UCLG
ASPAC

**United Cities and Local Governments
Asia-Pacific**

UCLG ASPAC
MANIFESTO

Empowering
Local Transformation
in Asia-Pacific

2026 - 2030

Introduction

Introduction

The next five years are critical for cities and local governments in Asia-Pacific, as they navigate a complex era shaped by intersecting crises—climate emergency, digital disruption, deepening inequality, demographic transitions, geopolitical tensions, and the lasting effects of COVID-19. In this landscape, local governments are no longer just service providers—they are frontline innovators, democratic stewards, and architects of long-term transformation. To meet rising expectations and evolving governance demands, stronger institutional capacity, inclusive planning, and resilient systems are urgently needed.

The **UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030** arises as both a strategic agenda and a moral commitment. Developed through an inclusive regional consultation process, it captures the aspirations, lived realities, and strategic priorities of UCLG ASPAC members and partners. Building upon the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, this Manifesto offers renewed direction, sharper focus, and deeper alignment with global frameworks that call for justice, sustainability, and care.

Crucially, the Manifesto echoes the vision of the **Pact for the Future**, adopted by the global UCLG in 2022. That Pact calls for a new social contract rooted in dignity, environmental responsibility, and co-creation between governments and communities. The Manifesto seeks to translate and localise this global vision into practical action across the Asia-Pacific, ensuring that regional and local dynamics shape how global goals are implemented on the ground and that no locality is left behind in this journey.

UCLG ASPAC introduces **seven interrelated COREs**—strategic pillars that serve as thematic anchors for the next five years. These COREs span vital domains: climate justice, inclusive digital governance, cultural vitality, sustainable infrastructure, equitable local economies, knowledge-driven governance, and enabling ecosystems for partnerships and financing. Each CORE represents not only a thematic priority but also a commitment to a new mode of governance that puts equity, resilience, participation, and collaboration at the centre of local and regional action.

At the heart of this Manifesto lie four guiding principles—**Collaboration, Openness, Resilience, and Empowerment**—which will shape UCLG ASPAC's programme development, partnership engagement, institutional behaviour, and direct support to members. These principles define how the organisation acts, leads, and learns alongside its members and partners, ensuring that implementation is both values-based and impact-driven.

The Asia-Pacific region—with its vast diversity, growing urban populations, and shared vulnerabilities—is where the global future is being negotiated. From megacities to small island territories, from democratic renewal to climate adaptation, this is where change begins—through neighbourhood-level action, intergenerational dialogue, and cross-border solidarity rooted in mutual respect.

This Manifesto reaffirms a core belief: **local transformation is the starting point of regional and global change**. Through this shared framework, UCLG ASPAC pledges to stand beside its members not only as a service organisation but as a key player for innovation and continuous learning. By investing in knowledge, amplifying local voices, facilitating peer exchange, and building collective capacity, UCLG ASPAC will help shape a more inclusive, sustainable, and just future for all communities across Asia-Pacific.

Objectives of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030

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The UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 is more than a strategic roadmap—it is a regional commitment to act with purpose, respond to complexity, and advance a collective vision for resilient, just, and inclusive local futures. Emerging from deep consultation within the Organisation and rooted in the global aspirations of the *Pact for the Future*, this Manifesto aims to reposition local and regional governments not as peripheral actors, but as central agents of transformation.

The objectives outlined below provide the foundation for UCLG ASPAC's actions over the next five years. They serve as a bridge between local needs and global agendas, and they are framed by the Manifesto's CORE principles—**Collaboration**, **Openness**, **Resilience**, and **Empowerment**—which define the values and operational commitments that will guide institutional behaviour and programme implementation.

1. **Strengthen the Transformative Capacity of Local Governments**
   Enable local and regional governments to serve as front-line actors in addressing today's polycrisis—climate change, inequality, demographic transitions, and digital disruption—through enhanced leadership, institutional innovation, and capacity development.

2. **Localise Global Agendas through Contextualised Action**
   Translate global commitments—such as the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, the New Urban Agenda, and the *Pact for the Future*—into actionable and locally owned strategies and initiatives that reflect the unique realities and aspirations of Asia-Pacific cities and territories.

3. **Embed Values-Based Governance through the CORE Principles**
   Mainstream the guiding principles of Collaboration, Openness, Resilience, and Empowerment (CORE) across all aspects of UCLG ASPAC's work—ensuring that every programme, partnership, and institutional decision reflects inclusive, transparent, adaptive, and enabling governance.

4. **Advance Strategic Integration through the Seven COREs**
   Operationalise the seven interrelated COREs as strategic pillars that respond to members' expressed needs—ranging from climate resilience to digital innovation, economic equity, cultural inclusion, and multilevel cooperation—and align them with regional and global frameworks.

5. **Institutionalise Monitoring, Accountability, and Learning**
   Establish a comprehensive and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system that enables evidence-based implementation, adaptive learning, transparent reporting, and alignment with global review processes, ensuring that progress is both measurable and meaningful.

Taken together, these five objectives affirm UCLG ASPAC's role as a strategic enabler of local transformation. They reflect a renewed commitment to decentralised action, multilevel solidarity, and regional leadership in shaping the future. By articulating clear priorities, promoting systemic collaboration, and embedding the CORE principles into everyday governance, the Manifesto offers a forward-looking and values-driven path for local governments to lead with confidence in an increasingly uncertain world.

The CORE Principles
of UCLG ASPAC
Manifesto 2026-2030

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As UCLG ASPAC charts a new course for the 2026–2030 period, it is essential to ground this strategic direction in a set of guiding principles that define how the organisation aspires to act, lead, and serve. At the heart of the Manifesto 2026–2030 lies a renewed commitment to four foundational values that shape the identity and strategic principles of UCLG ASPAC: Collaboration, Openness, Resilience, and Empowerment. Together, these values form the acronym **CORE**, offering both a moral compass and an operational framework for all institutional activities. The CORE values—**Collaborative, Open, Resilient, Empowering**—were not arbitrarily chosen. They represent a distillation of UCLG ASPAC's long-standing organisational principles, reaffirmed through years of programme delivery, multilateral engagement, and institutional reflection. These values have been consistently echoed in feedback from member cities, partner institutions, and Secretariat practices across multiple strategic cycles.

They are also aligned with international development frameworks and reflect global principles of good local governance. The decision to codify them into a clear acronym was made during the internal strategic review process that accompanied the development of this Manifesto. As such, the CORE values offer both continuity and clarity: continuity with UCLG ASPAC's established identity, and clarity to orient future action. The acronym **CORE** stands for:

Collaborative

Promoting cooperation across cities, levels of government, and regions through partnerships and alliances. UCLG ASPAC believes in the strength of collective action and the power of decentralised cooperation to address shared challenges and amplify local voices.

Open

Advancing inclusive, transparent, and participatory local governance. Openness involves institutionalising citizen participation, enhancing digital access, and fostering accountability in policy-making and service delivery.

Resilient

Strengthening the capacity of cities and local governments to adapt to crises, risks, and emerging challenges. This value reflects a commitment to supporting local governments in managing uncertainty—from climate risks to economic shocks—through innovation and preparedness.

Empowering

Supporting local governments with the authority, knowledge, and resources to lead transformative change. Empowerment includes building leadership capacity, enhancing autonomy, and enabling evidence-based governance across the region.

These four principles—**Collaboration, Openness, Resilience, and Empowerment**—represent the Principles through which UCLG ASPAC enacts its mandate. They are not derived from thematic analysis, but rather, are organisational commitments that ensure every initiative, programme, and partnership reflects shared values and consistent standards. The **CORE** values provide a **moral and strategic compass** for UCLG ASPAC, shaping how it operates internally and externally.

Importantly, these values also serve as the **anchor for the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030**. While they are distinct from the seven strategic COREs that follow, they form the foundation upon which the thematic priorities are built. In other words, each strategic pillar introduced in the next section draws strength and coherence from the CORE values.

Mapping of Findings to the 7 CORE Strategies of UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030

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The development of the COREs is a direct response to the diversity of issues surfaced through UCLG ASPAC's extensive member consultations and research. Rather than approaching strategic planning from a top-down perspective, the Manifesto embraces a grounded methodology—one that listens to the lived realities of local governments, identifies cross-cutting challenges, and re-frames them into actionable strategic commitments.

Each CORE represents the convergence of multiple thematic concerns consistently raised across different regions, sub national sizes, governance systems, and development contexts. These concerns were mapped, grouped, and synthesised using thematic analysis. Through this process, overlapping and interdependent issues—such as autonomy, participation, resilience, digitalisation, and collaboration—were merged into coherent strategic domains. The table below illustrates this analytical pathway: from raw thematic concerns to seven unified COREs.

The COREs are therefore not only representative of what members said, but also a framework for how UCLG ASPAC will act. They provide strategic direction while preserving the complexity and nuance of member voices.

Identified Themes, Issues, or Concerns	Thematic Cluster	Strategic Pillar (Resulting CORE)
• Cities are proactively identifying climate resilience as a top concern. • Growing demand for climate finance, early warning systems, and nature-based solutions. • Emphasis on community-based Disaster-Risk Reduction and green infrastructure.	Climate Vulnerability, Risk Governance, and Local Adaptation	CORE 1: Climate Resilience and Ecological Justice
• Local governments are embracing digital governance but face infrastructure and literacy gaps. • Cybersecurity and data management awareness is increasing. • Strong interest in digital capacity-building and innovation.	ICT Access, Smart Systems, and Digital Equity	CORE 2: Digital Futures for Inclusive and Smart Governance
• Cities prioritise economic recovery, local job creation, and MSME empowerment. • Inclusive approaches to support informal economies and youth employment are emerging. • Budget flexibility and financial planning remain constraints.	Economic Recovery, Local Value Chains, and Inclusive Growth	CORE 3: Equitable Urban Prosperity and Local Economic Development
• Urban service gaps and spatial inequality remain a challenge. • Members call for integrated planning in transport, energy, housing, and waste. • Access to infrastructure financing and resilient urban systems is critical.	Urban Systems, Infrastructure, and Service Access	CORE 4: Sustainable Infrastructure and Urban Systems

• Cities are using cultural heritage as a tool for post-conflict recovery and local identity. • Youth and intergenerational inclusion are gaining traction. • Stronger recognition of social equity and local storytelling in planning.	Cultural Resilience, Youth Inclusion, and Social Cohesion	CORE 5: Cultural Vitality, Social Inclusion, and Territorial Identity
• Cities show rising commitment to SDG localisation, VLRs, and global agenda alignment. • Strong interest in tools for integrating Paris Agreement, NUA, and Sendai Framework. • Increasing participation in ASEAN-wide dialogues and regional policy platforms. • Localise ASEAN Vision 2045 is emerging as a strategic framework for regional integration and shared prosperity.	Global and Regional Agenda Alignment, SDGs, Sendai Framework, ASEAN Vision Localisation, and other Global and Regional agenda relate to local governments.	CORE 6: Localisation of Global Agendas
• Local governments seek deeper South-South and regional collaboration. • Strong demand for knowledge sharing, peer learning, and evidence-based policy. • Financing constraints persist—climate finance, PPPs, and municipal investment pipelines are underdeveloped. • Members support the creation of training, research, and monitoring institutes.	Multilevel Cooperation, Knowledge Systems, and Financing	CORE 7: Enabling Ecosystems: Partnerships, Knowledge, and Financing *(Cross-Cutting Pillar)*

The development of the seven COREs stems directly from extensive consultations and thematic analysis of member inputs. Rather than imposing a top-down strategy, UCLG ASPAC adopted a grounded, participatory process that listened to the real experiences of local governments. Issues such as climate vulnerability, digital inequality, economic recovery, cultural identity, and infrastructure gaps were consistently voiced across subregions, city sizes, and governance systems. These themes were then clustered, analysed for overlap, and synthesised into coherent strategic domains that reflect both urgency and interdependence.

Each CORE thus represents more than a thematic category—it is a strategic response to multiple intersecting needs. Local economic aspirations, for example, were closely tied to digital access, youth engagement, and fiscal autonomy. Similarly, climate adaptation demands also highlighted the need for finance, planning tools, and global-local policy coherence. This integrated mapping approach ensures that the Manifesto does not simplify complex realities but channels them into actionable strategies. As a result, the COREs form a cohesive platform to guide UCLG ASPAC's future programming, capacity development, and advocacy—anchoring institutional direction firmly in the lived realities and ambitions of its members.

7 cores of UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026-2030

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To operationalise the Manifesto 2026–2030, UCLG ASPAC introduces seven interrelated COREs—each representing a vital domain of transformation identified through extensive consultation with its members. These COREs are not mere thematic pillars; they are expressions of collective ambition, institutional learning, and a shared vision for empowered local governance across the Asia-Pacific region. Rooted in the lived realities and strategic aspirations of cities, provinces, and territories, the COREs serve as anchors for UCLG ASPAC's programming, partnerships, and organisational growth for the next five years.

Framed as "COREs"—Collaborative, Open, Resilient, and Empowering in spirit—each domain embodies not only a policy focus, but also a mode of transformation that is participatory, locally owned, and globally connected. Through these COREs, UCLG ASPAC offers its members a structured yet adaptable framework for addressing increasingly complex governance challenges while remaining agile in responding to crises and emerging priorities. The seven COREs are:

- **CORE 1: Climate Resilience and Ecological Justice**

- **CORE 2: Digital Futures for Inclusive and Smart Governance**

- **CORE 3: Equitable Urban Prosperity and Local Economic Development**

- **CORE 4: Sustainable Infrastructure and Urban Systems**

- **CORE 5: Cultural Vitality, Social Inclusion, and Territorial Identity**

- **CORE 6: Localisation of Global Agendas and Sustainable Urban Futures**

- **CORE 7: Enabling Ecosystems: Partnerships, Knowledge, and Financing**

Each of these COREs responds to pressing and interconnected needs: the intensifying impacts of climate change, widening digital and economic divides, infrastructure gaps, demographic shifts, and demands for cultural affirmation, rights-based inclusion, and intergenerational equity. By working across these domains, local governments can build more adaptive, just, and cohesive societies. The approach recognises that transformation must be systemic—moving beyond isolated interventions to integrated solutions that operate across policy sectors, governance levels, and territorial scales.

Critically, the COREs are designed to ensure alignment with international and regional frameworks—including the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs)**, the **Paris Agreement**, the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**, the **New Urban Agenda**, and regional visions such as **Localise ASEAN Vision 2045**. They also contribute directly to the goals of the **UN Pact for the Future**, positioning local governments as vital actors in safeguarding people, planet, and future generations.

Rather than viewing global frameworks as external impositions, UCLG ASPAC reframes them as strategic opportunities for local innovation and leadership. Through the COREs, the Manifesto builds pathways for localisation, coherence, and context-driven implementation—ensuring that no city is left behind and that local voices are heard in multilateral arenas. The seven COREs, taken together, provide a strategic compass for UCLG ASPAC and its network. They define the architecture of collective action—bridging local priorities with global responsibilities and enabling member cities and territories to lead with purpose, equity, and resilience. These COREs will guide not only programme development and advocacy, but also shape capacity-building, research, institutional collaboration, and financing strategies to ensure durable and inclusive transformation throughout the Asia-Pacific**.**

CORE 1: Climate Resilience and Ecological Justice

Climate change in the Asia-Pacific region is no longer a distant threat but a present and intensifying reality. From rising sea levels affecting coastal cities to prolonged droughts and extreme weather events disrupting lives and economies, local governments are at the frontline of this global crisis. Yet, these challenges are not evenly distributed. Marginalised communities and vulnerable populations disproportionately bear the brunt of climate impacts, often without adequate protection or resources. CORE 1 of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 acknowledges that climate change is both an environmental and social justice issue. It calls for systemic, inclusive, and locally driven responses that prioritise resilience, equity, and ecological integrity.

This CORE aims to empower local governments to take decisive action in the face of climate adversity by providing strategic guidance, technical support, and capacity-building. It advocates for the development and implementation of Local Climate Action Plans (CAPs), integration of Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) into urban planning, improved disaster risk governance, and greater access to climate finance for local and vulnerable actors. In doing so, CORE 1 positions local governments not only as responders but as leaders in the climate transition—ensuring that no community is left behind in the pursuit of a just and sustainable future.

CORE	Strategic Objective
CORE 1 - Climate Resilience and Ecological Justice	• Local governments achieve resilient, low-carbon development pathways that safeguard communities and ecosystems from escalating climate risks. • Nature-based solutions are institutionalised as foundational elements of local planning, contributing to long-term ecological integrity. • Communities enjoy strengthened protection from disasters through inclusive and anticipatory risk governance. • Vulnerable groups have equitable access to climate finance, ensuring that resilience-building efforts are just and inclusive.

KEY ACTION

Strategic Objective 1: Carbon Neutrality and Resilient Development - UCLG ASPAC supports local governments in crafting and implementing Climate Action Plans (CAPs) through technical assistance and peer exchange. These efforts are complemented by the integration of carbon neutrality principles into local policies and financing, and the promotion of climate risk assessments and emissions inventories to inform decisions.

Strategic Objective 2: Institutionalisation of Nature-Based Solutions - To embed Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) in planning, the strategy offers practical toolkits, training for policymakers and technical staff, and support for pilot initiatives. Collaborations with academia and civil society help ensure ecosystem knowledge is reflected in local strategies.

Strategic Objective 3: Inclusive Disaster Risk Governance - Inclusive risk governance is strengthened through updated DRR strategies, community-based early warning systems, and risk mapping. UCLG ASPAC also helps mainstream DRR into spatial plans and conducts participatory assessments with vulnerable communities.

Strategic Objective 4: Equitable Access to Climate Finance - The strategy builds local capacity to access climate finance through training, matchmaking platforms, and advocacy for direct financing mechanisms. Equity is prioritised by promoting gender-responsive and inclusive budgeting in climate-related projects.

Digital transformation is no longer a distant ambition but a pressing necessity for local governments seeking to deliver more inclusive, efficient, and accountable governance. While the digital revolution opens vast potential for improving public services and enhancing civic engagement, it also presents new risks—particularly for marginalised populations who may be excluded from access to digital tools and infrastructure. CORE 2 of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 frames digitalisation not merely as a technical upgrade but as a strategic enabler of people-centred, equitable, and future-ready governance.

This CORE supports local governments to harness digital tools in ways that are inclusive, ethical, and tailored to their citizens. It encourages investment in ICT infrastructure, promotes digital literacy, and strengthens systems for open data and e-governance. It emphasises that digital rights must be safeguarded—particularly for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and underserved communities. CORE 2 positions local governments not only as adopters of digital technology, but as proactive shapers of a digital transformation that puts citizens first.

CORE	Strategic Objective
CORE 2 - Digital Futures for Inclusive and Smart Governance	• Local governance is transformed by inclusive, transparent, and people-centred digital systems that enhance service delivery and civic trust. • Marginalised communities experience reduced digital divides through equitable access to ICT infrastructure and digital literacy. • E-governance and open data become standard governance practices, enabling accountable, responsive, and participatory administration. • Digital rights are respected and safeguarded within ethical frameworks that promote inclusivity and data protection.

KEY ACTION

Strategic Objective 1: Inclusive, People-Centred Digital Governance - UCLG ASPAC helps local governments adopt digital systems that improve service delivery and civic trust through accessible, user-focused platforms. This includes building institutional capacity for digital innovation, encouraging user-friendly service frameworks, and partnering with civic tech groups to ensure solutions are locally relevant.

Strategic Objective 2: Bridging the Digital Divide - To reduce digital inequality, the strategy supports last-mile ICT access and community-based literacy programmes, particularly for women, youth, and vulnerable groups. It also encourages inclusive procurement and uses data to inform targeted, equitable responses to connectivity gaps.

Strategic Objective 3: Institutionalisation of E-Governance and Open Data - Cities are supported in mainstreaming e-governance and open data through technical assistance, peer exchanges, and guidance on transparency and participation. UCLG ASPAC also promotes decentralisation and helps draft local data governance policies that reflect privacy, accessibility, and accountability standards.

Strategic Objective 4: Protection of Digital Rights and Ethics - Digital governance must be ethical and inclusive. This objective promotes digital rights charters, builds capacity on cybersecurity and data ethics, and encourages local dialogues on issues such as AI and misinformation. Human rights and gender equity are central to all smart city initiatives supported under this CORE.

CORE 3: Equitable Urban Prosperity and Local Economic Development

Economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region has not always translated into shared prosperity. Many local communities—especially informal workers, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), women, and youth—remain excluded from mainstream development and vulnerable to economic shocks. Local governments, meanwhile, often face fiscal constraints that limit their ability to drive inclusive economic change. CORE 3 of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 responds to these challenges by promoting a more equitable model of Local Economic Development (LED)—one that is inclusive, sustainable, and grounded in territorial resilience.

This CORE supports local governments to empower MSMEs, foster climate-adaptive livelihoods, and create decent jobs through green and circular economic strategies. It also advocates for greater fiscal autonomy and access to investment for subnational governments. Central to this strategy is the integration of informal workers and social entrepreneurs into formal economic systems, ensuring their rights, recognition, and protection. CORE 3 envisions local economies not only as engines of growth but as platforms for justice, sustainability, and community well-being.

CORE	Strategic Objective
CORE 3 - Equitable Urban Prosperity and Local Economic Development	• Local governments and territories achieve inclusive economic growth that generates decent work, empower MSMEs, and advance green innovation. • Subnational governments are fiscally empowered to lead local economic development and mobilise strategic investments. • Informal workers and social entrepreneurs are integrated into formal economies and provided social protection, contributing to equitable prosperity and resilience. • Territorial economies foster climate-adaptive livelihoods and sustainable value chains that reduce inequalities and foster circularity.

KEY ACTION

Strategic Objective 1: Inclusive Economic Growth and MSME Empowerment - To drive inclusive growth, UCLG ASPAC helps local governments develop LED strategies that prioritise MSMEs, green jobs, and innovation. Support is also provided to establish local business incubators, facilitate regional exchanges, and create LED councils involving youth, women, and the private sector.

Strategic Objective 2: Fiscal Empowerment for Local Development - This objective promotes the financial autonomy of local governments through training in fiscal decentralisation, investment readiness, and public finance. It also supports advocacy for increased fiscal transfers and partnerships with regional and global finance institutions.

Strategic Objective 3: Integration of Informal and Social Economy Actors - UCLG ASPAC advances inclusive local policies to recognise and protect informal workers, while supporting reforms that expand access to finance, markets, and social protection. It also encourages cooperative development and pilots incentive systems to ease transitions into formal economies.

Strategic Objective 4: Climate-Resilient and Circular Territorial Economies - To foster sustainable territorial economy and development, this strategy promotes nature-based livelihoods, circular economy planning, and green value chain development. Capacity-building and finance access for rural, urban and climate-smart producers are complemented by knowledge exchange on low-emission LED models.

Infrastructure is essential to human development, yet many Asia-Pacific cities still face severe deficits in accessibility, integration, and resilience. From outdated transport systems to inadequate housing and energy grids, the lack of future-ready infrastructure impedes inclusive and climate-resilient growth. CORE 4 of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 promotes the development of integrated, climate-resilient and sustainable infrastructure systems that are inclusive, people-centred, and environmentally sustainable.

This CORE encourages cross-sectoral coordination in infrastructure planning—bridging housing, mobility, energy, water, and sanitation systems—to meet diverse urban and territorial needs. It supports the adoption of circular economy models and universal design principles, enabling infrastructure that responds to demographic shifts such as ageing populations, while also advancing climate goals. At its core, this strategy envisions infrastructure not just as physical assets, but as enablers of equity, well-being, and long-term resilience.

CORE	Strategic Objective
CORE 4 - Sustainable Infrastructure and Urban Systems	• Urban and territorial areas are equipped with integrated, climate-resilient and sustainable infrastructure that enhances accessibility, resilience, and environmental quality. • Mobility, housing, water, and energy systems operate in synergy to support inclusive and sustainable urban living. • Urban-rural linkages are strengthened, closing service gaps and promoting balanced territorial development. • Circular infrastructure models are adopted, advancing sustainable production and consumption at the local level.

KEY ACTION
Strategic Objective 1: Integrated and Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Infrastructure - UCLG ASPAC provides technical support for cities and local governments to develop sustainable infrastructure plans aligned with local climate action plans. This includes access to climate financing tools, climate risk screening methods, and training on design and resilient construction techniques. **Strategic Objective 2: Synergised Urban Systems -** This objective supports integrated planning across housing, mobility, water, and energy sectors. It includes technical exchanges, pilot projects on sustainable transport and decentralised energy, as well as toolkits on modular design and participatory service delivery. **Strategic Objective 3: Strengthened Urban-Rural Linkages -** To address spatial inequality, UCLG ASPAC promotes regional planning initiatives and inter-municipal cooperation in shared infrastructure. Planning guidance and data tools help map territorial service gaps, supported by advocacy for national frameworks that enable integrated urban-rural systems. **Strategic Objective 4: Circular Infrastructure and Local Sustainability -** This strategy promotes local circular economy policies—such as zero-waste systems and green construction—and builds capacity on lifecycle costing and sustainable procurement. Regional platforms and dialogues are also facilitated to mainstream circularity in public infrastructure investments.

CORE 5: Cultural Vitality, Social Inclusion, and Territorial Identity

Culture is more than tradition—it is a source of resilience, identity, and cohesion in the urban fabric. In the context of rapid urbanisation, migration, and demographic shifts, many cities across Asia-Pacific are grappling with social fragmentation and a loss of shared meaning. CORE 5 of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 reaffirms the importance of cultural vitality as an anchor of inclusive, sustainable, and liveable cities. It calls on local governments to integrate cultural heritage, diversity, and local identity into planning and governance.

This CORE supports actions that revitalise historic and cultural assets, promote community-based cultural expression, and ensure that urban development reflects the memories and aspirations of all residents. It uplifts Indigenous knowledge systems and creative arts as tools for healing, transformation, and civic engagement. At the same time, it promotes intergenerational solidarity through dialogue and inclusive design that responds to the needs of both young and ageing populations. By valuing culture not as an afterthought, but as a foundation for urban resilience, CORE 5 invites cities to lead development with belonging, memory, and mutual respect.

CORE	Strategic Objective
CORE 5 - Cultural Vitality, Social Inclusion, and Territorial Identity	• Cultural heritage and local identity are protected and revitalised as strategic assets for inclusive development. • Social cohesion is strengthened through participatory cultural expressions that celebrate diversity and foster belonging. • Youth and older generations co-create development processes, advancing intergenerational solidarity and leadership. • Indigenous knowledge systems and creative arts enrich local planning, enabling culturally grounded urban transformation.

KEY ACTION

Strategic Objective 1: Cultural Heritage and Identity - Support includes cultural asset mapping, cross-city heritage exchange, assistance in securing heritage recognition (e.g. UNESCO, ASEAN), and public investment for adaptive reuse of historic buildings and landscapes.

Strategic Objective 2: Social Cohesion Through Culture - This involves enabling community storytelling and cultural events, including minorities and migrants in cultural strategies, developing inclusive cultural governance toolkits, and activating public spaces that encourage everyday cultural expression.

Strategic Objective 3: Intergenerational Dialogue and Inclusion - UCLG ASPAC encourages cities to host forums and mentorship between youth and older persons, apply age-friendly design, and develop intergenerational impact assessments to shape urban plans that respond to shared futures.

Strategic Objective 4: Indigenous Knowledge and Creative Transformation - Local planning is enhanced through participatory mapping, artist-led urban design, and the integration of traditional knowledge into city frameworks. Partnerships are fostered with Indigenous-led organisations for co-governance and innovation.

CORE 6: Localisation of Global Agendas and Sustainable Urban Futures

Global frameworks such as the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, and the New Urban Agenda offer a vision for a sustainable and just world. However, these ambitions can only be achieved when they are translated into local realities. CORE 6 of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 recognises that localisation is the linchpin of global progress. It supports local governments in contextualising global goals through integrated planning, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), and policy coherence across levels of governance.

This CORE also reinforces the value of regional alignment—particularly through frameworks like Localise ASEAN Vision 2045—to strengthen shared priorities. It advances institutional capacities for implementation, promotes community ownership, and advocates for multi-level coordination that enables cities and local governments to lead in delivering on global aspirations. By embedding global goals in local governance systems, CORE 6 fosters accountability, coherence, and sustainable development that is not only global in vision but local in impact.

CORE	Strategic Objective
CORE 6 - Localisation of Global Agendas and Sustainable Urban Futures	• Local governments lead in contextualising and delivering global commitments, ensuring the SDGs, Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, and New Urban Agenda translate into tangible local results. • Voluntary Local and Subnational Reviews (VLRs/VSRs) are institutionalised as tools for inclusive planning and global accountability. • Regional frameworks, such as the ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future, are effectively aligned with local priorities. • Multi-level governance is strengthened to create a seamless flow between global aspirations and local implementation.

KEY ACTION

Strategic Objective 1: Local Delivery of Global Commitments - UCLG ASPAC helps cities and local governments implement global agendas like the SDGs, Paris Agreement, and Sendai Framework. This includes participatory planning and integration of global indicators into budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation systems. Local governments are guided to align spatial and climate plans with international benchmarks.

Strategic Objective 2: Institutionalisation of VLRs and VSRs - This objective strengthens city capacities to lead inclusive VLRs and VSRs through training and peer learning. UCLG ASPAC also builds academic partnerships to support data-driven reporting. It advocates for VLRs/VSRs to be recognised within national and global reporting systems.

Strategic Objective 3: Alignment with Regional Frameworks - To align with regional agendas, CORE 6 promotes policy mapping and technical support for cities and local governments to localise *ASEAN Vision 2045*. Subregional workshops and learning platforms support this effort. Cities are encouraged to engage in regional diplomacy and collaboration.

Strategic Objective 4: Strengthening Multi-Level Governance - This objective enhances coordination between national and local actors through inclusive platforms. UCLG ASPAC supports local participation in SDG councils, NDCs, and DRR forums. Dialogue and knowledge exchange across levels of government are also promoted to strengthen policy integration.

CORE 7: Enabling Ecosystems: Partnerships, Knowledge, and Financing

CORE 7 is the backbone of the entire strategy—it creates the enabling conditions that make the realisation of all other COREs possible. This cross-cutting pillar reinforces local capacities through training and research, strengthens partnerships, and ensures sustainable financing for transformation. As the region grapples with complex and interlinked challenges, CORE 7 elevates the importance of shared learning, decentralised cooperation, and resilient institutional systems. UCLG ASPAC positions itself as a strategic connector under this CORE, empowering cities and local governments through knowledge exchange, multilevel diplomacy, and access to green and blended finance. It champions a governance model where innovation is co-created, evidence drives policy, and financing mechanisms are tailored to local priorities. Ultimately, CORE 7 enables cities and local governments to not only implement bold solutions, but to lead them—mobilising partnerships and resources for long-term impact.

CORE	Strategic Objective
CORE 7 - Enabling Ecosystems: Partnerships, Knowledge, and Financing	• Local governments operate within enabling ecosystems where knowledge, innovation, and institutional learning drive progress. • Subnational actors become influential contributors to multilevel diplomacy, global advocacy, and decentralised cooperation. • Institutional platforms for training, research, and data systems are individually established to support continuous improvement and evidence-based governance. • Local initiatives are sustainably financed through expanded access to green funding, PPPs, and blended financial instruments.

KEY ACTION
Strategic Objective 1: Enabling Ecosystems for Knowledge and Innovation - UCLG ASPAC supports the operationalisation of structured learning ecosystems through initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Local Governments (APLG) Learning Platform and the development of the Cities and Local Governments (CLG) Institute. APLG has been the advocacy platform of UCLG ASPAC in the region. The platforms aim to serve as regional hub for training and knowledge co-creation. Modular learning pathways and the UCLG ASPAC Member Dashboard enable ongoing self-assessment, peer learning, and innovation tracking, while a curated repository of case studies and policy briefs supports local adaptation of tested solutions. **Strategic Objective 2: Local Diplomacy and Global Engagement -** To amplify the voice of local governments, CORE 7 facilitates participation in global and regional fora, and strengthens leadership in multilevel diplomacy. It promotes strategic city diplomacy and supports decentralised cooperation—including city-to-city, South–South, and triangular partnerships—that align with national goals and global agendas. **Strategic Objective 3: Institutional Learning and Data Platforms** - This objective promotes collaboration with academic and data institutions to generate actionable insights. It leverages the APLG Learning Platform and UCLG ASPAC Member Dashboard to enhance peer learning, knowledge exchange, and performance tracking. Interactive tools—like simulations and visualisations—support better planning, while periodic assessments ensure continued relevance to member needs. **Strategic Objective 4: Access to Finance and Investment Readiness -** Builds the financial literacy and project development capacity of local governments to access green and blended finance. It facilitates matchmaking with climate funds, donors, and investors while also providing technical support for structuring decentralised finance tools and PPPs aligned with local priorities.

Operationalising the COREs

Strategic Results Framework for 2026–2030

Operationalising the COREs: Strategic Results Framework for 2026–2030

To move from strategic vision to measurable implementation, UCLG ASPAC will adopt a Strategic Results Framework (SRF) that aligns each of the seven COREs with specific objectives, recommended actions, outputs, and monitoring indicators. This approach ensures that the Manifesto 2026–2030 is not only aspirational, but also actionable and trackable across diverse member contexts.

The Strategic Results Framework is designed to connect long-term aspirations with grounded, deliverable actions. It provides a flexible yet systematic tool to guide programme design, partnership engagement, and performance monitoring across diverse member contexts. Rather than treating the COREs as abstract themes, the SRF breaks each one down into a chain of logic—from objective to action, output to indicator—so that transformation becomes both intentional and traceable. The SRF will be organised around the following eight components:

Table 1 UCLG ASPAC Strategic Results Framework Table (2026–2030)

Component	Function	Description
Strategic Core	Thematic identity of each CORE	Defines the focus area of transformation, based on priorities raised by members and global trends.
Strategic Description	Narrative overview of context, challenges, and relevance	Provides background justification, problem framing, and alignment with UCLG ASPAC's values.
Strategic Objective (Ends)	Defines the long-term change or future condition to be achieved	Represents the desired outcome that guides all actions and aligns with the vision of the Manifesto.
Key Actions / Strategic Approach (Ways)	Explains how the objective will be pursued strategically	Outlines pathways, methods, or frameworks for implementation—what UCLG ASPAC will support or enable.
Outputs / Deliverables (Means)	Lists tangible results or tools developed through implementation	Represents the products, systems, or institutional mechanisms resulting from the approaches.
SMART Targets & Indicators	Establishes measurable goals to assess success	Provides specific, trackable benchmarks that define what success looks like by when.
Monitoring and Evaluation Framework	Defines the system for tracking, learning, and accountability	Describes how performance will be measured, reported, and reviewed over time.

This matrix will serve multiple purposes:
- Internal alignment: Helping UCLG ASPAC and its committees structure their work plans around common goals.
- Member engagement: Offering cities, LGs, and LGAs a roadmap to localise the Manifesto based on their needs.
- Donor dialogue: Presenting strategic coherence and accountability to external partners and funders.
- Annual review and adaptation: Enabling evidence-based reflection on progress and refinement of strategies.

This **Strategic Results Framework** structures each of the seven COREs into an integrated format that guides how UCLG ASPAC articulates its priorities, plans its actions, and measures its progress between 2026 and 2030. It ensures coherence across strategy design, implementation, and impact assessment, while remaining adaptable to the changing needs of members and external conditions.

The first component is the **Strategic Core**, which refers to one of the seven thematic domains identified through research and consultation with members. Each CORE reflects a fundamental area of transformation—such as climate resilience, digital governance, inclusive economies, or regional solidarity—and serves as a guiding framework for shaping UCLG ASPAC's programmes and institutional focus over the coming years.

The second component is the **Strategic Description**, which offers contextual insight into the relevance of the CORE. This section frames the specific challenges faced by local governments within the theme, highlights the urgency or opportunity for action, and links the CORE to UCLG ASPAC's institutional values and global development agendas. It answers the question: *Why does this CORE matter now?*

The third component is the **Strategic Objective**, which defines the long-term outcome or transformational state that each CORE seeks to achieve. These objectives reflect the collective aspirations of UCLG ASPAC and its members, expressing what success looks like by 2030—whether it be strengthening democratic local leadership, achieving climate justice, or ensuring knowledge-based governance. This component embodies the "Ends" of the strategic logic.

To move towards these objectives, the fourth component introduces **Key Actions and Strategic Approaches**, which represent the "Ways" or pathways to change. These include policy advocacy, systems strengthening, capacity-building, peer exchange, or knowledge co-creation. While high-level and adaptable, the actions are concrete enough to offer clear direction for UCLG ASPAC and its members.

The fifth component is the **Output or Deliverable**, which refers to the tangible results expected from the implementation of key actions. These may include published tools, training modules, strategic partnerships, VLR reports, or new digital platforms. Outputs serve as milestones along the transformation pathway and are instrumental in demonstrating progress to both internal and external stakeholders.

The sixth component comprises **SMART Targets and Indicators**, which provide the measurable benchmarks used to track and report progress. All targets follow the SMART principles—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—and may include both quantitative and qualitative indicators. These serve as the basis for assessing whether actions are producing intended results and whether outcomes are on track.

Finally, the seventh component is the **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework**, which supports continuous learning, accountability, and strategic refinement. The M&E system combines annual progress reviews, member dashboards, mid-term evaluations, and final assessments to ensure that the Manifesto remains dynamic, responsive, and transparent. It reinforces the organisation's ability to learn from implementation, adjust course when needed, and demonstrate value to members and partners.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation

The successful implementation of the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 depends on the organisation's capacity to track progress consistently, evaluate impact meaningfully, and adapt to changing circumstances. To this end, a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system will be institutionalised as an integral pillar of the Strategic Monitoring and Results Framework (SMRF). This system is designed not merely to measure performance, but to cultivate a culture of adaptive learning, accountability, and strategic alignment across the network.

Recognising that M&E is a dynamic and participatory process—not a static or one-off exercise—UCLG ASPAC will embed monitoring and evaluation into its annual governance rhythm and broader institutional cycle. The M&E system will fulfil both technical and political functions: guiding implementation fidelity, fostering transparency, enabling course corrections, and reinforcing member ownership.

Monitoring and Evaluation	Years				
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Annual Performance Reviews	■	■	■	■	
Biennial Monitoring Sessions		■		■	
Final Evaluation					■

Key components of this M&E system include:

- **Annual Performance Reviews**: Held at the end of each year (2026, 2027, 2028, and 2029) during UCLG ASPAC's internal Retreats, these reviews will assess the achievements, challenges, and lessons learned over the preceding year, informing adjustments and priority setting for the year ahead.

- **Biennial Monitoring Sessions**: Convened at the UCLG ASPAC Congress in 2027 and 2029, these high-level sessions will provide a platform for regional reflection, comparative learning, and alignment between the Manifesto and emerging global and regional priorities.

- **Final Evaluation**: In 2030, a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted to assess the cumulative impact of the Manifesto. This evaluation will serve as both a capstone to the current strategic period and a foundation for the co-design of the next UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2031–2035. Key findings and recommendations will be formally presented at the UCLG ASPAC Congress in 2031.

Additionally, the M&E system will include:

- **Member-led Evaluations and Thematic Scorecards**: Tools that enable cities, local governments and LGAs to assess their contributions to the Manifesto goals, identify policy and capacity gaps, and benchmark progress. These will also encourage peer learning and highlight innovative practices across the network.

- **Adaptive Feedback Loops**: Mechanisms that allow for real-time updates and recalibration of strategies based on on-the-ground realities, external developments, and emerging opportunities.

Importantly, UCLG ASPAC's M&E system will be aligned with global follow-up and review processes, including the SDGs, VLRs, VSRs, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework. In doing so, the system not only strengthens internal coherence but also positions UCLG ASPAC and its members as contributors to global accountability.

To maximise accessibility and impact, all M&E tools will be co-developed with members, tailored to varying capacities, and supported through training, peer exchange, and technical assistance. Findings from M&E activities will feed directly into programme planning, donor reporting, and institutional strategy adjustments.

By institutionalising a results-driven approach, UCLG ASPAC reaffirms its commitment to transparency, effectiveness, and continuous improvement. Monitoring and evaluation will serve not as an administrative obligation, but as a strategic engine for transformation—ensuring that members are supported in fulfilling the vision and promises of the Manifesto 2026–2030.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 presents a bold and future-oriented roadmap for local and regional governments across Asia-Pacific. At a time marked by polycrises and deep structural transitions, the Manifesto offers both strategic clarity and institutional resolve to meet the challenges of climate change, digital transformation, economic inequality, cultural fragmentation, and global instability.

Grounded in extensive member consultations and informed by the Pact for the Future, the Manifesto affirms that local governments are not mere implementers of national mandates, but autonomous agents of innovation, justice, and democratic renewal. It reframes global challenges through a local lens and offers seven interrelated COREs that reflect the lived realities, ambitions, and shared futures of Asia-Pacific communities.

The Manifesto sets forth five strategic objectives, from strengthening local capacity to advancing the localisation of global agendas and institutionalising values-based governance. At its heart, the Manifesto is underpinned by the CORE principles of Collaboration, Openness, Resilience, and Empowerment, which shape both what UCLG ASPAC does and how it does it.

As the operational foundation of the Manifesto, UCLG ASPAC sets out seven strategic COREs that represent the critical domains of transformation required by local governments: (1) Climate Resilience and Ecological Justice, (2) Digital Futures for Inclusive and Smart Governance, (3) Equitable Urban Prosperity and Local Economic Development, (4) Sustainable Infrastructure and Urban Systems, (5) Cultural Vitality, Social Inclusion, and Territorial Identity, (6) Localisation of Global Agendas and Sustainable Urban Futures, and (7) Enabling Ecosystems: Partnerships, Knowledge, and Financing. These seven COREs form an integrated and interlinked strategic framework to advance local transformation that is collaborative, open, resilient, and empowering across the Asia-Pacific region.

Through the Strategic Results Framework and its robust Monitoring and Evaluation system, the Manifesto provides a clear structure for operationalising these aspirations. Each CORE is accompanied by defined objectives, actions, and deliverables, ensuring that impact is measurable and progress is transparent.

In an era where global change is increasingly negotiated at the local level, the UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026–2030 calls on all actors—from mayors and municipal officials to national partners and global institutions—to centre their efforts on empowered, inclusive, and sustainable local governance. It is not just a plan, but a collective promise: to act with courage, collaborate across borders, and build resilient futures from the ground up.

UCLG ASPAC Manifesto 2026-2030
Empowering Local Transformation in Asia-Pacific

United Cities and Local Governments
Asia-Pacific