



East and Southern Africa Regional Hub Strategic Engagements

Nairobi, Kenya
21 – 23 March, 2023



Summary

On 21 – 23 March 2023, as part of its ongoing outreach to local governments and other key stakeholders in East and Southern Africa (ESA), the Strong Cities ESA Regional Hub met with representatives from a range of national and local government institutions in Kenya. These included the Office of the Deputy President, State Department for Devolution, the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), the County Assemblies Forum (CAF) and the Council of Governors (COG). The latter two bring together the executive and legislative wings of the 47 county governments in the country.

The meetings built on the Regional Hub's [inaugural regional workshop](#) (October 2022) and [Strong Cities](#) engagement with Kenyan county governments and national agencies since 2017. They were aimed at introducing the Regional Hub and its pillars - to an expanded set of stakeholders in the country and soliciting their inputs on hub priorities for Kenya and the wider region.

In addition, the Regional Hub hosted a roundtable for county government representatives from Isiolo, Kakamega, Kwale, Mombasa and Nakuru to better understand the key challenges country



level stakeholders face, as well as approaches they take to addressing extremism and polarisation.

The Regional Hub team highlighted the regional priorities and recommendations identified during the October 2022 launch in Nairobi, and how the Hub hopes to catalyse enhanced Strong Cities engagement with mayors and local governments across the ESA region and inclusion of local government on a more consistent basis in the prevention agenda.

Key priorities for the ESA Regional Hub

- Supporting local government officials, especially mayors, to better understand their role in prevention;
- Sharing local lessons learned to help identify new and existing resources, networks and services locally;
- Identifying and disseminating models and approaches for engaging youth;
- Facilitating country-focused National-Local Cooperation dialogues;
- Developing cross border collaboration between remote towns and villages;
- Expanding collaboration with regional and sub-national partners.

A representative of the EU delegation in Nairobi underscored the EU's support for Strong Cities as the implementer of its new, three-year [STRIVE Cities Initiative](#), an EU-sponsored preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) global programme. He noted that violent extremism was one of the most significant global problems faced today and a common challenge for governments and civil society all over the world that undermined international peace and security, which is why the EU was proud to finance the ESA Regional Hub with the aim to engage more consistently with local authorities across the region. He underscored the growing relevance of cities in P/CVE, including as first responders and service providers to their residents and communities.

Representatives from Isiolo and Kwale counties shared successes and lessons learned in developing and implementing community-based, evidence-driven, multi-stakeholder, local prevention frameworks, teams and interventions. They shared how this work, developed and implemented in partnership with local civil society organisations (CSOs) and in cooperation with the NCTC and country governments, 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.



Key takeaways from the Hub's engagements

- Young people need to be included in decision making when it comes to policies that will affect them, as well as in the design of programmes that are intended to benefit them;
- County governments need to do more to raise awareness of the existence and prioritise implementation of County Action Plans (CAPs) among relevant stakeholders;
- More attention should be given to ensuring the sustainability of county-led P/CVE efforts. Currently, county governments lack the necessary resources and knowledge to implement the CAPs. Moreover, in part because P/CVE is not enshrined in a county-level legal framework (i.e., not mandated by county law), there no dedicated budget line for P/CVE work in county budgets;
- County governments should explore a range of ways to help sustain CAP implementation, including by leveraging existing (non-P/CVE) resources such as those linked to implementation of County Development Plans, and engaging the private sector more proactively.

Meeting With the Urban Committee of the Council of Governors

During the Hub's meeting with the Urban Committee of the Council of Governors the Governors pledged to support the work of Strong Cities in Kenya and the wider region, expressed interest in membership and encouraged the Regional Hub to do more to sensitise Governors (and not just county practitioners) to Strong Cities in order to help ensure the political-level buy-in for its priorities.

Recommendations from this meeting

- Build county-level prevention capacities so counties can adopt more proactive approaches to address the violent extremist threat;
- Support community engagement programs to promote social cohesion;
- Enhance coordination and collaboration among countries, including by more regular sharing of good practices, and between national and county governments, including through joint planning, budgeting and resourcing on P/CVE initiatives;

Throughout the engagements, the Strong Cities team underscored how this was first step in engaging local governments and other key stakeholders in Kenya through the Regional Hub and that the consultations will continue in the coming months to further incorporate Kenya-specific priorities in its work. Ms. Gertrude Rose Gamwera, the Head of the Regional Hub, urged county



representatives to take full advantage of the resources, programmes and exchanges the Hub will provide and/or facilitate, including through its Technical Support Fund and working groups.

Next Steps

Among the agreed next steps for the Regional Hub in Kenya include deepening and expanding engagement with Governors so they can better understand their comparative advantages in prevention, the counties' prevention mandate and the importance of working with the county assemblies to catalyse it. In addition, there was consensus on the need for the Regional Hub to focus particular attention on newly elected Governors of counties which are already members of Strong Cities in order to ensure the continuation and sustainability of the prevention efforts initiated by their predecessors.