

LPSA STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

From systems insight to systems change: Building pathways to inclusive and durable decentralization and multilevel governance

Around the world, progress on gender equity, climate resilience, access to health services, and democratic participation is increasingly constrained not by a lack of ambition, but by systems that struggle to deliver results. As international assistance declines and countries are expected to finance a greater share of their own development, the effectiveness of multilevel governance systems—the way authority, resources, and accountability flow across national, regional, and local levels—will be a decisive factor in whether communities will see meaningful change—or continued exclusion.

The Local Public Sector Alliance (LPSA) exists to address this systems challenge. LPSA is a global Community of Practice of more than 2,300 practitioners, researchers, public officials, and civil society leaders working across 139 countries to strengthen decentralization and multilevel governance. LPSA focuses on the “missing middle” of governance: the institutional, fiscal, administrative, and political linkages that connect national policy frameworks with the day-to-day realities of local service delivery and citizen engagement. Through applied research, peer learning, and convening, LPSA helps reformers identify where authority and resources are misaligned—and how more effective multilevel governance and localization can unlock more equitable, accountable, and effective public sector systems.

From 2026 to 2030, LPSA will concentrate on rebuilding global coordination and shared learning on decentralization; supporting country-led reform processes; strengthening multilevel governance across Sub-Saharan Africa; and elevating gender-responsive governance and subnational approaches to climate action. At a moment when both democracy and development hinge on whether public institutions work for people in practice, LPSA offers a high-leverage pathway to durable, locally grounded systems change—and a platform for partners committed to making government work where it matters most.

1. Who we are and why we exist

The Local Public Sector Alliance (LPSA) grew out of a simple insight: no country can deliver equitable development if its local public sector is not empowered. What began in 2010 as a research initiative focused on understanding how public resources flow—and fail to flow—across levels of government has evolved into a global alliance committed to strengthening the systems that shape people’s daily lives.

Today, governed by an independent Board of Directors and guided by an Advisory Board of leading governance practitioners and scholars, LPSA is a global professional network dedicated to advancing effective, inclusive, and sustainable decentralization and local governance.

We bring together government officials, policymakers, researchers, development practitioners, and civil society leaders to strengthen the evidence base for decentralization and multilevel governance, and to translate that knowledge into better real-world outcomes. By connecting comparative data, country diagnostics, training, and peer exchange, LPSA helps governments and development partners design local governance systems that actually deliver more responsive services, stronger accountability, and meaningful citizen engagement.

Figure 1. LPSA’s Global Membership

In the four years since its founding in 2022, the Local Public Sector Alliance (LPSA) has seen consistent growth in its membership, with 2,443 registered members active from 134 countries and territories across Africa, Asia, Europe, Central Asia, MENA and Latin America (December 2025). Our members include national and local government officials, policy analysts and researchers, civil society leaders, and global development practitioners.

Over three-quarters (76.4%) of our membership is based in the Global South, and almost half of LPSA’s membership is based in Sub-Saharan Africa (47.9%).

Our reach allows LPSA to surface reform-ready ideas quickly, test them across contexts, and support locally led solutions with global credibility.



LPSA is distinct in the decentralization and multilevel governance landscape because it functions first and foremost as a global professional network, rather than a centrally driven institution. While coordinated and supported by a small part-time global secretariat, the Alliance operates through its regional and thematic working groups that serve as the engine of its work. This unique structure enables the Alliance to remain closely aligned with real-world reform agendas while responding flexibly to emerging priorities in the field. Its strength lies in the collective expertise of its members and in the relationships that connect practitioners, researchers, public officials, and civil society leaders across regions and disciplines.

LPSA's regional and thematic working groups are largely volunteer-led and practitioner-driven, bringing together many of the leading voices shaping thinking and practice on decentralization and multilevel governance worldwide. Members contribute their time, experience, and intellectual leadership to advance shared learning, develop comparative insights, and convene informed dialogue across countries and sectors. This distributed model allows LPSA to mobilize deep, context-specific knowledge while maintaining a global perspective, ensuring that ideas are tested against diverse institutional and political realities.

By design, LPSA acts as a connector, partner, and amplifier rather than as a gatekeeper or competitor. It creates space for collaboration across organizations, disciplines, and regions, lowers barriers to participation in global policy debates, and helps promising ideas and evidence travel across contexts.

In short, we are building a global Community of Practice to advance multilevel governance systems change that the world has always needed, but never had.

2. The problem: governance systems are failing people

Around the world, governments are grappling with grand challenges such as rising territorial inequality, complex service delivery systems, climate change, and growing pressure for accountability and transparency.

Perhaps the biggest constraint in achieving the world's ambitions—including global security and stability; economic prosperity; effective public services; and inclusive and responsive governance—isn't a shortage of money, or lack of talent or plans. Instead, the biggest constraint in many countries is the inability of public sectors to effectively transform public sector resources into development outcomes across their national territory in the cities, towns, and rural communities where their citizens live and work.

Political or institutional capture, misaligned incentives, and ineffective accountability mechanisms often cause resources and decision-making power to get stuck at the central government level; thwart an equitable and efficient horizontal distribution of public sector resources across the national territory; and prevent resource inputs being efficiently transformed into outputs and outcomes once they reach the local level.

3. Inclusive and effective multilevel governance as the missing link

Multilevel governance reforms pursue ways to improve capacity, coordination, and incentives among public stakeholders at different levels of government to increase the efficiency, equity and sustainability of public spending. Although multilevel governance reforms are technically and institutionally challenging, overcoming this challenge first and foremost requires national leaders to choose long-term development success and public sector effectiveness over short-term political and financial gain.

Effective multilevel governance enables:

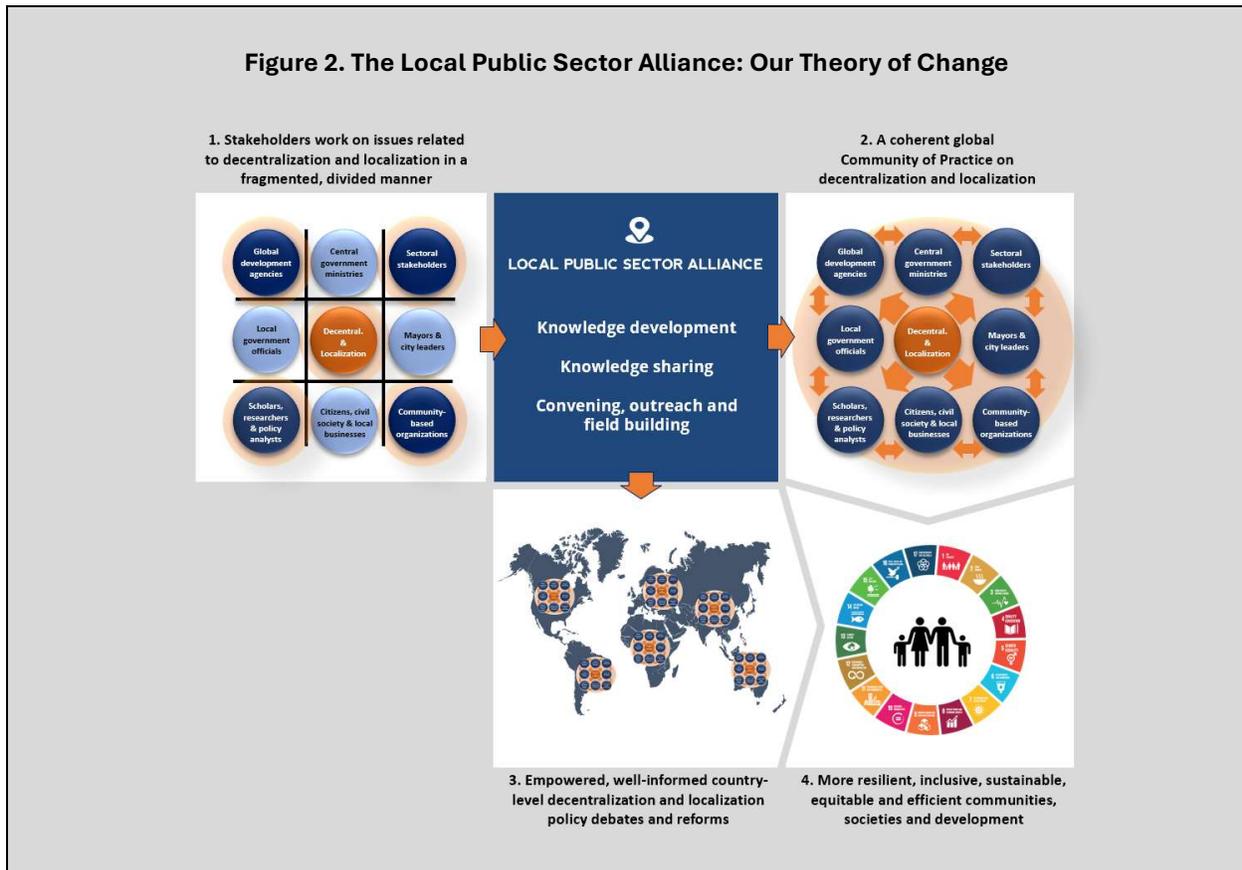
- Inclusive territorial economic development, driven by local priorities
- Democratic participation that is meaningful, not symbolic
- Gender-responsive services, such as childcare, health, and social protection
- Climate-resilient local action, especially in cities and frontline communities

Despite its importance, multilevel governance remains under-invested and poorly coordinated globally. LPSA exists to close this gap by bringing coherence, evidence, and collaboration to a field that is essential but often overlooked.

4. Our solution: inclusive decentralization and effective multilevel governance

The Local Public Sector Alliance acts as the connective tissue of the decentralization field, bringing together stakeholders within and between countries, institutions, levels of government, disciplines, and sectors. By deepening understanding of decentralization and localization as complex, cross-cutting reforms, LPSA helps promote more inclusive and equitable societies. We elevate regional and country-level debates by accelerating learning across contexts and by equipping local change agents with the peers, insights, and opportunities they need to drive meaningful reform.

Our theory of change is simple: When reformers, researchers, and institutions are connected through a strong global community of practice—supported by shared evidence, practical tools, and peer learning—countries are better able to design and implement governance reforms that improve real-world outcomes. LPSA does not implement services or replace government functions; instead, it strengthens the systems, institutions, and coalitions that allow governments to deliver sustainably.



5. What we do: LPSA’s programmatic pillars

Under the right conditions, an effective multilevel governance system with a more inclusive and empowered local public sector will result in a more efficient, accountable, responsive, and sustainable public sector. But LPSA does not aim to directly pursue multilevel governance reforms in any country. How a country organizes itself across different government levels, and how it empowers actors at different government levels—is a slow and gradual process, with choices driven by the social contract between the people and leaders of each country. It would thus be overly simplistic to measure our impact by the number of countries that have an inclusive and effective multilevel governance system.

Instead, LPSA aims to be a systems-change catalyst within the arena of decentralization and multilevel governance. We help advance systems change by changing the conditions under which system-level decisions are made. Our pathways of influence focus on shifting the knowledge environment, the capabilities of actors, and the coalitions that shape policy choices over time—so that when political windows open, countries are prepared to design and implement reforms that make government work better for people.

1. Advancing knowledge that shapes decisions

Most governments and development partners operate with incomplete or outdated mental models of how decentralization actually works in practice. LPSA accelerates progress by making the “invisible” visible: clarifying institutional arrangements, mapping intergovernmental systems, and generating comparative evidence that reframes what is possible. By providing authoritative, accessible knowledge, LPSA shapes diagnosis, agenda-setting, and the design of reforms before they enter political negotiation.

We produce and share cutting-edge research, tools, and data—such as InFER, PROMOTE, and LoGICA—that help governments understand how their systems function and how to improve them. Our focus is not academic theory alone, but usable evidence that informs reform.

Result: Knowledge development produces evidence and deeper insight that advocates and governments can use in improving inclusive, effective multilevel governance systems.

2. Knowledge sharing that strengthens the capabilities of key actors

Multilevel governance fails not only because of politics but because actors—when working independently—lack the tools, data, and frameworks to manage the inherently multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder nature of multilevel governance

reforms. LPSA shares knowledge among central ministries, local governments, researchers, and development partners, and across different global regions and countries, so that stakeholders learn to speak each other’s language; interpret evidence, coordinate across levels, and design feasible, technically sound reforms.

Knowledge sharing promotes peer-learning and updates professionals around the world on global trends, as well as on the current state of practice and the state of knowledge as a foundation for lasting improvements in governance and service delivery.

Result: Knowledge sharing promotes faster learning across contexts.

3. Convening, outreach, and field-building: building a Global Community of Practice

Systems change requires sustained pressure from a constituency that cares about effective local governance. LPSA’s role is to convene that community across regions and sectors, creating a platform where practitioners, researchers, and partners reinforce each other’s work and elevate local governance on national and global agendas.

Ultimately, the purpose of all of this is to improve people’s lives. LPSA’s impact occurs not only through formal reforms but through incremental improvements in sector coordination, local fiscal transparency, frontline management practices, and shared accountability. Systems alignment—even without legislative change—can produce measurable improvements in education, health, infrastructure, and local services.

Result: A stronger, more coordinated Community of Practice at the global, regional, and country levels.

LPSA’s unique contribution: Improving real-world service delivery by elevating the debate and catalyzing action through incremental system alignment

Together, these programmatic interventions reinforce one another—knowledge is shared among policymakers, scholars, and practitioners; knowledge gaps are filled; and diverse stakeholders are convened around feasible reform options.

Ultimately, the purpose is to improve people’s lives. LPSA’s impact does not primarily occur through formal reforms, but by elevating the policy debate and ensuring that policy makers and advocates for inclusive governance and effective public sector management understand the value of multilevel governance. Because major reforms occur only when political windows open, LPSA positions itself as both catalyst and ready partner, providing diagnostics, comparative insights, and technical support that allow governments and advocates to move quickly when opportunities arise. Evidence and capacity built over years thus becomes actionable when opportunities for public sector strengthening emerge.

6. Our strategic priorities, 2026-2030: from systems insight to systems change

Over the next five years (2026–2030), the Local Public Sector Alliance will focus on five strategic priorities that translate our global platform, evidence, and community of practice into concrete systems change. Together, these priorities are designed to revitalize the global decentralization and multilevel governance agenda, strengthen local governance systems, and support country-led progress on equity, climate resilience, and service delivery.

Figure 3 (next page) maps LPSA’s proposed core activities and strategic priorities across our three programmatic areas and operational levels (global, regional, or country-specific). These priorities reflect where LPSA can deliver the greatest leverage in a constrained funding environment by aligning with global actors, supporting reform leaders, and generating evidence that makes decentralization and multilevel governance work in practice.

While graph categorizes each activity within one (or two) programmatic areas, functional spillovers often cause activities to cut across all three program areas.

Strategic priority 1: Rebuild global coordination on decentralization and multilevel governance

Global coordination among decentralization and multilevel governance (MLG) champions has weakened over the past two decades, just as the world needs strong local governance more than ever. Fragmentation has limited learning, diluted influence, and reduced the visibility of multilevel governance reforms as a development priority. LPSA will:

- Organize or co-host annual global convenings to ensure regular global dialogue on the direction of the global community of practice on decentralization and multilevel governance.
- Engage with, and support, global advocates for inclusive and effective multilevel governance—including dedicated organizations and networks on federalism and local governance; local governments and their associations; as well as the World Bank, UN system, OECD, development partners and global foundations—around shared priorities and evidence.
- Maintain and expand virtual platforms and working groups for continuous learning and collaboration.
- Lead global dissemination and uptake of core multilevel tools promoting citizen-centric and results-oriented multilevel governance, including LoGICA, InFER, and PROMOTE.

Expected impact: A more aligned, visible, and influential global field—better positioned to shape policy debates, inform donors, and support reformers.

Figure 3. LPSA Strategic Priorities, 2026-2030



Strategic priority 2: Strengthen decentralization and localization in Sub-Saharan Africa

Decentralization remains a core development strategy across Sub-Saharan Africa, yet reform trajectories vary widely and often stall due to weak institutions and limited data. With nearly half its membership in Sub-Saharan Africa, LPSA will aim to strengthen decentralization and localization in Sub-Saharan Africa by:

- Supporting the Africa School on Decentralization (ASD) and other partners to strengthen regional leadership and capacity on decentralization and multilevel governance.
- Partnering with EACLGA to convene a regional SDG localization workshop using LPSA tools.
- Developing a comparative dataset on local governance and subnational public finance across (Eastern and Southern) Africa.

Expected impact: Improved evidence, stronger institutions, and regionally aligned reform momentum grounded in African leadership.

Strategic priority 3: Elevate gender-responsive multilevel governance and subnational climate action

Elevating gender-responsive governance and subnational climate action are a strategic priority for LPSA because both agendas ultimately succeed or fail at the local level, where public decisions directly shape people's lives. LPSA will:

- Strengthen gender-responsive multilevel governance systems, with a focus on how subnational institutions plan, budget, and deliver services in ways that reflect women's priorities and address structural exclusion.
- Advance effective subnational climate governance and finance, emphasizing the alignment of national climate commitments with local planning, fiscal frameworks, and implementation capacity.
- Generate and curate applied, comparative evidence on the governance drivers of gender equality and climate outcomes, and convene practitioners and partners to translate this evidence into actionable reform options across contexts.

Expected impact: Stronger evidence and better policy design, leading to more equitable local governance for women and more effective, climate-resilient subnational systems.

Strategic priority 4: Expand Regional Platforms in Asia and MENA

Recognizing that reform priorities and pathways vary widely across regions, LPSA will expand its regional engagement in Asia and the Middle East and North Africa to support locally grounded, context-sensitive approaches to multilevel governance. While many governments in these regions acknowledge the potential of decentralization to improve inclusion and responsiveness, reform efforts continue to face significant political and technical constraints. LPSA will:

- Launch and/or strengthen its working groups as regional platforms for convening, learning, and peer exchange.
- Support evidence production and policy dialogue tailored to regional contexts.
- Build reform coalitions that connect local actors with regional and global expertise.

Expected impact: Stronger regional communities of practice and clearer, context-specific pathways for improving multilevel governance.

Strategic priority 5: Support Kenya and Nepal’s devolution journey

Kenya and Nepal are engaged in some most ambitious devolution reforms currently ongoing worldwide, but political economy obstacles in each country have prevented these reforms from yielding mayor dividends in terms improved service delivery outcomes. In order to achieve a more inclusive, responsive, and efficient multilevel public sector, there is a need to improve intergovernmental coordination, while subnational governments in both Kenya and Nepal must achieve greater focus on evidence-informed, citizen-centric, and result-oriented frontline service delivery. As opportunities arise, LPSA will:

- Support national government, subnational governments, and intergovernmental institutions in strengthening county government performance.
- Partner with subnational governments, civil society organizations, and development partners to advance inclusive, citizen-centric, and result-oriented approaches to service delivery assessment and improvement.

Expected impact: Stronger multilevel governance systems, improved frontline services, and a credible, evidence-based model of that can be adapted in other countries.

7. Measuring our impact

LPSA acts as a systems-change catalyst in a field that has long suffered from fragmentation, underinvestment, and weak coordination. By advancing credible evidence, strengthening the capabilities of key actors, and building a more coherent global and regional Community of Practice, LPSA helps ensure that when political windows open, reformers are better prepared to act—and to act in ways that improve equity, accountability, and service delivery.

Rather than measuring success by the number of laws passed or country reforms adopted, LPSA focuses on shifting the systems, capabilities, and coalitions that shape how decentralization and multilevel governance decisions are made over time. This reflects the reality that governance reform is inherently political, nonlinear, and contingent on moments of opportunity.

Impact of LPSA knowledge development: Shaping how decisions are framed and debated. A core dimension of LPSA’s impact is its contribution to improving the quality of diagnosis and debate around decentralization and multilevel governance. Governments and development partners often operate with incomplete or overly simplified mental models of how authority, resources, and accountability function across levels of government. LPSA addresses this gap by producing and disseminating applied research, comparative datasets, and practical diagnostic tools that make intergovernmental systems visible and legible. Over time, this work influences how problems are framed, which reform options are considered feasible, and how trade-offs are understood. Evidence generated and shared through LPSA platforms helps shift debates from narrow administrative or sectoral perspectives toward more systemic, result-oriented approaches to governance reform.

***Illustrative impact indicator:** Evidence of LPSA knowledge products informing agenda-setting or problem framing in decentralization and multilevel governance debates.*

Impact of LPSA knowledge sharing: Strengthening the capabilities of reform actors. LPSA’s impact is also expressed through the strengthened capabilities of policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and development partners engaged in multilevel governance reform. By facilitating peer learning, shared frameworks, and cross-regional exchange, LPSA helps actors develop the technical literacy and coordination skills required to navigate complex, multi-actor reform processes. Through knowledge sharing, LPSA’s role is to elevate the decentralization debate, reduce friction points, and enable more informed, coordinated, and adaptive reform efforts.

***Illustrative impact indicator:** Public officials, scholars, and practitioners engage in knowledge-sharing that results in improved understanding of multilevel governance concepts and tools.*

Impact of LPSA convening and field-building: Building coalitions and a stronger field.

Achieving inclusive governance and sustainable development requires a constituency that understands, values, and advocates for systems change that achieves inclusive and effective multilevel governance. LPSA’s convening and field-building role contributes to impact by strengthening the coherence and influence of the global decentralization and multilevel governance community. Through global, regional, and thematic platforms, LPSA connects actors who would otherwise operate in isolation—across countries, sectors, and levels of government. This connectivity enables shared agendas, joint initiatives, and mutual reinforcement among reformers, researchers, and partners. A more aligned field is better positioned to shape national policy debates, inform donor priorities, and sustain momentum for reform over time.

Illustrative impact indicator: Growth and diversity of LPSA membership and active participation across regions and sectors.

8. Partner with us to unlock the power of localization and multilevel governance

As global development assistance declines and pressures on governments intensify, progress on inclusive development, gender equity, climate resilience, health, and democratic trust will depend on whether multilevel governance systems work. This is where development progress succeeds—or stalls.

LPSA is uniquely positioned to meet this moment. As a global Community of Practice, LPSA connects in-country reformers, researchers, and practitioners across regions, pairing deep technical expertise with real-world relevance. Through proven tools, LPSA helps governments identify where governance systems break down and how reform can unlock better results and greater value for money.

Trusted by reformers and global institutions alike, LPSA plays a critical bridging role: translating evidence into action, connecting global policy debates to local realities, and rebuilding coordination in a field that has become fragmented just when it is most needed.



Funders and partners can engage with and support the Local Public Sector Alliance in multiple, complementary ways that strengthen the decentralization and multilevel governance field as a whole. Rather than financing stand-alone projects, partners can help sustain the platforms, relationships, and knowledge infrastructure that enable locally led reform and collective learning across contexts, including by:

- **Supporting LPSA’s core coordination and backbone functions**, which sustain the global Community of Practice, working groups, convenings, and knowledge-sharing platforms
- **Co-investing in regional or thematic working groups**, enabling practitioner-led research, peer exchange, and targeted convenings aligned with partner priorities
- **Backing country-led reform processes**, through flexible support for diagnostics, comparative analysis, and peer learning linked to active decentralization and localization reforms
- **Sponsoring global or regional convenings**, roundtables, and learning series that elevate evidence, connect reformers, and advance shared agendas
- **Contributing to open-access knowledge and tools**, ensuring that practical guidance on decentralization and multilevel governance remains accessible to practitioners worldwide

Now is the moment to invest in the systems that make progress possible. Partnering with LPSA means strengthening local governance at scale—so public resources reach communities, services deliver results, and governments earn the trust of the people they serve.

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