

Plenary Session 1 of ISAP 2025:

Bridging Governance Levels, Empowering Local Solutions

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Introduction

IULA was established in 1913 in Belgium, while IULA ASPAC, headquartered in Jakarta, Indonesia was set up in September 1989.

IULA, UTO (United Towns Organization) and Metropolis merged in 2004 and formed UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments). It connects 240,000 cities and local governments worldwide.



The Asia-Pacific region is the biggest of the Regional Sections in UCLG..



UCLG ASPAC

is the united voice of local self-government in Asia-Pacific region. We promote and stimulate cooperation between governments and within the wider international communities in the region.



About Us

Scope of Work

- Advocacy
- Capacity Building & Training
- Research & Knowledge Management
- Project Development & Management
- Decentralised Cooperation

Key Features

- The only local government organisation recognised by the UN.
- Represents over 4.3 billion people (more than half of world population).
- The biggest regional section with linkages to more than 7,000 local governments (LGs).

History

1913	1989	2004	2004
IULA (International Union of Local Authorities) Set up: Belgium HQ: The Hague	IULA ASPAC Set up: 29 th IULA World Congress (Perth, Australia) HQ: Jakarta	UCLG Amalgamation of IULA + United Towns Organisation (UTO) + Metropolis HQ: Barcelona	UCLG ASPAC A new entity of IULA ASPAC Set up: Taipei (the 28 IULA th ASPAC Executive Committee and Extraordinary Council Meetings) HQ: Jakarta

PROGRAMMES

TRAINING AND PEER LEARNING

PITCHING SESSION

PROJECTS

ADVOCACY WORKS

DECENTRALISED COOPERATION

LOCALISING THE SDGs: VLR/ VSR

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT



Complex and Interrelated Challenges Faced by Local Governments Across Asia-Pacific

Structural and Institutional Constraints

- *Limited fiscal decentralisation and autonomy*
- *Outdated or unclear legal mandates*
- *Fragmented multi-level governance*

Governance and Capacity Gaps

- *Shortages in qualified personnel, especially for climate-related tasks*
- *Weak knowledge management systems hinder evidence-based decision-making and limit local innovation.*

Climate and Environmental Vulnerabilities

- *Cities are both major emitters and frontline victims of climate change.*
- *The inadequate integration of environmental considerations into local planning processes weakens long-term resilience.*

Citizen Participation and Trust Deficits

Public engagement mechanisms are often weak or absent. This leads to poor accountability, social dissatisfaction, and policy resistance.

Illustrative Examples Showing the Benefits of Integrated Local Responses and Multi-Level Cooperation

Alignment of Climate and Environmental Governance Across Levels

Through enabling environment assessments, it has become evident that when national policies provide clear mandates and space for local action—especially on climate and environmental issues—local responses are more effective, coordinated, and sustainable.

- Integrated governance systems, where national legal frameworks explicitly recognise the role of local governments in climate planning, tend to produce stronger local climate action.
- Countries with institutionalised vertical coordination mechanisms also demonstrate improved results in climate finance mobilisation, policy implementation, and resilience planning.

Benefit:

Local authorities are better equipped to develop place-based responses that are aligned with national priorities, while leveraging national support structures and funding channels.



Illustrative Examples Showing the Benefits of Integrated Global Agenda and Multi-Level Governance

Localisation of Global Agendas Through Multi-Level Synergy

Several local governments across Asia-Pacific have undertaken processes to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through integrated planning and voluntary local reviews (VLRs). These processes are most effective when supported by national coordination, regional facilitation, and local ownership.

- UCLG ASPAC has played a key role in facilitating training, peer learning, and documentation that enable cities to map local indicators against global targets.
- The VLR approach strengthens alignment across local, national, and global development actors, and allows cities to express their priorities as well as to showcase best practices in global dialogues.
- There have been 16 cities who have developed VLRs and 7 countries who have developed VSRs in Asia Pacific supported by UCLG ASPAC



Benefit:

This approach not only ensures policy coherence but also increases visibility of local contributions, enhances institutional legitimacy, and improves resource mobilisation.

Illustrative Examples Showing the Benefits of Integrated Local Responses and Multi-Level Cooperation

Integrated Planning Across Sectors and Government Levels

In many cities, sustainable development challenges—such as urban growth, mobility, disaster risk, and climate vulnerability—require multi-sector responses that go beyond isolated local efforts (silo). UCLG ASPAC has supported integrated planning initiatives that bring together local governments with national agencies, civil society, and development partners.

- Local authorities that engage in cross-sector, multi-actor planning are able to develop more coherent policies, access technical support, and secure funding.
- Integrated responses allow for simultaneous action on climate resilience, digital governance, infrastructure, and inclusion.

Benefit:

This results in more strategic, data-informed, and impactful programmes that are easier to scale and replicate.



Illustrative Examples Showing the Benefits of Integrated Local Responses and Multi-Level Cooperation

Peer Learning and Horizontal Cooperation Among Local Governments

UCLG ASPAC has enabled city-to-city learning, technical exchanges, and regional dialogue platforms which allow local governments to share best practices, innovations, and challenges.

- Topics range from solid waste management and renewable energy to public participation and digital service delivery.
- Local governments learn from real cases, replicate what works, and adapt strategies to their specific contexts, without being dependent on top-down directives.



Benefit:

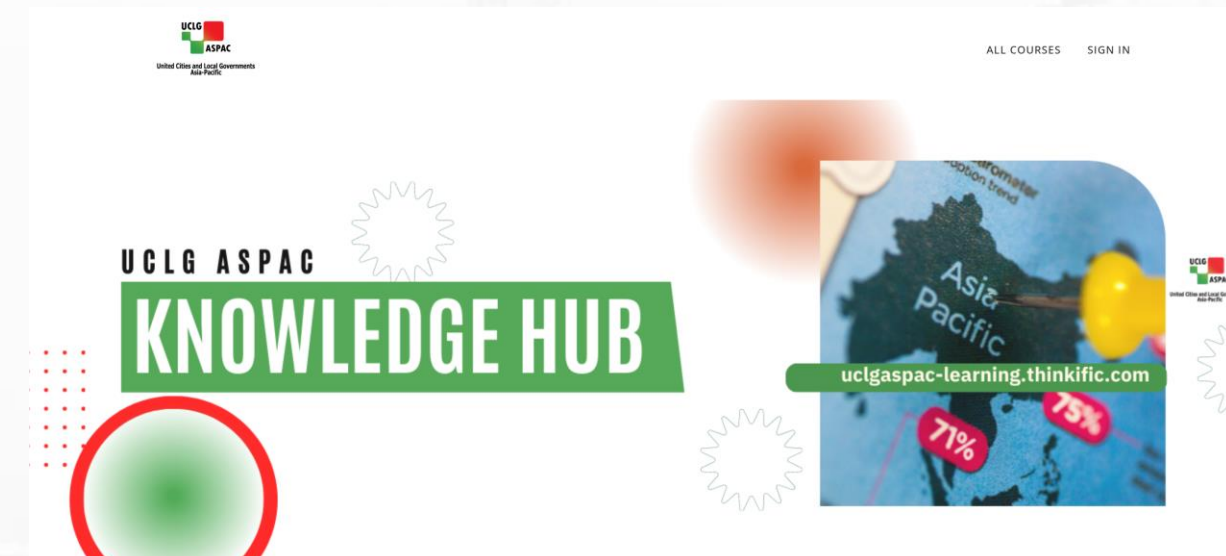
These exchanges promote innovation diffusion, reduce policy experimentation risks, and foster solidarity and cooperation among subnational actors.

Illustrative Examples Showing the Benefits of Integrated Local Responses and Multi-Level Cooperation

Digital Platforms for Knowledge Sharing and Policy Support

UCLG ASPAC is currently developing a Member Dashboard, envisioned as a digital platform for sharing real-time data, policy briefs, and localisation tools. It enables local governments to track progress, access regional trends, and interact with peers.

- This initiative exemplifies the power of integrating digital transformation into governance and policy coordination across scales.
- It also provides mechanisms for structured feedback loops between local and national entities.



Benefit:

Local governments are empowered to make informed decisions, contribute to regional knowledge, and participate in evidence-based governance.

Key Barriers to Realising Synergy and Approaches to Overcoming Them

Barrier	Explanation	Approaches to Overcome
Fiscal Constraints	Local governments lack direct access to climate finance and often have low revenue-raising power.	Develop municipal climate finance frameworks, tap into GCF, expand subnational borrowing rules.
Institutional Fragmentation	Overlapping mandates across levels of government prevent coherent planning.	Create joint planning mechanisms, national-local dialogue platforms, and legal clarity on local mandates.
Capacity Gaps	Lack of technical skills, data systems, and human resources hinder implementation.	Establish regional training institutes (as proposed under UCLG ASPAC), invest in digital tools and e-learning platforms.
Low Public Participation	Exclusion of citizens and communities reduces legitimacy and ownership.	Institutionalise participatory budgeting, citizen monitoring, and local forums.
Incoherence in Policy and Legal Frameworks	Environmental laws often do not recognise the role of LGs in NDC or DRR plans.	Harmonise climate/environmental laws to include LGs as implementers and stakeholders.

Thank You

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