ELEVATING THE ROLE OF AFRICAN CITIES IN PREVENTING EXTREMISM AND HATE: MAPPING CITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

A Strong Cities Workshop
10 – 12 May 2022
Sankara Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 10 to 12 May 2022, the Strong Cities Network (SCN) convened over 65 mayors and other local leaders, civil society representatives and senior officials from national governments and multilateral bodies in East and Southern Africa for an exchange of perspectives on how best to support city and other local authority-led efforts for preventing extremist- and hate-motivated violence and polarisation.[*] The multi-stakeholder gathering included officials and experts from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as the African Union, IGAD, UNOCT, UNDP, UN Habitat, UNOPS, other city networks including the East Africa Local Government Association and the Global Parliament of Mayors, and the British, Danish, Dutch and US embassies in Nairobi. The EU-funded workshop is part of a larger EU-supported initiative to map city-level prevention-related needs and priorities across Africa.

Topics included the threat landscape of hate and extremism in the region, as seen from the perspective of cities and other local actors; the comparative advantages of cities and other local authorities in prevention, and policies and infrastructure needed to leverage them; the challenges cities in the region face in terms of tapping into their potential for prevention, and how international, regional and sub-regional bodies and networks can support cities with overcoming them. From Blantyre to Cabo Delgado to Cape Town to Dar es Salaam to Djibouti City to Kampala to Mombasa to Nebbi to Tshwane, to Mogadishu and Kismayo, the workshop benefitted from a range of diverse perspectives on the threat landscape and the strengths and limitations of existing approaches to preventing and countering the threat.

Below are key takeaways and proposed next steps based on these discussions, which were conducted under the Chatham House Rule. A more detailed overview of each takeaway and next step can be found in the next two sections of this document.

The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent those who participated in the workshop nor those of the EU or the SCN (including its members and its Management Unit).

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[*] During the workshop, participants discussed the relevance of a range of sub-national authorities in the prevention space: this included capital cities, remote villages, small towns and county and other regional governments. This summary – and SCN more broadly – uses the term "cities" to capture all of these variations.

***Key Takeaways*:**

1. The extremism threat landscape in East and Southern Africa is compounded by significant challenges with (youth) drug abuse, illicit narcotics trade, gang violence, raiding, gender-based violence and other forms of social disorder.
2. Border communities and rural villages are overlooked in prevention efforts and generally under-resourced and under-equipped to provide sufficient public services.
3. Local authorities are vital <u>yet overlooked</u> actors in the prevention of hate- and extremist-motivated violence and polarisation in East and Southern Africa.
4. Despite recognition of the vital role of local authorities in prevention, the mandate for preventing extremism and other forms of hate-based violence still lies largely with central governments.
5. Significant obstacles to national-local cooperation (NLC) on prevention in the region include a lack of agreement between national and local authorities on the nature of the problem (e.g., security vs. social) and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities for addressing it, as well as the absence of mechanisms and processes to build trust and facilitate cooperation between the different levels of government.
6. Inclusion and trust-building (national-local and local-local) were emphasised as pivotal to successful "whole-of-society" prevention efforts.
7. Overall, NLC, coordination and communication should be strengthened across the region; local authorities should consider proactively coming together to engage the central government to this end.
8. The international donor community and global prevention landscape should prioritise connecting with local authorities on prevention to mitigate against risks of over-reliance on central governments for the funding and other resources these authorities need to fulfil their vital role in prevention.
9. Cities in East and Southern Africa would benefit from more opportunities to share learnings, experiences and speak candidly with each other about challenges with and achievements of prevention in the region.
10. The SCN can serve as an effective third party to help cities in the region recognise and tap into their comparative advantages in preventing polarisation and extremist- and hate-motivated violence.

Next Steps:

1. The SCN will build on the momentum of this workshop by organising one-to-one virtual consultations with interested participants, to deep-dive into the city-level needs and priorities identified during the workshop.
2. The SCN should develop a blueprint for the role of East and Southern African cities in prevention.
3. The SCN should act as a convenor of local authorities on a country-by-country basis, with the objective of enhancing local-local and NLC and building the capacity of cities to develop prevention policy and programming.

4. Through the soon-to-be launched SCN East and Southern Africa Regional Hub, the SCN should make a concerted effort to ensure cities in this region are consistently connected with relevant international bodies on the prevention agenda.
5. The SCN East and Southern Africa Hub should serve as a coordination body between regional/multilateral, national and local approaches to prevention.

Above: More than 65 local leaders, civil society representatives and central government officials convene in Nairobi, Kenya for the SCN workshop on "Elevating the Role of African Cities in Preventing Extremism and Hate".

KEY TAKEAWAYS

This section describes the aforementioned ten key takeaways in greater detail. These are divided into takeaways about 1) the threat landscape and 2) response.

The Threat Landscape

1. **The extremism threat landscape in East and Southern Africa is compounded by significant challenges with (youth) drug abuse, illicit narcotics trade, gang violence, raiding, gender-based violence and other forms of social disorder.**

Participants from multiple cities, including Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Cape Town, commented on the pervasive issue of local criminal gangs, members of which commit crimes ranging from petty theft to looting and murder. Participants noted how these are often an entry point into extremist movements and noted that efforts in the region to prevent hate- and extremist-motivated violence can and should learn from responses to gang and other criminal activity. Participants in turn recommended integrating responses to hate- and extremist-motivated violence within broader community safeguarding efforts, in light of the connections among the different forms of criminality and other anti-social behaviour in the region. **Indeed, city officials and civil society representatives from across the region noted that local authorities should always strive to leverage *existing* public services, resources and programmes in their response to the rising levels of hate and extremism they are facing.**

The value of nesting efforts to address these challenges in broader community safeguarding and public service was further underscored by context-specific challenges identified during the workshop. Many participants commented, for example, that local conflicts over agricultural and other land resources, which are being exacerbated by climate change, economic grievances and inter-tribal disputes are also sources of community polarisation and can serve to aggravate the threat of hate-based and extremist violence. **Existing public service provision that addresses socioeconomic and other basic needs can therefore also be leveraged in efforts to prevent violence motivated by hate and extremism**.

2. **Border communities and rural villages are overlooked in prevention efforts and generally under-resourced and under-equipped to provide sufficient public services.**

East and Southern African countries face the added difficulty of porous borders that extremists and other mal-intended actors exploit to radicalise and recruit others to violence and expand their presence in the region. The challenge of cross-border movement was brought up throughout the workshop, and participants stressed that this is compounded by a lack of resource and support for border villages and communities to respond to the in- and outflow of extremists. A lack of standardised information-sharing also means this flow of extremists is not being reported to the appropriate authorities, and thus often occurs with little to no consequence.

Responding to the Threat

3. **Local authorities are vital <u>yet overlooked</u> actors in the prevention of hate- and extremist-motivated violence and polarisation in East and Southern Africa.**

The workshop revealed that city officials in the region want to become meaningfully involved in prevention and empowered and capacitated to develop and deploy prevention policies and programmes. Participants recognised, for example, that extremists use local grievances as entry-points into new communities, exploiting inter- and intra-communal needs and tensions to recruit. In light of this, they further recognised that cities and other local authorities are best placed to respond given their immediacy to the local populace and their ability to leverage existing public service provision.

> "Cities are closest to the people… they know the problem and where to start and who to involve [to respond]."
>
> *- Civil Society Representative*

The role of local authorities in developing a **"local identity"** was highlighted, with participants noting how this can help build resilience by making citizens feel connected to one another and foster trust in local government institutions. This can be achieved through communications' campaigns that present an **inclusive** local identity that embraces all ethnicities and tribes within a particular city. Some participants noted this is particularly important in the context of East and Southern Africa, where strong senses of ethnic and tribal identity have, at times, escalated to inter-tribal tension and violence. Developing an inclusive local identity can also help municipal authorities mobilise different local actors in their prevention efforts – as part of a "whole-of-society" approach to safeguard communities – ultimately building a unified, local front against extremism.

4. **Despite recognition of the vital role of local authorities in prevention, the mandate for preventing extremism and other forms of hate-based violence still lies largely with central governments.**

Participants identified a lack of mandate at the local government level as one of the most significant barriers to local involvement in prevention. While in certain contexts (e.g., Kenya) the central government has devolved responsibility for non-law enforcement-related prevention to county governments, this remains the exception in the region. Even in Kenya, participants noted, there is additional work to do given only eight out of 47 counties have a localised action plan against violent extremism in place and few of the eight have the necessary resources to prioritise its implementation.

Further, participants noted that in the rare instance where a mandate has been given to local governments, this is often done without consulting local actors and/or then providing local authorities the resources and training often needed to allow them to fulfil that mandate. Participants agreed that the development of national prevention strategies must be informed by consultations with local actors, including local authorities, practitioners and under-represented demographics like women and youth. Funding and other resources must then

also be made available to local authorities to enable them to fulfil the role outlined for them in the national framework. A **consultative process** and a mutual, open line of communication between local actors and the central government were perceived as vital to effectively implement national strategies for prevention. Further, such a process should remain in place even after a national strategy has launched, to ensure local authorities and other local actors can provide feedback on how they are progressing in terms of implementing their mandate, and how the central government can support them in doing so.

> "We are appreciative of the SCN convening representatives of national and local authorities from my country to discuss these important issues; this is the first time we have been in the same room with representatives of national government ministries to exchange views on preventing extremist violence in our country."
>
> — *Senior Representative from Local Government*

Some participants argued that a similar **consultative process is needed in regional and other multilateral approaches to prevention** – while there are a lot of multilateral institutions active in the region specifically on the topic of preventing violent extremism (including UNDP, UNOCT, UNODC, the AU, IGAD, and the East Africa Community), these institutions rarely engage local authorities. Moreover, it was pointed out how there is limited coordination among them, leading to duplication and, in some cases, confusion.

> "Local policies and priorities rather than global frameworks need to define national policies in the region."
>
> - *Participant*

In addition, participants reported that national governments in the region are more likely to base their strategies and action plans on prevention frameworks and recommendations developed by the UN or regional bodies in Africa, rather than on local needs and perspectives on the threat and response.

5. **Significant obstacles to national-local cooperation (NLC) on prevention in the region include a lack of agreement between national and local authorities on the nature of the problem (e.g., security vs. social) and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities for addressing it, as well as the absence of mechanisms and processes to build trust and facilitate cooperation between the different levels of government.**

During a discussion surrounding the implementation of the Global Counterterrorism Forum's (GCTF) good practices for strengthening NLC for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in the region, participants remarked that P/CVE is still largely conflated with counter-terrorism, and therefore considered the responsibility of national security agencies. Participants expressed concern that it will be challenging to get local authorities more involved so long as national framing of prevention remains overly securitised. This is corroborated by initial findings of a mapping exercise that RUSI carried out on the strengths and weaknesses of P/CVE-related NLC in in East and Southern Africa, as part of an SCN initiative to create a toolkit for the implementation of the GCTF good practices. These initial

findings suggest that across the region, there is confusion and contention around whether P/CVE sits with national government and/or with local authorities. Some noted that the SCN and other third parties can help address this by encouraging national and local governments to distinguish between P/CVE and counter-terrorism, demystifying prevention and framing it as part and parcel of existing city-led efforts to safeguard communities, rather than as an explicit security matter. The use of a neutral, third party, it was argued, can also mitigate against risks of politicising P/CVE and counter-terrorism discourses. These risks can become heighted when representatives of different political parties are involved.

Another challenge to local involvement and NLC is a **general lack of coordination (and clear processes for facilitating it) between the local and national level** across the region. According to RUSI's above-mentioned mapping, in some contexts like Sudan and Mozambique there are little to no mechanisms for interaction between national and local government stakeholders. Participants remarked that this lack of coordination is particularly evident with processes like information-sharing, where they noted, for example, that central governments seem reluctant to share relevant data with local authorities and vice versa, and that this can result in scattered and uninformed responses to hate and extremism. Participants shared how practical arrangements – from the format of information-sharing to the channels used – can help standardise this process and ensure nothing falls through the cracks.

Further, participants noted that increasing the understanding of relevant stakeholders at both the national and local levels on (a) what type of information should be shared and to who, and (b) what to do once you receive that information is a key element for enhancing NLC.

6. **Inclusion and trust-building (national-local and local-local) were emphasised as pivotal to successful "whole-of-society" prevention efforts.**

Throughout the discussions, participants stressed the importance of building trust between national and local government actors, as well as between local governments and civil society. Participants reported non-responsiveness by national and local government actors to citizens' concerns as a key obstacle to trust-building, emphasising the need for public office holders to be accessible to the people they serve. In Cape Town, for example, participants commended the provincial government for holding "first Thursdays", where members of the public are invited on the first Thursday of every month to engage directly with public officials, whether to give feedback or simply open a line of communication about specific citizens' needs.

Participants stressed that approaches like this, which foster accountability, transparency and good local governance, can help improve trust in government institutions and strengthen feelings of "local identity", as described in Key Takeaway 3. This also provides public servants with the opportunity to learn about which of their prevention-specific and broader community safeguarding efforts are working versus what needs improvement (e.g., where citizens' needs are being met versus where they aren't), and allows them to adapt policy and programming accordingly.

Inclusion was also highlighted as an essential component of prevention. To enable a truly "whole-of-society" approach to prevention, relevant policy and programming must be inclusive in how it is developed and delivered: as mentioned, national and local frameworks for prevention should be informed by multi-disciplinary local actors and historically under-represented demographics, including women, youth and communities that live on the outskirts of urban areas and/or in rural, semi-isolated localities.

7. **Overall, NLC, coordination and communication should be strengthened across the region; local authorities should consider proactively coming together to engage the central government to this end.**

While recognising that the responsibility for providing a prevention mandate for local authorities lies with central governments, some participants criticised the tendency of local authorities to wait passively for this. Instead, participants suggested local authorities should map and identify existing resources they can leverage for preventing hate and extremism, consulting local civil society and community-based actors in their jurisdiction to this end. They should then convene with other local authorities across their country to identify shared needs and the role they envision playing in preventing hate and extremism. Local authorities should collectively present this vision to their national governments with the aim of securing buy-in and support for realising their role in prevention. Participants encouraged SCN to facilitate these consultations.

Further, participants reflected on the role of civil society, specifically that civil society actors struggle with a lack of communication from local and national governments. This leaves many of them unsure about where they fit in the broader prevention strategy, and denies them the opportunity to inform national and local governments' perspectives of the threat, and to communicate their needs (e.g., financial, resourcing) to be able to respond to the threat. This further underscores the importance of having efficient and sustainable coordination mechanisms between the national and local levels, and of the aforementioned consultations: local authorities should consult with civil society actors in their locality on their needs and perspectives of the threat, and should ensure this consultative process forms part of the development and deployment of localised prevention action plans.

8. **The international donor community and global prevention landscape should prioritise connecting with local authorities on prevention to mitigate against risks of over-reliance on central governments for the funding and other resources these authorities need to fulfil their vital role in prevention.**

While NLC is essential in an effective "whole-of-society" approach to preventing hate, extremism and polarisation, and although a nationally-given mandate for prevention is an important step in enabling local leadership in this space, some participants remarked that local actors should take care not to become over-reliant on central governments in this regard. As such, participants emphasised how cities in East and Southern Africa need to be better connected with the international donor community and global prevention architecture. This may provide some sustainability in terms of resources and funding e.g., in

situations where the shifting political dynamics in a country impacts the political will and mandate to support local authorities. Participants suggested that the SCN is well-placed to connect cities with the global prevention and donor landscape (see Next Step 4).

9. **Cities in East and Southern Africa would benefit from more opportunities to share learnings, experiences and speak candidly with each other about challenges with and achievements of prevention in the region.**

Participants expressed a desire for more opportunities, whether at a national or regional level, to share local learnings, challenges and experiences with fulfilling their potential as leaders in prevention. Importantly, participants remarked on **the need for these opportunities to involve cities and other localities that may not currently have a tangible extremist threat.** Too often, it was noted, the focus is on those contexts where the threat of hate- and extremist-motivated violence has already taken root and security actors are already engaged – often crowding out non-security stakeholders. This also leaves little space to focus on early preventative measures, i.e., ones where the role of local authorities is particularly salient.

10. **The SCN can serve as an effective third party to help cities in the region recognise and tap into their comparative advantages in preventing polarisation and extremist- and hate-motivated violence.**

Throughout the workshop, participants outlined ways in which the SCN can enhance local leadership in and ownership of prevention in the region. For example, they suggested that the SCN could help cities advocate for a prevention mandate from their central government; convene cities within and across countries in the region; and serve as a bridge-builder between regional/multilateral approaches to prevention, national strategies and frameworks, and local application.

What makes a "Strong City"?

Participants were asked to come up with key components of a "strong" East and Southern African city. Among those identified were:

- **good and transparent local governance**;
- a **robust, independent civil society** that is able to support prevention efforts and hold governments to account;
- clear and consistent **communication between actors (national – local and local – local)**, including about the roles of each actor and information-sharing about the threat and response;
- **accessible** and **responsive** public servants that citizens and grassroots organisations can engage with questions and concerns;
- **participatory budgeting**, where citizens inform the priority allocations in the municipal budget;
- **accountability mechanisms**, with participants suggesting civil society should be allowed and encouraged to hold local and national governments to account when e.g. public service provision is inadequate, specific needs are not being fulfilled, or policies have counter-productive impacts at the local level.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the key takeaways of the workshop, this section provides a series of next steps that the SCN and other institutions can take to support cities in East and Southern Africa with realising their full potential as leaders in preventing hate-based and extremist violence.

1. **The SCN will build on the momentum of this workshop by organising one-to-one virtual consultations with interested participants, to deep-dive into the city-level needs and priorities identified during the three-day programme.**

This will inform a [mapping report](#) the SCN Management Unit is developing, which will include a series of recommendations for the SCN's and other institutions' footprint and engagement in the region going forward. Findings of this mapping exercise will also directly inform the scope and scale of activities of the **SCN's East and Southern Africa Regional Hub**, which will launch in the coming months.

2. **The SCN should develop a blueprint for the role of East and Southern African cities in prevention**.

This will outline why and how cities should be involved and serve as both a manual for local authorities in the region to develop prevention policies and programmes, and as a resource that local authorities can take to their central governments to secure support to realise these

policies and programmes. This manual may help address some of the challenges surrounding the overly centralised and securitised conflation of prevention with counter-terrorism and can empower cities with a clear understanding of their essential role in prevention. This blueprint should also account for smaller, more rural towns and villages, as well as cities where extremism is not, as of yet, a tangible threat.

3. **The SCN should act as a convenor of local authorities on a country-by-country basis, with the objective of enhancing local-local coordination and NLC and building the capacity of cities to develop prevention policy and programming.**

By virtue of its global membership and access to the global prevention architecture, the SCN is well placed to build the capacity of local authorities and grassroots actors on prevention, including the local infrastructure that is needed to foster a human-rights oriented, multi-disciplinary approach to prevention, how to engage youth in a meaningful and sustained capacity, monitor and evaluation, among others. SCN should also leverage its 6+ years' experience organising city-city exchanges, regional workshops and global summits, to convene cities and other sub-national authorities on a country-by-country basis, helping them implement the above-mentioned blueprint and supporting them with improving NLC (e.g., through implementing the GCTF good practices for NLC, which the SCN helped develop).

4. **Through the SCN East and Southern Africa Regional Hub, the SCN should make a concerted effort to ensure East and Southern African cities are consistently connected with relevant international bodies.**
Throughout the workshop, it was evident that multilateral institutions have generally neglected East and Southern African cities in developing their global, regional and sub-regional prevention frameworks and programmes. The SCN can serve as a bridge between local action and the multilateral prevention landscapes, elevating the voices of mayors and the perspectives of the cities they lead on the global stage. To do so, the SCN will work with relevant partners in the region to ensure local authorities are invited to, e.g., GCTF working group meetings, relevant UN meetings, including the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly in 2022, where the SCN will present findings of the aforementioned mapping report.

5. **The SCN East and Southern Africa Hub should serve as a coordination body between regional/multilateral, national and local approaches to prevention.**

While Next Step 4 envisions a role for the SCN in amplifying local voices on the global stage, this step envisions a role for the SCN in serving as a coordination mechanism between the regional/multilateral, national and local levels of response. Among others, the SCN East and Southern Africa Regional Hub should regularly convene (e.g., virtually and/or in person) multilateral bodies, national and local governments and civil society in the region with a view to improve communication and collaboration between each party. Further, **the Regional Hub should support cities with translating international good practice and national frameworks and strategies into local action**. This ensures the SCN is supporting a mutual and actionable vertical flow of experience- and practice-exchange, and helps address the reported

disconnect between multilateral, national and local perspectives of the threat and needs for responding.

RESOURCES

➢ [Developing and Implementing Local Action Plans for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in East Africa: A Strong Cities Toolkit with Lessons from Kenya](#) by the SCN
  o Available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Swahili](#)

➢ [East Africa Regional Knowledge Hub](#) by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum

➢ [GCTF Memorandum on Good Practices for Strengthening National – Local Cooperation in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism](#)
  o Available in [Arabic](#), [English](#) and [French](#)

➢ [Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism](#) by the GCTF
  o Available in [Arabic](#), [English](#) and [French](#)

➢ [Multi-Actor P/CVE Interventions Workstream](#) by the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law

➢ [Promoting Democracy and Security in Africa: Don't Forget Cities](#) by Dan Hooton and Eric Rosand

➢ [The Prevention Project: A comprehensive research programme on the effectiveness of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) projects](#) by RUSI

➢ [Why Cities Matter? 10 Steps That Cities Can Take to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism](#) by the SCN

➢ [Why Local Networks are Key to Preventing Extremism and Hate](#) by the SCN