



Why Do Cities Matter? 10 Steps That Cities Can Take to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism



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Whether urban or rural, cities and other local authorities from Mumbai to Mogadishu, New York to Nice, and Paris to Pittsburgh have typically borne the brunt of violent extremist attacks. They are often the first to respond and, in the long-term, suffer from the fallout of intercommunal tensions, collective trauma of affected communities and economic slowdowns. These can last for years and spread beyond the target city. They are often the unit of government closest to local populations. They are therefore uniquely positioned to contribute to “whole of society” efforts to identify, understand and facilitate the prevention of violent extremism in their communities, contributions which should increasingly be recognized in national, regional, and global conversations about how best to address the threat in an effective and sustainable way that is sensitive to the needs and concerns of local communities.

The vital role cities can play in preventing and countering violent extremism can be harnessed in the following 10 steps:

Identify and Understand

1. Conduct a comprehensive local risk and needs assessment to identify, understand and categorise risks related to violent extremism risk on and offline; these include issues of inter-community tension, hatred and polarisation and the grievances that might make citizens vulnerable to recruitment to extremist violence.
2. Listen to local constituencies and develop a shared understanding of the nature of the violent extremist threat and most appropriate locally-led approaches for addressing it.
3. Build trust between communities and local police and engage and coordinate with civil society, community leaders, teachers and other educators around issues of violent extremism and how best to address the threat.



4. Create inclusive open spaces with universal access to reduce segregation, polarisation, and perceptions of isolation and nonbelonging, building social capital and contact amongst all citizens, which can help mitigate the social consequences across communities caused by extremist violence.

Design and Build

5. Map local stakeholders to identify the frameworks, partnerships, resources and capacities that can be leveraged for P/CVE. This can include services related to housing, education, vocational training, social welfare, recreation, religion and culture, which are brought together as part a comprehensive P/CVE effort that avoids the securitization of these services and ensures that trust between local providers and communities is strengthened and not undermined.
6. Develop a local P/CVE framework or integrate P/CVE into an existing public health or safety one, *e.g.*, focusing on violence more broadly, safeguarding social well-being, outlining a clear P/CVE mandate at the local level.

Coordinate and Engage

7. Develop and implement P/CVE programs that respect the “Do No Harm” principle and offer positive alternatives to alienated youth and other groups who might otherwise be attracted to extremist and other forms of violence, both online and offline; this could include community-focused and other early prevention and resilience-building activities and evidence-based, non-discriminatory multidisciplinary support and intervention programs that involve local practitioners and focus on “at risk” individuals.
8. Manage and coordinate access to P/CVE and related-resources such as local grants and support other local partnership initiatives such as with the private sector and CSOs; this might involve establishing a local public-private fund that could be used to address a range of issues of concern to the relevant local community, which could bring greater coherence to often siloed locally-led initiatives, and closer alignment between such initiatives and a national P/CVE framework.

Connect and Share

9. Gather local P/CVE and related good practices, information and experiences and seek to ensure they inform local, national, regional and international P/CVE planning and frameworks.
10. Build working relationships beyond local government jurisdictions to help coordinate information sharing and P/CVE efforts across large urban areas, regions, and where necessary, borders.