

## STRONG CITIES NETWORK

### DAKAR-MONTRÉAL CITY EXCHANGE: SUMMARY REPORT



#### Introduction

ISD held the first Strong Cities Network (SCN) bilateral exchange on 16-18 October 2017, building cooperation and shared learning to counter violent extremism between the cities of Dakar, Senegal and Montréal, Canada.

Hosted in Montréal by Esteban Benavides, the city's [International Relations](#) adviser, this exchange was the first of its kind and aims to promote and share on a city-to-city basis vital practical tools and initiatives to reduce local risk, prevent violence and build cohesive communities. Top officials from Dakar travelled to Montréal to attend these sessions, including Maye Seck, urban security adviser to the Mayor, and Papa Alassane Seck, supervisor of Dakar's innovative Volunteer Programme.

#### Aims and objectives

The SCN will run three direct city-to-city practitioner exchanges between member cities in 2017 and 2018, of which the Dakar-Montréal programme is the first. The objectives of these exchanges include:

- ✓ **Sharing vital practical tools and initiatives** to reduce local risk, prevent violence and build cohesive communities;
- ✓ **Developing a mutual understanding of the strategic planning processes in each city**, including how local action plans are developed, how risks are assessed and profiled, how partners and resources are allocated, what mitigation/prevention approaches are chosen, and how strategies are monitored and evaluated;

- ✓ **Improving mutual understanding of how P/CVE activities are being communicated** by municipal actors at the same time as understanding the broader public perceptions of this work;
- ✓ **Seeing first-hand how the city is implementing key initiatives on the frontline** through local site visits. Visits may include local welcome or information centres for refugees and new citizens, specialist centres of excellence on P/CVE and connected issues, youth centres and engagement programmes, community policing teams, or deradicalisation and disengagement specialist teams;
- ✓ **Building a long-term partnership between two SCN member cities** to provide bilateral support to design, share and implement effective P/CVE policies and practices beyond the exchange.

## Summary

The exchange began with a series of roundtables with key representatives from the Ville de Montréal. Commander Sylvain Bissonnette of the [Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal](#) (SPVM) gave a short overview of the police department’s core work on urban safety and resilience, reflecting on recent cooperation and support with local policing teams in Dakar and highlighting common challenges. Jocelyne Lebrun, Community Development Adviser, explained the work and approach of Montréal’s [Department of Social Diversity and Sports](#), which focuses on creating an inclusive, cohesive and engaged city. The [RÉSAL](#) (Réseau d’échange et de soutien aux actions locales) project was emphasised in particular as a unique multi-agency structure, involving actors including [l’Institute Universitaire sur les Jeunes en Difficulté](#), the [Ville de Montréal](#), the SPVM, and a range of relevant organisations working in the field. The primary focus of RÉSAL is to prevent and respond to violence, especially violent behaviour of young people, and consult with all actors and stakeholders to determine the problems and possible solutions.



The Dakar delegation later visited the district of Saint-Pierre in Lachine, Montréal, where the RÉSAL project was piloted. Local social and community workers presented the project and the local context of Lachine. After a spate of violent attacks and homicides tied to organised crime in the neighbourhood, rocking the local population of around 5,000, a citizen consultation was launched to build engagement and trust between community members and local services. In an effort coordinated by Montréal’s Department of Social Diversity and Sports, working alongside community outreach teams, the [International Centre for the](#)

[Prevention of Crime](#) (ICPC) was brought on board to conduct a local risk and diagnostics assessment to analyse the underlying local causes of violence, which in turn enabled the coordinated partnership of the RÉNAL outreach and prevention project.

The delegation later had the opportunity to visit the headquarters of the SPVM, where they received briefings from officers from both the [Hate Crimes](#) and [Counterterrorism](#) units. The Counterterrorism unit introduced Montréal's emergency response procedures and highlighted the importance of identifying and building relationships with all possible partners to ensure that police remain engaged across the community. The Hate Crimes unit discussed the distinction between hate incidents as non-criminal acts, as opposed to hate crimes as criminal offences, as well as the need to raise awareness around this issue and the means by which both hate crimes and incidents can be reported to the police.

During further meetings at the Ville de Montréal, several institutions presented their research and expertise on P/CVE and related fields, highlighting areas of work relevant to both cities. The [Montréal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies](#) at Concordia University presented on their different streams of work, ranging from researching terrorists' use of social media to engaging the [Parliamentarians for Global Action](#) to design an action plan to counter violent extremism. The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime illustrated their international projects, including their pilot programme, which works with probation services and psychological assessment teams in the French cities of Nice, Grenoble and Lyon. Rounding off the session, the [Collège Maisonneuve](#) showcased their "Travailleurs de corridor" project, developed as a response to a number of students leaving for Syria and Iraq.



Over the following two days, the Dakar officials attended an in-depth workshop at the [Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence](#) (CPRLV) to design a frontline awareness training programme for use with the Dakar Volunteer Programme. The tools developed by the CPRLV for training and awareness-raising

around radicalisation and violence were adapted to the Senegalese context, providing a tailored assessment, response and intervention approach that could be used in Dakar.

This exchange represents the first step in building continued SCN cooperation between Montréal and Dakar on a bilateral basis. The important lessons of these exchanges feed into the broader work of the SCN, demonstrating the potential for increased city-to-city collaboration and serving as an instructive approach to sharing best practice across differing local contexts with shared goals.

## Next steps

All parties are committed to further developing the training for the volunteers of the Volunteer Programme in Dakar, with the CPRLV assessment tools serving as a basis for continued contextual adaptation by partners in Dakar.

The SCN will continue to support bilateral cooperation between Montréal and Dakar in addition to its individual cooperation with both cities. The network will highlight the lessons of this exchange through online [City Profiles](#), detailing best practice initiatives, and through future SCN training and events.

Dakar exchange participants are encouraged to provide regular updates on the design of the training package for use in the Dakar Volunteer Programme and, pending funding opportunities, draw on the SCN, Montréal counterparts and expertise from the CPRLV to identify and deliver a sustained programme of training. Partners at the CPRLV kindly agreed to circulate an initial concept note to this end.