Operationalizing Local Government-Led Multi-Actor Prevention Policies and Programmes in East and Southern Africa

Inaugural Workshop: Strong Cities' East and Southern Africa Regional Hub

26-27 October 2022

Nairobi, Kenya

Meeting Summary[1]

Overview

On 26 and 27 October 2022, the Strong Cities Network (SCN) hosted the inaugural activity of its East and Southern Africa (ESA) Hub. The workshop, *Operationalizing Local Government-Led Multi-Actor Prevention Policies and Programmes in East and Southern Africa*, was organised with funding support from the European Union and US State Department.

Some 70 stakeholders gathered in Nairobi for the two-day event, including representatives from local and national governments, civil society and multilateral organizations from across the region. This group featured local actors from Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania, including some 20 governors, mayors, deputy mayors and other city officials.

It was an opportunity to learn about SCN's new Regional Hub and for local government stakeholders in the region, in particular, to share their perspectives on how they hope to work with and benefit from the network going forward. Additionally, it provided a forum for local leaders and practitioners and other relevant preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) actors from across the region and across sectors to discuss how to elevate the role of local authorities in P/CVE and prevention more broadly and explore potential solutions to common challenges cites and other local governments face in addressing violent extremism and related threats in a neutral and facilitated environment – something that many participants noted SCN was uniquely able to provide. Finally, the workshop allowed local leaders and practitioners from counties in Kenya to share their experiences and lessons learned in developing and implementing local multi-actor prevention plans and programmes, such as the US Department of State's PROACT initiative.

Key Recommendations

During the discussions, participants recommended a number of priorities for the Hub to pursue over next 12-18 months. This includes:

1. Helping mayors and other local government officials more fully understand their role in P/CVE and prevention more broadly. This includes:

---

[1] 1 This meeting summary was prepared by the SCN Management Unit; the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the workshop participants, meeting sponsors (the EU or the US Department of State), the SCN or SCN members or partners.

a. Facilitating the development of a model local framework (whether law, policy or regulation) that provides the local government with a clear P/CVE mandate, highlighting examples of what could be included in such a mandate;

b. Exploring how local governments can mainstream P/CVE into existing city-level structures/programmes and leverage existing and/or mobilise new resources to support these efforts;

c. Highlighting good practices for how local governments can build trust with local communities and reduce inter-communal or tribal tensions; and

d. Enhancing the skills of local government practitioners to design and implement successful prevention programmes.

2. Facilitating the sharing of lessons learned among cities and other local authorities across the region on the different ways they can develop new or draw on existing local networks that tap into the range of local services. These networks could be leveraged to identify those "at risk" of radicalising to violence and address their needs before they cause harm. More broadly, this exchange could help them leverage existing local structures to promote multi-stakeholder programmes to prevent extremism, hate and polarisation.

3. Identifying and disseminating models and methods – including tailored social media strategies – through which local governments can connect and engage with youth. This includes facilitating the development of local youth policy that integrates P/CVE, and promoting regional peer learning on how local governments can integrate P/CVE issues into existing youth engagements (including those related to economic and employment opportunities, sports or culture) with young people.

4. Running country-focused national-local cooperation dialogues that include national and local government and civil society stakeholders aimed at building trust and identifying and overcoming the barriers to NLC that can impede the meaningful involvement of local authorities in preventing extremism, hate and polarisation.

5. Convening remote towns or villages that share a common-border to explore ways to strengthen local-local cooperation around shared cross-border threats and develop common strategies for advocating for support from their respective central governments in addressing these threats.

6. Collaborating with relevant regional and sub-regional bodies, including the AU, IGAD and SADC, to ensure future discussions in those forum around violent extremism and P/CVE include the perspectives from local leaders and local government officials.

Opening Session

SCN Executive Director Eric Rosand underscored the important, but often overlooked, role that mayors and local authorities in ESA and Africa more broadly have to play in preventing what is an increasingly localised and complex threat environment across the continent. This includes preventing violent extremism and related insecurities from taking root or expanding in their communities. He shared how too few local governments understand the full range of contributions they can make to addressing these challenges and they often lack the mandate, expertise and capacities to leverage their prevention potential. He spoke of how the SCN was eager to work with local leaders and governments in the region to enable them to realise this potential. He added that with the ESA Regional Hub in place, SCN will be able to engage more consistently with more counties, provinces, border towns and urban centres on a regular basis going forward. He emphasised that a key objective of the workshop was to gather input from regional stakeholders on the Hub's initial priorities.

Katrin Hagemann, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation in Kenya, noted how the discourse around violent extremism should not be framed around security and how the EU-funded STRIVE Cities initiative, of which the ESA Hub is a part, aims to foster cohesion between different stakeholders
working to address violent extremism, including by establishing a trustful relationship between communities and local government.

A representative from Kenya's National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) spoke about how although terrorism remains a threat, Africa is also facing a number of other challenges from migration to climate change to urbanization to COVID-19. He shared how this is contributing to some "exhaustion" in the fight against violent extremism.

Cities and communities are both particularly vulnerable to extremist violence but well-placed to contribute to preventing its spread, he said. He emphasised the importance of spotlighting cities in prevention and how they can and must become a bulwark against violent extremism. Kenya, he said, remains a strong supporter of SCN, particularly given its focus on getting and keeping local governments engaged in P/CVE efforts.

A member of Mandera County's Executive Committee, noting that this county has suffered most of the terror attacks in Kenya, said that effective local P/CVE and related prevention frameworks hinge on building the capacity of local governments and effective collaboration between local governments and their national counterparts, as well as with civil society.

Overview of SCN's Africa Mapping Report's Key Findings and Recommendations – what's most relevant to East and Southern Africa?

SCN Executive Director, Eric Rosand, opened the event with an overview of key findings and recommendations from the recently published SCN report *Addressing the Overlooked Role of African Cities in Preventing & Countering Violent Extremism*. The findings shared included: 1) local authorities across Africa are well-placed to recognise and respond to hyper-localised drivers that extremist groups often exploit; 2) remote and border towns are particularly vulnerable and are often overlooked by central governments; 3) local authorities want to leverage their comparative advantages in prevention but often lack the understanding, mandate, capacities and resources to do so; 4) overly centralised and securitised P/CVE efforts often stand in the way of more local government involvement; 5) there

is a disconnect between regional and national-level P/CVE policymaking and local P/CVE action; 6) missing or limited national-local cooperation prevents city-level involvement in P/CVE and wider prevention efforts; and 7) while there is a multitude of multilateral prevention actors in Africa, examples of coordination among them and engagement with local governments are few and far between.

Among the report's recommendations highlighted included the need to: 1) promote locally-led, integrated responses to an interconnected threat; 2) encourage local leaders to develop and communicate an inclusive local identity; 3) prioritise consultative national prevention frameworks; 4) ensure local governments have mandate, capacities, expertise and resources to fully tap into their potential for prevention; 5) build trust between local governments and the communities they serve; and 6) overcome the coordination, cooperation and trust-related barriers to P/CVE-related national-local cooperation.

Speakers from Mozambique, Rwanda and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) highlighted the report's relevance to their different local contexts. The NGO representative from Mozambique encouraged local governments and local communities across the region to implement the recommendations. Echoing some of the report's findings, she said that the key drivers of extremist violence and conflict need to be appropriately identified and addressed on a community level in order to decrease the violence country-wide. As reflected in the mapping report, this is essential in order for local authorities to tap into their prevention potential. She also pointed to the SCN report's findings related to the importance of trust-building between local authorities and local communities, emphasising that a shared understanding of the local drivers and most appropriate solutions would allow for a closer collaboration between key stakeholders.

The city official from Kigali said that Africans need "to stop being influenced by history and attacking and blaming our past… and bring back unity and resilience." He stressed the importance of dialogue, sharing that local authorities would go into the communities each week and have discussions and debate around their daily lives. He explained how community outreach, including to the most marginalised parts, allowed Kigali (and other cities in Rwanda) to cultivate a culture of peace and resilience.

He also agreed that national and local governments would not be able to address drivers of instability in communities without first conducting in-depth consultations to understand what those key drivers are, emphasising that communities themselves have a role to play here. Where there is cohesion and shared identity among different communities, it becomes easier for government authorities to consult with and involve them in the development and implementation of prevention-related policies and programmes.

The representative from IGAD's Centre of Excellence on P/CVE underscored the important role it plays, for example through its digital hub, in convening and facilitating collaboration among different stakeholders, including civil society, around the P/CVE agenda and its commitment to partnering with the ESA Regional Hub going forward. It is important that municipalities work with civil society and young people and empower them to implement context-specific solutions and interventions. She also pointed out the need to develop safe spaces for people to report concerning behaviours, ensure the research and responses take into account the evolving nature of the threats and give local governments the tools to help counter and prevent the spread of on-line mis- and disinformation.

County Local P/CVE Plans, Platforms and Programmes in Kenya: a Model for Local Multistakeholder Action for the Region

Stakeholders from three Kenyan counties – Isiolo, Kwale and Nakuru – shared successes and lessons learned in developing and implementing community-based, evidence-driven, multi-stakeholder, local prevention frameworks, teams and interventions. This work, developed and implemented in partnership with local CSOs and in cooperation with the NCTC and local government, has helped build cohesion between stakeholders, promoted a better understanding of violent extremist vulnerabilities in the community, and raised awareness of the existing resources and programmes that could be leveraged to address not just violent extremism but a wider set of community concerns. It was also noted how sustainability of these teams can be facilitated by integrating them into existing county-level violence prevention structures rather than developing separate – and parallel – infrastructure.

County stakeholders shared how the teams have benefited from tailored training on a range of issues related to understanding and addressing the vulnerabilities to radicalisation to violence. These have included modules focus on, e.g., active listening, parenting, substance abuse and gender-based violence. Equipped with this expertise, the teams have been able to enter local communities to raise awareness about violent extremist behavioural indicators and the resources available to support at-risk individuals. This is turn has empowered community members to refer individuals to the team who need such support.

Discussions also focused on the County Engagement Forums (CEF) that have emerged in different Kenyan counties, which have provided a platform for multi-stakeholder conversations around violent extremism and P/CVE, where security actors, national, county, CSOs, religious, and private sector actors meet regularly. It was emphasised how these platforms, which allow for "everyone's voices to be heard," have contributed to strengthening trust among key stakeholders, whose cooperation is critical for P/CVE efforts to be effective. CEFs have since become part of the P/CVE framework in Kenya, connected to the County P/CVE Action Plans.

Participants from Kwale County highlighted some of the impact of its multistakeholder P/CVE efforts, which started with the elaboration of its first action plan in 2016. At the time, community members were concerned about disappearances of young people whom the security services were targeting for being involved with al-Shabaab; trust between community members and law enforcement was lacking and there was a reluctance from such members to cooperate with security actors and no place to share their concerns regarding the human rights abuses they felt those actors were committing in the name of counter-terrorism. The elaboration of a country-level context-specific P/CVE framework, the development and capacitating of the community team and the formation of the CEF have all contributed to rising levels of trust and dialogue.

Participants encouraged SCN to facilitate more learnings and sharing among cities in the ESA region, including around how to leverage existing local structures to promote multi-stakeholder programmes to prevent extremism, hate and polarisation. This recognises that there are other existing approaches at the local level in countries like Tanzania and Uganda, which, although not connected to P/CVE specifically, could also be relevant models for cities across the region interested in contributing to P/CVE efforts in their communities.

Synergies with Existing Multilateral Architecture in the ESA Region

With a plethora of multilateral and other P/CVE initiatives in the region, participants emphasised the importance of ensuring that the ESA Regional Hub works synergistically with relevant United Nations (UN) bodies, the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), whose P/CVE interactions are primarily with national governments and civil society.

A representative from UNDP's regional office in Nairobi shared some of the recommendations from UNDP's recently-completed evaluation its PVE work across 42 countries, including 24 in Africa. These include: 1) to continue PVE research in partnerships with community-based actors to inform a context-based approach in addressing the diversity of violent extremism across Africa and beyond; 2) multi-level engagement is required to address cross-border VE challenges and the connections among local, national and sub-regional PVE programming need strengthening; and 3) PVE support to sub- regional CSOs and networks should be upscaled, with a focus on sustainability.

She also noted UNDP's continued work in supporting the enabling policy environment and institutional capacity-building for PVE work and research on violent extremism and what works to prevent it. In terms of the research, she pointed to a number of new or forthcoming UNDP products. This includes the new edition of "Journeys to Extremism in Africa", which will explore how things have changed since 2017 and focus particular attention on youth, why people in Africa have disengaged from violent extremism and how to measure the impact of PVE efforts. With respect to assessing impact, she pointed to a number of UNDP tools on the design and evaluation of PVE programmes that local governments should take advantage of.

The representative from UN Habitat briefed participants on its Safer Cities Programme – which works with 90 cities around the world – and the New Urban Agenda. He explained how these efforts include a focus on supporting the efforts of cities to implement national crime prevention and other public safety frameworks at a local level. The prevention pillars in this context are: 1) social prevention, which included youth empowerment and providing young people with recreational opportunities; 2) preventative law enforcement, which include targeted, visible police patrols, conflict resolution and improved community-police relations; and 3) urban design. He noted how the Safer Cities Programme supports the development of city "Safety Labs" to allow municipalities to pilot innovative, evidence-based approaches to public safety.

It was underscored how Safer Cities' focus on multi-stakeholder, institutional, social and situational prevention at a city level, including through its New Urban Agenda, complements and reinforces SCN's approach. Although the former focuses on public safety and SCN on extremism, hate and polarisation, participants recognised how these two approaches could be integrated into a single city framework and programme.

Representatives of UN Habitat and UNDP committed to collaborate with the ESA Regional Hub, particularly given their shared focus on strengthening local governance. Cities across the region were encouraged to take advantage of UNDP's investments in context-specific research, data-based interventions and P/CVE programme design and monitoring and implementation tools. Participants highlighted SCN's ability to engage directly with mayors and local governments on the P/CVE agenda as complementing UNDP's more formal approach, which is through national governments and

national development plans.

The [East African Local Governments Association](#) (EALGA) Secretary-General advocated for working with existing networks and partners, including national city networks, to reach and maximise impacts on prevention for cities across the region. This would include leveraging city policies, agendas, structures and resources whenever possible and ensuring commitment of both local leaders (to help ensure the necessary political leadership) and local government civil servants (to help ensure continuity and sustainability of policies and programmes). [Note: EALGA will be partnering with SCN to lead the ESA Hub.]

Identify

SCN Executive Director explained SCN's new strategy. This includes its shift to a regional hub model that will involve standing up hubs in a number of regions, including ESA, to allow for more tailored, contextualized and sustained engagement with more cities on P/CVE and related issues. He noted the size, structure and focus of each hub will vary by region, scoped in consultation with relevant local leaders and local authorities. However, each hub will have five broad focus areas, with the specific activities under each to be based on the needs and priorities of cities in the particular region. These areas are: 1) convening local leaders or authorities to facilitate peer-to-peer or city-to city learning; 2) capacity-building; for local leaders or local government officials, including on engagement with youth, multi-actor prevention and other topics based on local needs; 3) promoting and strengthening national-local and local-local cooperation on prevention; 4) connecting local authorities across the relevant region with the global prevention architecture, elevating the voices of mayors and other local leaders and ensuring cities from the region can inform global decision-making on prevention; and 5) local authority-youth engagement.

During a series of breakout sessions, participants exchanged views on what the ESA Hub's priorities should be across each of its five pillars, emphasising the importance of partnerships and cooperation with existing city networks and relevant multilateral activities in the region.

Pillar 1 **Peer-to-Peer/City-to-City Learning:**
Among the priorities highlighted were to enable mayors to learn from each other on prevention, and city officials to exchange on local prevention models, structures, strategies and programmes, including for engaging with vulnerable youth and measuring impact. Additionally, exchanges could focus attention on the different ways to leverage existing or mobilise new resources for local prevention efforts, how to involve the private sector and religious and cultural organisations and how local governments can understand the local drivers of extremist violence within their communities. This could be done within a particular country, region-wide, have a cross-border dimension involving a handful of towns that share a common border, or through city-pairings.

Participants shared how there are a number of existing forums in the region that convene mayors or other local leaders to share experiences and that the Hub could support these efforts, including by ensuring these sharing opportunities are informed by international and other good practices on P/CVE and facilitating the sharing between countries across ESA.

Pillar 2 **Capacity-Building**:

Participants emphasised the importance of identifying and prioritising the specific needs of the local government and the communities it serves. These will vary depending on size, location, nature of the threat and local context more broadly. It was suggested that among the ESA Regional Hub's top priorities should be to help mayors and local government employees understand more fully their role in P/CVE. Among other things, this might involve the Hub 1) facilitating the development of a model local framework (whether law, policy or regulation) that provides the local government with a clear P/CVE mandate; 2) exploring how local governments can mainstream P/CVE into existing city-level structures/programmes and leverage existing and/or mobilise new resources to support these efforts; 3) highlighting good practices for how local governments can build trust with local communities and reduce inter-communal or tribal tensions; and 4) enhancing the skills of local government practitioners to design and implement successful prevention programmes.

Discussions emphasised the need to develop standardised training for local government employees to help ensure that changes in personnel do not affect the continuity of prevention efforts. This will also help ensure that P/CVE policies and programmes can withstand the changes in local political leadership. Such P/CVE training needs to be tailored to each local environment. Participants shared how local government officials from across different sectors need a shared terminology in order to minimize confusion and facilitation collaboration around P/CVE issues. It was noted how the Hub could facilitate the elaboration of this, drawing on good practices and lessons learned from other contexts.

Participants highlighted how capacity-building activities should draw on the expertise of local officials from across the SCN membership, rely on youth for hyper-local awareness raising efforts and include a "train-the-trainer" component in order to help ensure that sustainability of any such activities.

Pillar 3 **National-Local, Local-Local and Multi-Actor Cooperation:**

Participants agreed that inter-agency cooperation at national and local government levels is the only way to prevent extremism. In addition, given the dynamic nature of the online and offline threat landscape, no local government should consider itself immune from the threat. This underscores the importance of local-local cooperation, whether between cities, rural villages and urban centres, within a country, or across borders. Participants encouraged the Hub to focus attention on strengthening national-local cooperation in countries in the region as such cooperation is not only needed to enable the cascading down of national P/CVE frameworks, but for pushing up local government perspectives and priorities when it comes to P/CVE to the central government.

Moreover, participants stressed the importance of focusing attention on the role that cities can play in bridging inter-communal, inter-ethnic, community-law enforcement or other divides which can lead to violence if not addressed. Further, discussions highlighted how the Hub, drawing on different existing local violence prevention and community watch models in the region, could focus attention on the different ways in which cities across ESA could develop new or draw on existing networks that tap into the range of local services that could be leveraged to identify those "at risk" of radicalising to violence and to address their needs before they cause harm.

Pillar 4: **Elevating Local Voices**

Rather than waiting for the national government to reach out, participants stressed how local actors need to be pushing up their perspectives on both the nature of the violent extremist threat and how best to prevent and counter it to the national level and that existing national associations of cities or other relevant networks within each country in the region should be leveraged for this purpose. The Hub, it was suggested, could encourage local leaders to proactively use these structures for P/CVE purposes and national government officials to create more opportunities for the voices of local leaders to be heard when considering P/CVE policies and programmes.

More broadly, there was broad agreement that the voices of local leaders and the perspectives of local government officials need to be better reflected in regional and global conversations about violent extremism and violence and conflict more broadly, given the localised nature of their impact. It was suggested that the ESA Regional Hub should work with the AU, SADC, IGAD and other relevant inter-governmental bodies in the region to ensure that relevant local governments are at the table when those bodies are discussing violent extremism and how best to prevent and counter. Participants also recommended that the Hub work with cities in the region to ensure that local dialogue platforms that can help bring different parts of a city together and reduce political, economic, social and communal tension are inclusive, with youth, women and other often underrepresented groups at the table.

Participants also discussed how the Hub could improve existing communications networks for local government practitioners and other local stakeholders to facilitate the sharing of information about threats and drivers of violence, as well as good practice and lesson learned. A number of participants pointed to 'barazas' (Swahili word for both formal and informal meetings) as an example of a forum that brings people to discuss different topics. These meetings often take place around cultural and sporting activities to build cohesion and a shared identity.

Pillar 5 **Youth-Local Government Engagement:**

Participants discussed how the Hub can cataylse meaningful engagement between local governments and young people to ensure the latter's voices are heard in local policymaking debates and to strengthen trust and collaboration on P/CVE and prevention more broadly. There was recognition that feelings of exclusion and marginalisation among young people can exacerbate grievances that can lead to violence; that youth want to be involved as partners with impact, not framed as a partner without any real engagement or as the problem. Youth need seats at the table (e.g., when local policies that will affect them are being considered) and it is not sufficient for youth to be included but not allowed to speak as is the case with some local councils in the region. Local governments should provide them the safe space to share openly their concerns without fear of retaliation and with opportunities to connect with P/CVE stakeholders. Local governments need to allow young people to be actively engaged in designing youth programs and interventions and to enable cooperation between local agencies that focus on youth and those that engage in violence or crime prevention.

Participants also noted opportunities for the Hub to identify and disseminate models and methods – including tailored social media strategies, through which local governments can connect and engage with youth. The Hub can help local governments identify and train mentors who can serve as role models and leaders for young people - who they turn to for ideas and guidance.

Other recommendations included facilitating both the development of a model local youth policy that integrates P/CVE and regional peer learning on how local governments can integrate P/CVE issues into existing engagements (included those related to economic and employment opportunities, sports or culture) with young people. Participants also encouraged the Hub to map and identify different ways in which cities are engaging with youth-led organisations across region and to facilitate sharing of models such as SCN's Young Cities, and which integrate arts, sports, mentorship and critical thinking programmes, misinformation and disinformation campaigns, and local resource hubs. They also suggested opportunities to raise awareness with local governments about how climate change is affecting the economic and employment opportunities of young people in their communities and thus contributing to rising levels of extremism among youth in some contexts.