

STRONG CITIES NETWORK

FACT SHEET



WHAT IS THE STRONG CITIES NETWORK?

The Strong Cities Network (SCN) is an independent, global network of more than 150 cities and local governments dedicated to addressing all forms of violent extremism, hate and polarisation, while promoting a human rights-based prevention framework in which local knowledge and practice informs national, regional and international approaches.

WHAT IS THE SCN'S MISSION?

- To inspire, catalyse and multiply locally-driven, non-discriminatory, human rights-based, and gender-sensitive policies and programmes that prevent and counter violent extremism, hate and polarisation that rest upon trust-based partnerships with communities.
- To enhance the practical implementation of programming and practice at a local level aimed at building social cohesion and community resilience to all forms of extremist- and hate-motivated violence.
- To connect sub-national leaders and practitioners from a range of disciplines, including community relations, social and health services, education, leaders from the youth community, economic development, religious affairs, local community leaders and civil society, to exchange lessons learned and provide tailored training through face-to-face and online exchanges.
- To elevate the voices of mayors and other local leaders and ensure the needs and priorities of cities and other sub-national authorities are reflected in national, regional, and international conversations around how to most effectively prevent violent extremism, hate and polarisation.

WHAT DOES THE SCN DO?

Design

Provides policy/advisory support, training and analysis with a particular focus on building collaborative/multi-actor teams and, more broadly, local infrastructure for preventing violent extremism, hate and polarisation. These SCN programmes are designed to equip cities to address a complex array of threats. Informed by leading experts, they help to build meaningful links between city leaders and local organisations that combine community credibility with decades of local understanding. Examples of such support include:

- Data/analysis/research
- Community/youth engagement
- Risk/needs assessments
- Interventions
- Rehabilitation/reintegration
- Strategic communications
- Monitoring/evaluation
- Local prevention framework/network development

Build

- Establishes local coordination bodies that unite city halls, civil society educators, public health bodies, the private sector and faith leaders to identify and address community tensions. We base our success on harnessing existing and credible institutions, from social services to traditional civic infrastructure.
- Funding for innovative city/ community-led initiatives focused on building resilience and social cohesion to strengthen a 'whole of society' approach to preventing violent extremism, hate and polarisation.

Inform

- Helps members access the latest research and good practice from across the network through the SCN Online Hub, which features stories, interviews, guides and training modules for local practitioners, teachers, city officials and civil society. The SCN Hate and Extremism Mapper provides members with data, building digital observatories that correlate online risks with offline behaviour.
- Identifies, collects and amplifies promising city-led approaches (e.g. policies, programmes and structures), including through the development and dissemination (across SCN and among national government and regional and international organisations) of good practices on different aspects of city-led efforts to build resilience against and prevent violent extremism, hate and polarisation.

Connect

- Facilitates the sharing of expertise/experiences among local policymakers and practitioners, including through global summits, regional hubs, city exchanges, and the SCN website.
- Elevates the voices of mayors and other local leaders and ensures the needs and priorities of cities and other sub-national authorities are reflected in national, regional, and international conversations around how to most effectively prevent violent extremism, hate and polarisation, while respecting the 'Do No Harm' principle.
- Promotes cooperation between local and national officials and other preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) stakeholders, including by facilitating implementation of the GCTF national-local cooperation P/CVE and other relevant international good practices through national and regional dialogues and capacity-building support.
- Enables local leaders to assume a leadership role in preventing violent extremism, hate and polarisation.

WHAT IS THE SCN'S THEORY OF CHANGE?

If we expand and deepen a network of cities and other sub-national authorities to advocate for, deliver, and share locally-led, human rights-based approaches to addressing violent extremism, polarisation and hate and support the development and implementation of such approaches then we will see:

- increased adoption of relevant policies, programs, and structures at the local level; and
- enhanced implementation of locally-led, measures, which will ultimately build the resilience of local communities to violent extremism, hate and polarisation.

HOW DOES THE SCN WORK?

SCN International Steering Committee

- A geographically diverse group of up to 25 mayors/local leaders.
- Provides strategic direction to the SCN, including through the development of a bi-annual action plan that enumerates SCN priorities, e.g., training/capacity-building themes, partnerships, advocacy, and policy/communications outputs.

SCN Regional Advisory Groups

- Each consist of up to eight (8) local leaders/practitioners from each relevant region, e.g., MENA, East/West Africa, Western Balkans, and Southeast Asia; two (2) to three (3) from each region serve on above Steering Committee.
- Advise on the development of relevant SCN outputs and design of relevant SCN trainings and other SCN activities to ensure they reflect local priorities/needs/perspectives and are appropriately tailored (note: advisory committee members may also be drawn up to deliver training and/or provide SCN advisory services in the relevant region).

SCN Management Unit

In addition to providing administrative support to the network, and training and other capacity-building assistance to SCN members, the SCN Management Unit supports the development, dissemination, and amplification of human rights-based, city-led policies and programmes to prevent violent extremism, hate and polarisation. The Management Unit operates under the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and is enhanced through strategic partnerships with other organisations including, *inter alia*, Global Center on Cooperative Security (GCCS), Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT).

London-based team:

- Manages the overall network, including the Steering Committee, and the online Resource Hub, which includes both SCN-developed tools and other outputs, and those produced by other relevant organisations and experts
- Oversees the regional hubs
- Represents the SCN in UN and other multilateral venues/conversations
- Oversees the development and delivery of SCN training and other capacity-building tools
- Spearheads development of SCN good practices and ensures good practices and lessons learned are being shared across regions and with the UN and other international stakeholders
- Coordinates SCN engagement with national governments, the UN and other multinational organisations, national governments, civil society, the private sector

Regional hubs for priority regions (depending on the region this might include field-based SCN management unit staff member(s) and, as appropriate, in-region programme staff):

- Oversees SCN engagement with members and other relevant stakeholders in a particular region, including national governments, civil society, the private sector, local embassies, and multilateral organisations.
- Identifies the needs/priorities of SCN members in the region.
- Provides or facilitates advisory and other support to SCN members in the region, including by ensuring that all SCN training and other support is tailored to the needs/specificities of the region.
- Develops and manages a regional advisory committee consisting of representatives from relevant members from the region and a regional hub to connect practitioners across the region and ensure they have access to the necessary data, resources, and other tools.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF SCN MEMBERS?

Given the varied capacities of current and new SCN members, the SCN Management Unit works with individual members to set the appropriate level of expectations for each member. However, all members will be expected to meet the following expectations:

- Agree – in words and in actions – to the SCN Guiding Principles that guide the network’s activities and engagement around the world.
- Nominate an SCN point of contact from the local government
- Complete and upload a city (or sub-national authority) profile to the SCN website
- Participate in one SCN event or regional workshop each year

Additional expectations may include:

- Sharing information on relevant policies and programmes for inclusion in the SCN’s Online Library and leveraging the SCN’s online resources
- Responding to SCN surveys and requests for non-sensitive information
- Joining at least one SCN working group
- Contributing to the development and/or delivery of SCN tools and training
- Participating in SCN-facilitated city exchanges and other peer-to-peer learning opportunities
- Taking advantage of ‘deep-dive’ SCN capacity-building opportunities available in priority regions

HOW IS THE SCN FUNDED?

The SCN is supported through a combination of support from donor governments, as well as voluntary and in-kind contributions from its members, private sector actors, and philanthropic foundations.