

Forum des fédérations

Le Réseau mondial sur le fédéralisme et la gouvernance dévolue



Forum of Federations

The Global Network on Federalism and Devolved Governance

Forum of Federations Strategic Plan

2023-2028

*Think
& Do*

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Executive Summary

The Forum of Federations (the Forum) is pleased to present its Strategic Plan 2023-2028. This plan, elaborated in close consultation with the Forum's key institutional partners and funders, establishes the strategic direction for the organization over the next five years.



MISSION

Strengthen democratic, inclusive and gender-responsive governance through knowledge creation and mobilization, capacity development, and support to inclusive policy implementation processes.



VISION

Empower people in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries.

Focused on maximizing the impact of the Forum's work among its beneficiaries, the plan provides the framework through which the Forum will pursue its activity. It reflects the organization's intention to leverage its unique strengths in knowledge generation and transfer, institutional and individual capacity development, and supporting and facilitating inclusive policy implementation processes, to achieve key strategic outcomes. Crucially, it details how, through its programming, the Forum will pursue its aspiration to improve the lives of those living in federal and multilevel countries around the world. The global contribution the Forum seeks to make is encapsulated in its Vision Statement:

Empower people in established[1] and emerging[2] federal and multilevel countries.

This plan reflects a process of refinement of the Forum's institutional objectives and a sharpening of its strategic vision. Informed by the perspectives of donors, as well as an expert independent evaluation, this process is holistic and aims to maximise the Forum's ability to support agents of change in developing, reforming and participating in federal and multilevel systems of government.

The Forum's work remains highly relevant to scholars and practitioners of, as well as participants in, democratic, federal and multilevel governance. Its programming supports democratic and inclusive governance based on informed decision-making, multiple power centres, cooperation among agents of change, pluralism, gender equality and citizen involvement. Drawing on its unique global network of governance experts and comparative international methodology, the Forum aims to equip agents of change - individuals, institutions and organizations involved in dialogue, development, reform and implementation processes of federal and multilevel governance - with the tools they need to develop practical solutions to governance challenges. This aspiration is reflected in the Forum's Mission Statement:

Strengthen democratic, inclusive and gender-responsive governance in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries through knowledge creation and mobilization, capacity development, and support to inclusive policy implementation processes.

The Forum's unique status as the only multi-functional organization specializing in federal and multilevel governance is one of its key strengths. The strategic orientation outlined in this plan provides a foundation for fostering greater synergy between these functions to support more holistic programming and ultimately increased impact. The Forum's identity as an international non-governmental organization working at all levels of government is expressed in its self-definition statement:

The Forum is a “think-and-do” organization with an unparalleled network of experts and partners that produces authoritative comparative policy research as the basis for supporting the practice of federal and multilevel governance.

This plan refines and reinforces the Forum's institutional Theory of Change, as well as the links between its various programming areas. It reframes the work of the Forum with a sharpened focus on how the organization achieves its desired objective through its activity. It further establishes various outcomes which the Forum will work towards through the course of the next five years.

This new Strategic Plan is underpinned by a revised, updated and streamlined Results Framework, which will enable the Forum to measure and assess the extent to which it achieves its aims. Building on the experience of the 2018-2023 strategic period, the new Plan brings into closer alignment the Forum's Theory of Change, Results Framework and programming orientation to facilitate a more holistic approach to the pursuit of the Forum's vision.



[1] For the purposes of this Strategic Plan, an established federation or multilevel country adheres to characteristics that may include: multiple orders/spheres of government, a written constitution, genuine autonomy for each order/sphere of government, adequate representation for constituent units in central decision-making, procedures for ruling on constitutional disputes between governments, and a set of processes and institutions for conducting relations between governments.

[2] For the purposes of this Strategic plan, an emerging federal or multilevel country refers to a semi-federal country or a country considering federalism or other forms of meaningful decentralization that broadly adheres to/has interest in adhering to the above-mentioned characteristics of federalism and multilevel governance. In this context, an emerging federation or multilevel country is considered to be a country that supports principles of federalism and/or decentralized governance, but may not have fully implemented them owing to factors such as conflict or internal regional political and social instability.

President & Chair's Message

As the Forum of Federations enters its third decade, this plan sets out the organization's guiding vision and approach for the next five years (2023-28). In an era of increased fragility and democratic backsliding triggered by the COVID crisis and a global economic downturn, federalism and multilevel governance provide policy makers with important tools with which to build inclusive and responsive systems of government. The Forum, however, does not take a dogmatic approach. Indeed, it is not an advocacy organization and neither advocates for a particular model of federalism or devolution, nor suggests that federalism is the only solution in highly diverse or divided societies. This is because we recognize that each system and its institutions is the product of its own particular history and socio-economic realities.

The Forum was created as a clearing house for sharing international best practices on federalism among the practitioner community in established federations. But over the last twenty years, the organization has increasingly been drawn into supporting emerging federations and devolving countries to provide them with access to comparative expertise on a range of issues related to federalization, and to offer technical advice as needed. Institutions cannot be transplanted across countries. But agents of change can be inspired by the experience of others. As a non-hierarchical learning organization, the Forum emphasises the value of learning from each other.

This new plan takes on board lessons learnt during the 2018-23 plan period and elaborates how the Forum can become more effective achieving its vision to strengthen democratic and inclusive government by empowering people in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries. It has been developed in close consultation with the Forum's key institutional partners and interlocutors. We are extremely grateful for their input. The plan reflects the ambitious aspirations of the Forum to meaningfully contribute to strengthening governance in established federal democracies, as well as those countries transitioning to democracy and systems of multilevel government.



Rupak Chattopadhyay
President & CEO



Hans Altherr
Chairman of the Board of Directors

History of the Forum

The Forum of Federations (the Forum) was established by the Government of Canada. The inaugural International Conference on Federalism held in 1999 at Mont Tremblant, Quebec, Canada led to the founding of the Forum as an institution based in Ottawa.

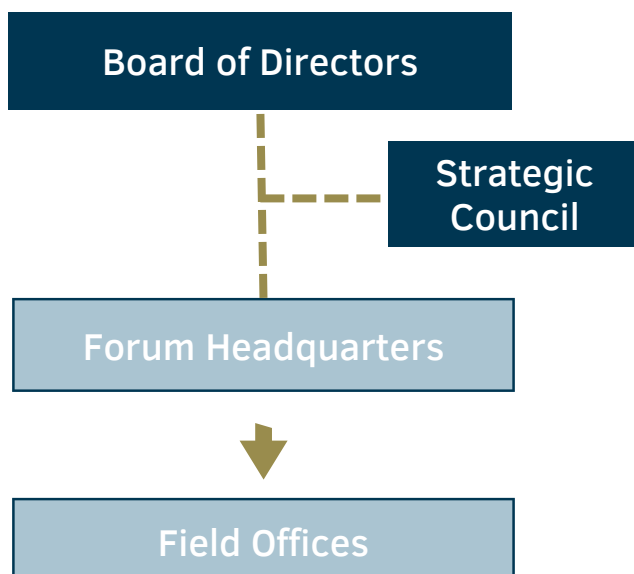
As of 2023, the Forum has ten partner countries who are represented on the Forum's Strategic Council and Board of Directors, supporting the activities of the organization and providing expertise: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Switzerland.

Over the years the Forum has expanded the scope of its work from established federal countries to include emerging federal countries and nation states in post-conflict situations adopting federal forms of governance, as well as those involved in processes of devolution and decentralization.

In 2023, the Forum had field offices and/or representation in Australia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Jordan, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, and Tunisia.



Forum Membership and Structure



Who We Are

The Forum is an international non-governmental organization specializing in the practice of federal and multilevel governance. The Forum is both a ‘think’ and ‘do’ organization. It produces, curates and marshals cutting edge knowledge and research on federal and multilevel governance. It mobilizes and applies this knowledge to directly support agents of change to develop practical solutions to governance challenges, and engage in inclusive dialogues concerning critical governance issues. The Forum utilises a comparative methodology, as well as academic and practical expertise drawn from a unique network of partners, to deliver a range of capacity enhancement activities supporting individual and institutional development. Operating across the Global North and Global South in established and emerging federations, the Forum tackles challenges concerning both sectoral and systemic issues in multilevel governance.

The Forum works in countries which can be considered established federations as well as countries which are aspiring to become either federal and/or to introduce forms of meaningful multilevel governance structures. From the Forum’s perspective, established federations include countries where federal characteristics such as constitutionally delineated powers between different spheres of government are enshrined in the constitution. The Forum’s expertise is also relevant in countries which may not be constitutionally federal but where there may be meaningful decentralization – politically, administratively, and/or fiscally. We capture this under the term “multilevel governance”. While there exists analytical distinction between federalism and various other forms of decentralization, the governance challenges experienced are often similar. Thus, from a practical perspective, the Forum believes it can have a meaningful impact working both in federal as well as multilevel countries.

The Forum of Federations is:

A “think-and-do” organization with an unparalleled network of experts and partners that produces authoritative comparative policy research as the basis for supporting the practice of federal and multilevel governance.

The Forum aspires to improve the lives of people living in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries by strengthening institutions and governance processes. In an increasingly polarized and uncertain global political climate, societies all around the world face unique and common challenges which threaten peace, stability and prosperity. Inequality, climate change, conflict, pandemic disease, economic turbulence, and the erosion of democratic political processes are just some of the exigent issues facing individual countries and the international community. In the face of such challenges, governments at all levels – local, subnational, and national – in the Global North and Global South will be required to work together if the aspirations of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 are to be achieved.

Working with agents of change at all levels, the Forum supports governments and civil society to tackle the key governance challenges of the twenty-first century. Through its work, the Forum aims to foster a world in which individuals and institutions in federal and multilevel countries have the knowledge, agency and opportunity to create better societies.

The Vision of the Forum:

Empower people in established and emerging federal/multilevel countries

Governance is the critical mechanism through which a society organizes itself, establishes the norms, value and rules of the game of public affairs, allocates resources, and engages in decision and policy making. Weak or inadequate governance inhibits development, undermines the rule of law, and leaves a society more vulnerable to bad faith actors, corruption and conflict. The Forum works at the forefront of federal and multilevel systems, processes, and practices to support agents of change to strengthen their governance models. Bridging theory and practice, the Forum provides those developing, refining, or simply participating in multilevel systems with the knowledge, capacity, tools and fora necessary to make informed decisions about their own approach to governance. Forum programming – wide ranging and tailored to national specificities – supports democratic and inclusive governance, based on informed decision-making, multiple power centres, cooperation among agents of change, pluralism, human rights, rule of law, gender equality and citizen involvement. In enhancing the quality and coherence of public discourse and policy as it relates to federal and multilevel governance, the Forum also supports the development of improved public service delivery and local, regional and national development strategies.

The Mission of the Forum:

Strengthen democratic and inclusive governance in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries through knowledge creation and mobilization, capacity development, and support to inclusive policy implementation processes.



The Forum's Unique Value Proposition:

The Forum has a very specific mandate. It is the only international organization which has federalism and multilevel governance as its thematic focus. It is also unique in how it generates, curates, shares and mobilizes knowledge on federalism and multilevel governance. It adds value to the academic institutions and networks that focus on federalism through its practical, solution-oriented multidisciplinary approach to making decentralized systems work in practice, its focus on exchange and learning from each other, rather than developing blueprints, and by bringing practical experts together with academia. The Forum also plays a specific role in supporting governance reforms, contributing value through its special ability to mobilize adequate expert knowhow on federalism and multilevel governance, as well as comparable experience from other countries. It provides valued input to ongoing reform processes and countries. It provides valued input to ongoing reform processes and facilitates peer-to-peer exchange between agents of change in the Global North and South, and crucially also enables North-North and South-South dialogue.

The Forum can be considered a hybrid “think and do” organization. It performs a number of different roles in the pursuit of its mission to strengthen governance in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries. It operates variously as:

- [A networking platform](#), bringing together experts and officials from established and emerging federal and multilevel countries;
- [A think-tank](#), developing knowledge and knowhow on a wide range of topics related to federalism and multilevel governance;
- [A change facilitator](#), providing expertise and implementing programs to support federal and multilevel governance development and reform processes

The Forum's unique status as the only hybrid organization specializing in federal and multilevel governance is one of its key strengths. It supports agents of change to develop solutions to governance challenges, offering innovative expertise on processes and practices of inclusive multilevel governance based on in-house expertise, cutting edge comparative research, and a unique network of experts in federalism and multilevel governance from around the globe. Adopting a non-hierarchical approach to learning, it convenes experts of diverse professional backgrounds from established and emerging federal/multilevel countries to explore and advise on the use of multilevel governance as a tool for developing better societies. It assists stakeholders to apply knowledge and develop the institutions and mechanisms necessary to strengthen governance systems in federal and multilevel countries.



Strategic Context

Map of Federal Countries



Since the Forum formulated its last strategic plan in 2018, the global context has changed significantly, with the current conditions making it more difficult than anticipated for the international community to attain the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 set out by the United Nations. The COVID crisis in particular provided an inflection point, bringing to the fore the failure of governance to address critical global challenges which will define the next decade.

The pandemic upended both the global economy as well as progress towards building more inclusive and democratic polities.

Taken together with the ongoing climate crisis and war in Europe, policy makers the world over face ever stronger headwinds in their desire to build less polarized, more inclusive, more economically sustainable, and more democratic states. It is in this context in which the Forum's work is both necessary and contributory.

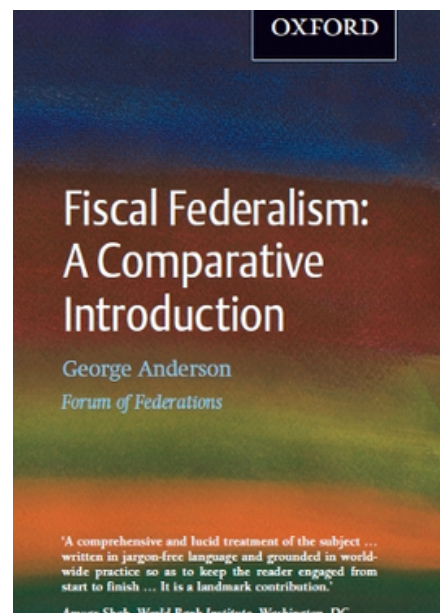
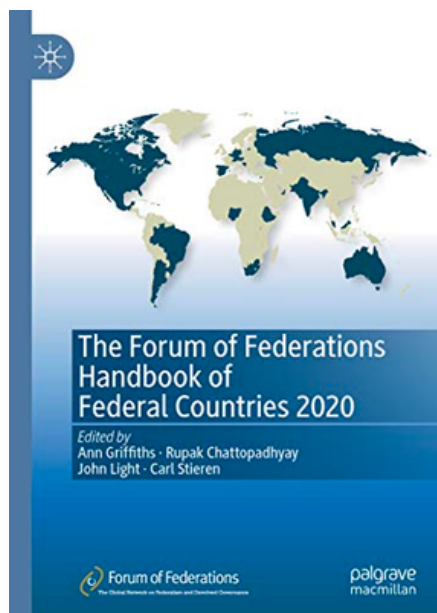
While the most of these antecedent conditions around governance challenges and state fragility predate COVID, the pandemic and its associated impacts both accelerated these trends and brought into sharper focus the threats they represent to individual countries and the international community. The cascading economic and social impacts of the COVID pandemic have been significant and exacerbated existing tensions and crises with damaging effects. The prospect of a global economic slowdown combined with an inflation and cost of living crisis in many of the world's most advanced economies, is likely to squeeze access to public goods in many countries. Social discontent is increasing in many parts of the world, manifest by a rise in often violent protest. Disillusionment with status quo politics has undermined trust in governance institutions and widened the gap for anti-democratic actors to exploit vulnerabilities and erode democratic systems. This in turn poses a threat to the fostering of more inclusive societies in which women and girls, as well as ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, are full and equal participants in society and politics. The devastating impact of climate change presents an existential threat that compounds the existing challenges such as water scarcity, and creates new ones concerning food security and natural disasters.

While many of these threats are transnational in nature, addressing the impacts and ensuring that people continue to receive the services they need requires governments, decision makers, and agents of change equipped with the knowledge and capacity necessary to develop and implement effective policy.

Indeed, it is unlikely there will be a single solution to any of these multi-faceted and interconnected threats. This is particularly pertinent in federal and multilevel systems, in which different governments have the autonomy to develop and implement policies tailored to the specific conditions and needs of a municipality, province, state or region. Federal and multilevel systems can provide for this type of approach, foster innovation, and develop examples of good practice which can be applied in similar contexts, and the work of the Forum is needed to support the development of federal and multilevel systems fit to meet those challenges.

The Forum's experience over the last 20 years has demonstrated the continued relevance of federalism, federal type and multilevel systems of governance. Indeed, a steady expansion of countries where the Forum's expertise has been in demand beyond the classic federations, shows that the "federal idea" is often at the heart of debates about democratic and inclusive governance. This is particularly true where debates coalesce around issues of around unity and diversity, and arise from questions of ethno-linguistic accommodation. Federalism provides a toolkit of solutions, which in whole or part may be applied to resolve internal conflict and to address challenges in divided societies, providing an alternative to secession or state collapse.

Since 1945, a remarkable number of countries have become federal, and several others have moved in that direction. However, there have also been numerous failed attempts at federalism. It is the ambition of the Forum to share and learn from these experiences to support the development of federal and multilevel systems fit to meet global challenges.



What We Do

In pursuing its mission, the Forum undertakes a range of activity focusing on the development, mobilization and application of practical comparative knowledge on federal and decentralized governance. Mediated through a suite of innovative, expert-led programs, the Forum's work is designed to equip agents of change with the knowledge, capacity and technical advice required to meet their federal and decentralized governance needs.

Functional Areas of Forum Activity

Forum activity comprises three interdependent and mutually reinforcing functional areas:

- Knowledge Development & Mobilization
- Capacity Enhancement
- Supporting Implementation Processes

Think & Do: The Foundation of Forum Programming

All Forum programming is underpinned by the fundamental principle of 'think and do'. Reflecting the functional areas of knowledge development, capacity enhancement and supporting inclusive policy implementation processes, Forum programs support agents of change in both established and emerging federal and multilevel countries to access, understand and apply the practical knowledge required for their governance development needs.

Forum knowledge development encapsulates experiences in both established and emerging federal and multilevel contexts. The insights and expertise that comprise this 'think' inform the Forum's work to support agents of change in developing, reforming and implementing federal and multilevel governance systems: the 'do'.

The 'think and do' aspects of Forum programs are specifically tailored to the context of the respective countries of focus. The knowledge generation, capacity enhancement and policy implementation support activities undertaken in established federal and multilevel contexts – in which there is often a more sophisticated understanding of federal and multilevel governance – vary from those undertaken in emerging contexts in which there is typically a lower level of initial capacity. Regardless of the type of activity, the principle of 'think and do' applies to all Forum programming.

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Thematic Programs concern the development and mobilization of knowledge on federal and multilevel governance systems.

Country/Regional Programs are demand-led initiatives which respond to the needs of stakeholders and donors concerning the creation, development, and reform of governance systems in emerging federal and multilevel countries.

“Think and Do” & “Do and Think”: The Program Feedback Loop

Thematic and Country/Regional programs are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Through the program feedback loop, knowledge, expertise and experiences from programs are used to inform the design and implementation of others. Reflecting the Forum’s multi-functionality and its holistic approach, knowledge generated through Thematic Programs feeds into Country/Regional programming. Experiences, expertise and knowledge derived from Country/Regional program implementation feeds into Policy Program research, thereby enriching both types of Forum program. Furthermore, the accumulated knowledge capital produced from both Thematic and Country/Regional programs is available to agents of change, from individuals to institutions, to inform initiatives and processes in which the Forum is not directly involved, thus amplifying the ‘think and do’ functions of the organization.

Programming Vision 2023-2028

The Strategic Objective of Forum programs is:

To support democratic and inclusive political processes in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries.

Forum programming is wide ranging, impacting on agents of change in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries on six continents. Reactive to the needs of stakeholders and tailored to the requirements of institutional partners, Forum programming equips agents of change with the knowledge and capacity to address governance challenges. Forum programming is highly responsive: determined by the needs and priorities of institutional partners and donors. Thus, there is flexibility in terms of the issues and themes addressed by Forum programs. At the same time, the Forum's work is also supply-driven and designed to fill gaps.

The Forum will aim to produce practical outputs that focus on what works and why and on what does not work and why. This includes aiming to identify good and bad practices in federalism and multilevel governance as well as challenges and opportunities.[3] A prerequisite for Forum programming is that there is both demand for and a political space for Forum intervention. Forum programming adheres to do-no-harm principles. This is reflected in the Forum's position not to develop blueprints or advocate for any specific form of governance, and in its recognition of the uniqueness of every country.








The 2023-2028 agenda includes new issues that fill gaps and address further needs in comparative programming. It also encompasses continuing work on “evergreen” issues of federalism and multilevel governance. Some issues (such as fiscal federalism; intergovernmental relations; gender equality among others) are of enduring importance because they evolve over time and require ongoing analysis in terms of policy successes and failures. The program agenda presents topics in three thematic areas:

- Sectoral issues
- Systems issues (including institutional and operational issues)
- Gender Equality as a cross-cutting issue.

The agenda is consistent with the Forum's mission and seeks to highlight interconnections and intersectionalities among the topics on the agenda. The agenda is designed to be mindful of the reflection that federalism is a process as much as it is a form of government; and that it is not an end in itself but a means to inclusive governance.

[3] This makes the small-N methodological challenge of comparative federalism research an asset rather than a liability because looking for lessons learned is case intensive. Outputs – such as publications – which concern only one country and thus are not comparative will be framed more overtly as: What can we learn from federation X's experience with Y?

Program Agenda 2023-2028

SYSTEMS ISSUES:	SECTORAL ISSUES
<p>Questions concerning structural, operational and institutional aspects of federal and multilevel governance systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  a) Managing Fragility: managing divided societies; conflict resolution; mediation (ongoing)  b) Democracy and Federalism (ongoing)  c) Building Federal and Multilevel Systems: constitution building; division of powers; fiscal relations; institutional design. (ongoing)  d) Intergovernmental Relations (ongoing) 	<p>Questions of federalism and multilevel governance in key policy sectors, addressing issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Climate Change (ongoing)  Healthcare (ongoing)  Education (ongoing)  Local Government (ongoing)  Fiscal Federalism (ongoing)  Indigenous Policy (inception)  Language Policy (ongoing)  Corruption and Federalism (inception)  Digitalization and Federalism (ongoing)  Federalism and Social Welfare (inception)

As a critical consideration for the development of inclusive societies, Gender Equality is a cross-cutting theme incorporated into all Forum programming. A gender lens is applied to all Sectoral and Systems issues addressed by Forum programming. A more detailed description of how gender equality considerations are integrated operationally into Forum programming can be found in the Forum's Gender Equality Strategy.

Over more than two decades, the Forum has completed many projects on issues of comparative federalism. This knowledge forms part of the Forum's intellectual base. Some of the products of this project legacy are currently being updated, and others will be updated further in the future.

The Forum endeavours to launch at least one new comparative program per year. A more detailed description of the Forum's approach to program development and implementation in the 2023-2028 period can be found in the Forum's Program Intervention Strategy.

How We Work

The Forum is a ‘think and do’ organization focused on supporting prospective and active agents of change: individuals, institutions and organizations involved in dialogue, development, reform and implementation processes of federal and multilevel governance. Reflecting its hybrid nature, the Forum is simultaneously a producer, curator, mobilizer and implementer of practical, comparative knowledge.

The Forum operates on the principle that federal and other multilevel forms of government can offer solutions to intractable governance challenges experienced in and by diverse societies. Through allowing varying degrees of self-determination within a larger national whole, multilevel systems provide agents of change with a sense of agency and control over the governance of their own lives while maintaining the advantages of shared government for general and common purposes.[4]

Multilevel systems establish mechanisms and processes for the recognition of minority rights and functions to compensate for the deficiencies of traditional (often majoritarian) constitutional principles which cannot suitably deal with diversity.[5] They enable greater coordination for equitable service delivery and economic prosperity. They can facilitate more inclusive societies in which linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic differences are recognized and valued within a single state. Federal and multilevel governance offers a variety of models and mechanisms through which governments can accommodate the varying needs and desires of citizens while increasing the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the population.[6]

The work of the Forum consists of three functional areas noted above reflecting the principles of ‘think and do’, underpinned by its comparative international methodology and a unique global network of federalism and multilevel scholars, practitioners and other experts.



[4] Simeon, Richard. “Managing Conflict of Diversity”. *Unity in Diversity: Learning from Each Other*, Vol. 1: Building on and Accommodating Diversity, Forum of Federations, 2008, pp. 54–69.

[5] Poirier, Johanne. “Autonomy and Diversity”. *Unity in Diversity: Learning from Each Other*, Vol. 1: Building on and Accommodating Diversity, Forum of Federations, 2008, pp. 37–53.

[6] Anderson, G. *Federalism: An Introduction*. Forum of Federations, 2008, pp. 70–79.; Watts, Ronald L. “The Contemporary Relevance of Federalism.” *Comparing Federal Systems*, vol. 3, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 2008, pp. 4–7.

The Forum Approach: Learning From Each Other

In providing and applying impartial practical knowledge and empirically-grounded learning on federalism and multilevel governance, the Forum adheres to its core principle of ‘Learning from Each Other’. A comparative international methodology based on the sharing of international experiences, Global North and Global South exchange, and identification of the most relevant practices from the federalism and multilevel governance community of practice, is the foundation of all Forum activity. The Forum’s comparative programming approach focusses on what works and what does not work in particular contexts, thus aiming to inspiring dialogue, thinking and decision-making.

This methodology recognizes that all federal and multilevel countries are unique. The Forum acknowledges that there is no ‘blueprint’ for federal and multilevel governance. Governance challenges require agents of change to develop tailored, local solutions sensitive to political, historical and cultural conditions in which they are situated. The Forum’s work is responsive and adaptable to local needs, sensitive to the political realities of the respective national context, and informed by local insights. It prioritises stakeholder consultation, political economy analysis, conflict-sensitivity, do no harm principles, and co-design and co-delivery of activity with local partners, as well as working directly with stakeholders on the ground, to ensure beneficiaries receive the most relevant knowledge and support. Thus, the Forum always works with and through local partners. The Forum’s country teams and offices are led by local experts with the requisite knowledge and understanding to ensure programming impact.

The comparative international methodology is made possible by Forum’s in-house expertise, comprising the applied knowledge of its:

- Headquarters staff, including its senior advisors and Research fellows;
- The Board of Directors
- Country-based teams;
- Extensive cadre of implementing partners;
- Unique global network of experts.

Spanning six continents and covering a wide array of thematic subject matter, the network enables the Forum to rapidly mobilize the appropriate expertise to support agents of change to tackle their governance challenges.

Reflecting the core principle of ‘Learning from Each Other’, the Forum approach emphasizes peer-to-peer exchange between prospective and active agents of change at all levels of governance. The organization’s working process, based on politically neutral, non-hierarchical, mutual dialogue and shared learning experiences, has established the Forum’s reputation of being an honest broker, adding value and increasing the impact of its work. The Forum equips key agents of change with the most relevant experiences according to their needs, and provides more specialized technical expertise where appropriate.

Our Partners

The Forum works closely with a wide range of partners in the pursuit of its mission to strengthen governance in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries. Spanning all levels of the multilevel governance ecosystem, the Forum's partnerships with stakeholders facilitate and enrich its work and ensure that its activity has the greatest possible impact.

As a trusted provider of politically impartial, empirically-grounded practical knowledge and learning on federal and multilevel governance, the Forum's partners encompass a diverse array of global institutions and individuals. The Forum has significant convening power, bringing together distinct groups of stakeholders in unique dialogue and exchange activities at international, national and subnational levels. The Forum's partners form the core of the international network of federal and multilevel governance experts and practitioners.

COUNTRY PARTNERS	FUNDING PARTNERS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS
<p>Country Partners are member countries of the Forum. Represented by their national governments,</p> <p>Country Partners provide institutional support and strategic direction to Forum activity. Sitting on the Forum Board of Directors and Strategic Council, Country Partners identify their priority Sectoral and Systems issues on which Forum support is required.</p>	<p>Funding Partners provide financial resources for programming in targeted areas of Forum activity.</p> <p>The Forum partners with donor agencies from partner and non-partner countries, multilateral institutions, and philanthropic organizations to address specific Sectoral or Systemic issues, or support federal and multilevel governance development processes in specific countries/regions.</p>	<p>The Forum partners with a wide range of organizations in the implementation of its activity. Implementing Partners fulfil a range of functions concerning the design and delivery of Thematic and Country/Regional programs. Implementing Partners are essential contributors in the Forum's provision of responsive, relevant and tailored expertise in federal and multilevel governance.</p> <p>Forum Implementing Partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Universities - Research Institutions - Civil Society Organizations - Multilateral Institutions - National and Subnational Legislatures - Foundations - Media Organizations

Partnership Vision 2023-2028

Since the Forum formulated its last strategic plan in 2018, the global context has changed significantly, with the current conditions making it more difficult than anticipated for the international community to attain the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 set out by the United Nations. The COVID crisis in particular provided an inflection point, bringing to the fore the failure of governance to address critical global challenges which will define the next decade. The pandemic upended both the global economy as well as progress towards building more inclusive and democratic polities.



The Forum will systematically deepen cooperation with the national governments as well as subnational governments/legislatures/other subnational bodies in partner countries to ensure its work remains relevant for its Country Partners. It will periodically assess the needs of its Country Partners and engage with institutions within those counties that require the Forum's expertise on issues of federalism and multilevel governance. These needs will inform the design of Forum programming.

The Forum will remain open to extending membership of the Forum to new countries with a commitment to federalism/multilevel governance. The organization will seek the support of its current Country Partners to assist in recruiting new Country Partners.

The Forum will work closely with its Funding Partners to develop tailored programming that supports federal and multilevel governance development processes in emerging and transitioning countries. It will remain responsive to new requests for assistance in transition processes in countries around the world. The Forum will strive to strengthen its position as "go to" organization to be engaged by funders to deliver federal and multilevel governance programming in emerging and transitioning countries.

Building on the historic legacy of cooperation with partners that bring substantive value to the work of the organization, the Forum will remain dynamic and open to partnership with new collaborators. The targeted approach to partnership will be further sharpened to enhance the impact of the Forum's work.

In this vein, the Forum will strengthen and deepen partnerships and relationships with its strategic Implementing Partners in both Thematic and Country/Regional program design and delivery. The strategic partners are organizations that either complement Forum's expertise, or play a key role in program development and implementation and/or program co-funding. A more detailed description of the Forum's approach to partnerships in the 2023-2028 period can be found in the Forum Partnerships Strategy.

Our Beneficiaries



The Forum works to support agents of change: individuals, institutions and organizations involved in dialogue, development, reform and implementation processes of federal and multilevel governance. Forum beneficiaries are primarily decision makers, leaders, and those with the opportunity to contribute to these aforementioned processes in their respective community of practice. Forum programming is highly targeted to specific groups of beneficiaries, informed by consultation with local stakeholders, political economy analysis, and the knowledge capital of Forum staff and experts.

FORUM BENEFICIARIES INCLUDE:



Government Institutions (all levels and branches)



Political parties



National and Subnational Government Officials and Bureaucrats



Politicians



Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations (including trade unions, professional associations, youth organizations, women's rights organizations)



Journalists



Thematic Experts and Academics

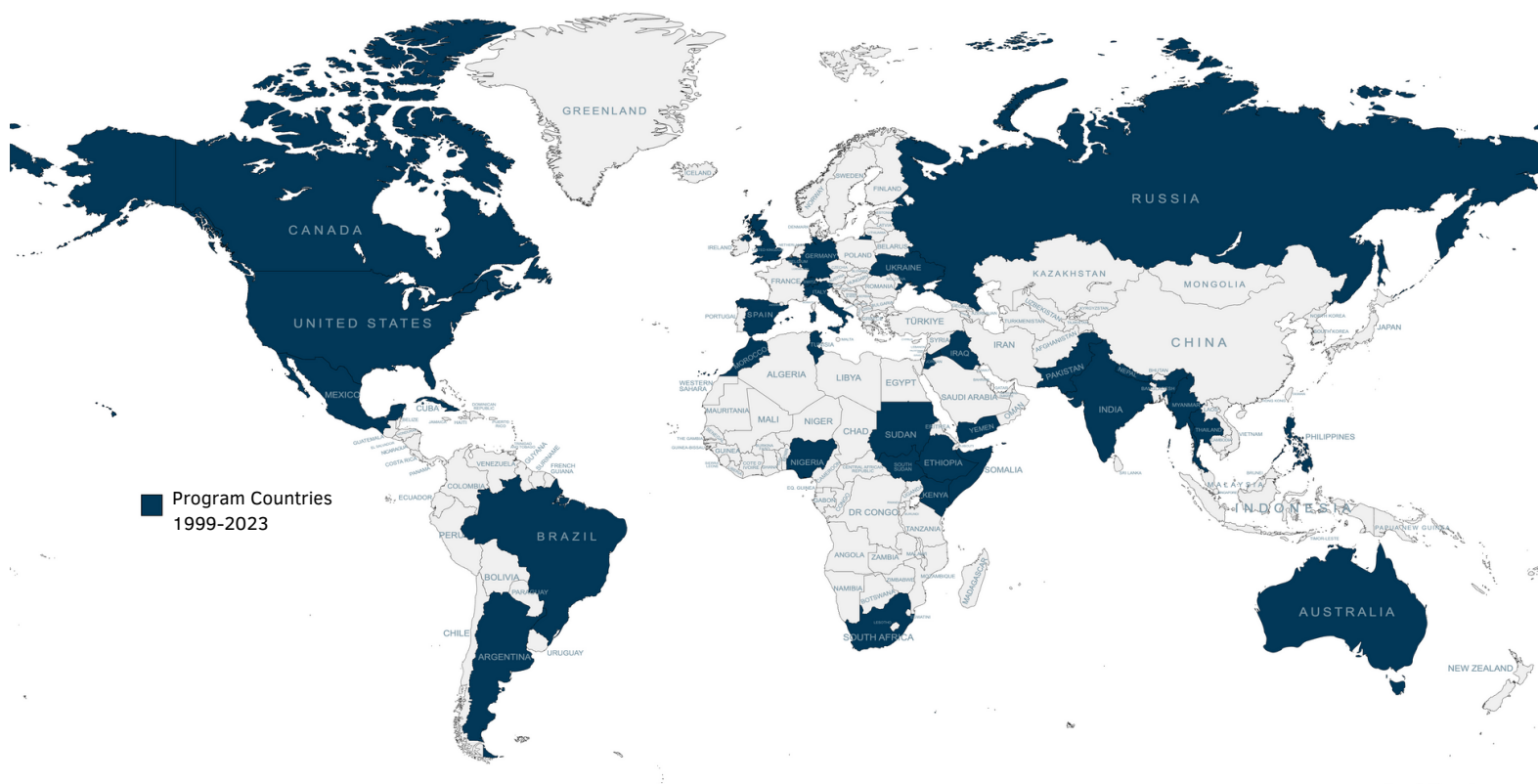


International and Multilateral Organizations



Active Citizens and the General Public in Established and Emerging Federal and Multilevel Countries

Forum Program Countries 1999-2023



Americas:	Europe:	Africa and Middle East:	Asia-Pacific
1. Canada 2. USA 3. Mexico 4. Brazil 5. Argentina 6. Cuba 7. St Kitts and Nevis	8. Austria 9. Belgium 10. Cyprus 11. Germany 12. Italy 13. Russia 14. Spain 15. Switzerland 16. United Kingdom 17. Ukraine	18. Ethiopia 19. Kenya 20. Jordan 21. Iraq 22. Nigeria 23. Morocco 24. Sudan 25. South Sudan 26. South Africa 27. Somalia 28. Tunisia 29. Yemen	30. Australia 31. Philippines 32. Malaysia 33. Myanmar 34. India 35. Pakistan 36. Nepal 37. Thailand

Theory of Change

The Forum is an international organization that aspires to: empower people living in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries.

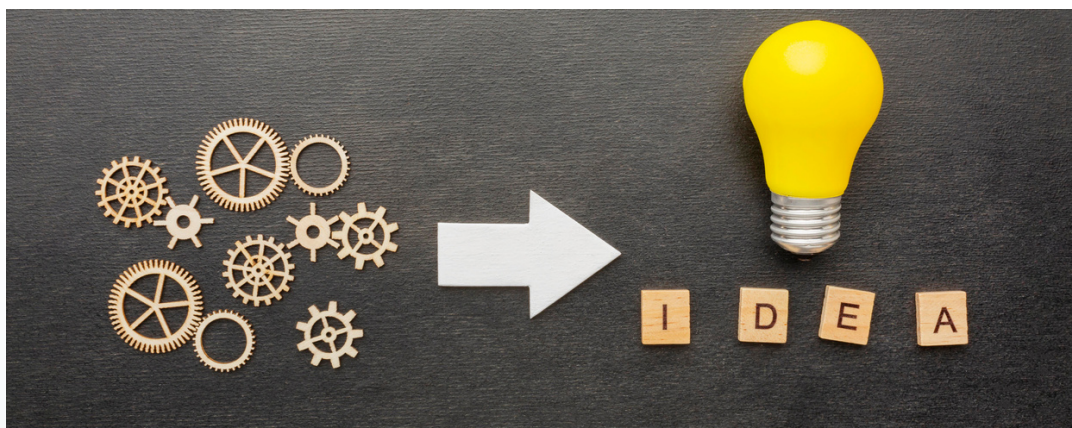
The Mission of the Forum is to: strengthen democratic and inclusive governance in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries through knowledge creation and mobilization, capacity development, and support to inclusive policy implementation processes.

The Forum addresses developmental challenges in governance that limit the empowerment of people in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries. These challenges include:

- Limited knowledge and understanding among prospective and active agents of change of the principles and advantages of federal and multilevel governance;
- Lack of curation of academic knowledge for the creation and application of policy, inhibiting government effectiveness;
- Lack of consensus among agents of change on appropriate multilevel governance solutions;
- State fragility;
- Capacity gaps;
- Lack of responsive government;
- Lack of inclusiveness, including gender and marginalized groups.

Due to its ability to address identified challenges and contribute to results, the Forum is hence a preferred development partner and can respond to demands for multilevel governance interventions from donor governments, host governments and other international development actors.

As an understanding of national contexts in which governance processes are situated is crucial in any intervention which aims to effect change, the design of Forum programs is informed by a comprehensive assessment of the circumstances in which they will be implemented. Through situational analysis, stakeholder consultation, and working with local partners, the Forum tailors its programs effectively to the needs of the beneficiaries to which it is providing support.



Forum programs include a range of intervention mechanisms implemented to effect change, which include: the production and dissemination of comparative knowledge products; modern adult learning & training; public education and awareness raising; dialogue processes involving key stakeholders; technical assistance; and communication materials. The comparative methodology and the key principle of “Learning From Each Other” permeates all programs and is facilitated through the Forum’s network.



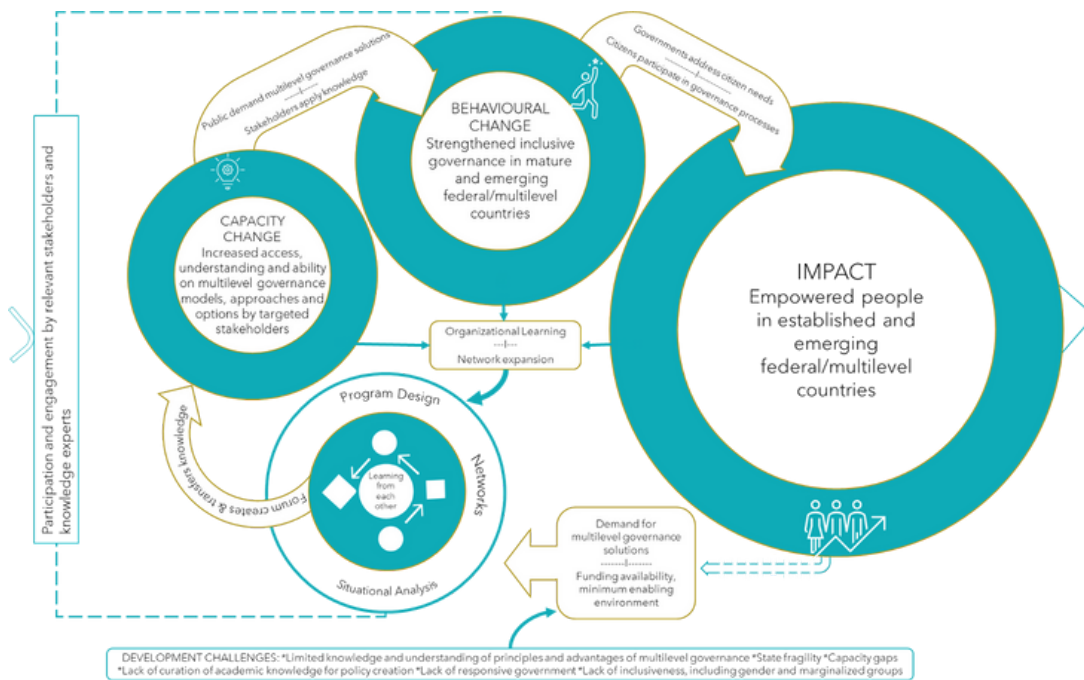
The Forum provides support in domains fundamental to governance development in multilevel systems. It specializes in areas such as: *Diversity and inclusion, including gender, in governance; Intergovernmental relations; Constitutional and institutional design and development; Fiscal arrangements, methods, and processes; and Local government and service delivery.*

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Central to the Forum’s work is the creation, curation, and transfer of knowledge on federalism and multilevel governance to agents of change. Through knowledge transfer and mobilization, Forum programs enhance the capacity of agents of change and enable them to apply their acquired knowledge in decision making in their respective functions in governance processes. The application of knowledge facilitates improved multilevel government institutions, processes, and practices, and the development of sustainable solutions to governance challenges in federal, decentralized, and transitioning systems.

The change process is underpinned by the Forum’s global network of multilevel governance expertise. Through its network, the Forum assembles and marshals the knowledge, expertise, and intellectual capital required to support the change process that leads to the organization’s desired ultimate outcome. Comprised of the Forum’s government partners, federalism and multilevel governance experts, governance practitioners, academics, universities, and a range of civil society and non-governmental organizations, the Forum network enhances and supports program activities.

Theory (Change levels)



Immediate Outcomes (Capacity Change)

Capacity changes in knowledge, attitudes, and skills at the first level where the Forum works with governance practitioners and civil society. The Forum's capacity change theory is:

If

"The Forum develops relevant comparative knowledge products; provides knowledge transfer and mobilization interventions and technical assistance to diverse agents of change; and facilitates the development of multilevel governance practitioner networks."

Then

"there is increased access to new and updated knowledge on the practice of federal and multilevel governance among key agents of change (100); an enhanced ability of agents of change to contribute to the practice of federal and multilevel governance (200); and agents of change involved in inclusive policy implementation processes are better informed of federal and multilevel governance options (300)"

Because

Comparative education on federalism and multilevel governance can allow practitioners to analyze and dissect trends between different countries and cultures in their practice of federal governance; these comparative trends can, in turn, allow practitioners and agents of change to engage better with newly acquired knowledge.[7]

More participants, particularly from minority groups, are willing and enthusiastic about increasing their participation in political engagement after targeted training;[8] this enthusiasm motivates them of applying their training sessions to their work in federalism and multilevel governance.[9]

Evidence shows that within five years, 94.5% of stakeholder groups targeted by Forum knowledge transfer interventions demonstrated increased knowledge and understanding of federal, decentralized, and devolved solutions.

In its 2021-22 Annual Stakeholders Survey, 95% of stakeholders indicated that “Involvement in Forum activities and/or exposure to Forum content increased my knowledge and understanding of federal and decentralized governance.” Furthermore, in the 2021-22 Annual Stakeholder Survey, 84% of Forum stakeholders indicated that they had “Used what [they] had learned as a result of [their] involvement in Forum activities and/or exposure to Forum content in [their] work or role.”[10]

Capacity Change Assumptions

- Accessible, appropriate, and available audience, interest, information, and expertise in federal and decentralized governance.
- Adequate resources available for activities, including donor commitment to programming of sufficient length to achieve impact.
- Governments of countries in which the Forum delivers programs desire/permit implementation of activities.
- The Forum possesses the capacity and financial resources to produce knowledge products and implement capacity-building programs that are a good fit for beneficiaries.
- Acceptance of devolution and decentralization among beneficiaries, and openness to gender and environmental considerations.

Risks

- There is extensive literature on the “training transfer problem” in which scholars raise the concern of how knowledge from training is not being transferred into practice in real world settings[11] and how understanding decays over time.[12] These studies argue that training does not inevitably and linearly increase the capacity of individuals to apply knowledge as intended. However, there is also extensive literature and evidence (some of which is mentioned above) which details how training can be an effective method of transferring practical knowledge later applied by agents of change in real-world settings.
- Increased individual capacity often requires additional resources relating to time, money, “civic skills”, community support and the willingness or desire to participate in politics and their perceived self-efficacy to do so. Access to knowledge and improved knowledge alone may not be sufficient to foster change.[13]

Intermediate Outcomes (Behavioural Change)

At this level, the Forum anticipates changes in behaviour and performance among agents of change towards strengthening governance in established and emerging federal and multilevel countries stemming from previously described capacity changes.

The behaviour change theory is:

If

“There is increased access to new and updated knowledge on the practice of federal and multilevel governance among key agents of change (100) an enhanced ability of agents of change to contribute to the practice of federal and multilevel governance (200); and agents of change involved in inclusive policy implementation processes are better informed of federal and multilevel governance options (300)

Then

“Governance is strengthened in mature and emerging federal/multilevel countries.”

Because

Increased knowledge of multilevel governance practices, enhancement of inclusive processes, and increased capacity to implement policy decisions, lead to an increase in the number of policies addressing contemporary and complex issues concerning all people,[14] allowing for the development of more targeted service delivery programs and more inclusive governance institutions that meet the needs of people.

Through inclusive processes, groups’ trust in government systems and the efficacy of political processes increases, further encouraging them to engage politically and supporting the development of a more participatory system of governance.[15]

Behaviour Change Assumptions

- Knowledge influences policymaking and the knowledge produced by the Forum is both relevant and applicable.
- Beneficiaries can identify if they require new knowledge and have the ability and influence to apply the knowledge.
- Beneficiaries share and apply knowledge, new laws, and new attempts at new policies.
- The Forum is the preferred partner to deliver solutions, with access to high-level practitioners.
- There exists a commitment to inclusive federal/multilevel governance and stakeholders will be inclusive in their participation in key processes.

Risk

- The development of concrete multilevel governance policies requires significant political will from relevant stakeholders, which can sometimes be lacking.
- Bad faith actors prevent the application of federalism and multilevel knowledge and work to block genuinely inclusive multilevel governance institutions and processes from being developed.

Ultimate Outcome – Impact (Change in Well-Being)

Improved well-being at the highest level which delivers direct benefits to society. At this level, the Forum anticipates that strengthening of governance affected the application of knowledge by agents of change has beneficial impacts at the broad societal level.

If

“Governance is strengthened in established and emerging federal/multilevel countries.”

Then

“People will be empowered in established and emerging federal/multilevel countries.”

Because

Evidence shows that better governance leads not only to more inclusive economic growth, but also to better access to services and opportunities and better literacy and health.

Better governance allows more people to trust governance systems and want to engage with them through collaborative participatory governance.[16]

Ultimate Impact Assumptions

- Inclusive and responsive governance is a desirable public good and federal/decentralized solutions are tools that can be applied to achieve it.
- There is a demand for better governance and absorptive capacity among agents of change.
- The distribution of power between different groups of stakeholders in societies is reasonable and there is a sufficient alignment of political power and incentives.
- Gender inclusiveness leads to improved governance, input for policy development, access to information, and more equitable service delivery.
- Minimum stability & support exists among partner countries to maintain a global network, and the network shares knowledge.

Risk

- External factors outside of the Forum's control prevent the strengthening of government or lead to a weakening of fundamental government capacity which restricts the scope for governance development or reform (conflict; political instability; natural disaster etc.)

[7] Phillips, D. (2006). Comparative Education: Method. In: Research in Comparative and International Education, 1(4), 304–319.

[8] Sanbonmatsu, K. (2015). Electing women of colour: the role of campaign trainings. Journal of Women, Politics and Policy. 36(2). 137–160.

[9] Lim, D. H., & Morris, M. L. (2006). Influence of trainee characteristics, instructional satisfaction, and organizational climate on perceived learning and training transfer. Human resource development quarterly, 17(1), 85–115.

[10] Forum of Federations 2021–2022 Results Report.

[11] Brachos, D., Kostopoulos, K., Soderquist, K.E. & Prastacos, G. (2007). Knowledge effectiveness, social context and innovation. Journal of Knowledge Management. 11(5). 31–4.

[12] Urick, M. (2017). Adapting training to meet the preferred learning styles of different generations. International Journal of Training and Development. 21(1). 53–59.; Saks, A.M. & Belcourt, M. (2006). An investigation of training activities and transfer of training in organizations. Human Resource Management. 45(4). 629–648.

[13] Lane, S.R., Otrander, J. & Rhodes Smith, T. (2017). 'Politics is social work with power': training social workers for elected office. Social Work Education. 37(1). 1–16.

[14] Gale, R., & O'Toole, T. (2008). Learning from Political Sociology: Structure, Agency and Inclusive Governance, The International Journal of Children's Rights, 16(3), 369–378.

[15] Archibong, Belinda and Kabir, Raiyan, Building Blocs: Examining the Links Between Youth, Trust and Civic and Political Engagement in Africa (April 13, 2020). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4020754> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4020754>.

[16] Kim, J. H. (2019). Direct democracy and women's political engagement. American Journal of Political Science, 63(3), 594–610.

Strategic Framework 2023–2028

In the 2023–2028 period, the Forum’s Strategic Framework focuses on the impact of the organization’s activity. Specifically, the Forum will work towards accomplishing series of key Outcomes through its institutional activities:

Intermediate Outcome

Strengthened democratic, inclusive and gender-responsive governance in established and emerging federal/multilevel countries.

Immediate Outcomes

- Increased access to new and updated knowledge on the practice of federal and multilevel governance among key agents of change.
- Enhanced ability of key agents of change to contribute to the practice of federal and multilevel governance.
- Agents of change involved in inclusive and gender-responsive implementation processes better informed by federal and multilevel governance options.

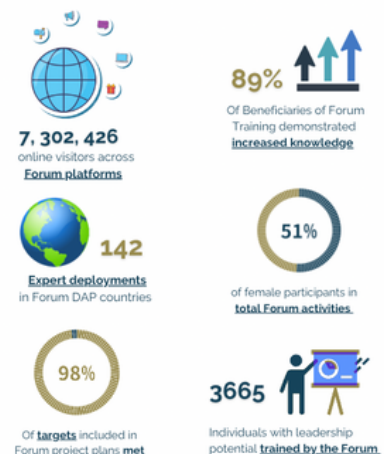
Underpinned by the tenets and logic of the Forum institutional Theory of Change, the achievement of these outcomes will support the Forum’s vision to empower people in established federal/multilevel countries. The Strategic Framework provides a holistic structure through which the Forum will work towards its vision.

The Strategic Framework is actioned through a results-based management (RBM) system centred on the change effected by the Forum. This comprises a range of processes and instruments supporting the collection, collation and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on Forum activity. It includes a robust Results Framework, a series of data collection, collation and evidencing tools, and reporting on results on an annual basis. Through its Strategic Framework and RBM system, the Forum will capture the impact of its Thematic and Country/Regional programming around the world.

Key Performance Indicators

To facilitate a results-based approach to Forum activity, the Strategic Framework includes a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The KPIs will be used to help measure the Forum’s achievement of and progress towards its intended Outcomes. They will support ongoing monitoring and decision making with regard to the taking of corrective action. As part of annual evaluation and reporting processes, the KPIs and their respective targets, data sources, and data collection methods, will be reviewed to ensure their continuing suitability and relevance, with adjustments made on an ongoing basis as necessary

Forum By the Numbers: 2021–2022



Forum Logic Model





Forum of Federations

The Global Network on Federalism and Devolved Governance

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