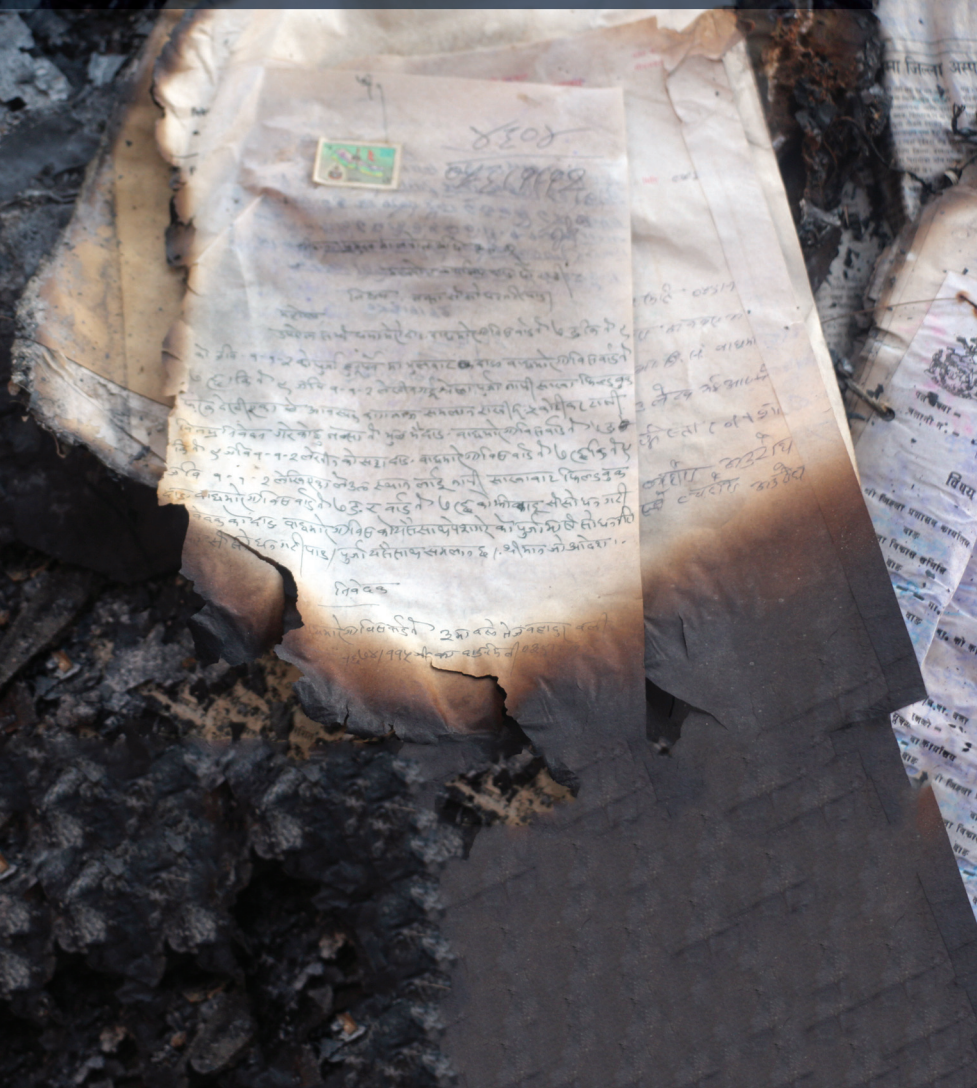

PUBLIC SERVICE RESUMPTION & REFORMS

Post Gen-Z Protest in Nepal



**PUBLIC SERVICE
RESUMPTION AND REFORMS**

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DEMOCRACY

RESOURCE CENTER

**Democracy Resource Center Nepal
Lalitpur**

PUBLIC SERVICE RESUMPTION AND REFORMS

Post Gen-Z Protest in Nepal

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Acronyms

CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CDMC	Community Disaster Management Committees
CDO	Chief District Officer
DAO	District Administration Offices
DoLMA	Department of Land Management and Archive
DoTM	Department of Transport Management
DRCN	Democracy Resource Center Nepal
eDL	Electronic Driving License System
eVRS	Electronic Vehicle Registration System
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry
Gen Z	Generation Z
HoR	House of Representatives
IDMC	Integrated Data Management Center
LDMC	Local Disaster Management Committees
MoFAGA	Ministry of Federal Affair and General Administration
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoLMCPA	Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation
N-PABSON	National Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation Nepal
NAIMA	Nepal Automobile Importers and Manufacturers Association
NID	National Identification
OPMCM	Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers
PABSON	Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation Nepal
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSA	Social Security Allowance

Executive Summary

Public service delivery in the aftermath of the September 2025 Gen-Z protests presented a significant governance challenge for the interim government led by Prime Minister Sushila Karki. With federal, provincial, and local government buildings facing varying levels of destruction, rebuilding public trust became crucial during this period of political crisis. In this context, public service served as a vital link between the State and citizens.

This report examines the factors that enabled or obstructed the resumption of public services and assesses institutional reform initiatives at the federal and sub-national levels. Institutional reform is defined as changes and improvements to an institution's structures, rules, and practices, including the behavior of individuals within the institution.¹ Consequently, this report focuses on whether such improvements occurred within government agencies and how employee behavior evolved.

Covering the period from December 2025 to January 2026, the study employed a qualitative approach that included a review of literature, policies, government decisions, media analyses, and extensive field research. The analysis is based on assessments of destruction and service resumption across 37 government offices, including 13 wards offices, in Bagmati, Madhesh, and Lumbini provinces. Utilizing a structured service-

¹ Diversification.com. n.d. Institutional Reform. Available at: <https://diversification.com/term/institutional-reform>; accessed on March 16, 2026.

resumption factsheet and semi-structured questions, 125 interviews were conducted with government officials, elected representatives, civil society members, political party leaders, business people, and service seekers.

Timeline for Resumption of Public Service

Despite major infrastructural damage, digital infrastructure and backup systems at the federal level enabled the safekeeping and uninterrupted functioning of key services, such as telecommunications, internet, data and cloud services, digital payments, and cyber security. However, several federal offices suffered varying degrees of damage; the Department of Transport Management (DoTM) was among the most affected. Overall, federal-level services resumed between five and 111 days after the protests. The Land Reform and Land Revenue Offices in Dhanusha, Siraha, and Rupandehi restored services within five days.

Damages to provincial government structures in Madhesh and Lumbini provinces was less extensive than in Kathmandu. Provincial offices resumed services between five and 60 days after the protests. Transportation offices took the longest to recover; for example, transport management offices in Janakpur and Lahan resumed services after approximately two months.

At the local level, service resumption timelines varied significantly based on the extent of the damage. Most local governments restored services mostly within one to two weeks. Some wards in Birgunj Sub-Metropolitan City resumed services within a day, while Butwal Sub-metropolitan City required 25 days.

By early December, with few exceptions, services had resumed at nearly all government offices in Madhesh and Lumbini provinces, with initial resumption of offices where documentation and technology remained unaffected.

Impacts on Service Delivery

While the extent of the damage varied, most basic services were impacted. These included vital event registration and the issuance of referral letters (*sifaris*) at the local level; citizenship, national identity card, and passport services at district administration offices (DAO); land registration, ownership certificates, ownership transfers, and title deed distribution at land revenue and management offices; and vehicle registration, renewals, and license issuance and renewals at provincial transport management offices.

Damage to office buildings, furniture, and digital infrastructure, alongside budget constraints, staff shortages, logistics, and the loss of official documents, posed immense challenges.

Operating from makeshift offices set up in open spaces, partially damaged rooms, or nearby hospitals—often with limited furniture and other essential supplies—proved difficult. In some instances, official forms had to be borrowed from other wards or manually recorded in notebooks. The judicial sector and police investigations were also affected.

Officials also faced difficulties validating information provided by service seekers due to the destruction of paper-based and, in some cases, digital records. For example, a respondent at DAO Kathmandu reported that the loss of both digital and paper records increased the burden on citizens, as officials required stringent verification to prevent potential fraud.

Factors Supporting the Resumption of Services

Strong leadership and collaboration were key enabling factors for resumption of services. Government actors often took the initiatives without waiting for directives or formal damage assessments. Efforts included clearing debris, borrowing or purchasing furniture and essential supplies, and establishing temporary offices in tents or other public and private buildings.

Inter-governmental coordination and departmental action were vital. Ward offices in Birgunj, Aurahi, Janakpurdham and Ghorahi shared space, equipment, and furniture while Ward-5 of Birgunj Metropolitan City provided furniture to the municipal office.

Strong state-community foundations aided both the prevention of additional destruction as well as the resumption of services. Citizens intervened to stop attacks on office buildings, helped extinguish fires, and assisted in cleaning debris and recovering looted furniture and equipment. Citizens, civil society groups and businesses also raised funds to donate and extended credit for infrastructure and equipment.

Factors Obstructing the Resumption of Services

The lack of a political crisis management protocol was evident. Such a protocol would have provided stability and structure to the crisis, enabling better recovery and continuity of operations.

Fiscal and human resource shortages were constantly cited as hindering service recovery at the provincial and local levels. Austerity measures like budget cuts, and weak coordination and insufficient funds from the federal government further hindered recovery at subnational levels. In the absence of the Federal Civil Service Bill, many provincial and local governments have long faced employee shortages—a crisis exacerbated by the political violence and a federal directive to eliminate contractual staff.

The centralization of digital systems at the federal level also proved to be an obstacle. This impacted the ability of provincial government to provide services like the electronic vehicle registration system (eVRS), the electronic driving license system (eDL), and the national identity card (NID) issuance. Local governments meanwhile demonstrated greater adaptive capacity as they were less reliant on federal digital systems. However, the incomplete digitalization of paper-based records at the local level resulted in a massive loss of data, hampering effective resumption of services.

Institutional Reforms

Innovative reforms were evident during this period, including streamlined verification processes requiring fewer documents, more citizen-friendly working modalities, and “single-desk” service delivery formats. The study also highlighted that officials’ positive attitudes and clearer instructions for service seekers helped minimize hassle and increase transparency. These reforms should be further studied for potential scalability across other government agencies.

Key Recommendations

For Managing Political Crises

- For all levels of government based on their constitutionally granted powers.
 - ↗ Develop a political emergency management protocol focusing on the continuity of essential services.
 - ↗ Ensure community involvement – including businesses, civil society, NGOs, Gen-Z youth and leaders of excluded groups – in emergency management and recovery planning
 - ↗ Integrate conflict management skills and sensitivity training into the policies and programs of all government offices.

For Public Service Delivery and Digitization

- Undertake a comprehensive assessment of digital governance to develop a strategic plan for adopting innovations in public service.
- Decentralize digital infrastructure and data centers.
- Digitize all archival records with secure off-site storage for all levels of government.

Invest in Leaderships Practices and Organizational Culture:

- Capitalize on the current momentum for change to transform public sector culture into a more service-oriented spirit.
- Undertake research into the interplay between leaderships practices and organizational culture in shaping service delivery.
- Pilot initiatives such as the “the Complaint Mailbox”, service delivery hotlines, and “Hello Sarkar” at the provincial and local levels.

1

Introduction

Nepal is navigating one of the most turbulent moments in its democratic history. With the Gen-Z protests in September 2025 against corruption, nepotism and poor governance, the country experienced widespread political upheaval, including the resignation of the Prime Minister and the formation of a new transitional administration. The interim government faced multifaceted challenges of stabilizing governance while addressing corruption, advancing institutional reform, and conducting credible elections for the federal parliament.

Globally, it is recognized that governance failures are a significant contributory factor in political crises.² The ability of countries to respond to such crises and initiate reforms that address macroeconomic and institutional problems varies considerably, depending on specific national circumstances – economic, political, and institutional.³ There is no “one size fits all” institutional solution to governance challenges. There are also considerable difficulties in measurement and attribution when assessing

² See for example: Habermas, Jürgen. 1975. *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston: Beacon Press; Stiglitz, Joseph. 2000. Reflections on the Theory and Practice of Reform. In Anne Krueger (ed.), *Economic Policy Reform: The Second Stage*, pp. 551–584. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³ Yusuf, Shahid. 2024. Countries and Crises: How Some Rise to the Challenge and Reform, While Others Fail. Available at: www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/countries-and-crises-how-some-rise-challenge-reform-while-others-fail.pdf; accessed on March 16, 2026.

public sector institutional reform.⁴ However, public sector governance reform depends on dynamic, two-way relations between institutional change, involving both formal and informal institution; and organizational change—including systems, human resources and structure—leading to such outcomes as improved service delivery.⁵

Among the many governance challenges in Nepal in the immediate aftermath of the protests, service delivery is paramount, given the widespread destruction of government buildings at the federal, provincial and local levels. In light of the need to re-build public trust, public service—as the connecting link between the State and citizens—is centrally important. This report examines the factors that enabled or obstructed service resumption and assesses of institutional reform initiatives at the federal and sub-national levels to restore service following the protests of September 8 and 9, 2025. This analysis is important, as endogenous capacity and political will are central to the initiation and sustainability of policy reforms and the potential for change at the deeper politico-institutional level.

⁴ Fukuyama, Francis. 2013. What is Governance? *Governance* 26(3): 347–368.

⁵ Joshi, Anuradha, and Becky Carter. 2015. *Public Sector Institutional Reform: Topic Guide*. Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

2

Methodology

The research for this study spanned from December 2025 to January 2026 and used a qualitative approach. This included secondary sources such as policy literature, media reports, academic journals, government ministry websites, alongside primary data from field interviews. Specifically, the analysis is based on assessments of destruction, service disruptions, and resumption across 37 government offices in the Kathmandu, Madhesh, and Lumbini provinces.⁶ The services assessed included:

- **Local level:** Vital event registration, referral letters (*sifaris*), building construction permits, social security allowance (SSA) registration and update.
- **Provincial level (Transport):** Vehicle ownership transfer, vehicle registration and renewal (both offline and online), license distribution and renewal.
- **Federal level:** Citizenship, national identity (NID), and passport services; land title registration, issuance of land ownership certificates, and ownership transfer.

⁶ See Annex 1 for more details.

Beyond the timeframe defined above, the study is limited to 13 wards across seven local levels, including Kathmandu Metropolitan City and the provinces of Madhesh and Lumbini. Although the findings are temporally and spatially limited, they provide a comprehensive overview of the disruptions to public service delivery and the efforts implemented at the federal, provincial, and local levels to resume operations.

The research methodology utilized a structured service resumption factsheet and semi-structured interviews with 125 respondents, including government officials, elected representatives, civil society members, political party leaders, businesspeople, and service seekers. The analysis also draws on direct field observations. Interviews with regular citizens were conducted to triangulate findings and capture broader governance dynamics.

For the purposes of this research, public service resumption is defined as the restart, re-initiation, or restoration of services after disruptions, returning them to a stable, accepted operating state.⁷ Institutional reform refers to changes and improvements to an institution's structures, rules, and practices, including the behavior of individuals within the institution.⁸ This report focuses on whether such improvements occurred within government agencies and how employee behavior evolved.

This report begins with an overview of the events on September 8 and 9, 2025 and the subsequent formation of the interim government. This is followed by a discussion of the nature and duration of disruptions and their impacts at federal, provincial, and local levels. An analysis of the enabling factors and obstacles to the resumption of services follows. The report then discusses key institutional reform initiatives and ends with specific recommendations.

⁷ Getidiom.com. n.d. *English Dictionary*. Available at: <https://getidiom.com/dictionary/english/>; McIlwee, Patricia. 2013. Business Resumption Planning. In *Encyclopedia of Crisis Management 2*: 88–90. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452275956.n31>

⁸ Diversification.com. n.d. Institutional Reform. Available at: <https://diversification.com/term/institutional-reform/>; accessed on March 16, 2026.

3

The Gen-Z Movement

On September 8, 2025, nationwide protests were held in Nepal by demonstrators identifying as “Gen-Z”, demanding an end to corruption and poor governance, as well as lifting of a government-imposed ban on social media websites and applications. A cabinet decision on August 5 had required all social media platforms operating in Nepal to register within seven days under the Directive on Regulating the Use of Social Media, 2023. What began as a peaceful protest on the morning of September 8 escalated as thousands poured into the streets. Protesters grew increasingly agitated and breached barricades around the Federal Parliament building. The Nepal Police responded violently, killing 19 protesters and injuring hundreds.

On the following day, September 9, violence erupted across the country. Government buildings—including the Federal Parliament, the Supreme Court, and the executive seat of the country, Singha Durbar—alongside police stations, political party offices, and the homes of political figures were targeted. The cycle of violence spread outside Kathmandu. The incumbent prime minister, KP Sharma Oli, resigned in the afternoon and the Nepal Army eventually assumed security responsibilities in the evening under a nationwide curfew. By the end of the second day, the death toll had reached at least 27, with thousands injured. By the end of September,

there were 77 confirmed deaths, including police personnel, with over 2,000 injuries nationwide.

Following Oli's resignation, the Nepal Army invited prominent Gen-Z youth to serve as representatives of the movement. On September 10, around 10,000 young Nepalis gathered on the Discord online gaming server to discuss potential candidates for the next Prime Minister.⁹ Following several hours of deliberation and multiple polls, former Chief Justice Sushila Karki emerged as the clear winner.¹⁰

President Ram Chandra Paudel appointed Sushila Karki as Nepal's Interim Prime Minister under Articles 61(4) and 66(2) of the Constitution, making her Nepal's first female head of government. Following her recommendation, the President dissolved the Federal House of Representatives (HoR) under Article 273(1). Karki later announced that the election would be held on March 5, 2026.

PM Sushila Karki initially inducted the following three ministers into her cabinet: Rameshore Khanal, former finance secretary, as Minister of Finance, and Federal Affairs and General Administration; Kulman Ghising, former Executive Director of the Nepal Electricity Authority, as Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Urban Development, and Energy; and Om Prakash Aryal, an advocate and former advisor to Kathmandu Metropolitan Mayor Balendra Shah, as Minister of Home Affairs, and Law.

On September 23, Karki expanded her cabinet by appointing four more ministers: Anil Kumar Sinha, Mahabir Pun, Madan Prasad Pariyar, and Jagadish Kharel. Sinha was appointed Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies; Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; and Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation. Pun was appointed Minister for

⁹ This process also drew criticism for being urban-centric and tech-savvy, with minimal representation of the broader public.

¹⁰ Kharel, Samik. 2025. More Egalitarian: How Nepal's Gen Z used Gaming App Discord to Pick PM. *Al Jazeera*, September 15. Available at: www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/15/more-egalitarian-how-nepals-gen-z-used-gaming-app-discord-to-pick-pm; accessed on March 14, 2026.

Education, Science and Technology, while Pariyar was assigned the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development. Journalist Kharel was sworn in as Minister for Communication and Information Technology.¹¹

Karki expanded her cabinet for the third time on October 26, appointing Bablu Gupta as Minister of Health and Sports and Dr. Sudha Sharma Gautam as Minister of Health and Population.¹²

The fourth cabinet expansion, on December 12, inducted four new ministers: Kumar Ingam, Rajendra Singh Bhandari, Madhav Prasad Chaulagain, and Shraddha Shrestha.¹³ Ingam was appointed Minister of Land Management, Co-operatives and Poverty Alleviation; Bhandari as Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security; Chaulagain as Minister of Forests and Environment; and Shrestha as Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens.

Retired Lt. General Balananda Sharma was appointed separately on December 26 as Minister of Foreign Affairs, while the Ministry of Defense remained under PM Karki.

Signaling a break from partisan politics, the Karki interim cabinet included technocrats, a move widely viewed as an attempt to restore public credibility.

¹¹ The Kathmandu Post. 2025. PM Karki Inducts Four More Ministers. September 22. Available at <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/22/four-new-ministers-sworn-in-1758540706>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

¹² The Kathmandu Post. 2025. Prime Minister Karki to Expand Cabinet for Third Time. October 26. Available at <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2025/10/26/prime-minister-karki-to-expand-cabinet-for-third-time>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

¹³ The Kathmandu Post. 2025. Prime Minister Karki Expands Cabinet, Inducts Four New Members. December 12. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/12/12/prime-minister-karki-expands-cabinet-inducts-four-new-members?>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

3.1 Damages Caused During the Protests

The media has reported extensively on the damage to public buildings, vehicles, furniture and equipment, as well as the loss of digital data and paper records. This destruction significantly undermined the ability of government agencies to provide services. Sites visited for this study frequently consisted of charred buildings, broken furniture, and remnants of burned vehicles.¹⁴

According to the government committee formed to assess the damage, the Gen-Z movement affected all seven provinces, including 54 districts and 262 local levels. The total cost of physical reconstruction is estimated at Rs. 84.457 billion. This includes 2,168 agencies and 2,671 buildings (valued alone at Rs. 39.317 billion.) Of the total damage to government assets, the federal government accounted for 68 percent, while provincial and local levels amounted for 10 percent and 22 percent respectively.¹⁵

The destruction impacted every sector of government and, consequently, the lives of citizens. A detailed list of affected services follows below.

Agency	Affected Services
Local Level	Vital event registration, referral letters, building construction permit, SSA registration and update
DAO, Federal Level	Citizenship, NID and passport services
Land revenue and land management offices, Federal Level	Land registration, land ownership transfer, and distribution of land ownership certificates or title deeds
Transport management offices (Provincial Level)	Vehicle ownership transfer, vehicle registration and renewal, and license renewal and distribution

¹⁴ See Annex 2 for brief highlights of destruction at government offices in places visited.

¹⁵ The Rising Nepal. 2025. Gen-Z movement report submitted. December 12. Available at: <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/72479>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

3.2 Timeline of Service Resumption

It is important to note that while major government institutions including the Federal Parliament, the Supreme Court, and Singh Durbar suffered severe damage, digital infrastructure and back-up systems enabled the safekeeping and continued functioning of key services such as telecommunications, internet, data and cloud services, digital payments and cyber security. Both Kathmandu’s primary data center—which stores data from Nepal Rastra Bank, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Nepal Police, and the Office of the Company Registrar, and operates the websites of more than 2,500 government offices, including all 753 local units—and the disaster recovery office in Hetauda, remained intact.¹⁶

Other central offices suffered varying degrees of damage, one of the worst affected being the Department of Transport Management (DoTM). The fire at the department destroyed the main administrative offices and service counters, computers, smart card printers, stocks of driving licenses and millions of blank license plates, over 500,000 embossed license plates ready for distribution, and decades of paper archives and digital servers containing vital records.¹⁷ This had far-reaching consequences for service delivery across the country as discussed in following sections of this report.

On October 21, 2025, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers (OPMCM) decided that, in order to repair damage to public institutions, and to ensure smooth operation of offices, public bodies were to immediately prepare detailed procurement plans specifying required quantities and timelines. However, there was no Cabinet-level federal directive on the overall resumption of services. Federal offices such as

¹⁶ Baral, Sajana. 2025. Nepal’s Digital Infrastructure Withstands Unrest as Backup Systems Avert Major Collapse. *The Kathmandu Post*, September 15. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/16/nepal-s-digital-infrastructure-withstands-unrest-as-backup-systems-avert-major-collapse> ;accessed on April 9, 2026.

¹⁷ Nepal Auto Trader. 2025. Nepal Transport Department Fire: How the Gen Z Movement Disrupted Services and What Happens Next. September 9. Available at: www.nepalautotrader.com/blog/nepal-transport-department-fire-how-the-gen-z-movement-disrupted-services-and-what-happens-next; accessed on April 9, 2026.

the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation (MoLMCPA) were issued notices to resume services. According to key respondents of this study, following the September protest, secretaries from different federal ministries attended a meeting convened by the Chief Secretary and decided to direct provincial and local agencies to resume services by any means possible. Although the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) issued a circular on September 12, 2025, instructing local governments to deliver regular services with available resources, officials in Birgunj, Aurahi, and Janakpur perceived this as a routine administrative communication than a crisis directive.

It was evident that across all levels and sectors that government actors did not wait for official directives or formal damage assessments. Instead, they took their own initiatives to resume services.¹⁸ At the provincial and local levels, this demonstrated an active understanding of their constitutionally designated rights and responsibilities.

For example, at the federal level, the vehicle inspection section at the DoTM, located on the top floor of the building, was unaffected by the fire and resumed services within two to three days. Agency-wise, however, the DoTM at the federal level and transport management offices at the provincial level took the longest to resume services due to the destruction of the eVRS, requiring 111 days. Overall, federal-level services resumed between five and 111 days after the protests. The land reform and land revenue offices in Dhanusha, Siraha, and Rupandehi began services within five days.

As previously noted, damage to provincial structures in Madhesh and Lumbini was varied but generally less extensive than in Kathmandu. In Lumbini, the provincial government's administrative complex in Deukhuri remained untouched, but the Office of the Chief Minister and Council of

¹⁸ Ghimire, Binod. 2025. Some Services Resume as New PM Takes Charge. *The Kathmandu Post*, September 17. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/14/prime-minister-karki-takes-charge-some-offices-resume-services>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

Ministers (OCMCM), the Office of the Province Chief, the Chief Minister's residence, and the Butwal Liaison Office were completely damaged.¹⁹ In Madhesh Province, the provincial secretariat—including the OCMCM, ministerial offices, and the Madhesh Provincial Assembly Secretariat—was severely damaged.²⁰

Provincial offices resumed services between five and 60 days after the September protest, with transportation offices taking the longest to recover. For example, transport management offices in Janakpur and Lahan resumed services approximately after two months. In Birgunj, while other transport-related services recovered quickly, license issuance and renewal services took two months to resume. Services at the transport office in Dang were also disrupted for nearly three weeks.

At the local level, most services resumed within one to two weeks, with the exception of Butwal Sub-metropolitan City, which required 25 days. Wards 4 and 5 of Aurahi Rural Municipality, Ward-1 of Birgunj Metropolitan City, Ward-8 of Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan City, Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City, Narainapur Rural Municipality; and Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan City all resumed services within three to seven days. Wards 10 and 20 of Birgunj resumed services within a single day.

By early December, with a few exceptions, services had resumed at nearly all government offices in Madhesh and Lumbini provinces. In most cases, services were restored first in offices where documentation and technology were either unaffected or only slightly affected. Overall, respondents in the local levels and wards visited by DRCN reported that

¹⁹ The Annapurna Express. 2025. Lumbini Province Government Unveils Report on Damages. September 17. Available at: <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/story/58685/>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

²⁰ The Kathmandu Post. 2025. Violent Protests Sweep the Nation, Offices and Leaders' Residences Torched. September 14. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/10/violent-protests-sweep-the-nation-offices-and-leaders-residences-torched>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

public service delivery was halted for periods ranging from one to 60 days.²¹

3.3 Impacts on Service Delivery

While the extent of damage varied, the consequences for citizens were significant across all levels of government—ward, municipal, provincial, and federal—with different sectors affected to varying degrees.

Damage to office buildings, furniture, digital infrastructure, and equipment, combined with budget constraints, staff shortages, logistical challenges and the loss of official documents posed immense challenges. In many cases, services had to be delivered from makeshift offices in open spaces, in the least damaged rooms of affected buildings, or from nearby office or hospital premises, often with borrowed and limited furniture, computers, electricity and other essential office supplies.²² Forms required for official work were retrieved from damaged premises where possible, or, if completely destroyed, borrowed from other offices. For example, Ward-10 of Birgunj had to borrow such forms from other ward offices. Some respondents reported that they resorted to using notebooks and manually writing referral letters and recommendations. Due to the scale of destruction, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan City effectively had to begin from zero, spending around Rs. 500,000 to procure essential supplies including computers, printers, and furniture before even basic services could resume.

Beyond the physical working conditions, civil servants repeatedly identified two major challenges. The first was the difficulty of validating

²¹ Detailed information on the affected services at federal, provincial, and local government agencies, the number of days required to resume services, and the reasons for the delay in resumption are provided in the table in Annex 2.

²² Media have highlighted how offices have joined wires from private residences in order to run a few computers etc. The Kathmandu Post. 2025. Essential Services Resume in Districts Under Makeshift Arrangements. September 15. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/15/essential-services-resume-in-districts-under-makeshift-arrangements>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

information provided by service seekers due to the destruction of paper-based records and, in some cases, digital records. The second was uncertainty over how to proceed in the absence of clear procedures. For example, a respondent at the DAO in Kathmandu reported that both digital and paper records, including service seekers' files, had been destroyed. This increased burden on citizens seeking services as officials required alternative means of verification to guard against what bureaucrats saw as the risk for fraud. An official at the Transport Management Office in Tulsipur, Dang, stated, "We receive just as many fake as genuine documents for vehicle registration and purchase. The only way to tell what is genuine or fake is through the documents. The federal government asks us to proceed with the application after gathering all required documents under existing law, but we currently possess less than 10 percent of the necessary documents."²³

Highlighting similar challenges, the Chief District Officer (CDO) in Banke pointed to the difficulty of verifying information without paper records, stating, "Let's say my name is Dal Kumar Tamang, but I said Dil Kumar Tamang. Now, where would an officer verify whether my name is Dal Kumar or Dil Kumar?"²⁴ In some cases—such as for those seeking a copy of their citizenship certificate—the burden on citizens increased, as they were now required to obtain a field verification document (*sarjimin*) along with other supporting documents.

The impact was also evident in the judicial sector. Respondents working in Lamahi, Ghorahi, Butwal, Siraha, and Janakpurdham reported that damages to court infrastructure and the loss of documents made it difficult to process cases involving offences such as felony, theft, robbery, private property fraud, substance abuse, and cheque dishonor. The district court in Siraha was severely damaged, disrupting services for nearly a month.

²³ Interview with the official on December 9, 2025.

²⁴ Interview with the officer on December 11, 2025.

In Janakpur, the judicial committee services were disrupted for more than four months due to the lack of space and separate rooms.

Similarly, police investigations were also affected. For example, a respondent at the police office in Ghorahi reported that a theft had taken place at a goldsmith's shop in Lamahi, during which the owner was shot. Although the police recovered the motorcycle used in the incident, they were unable to verify its ownership because records at the transport office had been destroyed during the protest.

Given the interdependence of public institutions, the destruction had knock-on effects across offices. While the DAO in Dang was not directly damaged, its ability to provide services such as citizenship certificates, NIDs, and passports was hindered in cases where referral letters from ward offices were required, but those offices had been completely destroyed. An indirect effect was evident in Parsa, where residents of rural wards often sought services from the land revenue office and the district court during the same visit to the city. Because court services had been disrupted, the number of people visiting the land revenue office also declined.

Following the Gen-Z protests, the widespread destruction of government infrastructure led to a critical loss of public records across Nepal. At the federal level, the most severe impact was reported in land administration, where the Land Revenue Office in Kalanki reportedly lost approximately 2.5 million land titles (*shresta*) in a fire.²⁵ Although digital back-ups in the Integrated Data Management Center (IDMC) remained secure, the Department of Land Management and Archive (DoLMA) indicated that reconstruction of records still required citizens to provide

²⁵ Poudel, Purushottam. 2025. Kalanki Land Office Battles Chaos as Arson Aftermath Slows Services. *The Kathmandu Post*, October 12. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/10/12/kalanki-land-office-battles-chaos-as-arson-aftermath-slows-services>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

supporting documentation, including citizenship certificates and original land ownership documents.²⁶

In the provincial transport sector, the DoTM reported the destruction of approximately 600,000 printed smart licenses, although the underlying digital data remained available and recovery efforts were initiated through back-up systems.²⁷ At the local level, widespread damage across 262 local levels, including Kathmandu, Birendranagar and Ghorahi, disrupted vital registration services, with many offices operating from temporary arrangements. In response, the government also prioritized strengthening digital resilience, including plans to operationalize a secondary data recovery center in Hetauda.²⁸

Evidence suggests that gaps in digitization were key bottleneck in service resumption, requiring citizens to compensate for missing records through additional verification processes and self-provided documentation. The reconstruction of non-digitized records, in turn, depended significantly on public cooperation to rebuild administrative data, underscoring the importance of trust between the state and citizens in sustaining service delivery during crises.

²⁶ MyRepública. 2025. Govt Simplifies Procedures to Reclaim Land Ownership Records of Which were Destroyed. October 11. Available at: www.myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/govt-simplifies-procedures-to-reclaim-land-ownership-records-of-which-were--98-91.html; accessed on April 9, 2026.

²⁷ OnlineKhabar. 2025. Data of Smart Licenses: Safe Printing to Begin. September 19. Available at: <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/data-of-smart-licenses-safe-printing-to-begin.html>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

²⁸ Baral, Sajana. 2025. Nepal's Digital Infrastructure Withstands Unrest as Backup Systems Avert Major Collapse. *The Kathmandu Post*, September 16. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/16/nepal-s-digital-infrastructure-withstands-unrest-as-backup-systems-avert-major-collapse>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

3.4 Enabling Factors in the Resumption of Services

Strong Leadership and Collaboration

Despite the challenges outlined above, services across various levels were gradually restored. A key enabling factor was decisive, dedicated, and effective leadership, along with the ability of elected representatives and bureaucratic officials to collaborate under severe constraints, despite a history of difficult working relations.

For example, at the federal level, the Supreme Court had been severely damaged, prompting staff to set up tents within the premises to continue services.²⁹ An under-secretary at the DAO in Kathmandu mobilized human resources to clear debris, manage furniture and equipment, and resume services. The official also secured additional office space from another agency, enabling the DAO to restart operations quickly. At the provincial level, the Transport Management Office in Lahan, Siraha operated from a single room, while the office head managed funds to clear debris, procure furniture and equipment, and established a temporary office space by setting up a tent within the damaged premises.

In Birgunj, a ward office operated from a verandah. In Janakpurdham-8, the ward chair resumed services after three days by placing a table and chair in an open space outside the burned office. In Narainapur-6, the services were provided from an unused safehouse, while in Ghorahi-17, multiple services were provided from a temple's yoga hall.

Another key enabling factor was a shared sense of responsibility among elected representatives and government officials, driven in part by the need to prevent further public frustration. This was consistently reflected

²⁹ Ghimire, Binod. 2025. Some Services Resume as New PM Takes Charge. *The Kathmandu Post*, September 17. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/14/prime-minister-karki-takes-charge-some-offices-resume-services>; accessed on April 9, 2026.

in interviews with officials in Birgunj, Aurahi, and Janakpurdham. A circular issued by the OCMCM in Madhesh Province on December 14, 2025 captured this sentiment, directing bureaucrats to restore public trust through dependable, efficient, and accessible service delivery in order to address “the extreme dissatisfaction and anger of citizens towards public service delivery.” In Lumbini, within two weeks of the protests, the Chief Minister publicly assured that essential government services would not be interrupted despite the damage.³⁰ This commitment was reflected in practice, with staff members taking on multiple roles and working extended hours to accelerate service resumption.

Inter-governmental and inter-departmental coordination also played an important role, enabled by strong leadership. For example, the ward chair at Birgunj-10 borrowed referral forms and templates from neighboring wards to resume services immediately. In Kathmandu-32, the ward office coordinated with the metropolitan office to plan and implement service resumption. Ward offices in Birgunj, Aurahi, Janakpurdham, and Ghorahi shared space, equipment, and furniture. Birgunj-5 ward office provided furniture to the metropolitan office while Butwal sub-metropolitan office donated two file cabinets to the Ward-4 office. Local governments also supported federal-level offices. For instance, the Land Revenue and Land Reform Office in Kalanki resumed operations with assistance from nearby municipalities, including Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Chandragiri Municipality.

Strong State-community Ties

Another key enabling factor underlying the leadership efforts was the strong state-community relations.³¹ Despite widespread anger and frustration,

³⁰ The Rising Nepal. 2025. CM Acharya Assures of Continuity of Essential Services in Lumbini. September 23. Available at: <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/68730>; accessed on February 27, 2026.

³¹ This replicates findings elsewhere. See for example, Beckham, J. et al. 2023. BRIDGE Builders – Leadership and Social Capital in Disaster Recovery Governance. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2023.103942>

citizens continued to demonstrate a sense of civic responsibility. DRCN recorded multiple accounts of citizens protecting government and security officials from violent mobs, and destruction of public property.³² For example, the ward secretary at Kathmandu-32 reported that local residents helped extinguish a fire at the ward office building, while the secretary at Kathmandu-13 noted that locals intervened to prevent attacks on the office and safeguard official.³³ Similar public actions were also reported at the Transportation Management Office in Parsa, Birgunj, and the Land Reform and Land Revenue Office in Butwal. While political leadership and governance systems were widely criticized, citizens appeared to recognize the importance of state institutions for their own welfare. This was particularly evident in Lahan, where a service seeker recalled that during the Maoist conflict period (1996–2005), the Land Revenue Office had been burned, causing long-term hardship for citizens who had to reconstruct records from Kathmandu. Learning from that experience, locals chose not to damage the office during the protests.

Beyond preventing further damage, strong state-community ties also translated into active support for recovery. Citizens, businesses, and civil society organizations, including the Gen-Z groups, contributed labor, materials and financial resources to help clean and restore offices and police posts. An under-secretary at the DAO in Kathmandu reported that 40 volunteers from Shivam Cement, along with Armed Police Force personnel, assisted in clearing debris. In Dang, the Ghorahi cement factory and the association of legal practitioners supported the Land Revenue Office in cleaning its premises. Citizens also helped recover stolen public assets.³⁴ The Mayor of Birgunj presented video evidence showing public

³² @AlabasterAtlas. 2025. Nepal Police Rescued by Nepali Citizens II Gen-Z Revolution Nepal. Available at: www.youtube.com/shorts/bYDeYeTqmds; accessed on February 27, 2026.

³³ Interview with the secretary on January 12, 2026.

³⁴ Ohamadike TV. 2025. NEPAL'S GEN-Z Going House to House Recovering Stolen Items.... Available at: www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1970842163674341; accessed on February 27, 2026.

cooperation with the municipal police in recovering looted furniture and equipment. According to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), approximately 40 percent of looted items were recovered with public support.

Respondents reported that citizens also offered voluntary labor, while local businesses provided financial and in-kind support to repair damages. Citizens also helped raise funds for reconstruction. A respondent from the MoHA noted that after a police booth in Imadol, Lalitpur was burned on September 9, local residents quickly raised NPR 500–1,000 per person and rebuilt the structure the following day. Media reports similarly highlighted citizens contributing cleaning supplies, paint, furniture and construction materials to restore damaged facilities.³⁵

This context of a functioning social contract enabled leadership to mobilize collective action effectively. At the federal level, for example, an official from the Department of Transport Management in Minbhawan, Kathmandu reported that a stakeholder consultations involving political actors and civil society were held to coordinate service resumption.³⁶ At the local level, similar efforts brought together elected representatives, bureaucrats, business leaders, civil society actors, journalists, and Gen-Z youth groups. In Birgunj, the Mayor convened such a stakeholder meeting to plan service resumption efforts, while in Siraha, Danusha, Parsa, Dang, and Rupandehi, the CDOs led similar stakeholder coordination processes.

Strong leadership also enabled governments at all levels to leverage public goodwill to expand service delivery capacity during the crisis. At the federal level, a Reconstruction Fund was established, with tax

³⁵ France 24. 2026. Communities Aid Police After Nepal's Deadly Uprising. January 26. Available at: www.france24.com/en/live-news/20260126-communities-aid-police-after-nepal-s-deadly-uprising; accessed on February 27, 2026.

³⁶ Interview with the official on January 12, 2026.

incentives for citizen contributors.³⁷ Across all levels, citizens, civil society organizations and businesses contributed to rebuilding efforts.³⁸

The Kathmandu DAO reported receiving approximately Rs. 8.5 million from 32 organizations, including Grande Hospital, to procure furniture and technology for quick resumption of services. According to a respondent from DoTM, the Federation of Truck Transport Entrepreneurs contributed Rs. 150,000 and the Nepal Automobile Importers and Manufacturers Association (NAIMA) provided approximately Rs.1.5 million to set up infrastructure and logistics for service resumption. SIPRADI contributed to repainting the office building, and Morang Auto Consultancy assisted with interior work. The National Bus Entrepreneurs Association reportedly pledged Rs. 3.4 million, and an automobile company provided two vehicles.

At the local level, organizations such as Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation Nepal (PABSON), National Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation Nepal (N-PABSON), the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), and commercial banks supported Birgunj Metropolitan City by providing furniture and equipment to resume services. In Aurahai, Gen-Z youth groups donated chairs to the Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force.

Beyond direct contributions, initiatives also included trust-based procurements of essential supplies on credit from local businesses. In Aurahi-5, Birgunj-10, Ghorahi-17, Ghorahi-13, Kathmandu-32, and the Transport Management Office in Tulsipur, services were resumed by purchasing equipment and furniture on credit.

³⁷ The Kathmandu Post. 2025. Government Seeks Donations for Reconstruction of Damaged Structures. September 25. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/09/25/government-seeks-donations-for-reconstruction-of-damaged-structures>; accessed on February 27, 2026. This money was used for martyrs' family social security.

³⁸ There were exceptions. In Siraha, however, the business community and civil society groups reportedly were not eager to help government agencies obtain furniture and equipment to resume services. They apparently believed government agencies already had sufficient funds to purchase the equipment needed to resume services.

Political Leadership Crisis – Local Government Response in Ghorahi

During the September 8–9 unrest, the ward office of Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City-13 remained operational on the first day and resumed work the following morning. However, after police warned that protesters might approach the area, the office was closed for safety. Given its relatively isolated location, it was not expected to be directly targeted. Contrary to expectations, three separate groups later vandalized, looted, and set fire to the office. An estimated Rs. 3 million worth of assets were destroyed, including paper-based archival records, furniture, and equipment.

The office remained closed for five days. During this period, ward member Ramkali Gharti, serving as acting ward chair, stepped forward to lead the recovery. Despite her interim status, she assumed full responsibility for restoring services. An emergency executive meeting authorized up to Rs. 500,000 for the immediate resumption of essential services. Under her leadership, elected representatives, staff, and local residents jointly assessed the damage and carried out clean-up operations.

Within seven days, services resumed despite the absence of electricity, internet, computers, and adequate furniture. Work began in the open courtyard of the damaged building. Essential services, including case registration, referral letters, and medical assistance certifications, were gradually restored. Staff shared a limited number of chairs and computers, while elected representatives worked on mats. Ward leadership remained visibly present on-site, signing documents outdoors as office rooms remained unsafe and partially destroyed.

All essential materials, including computers, printers, chairs, and tables, were procured on credit. One month after resumption, the ward office waived the Rs. 110 service fee for certain referrals to ease the burden on citizens. Despite operating with only four computers for ten staff members and insufficient furniture, the office continued to deliver uninterrupted services.

3.5 Obstacles to the Resumption of Services

A range of obstacles to the resumption of services were identified. First, while policies and laws exist for disaster response and public health emergencies such as COVID-19, there is no dedicated political crisis management protocol or standard operating procedure (SOP) to deal with situation of this nature.

The scale of violence and damage to state institutions and private losses were unprecedented. Nearly three quarters of respondents of this study reported that elected representatives, security forces, and government officials did not anticipate the level of violence that unfolded during the Gen-Z protests. Emergency management protocols would have provided better organization and structure to the crisis response, ensuring continuity of recovery operations and providing stability. In the absence of such frameworks, and given the scale of destruction, there was significant uncertainty about how to proceed.

Indeed, many of the leadership initiatives described earlier emerged precisely because no formal guidance was available. The value of structured emergency protocols became evident in practice. For instance, in Ghorahi, after five days of inactivity, the convening of an emergency committee meeting and the subsequent circulars regarding reconstruction budgets and service resumption reportedly led a “surge in energy” among elected representatives and government officials.

The need for emergency service protocol during emergencies was also reflected in other administrative challenges. While attempting to deliver services quickly under difficult circumstances, civil servants expressed concerns about potential scrutiny for procedural deviations. For example, an official at the Transport Management Office in Tulsipur, Dang noted that a short-term emergency policy framework would have enabled more flexible service delivery in the absence of legally required documents. Explaining their quandary, the official said, “While we aim to provide

services, there is a risk that we may even lose our jobs for relaxing procedures for the public.”³⁹

Given Nepal’s history, and the likelihood of recurring social and political upheavals driven by economic inequality, bad governance, or environmental crisis, preparedness for such crises remains essential.

Resource constraints and budget limitations were consistently cited as major hindrances to service recovery, particularly at the provincial and local levels. Provincial governments raised early concerns about the lack of consultation, coordination and communication regarding federal budget cuts, as well as restrictions limiting repair and maintenance expenditures to Rs. 1 million – an amount widely considered insufficient given the scale of damages.⁴⁰ In the context of federal austerity measures, some provinces, including Lumbini, made significant budget cuts to their own budgets.⁴¹

Given these constraints, existing budgets had to be reallocated.⁴² For example, the CAO of Janakpur stated, “We initiated service recovery with our limited resources.”⁴³ Similarly, the Deputy Mayor at Ghorahi reported that existing funds were mobilized to clear debris, document damage, and restart services.⁴⁴ As discussed previously, many local agencies also resumed operations by procuring furniture and equipment on credit from local businesses.

³⁹ Interview with the official on December 9, 2025.

⁴⁰ Ghimire, Binod. 2025. Provinces Complain of Snub by Karki-led Interim Government. *The Kathmandu Post*, October 27. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/10/27/provinces-complain-of-snub-by-karki-led-interim-government>; accessed on February 27, 2026.

⁴¹ Yogi, Rajani; Dahal, Rammani; Kattel, Nabaraj and Poudel, Laxman. 2025. Four Provinces Announce Budget Cuts Amid Austerity Initiatives. *The Rising Nepal*, October 15. Available at: <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/69652>; accessed on February 27, 2026.

⁴² Of the places visited, only in Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City Ward-17 and Narainapur Rural Municipality Ward-6 were reconstruction and painting underway.

⁴³ Interview with the CAO on December 8, 2025.

⁴⁴ Interview with the Deputy Mayor on December 10, 2025.

An official at the Transport Management Office in Tulsipur, Dang, which falls under the mandate of the provincial government, stated:

We have not been able to start the license trial yet because we lack the necessary resources and infrastructure. We need to arrange five CCTV cameras, camera poles, three trusses, traffic lights, uphill and downhill dividers, site poles and lights, and a secure room to store equipment. The estimated minimum cost is around Rs. 500,000. At present, we do not have the budget. While we could technically start the trial, it would be extremely difficult. All equipment would need to be transported back and forth in a vehicle with a capacity of at least 150 kilograms. The trial site is located far from the office and lacks on-site security. If equipment is left there, there is a risk of theft or loss. Previously, there were 14 CCTV cameras between the office and the trial site; currently, we are managing with only five. At the trial site itself, the number of cameras has dropped from five to two or three.⁴⁵

Another issue that emerged as a double-edged sword in Nepal's current governance system is technology. As noted earlier, digital infrastructure and back-up systems enabled the safekeeping and continued functioning of key services such as telecommunications, internet, data and cloud services, digital payments and cyber security.

However, the interdependence among government systems meant that the damage to federal-level digital infrastructure directly affected service delivery at the provincial level. Disruptions to federal systems hindered services linked to platforms such as the eVRS, eDL, and NID. For example, the DAO in Ghorahi, Dang, was unable to provide NID services due to the continued dysfunction of the federal server. Similarly, transport management offices in Dhanusha, Siraha and Parsa – the latter of which

⁴⁵ Interview with the official on December 9, 2025.

was not even affected by the protests – were unable to provide services for eight to nine weeks due to their dependence on federal systems. This highlights the limitations of isolated institutional reforms in addressing interconnected governance challenges, particularly during crises. More significantly, this underscores persistent gaps in decentralized digitization and digital governance in Nepal.⁴⁶

Local governments demonstrated relatively greater adaptive capacity, as they were less dependent on federal digital systems. In contrast, provincial offices were more constrained by their reliance of federal platforms. At the same time, the absence or incomplete digitization meant that the destruction of paper files resulted in a massive loss of data. In many subnational offices, files created prior to the introduction of digital systems had remained solely in paper form and were destroyed during the protests. For example, ward chairs of Birjung-10 and Janakpurdham-8 reported that records prior to 2017 had not been digitized. That such gaps persist even in metropolitan and sub-metropolitan areas underscores the urgent need for comprehensive, secure, and accessible digital data systems. Unsurprisingly, the most consistent recommendation from civil servants interviewed for this study was the full digitization of records and services.

Staff shortages were also cited as a major obstacle to service delivery. Many provincial and local governments have long faced a shortage of civil servants. At the local level, vacancy rates stand at approximately 36 percent, while provincial governments face staff shortages of around 62 percent.⁴⁷ The failure to enact the Federal Civil Service Bill 2024, combined with the federal directive to remove contracted staff, worsened

⁴⁶ Sharma, Sandesh. 2025. E-governance in Federal Nepal: The Failure of Decentralised Digitalisation. *The Himalayan Times*, July 18. Available at: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/e-governance-in-federal-nepal-the-failure-of-decentralised-digitalisation>; accessed on February 27, 2026.

⁴⁷ The Kathmandu Post. 2025. A Third of Civil Servant Positions Vacant at Local Level, Services Hit. March 23. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/03/23/a-third-of-civil-servant-positions-vacant-at-local-level-services-hit>; accessed on February 27, 2026.

these shortages. As a result, service resumption was significantly slowed across the visited local units, including Aurahi, Birgunj, Narainapur Ghorahi, Butwal. In Aurahi, for instance, not a single department within the municipal office had a designated head. A lone secretary managed multiple wards, while an account officer from another local unit handled finances. Basic support staff, such as office assistants, cleaning staff, and drivers, were absent. According to the Rural Municipality Chairperson, staff shortages predated the protests but worsened after Gen-Z youth groups demanded the removal of contracted staff in line with the federal austerity circular of September 23, 2025.

Weak coordination and limited support from the federal government were also identified as key constraints by local and provincial respondents. As discussed earlier in relation to budget cuts and austerity measures, subnational governments reported insufficient communication and resource support during the recovery phase.

4

Institutional Reforms

This study revealed that the post-protest period not only exposed systemic challenges but also created opportunities for institutional reform and innovation in public service delivery.

One notable case was the shift towards streamlined verification process requiring fewer documents. While not applicable for citizenship or NID services, procedures related to land ownership, driving licenses, and vehicle ownership were simplified. For driving licenses and vehicle registration, online application forms were introduced to reduce time and minimize administrative burden, including for the police.⁴⁸ In land registration, applicants were allowed to present a wider range of documents to establish legal claims. Citizenship and NID services also found became more citizen-friendly. A service seeker in Siraha noted, “Officials now request all required documents at once, reducing the need for multiple visits for the same service.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The Kathmandu Post. 2025. Nepal Police Working with Traffic Police and Attorney Offices to Reissue Documents Destroyed During Gen Z Protests. October 29. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2025/10/29/nepal-police-working-with-traffic-police-and-attorney-offices-to-reissue-documents-destroyed-during-gen-z-protests>; accessed on February 27, 2026.

⁴⁹ Interview with the service seeker on December 7, 2025.

Innovative service delivery arrangements by elected and bureaucratic officials were also reported as being effective in response to logistical constraints. One of the most effective practices was the adoption of single-room or single-desk service format.⁵⁰ The Transport Management Office in Lahan, Siraha operated from a single room, while the ward office in Ghorahi-17, delivered multiple services from a temple's yoga hall. In Narainapur-6, services were provided from a temporary safehouse facility.

These arrangements allowed service seekers to directly observe the progression of their applications, reducing bureaucratic hassles and increasing transparency. Although challenges such as overcrowding and chaos were reported,⁵¹ both officials and service seekers acknowledged the benefits of these modalities for quick and efficient delivery of services.⁵²

Another area of reform was reported to be the positive changes in the behavior and attitudes of government officials. Respondents in Birgunj, Janakpur, Ghorahi, and Butwal reported greater openness, responsiveness, and clarity in officials' interactions with service seekers. A service seeker at the DAO in Siraha observed: "In the past, government officials did not clearly explain the required documents and made us visit multiple times. Now, they provide clear instructions, which has made the process much easier."⁵³ Another respondent in Lumbini Province noted that the officials were more punctual, leaving for lunch breaks and returning on time.⁵⁴

However, these changes were not uniform. Respondents in Janakpurdham reported limited improvement and suggested that the reduced presence of Gen-Z youth groups following the protests may have

⁵⁰ DRCN observed services being provided from a single desk or room at the Ministry of Home Affairs in Kathmandu, Narainapur, Ghorahi, Aurahi and Birgunj.

⁵¹ Such challenges were seen at the Ministry of Home Affairs in Kathmandu, the Wards in Birgunj, and the Ghorahi SMC Ward-17 and Narainapur-4.

⁵² In Aurahi RM, researchers noted that situating the judicial committee along with other services for the rural municipality office a single room could compromise the confidentiality.

⁵³ Interview with the service seeker on December 7, 2025.

⁵⁴ Interview with the service seeker on December 9, 2025.

lessened pressure for behavioral change. Despite such variations, there was clear evidence that civil servants increasingly recognize the need to improve accountable delivery of services. As one official from MoHA noted, there was growing awareness within the bureaucracy of the need for reform.⁵⁵ Another official at DoTM similarly emphasized how transparency and accountability were essential to rebuilding the public trust.⁵⁶

Technology-Enabled Service at Kathmandu DAO

The District Administration Office (DAO) in Kathmandu was severely damaged during the Gen-Z movement on September 8 and 9, 2025, when parts of the office were set on fire. It took approximately two weeks for essential services to resume. As the original building remained under reconstruction, the DAO temporarily relocated its operations to a building originally constructed for the food security management office. This disruption created significant operational challenges, but also presented an opportunity to rethink service delivery systems.

Following the relocation, the office introduced a technology-enabled public announcement and token management system to improve efficiency and manage high demand, particularly for citizenship services, which constituted the office's core function. The hardware, software, screens, and installation cost Rs. 6 million and were financed on credit. The Chief District Officer (CDO) ensured that DAO officials received training on the new technology to operate the token system effectively.

Under the new system, service seekers would first visit a helpdesk to have their documents screened. They then would receive a token number indicating the specific room they needed to visit, allowing them

⁵⁵ Interview with the official on January 13, 2026.

⁵⁶ Interview with the official on January 12, 2026.

to wait in a designated seating area rather than standing in a queue. Their turn would then be announced via the public announcement system. This intervention appeared to significantly reduce congestion, improved order, and enhanced the comfort of service seekers.

The office initially planned to install seven speakers. As of January 2026, two had been installed, and the contracted company expected the remaining five to be operational within 15 days. The total installation cost of approximately Rs. 6 million remained unpaid; however, discussions were underway to distribute this cost among local municipalities, potentially at a rate of Rs. 1 million per municipality.

Overall, this reform illustrated how institutional disruption could catalyze practical innovation. It demonstrated how relatively simple technological interventions could improve service delivery, transparency, and the citizen experience in high-demand public offices.

5

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended as a starting point. Further analysis and planning will be required to translate these into clear pathways for change.

Managing Political Crisis

- For all levels of government, based on constitutionally mandated roles and responsibilities.
 - ↻ Design political emergency management protocol to ensure continuity of essential services during crises
 - ↻ Standardize communication protocols to ensure timely information flow and strengthen intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination, particularly during political crises
 - ↻ Promote leadership training for elected representatives and government officials on crisis management and protocol implementation
 - ↻ Integrate crisis management training into the proposed Disaster Risk Reduction Research Training Institute, as envisaged in the National Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

- ↗ Incorporate conflict management skills and sensitivity into policies and programs across government institutions, including training through the Nepal Administrative Staff College and provincial training academies. Separate training modules should be developed for elected officials.
- ↗ Ensure community participation – including businesses, civil society organizations, Gen-Z youth groups, and representatives of excluded communities – in emergency planning and local recovery strategies to strengthen trust and social capital.
- ↗ Reconfigure Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs) and Local Disaster Management Committees (LDMCs) to incorporate these dimensions, with particular attention to inclusive representation.
- ↗ Provide technical and financial support to pilot such initiatives.

Public Service Delivery and Digitization

- Undertake a comprehensive assessment of digital governance across all levels of government to develop a vision and strategic roadmap for innovation in public service delivery
- Decentralize digital infrastructure and data centers.
- Digitize all archival records and ensure secure off-site storage across all levels of government.
- Engage short-term technical experts to digitize existing paper-records and migrate data from local databases, ensuring strict confidentiality provisions to safeguard data privacy.
- Provide targeted training to government to support digital transformation

Strengthening Leaderships and Organizational Culture

- Build on the current momentum for reform among civil servants to foster a more service-oriented public sector culture.
- Undertake research on the relationship between leadership practices and organizational culture in shaping service delivery outcomes.
- Establish transparent and accessible mechanisms for citizens to lodge complaints regarding public services.
- Pilot and scale initiatives such as complaint email systems, dedicated hotlines, and platforms such as “Hello Sarkar” at provincial and local levels.
- Promote sustained engagement between state institutions and citizens to ensure that reforms are grounded in state-society collaboration.
- Finalize and implement the Federal Civil Service Bill 2080 (2024) to enable subnational governments to address staffing shortages and institutional gaps.

Rethinking Service Delivery Architecture

- Conduct research to reassess verification requirements for essential services, with the aim of reducing documentation burdens on citizens.
- Evaluate the sustainability and scalability of innovations such as single-room or single-desk service delivery models including their potential for cost savings and improved accessibility.

- Organize forums for elected officials and bureaucrats from affected offices to share experiences, challenges, and best-practices in resuming service delivery.
 - Establish an online “idea-hub”, housed within MoFAGA, to enable cross-level collaboration and innovation in service delivery
 - Shift the focus from merely restoring services to developing improved systems that prioritize efficiency, effectiveness, and inclusivity.
 - Develop a participatory national program for strengthening governance and public administration, with a clear long-term vision for public service delivery.
- As a pilot, the transport sector could be prioritized, given its long-standing perception as inefficient. Revisiting policies such as the embossed number plate system, and designing cost-effective alternatives with public input, could serve as an entry point for broader reform.

Annex 1

Details of Offices by Level of Government

Level of Government	Office Type	Number of Offices
Local	Municipal offices (rural municipalities, municipalities, sub-metropolitan cities, metropolitan cities) and ward offices	17
Provincial	Transport management offices	4
Federal	District administration offices	7
Federal	Land reform and land revenue offices	7
Federal	Federal institutions (Ministry of Home Affairs; Department of Transport Management)	2
Total		37

Annex 2

Brief Description of Damage to Government Offices

Level of Destruction	Madhesh Province	Lumbini Province	Kathmandu
Buildings completely destroyed by arson	Aurahi Rural Municipality Office; Wards 4 and 5 (Aurahi); Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City Office; Ward 8 (Janakpurdham); Birgunj Metropolitan City Office; Ward 10 (Birgunj), Transport Management Office, Lahan; Transport Management Office, Janakpurdham	Land Revenue Office, Ghorahi; Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City Wards 17 and 13; Narainapur Rural Municipality Ward 6; Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City Office; Ward 4 (Butwal)	District Administration Office, Kathmandu; Land Revenue Office, Kalanki; Ministry of Home Affairs; Department of Transport Management, Minbhawan; ⁵⁷ Kathmandu Metropolitan City Wards 13 and 32

⁵⁷ The respondent from the Transportation Management Department at Minbhawan, Kathmandu, said that digital systems, documents, physical infrastructure, and vehicles were destroyed during the protest. The data center was destroyed as well. He said it took more than 45 days to restore the driving license data storage. Despite the resumption of services, the respondent said they are still far from returning to the pre-protest level of service delivery. He felt that returning service delivery to the pre-protest phase would take time.

Level of Destruction	Madhesh Province	Lumbini Province	Kathmandu
Partially damaged by fire	—	Land Revenue Office, Butwal, Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City Ward 15; Narainapur Rural Municipality Office; Education and Administration Section (Narainapur); Ward 4 (Narainapur); Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City Office; Transport Management Office, Tulsipur	—
Vandalized offices	District Administration Office, Dhanusha; Birgunj Metropolitan City Office; Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City Office	District Administration Office, Banke	—
Furniture and equipment vandalized or looted	Computers, laptops, hard drives, printers, routers, CCTV cameras, biometric devices, scanners, photocopy machines, sofas, chairs, and tables looted from multiple offices	Similar equipment looted across offices (except Narainapur Rural Municipality), including generators	Citizen Charter in Butwal vandalized

About DRCN

Established in 2014, Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN) is a national non-governmental organization that conducts research on social and political issues. Since its establishment, the organization has conducted field-based and fact-based research on issues such as the process of implementing federalism in Nepal's transitional politics, local level restructuring, and election observation. DRCN has been presenting the findings of its research with stakeholders, and also conducting discussions and debates. DRCN's goal is to promote effective governance under Nepal's federal structure through such research and debates.

The Gen-Z movement of September 2025 posed a serious challenge not only to Nepal's political landscape but also to its public administration and service delivery systems. With government buildings, records, and infrastructure suffering widespread damage, the basic services that citizens accessed daily were disrupted. Amid such a crisis, how did the state restore public services? What factors enabled the resumption smoother, and what barriers made the process more complex? This study seeks answers to these very questions.

Prepared in the context of democratic transition and crisis management, this report, *PUBLIC SERVICE RESUMPTION AND REFORMS: Post Gen-Z Protest in Nepal*, presents an analysis of the resumption of public services based on a study of 37 government offices at the federal, provincial, and local levels, interviews with 125 stakeholders, and on-site observation. The study highlights roles such as leadership during the crisis, inter-governmental coordination, digital infrastructure, and community support. For policymakers, government officials, researchers, civil society, and general readers who wish to understand the prospects and challenges of rebuilding trust between the state and citizens after a crisis, sustaining continuity in public services, and advancing good-governance reforms, this report serves as an important reference resource.



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