

KPSRL Thematic Headline 2024 – Making Realities Meet

In 2023, the KPSRL explored the thematic headline “Towards Just Social Contracts” through three focus areas: (1) polarisation and social cohesion, (2) understanding authoritarian contexts, and (3) inclusivity in social contracts.

For [KPAC23](#), the thematic headline on social contracts was adapted into “Margins and Centres of Security and Rule of Law” angle, to systematically explore marginalisation dynamics in SRoL policies and programmes and how they can be healed. “Margins and Centres” felt like a relevant lens to the KPSRL network to discuss just social contracts, defined as those where people with lived experiences of SRoL issues are at the centre of decision making and action.¹

Following this line of thought, KPAC23 concluded the work on the 2023 thematic headline with reaffirming that people-centred approaches (PCA) and locally led development (LLD) are centerpieces of better policymaking and programming for just social contracts. Furthermore, network-wide consultations confirmed the relevance of and interest in these topics.

People-centred approaches and locally led development

The 2024 thematic trajectory “Making Realities Meet. From Lived Experiences to Humane Institutions” continues discussions from previous years by deepening knowledge and understanding of PCA to and LLD of SRoL, separately and at their intersection.

The People Centred Approaches are about formal and informal institutions’ understanding and responsiveness to lived experiences and people’s needs. Key elements of PCA are processes to regularly connect people with lived experiences of SRoL issues to policymakers and programming partners, new methodologies to highlight and discuss lived experiences, needs and expectations, and more capacity to balance lived experiences and needs on strongly polarised topics and to understand and heal mental models influenced by trauma.

Locally Led Development concerns a shift of power and roles towards ensuring that local actors and narratives drive processes, to the benefit of more effective and sustainable SRoL interventions. This reform agenda has multiple angles, such as innovative finance, equitable partnership structures, diversity inside organisations, effective co-creation methodologies, responsive feedback mechanisms to communities, embarking into inclusive learning journeys, and correct language, to name just a few.

The intersection of PCA and LLD is therefore a space where policy and programming are both responsive to lived experiences AND devolved as close to citizens as possible, and where SRoL support is characterised by local ownership, equity, and action shaped by context.

Learning tracks

The 2024 thematic headlines nudges the network to explore questions that past discussions left open.

1. Track 1 – Appreciate lived experiences and translate them into policy and programming.

Under track 1, the KPSRL will:

1. Continue to create spaces for people with lived experiences to meet with policymakers and programming partners, and to support the translation of lived experiences into policymaking and programming.
2. Invite contribution to methodologies and approaches to include and reconcile lived experiences at policy and programming levels, especially on polarised topics and

¹ You can find the main insights and recommendations that emerged at KPAC23 via [this link](#).

where trauma might play a role. For example, we invite the KPSRL network to explore how to use of the concept of “mental models as a lens to develop approaches and tools that can retrace roots of disagreements.

2. **Track 2 – Effectiveness of initiatives towards locally-led development.** The KPSRL network members are taking actions to implement (parts of) the localisation/decolonisation/shifting the power agendas. Recent research conducted by Radboud University revealed that little and scattered evidence has so far been generated on which combinations of reform actions are enough, given systemic forces and practical contexts, to produce positive results.² Even the concept of “positive results” has multiple meanings, from shifting the balance of power, to producing better development results, to forms of organisational effectiveness (internal democracy, quality of internal policy and programmes, etc...). Track 2 will therefore invite network members to share:
 1. Early evidence on what has worked for them in implementing LLD (and in which contexts).
 2. Stories of change about the processes that led to the implementation of LLD reforms.
3. **Track 3 – The future of SRoL.** This track focuses on what the future of locally led development cooperation in a politicized landscape could look like. It will explore how ambitions of locally led development for SRoL connect or contradict with other areas of donors’ foreign policy – also beyond development cooperation - that are driven by domestic priorities (e.g. trade, geopolitics, and defence). This explores a narrative on how SRoL support can continue in a landscape where public support for aid is decreasing in donor countries, while acknowledging that donor countries struggle with similar or shared challenges themselves too – and are regularly part of the problem. Where do local and donor priorities overlap and what should locally lead collaboration on those shared priorities look like? While answering this question, we shall constantly dissect long- and short- term priorities and who's priorities we're talking about (context and power). Track 3 will:
 1. Facilitate dialogue between the implementing partners, (Dutch) politicians and the wider public on the future relevance and shape of SRoL development cooperation.
 2. Explore with policy makers and local partners the implications of reimagined SRoL, positioning it within a broader landscape of policies and goals.

Practical steps

KPSRL Secretariat will publish working papers as the result of distilling insights and recommendations generated over the years on the topics of PCA and LLD.

Besides, Secretariat welcomes ideas for events or podcast conversations that tackle elements of the three tracks above. We will be happy to discuss which event to organise to connect your idea with the KPSRL network. A request for a conversation can be sent to the Secretariat at info@kpsrl.org by **21 April 2024**.

Later in the year, the Secretariat will launch an open call for session proposals for the Annual Conference of the Knowledge Platform (KPAC24).

² Banks N., Bukenya, B., Elbers, W., Kanya, I., Kumi, E., Schulpen, L., van Selm, G. M., van Wessel, M., Ye-boah, T. (2024). Where do we go from here? Navigating power inequalities between development NGOs in the aid system. Global: Academics Researching Power Imbalances. The study was based on a survey of 458 respondents from 55 countries and 55 interviews with organisations that have implemented localisations