



Government of Nepal
Office of the Prime Minister
and Council of Ministers



Government of Nepal
National Planning Commission



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Finance



NATIONAL GOVERNANCE SYMPOSIUM 2025

Doing Development Differently

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01. Background and Context

Nepal is at a pivotal moment. In the summer of 2024, something shifted. Young Nepalis, many of them under 25, took to the streets not merely in protest, but in proposition. The Gen Z Movement, catalyzed by frustration with entrenched governance failures, hollow promises, and a political establishment seemingly disconnected from the aspirations of a generation raised on connectivity and accountability, became a watershed moment in Nepal's public discourse. Their message was unambiguous: the old ways of doing development are no longer sufficient.

This movement did not simply demand better governance. It demanded a fundamentally different relationship between the state and its citizens — one built on transparency, merit, inclusion, and results. It forced a conversation that many in policy circles had long deferred: What does it mean to Do Development Differently?

It is against this backdrop that the National Governance Symposium (NGS) 2025 was convened.

Initiated in 2022 through the Kathmandu Declaration, the NGS was conceived as a neutral platform: apolitical, evidence-based, and grounded in the voices of those actively working within Nepal's governance and development landscape. That founding declaration established a shared vision: that inclusive, innovative governance was not aspirational, but achievable if the right people were in the right rooms, having the right conversations.

Each subsequent edition has built on that foundation. But NGS 2025 marked a deliberate evolution: from dialogue to action, from conversation to co-creation.

Co-organized with the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC) in Lalitpur, NGS 2025 was convened in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the National Planning Commission (NPC) with Daayitwa, and the Nepal Leadership Academy as organizing partners, where it functioned as a live policy laboratory. It brought together senior government officials, private sector leaders, civil society practitioners, academics, diaspora networks, and — critically — youth and Gen Z voices who are no longer waiting at the margins of policy but demanding a seat at the table.

1.1 Theme of NGS 2025

The symposium's central theme "Doing Development Differently" was not chosen as a direct response to a fundamental diagnosis: Nepal is not resource-poor. It possesses talent, institutional frameworks, financial instruments, and technological potential. What it lacks is alignment — between policy intent and implementation, between government and citizen, between data collection and decision-making, between digital ambition and institutional readiness.

To address this, NGS 2025 organized its entire programme around four strategic resource pillars:

People. Money. Data. Technology.

They were the four pressure points where the diagnosis was sharpest and where the potential for meaningful, near-term reform was the greatest. Each pillar became a dedicated Policy Studio: a structured, facilitated working session designed to move beyond problem identification and toward concrete, transferable policy recommendations.

1.2 The Rationale

Nepal has the talent. It has the resources. It has institutional architecture. What has been missing is coherence, a deliberate alignment between what the state intends and what citizens experience.

i. Bureaucratic rigidity continues to limit adaptive governance. Institutions designed for a centralized, compliance-driven era are not enough to respond to the speed, complexity, and citizen expectations of the present. Training systems are not aligned with the competencies federalism demands. Leadership pipelines are not properly supportive of the required diversity. Inclusion of women, of youth, of marginalized communities, remains more rhetoric than architecture.

ii. Public finance is under-mobilized and under-leveraged. Despite growing revenue collection, fiscal space remains constrained by low absorption capacity, fragmented subnational budgeting, and an underutilized diaspora capital base. Remittances flow in; productive investment does not flow out at the scale Nepal's development ambitions require.

iii. Data is collected but rarely used. Nepal generates substantial administrative and census data, yet decision-making at the policy level remains largely intuition-driven. Data systems are fragmented across ministries, incompatible in format, and inaccessible to the practitioners who need them most. The promise of evidence-based governance remains largely unfulfilled.

iv. Digital transformation is stalled by mindset, not just infrastructure. Connectivity is improving. Platforms are being built. But adoption is uneven, trust is low, and the cultural and institutional shifts necessary for genuine digital governance reform have not kept pace with technical investments.

v. Youth voices are yet to discover structured channels into policy. The Gen Z movement demonstrated both the energy and the analytical capacity of Nepal's young citizens. What it also exposed was the absence of formal, institutionalized mechanisms through which that energy can be channeled into governance reform.

02. Objectives



- **01 — Explore the theme through four strategic lenses** To interrogate the meaning of *Doing Development Differently* through the concrete, interconnected dimensions of People, Money, Data, and Technology, moving from abstraction to actionable insight.
- **02 — Create an inclusive, evidence-based platform for dialogue** To convene a genuinely diverse set of stakeholders, spanning government, private sector, civil society, academia, diaspora, and youth, with a deliberate emphasis on authentic Gen Z participation and meaningful engagement from the Daayitwa alumni network.
- **03 — Identify practical pathways for reform** To surface innovative, context-specific approaches to resource mobilization, institutional strengthening, and inclusive economic governance, solutions grounded in Nepal's realities.
- **04 — Generate and formally present actionable policy recommendations** To ensure that the outputs of each Policy Studio were not shelved as conference documents, but formally presented to the **Chief Secretary of Nepal**, creating a model of real-time accountability, rarely seen at governance convenings.

03. Program Overview

NGS 2025 was a single-day, full-immersion event structured around an Opening Keynote Plenary, four parallel Policy Studios, Live Policy Recommendation Presentation and a Closing Keynote Plenary. Unlike traditional conference formats, each studio was designed as an interactive policy lab — moving from diagnosis to live recommendation.

EVENT SNAPSHOT

1 Day Event Duration	4 Policy Studios	150+ Total Participants (Female: 69 , Male: 79, Other: 1)	12+ Policy Recommendations
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PROGRAM FLOW AT A GLANCE

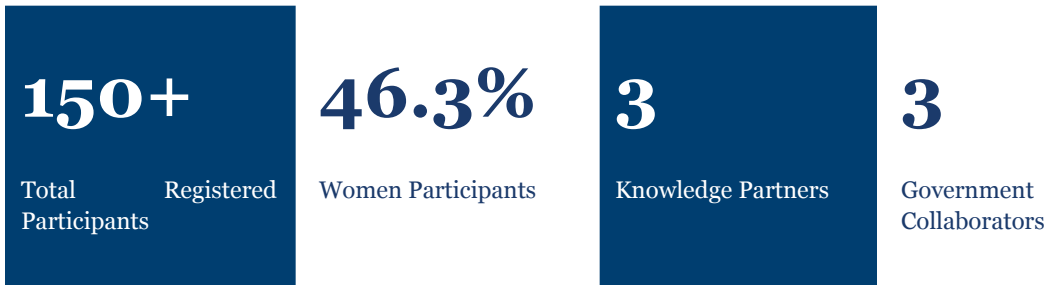
8:00 – 9:00 AM	Registration & Networking
9:00 – 10:00 AM	Opening Keynote Plenary — Prithvi Hall Welcome Opening Special Keynote Remarks
10:00 – 10:15 AM	Group Photo & Tea/Coffee Break
10:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Policy Studio 1: PEOPLE (Room A) & Policy Studio 2: MONEY (Room B) — Parallel Sessions
12:00 – 1:00 PM	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:45 PM	Policy Studio 3: DATA (Room A) & Policy Studio 4: TECHNOLOGY (Room B) — Parallel Sessions
2:45 – 3:00 PM	Tea Break & Reconvene

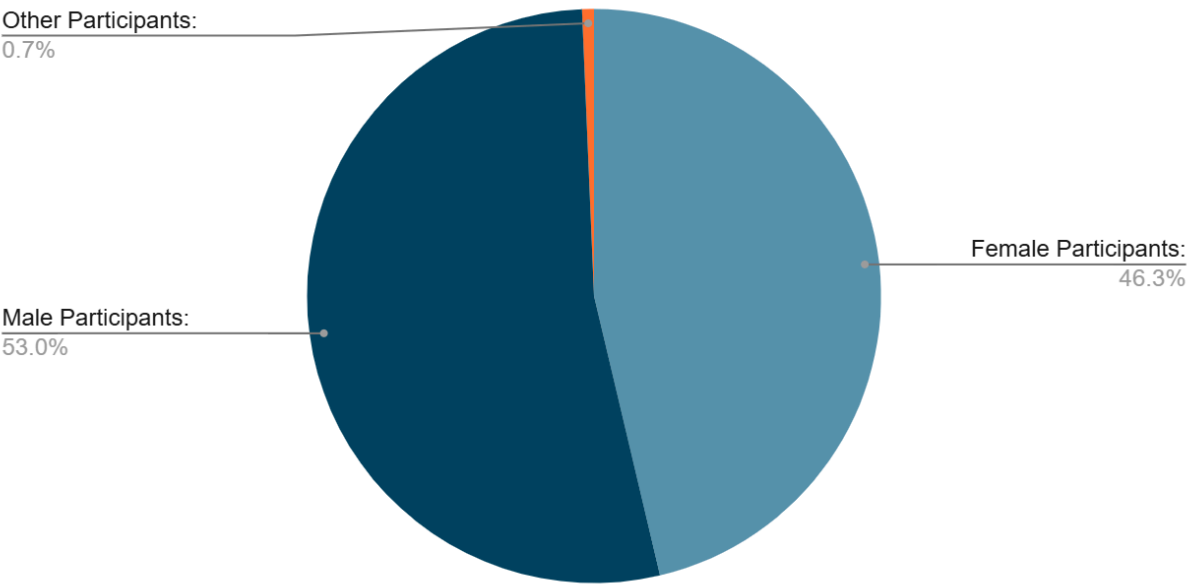
3:00 – 5:00 PM	Closing Keynote Plenary — Governance Reform for Inclusive Prosperity Presentation of Live Policy Recommendations to Chief Secretary
5:00 PM+	Hi-Tea & Networking

04. Participant Profile

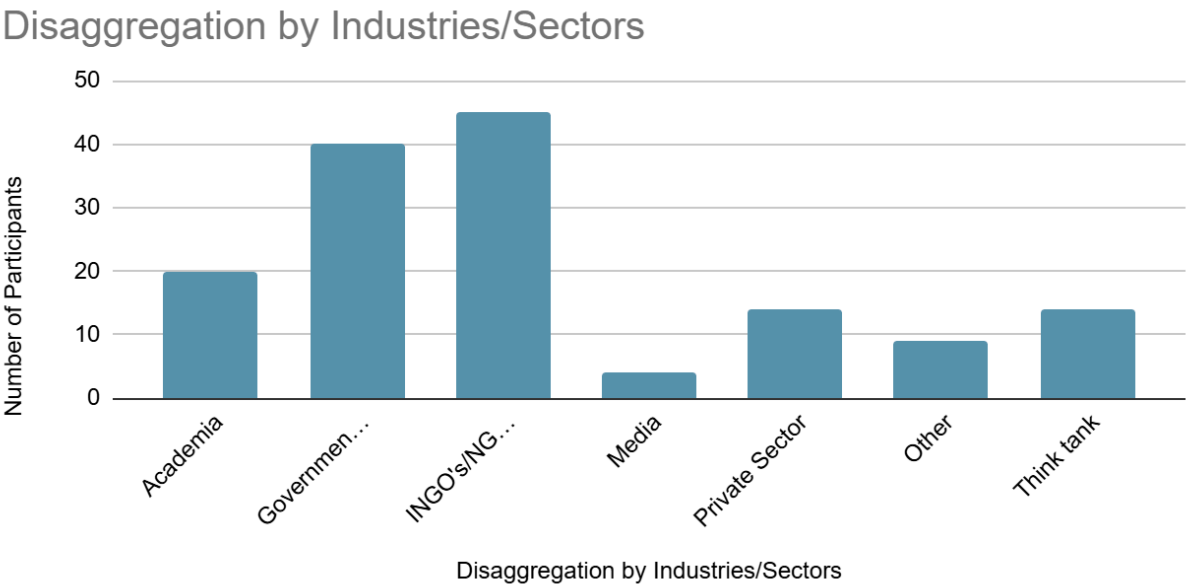
NGS 2025 brought together over 150 registered participants from across Nepal's government, development, academia, INGOs, NGOs, think-tanks, and private sectors.

BY THE NUMBERS





Sectoral Representation



05. Event Flow

a. Opening Keynote Plenary

The symposium opened with a powerful call for reinvention, not just of policy, but of the mindset behind it. Senior dignitaries from government, central banking, and local governance set the stage with one unifying message: Nepal has the capacity it needs. What it requires now is the will to do things differently.

	Speaker
Welcome Remarks	Dr. Nisha Onta, Founder & Executive Director, Governance Lab
Opening Remarks	Ms. Laxmi Devi Pandey, Chairperson, Hupsekot Rural Municipality & NARMIN
Special Remarks	Prof. Dr. Biswo Nath Poudel, Governor, Nepal Rastra Bank
Keynote Remarks	Hon. Rameshore Prasad Khanal, Minister of Finance & Federal Affairs
Session Chair	Mr. Ram Sharan Pudasaini, Executive Director, NASC

The plenary emphasized the urgency of rebuilding trust and strengthening federalism, noting that recent youth movements, local government leadership, and administrative coordination must be leveraged as catalysts for deeper institutional change.

“I don’t agree with the notion that the GenZ revolution was disastrous, rather it’s the biggest learning for us to do development differently.” - Ms. Laxmi Devi Pandey (Hupsekot RM / NARMIN) in her opening remarks.

The plenary session started with the welcome remarks from Dr. Nisha Onta where she emphasized that if we were to develop Nepal differently, the governance must evolve accordingly and she proudly mentioned that Governance Lab has been supporting in the process via platforms like NGS which evolves yearly with feedback, suggestions, and reflection. Stepping on to them, the next organized NGS will focus on more meaningful participation, deeper as well as action-oriented discourses just like this year’s.

Following that, Ms. Laxmi Devi Pandey (Hupsekot RM / NARMIN) mentioned that for doing the development differently, there should be an effective bottom-up approach with cross-sectoral collaboration & partnership, where the local levels must lead. She also supported youth-led movements and their political meaning as Gen Z mobilization has raised legitimate

concerns which should be treated as learning to do development differently rather than criticizing.

Likewise, the keynote remarks from Hon. Rameshore Prasad Khanal (Minister of MoF / MoFAGA) commended Daayitwa Abhiyaan's role in governance reform efforts from the past 12 years. He positioned the current political change/revolution as creating a government with heightened responsibility within democratic values by comparing past revolutions during monarchy as a fight for the introduction of democracy. Additionally, he ensured the NGS policy recommendations will be taken into account and will be utilized for enhancing the working guidelines, so that the studio won't be limited to discussions only.

Prof. Dr. Biswo Nath Poudel (Governor, Nepal Rastra Bank), one of the special guests in the opening plenary, stated Nepal has resources and a significant amount of remittance, yet investment direction and project effectiveness remain weak. He critiqued unproductive public investments and mentioned many projects that did not return the investment and likely will not. Additionally, he emphasized on the need of sector specialization and mentioned the inclusion barrier in banking as due to language barriers and middlemen in marginalized areas like terai which limits people's access to banking services.

Concluding the plenary, the Executive Director of NASC, Mr. Ram Sharan Pudasaini positioned NASC as a key government institution that trains civil servants, supports the entry and development journey of young bureaucrats, directly contributing to the people's resource of development. His key messaging was 'Think differently and act differently' emphasizing that NASC has been glad to co-organize the event with Governance Lab that would result in youth-centered, solutions-oriented outcomes.

"We don't want this symposium's discussions to just be conclusion papers but rather concrete and immediate implementable recommendations that the interim government can take forward." Mr. Ram Sharan Pudasaini, Executive Director, NASC

b. Policy Studios: The Heart of NGS 2025

Four Policy Studios (two running parallelly) ran across the day, each grounded in evidence, guided by a dedicated Knowledge Partner, and concluded with live policy recommendations. These were not panel discussions. They were structured working sessions designed to produce actionable outputs.

STUDIO 1: PEOPLE

Reimagining Public Service Delivery: Leadership Requirements for a Resilient and Adaptive New Normal

Chair: Dr. Ghanshyam Upadhyaya, Secretary, Ministry of Finance

Moderator: Mr. Sushant Vaidik, Daayitwa Fellowship Alumni/Formal Economic Advisor to the Chief Minister of Lumbini Province

Presenter: Ms. Sabrina Singh, Daayitwa Fellow 2014 and Organizer, Mission Aasha

Speakers:

- Baikuntha Aryal, Former Chief Secretary, Government of Nepal
- Mr. Mahesh Bhattarai, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance
- Ms. Preeti Adhikary, Founder, The Great Nepali Diaspora & General Partner, Momo Venture Capital
- Mr. Hari Bhakta Sharma, Executive Director, Deurali-Janta Pharmaceuticals

Knowledge Partner: Nepal Administrative Staff College (

Key Discussions

- The gap between technical capacity and administrative delivery in Nepal's bureaucracy
- The need for mindset change: from gatekeepers to enablers of citizen services
- Incorporating indigenous and feminine knowledge into capacity-building frameworks
- Why political transfers negate the investment made in bureaucratic training
- The Rapid Results Initiative (RRI): a 100-day, problem-driven approach that helped operationalize Nepal's National Health Financing Strategy

Key Takeaway

Nepal's public service delivery challenges persist not because the state lacks capable public servants, but because public institutions operate within fragmented authority, outdated legal frameworks, procedural rigidity, and leadership models that are insufficiently adaptive and citizen-centered. In practice, public services remain slow, complex, and uneven across locations, weakening trust in government and increasing the everyday transaction costs of citizenship.

Although Nepal's governance laws including the Civil Servant Act 2049, the Sushasan (Management and Administration) Act 2064, and the Right to Information Act 2064, establish important foundations for administration, integrity, and transparency, they have not been fully realigned to the demands of federalism, modern service standards, and rising citizen expectations for responsive and empathetic public services.

This session's discussion argued that reform must move on two tracks at once: (i) strengthening systemic coherence across federal tiers so that authority, responsibility, and coordination are clear; and (ii) institutionalizing human-centered, adaptive leadership so that rules and resources translate into better services. It proposes (a) modernizing civil service and governance laws to reflect federal realities; (b) re-engineering service delivery systems to be simpler and citizen-friendly; (c) embedding performance-based

accountability focused on outcomes and service quality; (d) enabling calculated risk-taking and innovation with safeguards; and (e) transforming capacity building from token training into practice-oriented leadership development.

Together, these reforms will aim to ensure that public authority is coherent, human capacity is effectively mobilized, and empathy is embedded in governance practice so that policy intent translates into tangible improvements in service quality, institutional trust, and citizens' everyday experience of the state.

Read the Policy Brief of People's Session: <https://www.govlab.com.np/national-symposium/2025>

Policy Studio 2: MONEY

Rethinking Financial Mobilization for a Self-Reliant Nepal

Chair: Dr. Ghanshyam Upadhyaya, Secretary, Ministry of Finance

Moderator: Mr. Sushant Vaidik, Daayitwa Fellowship Alumni/Former Economic Advisor to the Chief Minister of Lumbini Province

Presenter: Ms. Sabrina Singh, Daayitwa Fellow 2014 and Organizer, Mission Aasha

Speakers:

- Mr. Baikuntha Aryal, Former Chief Secretary, Government of Nepal
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- Ms. Preeti Adhikary, Founder, The Great Nepali Diaspora & General Partner, Momo Venture Capital
- Mr. Hari Bhakta Sharma, Executive Director, Deurali-Janta Pharmaceuticals

Knowledge Partner: Daayitwa

Key Discussions

- Why Nepal's diaspora remains an untapped, undervalued development resource
- How early-stage tax burdens and complex regulatory processes deter youth entrepreneurship
- The role of government as an enabler, not a controller, of private sector growth
- Innovative models: Mission Aasha's community-backed trust fund & Momo Venture Capital
- The case for nonpartisan, government-endorsed diaspora engagement platforms

Key Takeaway

Nepal's challenge in achieving self-reliant and inclusive economic growth is not the absence of capital, but the absence of trusted, structured, and investment-ready mechanisms that can effectively mobilize and deploy available financial resources. Despite sustained remittance inflows, growing entrepreneurial energy, and increasing interest from domestic and diaspora investors, capital remains fragmented, risk-averse, and weakly aligned with national development priorities.

Deliberations from the Money Policy Studio at the National Governance Symposium (NGS) 2025 highlight three systemic constraints. First, diaspora engagement remains largely unstructured and episodic, limiting the translation of remittances and goodwill into productive investment. Second, early-stage enterprises face high regulatory, procedural, and tax burdens, discouraging innovation, formalization, and risk-taking. Third, the state continues to operate primarily as a compliance enforcer, rather than as an enabler of investment, resulting in low capital absorption and missed growth opportunities.

This session's discussion argued for repositioning the Government of Nepal from a gatekeeper of capital to an investment enabler, one that builds trust, reduces friction, and strategically crowds in private and diaspora finance. It proposed a coherent reform package centered on structured diaspora co-investment, streamlined entry and compliance for entrepreneurs, facilitative regulation, and blended financing aligned with national priorities.

Read the Policy Brief of Money's Session: <https://www.govlab.com.np/national-symposium/2025>

Policy Studio 3: DATA

Using Integrated Statistics for Effective Policymaking

Chair: Mr. Rabilal Pantha, Secretary, National Planning Commission

Moderator: Ms. Supun Dahal, Daayitwa Fellow 2025 (OPMCM)

Presenters: Ms. Jenna Allard and Mr. Apurva Subedi, Inclusion Economics Nepal

Speakers:

- Dr. Bhishma Kumar Bhusal, Joint Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
- Mr. Khomraj Koirala, Joint Secretary, National Planning Commission
- Mr. Dhundi Raj Lamichhane, Deputy Chief Statistician, National Statistics Office
- Ms. Arpita Nepal, Co-founder and Advisor of Research & Development, Samriddhi Foundation
- Dr. Santosh Adhikari, Head of Economics Department, Kathmandu University School of Arts

Knowledge Partner: Inclusion Economics Nepal (IEN)

Key Discussions

- Nepal's data ecosystem is fragmented: ministries collect data but rarely share or use it strategically
- The missing link: accountability incentives for bureaucrats to collect and apply data in decisions
- How IEN's RCT-tested personalized dashboards improved program access
- Building a Single National Identifier system to integrate social registries and service delivery
- The urgent need to make publicly-funded survey data openly accessible to researchers and NGOs

Key Takeaway

Nepal has made significant investments in generating statistical and administrative data across government institutions and tiers. However, these data assets are not yet systematically integrated, consistently accessible, or routinely used to inform policymaking and service delivery. Policy decisions often continue with limited reliance on evidence, while fragmented systems, weak interoperability, and unclear data-sharing arrangements prevent institutions from fully leveraging existing data.

The core challenge, therefore, is not data scarcity but institutional fragmentation, weak governance of data systems, and misaligned incentives for evidence use. In the context of federalism—where planning, budgeting, and service delivery responsibilities are increasingly decentralized—these gaps undermine policy coherence, resource targeting, and accountability.

This session's discussion argued for an integrated reform approach that links unique identifiers and social registries, enforces interoperability across tiers, expands privacy-safe and tiered data access, and strengthens incentives and capabilities so that evidence use becomes routine in governance rather than dependent on individual projects or champions.

Read the Policy Brief of Data's Session: <https://www.govlab.com.np/national-symposium/2025>

Policy Studio 4: TECHNOLOGY

Strengthening Governance through Pragmatic Digital Reform

Chair: Dr. Krishna Hari Pushkar, Secretary, Ministry of Labor, Employment & Social Security

Moderator: Ms. Anoushka Pant, Daayitwa Fellow 2025 (MoICS)

Presenter: Mr. Bibhusan Bista, Executive President, Young Innovations

Speakers:

- Mr. Aadesh Khadka, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Communication & Information Technology
- Mr. Prince Shah Chaudhary, CEO, SpeakUp Nepal
- Mr. Gaurav Raj Pandey, President, Nepal Association for Software and IT Services Companies
- Mr. Dipesh Tripathi, Founder, The Nepali Comment

Knowledge Partner: Young Innovations

Key Discussions

- Nepal's digital transformation is stalled not by lack of tools but by lack of trust and behavioral change
- Nagarik App and other e-governance tools exist, yet citizens still queue at counters
- Vendor dependency, overplanning, and missing political stewardship are core bottlenecks
- SpeakUp Nepal's model: digitizing mass citizen petitions to formalize public voice
- The call for Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) built on three pillars: identity, payments, data exchange

Key Takeaway

Nepal is at a critical juncture in its digital governance journey. Core digital systems for taxation, customs, labour migration, licensing, and citizen services are already in place, and initiatives such as the Nagarik App signal meaningful progress. However, discussions at the NGS 2025 Technology Policy Studio revealed that Nepal's central challenge is no longer technological capability, but the governance of digital reform itself.

Digital initiatives have largely been approached as software procurement exercises rather than institutional reforms. This has resulted in fragmented platforms, incomplete digital transactions that still require physical follow-up, weak accountability for service performance, limited interoperability, and growing dependence on external vendors. These patterns undermine citizen trust and dilute the public value of digital investments.

This session discussion argued for a governance-first Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) approach. Rather than expanding the number of digital platforms, reform efforts should prioritize legal and procedural finality of digital actions, institutional stewardship of services, interoperability across systems, reduction of vendor lock-in, and performance measurement centered on citizen outcomes. The objective is to ensure that digital systems strengthen public trust and translate into tangible improvements in service quality and state capability.

Read the Policy Brief of Technology’s Session:
<https://www.govlab.com.np/national-symposium/2025>

c. Live Policy Recommendation Presentation

Before heading to the final plenary, the event was anchored by one defining moment: the formal presentation of live policy recommendations to all the significant dignitaries present included Mr. Suman Raj Aryal, Chief Secretary of the Government of Nepal. It was presented by Ms. Pratisha Joshi, Program and Partnership Coordinator and a close spectator of GenZ Movement. The presented policy recommendations for each studio were as follows:

PEOPLE	
P1.	Conduct a systematic review and revision of basic legal procedures and guidelines to eliminate policy incoherence, and align hands-on practice with current institutional reforms for enhanced public service delivery, starting from local level.
P2.	Ensure that high-level government officials actively listen to youth voices via a flexible, citizen-friendly service delivery and grievance handling mechanism, to drive reforms that make public service access simpler, faster, and more responsive.
P3.	Increase strategic investment in human resources to strengthen institutional capacity, and promote enhanced public service delivery inclusive of gender minorities and marginalised groups.

MONEY

- | | |
|------------|---|
| M1. | Establish a government-endorsed, nonpartisan platform to enable diaspora investment, mentorship, and funding, provide tax-efficient incentives for high-impact initiatives that align with government-priorities and ensure smooth repatriation of returns. |
| M2. | Lower heavy startup taxes and simplify complex legal, environmental and registration approvals. Remove redundant compliance requirements while overhauling the revenue structure to enable a supportive regulatory environment where the private sector can flourish. |
| M3. | Prioritize policies that enable investment facilitation, regulatory simplification, and amend specific policies including those related to land acquisition, forest clearance, and environmental approvals. |

DATA

- | | |
|------------|---|
| D1. | Build institutional trust between research institutions, academia and the government to estimate accurate and independent reviews of policy effectiveness while generating practical research directly applicable to policy-making and publicly disseminate research insights in layman language through collaboration with media |
| D2. | Identify how bureaucratic incentive structures drive evidence use and research collaborations to incentivize the government to collect and analyse data to inform |

DATA

policy-making and address potentially legal and practical bottlenecks to research collaboration such as high turnover

- D3.** Prioritize investments in data interoperability, infrastructure, and access to increase data use to standardize data collection and integrate administrative data to enable efficient data centralization and invest in digital data architectures to ensure data security while enabling collaborative research.

TECHNOLOGY

- T1.** Strengthen institutional capacities to design, implement, and scale up digital transformation through comprehensive legal, institutional and regulatory transformation for digital governance by establishing dedicated digital governance units.

- T2.** Create an enabling regulatory environment that attracts foreign investment and fosters public - private partnerships for technological innovation and service modernization through co-investment.

- T3.** Invest in robust cybersecurity, data privacy protection systems while simultaneously implementing strategic public awareness that promote citizen trust and uptake of digital services.

d. Keynote Plenary: Governance Reform for Inclusive Prosperity

Moderated by the Founder and Chairperson of Daayitwa Abhiyaan, Dr. Pukar Malla, the closing plenary speakers included the Secretary of OPMCM; Mr. Gobinda Bahadur Karkee, Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister; Dr. Ajay Bhadra Khanal, the Co-Founder of IME Group; Mr. Hem Raj Dhakal, and a Gen-Z movement leader Ms. Monisha Chaudhary. The keynote plenary brought the threads of

NGS 2025 together, synthesizing the outputs of all four Policy Studios into a single, high-stakes conversation: how does Nepal move from scattered innovation to durable institutional reform?

With senior government officials, private sector leaders, civil society practitioners, and youth advocates sharing the same stage, the session captured both the complexity of Nepal's governance challenge and the urgency of the moment. Prof. Michael Callen of the London School of Economics set the analytical frame via video address, grounding the discussion in comparative evidence on what makes governance reform stick and what causes it to stall.

Ms. Monisha Chaudhary, Member, Gen Z Movement Alliance, brought the youngest and perhaps most urgent voice to the plenary. Speaking to the People Studio's first recommendation on inclusion, she offered both affirmation and amendment. Her intervention was grounded in a stark statistic: 73% of deaths in squatter settlements involve Madhesi and Indigenous communities, a figure that reframes inclusion not as a values conversation, but as a justice imperative.

On the question of political participation, she pointed to a structural barrier that grassroots movements know too well: winning a single seat can cost up to NPR 1 crore in campaign financing. Without state funding for political parties, she argued, inclusion at the policy level will remain aspirational. Her call for a Campaign Financing Bill was a concrete, actionable amendment to the studio's recommendation and a reminder that inclusion must be designed into the system, not hoped for.

Dr. Ajay Bhadra Khanal, Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister, reframed the central question. The problem in Nepal, he argued, is rarely the absence of good policy. The harder question is: why does good policy fail to get implemented?

His diagnosis pointed to three compounding forces: state capture by dominant political parties that hollows out democratic accountability; crony relationships between political and business elites that distort incentives; and creeping kleptocratic dynamics where external technological change is exploited before institutions can respond. His prescription was unambiguous, digitization and technology are not just efficiency tools; they are reform tools. When processes are digitized, political interference becomes structurally harder. Technology, he suggested, may be the most reliable route to depoliticizing public service delivery.

Mr. Hem Raj Dhakal, Co-Founder and Managing Director, IME Group, spoke from the vantage point of someone who has watched Nepal's economy from the inside. His central provocation: the policy studios' recommendations were strong but job creation was conspicuously absent.

Without a thriving private sector creating productive employment, economic transformation remains incomplete. He was candid about the limits of a production-based economy in a competitive global market, and made the case instead for a knowledge-based economy anchored in technology and hydropower as Nepal's two most credible pathways to economic transformation at scale.

Mr. Gobinda Bahadur Karkee, Secretary, OPMCM, who heads the Governance Reform Unit, brought institutional experience to the question of why reforms stall. He drew a critical distinction that resonated through the room: the problem is not a capacity gap, it is a capacity trap. Nepal has people. Nepal has resources. What it lacks is the institutional architecture to properly mobilize them. The challenge is not about acquiring what is missing; it is about unlocking what is already there.

Keynote Remarks: Mr. Suman Raj Aryal, Chief Secretary, Government of Nepal

The session's anchor remarks came from Chief Secretary Suman Raj Aryal, who received the formal policy recommendations from all four studios, a moment that converted deliberation into documented commitment.

His remarks were direct and forward-looking. He challenged participants — and by implication, the institutions they represent — to leave their comfort zones and embrace the harder, more exposed work of reform. Some commitments, he noted plainly, are non-negotiable.

His most pointed observation concerned the architecture of policy itself: "Hamro policy ma interdependency ko gap ekdamai dherai cha" — there are enormous interdependency gaps between the policies of different sectors. When institutions work in silos and cross-sectoral alignment breaks down, he asked the question that every governance practitioner must sit with: who is accountable? Accountability without interdependency, he suggested, is a fiction.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Krishna Gyawali closed the symposium with words that cut through the accumulated jargon of the day to something more elemental.

"Maile dekheko development k ho bhanda — swatantra ra madyadit jiwanyapan garna sakne hami ra hami bhanda agadi ko generation bhayo bhane tyo chehi development cha."

"Development, in his framing, is not a sector or a strategy. It is the capacity of people — this generation and the next — to live with freedom and dignity. Everything else is scaffolding."

He offered a gentle but pointed caution: Nepal receives many ideas, many frameworks, many jargons. If these cannot be tailored to our own conditions and context, development itself risks becoming dependent — borrowed rather than owned. He invoked justice with reconciliation as a prerequisite for sustainable progress, noting that reconciliation without justice is ultimately hollow, and called for rigorous watchdogging as a civic responsibility.

Drawing the symposium to a close, he offered five foundations that he sees as indispensable to doing development differently: Law. Leadership. System. Institutions. Resources.

Wrapping the event up, Mr. Basanta Raj Sigdel, Deputy Executive Director, NASC, added a final, grounding reflection: "Knowledge kaha cha?" — Where does knowledge live? His answer: everywhere. From the farmer working the field to the student in the classroom, knowledge is not confined to institutions or experts. The challenge for governance is not to create knowledge, but to find, respect, and activate the knowledge that already exists across Nepal's communities.

06. Key Highlights of NGS 2025

What Made NGS 2025 Different

- **Live Policy Recommendations:** Real-time policy outputs from all four studios were formally presented in front of the Chief Secretary of Nepal, supporting the idea of accountability by design.
- **Strong Gender Representation:** With 69 female participants (46%) alongside 79 male participants (53%) and 1 participant identifying as Other, NGS 2025 demonstrated a meaningful commitment to gender-inclusive dialogue."
- **Gen-Z At the Table:** GenZ representative from the Gen-Z Movement presented the policy recommendations and spoke on the closing plenary stage, representing a generation that is actively reshaping Nepal's political discourse
- **Diaspora Investment on the Agenda:** Diaspora capital mobilization received a full dedicated policy discussion, significant for an economy, where remittances constitute a significant share of GDP
- **Senior Government Leadership in the Room** The parallel studio sessions were chaired by the **current Chief Secretary** and **Ministerial Secretaries**, lending institutional weight and real-time decision-making proximity to the discussions. The **Opening Keynote Plenary** was delivered by then **Hon. Minister of Finance and Minister of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Mr. Rameshore Prasad Khanal**, and **Governor of NRB, Dr. Biswo Nath Poudel**, ensured that the conversations carried the gravitas and the access required for genuine impact.

07. Insights and Learnings

- **The Mindset Gap Is Real:** Across all four studios, one theme consistently emerged. Nepal has the resources, the institutions, and the talent. The constraint is mindset: risk-aversion in bureaucracy, distrust between citizens and state, and a culture of silos over collaboration.
- **Data Without Incentive Is Noise:** Government data collection without an accountability framework to act on it is a wasted investment. Legal reform that rewards data-driven governance is essential and overdue. Likewise, the framework for the data accessibility for study as well as project implementation should be communicated in an enabling way rather than having a variety of conflicting misinterpretations.
- **The Diaspora Is Waiting:** Nepal's diaspora, through networks like TGND and Momo VC, is ready to invest. The barriers are structural: complex repatriation rules, the absence of neutral engagement platforms, and a persistent trust deficit.

- **Technology Is a Cultural Problem:** The failure of Nepal's digital governance is not a technology failure. It is a behavioral and legal failure that no amount of software can fix on its own.
- **Youths ARE Not the Future. They Are the Present:** Gen-Z's presence and policy articulation at NGS 2025 demonstrated that Nepal's youth are not waiting to inherit governance. They are already shaping it.
- **Job Creation Was the Missing Conversation:** The full recommendation set was light on employment creation, a critical gap. Economic transformation requires more than policy reform. It requires an ecosystem that produces jobs at scale.

08. Conclusion and Way Forward

NGS 2025 was more than a symposium. It was a proof of concept for a new way of conducting governance dialogue in Nepal. By centering authentic voices, demanding real outputs, and creating a direct line from studio discussions to the Chief Secretary's table, it demonstrated what accountable and evidence-based governance conversation can genuinely look like.

What Comes Next:

- **Policy Brief Publication:** A formal policy brief compiling all 12 recommendations will be shared with relevant ministries and posted publicly for transparency and accountability
- **Follow-Up with Knowledge Partners:** Daayitwa, IEN, and Young Innovations will work with government counterparts to track implementation of recommendations aligned to their respective studios
- **Ministerial Engagement:** Studio chairs, all Secretary-level officials, will be the internal champions for carrying the recommendations forward within their ministries
- **Youth Engagement Map:** A stakeholder and youth engagement map will be developed to formalize Gen-Z and alumni networks as ongoing contributors to Nepal's governance dialogue
- **NGS 2026 Planning:** The next symposium will deepen the live policy recommendation mechanism and expand representation from provincial and grassroots levels.

09. Acknowledgements

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- Government Collaborators: Office of the Prime Minister & Council of Ministers, Ministry of Finance, and National Planning Commission

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- The Gen-Z leaders and youth voices who brought energy, urgency, and accountability to every room
- The logistics, coordination, and communications teams who made the day seamless

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