

*Proposal for the second book under SANPA Book Series: Springer, USA*

**FROM VISION TO REALITY**  
*Sustainable Development through Effective  
Governance in South Asia*

This book is one of a series of books on South Asian public administration and governance in a post-pandemic context that explores the role of public administration in promoting inclusive governance and steering equitable development. Agenda 2030, popularly known as the SDGs, announced in 2015 by the UN after a two-year-long negotiation with 193 member states, offer a roadmap to address the multifaceted challenges — economic, social, and environmental — that the world is facing. Several profound challenges that the ever-increasing ethnic and political conflicts, continued backsliding of democracies and the rise of hybrid regimes, the rising societal inequalities including crony capitalism and abject poverty, deep-rooted social injustices, and continuing climate disasters leading to increasing numbers of climate refugees have reinforced the importance of effective governance and strong institutions. These crises further emphasise not only the need for achieving the SDG Agenda but also the interrelatedness of SDGs. Amongst the 17 SDGs, SDG 16 is directly related to public administration and is at the heart of SDG achievements. Due to its focus on building effective governance, inclusive societies, and strong institutions, it is argued that SDG 16, along with SDG 17, lies at the core of effective public administration and the provision of good governance (Massey, 2022).

As a region, South Asia is diverse in terms of its religious beliefs, ethnic landscape, culture, and even developmental progress. However, there are certain commonalities in the region in terms of the prevalence of multi-dimensional poverty, rising inequalities, gender-based violence, prone-ness to natural disasters, political rivalries and conflicts, steady decline in democratic practices and shrinking civic spaces. Due to ethnic conflicts and political strife, millions of people became homeless and refugees with huge socio-economic and environmental implications. The influx of almost a million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, despite worsening humanitarian conditions in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, adds another layer of complexity to sustainable development. Governance and effective institutions, as outlined in SDG 16, have a critical role to play in addressing these challenges and achieving the SDG Agenda. These regional commonalities call for effective governance and an integrated collaborative approach to development utilising limited resources.

Despite ranking poorly on the global economic index, South Asia, along with East Asia, has made more progress on the SDGs than any other region since their adoption in 2015, with Bangladesh and Cambodia being the forerunners among all countries (Sachs et al., 2022). However, due to the confluence of crises, COVID-19, climate change, and geopolitical conflicts, the progress towards the SDG Agenda has experienced a massive setback in South Asia (ESCAP, 2021). Consequently, the region is not on track to achieve any SDGs by 2030. This has implications for global SDG achievements, given the significance of South Asia due to its relative weight of inhabiting one-fourth of the global population, its labour-intensive manufacturing potential and potential energy resources (ESCAP, 2021). The pandemic has highlighted the need for well-functioning public administration and effective governance frameworks as preconditions to respond to sustainable development challenges. A renewed focus on public administration through the lens of SDG 16, therefore, becomes pertinent for effective, strong, and accountable institutions to strengthen and deepen inclusivity, equity and

trust in societies. Halfway down the track to the SDG Agenda, it's therefore timely to assess how SDG 16 influences public administration in South Asia to be more equitable, inclusive, fair, accountable, trustworthy, and predictable.

As sustainable development in the region cannot be achieved without peace and security, the collective work proposed in this book seeks to enhance our understanding of South Asian public administration and its role in development through the lens of SDG 16. We explore how SDG 16 has influenced the development of effective and accountable public institutions and the initiatives taken within this region to promote an inclusive society, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

We explore the best practices, the challenges faced, and the opportunities SDG 16 provides for regional and national development. In short, this book aspires to examine 1) how far has public administration in South Asia transitioned towards implementing SDG 16 and building effective, responsible, accountable, and inclusive institutions to address the different challenges prevalent in the region (i.e., climate, food security, gender-based violence and discrimination, rising inequalities, human rights abuse, urbanisation etc.)? (2) What are the obstacles and challenges faced in this journey and how these may be addressed? (3) Given the inter-relatedness of SDGs, what are the intended and unintended consequences of SDG 16 in terms of trade-offs and synergies? How can we maximise the synergies while compromising the trade-offs? and (4) Is there any potential for 'South-South' and 'North-South' knowledge exchange to facilitate SDG 16 in the region?

We are open to quantitative, qualitative, conceptual papers, specific examples or case studies which address questions that include but are not limited to the following:

- What specific policy reforms, actions and strategies need to be adopted or are being adopted to support strengthening institutions to best deliver on SDG 16?
- How has public administration evolved in the last decade for building responsible, accountable, and inclusive institutions? What are the challenges faced in the process? What are the lessons learnt?
- What are the key interventions and specific policies being undertaken to address the different challenges prevalent in the region and include those marginalised and left behind due to violence, injustice, and exclusion?
- How can multisectoral partnerships promote SDG 16? What are the challenges faced and how can they be addressed?
- What are the opportunities and challenges of implementing SDG 16 in South Asia?
- What are some of the capacity needs and skill gaps of governments and other stakeholder groups around SDG 16, and how can those gaps be filled?
- What is the role of technology in facilitating SDGs for strong and effective institutions? How are governments adopting technology and how does it influence the delivery of SDG 16?
- Given the interrelatedness of SDGs, what are the intended and unintended consequences of SDG 16 leading to trade-offs and synergies? How can we be successful in moving from trade-offs to synergies?
- How can we facilitate South-South learning in the South Asian region for building responsible, accountable and inclusive institutions?
- Is there any potential for North-South learning to facilitate SDG 16 in the South Asian context? Are there any certain elements of the Western public administration aspect that we can apply in South Asia? Why/Why not?

This book, therefore, deviates from previous works in three ways. First, it offers a collective and individual perspective on South Asian public administration and its impediments.

Second, it considers these developments and nuances through the lens of SDG 16. Finally, it offers valuable insights into the transfer of knowledge and learning within the South Asian region and for broader “South-South” and “South-North” exchange, an emerging area of significance.

The book is intended for policymakers, businesses, civil society organisations as well as academics across research fields spanning management, social innovation, and corporate sustainability, who are pursuing research on public administration, governance and the SDG Agenda.

### **Key information**

- Last date for abstract submission **20 August 2023**
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