In the last few decades, the involvement of NGOs in social development, advocacy, and democratic governance has increased. This involvement has attracted a lot of attention from different stakeholders such as academics, researchers, practitioners, planners, policy implementers, donors, taxpayers and also the beneficiaries at large. At present, NGOs do not only operate alone but form partnerships with other organizations including the government. In Nepal, there is an NGO boom especially after the restoration of democracy in 2008. From a modest size of only 220 in numbers in the early 1990s, their numbers are now around 37000.

Their enormous growth in numbers over a short period of time in Nepal testifies the fact that their participation in development programs such as in education, health, poverty reduction, environment, awareness and conscientization, and democracy are widespread. Their size also varies from small NGOs with limited number of staff to huge organizations resembling conglomerates with thousand of employees. Given the amount of money they handle, the number of social, economic and political interventions they carry out, and the numbers of beneficiaries they serve have raised the question of accountability and transparency of these organizations. From the 1990 a very congenial legal structure facilitated the expansion of their numbers and diversified their activities. The concern is whether they function within the legal jurisdiction and according to the development agenda of the government or are they operating perhaps under the umbrella of different bilateral and multilateral donor agencies with a different agenda of development and a framework of accountability. Does the government of Nepal perceive them to be complimentary actors to government’s developmental efforts or are they states within the state pursuing a different agenda than that of the government? The answer to such concern and challenge may address the issue of NGO governance in Nepal.

There is a serious dearth of studies of NGOs governance and accountability in South Asia in general and Nepal in particular. This is a concern which academics as well as practitioners often voice their frustration over the lack of NGO governance strategy by the government leading to inadequate control of NGOs.

The study maps the state of accountability of NGOs and transparency of their operations in Nepal. Given the transition to democracy in Nepal, the question is how “new” Nepal is coping with devising god governance mechanism. In this regard, it is pertinent to ask what mechanisms the government has developed to address the issue of NGOs’ governance with regard to accountability. The study is primarily based on a questionnaire survey of around 50 NGOs operating across Nepal. In addition, some members of the civil service would be interviewed to map the mechanisms of accountability at the disposal of the government to make the NGOs justify their conduct. The survey and in-depth interviews are meant to highlight how NGOs perceive their relationships with government and vice versa.

The study highlights how the concept of accountability has evolved and what it entails? How are these employed in the relationship between government and NGOs? What are the mechanisms of control and accountability the government of Nepal has to ensure NGOs’ accountability in Nepal? The issue of NGOs’ accountability and transparency will be the major focus of this study.