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LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

NEWSLETTER



United Cities and Local Governments
Asia-Pacific



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Foreword



Sustainable tourism offers our communities a path to growth that is both inclusive and enduring. Across the Asia-Pacific region, local governments are demonstrating that tourism can do more than attract visitors. When governed well, it can create decent livelihoods, strengthen local enterprises, preserve culture and heritage, and protect the natural assets on which our future depends. UCLG ASPAC remains committed to advancing this agenda by supporting local governments in shaping tourism policies that are responsible, climate-responsive, and community-centred. In doing so, we help ensure that development delivers lasting value not only for economies, but for people and places.

The future of cities in the Asia-Pacific is local. It will be shaped by communities that design solutions around their realities. And if we truly believe that the future is local, then we must give local leaders the tools - and the trust - to shape it.

Gov. Dakila Carlo Cua

President, UCLG ASPAC

(President, Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines; Chairman, League of Provinces of the Philippines; and Governor, Province of Quirino, Republic of the Philippines)



As tourism continues to gain global momentum, UCLG ASPAC is stepping forward to ensure cities and local governments are ready to harness its full potential. By adopting “Sustainable Tourism” as the theme of its Executive Bureau meeting, we open the door for members to explore forward-looking, practical, and impactful solutions.

Beyond this, our commitment to sustainability remains strong. From establishing a water recycling unit in Jakarta Province to advancing capacity-building and knowledge-sharing through initiatives such as the Urban-Act Project, APFSD, and AGMF, we continue to support cities in driving meaningful change. We are also proud to introduce our new podcast initiative—designed to expand conversations, share insights, and connect our network more closely than ever.

Sustainability is a shared journey. Join us as we strengthen collaboration and work together towards more liveable, resilient, and future-ready cities and communities.

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi

Secretary General, UCLG ASPAC

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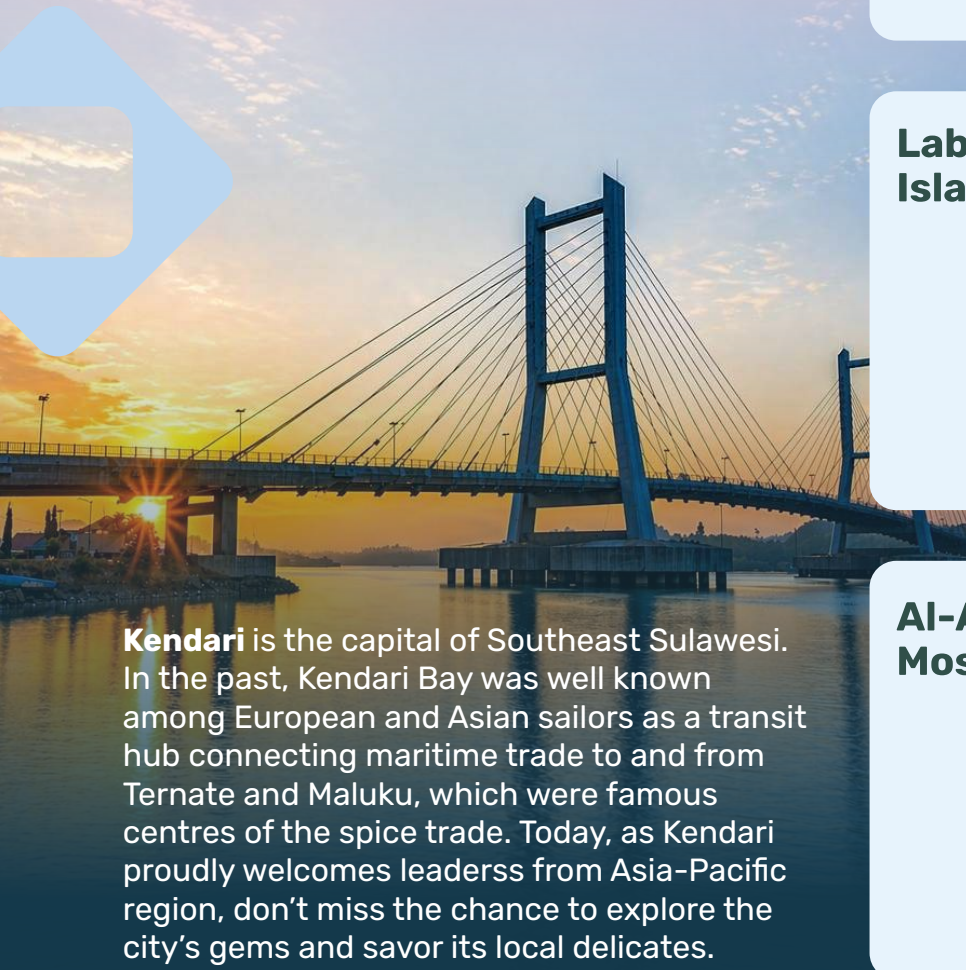
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What's Next 2026

Welcome to Kendari



Kendari is the capital of Southeast Sulawesi. In the past, Kendari Bay was well known among European and Asian sailors as a transit hub connecting maritime trade to and from Ternate and Maluku, which were famous centres of the spice trade. Today, as Kendari proudly welcomes leaders from Asia-Pacific region, don't miss the chance to explore the city's gems and savor its local delicacies.

Kendari Botanical Garden



Established on what was once a mining site, the Kendari Botanical Garden has now become one of the favourite tourist destinations in Southeast Sulawesi. It also serves as a conservation area and a camping ground. Local people visit with family or colleagues to enjoy the cool breeze across its spacious grounds.

Labengki Island



Labengki Island is often referred to as a miniature version of Raja Ampat, a famous tourist destination in West Papua, Indonesia, widely known as "heaven on earth" for its natural beauty. Comprising a small archipelago, Labengki offers stunning underwater scenery, a blue lagoon, and "Love Bay" for visitors to enjoy.

Al-Alam Mosque



Located on Kendari Bay, Al-Alam Mosque is a floating mosque that attracts both tourists and local worshippers. It features four minarets, resembling the Burj Al Arab. Inaugurated in 2018, the mosque can accommodate up to 10,000 people.

Local Delicacies

Cashew Chocolate

Cashew mixed with chocolate powder.



Cashew Steam Cake

Delicious snack made from cashew, highly recommended for souvenirs.



Kabuto

Light snack made from cassava and sweet potatoes. It served with grated coconut.

Sinonggi

Made from sago, Sinonggi is a local specialty from Kendari. It has a thick texture and is prepared with fresh spices. Usually served with fish, meat, and vegetables, Sinonggi is often found at traditional ceremonies in Sulawesi.



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Sustainable Tourism

WHAT IT IS

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

(<https://sdgs.un.org/topics/sustainable-tourism>)



Facts About (Sustainable) Tourism

Tourism is both highly **vulnerable** to climate change while at the same time contributing to it.

Sustainability principles refer to the **environmental, economic, and sociocultural** aspects – and a suitable balance must be established to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Over half (**53%**) of global travellers want to travel more sustainably in the future (<https://hospitalityinsights.ehl.edu/>)

TOURISM TRENDS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION



Community-Based Tourism (CBT), homestays included, has been a prominent trend in many parts of Asia including Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Viet Nam. This aligns with sustainable development and primarily occurs in poorer rural areas of countries. (*Responsible Travel, 2022*)



Medical tourism has enjoyed significant growth in several Asia-Pacific countries, including Thailand and India. (*Medical Trends Now, 2022*)



There has been growth in many forms of special interest travel in the Asia-Pacific region. Some include adventure, culinary, and religious tourism. (<https://gala.gre.ac.uk>)

TRAVEL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT INDEX FOR ASIA-PACIFIC (2024)

East Asia & Pacific		South East Asia		South Asia	
Japan	3	Singapore	13	India	39
Australia	5	Indonesia	22	Sri Lanka	76
China	8	Malaysia	35	Pakistan	101
RoK	14	Thailand	47	Nepal	105
New Zealand	25	Viet Nam	59	Bangladesh	109
Mongolia	85	Philippines	69		
		Cambodia	86		
		Lao PDR	91		

www.weforum.org

Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) is comprised of five dimensions (Enabling Environment, Policy and Enabling Conditions, Infrastructure and Services, Resources, and Sustainability), 17 pillars, and 102 individual indicators distributed among different pillars. It benchmarks and measures the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable and resilient development of the Travel & Tourism sector, which in turn contributes to the development of a country. One of key takeaways from TTDI: In general, the Europe and **Asia-Pacific regions** and high-income economies in particular continue to **have the most favourable conditions for travel and tourism development.** (*Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024 Insight Report*)

Cities in the Asia-Pacific region have paved its way towards sustainable tourism. Find out initiatives of local governments in the region as well as the collaboration established with local communities to ensure the sector benefit the people, planet, and the future.

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INSIGHTS ON ASIA-PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POTENTIALS



The number of international tourists in 2024 reached

1.4 billion,

a 115% increase from 2023. The Asia-Pacific region benefited the most, achieving 87% of the growth compared to pre-pandemic tourist numbers.

(<https://kemenpar.go.id/>)



The Asia-Pacific sustainable tourism market had total revenues of

\$60.3 billion

in 2023, representing a negative compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.4% between 2018 and 2023

(<https://www.researchandmarkets.com/>)



The domestic segment accounted for the market's largest proportion in 2023, with total revenues of \$39.4 billion, equivalent to

65.4%

of the market's overall value.

(<https://www.researchandmarkets.com/>)



China accounted for the largest share with

39.0%

of the Asia-Pacific sustainable tourism market in 2023 followed by Japan with a 16.4% share.

(<https://www.researchandmarkets.com/>)

Love Wanaka: A Collaborative Effort, Investment for the Future

Tourism and travelling are highly related with carbon emission. However, community group in New Zealand managed to transform this to initiative that positively contribute to the environment and investment for the future.



WHAT IT IS

Love Wanaka is a grassroots, collaborative initiative between the local community, businesses, and the council in Wanaka, New Zealand. Established as a not-for-profit platform, it raises funds through contributions from businesses and visitors to support local climate action, conservation, and biodiversity efforts.

WHAT IT DOES

Love Wānaka accelerates grassroots environmental action, enabling tourism to enrich the region for generations to come. Its mission is to foster an ecosystem where nature thrives for the benefit of all species, while ensuring that tourism gives back more than it takes.

It creates impacts by:

- Raising funds and awareness for grassroots environmental action
- Educating and inspire visitors
- Creating a culture of giving within the industry

IMPACTS BY THE NUMBERS (2023-2025)



\$74,000 in Impact Grants
\$38,850 (FY2025)



1,085 visitor + industry donors
525 (FY2025)



\$17,245 invested for the future
\$8,660 (FY2025)



360 native trees planted
145 (FY2025)

SEVERAL PROJECTS SUPPORTED

- Plastic Free Wanaka – Accelerating Zero Waste Initiatives
- WAI Wanaka – Safeguarding Freshwater Ecosystems
- Planetary Accounting Network – Quantifying Regenerative Actions
- Upper Clutha Tracks Trust – Connecting the Hawea River Corridor

- Te Kakano Aotearoa – Nurturing Native Habitats
- Friends of Bullock Creek – Restoring Urban Waterways
- Love Wanaka Endowment – Sewing the Seeds of the Future

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New Zealand Tourism: Converting Disappointment to Tree Planting



Another example of responsible and sustainable tourism can be seen in an initiative by New Zealand Tourism. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck and the tourism sector was among the hardest hit, Tourism New Zealand chose to respond with a message of hope and resilience. In partnership with Trees That Count, it invited people around the world to transform their disappointment into something positive by planting a tree—each one symbolising hope and renewal for the future.

This movement, known as the Forest of Hope initiative, was launched in late 2020 and continued into 2021.

It was designed not only to inspire, but also to keep New Zealand top of mind for international travellers while borders remained closed.

Through the campaign, individuals worldwide were encouraged to donate a tree via the Trees That Count platform, a conservation charity aiming to help plant 200 million native trees across the country. Each donated tree contributed to the growing “Forest of Hope,” and donors could personalise their contribution by naming their tree and sharing their reflections, which were displayed on a digital forest map. Donations started from NZD 10 (approximately USD 7) per tree.

Native Te Reo Maori Values Behind the Campaign

Manaaki: the importance of having empathy
Tiaki: care for people and place



Sources

<https://ecowanaka.co.nz/adventure-journal/native-tree-planting-initiative-on-mou-waho>

<https://lovewanaka.co.nz/wanaka-stories/impact-report-growing-community-one-native-plant-at-a-time/>

https://lovewanaka.co.nz/content/uploads/2025/09/Love-Wanaka_2025-Annual-Impact-Report.pdf.pdf

Haikou Volcanic Cluster Geopark

As the capital of Hainan Province, Haikou is renowned for its tropical climate. Besides serving as a major port city, Haikou is also home to the Haikou Volcanic Cluster Geopark, featuring ancient dormant volcano craters and lava.

Location

Haikou Volcanic Cluster Geopark is located on Shishan Town.

It is a key part of the Leiqiong UNESCO Global Geopark, straddling the Qiongzhou Strait.

The Area

Total area: 108km²

Home to 40 dormant volcanoes, more than 30 lava tunnels, millennium-old geological relics

Highest point: 222.8-metre high Ma'an Ridge



Miniature topographical model of the Haikou Volcanic Cluster Global Geopark at the Volcano Science Museum



Lava flow exhibit in Haikou Volcanic Cluster Global Geopark



Multiple scoria cones surrounding Maanling volcano, one with a small lake (bottom) in Haikou Volcanic Cluster National Geopark



The Highest Point

How does it relate to Sustainable Tourism?

Geopark is considered a relatively new activity within tourism; yet, it has grown rapidly over the past decade. It plays an important role in the development of geotourism, which has evolved partially in response to the need to minimise the negative impacts of mass tourism in geologically and geographically sensitive and/or important areas situated in tourist environments, while at the same time providing a catalyst for sustainable rural development. (*mdpi.com*)



Main Attraction

Visitors can explore the Mount Maanling Crater Scenic Area, where the twin volcanoes of Mount Fengliung and Mount Baoziling rise majestically, resembling a saddle in the landscape. Visitors can descend stairs winding down into the lushly vegetated crater and climb back up for luscious views of the countryside all the way to the sea.



How It Benefits Local People

(chinadaily.com, 2025)

- 1 Many farmers in the area work across agriculture and hospitality sectors.
- 2 The average annual income for local farmers has risen from less than CNY1,000 (USD\$146.59) in the 1990s to more than CNY20,000 (USD\$2,931.82), according to Haikou's agriculture and rural affairs bureau.
- 3 Annual visitors to the geopark have surged from just 35,000 two decades ago to more than 1 million, transforming the once little-known geological site into a major eco-tourism destination.

Financial Status

CNY40.3 mio

(approx. USD\$5,907,746.26)

Total income (2020)
of main scenic spots
(of Leiqiong Geopark)

(globalgeoparksnetwork.org)

CNY46.04 mio

(approx. USD\$6,749,196.97)

The park's
tourism income
(2023)



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Thailand's Bo Suak Village: Empowering Community for Sustainable Tourism



Bo Suak Village is located in Nan Province, Thailand. At the heart of Bo Suak is its strong Lanna cultural heritage, characterised by distinctive traditions, art, and architecture. The area retains its rural “slow life” with the livelihood centred on agriculture and artisanal crafts such as weaving, pottery, and bamboo work.

In line with Thailand’s national strategy to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into tourism policy, the Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) explored ways to develop Bo Suak for sustainable tourism. DASTA didn’t apply a top-down model. Instead, the strategy revolves around participatory, area-based approach rooted in co-thinking, co-planning, co-acting, co-responsibility, co-benefiting, and co-ownership.

Roles of DASTA/Government

1 Conducted comprehensive research on local resources and sensitivities.

2 Shared findings with local authorities and village leaders to assess interest in tourism development.

3 Worked closely with local occupational groups to transform traditional livelihoods into experiential learning bases.

Engine of Success: Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

1. Local people were supported to design and deliver hands-on workshops, such as weaving, pottery, and craft-making.
2. Training included building communication confidence, enabling community members to act as knowledgeable local guides and facilitators.
3. Local people were trained in Thailand's Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)-recognised Community-Based Tourism standards (covering areas such as governance and administration, socio-economic management, cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, and service quality)



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Results:

- 1 Visitors engage in hands-on activities such as pottery, bamboo weaving, and textile weaving, creating meaningful exchanges between hosts and guests while adding value to local craftsmanship.
- 2 Rather than simply producing goods for sale, artisans became storytellers, sharing the meaning, history, and cultural significance behind their crafts.
- 3 The formation of the Bo Suak Community-Based Tourism Promotion Club, composed of weaving groups, craft cooperatives, culinary groups, and other key sectors. The Club became the community's management and decision-making hub, ensuring that tourism development remained community driven.

Impact:

Since its development in 2012, Bo Suak has achieved transformative results, including:

- Tourism activities created new employment opportunities, diversified income sources, and contributed to a steady increase in visitors, from around 1,000–2,000 annually in the early post-COVID period to approximately 50,000 in 2023.
- Improved roads, lighting, and water systems, delivering benefits well beyond the tourism sector.



Recognition:

1. The UN Tourism Best Tourism Village award in 2024.
2. As a leading case study within DASTA's portfolio sharing its experience through national and international knowledge-exchange networks.

Kerala: Pioneer of Responsible Tourism in India



Kerala claims to be the pioneer of Responsible Tourism in India (goodtourismblog.com). Aiming to help travellers, the local population, and the trade derive the greatest possible benefits from tourism, without causing any ecological or social damage. In 2007, Kerala piloted projects in several destinations (Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady and Vythiri). In 2012, the initiative was extended to three more destinations – Kumbalangi, Bekal and Ambalavayal. In 2013, Kerala Tourism was conferred a United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Award for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism for its global leadership in creating innovative initiatives for sustainable tourism at Kumarakom. Following the success of Kumarakom and the other pioneering destinations, Responsible Tourism is being implemented throughout Kerala [via the Responsible Tourism Mission]. In 2017, the local government established Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission.

WHAT IT IS

Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission Society is the nodal agency formed by the Government of Kerala to spread and implement the ideologies and initiatives of Responsible Tourism all over the State (keralatourism.org). Kerala Responsible Tourism Mission encompasses all forms of tourism and seeks to minimise negative economic, environment and social impacts. It generates greater economic benefits to local people and enhances the wellbeing of local communities. It also makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and maintenance of the world's diversity. (<https://sdgs.un.org/topics/sustainable-tourism>)

The Kumarakom Model

- a. Based on "Triple Bottom Line" philosophy (Economic, Social, and Environmental Responsibility)
- b. Challenges faced: Tourism paradox (luxury resorts springing up and local community felt alienated)
- c. Transformation made: The village decided to sell its "daily life" as an experience.
 1. Economic: Ensuring that the money spent by tourists reaches the pockets of the local farmers, fishermen, and artisans.
 2. Social: Preserving the traditional way of life and involving the community in tourism decision-making.
 3. Environmental: Protecting the fragile Kumarakom Backwater ecosystem, mangroves, and water bodies from pollution.
- d. Economic Impact: Over 15 major resorts in Kumarakom now source their vegetables, eggs, milk, and fish directly from local homestead farmers.
- e. Environmental Stewardship: The Responsible Tourism (RT) model introduced several green initiatives: Plastic-Free Zone, Mangrove Restoration, Organic Farming, eco-friendly practices by Kerala Houseboat (waste management, local staffing, silent cruises).

source: kumarakom.com



WHAT IT DOES

- To initiate community level tourism activities
- To establish tourism linkage to community level activities
- To encourage tourism trade and other stakeholders to practice Responsible Tourism principles
- To encourage tourism units and tourists to take up socially relevant activities and practice environment-friendly practices
- To build capacity of community at various levels to get benefits from tourism
- To promote local employment and local procurement
- To promote green principles in construction and architecture, green protocols in waste management, organic farming etc. in tourism destinations
- To promote fair trade in tourism
- To facilitate the empowerment of women and marginalised communities through tourism
- To develop local entrepreneurship in tourism
- To organise Responsible Tourism Clubs at colleges and schools
- To promote innovation in the economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism to enhance benefits for local community

AWARDS

- 1 Global Vision Award 2022 (for experiential, sustainable, and environmentally friendly tourism)
- 2 International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT) Indian Sub-Continent Awards 2022 (Top honours in plastic waste elimination, water conservation (under the Water STREET Project), diversification in the tourism sector and revival of post-COVID tourism.
- 3 Global award at the World Travel Market (WTM) London 2022 (Conserving Water and Improving Water Security and Supply for Neighbours)

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SAKA ALIR TEBET

Transforming Wastewater into Sustainable Solutions



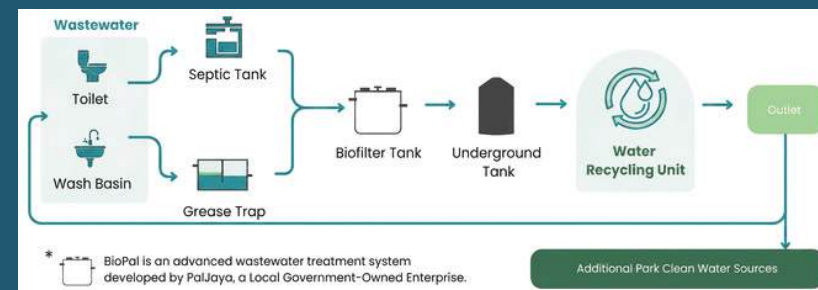
UCLG ASPAC, in close collaboration with the Provincial Government of Jakarta, its host city, officially inaugurated Saka Alir Tebet - the Water Recycling Unit (WRU) at Tebet Eco Park, South Jakarta, on February 10, 2026. The ceremony was attended by representatives from the Provincial Government of Jakarta, delegates from 16 local governments, and technical experts. This facility is a support that contributes to solving the interconnected challenges faced by Jakarta Provincial Government: groundwater depletion, polluted waterways, and land subsidence – partly driven by long-term groundwater extraction.

The Saka Alir WRU introduces an innovative system designed to treat domestic wastewater from toilets and wash basins—including liquid blackwater—into safe, reusable water for public space operations. By integrating this technology, the initiative contributes to urban resilience by reducing dependence on groundwater, supporting safe sanitation standards, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions associated with unmanaged wastewater.

How the System Works

The WRU applies a structured wastewater treatment process that separates and treats different waste stream:

- Greywater from wash basins flows through a grease trap to remove oils and residues.
- Blackwater from toilets is directed to a septic tank where solids and liquids are separated.
- The liquid fraction is then further processed through a biological treatment system to reduce organic matter and pathogens.



The treated water is stored in an underground tank before entering the Saka Alir Unit, which features a nine-chamber system employing multiple treatment stages, including sedimentation, biological processes (anaerobic, aerobic, and anoxic), recirculation, and chlorination. With a treatment capacity of five cubic metres every four hours, the system produces reusable water that serves as an additional source for the park operations, including toilet flushing and landscape irrigation.

The unit is fully locally manufactured, supporting domestic industry while ensuring accessible maintenance and spare parts. To enhance operational safety, the facility is equipped with an automated water quality monitoring system powered by a dedicated solar panel, enabling continuous and energy-efficient monitoring.



A Replicable Model for Cities

Beyond serving Tebet Eco Park, Saka Alir demonstrates how wastewater—particularly liquid blackwater that is often poorly managed—can be repositioned as a resource within urban systems. By reducing groundwater extraction, the system contributes to efforts to address water scarcity and land subsidence challenges. Proper treatment of blackwater also helps minimise methane emissions commonly associated with conventional septic systems that are not optimally managed.

As a pilot initiative, the WRU offers a practical model that can be adapted by local governments in schools, terminals, public parks, and other public facilities, based on their respective contexts and budgets. Through Saka Alir Tebet, wastewater is no longer viewed as a burden, but as part of a circular solution supporting greener, more resilient cities.

Upon the completion of the project, UCLG ASPAC acknowledges the strong collaboration with the Provincial Government of Jakarta, particularly the Jakarta Parks and Urban Forest Agency, the Jakarta Development Planning Agency, and its local partner, Fasilitas Sehat Manfaat-kembali Aman (FSMAman), which has been instrumental in achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

- + “Saka Alir”—with “Saka” meaning a supporting pillar or foundation, and “Alir” meaning continuous flow or life-giving movement—represents more than just a technological installation.
- + It reflects strong intergovernmental collaboration and a shared commitment to turning urban challenges into sustainable opportunities.

Insights Towards AGMF 2026

UCLG ASPAC, serves as the Secretariat of the ASEAN Governors and Mayors Forum (AGMF), is preparing the way towards AGMF 2026 hosted by the Manila City.

■ Forging a Partnership in Manila

In a visit on January 12-14, UCLG ASPAC, under the AGMF framework, President and Secretary General had a productive meeting with Mayor Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso of Manila. Mayor Domagoso extended the city’s full commitment to hosting a premier regional gathering. There was also a commitment to build commemorative landmark at Mohen Garden, plan a tree-planting activity, and a site visit to a major housing project. There was also a high-level discussion with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) of the Philippines, represented by the Undersecretary Mr. Marlo L. Iringan and Undersecretary Mr. Francisco R. Cruz.

It was agreed that the AGMF/MGMAC 2026 will directly contribute to the strategic objective of localising the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and that the forum will provide a critical platform for governors and mayors to shape policies, share transformative practices, and forge partnerships that anchor the region’s sustainable development ambitions at the local level.



■ Towards Enriching ASEAN-Japan Local Government Cooperation

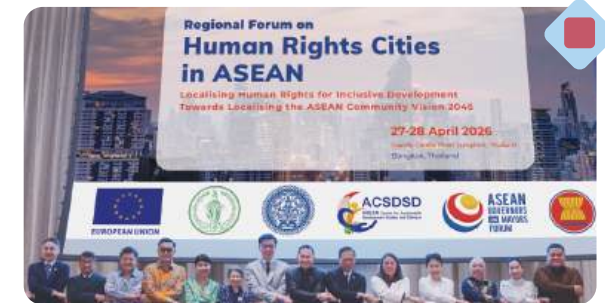
Secretary General Dr. Bernadia I. Tjandradewi, representing the ASEAN Governors and Mayors Forum Secretariat, met with the newly appointed Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN, Mr. Yonetani Koji, on February 12, 2026. The meeting aimed to explore cooperation between ASEAN local governments and Japan within the broader ASEAN-Japan partnership framework.



■ A Regional Forum on Human Rights Cities in ASEAN

A Regional Forum on Human Rights Cities in ASEAN was convened on April 27-28, 2026, in Bangkok, bringing together policymakers, city leaders, and development partners to advance the localisation of human rights for inclusive, people-centred urban development. The Forum was organised by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Thailand and co-organised by AGMF/UCLG ASPAC and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, with support from the European Union. It underscored the growing recognition that human rights must be embedded at the local level to realise sustainable and people-centred cities.

Held in a hybrid format, the Forum featured high-level opening remarks, including those by the EU Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand (Mrs. Luisa Ragher), the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Thailand (Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi), and Secretary-General Bernadia, alongside technical sessions on integrating human rights into urban governance frameworks. Discussions highlighted that the localisation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 (ACV 2045) is inseparable from the role of local governments, which serve as the primary interface between policy and people. Sessions on participatory governance, inclusive service delivery, and city-to-city cooperation demonstrated how cities and municipalities can operationalise human rights principles to address urban challenges, from social protection to equitable access to services.





UCLG ASPAC – Catbalogan City Government:

SDGs-ASEAN Park, A Local Economic Development Project

UCLG ASPAC and the Catbalogan City Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise collaboration on the development of the ASEAN-SDGs Park Project – an initiative to create a public space that integrates sustainable development, economic empowerment, and community engagement on March 11, 2026. The MoU was signed by Secretary General Bernadia and Mayor Dexter Uy of Catbalogan, in the presence of Councillor Stephany Uy Tan and representatives of key stakeholders across the city.

A key component of the proposed park is containers designed to support micro and small enterprises. The marketplace will consist of modular vendor spaces created from repurposed shipping containers, providing affordable commercial spaces for local entrepreneurs.

The park is part of the bigger complex that will include sports facilities targeting the youth, as well as a playground for children.



Sample of container



SDGs-ASEAN Park Project Area



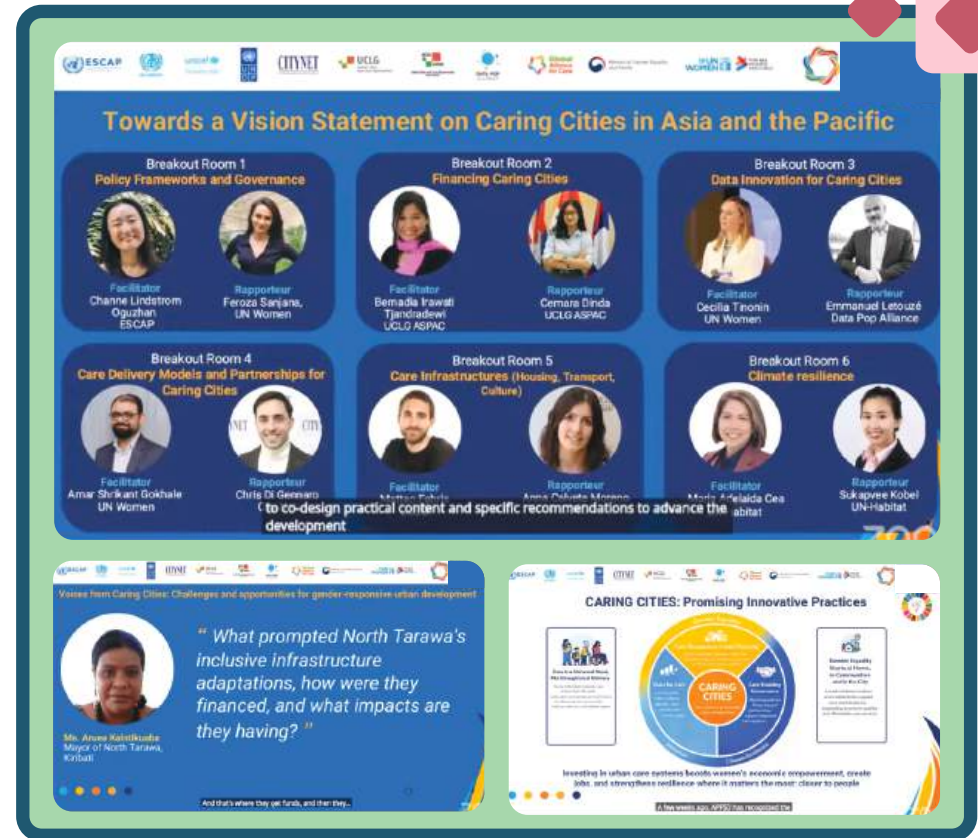
Joining Forces to Promote Gender Equality in Local Governance

Caring Cities and Inclusion

UCLG ASPAC promoted gender equality in local governance by participating in the 13th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) Associated Event on “Caring Cities: Gender-Responsive Pathways to Ageing, Inclusion, and Transformation in Asia and the Pacific”, conducted online on March 11, 2026.

Attended by more than 340 participants joining via Zoom and 235 via YouTube, the event was convened by the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, with financial support from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea, and co-organised by UN ESCAP, UNICEF, UN-Habitat, UCLG, UCLG ASPAC, City-Net, Global Alliance for Care, and Data-Pop Alliance. It explored how care can be better integrated in urban governance, financing, and service delivery.

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG ASPAC, opening the event alongside representatives from UN Women, UN-Habitat, and ESCAP, underscored that care lies at the heart of gender equality, social justice, and the sustainability of life. She stressed that SDG 11 is not only about infrastructure but also about how cities are lived in, governed, and cared for. As she noted, the future of cities will not be defined only by how fast they grow, but by how well they care.



Mrs. Tiene Kanoua, CEO of Kiribati Local Government Association (KiLGA), representing Mayor Aurea Kaintukuaba, shared the experience of North Tarawa, Kiribati, where modest but meaningful improvements, such as providing chairs and benches in waiting areas for elderly residents, pregnant women, and persons with disabilities, helped make local public services more inclusive and dignified.

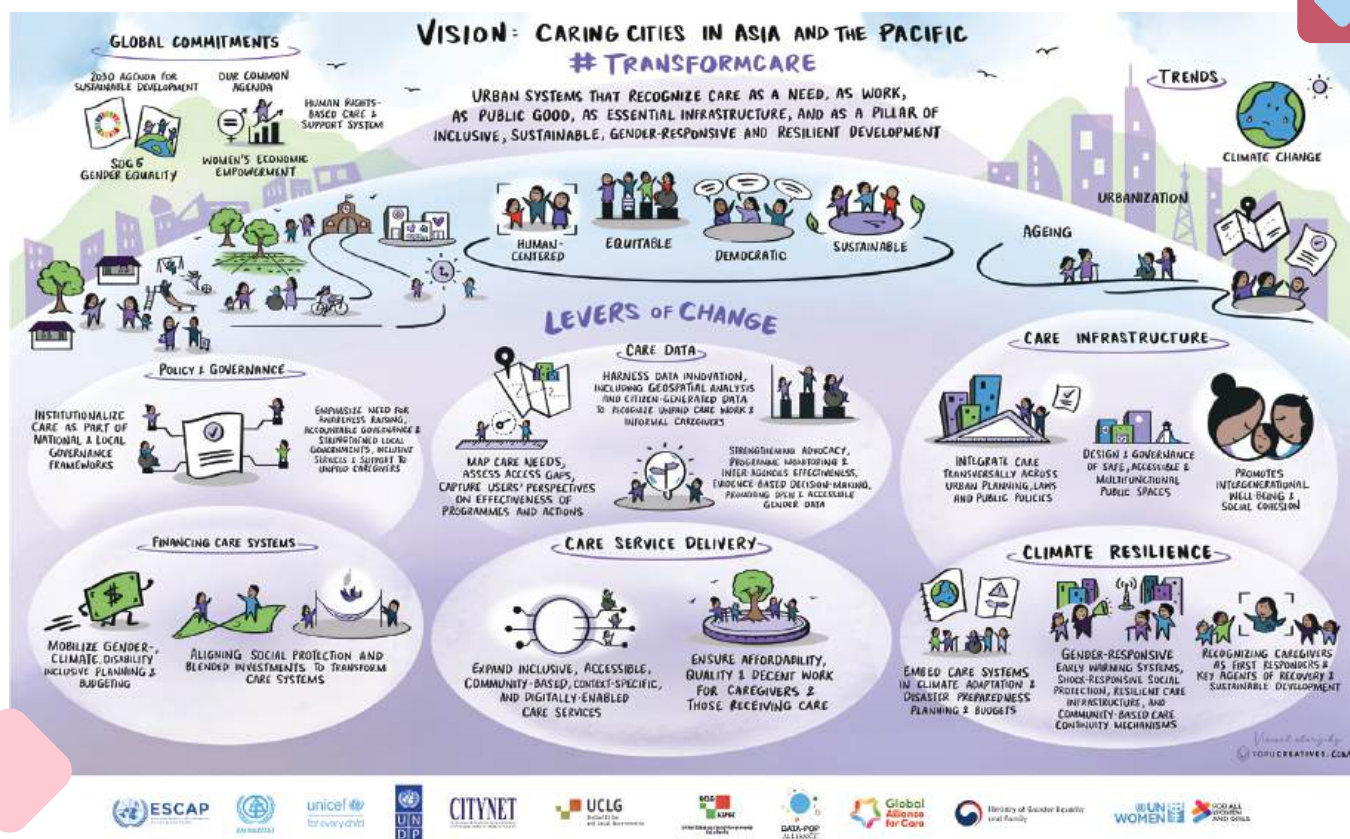
A major highlight was the interactive breakout segment. Participants were grouped into six thematic breakout sessions covering Enabling Policy Frameworks for Caring Cities; Financing Caring Cities; Data Innovation for Caring Cities: Moving Beyond GDP; Care Delivery Models and Partnerships for Caring Cities; Care Infrastructures (Housing, Transport, Culture); and Climate Resilience. Dr. Bernadia facilitated the breakout session on Financing Caring Cities.

Ms. Julaihah binti Jamaludin, Mayor of the Hulu Selangor Municipal Council (MPHS), Malaysia, shared that the Council's Municipal Endowment Fund is the first initiative by a local government in Malaysia. Introduced in 2018, the fund has grown to RM 7.28 million (approximately USD 1.86 million) as of February 2026, and supports a wide range of programmes that strengthen family and community well-being, including free breakfast programmes, school fee support, childcare and community facility upgrades, school bus stop improvements, ambulance services for the elderly, and economic empowerment for single mothers.

Mr. Diza Hazra Aljoshia, Vice Mayor of Jambi City, Indonesia, emphasised the need for an integrated financing system for care services that links local budgets, national government support, community participation, and private sector contributions through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Additional reflections from Councillor Stephany Uy of Catbalogan City and Mr. Krishna Neupane from Nepal further shared insights that financing care is both a political and practical local governance issue that requires clearer prioritisation, greater local fiscal space and stronger municipal capacity.

This event reinforced how local governments are not just implementers of care-related policies, but key actors in shaping how care is governed, delivered, and financed across this dynamic region. The final Vision Statement for Caring Cities in Asia and the Pacific is available on UCLG ASPAC website.



Urban-Act: Support to National and Regional Level

UCLG ASPAC, under the framework of Urban-Act Programme, played its role as the project's regional support and country implementing partner for Indonesia.

NATIONAL ROLE



Coaching Clinic and City Pairing in Jakarta

February 9, 2026

Outcomes

- Strengthened institutional capacity through peer learning engaging local governments from 16 cities and regencies in Indonesia, along with participation from the project's consortium partners and technical experts
- Support to cities in translating climate commitments into implementable actions, particularly in the priority sectors of urban mobility and solid waste management



Focus Group Discussion on Policy Instrument, Jakarta

February 20, 2026

Outcomes

- Identification of feasible and relevant climate resilience indicators for each priority sector: marine and coastal areas, water resources, agriculture, and health
- Examination of data, capacity, and institutional gaps that hinder the monitoring and reporting of resilience performance at the local level
- Reflections on which policy instruments or technical guidelines should be prioritised by the central government to strengthen implementation, monitoring, reporting across the four sectors

REGIONAL ROLE



City Pairing Planning Workshop for Thai City

January 29–30, 2026

Bangkok

Outcomes

- Finalise the key areas of thematic issues for pairing, support needs, modalities and potential knowledge cities (domestic and regional)
- Develop work plan, timeline for 2026 city pairing activities in Thailand



Regional Synthesis Workshop

February 23–24, 2026

Bangkok

Outcomes

- Knowledge sharing to strengthen project preparation, improve financial viability, and enhance cities' capacity to access and manage climate funding
- Introduction to the Climate Budget Tool for Cities to support municipalities in tagging and tracking climate-relevant expenditures within their annual budgets



Expert Group Meeting

February 5, 2026

New Delhi

Outcomes

- Evaluated effectiveness of India's national frameworks enabling local governments to lead climate actions in five sub-criteria: legal and policy frameworks; governance and science-policy support; bureaucracy and human capital development; climate financing and resource mobilisation; and public participation
- India recorded an overall score of 3.05 out of 4 of CEE-ECG, reflecting a generally strong national framework, while also identifying public participation as a key area requiring further strengthening.



Lessons from India and Indonesia – Side Event at APFSD 2026

February 25, 2026

Bangkok

Outcomes

- Promotion of low-carbon and resilient urban development in several Asian countries
- Presentation of CEE-ECG assessment result, indicating a relatively strong regulation framework for climate action, with national policies supporting local government and public participation

*) CEE-ECG: City Enabling Environment for Environmental and Climate Governance



The Third Local and Regional Government Assembly by APLG at the 13th APFSD in Bangkok

UCLG ASPAC, as the coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Local Government Coordinating Body (APLG), organised the third Local and Regional Government Assembly (LRGA) in Bangkok, Thailand, on February 23, 2026. An associated event of the 13th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), the Assembly engaged leaders and representatives of local and regional governments.

Results of the discussion from the LRGA were delivered in the relevant plenary sessions of the APFSD. Ms. Annaliza Gonzalez-Kwan, Presidential Adviser for Economic Affairs of League of Municipalities of the Philippines and Mayor of Guiuan Municipality, reiterated the role of localisation and access to financing. Atty. Elmer Datuin, Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Philippine Councillors League and Councillor of Baguio City, delivered the recommendations of the LRG constituency to achieve the SDGs. The Joint Statement of Local and Regional Governments to the 13th APFSD was adopted as an outcome document of the LRGA and submitted to the APFSD. Mr. Dakila Carlo Cua, President of UCLG ASPAC, President of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, and Governor of Quirino Province, underscored the crucial role of local governments and localisation for a sustainable future.

Local Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development session

Local and regional governments presented their actions to implement the SDGs: Kurunegala on the provision of water and sanitation services, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration's energy action plan, Guiuan on disaster resilience, Baguio's circular economy transition, Surigao on housing resettlement for Indigenous Peoples, Nakhon Si Thammarat's people-centric smart city, and the All-India Institute for Local Self-Government (AIILSG) on fostering partnerships and financing for the SDGs. In the session on "Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)", Surigao, Baguio, and Nakhon Si Thammarat discussed their experience on the process, institutionalisation, and lessons learned in developing the VLR. The statement released in the Assembly was presented to the member states attending the APFSD.



Introducing The Mayor's Compass

A Podcast Initiative Showcasing Stories
from UCLG ASPAC Member Cities

UCLG ASPAC announced new podcast initiative “The Mayor’s Compass” to kick off the year of 2026 with a fresh, renewed idea. This aims to capture the voice of local governments leaders, innovators, and young changemakers shaping the future of Asia-Pacific.

The series is set to amplify the diverse voices and experiences of local governments across the region by providing a dedicated platform to share their insights, challenges, and successes in the shape of accessible multimedia format. It ensures that critical knowledge is properly disseminated and easily digested.

Led by the UCLG ASPAC Secretary General, the series features a 15-minute, casual-conversation format and is scheduled for release every two months, ideally in English while remaining open to other languages to ensure broader accessibility.

The podcast offers an opportunity to highlight the work of local leader through a closer and more personal perspective. It also seeks to spark new energy. As more voices from the UCLG ASPAC Network come forward, the series hope to strengthen the sense of connection and shared purpose that unites cities throughout the region.



Episode 1: Mayor Siska Karina Imran of Kendari (Indonesia)

This episode discussed her communicative leadership style and the city's proactive approach to public service, such as the "112" call centre. The Mayor outlined strategies for climate change mitigation and infrastructure development while preparing to host the upcoming 2026 UCLG ASPAC Executive Bureau Meeting.



Episode 2: Councillor Stephanie Uy-Tan of Catbalogan (the Philippines)

She shared her experience as a two-term Mayor, the first female leader in the city, and a champion for gender equality. It also introduced a local project between UCLG ASPAC and Catbalogan City, promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in line with the Philippines' ASEAN Chairmanship and the upcoming ASEAN Governors and Mayors Forum in Manila.

Interested in being featured on The Mayor's Compass?

Members of the UCLG ASPAC Network who are interested in being featured on The Mayor's Compass may contact the Secretariat for further details and availability.



From Local Limits to Real Impact A Young Practitioner's Journey into Development

Sungchan Lee's journey into development began with a simple observation growing up in Jeonju, Republic of Korea: many young people had to leave their city to access better opportunities. Reflecting on this, he notes:

"development is not an abstract concept. It is about creating systems, institutions, and opportunities that allow people to build meaningful futures in their own communities."

For local governments, it reinforces the idea that development must ultimately be measured by whether it expands real opportunities where people already are.

For him, "interest alone is inherently passive it does not directly improve people's lives." This realisation led him to seek practical exposure, beginning with his internship at UCLG ASPAC. Supporting communication between Jeonju City and UCLG ASPAC, he learned that even when there is alignment in goals, progress depends heavily on how stakeholders communicate, how trust is built, and how differences are managed.

When joining the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Nepal, he worked on agricultural initiatives involving drone technology. He contributed to developing practical drone operation manuals and supported training for farmers. Key lesson: development is not defined by how advanced a solution is, but whether it is usable, accessible, and sustained over time.



In practice, he found that development work values transferable skills such as communication, coordination,

and adaptability more than perfectly aligned experience. His advice to other young people is to start where they are, take on responsibility, and learn through doing. For institutions such as UCLG ASPAC and its members, this also points to the importance of creating entry points that allow young people to engage meaningfully, even without extensive prior experience.

Sungchan's experience suggests that meaningful contribution in development is more about a willingness to engage with complexity, remain open to learning, and focus on making ideas work in practice. For local governments and development practitioners, this perspective offers a useful reminder that sustainable impact is built not only through vision, but through consistent and grounded effort over time.

Strengthening Indonesian Local Governance for Better Services

UCLG ASPAC – Ministry of Home Affairs of Indonesia



UCLG ASPAC reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening local governance and improving public services delivery in Indonesia, as expressed in the National Coordination Meeting (Rapat Koordinasi Nasional/Rakornas) on the Minimum Service Standards (Standard Pelayanan Minimum/SPM) between UCLG ASPAC and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) of Indonesia on March 4, 2026.

SPM is a national programme calling on local governments to provide public services that meet at least the minimum standard set in the regulation. The meeting brought together around 100 representatives from national ministries, provincial and local governments, attending offline and at least 6,000 representatives joining online.

“SPM is a commitment of the state to guarantee basic rights. It must not stop at compliance, but drive real improvements in people’s quality of life

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi
Secretary General of UCLG ASPAC

From Compliance to Transformation

The Secretary General highlighted encouraging SPM progress in Indonesia, including:

- + Increased integration of SPM into local planning and budgeting;
- + Strengthened monitoring and reporting systems; and
- + The emergence of local best practices driven by strong leadership.

She also acknowledged persistent challenges: fiscal disparities among regions, fragmented sectoral data systems, and the need for stronger inter-agency coordination.

In response, UCLG ASPAC promotes a “transformation-based approach” where SPM implementation becomes a driver of governance reform, enhancing transparency, accountability, and results-based management, rather than a compliance exercise.

UCLG ASPAC’s Role: Bridging Policy and Practice

Throughout 2025, UCLG ASPAC has delivered technical capacity-building programmes and strengthened collaboration amongst cities and local governments in Indonesia and beyond. Looking ahead, UCLG ASPAC presented its 2026–2027 work plan, reaffirming its support to:

- + Strengthen local governments’ capacity in delivering basic services;
- + Promote peer learning and knowledge exchange across regions;
- + Elevate Indonesian local innovations to the Asia-Pacific stage; and
- + Accelerate the localisation of SDGs through integrated planning and governance.

During the meeting, UCLG ASPAC and MoHA signed the agreed Programme Master Plan (Rencana Induk Kegiatan/RIK) and Annual Workplan (Rencana Kerja Tahunan/RKT) 2026–2027.

As Indonesia continues to advance its decentralisation agenda, UCLG ASPAC remains a strategic partner aiming to support local governments to become more responsive, innovative, and globally connected



Pacific

Public Transport to Address Fuel Insecurity

Providers of public transport in New Zealand are expecting more users, particularly as Government is considering public transport as essential part to address fuel insecurity. "We expect increased public transport use as fuel costs rise, and we've already heard from Public Transport Authorities around the country that patronage is reaching record highs in some places." In Auckland, passenger numbers were seven percent higher last Tuesday than the previous week, the highest they have been since 2019. In that same period, public transport in Canterbury saw a 2.25% increase. "This reinforces the importance of councils continuing to provide affordable, reliable alternatives that communities can readily switch to when needed," Chair Swiggs said. (gnz.co.nz)



South-southwest Asia

School Level Climate Circles

The Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA), in collaboration with the National Building Research Organisation and the Department of Probation and Child Protection, conducted a preliminary workshop to establish school level Climate Circles in the Aranayaka, Ayagama and Kalawana divisions of Sabaragamuwa Province. This programme educates students to identify differences of natural hazards and man-made disasters in the context of their community as well as the main types of disasters affecting Sabaragamuwa Province (with a focus on floods and landslides). This was conducted as part of the "Enhancing Community Resilience to the Impacts of Climate Change and Disaster Management in Four Pradeshiya Sabhas in the Sabaragamuwa Province" project, supported by the Australian High Commission in Sri Lanka through a Direct Aid Programme Grant. (fslga.lk)





East Asia

The 2025 “Run with Yiwu” Global Youth Business Programme

Yiwu successfully hosted the 2025 “Run with Yiwu” Global Youth Business Programme (two training sessions) in early and mid-August. The programme attracted over 50 outstanding young entrepreneurs and emerging business leaders from Latin American and Pacific Island countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Tonga, Micronesia, and Fiji, etc. Over the course of the programme, participants took part in a dynamic mix of learning activities—including site visits, cultural experiences, interactive discussions, and enterprise internships—designed to leverage Yiwu’s strengths as an open and globally connected hub of trade and innovation. By connecting young entrepreneurs from around the globe with Yiwu’s vibrant business environment, the 2025 “Run with Yiwu” Global Youth Business Programme has not only strengthened bonds of friendship but also opened new pathways for cross-cultural innovation and cooperation.



Southeast Asia

Launch of the 22nd Indonesia City Expo

Asosiasi Pemerintah Kota Seluruh Indonesia (APEKSI/ Association of Indonesia Municipalities or Association of Indonesian City Governments) was preparing for its National Working Meeting in Medan (to be conducted on June 28–July 4, 2026). Building on the momentum, APEKSI also launched 22nd Indonesia City Expo (ICE) organised in the city on February 24, 2026. “Medan is ready to welcome city leaders and provide space for productive discussion,” said Mayor Rico Rawas of Medan. Mr. Eri Cahyadi, Chairman of APEKSI, expressed high appreciation to the city’s preparation and emphasise on the importance of synergy. (*apekti.id*)

New Members

UCLG ASPAC Secretariat welcomes new members to be approved in the UCLG ASPAC Executive Bureau Meeting 2026.



Central Java Province

Governor : Komjen Pol (Purn) Drs. Ahmad Luthfi, S.H., S.St.M.K.
Website : www.ppidsetda.jatengprov.go.id

Central Java is one of the most populated provinces in Indonesia that plays a significant role in supporting national development through inclusive governance and economic growth. The provincial government focuses on strengthening public services, promoting innovation-driven economic development, and enhancing collaborative governance. Central Java has been awarded (2025) as the top-performing province in Indonesia for implementing a merit-based talent management system for civil servants.



Depok City

Mayor : Dr. H. Supian Suri, M.M.
Website : www.depok.go.id

Depok City is a rapidly growing city in West Java, serving as a key residential, educational, and economic hub. Depok also has demonstrated strong commitment to transparency and good governance, earning the "Informative Public Body" award at the West Java Provincial Public Information Disclosure Awards for four consecutive years (2022–2025), reflecting consistent implementation of open government principles across its institutions.



Gadhimai Municipality

Mayor : Mr. Shyam Yadav
Website : www.gadhimaimun.gov.np

Gadhimai Municipality, established in 2016 within the Rautahat District of Madhesh Province, serves as a vital urban local government in Nepal's southern Terai region. The municipality is strategically located near the India–Nepal border. Gadhimai leverages its robust agricultural base and historical significance—notably its administrative centre in Samanpur, a key site from the Anglo–Nepalese War—to foster local trade and regional connectivity.



Kalika Rural Municipality

Chairperson : Mr. Harikrishna Devkota
Website : www.likhumunnuwakot.gov.np

Kalika Municipality is an urban local government in Nepal, located in the northeastern part of Chitwan District within Bagmati Province. Kalika Municipality is characterised by a diverse geographical landscape spanning both the Terai plains and hilly areas, supporting a predominantly agriculture-based economy with growing activities in livestock and commercial farming.



Likhu Rural Municipality

Chairperson : Mr. Dhruva Shrestha
Website : www.likhumunnuwakot.gov.np

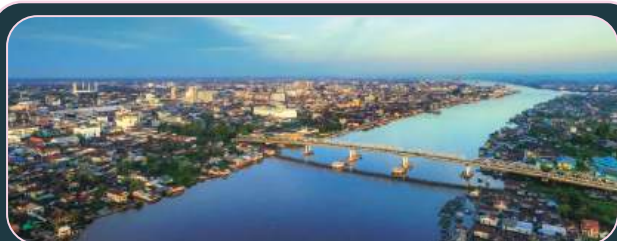
Likhu Rural Municipality is a rural local government in Nepal, located in Nuwakot District within Bagmati Province. As one of the smaller rural municipalities in the district, Likhu is characterised by its hilly landscape and dispersed settlements, with its administrative centre located in Bhaladmi Danda. The municipality is focused on strengthening basic service delivery, rural infrastructure, and community-based development, while promoting inclusive local governance in line with Nepal's decentralisation framework.



Neelkantha Municipality

Mayor : Mr. Bhim Prasad Dhungana
Website : www.neelakanthamun.gov.np

Neelakantha Municipality is an urban local government in Nepal, located in Dhading District within Bagmati Province. The municipality serves as a key administrative centre in the district. Characterised by a predominantly hilly and forested landscape, with nearly half of its area covered by forests, Neelakantha supports a mixed economy based on agriculture, trade, and emerging tourism. Foreign employment represents a key source of livelihood for the youth, with many engaged in overseas employment across nine international destinations, including Malaysia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and others.



Pontianak City

Mayor : Ir. H. Edi Rusdi Kamtono, MM., MT.
Website : www.pontianak.go.id

Pontianak is strategically located at the confluence of the Kapuas and Landak rivers along the equator, earning its identity as the "Equator City". The city has developed into an important trade and port centre in the region. Today, Pontianak continues to strengthen its role as a regional economic hub. The city has also received national recognition for its public sector management and social development efforts.



Siquijor Province

Governor : Mr. Jake Vincent S. Villa
Website : www.siquijorprovince.com

Siquijor is a small island province in Philippines, located in the Central Visayas region. Known as the "Island of Fire", Siquijor has a rich cultural heritage shaped by history, spirituality, and local traditions. The province is characterised by a predominantly hilly and mountainous landscape, with coastal communities and a central peak at Mount Bandilaan. Siquijor is also recognised for its unique cultural identity, including traditional healing practices, as well as its growing tourism sector, which recorded over 168,000 visitors in 2019.



Uijeongbu City

Mayor : Mr. Kim, Dong Keun
Website : www.ui4u.go.kr

The city of Uijeongbu, Republic of Korea, continues to strengthen lifelong learning and global citizenship by implementing inclusive, community-based initiatives. The city has developed the Alley Project and Uijeongbu regional studies to foster local identity, engagement, and provide accessible learning opportunities across all age groups, including support for persons with disabilities, adult literacy, and small business entrepreneurship.



Digital Smart Monitoring Centre
and AI Disaster Prevention

New Taipei City Demonstrates Its Global Capabilities in Smart and Resilient Urban Transformation

On February 5, 2026, a delegation from the International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) programme, led by senior officials from the European Commission's Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), conducted a visit to New Taipei City, where they examined the city's AI-based building monitoring, roads information, and fire dispatching systems. Their examinations confirmed New Taipei's internationally leading position in the fields of smart technology, digitalisation, and social innovation.

The delegation first visited City Hall, a highly digitalised smart energy-saving centre, with core technology provided by the technical partner Ennowell, integrating building information modeling (BIM), artificial intelligence (AI), and digital twin technology. This system is not only a monitoring interface but also an energy-saving solution. It successfully reduces electricity consumption by more than 1.36 million kWh each year, demonstrating practical results in achieving net-zero carbon emissions.

The delegation then proceeded to the iRoad Smart Cloud Road Information Centre, where it was shown how big data is utilised to monitor urban infrastructure, ensuring that the city's main arteries remain efficient and resilient under extreme climate conditions. Subsequently, New Taipei City's 119 Dispatch Centre showcased its "40-second golden dispatch" capability. By integrating AI expert systems, they reduced dispatch times from 84 to under 40 seconds. The IURC delegation highly praised this seamless integration of technology and public safety.



New Taipei City has also demonstrated its strategic vision in international cooperation, currently engaging in multilateral dialogue with the European Union and cities across the Asia-Pacific, including Bologna (Italy), Riga (Latvia), Sofia (Bulgaria), Gangtok (India), and Seberang Perai (Malaysia).

By sharing its practical experience in circular economy governance, digital transformation, and social innovation, New Taipei has successfully transformed its local resilience strategies into solutions that can serve as references for cities worldwide. Through the visit of the IURC delegation, New Taipei once again highlighted its role in contributing comprehensive solutions for building resilient cities.

Seagulls Delight Visitors

at Qingdao's Zhanqiao Pier

At Qingdao's iconic Zhanqiao Pier, spring brings a special kind of magic. Thousands of seagulls gather along the coastline, interacting with visitors in delightful ways.

The birds boldly land on people's heads and shoulders, creating moments of pure joy and surprise. With remarkable precision, they grab treats from outstretched hands or catch food mid-air, showing their agility and trust. Visitors burst into laughter and amazement as these feathered friends perform aerial acrobatics.

This heartwarming scene has become one of Qingdao's most cherished traditions every winter and spring, attracting locals and tourists eager to experience this unique bond between humans and nature. The seagulls' playful antics turn an ordinary day at the pier into an unforgettable memory.

Source: **Charming Qingdao English Website**
http://qingdao.chinadaily.com.cn/2026-03/09/c_1166649.htm



Goyang Launches 24/7 Smart City System to Strengthen Safety and Innovation

Goyang Special City has established a fully operational smart city system at the Seongsu Innovation Campus in Deogyang-gu, Goyang, integrating urban control, technology testing, and digital education in one location. The system operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



At the centre is the Goyang Smart City Centre, which manages 9,671 CCTV cameras citywide, including 7,487 for crime prevention, 2,077 for illegal parking enforcement, 62 for vehicle security, and 45 for cultural heritage protection. Among them, 3,576 cameras are equipped with AI-based monitoring capable of detecting risks such as loitering, falls, and crowd congestion.

To ensure accuracy, the system follows a three-step process: AI analysis, Vision Language Model (VLM)-based semantic verification, and final review by trained control officers.

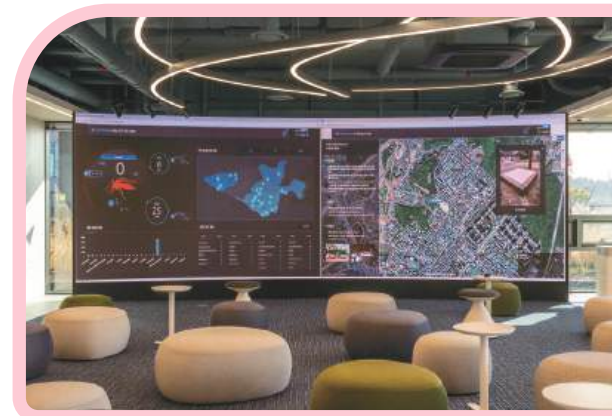
The centre is staffed by 36 monitoring officers working in shifts, with three police officers stationed on-site. Video data is shared with six related agencies to enable rapid coordination during emergencies.

Beyond monitoring, four Open Labs—AI Big Data, Digital Twin, Global Demonstration, and Innovation Labs—test urban data before it is translated into policy.

Since 2016, Goyang has implemented 23 smart city pilot projects, including an AI Direction-Recognition Emergency Bell system that detects distress calls and automatically directs nearby CCTV cameras toward the sound source.

The campus also houses the Northern Gyeonggi AI Campus and Gyeonggi SW Future Center, providing AI and coding education in partnership with Amazon Web Services, Cisco, IBM, NAVER Cloud, and Microsoft.

Through this integrated model, Goyang seeks to strengthen international cooperation, share its data-driven governance approach, and collaborate with global partners to build safer and more sustainable cities.



From Jinju to the World: Advancing Human Centred Entrepreneurship

Jinju, Republic of Korea, is strengthening its role as a global hub for entrepreneurship dialogue through the **“Jinju International Forum on Entrepreneurship”**. Since its launch in 2023, the forum has served as an international platform where policymakers, scholars, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders gather to explore the value of human centred entrepreneurship and its role in addressing global challenges.



Jinju is widely recognised as the birthplace of founders of major Korean companies, including Samsung, LG, and GS. Building on this historical legacy, the city promotes the philosophy of K-Entrepreneurship, which emphasises human dignity, community values, and social responsibility. By sharing this experience internationally, Jinju seeks to contribute to global discussions on inclusive economic development and responsible innovation.

The 2025 forum brought together around 500 participants from 29 countries, including representatives from the Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly (UNCPGA), the City of Columbus and Columbus State University in the United States, HELP University of Malaysia and more.



The upcoming 2026 Jinju International Forum on Entrepreneurship will be held from October 18 to 20, 2026. A wide range of international organisations and institutions, including the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), the Korean Academic Society of Business Administration, the University of Utah Asia Campus, and the University of Hong Kong, are expected to participate.

The forum will also introduce a special discussion on the aerospace and defense sector, focusing on ethical technology, human safety, and responsible entrepreneurship and a university student Camp and tourism programmes to nurture the next generation of global leaders. Through these initiatives, the forum seeks to lay the groundwork for Jinju to grow into an “Asian Davos” platform for global dialogue on entrepreneurship and future industries. Partners and stakeholders across the Asia Pacific region are warmly invited to join the 2026.

Participants may register in advance through the official website:
<https://www.jinju.go.kr/jinjuforum/en>



Dhankuta Municipality: Strengthening Migrant Worker Welfare through Local Leadership and Reintegration

Dhankuta Municipality is a mid-hill local government in eastern Nepal with a population of approximately 40,000. As a labour-sending municipality, foreign employment has long been a key livelihood strategy for many households. However, unsafe migration, challenges of reintegration, and limited local economic opportunities have posed serious social and economic risks for migrant workers and their families.

To address these challenges, Dhankuta Municipality has taken a proactive and innovative approach to migration governance at the local level. In 2021, Dhankuta became the first municipality in Nepal to adopt a Foreign Employment and Reintegration Policy, institutionalising migrant worker welfare within its local government mandate. The policy focuses on safe migration, access to information, psychosocial care, and sustainable economic reintegration—particularly for women, vulnerable migrants, and survivors of trafficking.

A key pillar of this work is the Municipal Migrant Resource Centre (MRC), which functions as a one-stop service point. The MRC provides pre-departure counseling, legal aid, grievance handling, psychosocial support, and referrals for returnee migrants. In collaboration with partners such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), RERP–Samriddhi, and SaMi projects, the municipality has also linked returnees to livelihood opportunities.

This including small business grants, agriculture support, skills training, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) programmes.

Community outreach is strengthened through FM radio public service announcements and mobile information clinics, ensuring that safe migration messages reach remote communities. These efforts have contributed to improved access to justice, reduced repeat foreign employment, and stronger local economic participation by returnees.



Gyeonggi Province Revamps “Climate Action Opportunity Income” for the New Year

Gyeonggi Province’s “Climate Action Opportunity Income” programme will be restructured and implemented in 2026. The main changes introduced this year include three major points:

1. Expanding eligibility to include university students studying in Gyeonggi Province even if they live outside the province
2. Introducing additional rewards in six cities and counties
3. Improving reward criteria to focus more on carbon-reduction effectiveness



First, the programme also includes students enrolled at universities (including graduate schools) located in Gyeonggi Province even if their official residence is outside the province by submitting a certificate of enrolment through the app. This change took effect on March 3, 2026, with the start of the new academic semester.

Second, additional rewards reflecting the unique characteristics of each municipality have been introduced. Six cities and counties—Uiwang, Yongin, Gapyeong, Siheung, Hwaseong, and Osan—will provide extra incentives funded by their own budgets to residents who carry out carbon-reduction activities tailored to local conditions. The province plans to expand participation in these additional reward programmes to more municipalities in the future.

Third, the reward amounts for 16 eligible activities have been adjusted. Activities with greater carbon-reduction effects have seen increased reward limits, including:

- Proper separation and disposal of high-quality recyclables: from KRW 10,000 to KRW 20,000 per year
- Recycling of waste household appliances: from KRW 20,000 to KRW 40,000 per year
- Installation of residential solar power systems: from KRW 30,000 to KRW 40,000 per year
- Purchasing high-efficiency home appliances: from KRW 20,000 to KRW 30,000 per year

Meanwhile, rewards for activities with relatively smaller carbon-reduction impacts have been adjusted downward, such as:

- Climate citizen certification: from KRW 2,000 to KRW 1,000
- Climate quiz participation: from KRW 15,000 to KRW 7,300 per year

In addition, a new reward activity linked with Naver’s electronic notification service will be introduced this year. Switching from paper bills to electronic notifications can reduce carbon emissions and is expected to become a representative example of simple, everyday climate-action practices that anyone can participate in.

As of the end of 2025, the Climate Action Opportunity Income programme had surpassed 1.74 million registered users, establishing itself as one of the province’s flagship climate policies with broad public participation.

Gunsan's Youth and Startup Ecosystem: Created by Youth, Nurtured by the Region



The Gunsan Youth Centre operated a total of 14 programmes in 2025, attracting 3,433 young participants over the course of the year. Beyond the scale of participation, the centre achieved meaningful outcomes, including the acquisition of five types of professional certifications, the development of 15 youth policy ideas, and the operation of a social reintegration support programme for vulnerable youth through a public contest project. Gunsan connects education, policy, and entrepreneurship to create reasons for young people to stay. These results mark a significant step toward establishing a region-based youth ecosystem.

Training Future Professionals Through Certifications and Industry Visits

Gunsan City has focused on nurturing regionally specialised talent in emerging industries such as new energy technologies and AI and Software fields. Through certifications related to local strategic industries—including Battery Performance Evaluator and Secondary Battery Performance Evaluator—as well as the Unity* Certified User qualification (an internationally recognised certification demonstrating proficiency in the Unity engine, the world's most widely used real-time 3D content creation platform), a total of 97 skilled professionals were trained. In addition, 182 young participants took part in industry visits to major companies in Jeonbuk, including Hyundai Motor Company and GL Chem Co., Ltd., helping connect theoretical learning with real-world industry experience and strengthening youth employment competitiveness.

Startup Support Impact Confirmed Through Sales

In 2025, the Gunsan Startup Support Centre recorded approximately KRW 760 million in direct sales generated by supported startups. This figure is based not on participation numbers or programme completions, but on actual market transactions and revenue generated. Notably, many participating companies experienced a 60–70 per cent increase in monthly sales compared to before receiving support. Achievements such as the launch of online sales channels and an increase in sales volume demonstrate that sustainable revenue structures are beginning to take shape, highlighting the tangible impact of the programme.

Connecting Local Businesses to External Markets

The support provided by the Startup Support Centre was not limited to the Gunsan area. Through a pop-up booth event held in partnership with Lotte Mall Gunsan, two participating companies received store-opening proposals from Lotte Mall. In addition, some companies that participated in domestic exhibitions secured license agreements and additional distribution proposals. These outcomes suggest that local startups are establishing themselves as competitive players in large-scale retail and exhibition markets, opening pathways for expansion beyond the regional market.

A Gunsan City official stated, “The Gunsan Youth Centre has gone beyond simply offering programmes to building a ‘youth ecosystem’ where young people can grow independently and shape the future together with the region. These comprehensive youth support achievements are becoming an important foundation for making Gunsan a city where young people want to stay.”

In 2026, the Gunsan Youth Centre plans to expand AI and regional strategic industry-focused training programmes, improve accessibility to youth policies, and strengthen a youth-friendly ecosystem. Meanwhile, the Startup Support Centre will focus less on expanding individual projects and more on connecting and accumulating outcomes, laying a sustainable foundation for continuous regional startup growth.

Through these efforts, Gunsan aims to establish a virtuous cycle in which young people and entrepreneurs grow together with the region.

**) The world’s most widely used real-time 3D content creation platform*



Drafting By-Laws to Enshrine the Climate Change and Disaster Management Agenda into Sri Lanka's Local Government Sector



The Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA), the National Association of Local Councils, strongly focuses on the narrative that the local government sector should not only be upheld, but also uplifted to build a resilient democracy.

One of the most comprehensive activities launched as part of our project, "Enhancing Community Resilience on Climate Change and Disaster Management in Four Pradeshiya Sabhas in the Sabaragamuwa Province," was drafting three by-laws related to climate change and disaster management for four councils in the Sabaragamuwa Province. This province is a geographically vulnerable area prone to disasters like landslides, floods, and strong winds. The legal capacity to address these disasters is limited. Therefore, FSLGA supported a collaborative effort to draft bylaws focused on three key areas of disaster and climate risk in the region, namely, unauthorised excavations, contamination of drinking water sources, and the cutting of hazardous trees.

During the process of drafting these bylaws, advisory committees were established in each council, known as the 'Climate Change and Disaster Management Committee'. Members of these committees, along with officials from the Department of Local Government in the Sabaragamuwa Province and a legal expert, participated in the drafting process. Following weeks of discussion, the officials collaboratively finalised the bylaws, which are both practical and feasible in implementation.

Through this initiative, we anticipate formalising the need to address these topics by enshrining it into the law. By-laws give the officials clear guidelines. It sets the precedent for future programmes and ensures accountability. Participants included a diverse range of officials, including members of the Climate Change and Disaster Management Committees, officials from the Department of Local Government in the Sabaragamuwa Province and a legal expert.



Xi'an High-tech Industries Development Zone Approved as National Demonstration Area for High-quality Intellectual Property Services

Recently, the China National Intellectual Property Administration approved Xi'an High-tech Industries Development Zone to establish a national demonstration area for the high-quality development of the intellectual property (IP) service industry. This recognition marks a significant milestone in the zone's IP development and innovation-driven growth. It also provides strong momentum for Xi'an to build a leading IP service hub and advance its goal of becoming a globally influential science and technology innovation centre.

For years, Xi'an High-tech Industries Development Zone has adopted an enterprise-centred approach, ensuring services meet business needs and resources support industrial development. Through sustained efforts, it has established a comprehensive, responsive, and efficient public IP service system. Currently, the zone is home to over 620 IP service institutions. It has developed a multi-level service network including Technology and Innovation Support Centres (TISC), patent navigation service bases, and IP protection and assistance stations.

These facilities together form a "15-minute IP service circle" covering key industrial parks and clusters, offering 20 types of public services through a one-stop service platform. To better serve enterprises, the High-tech Industries Development Zone has deployed professional teams to provide on-site outreach services, delivering targeted support to key industries such as semiconductors and biomedicine. These services include patent navigation, dispute mediation, and brand development.

In 2025, service stations handled more than 6,200 enterprise consultations and resolved over 1,800 IP-related issues, achieving a satisfaction rate exceeding 95%. The zone has also nurtured a number of nationally recognised model enterprises in IP development, including NovaStar, Giant Biogene, and Shaanxi Blower Group. The influence of the "Intellectual Property in High-tech Industries Development Zone" service brand continues to grow, contributing to the development of a more dynamic and innovation-driven industrial ecosystem.



Community-based Urban Farming in Quezon City

Cities around the world are exploring innovative approaches to improve public services and advance inclusive urban development. This initiative from Quezon City, recognised by the Guangzhou Award, highlights how urban agriculture can strengthen food security and empower vulnerable communities.

Located at the heart of Metro Manila, Quezon City benefits from a steady supply of food from surrounding regions. However, food insecurity remains a serious concern. National data shows that 62.1% of Filipino households experience moderate to severe food insecurity, and in Quezon City nearly half of child malnutrition cases are linked to limited access to nutritious food.

To address this challenge, then-Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte launched the **Joy of Urban Farming (JOUF)** programme in 2010. The initiative encourages low-income households to grow their own nutritious food, helping reduce household food expenditures while providing an additional source of income. The programme promotes urban farming methods suited to limited city spaces, including vertical gardening and container farming. Participants receive “starter kits” containing tools, seeds, fertiliser and soil, as well as training and technical support. The programme is directly managed by the Office of the City Mayor with a dedicated team and independent budget.

Over time, the initiative has expanded beyond individual household gardens into a citywide effort to promote sustainable urban food systems. By strengthening food security, improving access to fresh produce and encouraging community participation, the programme has significantly enhanced food access for vulnerable groups while promoting environmental sustainability.

Quezon City’s experience demonstrates how cities can address social inequality through practical and community-driven solutions. By integrating urban agriculture into local policy, the city has created a resilient and inclusive approach to food security.

This initiative was recognised as a
Deserving Initiative of the 2020 Guangzhou Award

Learn more about global urban innovation through the Guangzhou Award:
<https://www.guangzhouaward.org>

What's Next 2026

7-9 May 2026

First Session of 2026 UCLG ASPAC Executive Bureau
Kendari
UCLG ASPAC, Kendari

17-22 May 2026

Thirteenth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13)
Baku
UN-Habitat

2-3 June 2026

Policy Forum on Development (PFD) Regional Meeting
Jakarta

5-7 June 2026

Zero Waste Forum 2026
Istanbul
Zero Waste Foundation

14-16 June 2026

World Cities Summit
Singapore
CLC, URA

21-24 June 2026

2026 Innovate4Cities Conference (I4C26)
Nairobi
GCoM, UN-Habitat

22-25 June 2026

UCLG World Congress
Tangier
UCLG, Tangier City

1-3 July 2026

9th ESCAP Committee on Environment and Development
Bangkok
ESCAP

6-16 July 2026

High Level Political Forum 2026
New York

8-10 July 2026

9th Board Meeting of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD)
Philippines
UNFCCC

14-16 September 2026

2026 ASEAN Governors and Mayors Forum
Manila
UCLG ASPAC

7-9 October 2026

10th Board Meeting of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD)
Philippines
UNFCCC

4th Week of October/1st Week of November 2026

2026 UCLG ASPAC Council
Haikou
UCLG ASPAC, Haikou

25-27 November 2026

3rd World Mayor Forum and 7th Asian Cities Summit
India
AIIILSG

November 2026

Guangzhou Award Ceremony, Global Mayors' Forum
Guangzhou

We would like to thank our members and partners for contributing photos and materials used for this publication.

We want to hear from you!
Please send your feedback and suggestions to communication@uclg-aspac.org

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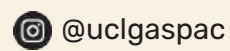
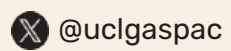
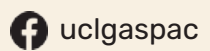
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