



6th South Asian Conference on Public Policy and Governance

“Resilience and Renewal: Reenvisioning Governance through Youth Engagement, Digital Transformation, and Cultural Narratives in South Asia”

Date: 2 – 3 April 2026 (19 – 20 Chaitra 2082)

Venue: Nepal Administrative Staff College

Background and Rationale

South Asia is evolving a lot in terms of society, politics, and technology. This region is at a historical crossroads, with changes in government, shifts in the federal system, civic movements led by young people, fighting natural disasters, and technology-enabled governance. The demographic change, technological progress, and cultural heterogeneity present challenges as well as possibilities for resilient and inclusive governance in South Asia. Generation Z networks along with techno-savvy citizens in South Asia have efficiently utilized social media to voice against governments, mobilize amid disasters, enabling relief initiatives, locating missing people, and advocating climate justice. Thus, the digitally native citizens function as initial responders and builders of resilience in the face of ecological crises. The theme “Resilience and Renewal: Reenvisioning Governance through Youth Engagement, Digital Transformation, and Cultural Narratives in South Asia” reflects this generational and institutional transformation, inviting reflection on how South Asian societies are rebuilding trust, reimagining leadership, and renewing governance models in the digital age.

Youth movements are changing the governance landscape of South Asia. The participation and responsibility towards society along with the opinions of the citizens are transforming while trying to find a connection with the government entities ruling the nation. The Gen Z protests in Nepal was fueled by the disparity seen in the lifestyle of the political elites led to internet movements and campaigns. People of all age groups were seen on the streets supporting the protest. The old parliament disbanded, and Sushila Karki was sworn in as Nepal's first female prime minister. This digital inclusion shows that institutions need to reform¹. Youths in Bangladesh organized "Gen Z revolution" against government repression, unfair civil service job quota system, high youth unemployment, economic troubles after COVID, and prevalent corruption. As a result, their government was toppled². The "Aragalaya" movement in Sri Lanka began with the fall in economy and inability of people to pay their debts. This led to the fall of governments that were already in power. This changed the focus of the younger generation, becoming disconnected from their problems³. Gen Z rallies were also prevalent in India against corruption and the lack of jobs⁴. The trend also shows that such movements are learned and replicated around the world using digital technologies. So, it is a matter of time for all other countries in South Asia to be prepared.

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/16/colombo-kathmandu-youth-movements-nepal-toppling-entrenched-elites>

2 <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/06/asia/bangladesh-protests-hasina-resignation-explainer-intl-hnk>

3 <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/9/16/sri-lanka-bangladesh-nepal-is-south-asia-fertile-for-gen-z-revolutions>

4 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/hr-policies-trends/gen-zs-rage-in-india-its-neighbours-is-stoked-by-a-staggering-jobs-crisis/articleshow/124332891.cms?from=mdr>

Within these movements, South Asia requires integrated disaster governance that incorporates technology, youth engagement, and local knowledge. This is because the area is prone to natural calamities and effective and efficient technology can help people stay safe and rebuild. This requires adaptive learning, digital coordination, and participatory government. People were quite upset with the government response to disaster, but social media got young people interested in developing solutions that were accessible for mitigating crisis. The digital networks for risk reduction developed by the government and citizens help individuals who need it, discover people who are missing, and fight for climate justice. This shows that youths often become first responders and support those who are having trouble with the environment⁵. The digital creators are also leveraging their cultural legacy as a venue to discuss, do things, and come up with new ideas. They are transforming ways of sharing stories, developing art, and accomplishing things as a collective. This has made it imperative for the future government of South Asia to include everyone, respect culture, encourage democracy, and push technology ahead. This also highlights the cruciality of turning public institutions into systems that can learn and adapt. The 6th South Asian Conference on Public Policy and Governance serves as a forum to discuss the interconnected dynamics of youth agency, governance reform, mitigating disaster and crisis, digital transformation, and cultural narratives, with the aim of collaboratively envisioning strategies for a resilient, inclusive, and future-oriented South Asia through six sub themes.

Aim

The 6th South Asian Conference on Public Policy and Governance aims to provide a platform for dialogue, reflection, and knowledge sharing on the evolving governance landscape of South Asia. It seeks to explore how youth engagement, digital transformation, and cultural narratives can strengthen resilience, rebuild trust, and renew public institutions to respond effectively to social, political, and environmental challenges.

Objectives

- To examine the role of youth movements and civic engagement in shaping governance, public policy, and institutional reform across South Asia.
- To explore how digital technologies, innovation, and artificial intelligence can improve public service delivery, enhance transparency, and foster citizen participation.
- To analyze the influence of cultural values, identity, and social transformation on governance practices, public trust, and inclusive development.
- To discuss strategies for adaptive and responsive public administration capable of addressing natural disasters, climate risks, and socio-political uncertainties.
- To foster collaboration and dialogue among scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and youth for knowledge exchange and policy learning.

Sub-theme 1: Mass Uprisings and Future of Governance

This sub-theme examines how mass uprisings reshape political structures, social expectations, and the legitimacy of governance in South Asia. It explores the conditions that give rise to collective mobilization, from political exclusion and inequality to demands for justice and accountability. The discussion focuses on how governments respond to such movements whether through reform, repression, or renewal and what these responses reveal about the strength and adaptability of institutions. This also considers the long-term implications of uprisings for democratic governance, state-citizen relations, and institutional reform. The sub-theme also considers how technology, media, and civic networks influence the scale and impact of popular movements. It highlights that understanding mass uprisings is key to envisioning more responsive, participatory, and resilient governance systems for the future.

⁵ <https://ictframe.com/nepal-flood-relief-efforts-genz-moha/>

Sub-theme 2: Avenues for Responsive Public Administration

This sub-theme focuses on the pathways through which public administration can become more responsive, inclusive, and citizen centered. It examines how administrative systems can adapt to changing social expectations, technological advances, and complex governance challenges. The discussion highlights strategies for improving service delivery, strengthening feedback mechanisms, and building trust between citizens and the state. Emphasis is placed on institutional reforms that promote transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct within public service. The sub-theme also explores the role of innovation, digital governance, and participatory approaches in enhancing responsiveness and efficiency. It emphasizes that a responsive public administration is essential for sustaining democratic legitimacy, ensuring equitable development, and meeting the evolving needs of society.

Sub-theme 3: Innovation and Artificial Intelligence for Digital Governance

This sub-theme explores how innovation and artificial intelligence (AI) are transforming the landscape of governance in South Asia. It examines the potential of digital tools, social media and intelligent systems to enhance decision-making, improve public service delivery, and strengthen accountability. The discussion highlights both the opportunities and challenges of integrating AI into public administration, including issues of ethics, data privacy, and digital inclusion. Attention is given to how governments can build the institutional capacity and technical competence required for effective digital transformation. The sub-theme also considers how innovation can promote transparency, citizen participation, and evidence-based policymaking. It emphasizes that responsible and inclusive use of AI is key to advancing digital governance and creating more efficient, adaptive, and trustworthy public institutions.

Sub-theme 4: Culture, Identity, and Social Transformation

This sub-theme examines the dynamic relationship between culture, identity, and social transformation in shaping governance and public life in South Asia. It explores how cultural values, traditions, and collective identities influence political behavior, public policy, and institutional change. The discussion highlights the role of cultural narratives in promoting inclusion, tolerance, and social cohesion amid diversity and change. It further examines how evolving notions of identity linked to ethnicity, gender, religion, and region intersect with governance and development agendas. The sub-theme also considers how cultural transformation can serve as a foundation for renewal, fostering empathy, solidarity, and civic responsibility. It emphasizes that recognizing and respecting cultural diversity is essential for building resilient, participatory, and just societies in the region.

Sub-theme 5: Responding to Climate and Disaster Risk for Sustainable Future

This sub-theme focuses on how governance systems can effectively respond to the growing challenges of climate change and disaster risk in South Asia. It examines the roles of national and local governments in developing adaptive policies, building resilience, and safeguarding vulnerable communities. The discussion highlights the importance of integrating climate action and climate finance into public planning, budgeting, and institutional reforms to ensure sustainability and long-term stability. It further emphasizes collaborative approaches that unite government, civil society, and the private sector to address environmental risks and promote green innovation. The sub-theme also explores how knowledge, technology, and community participation can strengthen preparedness and recovery efforts. It underscores proactive and inclusive governance is essential to managing climate and disaster risks and achieving a sustainable future.

Sub-theme 6: Youth Leadership for Adaptive Governance

This sub-theme explores the role of youth as catalysts for adaptive and forward-looking governance in South Asia. It examines how young leaders contribute fresh perspectives, technological skills, and social energy to address emerging policy challenges and institutional reforms. The discussion highlights the importance of empowering youth through participation, education, and innovation, enabling them to shape governance systems that are more responsive and resilient. It emphasizes how governments

and institutions can build supportive conditions that encourage meaningful youth participation in policymaking, local governance, and civic life. The sub-theme also considers how intergenerational collaboration can strengthen adaptability and sustain reform momentum. In essence, it highlights that investing in youth leadership is key to revitalizing public institutions, rebuilding trust, and guiding governance toward a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Keynote Theme: Government Functions and Reforms During Transition

The keynote focuses on how government functions evolve during periods of political, social, or institutional transition. It examines how administrative responsibilities such as policy implementation, service delivery, and public accountability are maintained when systems face uncertainty. The discussion highlights the need for reforms that strengthen institutional capacity, ensure transparency, and uphold the rule of law. Attention is given to the restructuring of government institutions to respond effectively to citizens' needs, manage change, and rebuild legitimacy. Leadership and coordination among federal, provincial, and local governments are emphasized as key to maintaining continuity and coherence during transition. The keynote also underscores the importance of resilient institutions and reform-minded leadership committed to restoring trust and building a sustainable foundation for good governance in South Asia.

Panel Discussion Theme 1: Youth, Protest, and Public Voice

The panel discussion explores the growing role of youth in shaping public discourse and influencing governance across South Asia. It examines how young people engage with political and social movements, using protest, digital platforms, and civic initiatives to express collective aspirations and hold institutions accountable. The discussion highlights the importance of recognizing youth participation as a legitimate form of democratic engagement rather than mere dissent. Attention is given to how governments and institutions can respond constructively to youth voices, integrating their perspectives into policy processes and governance reforms. The panel also considers the social, cultural, and technological factors that amplify youth mobilization and redefine the boundaries of public space. It highlights that fostering dialogue between state and youth is essential for inclusive governance, social renewal, and long-term political stability in the country.

Panel Discussion Theme 2: Towards Ethical Governance: Public Value, Trust and Commitment

The panel discussion examines the principles and practices of ethical governance in South Asia. It explores how governments and public institutions can build trust, uphold integrity, and deliver public value through transparent decision-making and effective service delivery. The discussion underscores the importance of accountability, openness, and citizen engagement as cornerstones of ethical governance. It highlights how public servants, policymakers, and institutions can reinforce ethical standards and respond more effectively to citizens' expectations. The panel also considers the social, cultural, and institutional factors that shape public trust and influence governance outcomes. It concludes that ethical governance is the foundation for strong institutions, inclusive development, and deeper public trust across South Asia.

Key Dates

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Nepal Administrative Staff College

Jawalakhel, Lalitpur, Nepal

Phone: +977-1-5423022, +977-1-5422160, +977-1-5422002

Fax : +977-1-5424906 | P.O. Box: 2152

 Hello Nepal Administrative Staff College |  @NASC_Nepal

E-mail: info@nasc.org.np | Website: www.nasc.org.np