at the local level, producing an accountability gap at the point of implementation. By contrast, Bhutan's unitary, centrally coordinated system is expected to show stronger top-down coherence in fund tracking but weaker local participation in allocation decisions, while Sri Lanka's unitary republican structure offers a comparison point for how legislative oversight mechanisms function absent federal complexity. Together, the three cases allow the paper to isolate how constitutional structure—rather than climate exposure or development level alone—shapes adaptation finance accountability. The paper contributes a comparative framework for assessing adaptation finance governance along allocation, accountability, and oversight dimensions. As South Asian nations advance their NAPs and SDG 13 commitments, these insights offer critical public administration lessons. Specifically, it clarifies how to design climate-responsive oversight mechanisms that bridge the gap between formal political decentralization and practical financial monitoring capacity, thereby strengthening long-term state capacity and inclusive climate action.

T608 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Plans and Policies Related to Climate Change in Bangladesh: Emerging Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Being one of the Most Vulnerable Countries (MVC) of the world to climate change, Bangladesh in its plans, policies and legislation, has put emphasis on climate change caused due to global warming and concomitant sea level rise associated with natural disasters, like floods, cyclones, tornadoes and tidal waves. As it is a disaster-prone country, global warming-induced natural disasters are increased both in intensity and frequency. Among others, the two main objectives of the National Environment Policy 2018 are a) to reduce adverse impacts of climate change and promote adaptation programs; and b) to promote low carbon emission technology. The Policy 2018 called for promotion of community-based climate change adaptation; rehabilitation of climate induced displaced population and adoption and implementation of "Climate Change Resilient Master Plan". The policy in its climate change preparedness and adaptation section, put emphasis on assessing sector-specific vulnerability due to climate change and promoting adaptation measures. There are two other action plans, namely Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), 2009; National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), 2005. The Eighth Five Year Plan (2020-2025), Bangladesh Perspective Plan 2041 and Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 also highlighted on undertaking preparedness program related to adaptation to climate change. The article would discuss achievements and failures of Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund set-up by the Govt of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Climate Resilient Fund established by the development partners would also be discussed. On the legislation front, the article would focus on the Bangladesh Conservation Act 1995 and Conservation Rules 2023 related to containing climate change and enforcement challenges. The Article intends to focus on the implementation challenges of these plans and policies and suggests measures on how to overcome them. The Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MOEFCC) has been entrusted with the responsibility of implementation of the plan. The chapter would focus on the priority of the government related to climate change, political commitment and consensus reached in the parliament in this regard. The role of the development partners, bureaucracy, judiciary, the NGOs and civil society including the media are vital in policy implementation.

Keywords: Climate change; Vulnerability; Adaptation

T626 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Climate Finance Governance for Climate Adaptation: Strengthening State Capacity and Public Institutions in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

\South Asia is among the region's most vulnerable to climate change, yet the capacity of public institutions to plan, manage, and deliver climate adaptation finance remains uneven. Although international climate funds, multilateral financing, and domestic public investments have increased over the past decade, the institutional systems responsible for allocating, coordinating, and monitoring these resources continue to face significant governance challenges. As a result, the effectiveness of adaptation finance is constrained not only by limited financial resources but also by weaknesses in public administration, institutional coordination, and accountability. This paper aims to examine how public institutions across South Asia govern climate adaptation finance and to identify institutional reforms that can strengthen state capacity for effective and inclusive adaptation. The study adopts a comparative institutional analysis based on policy documents, governance frameworks, and published evidence from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Pakistan. It examines how national and subnational governments receive, allocate, implement, and monitor adaptation finance while identifying common institutional barriers that reduce its effectiveness. The analysis highlights several recurring governance challenges, including fragmented institutional responsibilities, weak coordination between national ministries and local governments, limited administrative and financial capacity, project-based financing approaches, and inadequate monitoring, reporting, and verification systems designed specifically for adaptation outcomes. The study also explores how federal and decentralized governance structures influence the flow of adaptation finance to local governments, where climate risks and adaptation needs are often greatest. The paper argues that strengthening climate finance governance is fundamentally a public administration challenge that requires improved institutional coordination, stronger fiduciary systems, transparent accountability mechanisms, and more effective public financial management. It proposes a governance framework that supports climate-responsive public institutions while advancing the localization of Sustainable Development Goal 13 through better planning, financing, implementation, and oversight of adaptation initiatives. The findings offer practical recommendations for governments seeking to strengthen institutional capacity, improve coordination across levels of government, and enhance accountability in climate adaptation finance. By linking climate finance governance with state capacity and inclusive public administration, the paper contributes to current discussions on building resilient institutions for sustainable development across South Asia.

Keywords: Climate finance governance; Climate adaptation; Public administration; State capacity; South Asia

Session 28 / Public Administration and the SDGs

TRACK 1 IV | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | SWAYAMBHU HALL

CHAIR Tehmina Faisal [University of Karachi] FACILITATOR Roshani Bhujel [NASC]

T110 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Poverty Alleviation: A Re-Examination of Government Interventions and Socioeconomic Realities in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Poverty remains one of the most persistent socioeconomic challenges in Sri Lanka despite decades of government interventions aimed at improving the living standards of vulnerable populations. Since independence in 1948, successive administrations have implemented numerous poverty alleviation programmes, including food subsidy schemes, the Food Stamp Programme, Janasaviya, Samurdhi, Divi Neguma, and, more recently, Aswesuma. While these initiatives sought to reduce income inequality, enhance access to basic services, generate employment, and strengthen low-income livelihoods, existing scholarship indicates that they have largely failed to eliminate structural poverty. Although these programmes contributed to short-term welfare improvements, their long-term effectiveness has been constrained by political interference, weak institutional capacity, ineffective targeting mechanisms, and inadequate policy continuity. The main objective of the research is to examine the historical evolution of poverty alleviation programmes in Sri Lanka. This study employs a qualitative research design based exclusively on secondary data. Data were collected through an extensive review of government reports, policy documents, Central Bank publications, Department of Census and Statistics reports, international agency publications, and peer-reviewed academic literature. The collected data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, enabling the identification of recurring themes related to policy implementation, political influence, programme effectiveness, institutional challenges, and long-term poverty outcomes. The analysis reveals that one of the most significant weaknesses of Sri Lanka's poverty alleviation programmes has been their politicization. Beneficiary selection has frequently been influenced by political patronage rather than objective poverty criteria, resulting in the inclusion of non-poor households while excluding many genuinely poor families. Furthermore, successive political administrations have often replaced or restructured existing programmes instead of strengthening them, creating policy discontinuity and reducing institutional efficiency. The findings also highlight persistent administrative shortcomings, including weak monitoring and evaluation systems, poor coordination among implementing agencies, limited transparency, and insufficient community participation. Moreover, many programmes have emphasized short-term cash transfers and welfare distribution rather than sustainable livelihood development through education, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and rural economic development.

Consequently, many beneficiaries have remained dependent on government assistance instead of achieving long-term economic self-reliance. The findings further demonstrate that although Sri Lanka recorded substantial reductions in poverty during periods of economic growth, these achievements have been significantly undermined by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 economic crisis, high inflation, unemployment, and rising living costs. Multidimensional poverty, food insecurity, regional disparities, and income inequality continue to disproportionately affect rural communities, estate populations, female-headed households, and workers in the informal sector. The study concludes that poverty in Sri Lanka is fundamentally structural rather than merely income-based, reflecting unequal access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, housing, and social protection. Sustainable poverty reduction, therefore, requires a transition from politically driven welfare programmes to evidence-based, transparent, accountable, and inclusive development policies that strengthen human capital, improve institutional governance, promote productive employment, and ensure effective targeting of vulnerable populations.

Keywords: Poverty Alleviation; Welfare Policies; Structural Poverty; Political Patronage; Sustainable Development

T113 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

The Role of Media Campaigns in Changing Perception & Engagement of Menstrual Hygiene Management Among Students in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to compare the effect of media exposure to enhancing adolescent girls' knowledge, attitudes, and practices about menstruation in Cumilla, Bangladesh. Though women's awareness of the menstrual health has grown in recent few years, the socio-cultural taboo and misconceptions about menstruation have still dampened proven benefits for adolescent girls, in specifically the rural areas. Thus, a cross sectional study design was used and quantitative data were gathered with a structured questionnaire from 400 adolescent girls. The results showed that the most prevalent source of menstrual health information was social media (98.3%), followed by school programs (100%) and the television (56.8%). The overall responses showed good knowledge and positive attitude of the respondents on the menstruation and they showed practice of appropriate behavior for menstrual hygiene which includes using sanitary pad, bathing regularly and proper genital hygiene. But there were a few misunderstandings: One was that menstruation meant one had conceived; another was the perception of foul odor in menstrual blood. Stigma due to socio-cultural issues and inadequate sanitary products, were also significant barriers, particularly for those who lived in the village. There was a weak but significant positive association between media exposure and menstrual hygiene practices by Spearman's correlation ($\rho = 0.146$, $p = 0.004$), and simple linear regression ($\beta = 0.149$, $p = 0.003$), respectively. However, there was no significant association between media exposure – attitudes ($p = 0.726$) and only a weak association with knowledge ($p = 0.050$). The findings indicate that media usage is more effective in promoting positive menstrual hygiene practices than changing knowledge and/or attitudes. The findings of the study conclude that media, in special social media, has a significant place in enhancing good practices in sanitation of the menstruating girls in the range of adolescent girls. But more work is required to tackle misconceptions, reduce the stigma and increase the availability of information and products around menstruation – particularly in rural areas.

Keywords: Menstruation; Menstrual hygiene management; Media exposure; Adolescent girls; Knowledge; Attitudes; Practices; Social media; Bangladesh

T101 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Bureaucratic Compliance or Technocratic Rigor? Determinants of Gender-Responsive Budget Prioritization in the Local Governments of Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) has become an important instrument for integrating gender equality objectives into public financial management systems. In Nepal, GRB has been formally institutionalized through national policies, constitutional commitments, and budget guidelines. The introduction of federalism in 2015 further expanded the relevance of GRB by transferring planning and budgeting responsibilities to provincial and local governments. Despite these institutional developments, the extent to which gender issues are prioritized in local government budgets varies considerably. In many cases, the presence of GRB frameworks and procedural guidelines has not translated into substantive changes in budget allocations. This gap between formal adoption and fiscal practice raises an important question: what determines whether gender issues receive meaningful priority in local government budgeting? Using survey data from 1,011 elected representatives and administrative officials across 61 local governments in Nepal, this study examines the influence of two sets of factors on gender-responsive budget prioritization. The first includes bureaucratic compliance mechanisms, such as the existence of GRB guidelines and participation in training programs. The second includes technocratic practices, such as the use of sex- and caste-disaggregated data and the conduct of ex post Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) audits. The findings reveal a clear difference between bureaucratic compliance mechanisms and technocratic practices. The use of sex and caste disaggregated data and the conduct of GESI audits are strong and statistically significant predictors of gender prioritization in local government budgets. Local governments that consistently use disaggregated data and conduct gender-focused audits are substantially more likely to report that gender issues receive high priority during budget allocation. These results suggest that evidence-based planning and accountability mechanisms play a crucial role in shaping gender-responsive fiscal decisions. In contrast, bureaucratic compliance mechanisms show weaker or inconsistent relationships with gender prioritization. The presence of formal GESI guidelines is not significantly associated with higher levels of gender prioritization, while participation in GRB-related training is negatively associated with reported prioritization. This pattern may reflect the possibility that trained officials apply stricter standards when evaluating whether budgets genuinely address gender inequality. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of gender-responsive budgeting at the local level depends less on the formal existence of policies and training programs and more on the integration of evidence and accountability within routine public financial management practices. Strengthening data systems and institutionalizing monitoring mechanisms such as GESI audits may therefore be more effective in advancing gender-responsive fiscal governance than relying solely on procedural compliance with guidelines.

Keywords: gender-responsive budgeting; public financial management; local government; Nepal

T114 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Localising the Sustainable Development Goals Through Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu: An Empirical Assessment of Institutional Capacity and Rural Development Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The effective achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) depends not only on national policies but also on the capacity of local governments to translate global commitments into local development outcomes. Despite significant progress in SDG implementation, many rural local bodies in India continue to face challenges related to administrative capacity, financial autonomy, technical expertise, and citizen participation. In Tamil Nadu, the localisation of SDGs through Gram Panchayats has been institutionalised through the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) framework and the State Indicator Framework (SIF 2.0), which aligns state-level development priorities with the United Nations 2030 Agenda. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on how institutional capacity influences the effectiveness of SDG localisation and rural development outcomes at the grassroots level. This paper seeks to examine the relationship between institutional capacity and SDG implementation in Gram Panchayats of Tamil Nadu. Specifically, the study aims to: (i) assess the administrative, financial, technical, and participatory capacities of Gram Panchayats; (ii) analyse the extent to which SDGs have been integrated into local planning and governance processes; and (iii) evaluate the impact of institutional capacity on selected rural development outcomes linked to poverty reduction, health, sanitation, education, water management, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. Primary data will be collected through structured questionnaires administered to elected representatives, Panchayat officials, and community stakeholders across selected Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations will complement quantitative data. Secondary data will be drawn from GPDP documents, government reports, SDG monitoring frameworks, and local governance databases. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, supported by qualitative thematic analysis, will be employed to assess the relationship between institutional capacity and development outcomes. The study is expected to reveal that Gram Panchayats possessing stronger institutional capacities, including effective planning mechanisms, greater fiscal management capability, digital governance adoption, and higher levels of community participation, demonstrate better performance in achieving SDG-related targets. On the other hand, constraints such as inadequate staffing, limited technical support, dependence on external funding, and uneven citizen engagement are anticipated to hinder effective implementation. The research is expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on SDG localisation by providing empirical evidence on the role of local governance institutions in advancing sustainable development. The paper is particularly relevant to public administration in South Asia, where decentralisation reforms and local governance institutions are increasingly recognised as critical instruments for achieving inclusive and sustainable development. By examining the Tamil Nadu experience, the study offers valuable lessons for strengthening state capacity, enhancing participatory governance, improving policy coordination, and institutionalising SDG implementation across subnational governments in the region. The findings will contribute to ongoing debates on public administration, local governance, and sustainable development, thereby supporting the broader agenda of building responsive, accountable, and citizen-centric governance systems in South Asia.

Keywords: SDG Localisation; Gram Panchayats; Institutional Capacity; Rural Development; Decentralised Governance

Session 29 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 IX | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | RARA HALL

CHAIR Bishnu Sapkota [University of Notre Dame] FACILITATOR Surya Prakash Baral [NASC]

T438 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Opinion of Citizen-Centric Public Service Delivery of Ward Offices in Kathmandu Valley

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ABSTRACT

Citizen Centric Governance within ward level public services delivery in Kathmandu Valley is evaluated in terms of accessibility, responsiveness, reliability and online service delivery after the federal restructuring of Nepal. Descriptive research design was used to collect data from 222 household respondents from Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur by utilizing the five point Likert scale. One sample t-test statistics and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was conducted. Moderatelypositive perceptions have been found for access (3.35), user-centricity (3.48) and reliability (3.29). Online service delivery had scored critically low (2.55), with public sector integrity failing to reach the reliability threshold (α=0.646). Necessary infrastructure development in terms of digital technologies, transparency and accessibility measures along with standard protocols need to be developed immediately.

Keywords: Citizen-centric service delivery; Kathmandu Valley; public service satisfaction; ward offices

T434 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Citizen Trust, Digital Governance and State Capacity: An Empirical Study of E-Sevai Service Delivery in Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

Digital governance has become a central component of public sector reforms across South Asia, with governments increasingly adopting technology-enabled service delivery systems to improve accessibility, transparency, and administrative efficiency. While digital platforms have expanded citizen access to public services, concerns remain regarding their effectiveness in strengthening citizen trust and enhancing state capacity, particularly in developing governance contexts. In Tamil Nadu, the e-Sevai initiative represents a significant effort to provide citizens with integrated access to government services through digital platforms and service centres. However, empirical evidence on its impact on citizen trust and public administration outcomes remains limited. This study examines the relationship between digital governance, citizen trust, and state capacity through an empirical assessment of e-Sevai service delivery in Tamil Nadu. The objectives of the study are: (i) to assess citizens' perceptions of service quality, accessibility, transparency, and responsiveness in e-Sevai Centres; (ii) to analyse the influence of digital service delivery on trust in public institutions; (iii) to evaluate the contribution of e-Sevai services to administrative efficiency and state capacity; and (iv) to identify policy measures for strengthening inclusive and citizen-centric digital governance. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. Primary data will be collected through structured questionnaires administered to citizens using e-Sevai Centres across selected districts of Tamil Nadu, supplemented by interviews with service operators and government officials. Secondary data from government reports, digital governance policy documents, and administrative records will support the analysis. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis will be employed to examine the relationship between service delivery performance and citizen trust. The study is expected to demonstrate that efficient, transparent, and accessible digital services positively influence citizen trust in government institutions while improving administrative responsiveness and service delivery outcomes. The findings are also expected to highlight challenges relating to digital literacy, infrastructure disparities, and unequal access to digital services, particularly in rural areas. The paper contributes to the growing discourse on digital governance and public administration by providing empirical evidence from Tamil Nadu, one of India's leading states in e-governance initiatives. The study offers policy lessons for South Asian countries seeking to strengthen state capacity, improve citizen-government relations, and achieve more inclusive and accountable public service delivery through digital transformation. By examining the Tamil Nadu experience, the paper advances understanding of how digital governance can support responsive, transparent, and citizen-centred administration in the South Asian context.

Keywords: Digital Governance; Citizen Trust; State Capacity; e-Sevai; Public Service Delivery; Tamil Nadu; South Asia

T442 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

AI Adaptation in Bangladesh Public Administration: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

The ICT division of Bangladesh drafted the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (2019-2024), which marked its first involvement with AI in public governance. Bangladesh's first National AI Readiness Assessment was published in November 2025 in partnership with UNDP and UNESCO. In Bangladesh, AI-driven e-governance can be helpful for rendering services to the people and the locality that are of dire need, and with the effective use of the native language, this service can be handy for the people with low literacy. It can be effective in ensuring transparency and fighting corruption, as well as it has immense opportunities in some of the vital issues in Bangladesh like disaster management, the health sector, and agriculture, according to the National AI Strategy. Bangladesh has focused on e-governance in the last two decades with agendas like "Digital Bangladesh" and "Smart Bangladesh", which have created a favourable environment for AI adaptation; still, challenges lie with existing administrative, judicial, and linguistic adaptability. Followed by a mixed methods this paper tries to identify the gap between the urban and the rural areas and between the socioeconomic classes in terms of internet facility, digital education, the capacity of the working force, gender disparity, and a fragmented data system are the main barriers. Also, the lack of documented guidelines for the implementation, ethical ambiguity, and integrity and policy disruption are the detrimental factors. The paper concludes that enhancing institutional capacity, providing skill training, investing in high-quality linguistic datasets for Bangla and other indigenous languages, establishing clear ethical guidelines and ensuring policy continuity despite regime changes are essential for effective AI adaptation.

Keywords: Public administration; AI; e-governance; policy; AI adaptation

T454 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Citizen-Centric E-Government for Improving Public Service Delivery in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Citizen-centric governance places citizens at the centre of public administration by ensuring that government institutions and services are accessible, responsive, inclusive, transparent and accountable to the people they serve. Digital transformation offers Nepal an important opportunity to strengthen citizen–government relationships and improve the quality and efficiency of public service delivery. This study examines how citizen-centric e-government can contribute to more responsive, inclusive and effective public services in Nepal with particular attention to emerging initiatives such as the Digital Nepal Framework, Nagarik App and other digitally enabled government services. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study draws on in-depth interviews and case studies of selected e-government initiatives to explore citizens' experiences and perceptions of digital public services. The analysis focuses on key dimensions of citizen-centric governance, including accessibility, usability, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, citizen participation and institutional capacity. The findings suggest that digital government can substantially improve service accessibility, reduce administrative burdens, enhance transparency and strengthen citizen engagement when services are designed around citizens' needs rather than solely around institutional processes. However, persistent challenges including the digital divide, limited digital literacy, inadequate connectivity, concerns regarding data privacy and cybersecurity, fragmented institutional coordination and limited mechanisms for meaningful citizen feedback continue to constrain equitable access and effective service delivery. The study argues that digitalization alone does not constitute citizen-centric governance rather the effectiveness of digital government depends on how well technology, institutions, and public services respond to citizens' diverse needs and expectations. The study concludes that embedding citizen-centric principles within Nepal's digital governance agenda can strengthen public trust, institutional accountability, service quality and citizen satisfaction. It recommends a more inclusive and participatory approach to digital governance, supported by interoperable systems, stronger institutional capacity, digital inclusion measures, robust privacy and cybersecurity safeguards and effective citizen feedback mechanisms. Such an approach can contribute not only to improved public service delivery but also to the broader objectives of good governance, inclusive development, and sustainable public institutions in Nepal. Development.

Keywords: Public Service Delivery; Good Governance; Digital Inclusion; Sustainable

Session 30 / Citizen-Centric Governance and Service Delivery

TRACK 4 X | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | PATHIVARA HALL

CHAIR Nurul Huda Sakib [Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh] FACILITATOR Anup Bhurtel [NASC]

T443 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

From Policy-Induced Inequalities to Citizen-Centric Governance: Rethinking Public Service Delivery in South Asia Through the Indian Experience

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ABSTRACT

Despite sustained economic growth, South Asia continues to exhibit persistent inequalities in access to public services, social protection, healthcare, education, and digital governance. While inequality is commonly attributed to socio-economic disparities, this paper argues that it is equally reproduced through policy design and administrative implementation. Complex bureaucratic procedures, fragmented welfare delivery, digital exclusion, geographical disparities, and weak grievance redress mechanisms often create "administrative inequalities," whereby citizens with similar legal entitlements experience vastly different outcomes depending on their location, social identity, institutional capacity, or digital literacy. Consequently, inequalities are not merely social conditions but are also shaped by the everyday functioning of public institutions. Using India as an evidence-rich case, the paper examines how successive governance reforms have attempted to transform state-citizen relations through citizen-centric service delivery. The study analyses major policy initiatives including the JAM (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile) architecture, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Ayushman Bharat, Digital India, Aspirational Districts Programme, PM Gati Shakti, Mission Antyodaya, and grievance redress platforms such as CPGRAMS. Drawing upon secondary data from the Government of India, the NITI Aayog, the World Bank, the UNDP, and peer-reviewed scholarship, the paper evaluates the extent to which these reforms have reduced administrative burdens, expanded financial inclusion, improved targeting of welfare, strengthened transparency, and enhanced citizen participation. At the same time, it critically assesses continuing challenges, including the digital divide, authentication failures, exclusion errors, uneven state capacity, and regional disparities that continue to limit equitable outcomes. The paper proposes the concept of administrative equality, arguing that public policy should be evaluated not only by legal entitlement or fiscal expenditure but by citizens' actual ability to access quality public services with dignity, fairness, and responsiveness. It develops a citizen-centric governance framework linking inclusive policy design, digital public infrastructure, responsive institutions, and participatory accountability to equitable service delivery. The findings suggest that reducing inequality requires moving beyond redistributive welfare towards governance systems that minimize administrative barriers and actively empower citizens throughout the policy implementation process. By positioning India as an illustrative case within the broader South Asian context, the paper contributes to debates on citizen-centric governance by demonstrating how institutional reforms can reshape the social contract between citizens and the state. It offers policy lessons for South Asian governments seeking to build more inclusive, accountable, and equitable public service delivery systems capable of advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the commitment to "leave no one behind."

Keywords: Citizen-centric governance; administrative inequality; public service delivery; Digital India; Direct Benefit Transfer; South Asia; administrative inclusion; social accountability

T432 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Exploring the Dynamics of Social Safety Net Distribution: A Case Study on Khulna, Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, the Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) are one of the key factors in the country's socio-political dynamics. Each government has used this as a tool to gain public trust and political capital at the grassroots level (Kundo, 2018). Over the years, significant changes have occurred in how these programs are distributed. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the country shifted its SSNPs distribution system from offline methods to online platforms via Mobile Financial Services (MFS) (Shitol et al., 2025). This transition introduced a new dynamic to SSNPs by implementing a more direct cash-incentive model designed to bypass traditional intermediaries, which had long been criticized for creating barriers in accessing services (Parvin, 2023). However, empirical evidence indicates that altering the distribution medium has neither fully eliminated the problem of intermediaries nor increased the overall probability of accessing these services (Shitol et al., 2025; Siddiqui et al., 2025). Following the national parliamentary election of 2026, the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), in line with its campaign promises, introduced a universal social protection scheme using a family card program (Islam, 2026). Considering the change in three phases in the distribution of the social protection system, this case study utilizes qualitative data from beneficiaries of three different time frames in Khulna district, Bangladesh. The 'governance diaries' (Loureiro et al., 2023) approach is used to capture the distribution process of SSNPs in the first two phases. We found the prominence of intermediaries and interpersonal networks in accessing social protection during both pre- and post-digital distribution. In contrast, the piloting phase of the family card distribution was designed and executed by local administration under the supervision of the Social Welfare Ministry, claimed by the beneficiaries to be free from political influence. However, the uncertainty among beneficiaries surfaced regarding the scaling of this scheme. The study has tried to understand these three forms of the distribution model with an in-depth empirical analysis, which can contribute to developing a more comprehensive and efficient service delivery model for social protection programs in South Asian countries.

Keywords: Service delivery; SSNP; Intermediaries; Bangladesh; Social Protection

T417 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

From Colonial Bureaucracy to Citizen-Centric Governance: Reimagining Ethical State Capacity in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

Public administration in South Asia continues to be deeply influenced by institutional structures and administrative cultures rooted in the colonial period. Despite democratic transitions, welfare expansion, and governance reforms in countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, many state institutions still retain centralized authority, bureaucratic rigidity, and limited citizen engagement. These continuities often create challenges for ethical governance, inclusive development, and public trust. This paper examines how colonial bureaucratic legacies continue to shape governance practices in South Asia and asks how public administration can be reimagined to better serve democratic societies in the twenty-first century. It specifically explores how inherited administrative systems affect citizen participation, ethical accountability, and state capacity, while also identifying pathways for more inclusive and citizen-centric governance. The study adopts a qualitative and comparative methodology, focusing on India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka as key case studies. Drawing on postcolonial theory, public administration scholarship, and contemporary governance debates, it analyzes secondary sources including academic literature, policy frameworks, governance reform reports, and SDG-related institutional assessments. Through thematic comparative analysis, the paper investigates the relationship between colonial administrative continuities and present-day governance challenges such as service delivery gaps, social exclusion, and deficits in public trust. The paper argues that strengthening state capacity in South Asia requires moving beyond procedural reforms toward a deeper transformation of governance values and institutions. Decolonizing public administration is presented not merely as institutional restructuring, but as the creation of citizen-centric systems grounded in ethical accountability, participatory governance, and local realities. By reimagining public administration through this lens, South Asian states can build more inclusive, democratic, and responsive institutions capable of addressing contemporary developmental challenges while restoring public trust and legitimacy.

Keywords: Colonial Bureaucracy; Citizen-Centric Governance; Ethical Governance; State Capacity; Decolonization; Public Trust; Inclusive Development; SDGs

T416 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Public Value Creation through Digital Procurement Governance: A Decadal Assessment of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

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Magadh University

ABSTRACT

Public procurement is vital for sustained economic development in underdeveloped economies. Accordingly it accounts for a considerable portion of government spending as in OECD countries it constitutes 25-30% of GDP, while in India it is approximately 20%. The digital transformation of public administration has consistently reshaped how modern state economies design, deliver, and legitimize governance processes in the 21st century. Among these transformations, digital public procurement has emerged as a critical instrument for enhancing administrative efficiency, transparency, accountability, and inclusive economic participation. In India, GeM was launched on 9th August 2016, driven by the goal of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance" as one of the most significant digital governance reforms in public procurement. This can be prophesized to enhance "Ease of Doing Business" simultaneously promoting greater transparency, inclusion, and efficiency in the public procurement system. GeM was conceived as an integrated online procurement platform for government ministries, departments, public sector enterprises, and local bodies with the goal to replace fragmented and opaque procurement practices with transparent, technology-enabled, and citizen-oriented governance architecture. This paper critically assesses the extent to which GeM has transformed public procurement governance in India over the past decade. It addresses the broader policy question of whether digital procurement systems can simultaneously enhance administrative efficiency, promote transparency and accountability, expand socio-economic inclusion, and strengthen citizen trust in public institutions. The study situates GeM within contemporary debates on digital governance, platform governance, and public value theory, particularly in the context of developing democracies navigating complex governance and developmental challenges. The study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design based primarily on secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents, parliamentary committee observations & audit reports, GeM statistics, and annual reports on digital governance and public administration reforms. The analytical framework is informed by Mark Moore's Public Value Theory and contemporary developments on digital state capacity and governance innovation. The paper evaluates GeM across multiple dimensions, including procurement efficiency, transparency mechanisms, accessibility, and inclusion of marginalized economic actors, administrative responsiveness, and institutional accountability. The research finds that GeM has significantly contributed to the reduction of procedural discretion, increasing market competition, and improving transactional transparency. This surge pushes the platform's cumulative Gross Merchandise Value of about ₹18.4 lakh crore, driven by a massive network of over 1.36 lakh government buyers and nearly 25 lakh registered sellers. A core driver of this expansion is advancing inclusive procurement sellers including Micro and Small Enterprises securing over 51 lakh orders worth ₹2.36 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, women -led SHGs businesses and startups. At the same time, the study identifies persistent challenges related to digital divide, institutional capacity disparities, cybersecurity concerns, uneven adoption across administrative tiers, and barriers affecting smaller vendors in technologically constrained regions. Beyond efficiency gains, the platform demonstrates how digital governance reforms can strengthen institutional legitimacy, enhance citizen-oriented administration, and contribute to more transparent and accountable governance systems. The findings hold broader relevance for South Asian countries seeking to modernize public administration through digital platforms while balancing efficiency, inclusion, and democratic accountability.

Keywords: Citizen-Centric Governance; Digital Governance; GeM; Public Procurement; Public Value

Session 31 / Modernizing Public Administration for Democracy, Development and State Capacity

TRACK 5 VIII | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | LUMBINI HALL

CHAIR Chandra Dev Bhatta [Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung] FACILITATOR Aakriti Shakya [NASC]

T507 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Shaping the Future of Governance in Nepal: Public Administration Reform Through Inclusion, Accountability, and Digital Innovation

Meen Bahadur Poudyal Chhetri
Public Administration Association of Nepal

ABSTRACT

Nepal's governance stands at a decisive tipping point. It's reform today will shape the nation's democratic strength for decades. This paper delivers a critical, solutions-driven analysis of Nepal's effort to align public administration with global good governance principles while confronting rooted challenges: political interference, corruption, exclusion, favoritism, and chronic inefficiency. The argument is clear -- merit-based recruitment and promotion must replace patronage to professionalize the civil service. Capacity-building must evolve from routine training to a culture of competence and service. Performance management should drive results, reward integrity, and center citizens at the heart of administration. Digital transformation is Nepal's most underused device for change. Properly harnessed, it can make governance transparent, efficient, and participatory, especially for marginalized groups. Yet its promise is undermined by corruption, eroded ethics, and resistance to reform. Addressing these issues remains central to restoring public trust and ensuring effective governance. This study reveals that political interference significantly undermines the effectiveness of Nepal's civil service, leading to inefficiency and weakened professional integrity. Comparative insights from South Asia highlight proven pathways to embed professionalism, accountability, inclusion, and technological innovation into Nepal's reform journey. A meaningful transformation requires an integrated agenda that blends structural reform, ethical leadership, inclusive governance, and digital innovation. This must go beyond policy adjustments. While it demands a cultural shift embedding trust, transparency, and competence at every level. This paper offers both diagnosis and roadmap, calling on policymakers, practitioners, and citizens to reimagine and rebuild a public administration capable of delivering the resilient, inclusive, and ethical governance that Nepal urgently needs.

Keywords: Public Administration Reform; Good Governance; Digital Transformation; Accountability; Inclusion

T520 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Behavioural Framework for Policy Implementation in Bangladesh: A Macro-Meso-Micro Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Policy implementation denotes the deliberate process of executing a set of preplanned coordinated actions through various policy instruments adopted by the government and agencies. It is a dynamic process through which policy objectives are translated into tangible outcomes whose success heavily depends on the actions and behaviour of individual actors (both state and non-state) operating within institutional and socio-cultural contexts. This study employs a qualitative research design based on systematic analysis of secondary sources, including policy documents, official reports, and scholarly literature in the context of Bangladesh. This study examines policy implementation in Bangladesh through a macro–meso–micro behavioural framework, which explains how individual choices, cognitive processes, motivations and different contexts shape implementation performance. The model highlights that implementation outcomes are influenced not only by policy design, formal structures and procedures but also by how people think, decide, and act in real social environment. The findings demonstrate that behavioural factors permeate all levels of the policymaking process, most importantly at implementation level. It reveals that behavioural dynamics at the micro level interact with organizational practices at the meso level and broader political and institutional conditions at the macro level. In Bangladesh, political culture, ideology, social norms, and economic conditions, often shaped largely by institutions (mostly by extractive institutions), constrain actors, bureaucrats in particular to innovate or commit to effective implementation. They play the pivotal role at all levels as implementers and their behaviour is shaped by multi-dimensional individual and social aspects such as bounded rationality, cognitive boundaries, risk aversion, and political incentives. Thus, the process continues interacting within the broader social and political contexts. It is found that the aggregated behaviour of different actors developed over time in different contexts through multidirectional interactions at micro level transmits to organizations at meso level and policy, culture and institutions at macro level. As a result, number of vital issues contribute to the interactive process. The study suggests that institutional behaviour often reflects political compliance rather than adherence to formal procedures and institutional values. When organizations are influenced by politicization, it allows actors to reciprocate benefit between them that results in poor implementation performance. The study further finds that the social interactions underpinning policy implementation in Bangladesh validate the behavioural model, demonstrating that individual-level behavioural interventions extend beyond the micro level. When diverse actors operating at the meso and macro levels possess a sense of ownership, demonstrate commitment to results, and are dedicated while receiving support from non-state actors, implementation performance is more likely to succeed. In contrast, structural limitations, resource constraints, and the cognitive boundaries of bureaucracy tend to undermine performance and contribute to failure. The study recommends adoption of co-creation model of policy implementation driven by commitment and ownership of all actors beyond the compliance. It also advocates altering incentive environments, redesigning performance management systems to be ownership-driven and establishing a politicization-free professional bureaucracy.

Keywords: Policy Implementation; Behavioural Governance; Politicization of Bureaucracy; Institutional Constraints

T522 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Beyond Nudging: Towards Neuro-Behavioural Public Administration for Inclusive and Adaptive Governance in South Asia

Alok Kumar Gaurav[1] · **Vaishali Saxena**[2] · **Astha Arora**[1] · **Shashikant Pandey**[3]

[1] *Central University of Karnataka* · [2] *University of Lucknow* · [3] *Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University*

ABSTRACT

Digitalization, artificial intelligence (AI) and the use of data for governance have been reshaping the theory and practice of public administration more and more. Although the behavioural approach to public policy has become globally famous for its use to shape citizens' behaviours, particularly in regards to taxation, health, education and environmental sustainability, the challenges for contemporary governance calls for the adoption of more advanced approaches than the first generation behavioural approach. This paper posits the idea that this current confluence of behavioural public policy, neuroscience and public administration presents a new paradigm in the design of more adaptive and citizen-centric governance systems in South Asia, with an emphasis on evidence-based governance. Based on the latest advances in behavioural science, neuroeconomics, cognitive psychology and public administration, the paper introduces a novel concept: Neuro-Behavioural Public Administration (NBPA) as a new interdisciplinary approach combining behavioural insights and neuroscientific research to explain how citizens and public administrators think about risks, make decisions, react to public services and trust in institutions. Unlike classic nudging, which aims to counteract cognitive biases mainly by adjusting the structure of choice, NBPA aims to understand the processes of the brain and emotions involved in public decision-making in order to create context-sensitive, ethical and socially inclusive interventions. The paper chronicles the development of behavioural public policy from libertarian paternalism to second-generation behavioural governance, focussing on novel developments including digital nudging, the design of public services using artificial intelligence to deliver personalised service, adaptive policy experimentation, behavioural data analytics and human-centred policy design. It also explores using neuroscientific tools and evidence to enhance policy communication, crisis management, public trust, deliver less burdensome administration and evidence-informed leadership for public administration. Such innovations have significant implications for South Asian states, which are grappling with complex development issues, demographic differences, digital disparities, and institutional constraints. The paper also suggests that ethical, transparent and democratic accountability are closely linked to behavioural governance. The rising trend of leveraging behavioural data, predictive algorithms, and AI-driven decision-making systems brings about privacy issues, manipulation, algorithmic bias, and disparities in access to digital public services. Thus 'nudging for compliance' must be replaced in the next generation of behavioural public policy with the promotion of behaviourally-informed, rights-based and participatory governance. Public administrators need to therefore acquire interdisciplinary skills, integrating the fields of behaviour, neuroscience, digital governance and public ethics. Finally, the paper offers a conceptual model of Neuro-Behavioural Public Administration, setting the cognitive processes of the citizen, the trust in institutions and the ethical role of AI at the heart of governance innovation. It believes that the merging of behavioural science and the science of the brain can enhance state capacity while also ensuring democratic values, providing a transformative agenda for public administration reform and digital governance in South Asia.

Keywords: Behavioural Public Policy; Neuro Public Administration; Nudging; Artificial Intelligence; Behavioural Insights; Human-Centred Governance; South Asia

T511 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Reimagining Public Education Governance Through Human-Centered AI: A Framework for Ethical, Inclusive, and Capacity-Driven Education Systems in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

Public institutions are increasingly using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to redesign policies, provide services and enhance teaching and learning processes. South Asia governments are increasingly looking to digital transformation initiatives to enhance the quality, accessibility and efficiency of public education systems across the region. However, the use of AI in educational governance has not yet been uniformly adopted and thoroughly researched in an ethical, inclusive, and human-centric way. Much debate in the field has tended to focus on technological innovations and administrative efficiency, and comparatively little on other matters like equity, democratic accountability, teacher agency, institutional readiness and digital exclusion. The concerns are especially relevant in developing countries as the differential use of technology, policy support and governance capacity remain a factor in education results. This study examines the role of Human-Centered AI in the modernisation of public education governance in South Asia, maintaining ethical accountability, inclusivity and institutional sustainability. In the study, the authors propose a framework that is grounded in context, and that can be applied to the integration of AI into public education systems in a manner that will enhance state capacity while maintaining the involvement of humans and their professional autonomy. In detail, the study explores the way in which the policies, governance arrangements and approach to digital education related to AI are being framed within selected countries in the South Asian region: Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The study uses a qualitative comparative content analysis of policy documents, national AI policies, AI in digital governance policies, public education reform reports, and international policy publications from various organizations, including UNESCO and the World Bank. Thematic analysis is used to uncover themes across the categories of ethical governance, institutional readiness, administrative modernization, educational inclusion, and the role of teachers in AI-based public settings. The work draws on the principles of Human-Centered AI and sociotechnical approaches, which underscore the need for aligning AI technologies with human values, democratic processes, and social responsibility. These results will showcase how AI has the potential to transform the public education sector by improving decision-making capabilities, providing personalized learning support, streamlining administrative processes, and enabling data-driven governance. The study at the same time points to key risks of algorithmic bias, disparities in digital access, inadequate regulatory protection, and potential loss of teacher autonomy and trust. The findings indicate that education modernization is not an easy process to achieve with just technology, but also with inclusive governance structures, ethical supervision, institution capacity, and community and teacher engagement in decision-making. This research attempts to place the implementation of AI in the context of the public administration reform and state capacity in South Asia and brings into the contemporary discussion on democratic governance, digital transformation, and citizen-centric public administration delivery. Proposed framework provides practical advice for policy makers, school leaders and public institutions on how to adopt AI solutions transparently, equitably and adaptively, to regional contexts. Finally, the work offers a locally informed, but internationally applicable lens on the potential role of AI for ethical, inclusive, and capacity building of public education systems in South Asia.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence in Education; Human-Centered AI; Public Education Governance; Ethical AI; Educational Administration; State Capacity; Digital Governance; South Asia

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TRACK 5 IX | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | PRITHVI HALL

CHAIR Deepak Kumar Khadka [Policy Research Institute (PRI)] FACILITATOR Raju Pangeni [NASC]

T537 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Digital Government, Artificial Intelligence, and Sustainable Development: Evidence for Strengthening Public Administration in OECD Countries

Ayub Ali
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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation is reshaping public administration by enhancing government efficiency, institutional capacity, and evidence-based policymaking, thereby creating new opportunities to advance sustainable development. Despite the growing importance of digital governance, limited empirical research has comprehensively examined how artificial intelligence (AI) and technological innovation influence the relationship between the digital economy and sustainable development from a public administration perspective. This study investigates the impact of the digital economy on sustainable development in 32 OECD countries during 2005–2022, with particular emphasis on the moderating role of AI and the mediating role of technological innovation in strengthening governance outcomes. Employing Driscoll–Kraay standard errors (DKSE), Panel-Corrected Standard Errors (PCSE), Feasible Generalized Least Squares (FGLS), quantile regression, and instrumental-variable estimations, the study generates several important findings. First, the digital economy significantly enhances sustainable development by improving digital governance, institutional effectiveness, and the capacity of public institutions to deliver sustainable public services. Second, the asymmetric analysis reveals that the sustainability-enhancing effects of the digital economy are stronger in countries with lower sustainability performance but gradually diminish at higher sustainability quantiles. Third, artificial intelligence, measured through AI-related patents and industrial robot stock, positively moderates the relationship by strengthening evidence-based governance, intelligent resource management, and public sector efficiency. Fourth, technological innovation, represented by patent applications and research and development expenditure, mediates the relationship by accelerating innovation diffusion, green technology adoption, and resource-efficient public service delivery. Finally, heterogeneity analysis indicates that these effects are more pronounced in less economically developed, highly industrialized, and highly urbanized OECD countries. The findings suggest that governments should strengthen digital governance frameworks, invest in AI-enabled public administration, enhance institutional capacity, and promote innovation-oriented public policies to improve public service delivery, accelerate SDG implementation, and build more resilient and sustainable governance systems to achieve broader sustainability goals, including SDGs 3, 4, 8, 12, and 13.

Keywords: Digital Government; Public Administration; Artificial Intelligence; Sustainable Development; Digital Governance; Technological Innovation; SDGs

T539 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Everyday Administration: Political Complexities, Patronage and Relationality in Nepali Bureaucracy

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines power relations, political partition and patronage practices in Nepal's civil service focusing on the transfer of civil servants. The political complexities and dynamics have been analyzed through the ethnographic approach using three different cases to reveal how the practices of transfer in civil service are managed and manipulated by those having power connections to the political and administrative leaderships. Bureaucracy, as one of the major actors in overall governance, the everyday practices of bureaucrats has not only facilitated understanding the everyday political and social complexities but also served to analyze the ways they consolidate administrative privilege and political patronage. Mainly, focusing on three different scenarios, this study has provided a glimpse of the complexities of managing everyday administration and making systemic arrangements of bureaucracy. It has highlighted the ways power and politics are associated with transfer mechanisms in Nepal's bureaucracy and informs a political struggle, partition and patronage practices reflected in the everyday administration within the bureaucracy are not usual phenomena however such practices are being more common these days. Adopting the interpretative and descriptive approach to the ethnography of the transfer of civil servants, this study has revealed the contradictory and contested processes along with the widely variation of experiences and outcomes in relation to power and political relations which exist, operate and manipulate the process through which conjunctural formations in Nepal's bureaucracy is taking place. Due to such practices, professionalization of Nepali civil service has witnessed tremendous challenges with low morale, trust, persisting nepotism and gradually being politicized. It is shaping and reshaping because the civil servants have experienced political power relations and patronage have been powerful instruments to be transferred in an office they desire to be in, for which they are being engaged in trade unions, making connection with political and higher administrative leadership to strengthen themselves to manipulate the transfer system. The lived experiences of civil servants suggest that the civil service is characterized by hegemonic power relations, power influence and manipulation (where some people are enjoying more benefits to others who do not have power connection to political and administrative leadership) which reflect deep rooted power and politics in, at least theoretically imagined apolitical, state machinery.

Keywords: Bureaucracy; Transfer; Politics; Power Relation and Patronage

T503 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Student Participation, Institutional Governance, and Social Responsibility in Higher Education: A Social Work Perspective on Administrative Challenges and Innovation in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

Rapid social, economic, and administrative transformations are taking place in South Asian higher education institutions, impacting student involvement, institutional governance, and social responsibility. In these challenging times of inequality, mental health concerns, digital revolution, and socio-political instability, effective administration of educational institutions is crucial for promoting inclusive and student-centered growth. Universities and colleges serve as vital institutions for education, and from a social work viewpoint, they are significant arenas for social justice, participation, empowerment, and community involvement. This research aims to examine the correlation between institutional governance practices and the well-being, involvement, and social responsibility of higher education students. The research investigates the impact of administrative frameworks, student support services, grievance procedures, and participatory decision-making on students' academic experiences and social involvement. The research examines the role of social work principles in enhancing the democratic, inclusive, and responsive nature of educational institutions. A quantitative study approach will use a standardised questionnaire delivered to 150 students from higher education institutions. The research will assess students' perspectives on transparency, accessibility to administrative services, involvement in institutional activities, mental health assistance, and avenues for civic engagement. Data will be examined using descriptive and inferential statistical approaches to identify principal governance-related concerns impacting student development and institutional trust. The study contends that integrating social work methodologies into higher education governance may promote more inclusive, responsible, and student-centric institutions. The results are expected to provide actionable suggestions for politicians, educational leaders, and social work practitioners to improve participatory governance and student welfare systems within South Asian higher education settings.

Keywords: Higher Education; Governance; Public Administration; Social Work; Student Participation; Institutional Accountability; Student Welfare; South Asia; Inclusive Education; Administrative Innovation

T502 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Digital Transformation or Resource Drain? Technostress, Work-Life Balance, and Governance Gaps in South Asian Public Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

South Asian public hospitals are undergoing a rapid digital revolution, including electronic health records, AI-driven appointment scheduling, performance management tools, and digital surveillance systems. Though these innovations offer several advantages to the sector, empirical findings indicate that they impose a new burden on healthcare workers. Health care workers, such as nurses and physicians, as well as administrators, have experienced more technostress, lack of work-life balance, lack of autonomy, and problems with algorithms. In public hospitals with limited resources, where the welfare of employees is already questionable, digital transformation could become a drain on resources rather than a generator. A stratified random sample of 387 employees (doctors, nurses, and administrative staff) was drawn from four public tertiary care hospitals in Karachi, Pakistan. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SMART PLS 4.0 was conducted to test direct, mediating, and moderating paths. Common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test. Employees with high levels of digital workload were 2.4 times more likely to report symptoms of burnout. As many as 23% of employees believed that their hospitals have digital performance indicators. Right-to-disconnect laws (in place at only one of four hospitals) helped avoid blurring of work-life boundaries. The study provides quantitative evidence that right-to-disconnect policies and algorithmic transparency are not abstract ideals but measurable buffers against digital-induced resource loss.

Keywords: Digital transformation; employee well-being; public hospitals; Conservation of Resources theory; technostress; workload; autonomy; fairness; work-life balance; governance principles; South Asia

Session 33 / Public Administration and the SDGs / Climate Change, Sustainability, and Inclusive Governance

TRACK 1 V / TRACK 6 V | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | JANAKI HALL

CHAIR Nirmal Kumar Raut [Tribhuvan University] FACILITATOR Aasthadeep Dhakal [NASC]

T616 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Climate Adaptation in a Multi-Level Governance Context: Policy Localisation, Public Trust, and Indigenous Knowledge in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh

Fahim Shahriar
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ABSTRACT

Over the last twenty years, Bangladesh's climate adaptation policies have focused on indigenous practices, ecosystem degradation, livelihood vulnerability, and community-level coping strategies. However, how adaptation is shaped by public institutions, policy implementation processes, and inclusive governance procedures has received little or no attention. This paper directly addresses this research and policy problem by unfolding climate adaptation as a nexus between environmental management and public administration, presenting challenges involving coordination, accountability, participation, and recognition of local knowledge in one of the most complex regions of Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). This region's distinct context, along with overlapping governance structures such as central and local administration, Hill District Councils, projects supported by international donors, and traditional leadership, brings significant concerns regarding the on-ground role of public institutions and policy localization in this area. The key objective of the paper is to examine climate adaptation in CHT through the lens of inclusive public administration and policy localization. The objectives are focused on three major areas: the link between formal policies and local governance practices, the role of public institutions and institutional gaps in climate adaptation planning and implementation, and contributing to global scholarship of climate adaptation by unfolding the importance of inclusive and context-sensitive public administration in politically and ecologically distinct regions such as the CHT in Bangladesh. The paper follows a qualitative case study approach focusing on the CHT region of Bangladesh. The method includes key tools such as document analysis (analysis of key documents such as national adaptation plan (NAP 2023-2050), CHT related development plan, donor project documents implemented in the region, and relevant institutional frameworks), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with government officials, local administration, NGO workers, traditional leaders, and others), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the indigenous community members, and climate affected households. Following a thematic analysis approach, this paper finds six themes: policy localization, multi-level governance coordination, role of local knowledge in institutional frameworks, climate finance as a resource, trust in public institutions, and conflict resolution and environmental justice. The six themes result in a broad argument: sustainable climate adaptation in CHT requires adaptation outcomes shaped by coordinated public institutions that focus on combining policy regulations with indigenous practices, gaining trust from local communities through accountable service delivery, and transparently using the designated finances for the cause of environmental justice. The paper shifts the discussion from climate impact and ecological vulnerability towards inclusive public administration and policy localization, by arguing that adaptation in the CHT depends on how public institutions localize national climate policy, coordinate across overlapping governance structures, recognize Indigenous knowledge, and ensure accountable service delivery in a politically and ecologically distinct region. As many South Asian countries face similar governance and geographic challenges, this study contributes directly to a better understanding of how climate policies operate in regions with geographical remoteness and requires a coordinated and specific model for climate adaptation, rather than a 'one size fits for all' model.

T618 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Inclusive Governance and Climate Justice: Reframing Child Marriage as Non-Economic Loss and Damage in Northern Bangladesh

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[1] *Asian Institute of Technology*

ABSTRACT

The contemporary landscape of child marriage increasingly shaped by what multilateral institutions define as a "polycrisis"- a convergence of rising cost of living, conflict, public health crises, and an accelerating impact of climate change. These overlapping crises intensify pre-existing social inequalities and disproportionately affect adolescents in low and middle-income countries. In particular, climate and environmental stressors, when combined with socio-economic fragility compounding loss and damage to human and child rights, particularly for children living in resource-constrained households experiencing recurrent flood, river erosion, saltwater intrusion, climate-induced displacement. The study reconceptualises child marriage (CM) in climate-vulnerable regions as a non-economic loss and damage (NELD) by putting forward its functionality where climate adaptation, mobility governance and child safety and protection are insufficient, emerging as maladaptive coping strategy. The study intends to explore how climate-induced loss and damage intersect with gendered vulnerabilities to bolster the persistence and adaptation of child marriage practices in Bangladesh? Historically child marriage described as harmful social practice caused by poverty, social and cultural norms and barriers to gender equality restricting individuals agency, access to education and health services, reduced bodily autonomy and controlled mobility limits overall participation and further marginalize future prospects of girls and womens. Recent scholarship highlights a concerned intersection: the economic instability following COVID-19 and the mounting threats of the climate crises are driving a surge in child vulnerability. Data suggests that one billion children live in "extremely high risk" areas and Bangladesh is among one of them. Northern Bangladesh has the highest child marriage prevalence rate in South Asia despite national progress over the year along with several climate risk hotspots hosting bothe the sudden and slow onset events. In coastal area, study findings confirms a significant association (specifically severe flooding and riverbank erosion) between natural disaster exposure and the increased incidence of child marriage as IRC documented 39 percent surge. However, slow onset events like heatwaves or drought identified as prominent driver of child marriage in SSA and South Asia, studies indicates substantial impacts on adolescent girls health, especially SRHR and disruption of education during the year of or immediately following a severe heatwave or dry spell heightening the child marriage risk. Methodologically the study will be framed within a Critical Environmental framework (CEJ) lens to observe how unequal exposure to climate risk and social protection interact with demographic, sociocultural background and other identities to create experiences of marginalization that shapes capacity and strategy for resilience and adaptation leading to child marriage. The research will apply qualitative methodology for secondary analysis and synthesis of peer-reviewed literature, policy documents and major national and international data sets such as BDHS, MICS, Child Marriage Data Portal by UNICEF alongside climate vulnerability evidence. This mixed qualitative-secondary approach enables both macro-level pattern identification and micro-level interpretive depth. Moving beyond economic assessments of non-economic losses the study will critically engage with the Loss and Damage framework including erosion of social protection, educational discontinuity and compromised bodily autonomy, It further interrogates the role of inclusive governance in addressing these vulnerabilities in differed social and ecological level, assessing weather current climate adaptation and social protection policies adequately incorporate the lived realities of at-risk populations.

T108 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Localising the Sustainable Development Goals: Assessing the Status of SDGs in Kerala, India

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ABSTRACT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global framework for addressing major social, economic, and environmental challenges, but their achievement depends largely on local governments as they play a significant role in adapting and customising the SDGs into development outcomes. Existing literature has mainly focused on the institutional and governance mechanisms of SDG localisation. Very little attention is given to evaluating its impact on development outcomes. This paper analyses both the localisation process and its outcomes by examining SDGs performance at both state and local levels through the SDG India Index and the Panchayat Advancement Index. In the first part, the paper focuses on the interaction between three key actors in the localisation process: the state government, local governments, and the community organisations. The state government has played a key role in enabling SDG localisation through policy support, fiscal devolution, institutional coordination, and capacity-building initiatives. At the local level, Kerala has integrated the SDGs into its local government development plan, aligning them with local needs and priorities. Therefore, local governments at both urban and rural levels have to align their development plans with the SDGs. Kudumbashree, Kerala's self-help group, has played a crucial role in localisation efforts through its extensive network of neighbourhood groups and community-based initiatives. The NITI Aayog SDG Index analysis indicates that Kerala has made overall progress in the SDGs with its composite score increasing from 69 in 2018 to 79 in 2024 and showing significant improvements in clean energy, sustainable cities, water and sanitation, and gender equality. However, the progress has been uneven in health, education, inequality, and responsible consumption. To look into SDGs outcomes at the local level, the study uses the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI), a monitoring framework that assesses the performance of Gram Panchayats across nine SDG-related themes. The PAI score indicates significant improvement in Gram Panchayat performance in Kerala from 2022–23 to 2023–24. The number of Panchayats securing higher grades also increased significantly. Thematic analysis shows improvements in the themes of infrastructure development, good governance, environmental sustainability, social protection and poverty reduction. However, there was a decline in the themes of water sufficiency, child-friendly development, and women-friendly outcomes. The paper concludes that Kerala's progress on the SDGs has resulted from coordinated interactions among the state government, local governments, and community institutions. The thematic findings reveal that progress has been uneven across goals, and several goals are in stagnation or decline, which requires attention. The Kerala experience offers important lessons for other Indian states and countries in South Asia seeking towards the SDGs.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); SDG Localisation; Democratic Decentralisation; Local Government; Kerala; Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)

T103 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Men's Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence in Bangladesh

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East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence (IPV), often framed as a gendered issue with women as victims and men as perpetrators, remains a serious social, public health, and human rights concern globally. This dominant narrative has led to the neglect of female-perpetrated IPV against men, particularly in Bangladesh, where male victimization is largely overlooked in research and policy. Addressing this gap, the present study explores the lived experiences of male IPV victims by their female intimate partners, focusing on the nature of abuse, its consequences, and men's coping and help-seeking strategies. The study is grounded in the family violence perspective and gender symmetry theory, both of which recognize that violence in intimate relationships can be bidirectional. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data are collected through semi-structured interviews with approximately 30 male participants recruited via men's rights organizations. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's framework, is employed to identify key patterns and develop case studies. Findings reveal that male victims experience multiple forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, financial, sexual, and legal manipulation, with significant impacts on their health, well-being, and social relationships. Stigma, societal disbelief, and traditional masculinity norms hinder help-seeking, leading many men to rely on informal coping mechanisms while avoiding formal support systems. The study highlights the need for gender-inclusive policies, legal reforms, and support services in Bangladesh. By aligning with SDG 5 and SDG 16, it advocates for more equitable and inclusive approaches to IPV, aiming to address the needs of all victims regardless of gender.

Keywords: Bangladesh; Female; IPV against Men; Qualitative Research

Panel 4 / Public Perception, Governance and Public Administration: Turning Evidence into Trust, Inclusion, Responsiveness and State Capacity

Panel Session | 6 NOV 2026 | 11:00–12:30 | ARANIKO HALL

CHAIR Meghan Nalbo [The Asia Foundation] FACILITATOR Pratibha Dhungana [NASC]

P4.1 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Survey of Nepali People (SNP): Citizen Perceptions of Government and Public Administration

Uddhab Pyakurel
Kathmandu University

ABSTRACT

Evidence Source: Survey of Nepali People (SNP). The opening evidence presentation draws on the Survey of Nepali People to establish how citizens experience public institutions. Its focus is on a selective set of governance-related trends: confidence in government, institutional trust, access to and quality of public services, perceived government responsiveness and accountability, participation in public decisions, and expectations of different levels of government. Rather than presenting the survey as a broad inventory of opinions, the contribution uses citizen experience as an important lens on the quality of public administration and the citizen–state relationship. It will foreground tensions that can arise when administrative improvements are not recognized by citizens, when views differ across levels of government, and when better service delivery does not automatically produce greater institutional trust. These themes establish the basis for comparison with the other evidence sources. Core Question: What are citizens telling the state, and how should public administration respond to their experiences and expectations?

Keywords: Citizen Perceptions; Institutional Trust; Public Services; Responsiveness; Accountability

P4.2 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Nepal: The State of Federalism Report 2025 — Institutional Capacity and Responsiveness

Dilaram Panthi
Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme

ABSTRACT

Evidence Source: Nepal: The State of Federalism Report 2025. This contribution examines Nepal's governance system from an institutional perspective, using the State of Federalism Report 2025 as the principal evidence source. It situates the experiences and expectations expressed by citizens alongside questions of the capability of federal institutions to respond, implement decisions and deliver public services. The discussion connects federal governance arrangements and administrative performance to the wider panel's concern with public trust and responsiveness. It will consider the relationship between institutional reform and everyday citizen experience, including whether existing government systems are equipped to recognize dissatisfaction, learn from feedback and address gaps in public expectations. Core Question: Is the governance system institutionally capable of responding to what citizens expect?

Keywords: Federalism; Institutional Capacity; Service Delivery; Governance; Public Administration

P4.3 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Institutional Beliefs, Inclusion and Investments in State Capacity

Chandra Bhandari

Inclusion Economics Nepal & GovLab

ABSTRACT

Evidence Source: Beliefs About Institutions (2024); From People's War to People's Rule (2017/18–2018). This contribution brings together two strands of Governance Lab (GovLab Nepal) research: work on beliefs about institutional stability and inclusion, and research on the historical foundations of inclusive local governance. The 2024 research considers how perceptions of political stability and inclusion relate to officials' willingness to invest in state capacity, while the earlier studies offer a historical lens on inclusive governance. By focusing on officials' beliefs and the legacies of governance arrangements, the discussion complements citizen-perception data and institutional assessments. It helps interrogate how expectations of institutional durability, representation and inclusion affect governance choices, and why administrative capacity cannot be understood solely as a technical matter. Core Question: How do beliefs about stability and inclusion shape officials' willingness to strengthen state capacity, and what do historical experiences reveal about inclusive local governance?

Keywords: Institutional Beliefs; Inclusion; Political Stability; State Capacity; Local Governance

P4.4 RETURN TO SCHEDULE

Gauging Elite Perceptions: Governance, Power and Decision-Making

Sudeshna Thapa
The Asia Foundation

ABSTRACT

Evidence Source: Gauging Elite Perceptions. This contribution introduces the perspective of influential actors who shape or interpret Nepal's political and administrative system. Drawing on Gauging Elite Perceptions, it examines how those involved in governance and decision-making understand institutional performance, reform needs and the functioning of the state. The evidence provides a counterpoint to citizen-focused research and formal assessments of federal governance. The discussion will consider where the understandings of influential actors are consistent with citizen experience, where they differ, and what those differences suggest about the responsiveness of public decision-making. This comparison is central to translating multiple sources of governance evidence into practical administrative learning. Core Question: How do influential governance actors understand the system, and how closely does that understanding reflect citizens' experiences?

Keywords: Elite Perceptions; Governance; Decision-Making; Citizen–State Relations; Public Administration

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