

Preface

This book is a study of governance in South Asia. The chapters in this volume, however, do not specifically cover all regions of South Asia. Most of these chapters were presented in an international conference held in Kathmandu in 2011 with the title “In Search of Better Governance: Challenges and Prospects”. The conference was the outcome of a collaborative research project between the Department of Administration and Organization Theory, University of Bergen, Norway and the Department of Public Administration, Tribhuvan University, Nepal. We are grateful to the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD) which funded the project under the NUFU program.

A book of this kind was felt essential on governance and public policy in South Asia. The region is home to two-fifths of world’s population. This huge population is diverse with multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic constellations with geography from high rugged mountains of the Himalayas in Nepal to the plain lands in the South, with arid lands in Western India and Southern Pakistan to the deltaic region in Southern Bangladesh. There are religious, ethnic and caste tensions, and strife posing serious challenges to governance especially in the new context as most South Asian countries has chosen democracy as the form of government. Challenges to democracy are many and formidable. Overcoming these challenges are the key to progress, peace, and security in the region.

In order to portray the picture of the state of governance, one needs to take stock of governance as developed and practiced in the South Asian region. What are the recent trends in governance? Is there a model of governance unique to the South Asian region? What is the status of governance in the South Asian region and what are its implications for administrative performance and the functioning of the government? Today as more than before, public institutions increasingly encounter challenges and demands from such societal actors as the private sector, NGOs, civil society, and community-based organizations to forge coordinated efforts to achieve development goals as well as promote society, market, and citizen friendly policies. In this context, there is a long and intense debate on how state and society could collectively address such challenges and adopt ‘better governance’ through exchange of ideas and learning from each other. It is, therefore, important to explore how different actors such as the public, private, and

civil society could join hands and contribute to the common cause of improving governance in South Asia.

We do acknowledge that the book does not cover all issues of governance in South Asia. Our approach is from the perspective of political science and public administration. Some chapters focus on theoretical aspects of governance and some are more empirical using both qualitative and quantitative data. Written by South Asian and International scholars the book is relevant and invaluable resource for students and academics who are interested in South Asian politics, administration, governance, and policy issues.

We thank Jon Gurstelle of Springer for inspiring us to edit the book and for his patience. We also thank James Hathaway for copy editing.

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In Search of Better Governance in South Asia and
Beyond

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2013, XII, 251 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4614-7371-8