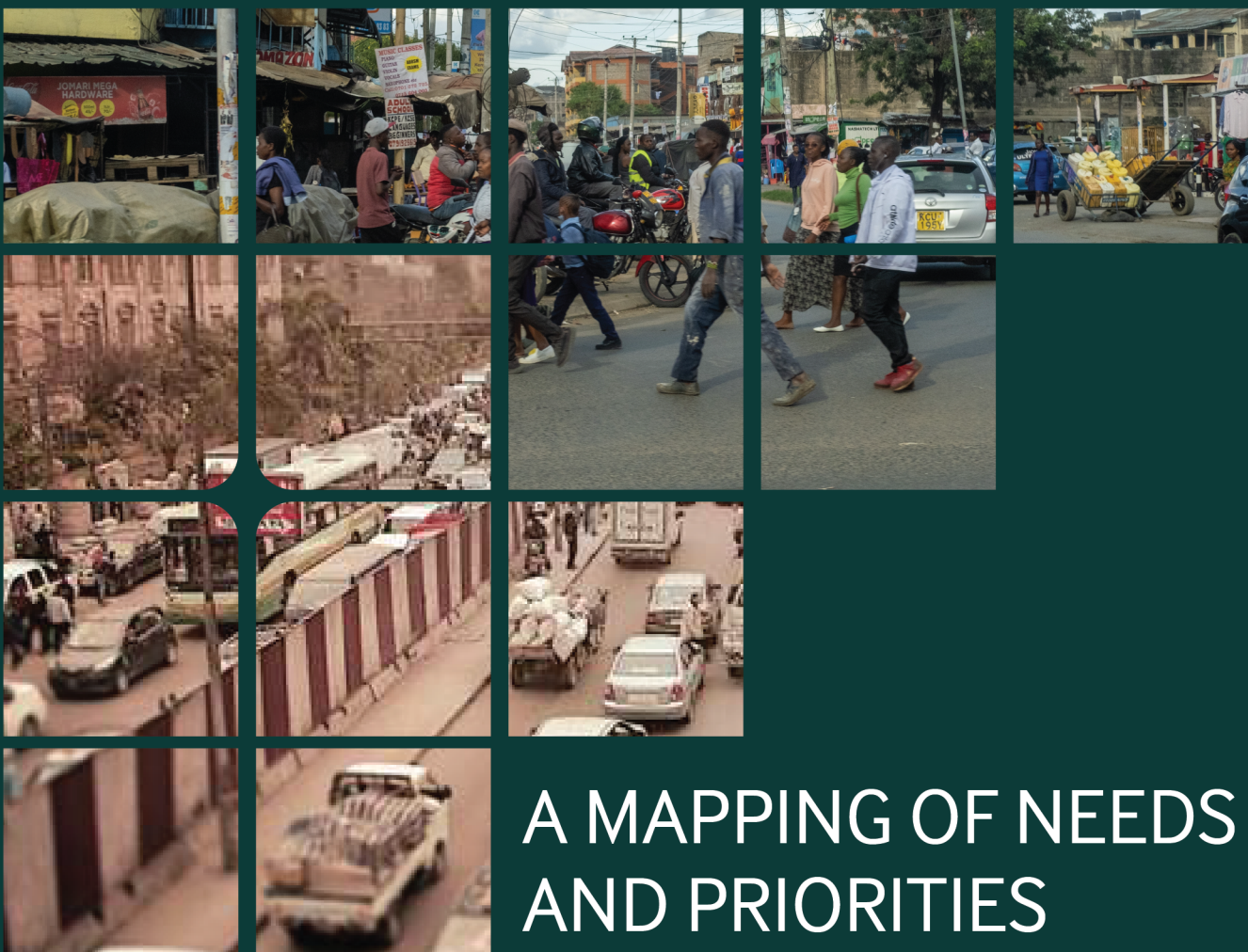# Strong Cities Network

ADDRESSING THE OVERLOOKED ROLE OF AFRICAN CITIES IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

A MAPPING OF NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Eric Rosand, Isel van Zyl, Jon Jones and Charlotte Moeyens

About this Report

This report maps the needs and priorities of cities and other local authorities in Africa for preventing and countering violent extremism. It explores where enhanced involvement of these local actors could help catalyse and sustain efforts towards locally led, whole-of-society approaches to violent extremism and related challenges. It also identifies steps to address these needs and priorities, including through the development of training and other capacity-building tools, and the involvement of existing multilateral bodies and platforms, including the Strong Cities Network.

The report is informed by a series of consultations with national and local government officials, civil society organisations, researchers, and multilateral bodies across Africa, as well as donors. It examines the threat landscape across Africa, with a focus on local dimensions and perspectives of the threat. It then maps the current P/CVE ecosystem across the continent, including the strengths and limitations of existing regional, national, civil society, and local authority-level efforts, as well as the barriers to local authorities' involvement in prevention. Finally, this report provides a series of practical, policy-relevant recommendations for overcoming these barriers and, more broadly, for enhancing the involvement, leadership and impact of cities and other local authorities in addressing violent extremism and related challenges facing their communities.

About Strong Cities Network (SCN)

The SCN is an independent global network of more than 160 cities and other local governments dedicated to supporting city-led efforts to prevent all forms of extremism, hate and polarisation while protecting human rights.

WHAT IS THE SCN'S MISSION?

- To inspire, catalyse and multiply locally driven, non-discriminatory, human rights-based and gender-sensitive policies and programmes that prevent and counter extremism, hate and polarisation in a manner that rests upon trust-based partnerships with communities.
- To enhance the practical implementation of programming and practice at a local level aimed at building social cohesion and community resilience to all forms of extremist- and hate-motivated violence.
- To connect local leaders and practitioners from a range of disciplines, including community relations, social and health services, housing, culture, economic development, as well as youth, religious and other community leaders, and civil society, to share lessons learned and provide tailored training through face-to-face and online exchanges.
- To elevate the voices of mayors and other local leaders and ensure the needs and priorities of cities and other local governments are reflected in national, regional, and international conversations around how most effectively to prevent violent extremism, hate and polarisation.

The SCN Management Unit, which comprises a central leadership team and experts on the ground, works with all sub-national authorities — from megacities to municipal governments, rural villages and border communities — and uses the term "cities" to refer to all variations of local government. This report was authored by the SCN Management Unit, specifically by Eric Rosand, Executive Director; Isel van Zyl, Africa Programme Lead; Jon Jones, Project Coordinator; and Charlotte Moeyens, Senior Manager — Networks & Civic Action.

For more information about the SCN, visit our website at https://strongcitiesnetwork.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"While the overall number of deaths from terrorism has declined, the threat remains ... the threat to Africa — in particular — is in fact increasing. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 48% of deaths attributed to terrorist groups globally last year. Groups like Al-Qaida, Da'esh and their affiliates are continuing to grow in the Sahel and make inroads into Central and Southern Africa. They are exploiting power vacuums, longstanding inter-ethnic strife, internal weaknesses and state fragilities."[1]

UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the eighth meeting of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, New York, 8 June 2022

Over the past two decades, the international community's understanding of violent extremism, related threats, and how best to prevent and counter them, has evolved in several ways. Two important ones point to the increased relevance of cities and other local authorities in preventing and countering these threats.

First, despite the emergence of increasingly global and interconnected terrorist networks, many of the threats are locally rooted. Violent extremist and other armed groups increasingly exploit local political, social and economic grievances to recruit and mobilise others.[2] Second, recognition of the localisation of the threat has led to a growing realisation of the need for cities (and other local authorities) to become involved in what has traditionally been seen as the exclusive remit of national governments and national security actors in particular. It is cities and other local jurisdictions, after all, that face the brunt of terror attacks and acts of violent extremism. They are typically the first to respond in the immediate aftermath, and the ones responsible for mitigating the long-term economic and social impacts of violent extremism and other forms of hate-motivated violence in the communities they serve. The role of local authorities in prevention cannot be overstated: by virtue of their proximity to communities, they can build trust, foster inclusive city identities, and leverage other forms of public service

— including around housing and employment — to respond to the threat of extremism in a sustainable, non-stigmatising way that respects the principle of 'do no harm'.

In some African contexts, local leaders and authorities are gradually becoming more involved in the discourse around terrorism and violent extremism, as well as the development and cohesion-building initiatives that aim to ensure the well-being and peaceful coexistence of and within their communities. Yet, despite increased recognition of the importance of locally driven, whole-of-society approaches to addressing these threats, far too often cities are not considered relevant stakeholders. Local authorities struggle to get involved — let alone lead — in developing and implementing policies and programmes to prevent extremism, hate and polarisation from taking root in their communities and escalating to violence.[i]

Whether it is a lack of understanding about the threat (and how local conditions can enable it), a lack of mandate from their national government or a lack of resources, expertise and capacities, local authorities in Africa face multiple barriers to their inclusion and leadership in prevention. There remains, for example, a disconnect between regional- and national-level policymaking and local action; multilateral institutions and national governments often overlook cities and other local authorities as they develop prevention policies and programmes, and relevant donors and international partners largely focus their resources on national governments and civil society.

The Strong Cities Network (SCN) works with cities and other local authorities, as well as national, regional and global actors, to overcome these barriers and support local governments to achieve their full potential as leaders in preventing extremism, hate and polarisation. As part of this commitment, the SCN has been supported by the European Union (EU) since February 2022 to map the preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) needs and priorities of cities across the African continent.

The SCN uses the term "cities" to refer to and encompass any sub-national authority, including megacities, cities, states, counties, towns, villages and municipalities.

More information is available at https://strongcitiesnetwork.org

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[i] The SCN uses the terms "*extremism, hate and polarisation*" to allow for a broad interpretation of the heterogeneous threats faced by cities and local communities throughout the continent. A complete list of acronyms, terms and definitions used in this report can be found in the glossary.

This initiative was launched not only in recognition of the above challenges, but also because cities across Africa are among the world's fastest growing[3], which may overwhelm public services and exacerbate radicalisation to violence. Cities can also offer a response that national governments in the region, which may be slow to respond or even contribute to the problem, cannot or are unwilling to deliver. Moreover, as witnessed in coastal West Africa, it is in remote border towns and villages, sometimes thousands of kilometres from the capital and beyond the reach of security services, where militant groups have proven increasingly effective in recruiting from pastoralist communities, tapping into farmer-herder concerns over land and a lack of trust in and/or relationships with central governments. There are growing fears that grievances in these border towns "may evolve into sympathies for violent extremist narratives".[4]

To mitigate these threats, it is therefore critical to increase the involvement, leadership and impact of African cities and other local authorities in P/CVE and related efforts. This report offers several action-oriented, practical recommendations for doing so.

Mayors and other local leaders are not entirely free of the bureaucratic and political constraints that can impede national-level policymakers, whether on issues of corruption, climate change, COVID-19 or violence. However, they often have no option but to work around obstacles to deliver for their communities. Cities in Africa are increasingly serving as laboratories for developing innovative initiatives that are designed and implemented in collaboration with local communities to address global challenges. In some cases, this work is taking place in the absence of or despite central government involvement. With the necessary mandate, capacities, resources and expertise, local authorities across the continent can make invaluable contributions to safeguarding their citizens from the threats posed by violent extremism, hate and polarisation.

> Given the nature and duration of the project, this report does not intend to provide a comprehensive account of the P/CVE and related needs and priorities of the thousands of cities and other local authorities across the African continent. Rather, it is an important first step in understanding how these often-overlooked local actors perceive violent extremist threats, their role in preventing them from taking root in their communities and responding to them when they do, and how they can be supported to meet their potential as leaders in whole-of-society P/CVE efforts.[ii]

[ii] See *Annex B: Methodology* for an overiew of the project's approach.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **An increasingly complex and localised violent extremist threat landscape:** The extremist threat landscape in Africa is multi-faceted with complex local dimensions. It is fuelled by, *inter alia*, political, religious, and ethnic-motivated tensions and conflicts, as well as marginalisation, lack of or weak governance, and a lack of trust in government institutions, including due to high levels of corruption and heavy-handed policing.

2. **Local authorities are well-positioned to recognise, understand and respond to hyper-local contexts that extremists exploit:** Extremist groups capitalise on a range of local concerns for recruitment, for example, taking advantage of young people's economic grievances by providing financial incentives to join them. More broadly, they use local injustices as entry points into new communities, exploiting inter- and intra-communal needs and tensions to recruit new members or gain support. This underscores the important role local governments can play in recognising and understanding the hyper-local contexts that extremists exploit. They are well placed to respond to violent extremism, given their immediacy and direct interface with local populations.

3. **The most effective local responses to violent extremism are those situated within wider community safety efforts:** There are growing connections between extremism and other forms of community violence and social disorder. These include inter-communal, farmer-herder, gang and gender-based violence. Armed gangs and extremist groups capitalise on the instability and feelings of insecurity that result from these conflicts, enabling them to recruit and mobilise others. Organised crime can also serve as an entry point into extremist movements. The most effective responses to violent extremism are therefore likely to be those that can be situated within efforts to address broader threats to community safety.

4. **Remote border towns and villages are particularly vulnerable, but often overlooked:** Towns and communities located in border areas face particular challenges because of the porous nature of the borders and the unregulated movement of people and arms in parts of the continent. Central governments in Africa generally overlook the importance of supporting – logistically and financially – remote border communities and rural villages. This results in insufficient public service delivery and leaves a vacuum that extremist and armed groups exploit to present themselves as better alternatives to official (local) government structures. This is particularly concerning in coastal West Africa and the Sahel, where armed and inter-communal conflicts are concentrated in border towns.

5. **Local authorities want to leverage their P/CVE comparative advantages:** Local authorities want to become meaningfully involved in P/CVE and prevention more broadly, and to be empowered and capacitated to develop and implement prevention policies and programmes. They believe they have a key role to play in addressing these challenges. These roles include building trust between local communities and security actors, engaging young people, convening local actors, designing and implementing prevention programmes that address local needs and priorities, and mapping and analysing local contexts. This can then inform local, national and regional prevention frameworks and programmes.

6. **Overly centralised and securitised P/CVE efforts in Africa persist:** Despite the above, P/CVE efforts across the continent generally remain overly centralised and securitised. Cities, including border towns and rural authorities, are typically overlooked in prevention policy and programming and often lack the expertise, resources and/or mandate to engage in this space.

7. **National P/CVE frameworks rarely include perspectives of cities and local authorities:** Where national or regional P/CVE or related frameworks exist, they have generally been developed without consultation with local government and non-governmental actors and fail to delineate a role or provide a mandate for local governments. As a result, these plans are often based on assumption rather than an informed understanding of local realities. Further, local authorities are rarely involved in the implementation of these plans, such that there remain significant challenges in translating them into local action.

8. **Missing or limited national-local cooperation (NLC) stands in the way of more city-level involvement in P/CVE:** Lack of or strained NLC is a significant barrier to the involvement of local authorities in P/CVE and violence prevention more broadly. NLC shortcomings in much of Africa include a lack of shared understanding between national and local authorities of: a) the nature of the threat and how to prevent and counter it most effectively; and b) the roles and responsibilities for addressing drivers of violence. The absence of mechanisms to build trust and facilitate cooperation and information sharing (for example about the movement of extremist and armed groups) between the different levels of government undermines effective NLC. These challenges can be exacerbated by politically or ethnically motivated resource distribution, historic marginalisation, corruption, and (real or perceived) collusion with local vigilante or other armed actors that can affect interactions between national and local authorities.

9. **Local governments need training and other capacity-building support to tap into their P/CVE potential:** To reach their potential in P/CVE and prevention more broadly, local governments need training and other capacity-building across a range of disciplines, an understanding of how to leverage existing resources and infrastructure, additional local resources, and more opportunities to share with and learn from other local authorities, whether at the national, regional or global level. The SCN was identified as an appropriate platform to facilitate more local authority involvement in prevention, including through convening local authorities on a country-by-country and/or regional basis, with the objective of enhancing local-local cooperation and NLC.

10. **Many multilateral P/CVE actors engaged in Africa but limited coordination and coherence:** There is a wide range of multilateral institutions engaged in P/CVE or related issues at a continental or regional level (including United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office for Counter-Terrorism (UNOTC), United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the African Union (AU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the East Africa Community (EAC)). However, these institutions rarely engage local authorities. Moreover, there is limited coordination among them, leading to duplication of efforts and, in some cases, confusion about local authorities' roles and responsibilities in addressing threats of violent extremism.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

See [page 57](#) for the full set of recommendations

1. **Better Responses: Integration, Inclusion and Learning**
   a. Promote integrated local responses – leveraging existing local resources where possible – to an interconnected localised threat
   b. Prioritise inclusive and consultative prevention frameworks
   c. Create more opportunities for sharing and learning among local authorities across the continent

2. **Building Locally: Identity, Capacity and Trust**
   a. Promote and communicate an inclusive local identity
   b. Ensure local governments have the necessary mandate, capacities, expertise and resources to fully tap into their potential for prevention
   c. Build trust between local governments and the communities they serve

3. **Better Cooperation: At All Levels**
   a. Engage national governments proactively
   b. Address the structural challenges and other barriers that are impeding national-local cooperation
   c. Address the disconnect between multilateral P/CVE policymaking and programming and local application

CONTENTS

Glossary

Acronyms

AU — African Union

CAERT — Africa Centre on the Study and Research on Terrorism

CAP — Community Action Plan

CELLRAD — Regional Cell for the Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism

CIDPs — The County Integrated Development Plans

CSOs — Civil Society Organisations

EAC — East Africa Community

ECOWAS — Economic Community of West African States

EU — European Union

FMS — Federal Member States (Somalia)

G5S — The G5 Sahel

GCERF — Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund

GCTF — Global Counter Terrorism Forum

IGAD — The Intergovernmental Authority on Development

IOM — International Organization for Migration

ISIS — Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

JNIM — Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen

NAP — National Action Plan

NCCRM — National Centres for the Coordination of the Response Mechanism

NLC – National-Local Cooperation

P/CVE – Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.

RECs – Regional Economic Communities

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UN-Habitat – United Nations Human Settlement Programme

UNOCT – United Nations Office for Counter-Terrorism

UNODC – United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

'Do no harm' approach – A framework devised to ensure that people, communities and other beneficiaries are not exposed to additional risks as a result of social interventions. This requires an understanding of the local context, relationships and dynamics more broadly. It involves mitigating or avoiding negative, unintended consequences for potential beneficiaries and implementers of P/CVE interventions that may result from such interventions and seeking to influence these dynamics in a positive way.[5]

Extremism – The beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically motivated violence to further social, economic, religiously-based or political objectives.[6]

P/CVE – Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. This report uses the terms and acronyms P/CVE, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) interchangeably throughout.

DEFINITION: A broad range of non-coercive and preventative activities that are united by the objective of counteracting the drivers of violent extremism specific to the locations in which these initiatives occur. P/CVE includes activities that target individuals specifically identified as 'at risk' of being drawn into violence, to the extent that this is feasible in each location.[7]

SCN Management Unit – The SCN Management Unit serves as SCN's secretariat and is the central point for coordinating the SCN's global engagement and communications strategy.

Whole-of-society approach – An approach to P/CVE that includes a role for multiple sectors and civil society actors in prevention, intervention, disengagement, de-radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration policies and programmes.[8]

INTRODUCTION

I t has been more than 20 years since the 11 September 2001 attacks that catalysed the development of a global ecosystem of national counter-terrorism frameworks, institutions, programmes and networks. Despite these investments, the terrorist threat in Africa is on the rise.[9] These threats are evermore aligned with, or emerging from, one form of local conflict or another. Terrorist recruiters, often linked to al-Qaeda, ISIS and their affiliates, exploit local grievances that stem from weak governance, political and socio-economic marginalisation, porous borders, corruption, and heavy-handed policing, among others. The UN Security Council recently reported that parts of Africa have become central fundraising hubs for ISIS affiliates and fighters. For example, according to the UN, funds generated by Kenyan and Ugandan ISIS supporters in South Africa are being laundered for the benefit of the ISIS-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[10]

Addressing the June 2022 meeting of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, UN Secretary-General António Guterres voiced concern about how these groups are making inroads across the continent and exploiting governance deficits to radicalise local populations.[11] Terrorist threats across Africa have rapidly expanded and diversified in recent years, despite the increased military, intelligence and other security investments made by a number of countries. The UN itself has pointed to how this security-heavy approach has inflamed the conditions that militant groups exploit to stoke violence.[12] If one hopes to reverse, let alone stem, the rising tide of extremism, there is growing recognition that more attention must be given to addressing these conditions. There is also a broader need to move away from the security-centric paradigm that has defined much of the continent's response to terrorist threats over the past 20 years. This is underscored by the fact that, despite a decade of military assistance from the international community, violent extremist groups continue to make advances in West Africa and the Sahel.[13]

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Countries across the continent, particularly following the elaboration of the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism in 2015, are gradually recognising the limitations of an overly centralised and securitised approach to addressing a threat that has become more localised than ever. As a result, the P/CVE agenda – with its focus on a whole-of-society approach that recognises the importance of local and non-security actors and the need to address the drivers and not simply the manifestations of extremist violence – has begun to gain traction, albeit gradually.

The UN, AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) continue to encourage and help support African states' efforts to develop, implement and evaluate P/CVE strategies, action plans and programmes, typically led by civil society organisations (CSOs) linked to the relevant national framework. International donors, including through the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), have invested in building the P/CVE capacities of community-based CSOs across the continent. Although it is too soon to assess the overall impact on threat levels, this has led to an increase in the number of national plans and the number of local CSOs, including youth-focused and women-led, engaged in local P/CVE work.

One critical but often overlooked stakeholder is local government, whether in capital cities or rural villages or border communities. This omission has practical consequences: local leaders and authorities are uniquely positioned to facilitate the local application of national frameworks, including by ensuring those frameworks reflect local concerns. With the right support, they can respond to the needs of their citizens in ways that can build community trust and social cohesion while providing security and protecting democratic values. These are responses that their national counterparts often cannot or will not deliver.[14] Yet, with few exceptions, cities and other local authorities in Africa lack a full understanding of the unique contributions they can make to P/CVE, as well as the mandate or resources to leverage them. Too often, central governments do not consider local governments as relevant actors in national P/CVE planning and programming. This is a critical missed opportunity to integrate local knowledge and stakeholders into these frameworks.

While not a panacea, enhancing local authority involvement in P/CVE in Africa, including by overcoming the barriers to such involvement, is likely to contribute to a more effective and sustainable approach to reducing terrorist threats. This is particularly so given the highly localised nature of the threat, the salience of local grievances and the increasingly recognised need to move away from the centralised and over-securitised paradigm of the past two decades.[15]

This report is informed by consultations with a variety of local, national, and multilateral stakeholders across Africa. It highlights: a) local authorities' comparative advantages in preventing violent extremism and related threats; b) the barriers to fully leveraging those advantages; c) some of the ways in which they are contributing to mitigating the threat; d) the P/CVE and related needs of local authorities in Africa; and e) steps that national, regional, and international stakeholders can take to enhance city-led P/CVE and related efforts.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

North and West Africa

East and Southern Africa

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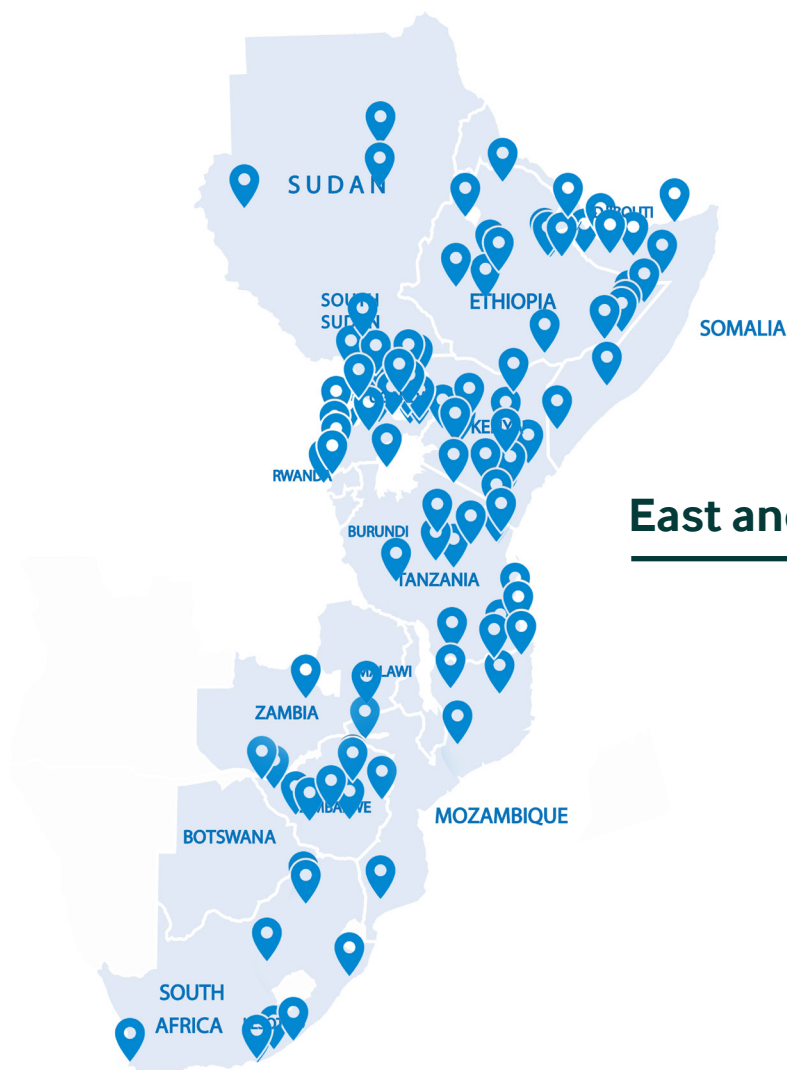
THE THREAT LANDSCAPE
Local Perspectives on Key Challenges

Africa's extremist- and related threat landscape remains volatile, with varied forms of conflict polarising communities and driving violence across the continent. According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index, 48% (or 3,461) of global deaths attributed to violent extremist groups in 2021 took place in sub-Saharan Africa.[16] Countries like Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Niger all witnessed an increase in deaths at the hands of these actors. Overall, violent attacks and deaths as a result of attacks by violent extremist groups in the Sahel increased by 1,000% between 2007 and 2021.[17]

This escalation in violence shows no sign of abating, as the mixing of local armed groups with transnational affiliates of al-Qaida or ISIS is on the rise, as seen in Somalia, the Sahel region, and Mozambique.[18] In Somalia, while al-Shabaab's activity has declined over the past few years and security has improved in the capital of Mogadishu, the group continues to recruit and radicalise in other districts and rural areas of the country. The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) is considered the most dangerous and active group in West Africa, with an estimated 5,000 fighters across Niger and Nigeria and neighbouring Cameroon.[19] Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) has increased its activity by 69% in West Africa, claiming over 351 lives in 2021 alone.[20] The threat has also recently spread to Coastal West Africa, where militant groups operating from Burkina Faso are now targeting Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Togo to the south, with Benin's border region alone the locus of nine attacks since December 2021.[21]

As in other parts of the world, the threats facing communities across Africa are more complex and integrated than ever. Radicalisation and militancy are driving polarisation and division, and there is a mainstreaming of disinformation and conspiracies, especially during election periods. Extremism is threatening democratic values and institutions, opening opportunities for foreign actors to further exploit these dynamics. These intertwining threats to security and the social fabric have only been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2020

and 2021, there was a 70% increase in violent events linked to militant Islamist groups in the Sahel.[22] Democratic processes in the region are under threat. Seven coups took place between 2020 and 2022, including in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Sudan. These were driven in part by instabilities created by already poor governance and conflicts that violent extremist groups have exploited.[23] Yet the coups have not led to a reduction in violence. For example, in Burkina Faso, there has been an increase in civilian deaths due to attacks by extremists as well as the military and militia activity that resulted from the political instability.[24]

Intersection Between Violent Extremism and Other Forms of Violence and Criminality

Many stakeholders consulted in this mapping initiative emphasised how the extremist- and terrorist threat landscape in their communities is compounded by challenges posed by other forms of social disorder, some of which present a more pressing threat than violent extremism. Representatives from different parts of East and Southern Africa pointed to rising levels of youth drug abuse, illicit narcotics trade, cattle rustling, gender-based violence and violent protests as exacerbating insecurity. They shared that violent extremists are capitalising on this environment to recruit disenfranchised and marginalised youth. In some contexts, gangs serve as gateways into violent extremist groups, as extremist recruiters harness the local gang landscape to expand membership and messaging.[25]

In North and West Africa, the extremist threat landscape is complicated by ties to illicit activities such as banditry and kidnappings for ransom, especially in parts of Nigeria.[26] The insecurity and political and economic instability caused in part by activities such as drug and human trafficking are being exploited by armed groups to recruit and radicalise (primarily) alienated or marginalised youth, who feel they are being failed by official 'leadership' and governance structures. As in East and Southern Africa, criminal groups serve as entry points into extremist movements.[27] This finding is consistent with the well-documented research findings on the nexus between crime and terrorism, including in Mali and Niger in West Africa and Kenya in East Africa.[28]

Ultimately, the threat is localised not just in that extremist groups capitalise on context-specific grievances to grow their influence, but also in the interconnection with other local forms of social disorder and criminality, which have proven foundational to the expansion of extremist movements. Despite this, central governments often operate with little consultation from and collaboration with local authorities. Yet, it is these stakeholders which arguably have a better, more direct understanding of these local contexts than their national government counterparts. If properly mandated and capacitated, local authorities are uniquely placed to take preventative measures to stifle recruitment and radicalisation locally and thus reduce the likelihood that individuals from their communities get drawn into regional violent extremist groups such as al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.[29]

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MARGINALISED AND UNDER-RESOURCED BORDER AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Local stakeholders across Africa also pointed to the continent's typically porous borders, unregulated cross-border traffic and the consequent ease with which extremists and other armed groups can move between countries as factors that fuel extremist violence. This is particularly the case in West Africa and the Sahel, where local authorities along the borders are often under-resourced and ill-equipped to prevent and/or respond to the threats. They have limited capacity to safeguard their citizens, for example through early-warning mechanisms, identifying the community members most susceptible to recruitment into violent groups, protecting civilian and other soft targets and infrastructure, and securing their borders.

These gaps contribute to extremist groups and other criminal and armed groups being able to move from border town to border town with little to no consequence.[30] This vulnerability is highlighted by recent attacks in northern Togo, close to the border with northeast Ghana. These have left Ghanaian security officials on high alert and found local authorities largely ill-equipped to help manage the threat.[31]

Insecurity and conflict in and around border towns have also displaced local populations, who travel into urban centres or across borders into other rural communities in search of safety and stability. In some contexts, this migration has led to further conflict, where 'host' communities perceive newcomers as a threat to their access to land and other resources, and in turn, their livelihoods (given that agriculture is a primary source of income and subsistence in rural areas across the continent). This creates the 'us vs. them' conditions that extremists exploit to recruit and further their cause.[32]

Responses to border conflicts have been largely security-focused (e.g., arming national government border authorities with guns, establishing military bases, and self-establishment of vigilante and community-based armed groups).[33] Few attempts have been made to address the drivers of this violence or to ensure relevant local authorities have the resources and capacities to service their communities' needs.[34]

Further, in the face of this rising insecurity and violence and with central governments often unable or unwilling to provide the necessary security and services, border populations are taking into their own hands the authority to safe-keep and protect their communities and livelihoods. This includes forming civilian militias that operate outside the law.[35] While well intended, this only makes an already unstable situation worse by increasing the local proliferation of small arms and other weaponry and by fostering 'vigilante' violence.

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL EXCLUSION ON THE BASIS OF ETHNICITY, TRIBE AND/OR RELIGION

Extremism on the continent is often most condensed in areas of 'multidimensional poverty' and socio-economic and political exclusion are critical factors driving violent extremist recruitment.[36] Local authority stakeholders consulted in this mapping initiative highlighted that one of the main drivers of insecurity in their communities is socio-economic marginalisation and political exclusion on the basis of ethnicity (there are more than 3,000 different ethnic groups in Africa) and religion.[37] Political minorities or ethnic groups that are not represented in the country's political environment can face discrimination and exclusion and be exposed to and targeted by state security mechanisms.[38] Ethnic and religious marginalisation has resulted in the systematic targeting of some groups during security interventions, including counter-terrorism operations.[39] Socio-economic and political exclusion, as such, can perpetuate the 'us vs. them' narrative violent extremist groups exploit for recruitment and radicalisation purposes.[40]

Economic marginalisation — lack of access to education and employment opportunities, and ultimately poverty — was often mentioned by stakeholders as a major driver of insecurity. Criminal and extremist groups exploit environments where these conditions exist. The financial incentives they offer to young people to join them are often perceived as the only (or fastest) way to make money to support themselves and/or their families.[41] For example, in Dakar, extremist groups have reportedly provided 'taxi-motorbikes' to young people to allow them to commute across the city and country, increasing their chances in the job market. However, this has also provided these groups with an entry point to engage (and potentially recruit) youth, who might be more receptive to their narratives after already benefitting through the provision of the motorbikes.[42] In fact, there have reportedly been incidents where these bikes have been used by extremist groups "to travel to and execute attacks against a target".[43]

Stakeholders from Mogadishu and Khartoum described how extremist and criminal groups use socio-economic insecurities, such as poverty and high unemployment rates, more broadly to recruit and radicalise individuals.[44] Individuals have reported joining Boko Haram in order to make a living and have employment, and thus have a sense of purpose and identity.[45] Local actors from Nigeria, Cameroon and other West African contexts remarked on how the nature of extremist recruitment has evolved from one that exploits religious ideologies to one focused on economic survival, whereby extremist groups are perceived to offer solutions to the socio-economic challenges faced by marginalised communities.[46] This will likely continue as peoples' livelihoods on the continent are negatively impacted by the effects of climate change and soaring global food and energy prices, exacerbated by the pandemic and recent Russian invasion of Ukraine.[47]

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Weak Governance

Poor governance, an absence of human-centred security and disaffection with governments are fundamental areas that extremist actors exploit to recruit and reinforce their narratives.[48] Violent extremists and criminal groups have also capitalised on governance shortfalls and insufficient public service delivery to recruit and mobilise others, marketing themselves as better alternatives to official local institutions. For example, in Kaduna in north-western Nigeria, Ansaru recently distributed food to community members and promised them protection from local bandits.[49] Similarly, according to a local authority stakeholder from East Africa, groups like al-Shabaab offer to fulfil basic public service needs in the absence of sufficient provision from the local and national government.[50] This, in turn, builds the 'rapport' of extremist groups, and may make the benefiting local populations more receptive to their ideology, and more willing to associate with them more broadly. It also reduces faith in official governance structures, fostering clusters of local communities that feel disconnected and distrustful of their government in a context where corruption and already low levels of trust undermine economic growth, good and transparent governance and trust-building with the populations. According to recent polling data, for example, more than 130 million African citizens believe that corruption is worsening in their countries and that their state leaders lack the political will to address it.[51] In sum, resource provision by extremist or armed groups only exacerbates the trust issues caused by corruption and serves to 'normalise' extremist groups as public service providers, rather than disruptive and dangerous illicit movements.

Rapid Urbanisation and Population Growth

Throughout this mapping initiative, local authority stakeholders noted how the increasingly hybridised threat landscape exists in a context of rapid urbanisation. Lack of space and access to natural resources, high unemployment rates and social violence (which is often concentrated in rural areas) are causing many people to move to urban centres in search of safety, access to services and better livelihood opportunities.[52] This mass migration from rural to urban areas is adding pressure on local authorities to accommodate and provide public services to ever-growing numbers of residents and refugee communities. Not only that, but experts are expecting Africa's general population (rather than just urban) to double to 2.5 billion by 2050.[53] Continued incidents of violence and the effects of climate change are creating an influx of refugees, causing competition over local resources. This in turn creates tension between 'host' and refugee communities.[54]

If local authorities are unable to accommodate this rapid urbanisation and general population growth, the social vulnerabilities that extremists and other mal-intended actors already exploit will only be exacerbated. Key conditions include the inability of local governments to meet the public service needs and demands of larger populations, an increasingly competitive job market contributing to high unemployment and poverty, and social and economic marginalisation. In many African states, violence and growing hostilities directly correlate with underdeveloped urban settings, growing groups of refugees living on the fringes of localities, and marginalisation.[55]

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City Spotlight:
Nebbi Municipality, Uganda

Threat: Nebbi is located on the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. High unemployment rates, lack of service delivery and lack of trust in national and local government authorities are primary drivers for young people to travel across the borders to join armed groups offering financial incentives. Although there are existing civic participation projects that aim to include youth (which makes up 60% of the Municipality's population), local representatives shared that these activities are not sustainable, and that young people are left feeling despondent and resentful towards government authorities as the expectations are not realistic.

Response: Nebbi Municipality has implemented a youth livelihood programme that aims to get young people from school into work to address the unemployment and access issues many of the municipality's young people are facing. It is also implementing Uganda's Parish Development Model, which seeks to address five areas of livelihood enhancement: human, natural resources, social, finance and physical assets. Beyond development plans, Nebbi has yet to integrate P/CVE into these efforts — or develop its own P/CVE action plan — though appetite to do so exists.

Needs/Priorities: According to Nebbi officials, the municipality would benefit from more resources and support from central government and CSOs to deliver community resilience-building programmes and to provide vulnerable and/or marginalised groups (including youth, women, the disabled and displaced) with more socio-economic opportunities to deter young people, in particular, from the lure of violent extremist groups. Officials believe that smaller municipalities in Uganda, such as Nebbi, are often overlooked by central governments, compared to older and larger urban areas. Moreover, Nebbi officials shared that, as a remote municipality, it struggles to attract engagement and support from international partners. Local officials see more city-to-city connections for local prevention efforts as one avenue to overcome this, which the SCN could facilitate.

THE CURRENT P/CVE LANDSCAPE IN AFRICA

CONTEXT

For much of the past two decades, often at the behest of the 'West', African governments have tended to favour a hard security approach to addressing terrorist threats. This focused on strengthening national military, intelligence, and law enforcement institutions and capabilities. It was part of the largely reactive paradigm that treated violent extremism and terrorism as an exceptional threat and focused largely on its symptoms rather than its roots. As in other parts of the world, these efforts contributed to some tactical successes, often in cooperation with international or regional partners. However, they have done little to reduce the overall threat. In fact, these securitised approaches have perhaps done more to exacerbate than mitigate insecurity. The UN itself has highlighted how the experience of state violence is often a driver of radicalisation and recruitment to violent groups across Africa.[56] Compounding matters, a number of governments across the continent have been accused of misusing these 'hard' counter-terrorism measures to suppress dissent or harass political opponents. This has undermined respect for human rights and overall human security, as well as the trust between government and local communities that is the foundation of effective prevention.[57]

In recent years, the rising levels of extremist and related violence have devastated livelihoods and undermined development gains across the continent. There is now increased awareness of the need to diversify the approach to addressing the threats, including by placing more emphasis on prevention.[58] This involves focusing more attention on the underlying conditions that drive extremist violence in Africa and developing a whole-of-society approach that recognises local actors' unique potential contributions. This awareness was catalysed, in part, by the release of the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism in December 2015[59], with its encouragement for all UN member states to develop national P/

CVE plans. This has generated a host of P/CVE investments and initiatives across the continent, supported almost entirely by international donors and development institutions. Much of the focus, however, has been on regional and sub-regional organisations, national governments, and civil society, with numerous international and local CSOs leveraging their experience in related fields such as peacebuilding, conflict prevention, women's or youth empowerment or human rights issues.

CONTINENTAL LEVEL

At the continental level, the AU has generated several counter-terrorism resolutions, decisions, conventions and guides that are often linked to the implementation of relevant UN Security Council requirements. Working at the technical level through its African Centre on the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT), it has visited more than 20 AU member states to identify gaps in the implementation of the AU counter-terrorism framework. To bolster these efforts — and as one of the outcomes of its May 2022 counter-terrorism summit in Malabo — the AU is on the cusp of establishing a counter-terrorism coordination task force to, among other things, serve as an oversight mechanism for the periodic review and evaluation of the AU counter-terrorism activities and plan of action.[60] Although the task force's draft terms of reference do mention the importance of whole-of-society approaches to addressing the threat, there are no seats on the commission reserved for representatives of either local government or civil society.[61]

CAERT does, however, advise African governments, albeit at a technical rather than political level, on adopting an inclusive approach to addressing terrorist threats. It delivers or facilitates training at regional, sub-regional and national levels, during which centre officials promote the roles of different government actors and the various tools that each can use.[62] This showcases that every sector and department has a role to play in addressing violent extremism.

Spurred by the elaboration of the UN PVE Plan of Action and the increased attention given by the UN system (and international donors) to prevention, CAERT has begun to focus more attention on P/CVE in its interactions with its members. Although approaches and resources remain highly centralised, the centre is encouraging its members "to change the way they address violent extremism, for example by involving local authorities and local communities in their efforts".[63] CAERT has also recently increased its focus on P/CVE training for its members. For example, it delivers programmes on the role of education in P/CVE, as well as a training course for national and local stakeholders at a sub-regional level, to promote prevention as an effective response to the rise of violent extremism.

This course, which was offered in West Africa in July 2022, was based on CAERT's recognition that "[w]hile [law] enforcement measures only deal with the symptoms and the consequences of the violence as well as perpetrators, the preventative measures, instead, tackle the root causes of the issue by trying to understand what motivate people to join violent extremist

groups and what could lead them out, and to work at transforming the multiples and complex causes of violence." The curriculum includes modules aimed at increasing their understanding of: a) the context-specific drivers of violent extremism and reasons why some individuals join such groups; b) how to shift from a security approach to a preventative, human security paradigm for addressing the threat; and c) the various actors needed to enable a whole-of-society approach.

REGIONAL LEVEL

At a sub-continental regional level, the emphasis placed on P/CVE has varied considerably among the RECs, with IGAD far ahead of others. It is the only one that has developed a P/CVE strategy and a dedicated structure – financed by international donors – to support its implementation. The IGAD Centre of Excellence on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (ICEPCVE) works with IGAD members[iii] to ensure the framework's elements are reflected in relevant national plans. The strategy offers guidance to national agencies responsible for P/CVE and a structure within which these bodies can exchange ideas. It calls for national legislation on P/CVE but prioritises "the empowerment of non-state stakeholders including civil society organisations, the private sector, organisations of academics, and faith-based organisations".[64] The centre has focused on increasing the capacity of IGAD members in terms of research, strategic communication, community outreach, knowledge sharing and multiagency collaboration.[65] It is mandated to provide training, research and technical support to those working in P/CVE and counter-messaging.[66]

In general, there are several multilateral bodies across the continent engaging with some aspects of the P/CVE agenda, although none with the framework and structure (and dedicated resources, albeit provided by international donors) that IGAD has developed. Examples include:

The **Southern African Development Community** (SADC), after many years of insisting that terrorism was not a priority concern for its members, developed a counter-terrorism strategy in 2015. It placed little emphasis on preventative measures, focusing instead on response. The strategy was complemented by training sessions (delivered in cooperation with UNODC) on enhancing counter-terrorism laws and on investigating, prosecutorial and judicial capacities.[67] In addition, in July 2021, again reflecting the rising terrorist threat levels in the region, SADC established a mission in Mozambique – SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) – to counter terrorism and acts of violent extremism in some districts of Cabo Delgado Province.[68] The mission includes troops from a number of SADC

[iii] The seven IGAD members are Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

members and assists the government of Mozambique with ongoing security interventions and providing humanitarian relief to those affected by the violence. These efforts have been criticised by some for being reactive rather than preventative, not safeguarding the local population, and causing the displacement of thousands of people.[69]

In 2013, **ECOWAS** elaborated a comprehensive counter-terrorism framework that includes a prevention pillar.[70] However, local authorities across the region have limited awareness of it, in part because ECOWAS members have not prioritised its implementation within their territories. Some national officials have questioned the practical relevance of a regional strategy that has failed to 'trickle down' to local leaders and communities and thereby been ineffective at dealing with a threat that has become so localised.[71]

The **G5 Sahel** (G5S, comprised of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger)[iv] developed a regional guide to help its members align their national P/CVE action plans (NAPs) with the threats.[72] The document calls for national legislation on P/CVE and emphasises, according to West African local stakeholders, "the inclusion and participation of non-state stakeholders including CSOs, the private sector, organisations of academics, and faith-based organisations" in P/CVE approaches.[73] The G5 Sahel also works to ensure the NAPs are developed in accordance with international best practices. It has also set up a Regional Cell for the Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (CELLRAD) with units in every member country, with each then supposed to set up local units in all their regions or municipalities.[74] There is little evidence that any of these local units have been established.

Many of these bodies experience stove-piping, in which information and resources may flow well vertically and as applied to a particular problem, but struggle to achieve wider, more horizontal reach. This has impeded the full leverage of potentially promising, broader violence prevention initiatives. An example of this is ECOWAS' conflict prevention early-warning framework, and its ongoing efforts to establish a fully integrated and functional early-warning system within its members. Between 2015 and 2021, the ECOWAS Commission helped establish National Centres for the Coordination of the Response Mechanism (NCCRM) in five pilot countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Mali and Liberia. Additional centres are being established in Benin, Senegal, Niger and Cape Verde. Yet, to date, there has been little discussion of how these systems can be leveraged for P/CVE purposes as well.

[iv] While still officially known as the G5 Sahel, Mali announced its withdrawal from the G5S in May 2022.

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There is also little coordination within the multilateral ecosystem. East and West Africa are littered with multilateral bodies, platforms, frameworks and initiatives and the limited coordination among them has led to confusion and, in some cases, duplication of efforts. Within the same week in June 2022, for example, UNOCT and the GCTF's West Africa Capacity-Building Working Group, with support from UNODC, convened regional conferences focused on addressing violent extremism in West Africa.[75]

Moreover, P/CVE-related multilateral efforts tend to be dominated by national-level — and primarily security — actors and thus fail to reflect the perspectives of local governments. Local authorities are rarely consulted in the development of regional or sub-regional plans and programmes related to P/CVE and are rarely the beneficiaries of training or other capacity-building assistance related to their implementation.[76]

NATIONAL LEVEL

At a national level, virtually all governments across the continent have embraced the rhetoric of prevention. Many of them have benefited from the increased attention donors and multilateral bodies have given to P/CVE and related training and capacity-building opportunities. UNDP alone has worked with more than 20 African countries on developing P/CVE frameworks and programmes.[77] Nevertheless, most countries continue to prioritise (in terms of political support and resources) the security dimensions of the response to the threat. For the most part, national governments are reluctant to share responsibility with local actors over what they consider a security issue, and therefore falls within the exclusive remit of the central government. For this and other reasons, it should not come as a surprise that only a small number of countries in Africa have developed national P/CVE strategies and/or action plans outlining whole-of-society approaches and elaborating the ways in which local actors and national governments can work together. Even fewer have complementary local frameworks in place. See for overviews of the progress of developing NAPs in West Africa and East and Southern Africa.

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PROGRESS OF NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR P/CVE

West Africa[78]

1 Benin:
No national P/CVE strategy reportedly part of the counter-terrorism strategy, however ongoing efforts to develop one since 2020.[79]

Benin has established the High Level Committee for the Fight against Terrorism and Insecurity at Borders (CLTIF), which is charged with implementing its strategy.

2 Burkina Faso:
National P/CVE strategy and action plan validated with support from USAID.

In Burkina Faso, the newly created Ministry of National Reconciliation and Social Cohesion has the mandate to mobilise stakeholders for the implementation of the national P/CVE strategy.

3 Cabo Verde:
No national P/CVE action plan.

4 Côte d'Ivoire:
No national P/CVE action plan.[80]

5 The Gambia:
No national P/CVE strategy or action plan.

6 Ghana:
Has a framework on P/CVE but kept at the higher levels with no national action plans.

Ghana has established a National Counter Terrorism Unit under the Ministry of National Security. This body collaborates with departments and agencies that form the "Joint Intelligence Community".

7 Guinea:
No national P/CVE strategy.

8 Guinea Bissau:
No national P/CVE strategy.

9 Liberia:
No publicly available national P/CVE action plan.

10 Mali:
National P/CVE strategy and action plan developed since 2017 under the tutelage of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

11 Niger:
National P/CVE strategy and action plan validated with support from USAID.

In Niger, the National Centre for the Coordination of Early Warning and Response Mechanism to Security Risks (CNAP) has been created and placed under the office of the President. It aims to develop synergies between agencies in the fight against insecurity and organised crime, and to monitor, evaluate and coordinate the response implementation among State services, communities and national and international CSOs.

12 Nigeria:
Policy framework and national P/CVE action plan developed since 2018.[81]

13 Senegal:
No national P/CVE strategy.

Senegal's Centre for Advanced Studies in Defence and Security (CHEDS), a research and policy-oriented body under the Office of the President, developed an Inter-Ministerial Framework for Intervention and Coordination of Counter-Terrorism in 2016 to coordinate the government's response to violent extremism and terrorism. Although Senegal is yet to develop its P/CVE Strategy or action plan, the CHEDS has carried out some capacity efforts and collaborates with other stakeholders on P/CVE.

14 Sierra Leone:
No national P/CVE strategy.

15 Togo:
P/CVE strategy developed (validated on 6 July 2022).

In 2019, Togo established an Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Prevention and Fight against Violent Extremism (CIPLEV).

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PROGRESS OF NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR P/CVE
East and Southern Africa[82]

1 Burundi:
No national action plan on P/CVE.

2 Djibouti:
P/CVE action plan reportedly completed and validated in 2020.

3 Ethiopia:
National action plan on P/CVE in development since 2018.[83]

4 Kenya:
The national strategy for CVEfirst launched in September 2016. Review ongoing to develop revised version.

Kenya presents a good practice for local government involvement in P/CVE, with the CAPs managed by CEFs. The first CAPs (Kwale, then Mombasa) were launched in 2017. A total of 10 counties have since completed their respective plans, which stipulated P/CVE agenda over a five-year period.

5 Mozambique:
No national P/CVE action plan.

In Mozambique, where the government is remarkably centralised and confusion reigns over the delineation of the mandates of the Governor and Secretary of State, coordination of any government work at the local level is weak, let alone that involving P/CVE specifically.

6 Rwanda:
No publicly available national action plan on P/CVE.

Rwanda has a Ministry of Local Government. A non-governmental voluntary membership organisation, the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA), also helps to coordinate the work of the 30 districts of Rwanda.

7 Somalia:
The national strategy and action plan was endorsed by the President in 2017.

In Somalia, fraught relationships between Federal Member States and the national government have made consistency between national and local efforts challenging. However, mechanisms for converting the national strategy into local action have been designed, at least on paper. The P/CVE coordination unit at a national level should steer, regulate and convene a cluster of individual focal points at the regional level, appointed and empowered by each respective Federal Member State president.

8 South Sudan:
No action plan on P/CVE.

In South Sudan, the national government has established a local government board and local government ministries, as well as an advisor on decentralisation at the presidency level.

9 Tanzania:
National P/CVE strategy in development since 2017, with support from the UNDP.

10 Uganda:
National P/CVE strategy completed but not yet launched.

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Many national governments do not fully appreciate the complementary role that can be played by a whole-of-society P/CVE framework that is underpinned by a 'do no harm' approach. Where national frameworks exist, they are typically aligned with regional or global frameworks. They are not informed by local voices and are thus disconnected from reality in the field, or are inaccessible and challenging for local authorities to contextualise and apply.[84] Moreover, existing frameworks are thus far based primarily on perspectives of the threat from those based in capitals, with national government ministries creating these frameworks. The strategies tend to overlook the hyper-local, context-specific challenges that drive extremism in remote parts of the country and the dynamics that allow extremist groups to move between urban and rural areas.[85]

Further, security actors have generally spearheaded the development and overseen the implementation of these plans, with military or other security personnel populating those parts of government with responsibility for counter-terrorism and P/CVE. As a result, many officials working on P/CVE have 'hard' security backgrounds and may lack a comprehensive understanding of P/CVE. In some cases, however, these same security actors have seen the limitations of a military-dominated approach to addressing violent extremist threats in Africa over the past two decades and can be compelling advocates for increased focus on addressing the underlying drivers of the violence and on prevention more broadly.[86]

Implementation of National Frameworks

Implementation of NAPs relies almost entirely on international donor support. Given that they are faced with more urgent structural, systemic or imminent security challenges, many governments give low priority to prevention. Moreover, platforms to coordinate implementation, particularly between national and local actors, are few and far between.

Many national governments that lack national P/CVE frameworks have nevertheless implemented and/or benefited from discrete P/CVE programmes, generally with funding from international donors. These include ones focused on building trust between law enforcement and local communities, strengthening community cohesion, providing peaceful alternatives for vulnerable youth, and activities that address the specific needs of women and girls at risk from violent extremism.[87]

Barriers

Although there has been some P/CVE progress at the national level in different parts of Africa, barriers to further and sustained progress remain. Perhaps the most significant one is the insufficient attention given to addressing the drivers of violence for which the central government bears a degree of responsibility. This includes heavy-handed policing and other repressive security measures often taken in the name of counter-terrorism, inadequate service provision, corruption (which undermines trust in government), marginalisation of

certain parts of the country and youth alienation. In addition, there is a reluctance to allow for meaningful involvement of local actors, including cities and the mayors who lead them, in the development and implementation of P/CVE frameworks and programmes, despite the vital role they play on the ground. This overly centralised approach "limits the authority of local actors and produces an imbalance in the power dynamics between the national government and local decision-makers". [88]

As in other parts of the world, there is also the tendency for governments in Africa to treat extremist violence differently from other forms of violence and conflict, when in fact it shares similarities both in terms of the drivers and the most effective responses. This perception is shared by local stakeholders from across the continent who were consulted for this report. It has contributed to creating an agenda that sits precariously between the security and development spaces, typically with distinct, siloed policy frameworks and programmes. The response to violent extremism has not been situated within a wider set of approaches that have had a long history in Africa (e.g., reducing conflict and violence and building peace), which could inform how to best tackle extremism. Moreover, such an integrated approach, partly due to this familiarity across the continent, is more likely to be embraced by local communities than a distinct P/CVE one, which is frequently seen as a Western concept and which may not align with the needs of local communities. If perceived as foreign, it is unlikely that local communities will ever feel that they genuinely own P/CVE efforts. Evidence shows that P/CVE is neither effective nor sustainable in isolation and that integrating P/CVE into this wider agenda should be a priority.[89]

CIVIL SOCIETY

Globally, multilateral actors and international donors are increasingly aware of the hyper-localised nature of extremist threats in Africa, the need to focus more attention on addressing its local drivers, and the limitations of national governments in doing so. They are also aware of the comparative advantages that local CSOs in conflict-affected and fragile states have in P/CVE efforts, particularly given their experience working in related fields such as peacebuilding, human rights, youth engagement, women's empowerment, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and conflict prevention. As such, local CSOs across the continent have been among the primary beneficiaries of the international community's P/CVE push in recent years. Hundreds if not thousands of local CSOs in Africa — many of which had no prior experience working on issues related to violent extremism — have received training, funding and other support over the last decade to enable them to deliver on their P/CVE comparative advantages. These include having unparalleled knowledge of local conditions, having trust and access within communities in ways that national actors and multilateral organisations may not, and often being the first to observe early indicators of radicalisation to violent extremism and to respond in the aftermath of an attack or crisis. They can provide a safe space for constructive engagement between the state and citizens, and facilitate civic participation. They have a willingness and ability to be innovative and

flexible in identifying and tackling emerging issues, often long before governments are aware or willing to address them.[90]

As a result, investments have been directed to capacitating small CSOs to deliver P/CVE programmes. These include donor contributions to GCERF (which has provided funding and training to dozens of community-based organisations in a number of countries across the continent),[v] the development of regional[91] and national[92] networks for sharing and learning among the growing numbers of CSOs in the P/CVE space, and encouraging national governments to promote a whole-of-society approach to prevention that includes an important role for civil society. As a result of this attention, a growing number of national governments in Africa, particularly in West Africa, have recognised the importance of engaging civil society, in one form or another, in the development and implementation of their national P/CVE frameworks.[vi] This has led to an uptick in P/CVE activities implemented by local CSOs.[93] The increased willingness of governments in Africa to include a role for civil society in their P/CVE thinking may signal a shift, albeit a modest one, away from the centralised approach to addressing terrorism across the continent which has dominated much of the past two decades.

However, some caution is warranted. Governments appear willing to work with CSOs so long as they do not interfere with their agenda and so long as these activities are funded by international donors rather than tight government budgets. There is little indication that capitals are willing to divert even a small portion of their budgets towards this activity. A number of local stakeholders consulted as part of this mapping initiative commented that in many of the countries where national governments allow donor funding to support CSO-led P/CVE – as a way to demonstrate their support for the international P/CVE agenda without any costs – those same governments are shrinking civic space, often in the name of security.[94] Further, some CSOs have shared that rather than a genuine devolution of responsibility down to the local level, national governments are co-opting CSOs, including by using them to convey specific (state-approved) messages, for example about the threat and the state's strategy for addressing it.[95] There is also the issue of the extent to which local CSOs have the relevant knowledge and understanding of violent extremism (including why and how it is manifesting itself in their communities) to be able to design and deliver tailored P/CVE-related programmes, or whether they are simply relabelling traditional development programmes in order to attract donor funds.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is the disconnect between P/CVE policies and programmes. On the one hand, CSOs are implementing projects in different sub-regions of Africa that involve "vocational training and skills development, education, promoting tolerance and peace between communities, raising awareness, and providing individuals with psycho-

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[v] GCERF has funded CSO-led P/CVE projects in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Tunisia. https://www.gcerf.org/

[vi] For example, civil society representatives were involved in the development of national P/CVE frameworks in Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Togo.

social support".[96] On the other hand, their governments are doing little to address the structural factors that drive much of the violence in those contexts, which include marginalisation of certain communities, human rights abuses, and lack of job opportunities. This continued disconnect undermines the impact of CSO-led activities and the progress they can make in preventing and countering violent extremism across the continent.

CITIES AND OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

As noted above, despite the increasing attention being given to the role of local CSOs in P/CVE across much of Africa, local governments — whether urban centres or border villages — have largely been overlooked. Although they are the most vulnerable to and most likely to suffer the consequences of violent extremism when it appears, cities and other local authorities are yet to be leveraged across much of the continent. This remains the case despite their numerous comparative advantages in preventing the threat from escalating in the first place,

For example, with the threat increasingly localised, local governments, by virtue of their proximity and access to local communities, are well positioned to recognise and understand the hyper-local contexts that extremists exploit. Because of this understanding, they can prepare contextual analyses to inform national P/CVE frameworks to ensure they reflect the often-varied local realities within a particular country. They are also best placed to help translate national frameworks into local action, bring greater coherence to often siloed, locally led prevention initiatives, and build closer alignment between such initiatives and a national P/CVE framework.

With access (or potential access) to these services and local leaders, local authorities can conduct mapping exercises, consulting with local actors to chart both the threat and their needs and capacities to respond proportionately. Access to these services allows local authorities to bring a social well-being and community cohesion focus to a set of challenges that are typically viewed through the central government's national security lens. Policies and programmes with such an emphasis are more likely to gain traction with the often-marginalised communities that are the most susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment to groups that espouse violence.[97]

Local authorities are also well-positioned to identify and give early warnings of situations that may escalate to violence. Their ability to develop and promote a local identity that embraces all tribes and ethnicities within a particular locality can help build resilience and strengthen community cohesion by making citizens feel connected to one another and fostering trust in local government institutions. They can access and bring together local services from housing, education, vocational training, social welfare, recreation, religion, sports and culture as part of a comprehensive effort to prevent violent extremism and related threats of concern to local communities. Their ability to situate P/CVE within an existing local violence prevention or

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safeguarding framework can avoid the over-securitisation trap that national governments can fall into when they exceptionalise the threat through a siloed response. They can also develop tailored programmes that address local drivers of extremism that 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, while avoiding the stigmatisation often associated with similar programs designed and delivered by national-level actors.[vii]

Despite these comparative advantages, as well as the growing recognition of the need for tailored, localised approaches to address extremist and related challenges, examples of city or other local authority involvement in P/CVE in Africa are few and far between. This stands in stark contrast to the numerous examples of their involvement in addressing other forms of violence — including gang- and gender-based — as well as peacebuilding and resilience building in Africa.[viii]

There are, however, some isolated examples of cities or other local authorities developing and implementing policies or programmes with direct implications on violent extremist and related threats. This includes:

- In Nigeria, **Kano State** has elaborated a comprehensive framework and put in place mechanisms aimed at holistically addressing violent extremism. These include a joint task force to facilitate coordination among the security and paramilitary personnel working across the state, a strategic communications centre, and a platform to enable cooperation among the various stakeholders involved in community-policing initiatives.[98]

- **Kaduna State's Peace Commission (KAPECOM)** offers avenues for mitigating the state's acute security threat. These include programmes that promote tolerance and peaceful resolution of intercommunal conflict. They encourage "cooperation and dialogue among local stakeholders, helping to elevate community concerns such as access to shrinking land resources and deteriorating socio-economic conditions before community m turn to violence. Such forms of dialogue and engagement, likewise, aim to reduce criminal activities and militant Islamist recruitment."[99]

- In **Niger**, the Governor of Diffa has worked with international partners and local leaders to set up a de-radicalisation programme that encouraged defectors from Boko Haram and prepared ex-combatants for reintegration into society. With the support and buy-in of local traditional chiefs and community radio stations, the Governor sent the message

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[vii] This could include community-focused and other early prevention and resilience-building activities and evidence-based, non-discriminatory multi-disciplinary support and intervention programs that involve local practitioners and focus on 'at risk' individuals.

[viii] Other forms of violence include hate-motivated violence, human rights violations, intercommunal violence, violent protests and riots.

that defectors would be protected. This led to over 180 people, including defectors and their family members, opting for the de-radicalisation camp in Goudoumaria.[100]

- **Kolofata**, a city in Cameroon near the Lake Chad Basin, led by a mayor who himself was captured and held by Boko Haram militants, created a "vigilance committee" supported by tribal elders and led by civilians to serve as an early warning mechanism for militant activity nearby.[101]

There are also examples where local authorities have developed broader initiatives to reinforce good governance and contribute to strengthening the trust with local communities that makes it more difficult for extremism and hate to take root within them. These include the participatory and transparent budgeting process run by the Kano State in Nigeria, which provides opportunities for local citizens to influence the spending priorities of their local government and then hold it accountable.[102] In Ouagadougou, the city brings together actors from different communities to connect with each other, voice their concerns and build trust with local government and across different communities.[103]

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Kenya

Kenya offers perhaps the only good practice across the continent, and among the few globally, for how to systematically involve local government – or counties, in the Kenyan context – in P/CVE. As part of a wider decentralisation effort, the Kenyan government tasked all 47 county governments to develop County Actions Plans (CAPs). These aim to reflect local concerns and priorities that might not be captured in the national framework and to avoid imposing a one-size-fits-all framework on localities with varying threats and needs. Importantly, the CAPs have subsequently informed Kenya's national strategy to ensure the approach remains sensitive to hyper-local needs and threats.[104]

Each CAP is managed by a multi-stakeholder County Engagement Forum (CEF), co-led by the elected county governor and county commissioner, who is appointed by the national government. The first CAPs (Kwale, then Mombasa) were launched in 2017 and ten counties have now completed their respective plans, with each outlining a five-year agenda.[105] Following the January 2019 al-Shabaab attack against the Riverside complex in Nairobi, the president directed the remaining 37 counties to develop Rapid CAPs (RCAPs).[106] The RCAPs, which were not developed following the same consultative process as the CAPs, contain one-year plans and are focused on each county's most urgent priorities.[ix]

The multi-stakeholder CEFs are intended to serve as steering committees that bring together national and local government actors, civil society, the private sector, religious leaders, traditional elders, youth groups and women's groups.[107] Although they have sought to bring together the national and county government with civil society,[108] the structure and composition of county-level actors in the P/CVE space vary depending on the county.[x] The County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and county budgets are important to CAP implementation as they provide an avenue to mainstream CAP activities into other financially resourced strategies.[109]

[ix] There are three generations of CAPs in Kenya. The first-generation CAPs were developed in the coastal counties – particularly Kwale, Mombasa and Lamu – in 2017. They were five-year plans. The second-generation CAPs were developed in 2018 in the remaining coastal counties, counties of North East bordering Somalia and other at-risk counties such as Isiolo and Marsabit. These CAPs were developed based on the guidelines provided by National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC). The third-generation CAPs were developed in 2019 following a Presidential Directive. They were rapidly developed, and hence are sometimes called RCAPs. They were mainly one-year plans. See Ben Crisman et al., 2020; Patricia Crosby and Dominic Pkalya, 2021: 45.

[x] For example, while in Mombasa, Nairobi and Kwale, civil society plays a key role at the centre of the information sharing network, P/CVE in Nyeri is much more centralised, with most sharing through county government. *See* USAID, "Countering Violent Extremism: Governance and Communications Strategy Paper," 2022, forthcoming.

Mombasa has been among the most active counties in the P/CVE arena, thanks in part to a governor who took a personal interest in the issue and thus ensured the necessary county resources were made available to facilitate implementation of its CAP on the ground. The comprehensive CAP includes pillars focused on good governance, public safety and protection, peacebuilding and cohesion, youth economic empowerment, and rehabilitation and rehabilitation. In addition, the county has established a dedicated P/CVE unit with a P/CVE focal point, created a fund that provides small grants to youth who want to start businesses, works regularly with local CSOs on various CAP-implementation projects, and participated in P/CVE city exchanges with Kristiansand, Norway (focused on prevention and resilience building among local youth, implementation of local P/CVE action plans, and multi-agency cooperation).[110] Wherever possible, the county government has sought to situate this agenda within wider efforts to build resilience and enhance social cohesion across the county.

Related to this last point, several counties in Kenya are in the process of passing 'peace and cohesion bills' in their county assemblies. These bills include, among other things, references to the CAPs or P/CVE initiatives. They have helpfully framed these issues in ways that are more likely to attract and sustain interest from local elected officials, county commissioners and others, and potentially create more opportunities for county funding for CAPs than, for example, by framing this as a set of security issues.[111]

Despite the progress in Mombasa and some other counties, implementation of the CAPs faces several challenges across the country, which should be taken into consideration if and when other parts of the continent look to replicate at least some elements of the Kenyan model. These include:

- **Funding**, given that the national government has not provided counties with any resources for P/CVE. This is particularly so where the governor has not prioritised P/CVE in the county budget. As a result, CAP implementation efforts have too often relied on donor funding.
- A second and related challenge centres on how **security remains a function exclusively of the national government**, with counties allowed only to engage in prevention activities in the non-security space. However, the lines between the security and prevention spheres can get blurred, with countering al-Shabaab framed as a security matter and P/CVE poorly understood among county officials. As a result, some county governments remain uncertain as to how they should interact with the CAPs and "whether they should be dedicating limited county funds towards something that may be the preserve of the national authorities".[112]
- A third involves **staffing**, with implementation often dependent on the personalities assigned to the relevant county government positions.[113] Personnel changes, particularly at the senior level, can result in implementation stagnation.[114]

P/CVE in Africa: Exceptionalism vs. Mainstreaming

One recurring theme raised throughout stakeholder consultations concerned the most appropriate entry point for local authorities to become involved in whole-of-society efforts to address violent extremism in their country. On the one hand, multilateral organisations and international donors continue to emphasise P/CVE and the importance of developing national P/CVE strategies and action plans and to invest in local P/CVE projects. However, there is also an awareness of the sensitivities and challenges associated with the P/CVE agenda, particularly when one tries to operationalise at a local level.[115]

Although multilateral bodies and national governments have developed a distinct set of frameworks, policies and programmes to address rising violent extremist threats, the threats themselves are increasingly connected with other threats and challenges on the ground, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile states. As noted earlier, it has become ever more difficult to disentangle extremist violence from other forms of violence and criminality, including gender-based and gang violence, banditry and kidnappings. Further, much of this violence is driven by similar factors. Local authority policies and programmes that enhance good governance, promote civic participation (particularly by young people), ensure accountability for human rights violations, improve service delivery, foster trust between local government and their citizens (particularly the most marginalised communities), and promote a sense of local identity can all help build social cohesion and strengthen resilience, reducing the lure of extremist groups.[xi]

Given this, some local stakeholders have argued that local authority contributions should not be attached to addressing the specific threat of violent extremism, but rather integrated into existing violence prevention, community safeguarding and/or resilience-building efforts. Among the reasons cited include the perception by some that it is too closely linked to counter-terrorism and national security objectives, as well as conceptual ambiguity around and potential stigma associated with involvement in P/CVE. Certain ethnic or religious groups may feel unfairly targeted by policies and programmes labelled as P/CVE, and fear repercussions from either national security apparatuses or the violent extremist groups themselves. Thus, it was argued that the less local authority contributions are seen through an explicit P/CVE prism, the more likely cities will be able to leverage their comparative advantages, which centre on social, health, education, housing, culture, sports, youth and other non-security matters. Practitioners and service providers in these fields will be nervous about having their work securitised and thus local authorities might find it more difficult to leverage these existing resources if they insist on applying a P/CVE label to their efforts.

[xi] Other common approaches to address extremism, hate and polarisation highlighted by stakeholders include community resilience building, conflict mediation, economic development, education and tolerance, human rights, peacebuilding, strengthening democracy and promoting inclusive politics, and violence prevention.

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While taking the above into account, local stakeholders have nevertheless underscored how, before entering the P/CVE arena, local authorities should first understand the ideological aspects of violent extremism that can make efforts to steer young people away from it more complicated than other forms of violence. Moreover, they need to be aware of the particular extremist milieu in their local environment — and how it manifests — so that they are in a position to identify early signs of it emerging or spreading among its citizens and communities. Finally, local authorities need to make sure that those involved in the design or delivery of relevant city-level violence prevention or community-safeguarding policies or programmes — to which a P/CVE dimension could be added — have this understanding and awareness as well.

Evidence shows that P/CVE is neither effective nor sustainable in isolation and more attention is being given to mainstreaming P/CVE into existing governance and peacebuilding initiatives. Donors are being encouraged to situate the P/CVE programmes they fund within comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approaches where possible, or to ensure more traditional development programmes incorporate P/CVE sensitivities. As in other aspects of P/CVE across Africa, Kenya is proving to be a pioneer in this mainstreaming effort. In May 2022, the National Counter-Terrorism Centre hosted a workshop "to explore ways in which a P/CVE lens could be applied to existing governance initiatives. Representatives from national and local government, the private sector, religious leaders, affirmative action funds and civil society discussed how they could better include those most at risk of radicalisation and recruitment in their work to adopt a more sustainable approach to P/CVE."[116]

City Spotlight:
Cape Town, South Africa

Threat: Gang violence is a major source of insecurity in the city of Cape Town, with 49% of homicides perpetrated by gangs. Like other types of violent groups on the continent, gangs offer young people a sense of identity and purpose. Although violent extremism is not currently considered a priority for the city, there is increasing concern about the rise in xenophobic attacks around the country, and officials believe preventive measures should be put in place to mitigate against this escalating further.

Response: The city has several violence reduction frameworks and programs in place, which include the Mayor's urban regeneration programme and the City's Risk Reduction Strategy. It has adopted approaches from other cities, including Sacramento (a trust-building programme where high-risk youth spend a weekend with metro police). Cape Town has additionally established a monthly forum that makes city officials more accessible to the citizens they serve, strengthening trust with local communities by enabling the latter to share their needs and concerns on a regular basis. Officials have also taken steps to establish a P/CVE strategy, which proposes the establishment of a directorate that will, among other activities, develop and deploy communications campaigns to counteract extremist messaging, youth-oriented interventions, build community partnerships, and conduct research to better understand the threat locally and across the region.

Needs/Priorities: Cape Town officials believe that cities across South Africa could benefit from a better understanding of the extremist threat landscape in and around their communities and the roles that cities can play (and responsibilities they have) in P/CVE, including by leveraging and learning lessons from existing crime and violence prevention frameworks and approaches. They also believe that a P/CVE toolkit for cities in South Africa and the wider region is needed to help them operationalise these roles and fulfil these responsibilities.

AFRICAN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND P/CVE
Challenges and Needs

Challenges

Extremism is spreading across the continent, more communities are feeling threatened, and the limitations of a centralised, militarised response are becoming clearer. As such, representatives of local authorities consulted in this mapping initiative expressed an interest in becoming meaningfully involved in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, including in ways outlined in the previous section.[117] This is despite being largely overlooked by national, regional and international stakeholders when it comes to the P/CVE agenda.

Highly Centralised/Security-focused Approach

Deepening the involvement of local authorities in P/CVE and related efforts requires overcoming numerous barriers. Perhaps the most basic one is that the overwhelming majority of central governments across the continent continue to exert tight control over security issues, viewing threats related to terrorism and violent extremism within their exclusive domain. As such, most central governments do not consider their local counterparts to be partners in addressing the violent extremist threats that continue to spread.

In fact, this highly militarised approach, which characterises the response of a number of national governments and which some have argued has done more to exacerbate than mitigate the threats, leaves little room for local authorities and other non-security actors in practice. For example, even though governments like Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria have openly advocated for the whole-of-society approach reflected in the UN PVE Plan of Action, "there is confusion, especially in Nigeria, over the extent to which civil society and local government can become involved in some P/CVE initiatives. Under Nigeria's devolved system, security is a function of

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central government, and the government is often reluctant to share information regarding security issues with those at state level, especially with States whose governors are from the opposition."[118]

As mentioned earlier, similar confusion exists in some parts of Kenya and in Ghana, where local authorities remain desensitised to the threat of violent extremism and their role in P/CVE, perceiving it as either a foreign threat or as a security issue that the national government is responsible for addressing. In short, the more the national response to violent extremism and the framing of P/CVE remains highly securitised – and closely connected with counter-terrorism – the more difficult it will be for local authorities to see their role in P/CVE. Local authority representatives and other local stakeholders consulted in this initiative expressed the view that the more P/CVE can be seen as part of local governments' existing responsibility to safeguard their communities, rather than an explicit security matter, the more likely both central and local authorities will see a role for the latter in P/CVE.[119]

Lack of Mandate for Local Authority Involvement in P/CVE

This leads to a second and related barrier: few local governments are provided or otherwise believe they have a mandate to contribute to P/CVE, with national governments often lacking trust in local authorities (particularly when their mayor or governor is from the opposition party) to engage in what central governments consider a security matter.[120] In select cases, for example Kenya and Nigeria, the central government has either devolved responsibility for non-law enforcement-related prevention (Kenya) or recognised the role of sub-national governments in P/CVE (Nigeria). Both the Burkinabe and Nigerian governments encourage sub-national authorities to develop their own P/CVE plans to suit the needs and priorities of their towns and communities. However, this encouragement is not followed with resources or guidance, and it does not appear that any such local plans have yet emerged. Even in Kenya, despite this devolution, only ten counties have developed CAPs.[121]

In general, according to some local stakeholders, the centralised, 'top-down' governance model across much of the continent has given rise to passive local governance in many countries, such as Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal, where "local actors are said to be weak, ill-equipped and unable to implement the national government's P/CVE directives or policies".[122]

Lack of Consultation with Local Authorities

In the rare instance where a mandate has been given to local governments, this is often done without consulting them beforehand. For example, most African states that have a national P/CVE policy framework, following international best practice, formed a national steering committee to lead the development process as well as to implement the plan through a "cross-cutting, multi-stakeholder national campaign".[123] However, there are few, if any,

examples, where representatives of local authorities are included in any of these processes. The committees and the related consultations have more typically involved a diversity of national-level and civil society actors.

The tendency is for those responsible for P/CVE at the national level — typically security actors — to consider their local counterparts relevant only in the aftermath of a terrorist attack or otherwise when the threat of violent extremism is acute.[124] However, they are most relevant when it comes to *prevention*, which includes both leveraging their early-warning capabilities and building community cohesion and resilience to help mitigate the damage to the city's social fabric following an attack.

Lack of Resources

Then there is the challenge of a lack of resources, which is heightened in typically under-serviced, smaller rural and border areas that are far away from the capital but where the threats are now the greatest. Competition for limited resources across the continent is growing, the security sector continues to receive most of the funds from national budgets for addressing rising terrorist threats, and international donors and development actors continue to prioritise support for locally led P/CVE activities (primarily activities involving civil society rather than local governments). With national governments assuming that P/CVE funding can be outsourced to international actors, it should come as little surprise that central governments are spending few, if any, of their own funds on P/CVE, let alone allocating them to local actors, whether civil society or governments.[125]

For their part, according to a number of local government representatives consulted in this mapping exercise, local authorities would be more likely to dedicate some of the limited resources they control and to leverage existing resources or programmes to support the tailored implementation of the national P/CVE framework on the ground if they have been engaged in the development and have a sense of ownership of the framework. This is rarely the case, however.

Limited National-Local Cooperation

A further challenge centres on overcoming the barriers to cooperation between national and local P/CVE actors across much of the continent (and the globe).[126] These barriers include a general lack of coordination, and clear processes for facilitating such cooperation, between local and national levels. This gap is particularly evident with processes like information-sharing, where central governments seem reluctant to share relevant data on threats with local authorities because the former considers them to be matters of national security. The ability of local authorities to respond to the threat, especially in the immediate aftermath of an attack, is often slowed down by insufficient and unclear information-sharing protocols and processes between national and local authorities.

In some contexts, like Sudan and Mozambique, there are few, if any, mechanisms to facilitate interaction between national and local government stakeholders. Although many of the small number of African states that have developed national P/CVE frameworks have set up committees to facilitate implementation, including at the local level, most still only exist on paper. Further, although a number of countries, including Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, have national agencies to facilitate coordination with and among local and regional governments in general, their remits rarely include P/CVE, given the tendency for it to be under the tight control of national security agencies.[127]

Lack of Trust

Lack of trust between central and local government is another barrier to the increased involvement of the latter in P/CVE. Levels of trust between national and local government are likely to be lower where there is a popular local leader, particularly from an opposition party that central government officials view as a threat to the 'status quo'.[128] National-local trust deficits appear to be most significant where law enforcement (often deployed by and reporting to the national government) has been involved in or accused of abuses in local communities, including looting, extortion, threats and violence. Moreover, security actors have been accused of engaging with communities to gather information about particular threats or individuals of concern rather than to exchange ideas and build meaningful relationships. Frequent redeployment of security personnel is also perceived to be an obstacle to establishing trust and healthy relationships with communities.[129] These trust deficits and efforts to address them are well-documented across the continent.[130]

One of the comparative advantages that local authorities have in P/CVE stems from their proximity to and understanding of local communities, and thus the ability to access them in ways their national counterparts cannot. However, their ability to tap into this advantage is seriously compromised where young people from historically marginalised communities feel detached and distrustful of local and national government institutions — in particular, law enforcement. In these contexts, youth are less likely to share concerns with local authorities about specific individuals who show signs of radicalisation to violence and may be hesitant to work with those authorities to steer them down a peaceful path.

Similarly, the tendency in many localities across the continent for young people (and other citizens) to feel excluded from government-led discussions about insecurities in their communities and how to address them, contributes to the trust deficit and makes it less likely that they will want to support any city-led P/CVE efforts. [131]

Capacity, Expertise and Confidence Deficits

Finally, there are challenges related to addressing capacity, expertise and confidence shortfalls that many local authorities across the continent face. As noted earlier, local officials, particularly in remote border areas, often lack access to central government data that can help them better understand the extremist threats in their communities, including their connection with other threats and vulnerabilities. In general, local authorities remain desensitised to the threat of violent extremism and their role in P/CVE, perceiving it as either a foreign threat or as a typical (exclusively) security issue.

Related to this, local governments, both at the policy and practitioner or service provider level, typically lack the expertise to understand the ideological and other dimensions of violent extremism that differentiate it from other forms of violence and that would need to be reflected in any local policy, programme and/or intervention aimed at addressing the threat, whether as part of a stand-alone P/CVE effort or mainstreamed into a broader violence prevention or community safeguarding initiative. Moreover, their current lack of access to global, regional, sub-regional, and, for the most part, national P/CVE workshops and forums makes it difficult for local authorities to learn about relevant P/CVE good practice, let alone how to tailor and apply it to their specific context.[132]

Overall, local authorities' confidence that they can make a meaningful contribution to P/CVE is likely to be influenced by whether their involvement is seen through a security lens (in which cities are less likely to view themselves as relevant) or a prevention or community safeguarding lens.

NEEDS

The P/CVE needs of local authorities across the continent vary depending on many factors. These include their proximity to the capital and/or the border, population composition and density, relationship with the central government, cooperation with local communities, current resource and capacity levels, and, of course, the nature of the threat. The requirements of megacities and border villages to contribute to whole-of-society P/CVE efforts will differ. However, throughout this mapping initiative, consultations with a range of local authorities and other stakeholders in Africa revealed several needs, which are shared by many local governments across the continent to one degree or another.

These include:

- **Providing inputs** into and **otherwise being consulted** on the development of national, regional and continent-wide strategies and plans in P/CVE to mitigate extremist violence and related threats. The more these frameworks reflect the concerns of local

leaders and practitioners (including from rural contexts and border communities, given how their perspectives and priorities differ from urban centres), the more likely they are to prioritise local implementation.

- **Addressing the disconnect** between existing multilateral and national-level frameworks and strategies and the local application of these structures. This disconnect is due, in large part, to an incompatibility between those frameworks and specific, local contexts.

- A **mandate** from the central government on their role(s) in P/CVE and clarity on where it is appropriate for them to act alone versus where they need to consult with their national counterparts before doing so.

- **Awareness raising** on and **understanding** of the nature of violent extremist threats within their communities, the ways in which they differ from but intersect with other forms of violent/criminal activity, the variety of contributions that local authorities can make to addressing these threats, and how to build relationships with other stakeholders (including national government officials, civil society, private sector and grassroots activists, and their citizens) around issues related to extremism and hate that can lead to violence.[135]

- **Enhanced knowledge** about effective local authority-led approaches and good practices, and awareness of how and when to leverage existing institutions and programmes.

- **Training and other capacity-building**, including for mayors and other local leaders, on the role they can play in spearheading the development of new or tailoring of existing local policies and programmes for P/CVE. This should extend to municipal workers (e.g., housing, health, social, youth, sports and cultural) to give them the necessary understanding of violent extremism and P/CVE. This will allow them to either mainstream P/CVE issues into existing initiatives or develop new, tailored, multi-disciplinary and other P/CVE activities – all without securitising their work or that of their agency.

- **Skills** to enable local authorities to work with different community-based, non-governmental stakeholders such as religious, traditional, youth and other community leaders, youth groups, and women-led organisations. This will help them educate their citizens on tolerance and respect for diversity, and detect early signs of extremist narratives or ideologies.[133]

- **More effective NLC**, including through the involvement of local governments in regular dialogues with national government counterparts and other relevant P/CVE

stakeholders. This could be sustained through a mechanism or platform (whether formal or informal) and protocols to facilitate two-way information-sharing between national and local authorities, including as it relates to specific individuals and/or threats. Effective NLC will enable local authorities to fully leverage their prevention capabilities. It will also enable national governments to ensure their approaches to P/CVE reflect the changing local dynamics and needs in their country.

- **Multi-media toolkits** tailored to the needs of local authorities in different parts of the continent. These are required to build the expertise within and institutional capacities of cities and other local actors, to enable them to independently pursue successful approaches to P/CVE locally. It will also mitigate risks of the loss of experience and working knowledge that often follows elections (see pages 52 to 53 for what such a toolkit might include).

- **Networking opportunities** to expand and share local learnings on P/CVE with peers across the continent and globally, similar to the city-to-city sharing that is increasingly taking place on issues like climate change and economic growth. This will allow local authorities to get exposed to and, where appropriate, adopt and adapt good practices from other localities (see below more on city networks). When different cities are brought together, city officials and relevant stakeholders could be encouraged to develop practical and actionable recommendations and establish links between existing national frameworks and local applications.[149] Through its Regional Hub model (see page 56), the SCN is well placed to support such peer-learning opportunities.

City Networks
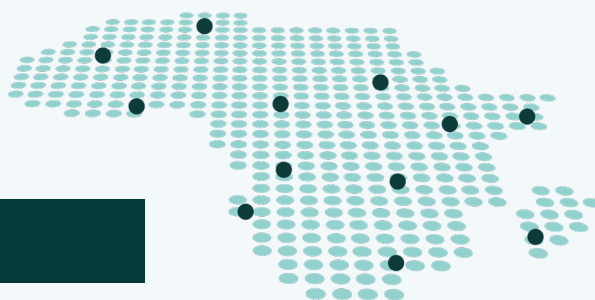
Africa has a number of existing city networks that facilitate sharing of lessons learned, good practices and challenges among localities across a range of issues of common concern. These include the East Africa Local Governments Association (EALGA),[138] which operates at a sub-regional level; national networks such as the ones in Burkina Faso, Gambia, Liberia, and Uganda;[139] and continent-wide ones that offer avenues for collaboration and platforms for networking to local governments across Africa, such as the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A).[143] These existing platforms could be leveraged to allow local government authorities to come together to discuss the extremist and related threats they are facing and how they as local authorities can contribute to addressing them.

- **Access to key multilateral bodies** responsible for coordinating global, continental and regional P/CVE responses, including in the UN, GCTF (particularly the GCTF East and West Africa Working Groups) and AU. This will help ensure that those responses incorporate the perspectives of local leaders and the cities and communities they represent.

- **Benefit from sustained support from key multilateral fora** to mitigate against risks of over-reliance on central governments for financial, logistical and human resources to engage in P/CVE. Often, without the support from central government or international organisations, local authorities struggle to develop and implement PVE programs successfully. Such support could include assisting local authorities in recognising and identifying their comparative advantages in P/CVE.

- **Be proactive** and take the initiative to convene local authorities in their jurisdiction and engage officials from other local authorities to outline the roles they envision playing in addressing violent extremism and related threats. Once there is a concrete plan in place, local authorities should proactively propose this way forward to central governments rather than waiting to be approached by the capital.

City Spotlight: Mansakonko, The Gambia

Threat: Intercommunal tensions and hostilities along ethnic, religious and tribal lines remain a key source of insecurity in Mansakonko and other local communities in the Gambia, in the wake of a 22-year dictatorship. According to local officials, marginalisation and lack of socio-economic opportunities, particularly for youth and women, are key drivers of radicalisation. As the city is a major transit corridor for the region, human trafficking and child abuse are significant issues for the local government, so protecting vulnerable people such as youth and women from this threat is a priority.

Response: The central government has developed legal frameworks in efforts to combat hate speech and reduce intercommunal tensions between communities. While neither the central government nor Mansakonko Area Council have an action plan or strategy for P/CVE, the Municipality is formulating a development plan that aims to address the socio-economic marginalisation of vulnerable communities and other primary drivers of hate and violent extremism. Further, Mansakonko's local authorities are working closely with multilateral agencies such as UNICEF and UNFPA to tackle the human-trafficking issue.

Needs/Priorities: Despite The Gambia introducing a decentralisation framework more than 20 years ago, local officials in Mansakonko continue to rely on the central government for the mandate and resources to address local social issues. Local officials feel that national government lacks the political will to provide financial and logistical assistance to local governments and that more support is needed for local authorities to provide essential services to their communities. Local officials said they would benefit from further connection with other local authorities in the country and wider region, particularly on how to lead local community cohesion efforts and intercultural and interreligious exchange programmes.

Toolkit: Local Authorities and P/CVE

Local stakeholders consulted in this mapping initiative identified the need for a clear roadmap for their involvement in P/CVE. The SCN, which can draw from its regional and indeed global membership, is exploring the development of such a toolkit, which it would roll out through its Regional Hub model (see page 56 for more on Regional Hubs). The toolkit could cover:

1 **A comprehensive introduction to P/CVE**

- An introduction to core concepts, a mapping of extremist threats in the relevant national, sub-regional, or regional context, and key considerations for addressing them.

- Advice for incorporating their existing activities into a P/CVE framework.

- Good practice and considerations for issues like terminology, and guidance to make programmes and policies inclusive and relevant. This would encourage a multistakeholder whole-of-society approach and include a particular focus on youth, women and minority communities.

- Case studies from around the region to illustrate different methods and responses, inspire action and promote targeted networking between local authorities.

- Resources and templates for planning, managing, and monitoring and evaluating P/CVE programmes and research, upscaling or adapting existing programmes, and guiding the development of inclusive policies.

- An introduction to communications and resources to help increase visibility about P/CVE efforts, increase trust and build and leverage community buy-in.

- Tips and resources for identifying, mitigating, and managing risk associated with P/CVE, including safeguarding protocols.

2   The role of the city in P/CVE and addressing related challenges

- An introduction to the role of the city, including its strengths and its limitations, which would be contextualised within a national, regional and international framework and encourage a multi-stakeholder approach.

- Guidance and advice for developing a local action plan or coordinating existing plan(s) within established structures to support P/CVE efforts.

- Guidance and resources for developing new local action plans and improving the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of existing plans.

- Advice for how to incorporate and leverage existing programmes, structures and funding streams for P/CVE with examples from different sectors and areas of responsibility.

- A series of case studies from within the region to illustrate key take-aways and offer inspiration for how cities can lead localised P/CVE efforts, including policy, research and projects.

- Guidance to pursue a multi-sectoral city-led approach that builds and leverages partnerships with civil society, private sector and grassroots actors, including a specific focus on young people.

- Information about the role and strengths of different actors and guidance on how to boost their work and incorporate them into local action plans.

- Guidance and resources to support effective communication with different stakeholders.

- Guidance to help establish relationships with other cities to strengthen regional approaches, including advice, resources and templates to convene meetings and exchanges with other cities.

- Guidance for working with the national government and multilateral entities, encouraging sustainable national-local cooperation, including advocacy for cities to jointly influence national, regional and global frameworks based on their common interests.

WHAT MAKES A *STRONG CITY?* 4

Building cities and other localities that are resilient to "natural and human-caused shocks and stresses, both expected and those not yet imagined", climate change, economic downturns, migration and refugee crises has become a key piece of the solution to these global challenges.[134] The OECD measures resilience using four indicators: governance, economy, society and environment; other indicators used to measure cities' resilience include social cohesion, urban planning and mobility and transportation.[135]

For reasons including those outlined in this report, building resilient or strong cities is critical to addressing violent extremism. Yet it is a largely missing piece of the P/CVE puzzle in Africa, where sustainable and effective, locally led prevention-focused approaches that reduce the drivers of extremism are more needed than ever. Stakeholders involved in this mapping initiative reflected on the various extremist threats they are facing, and the P/CVE needs and priorities of local authorities across Africa.

This initiative has generated several discrete findings and recommendations, which are captured in the Executive Summary and expanded upon in the Conclusion. If each of the recommendations is acted upon, over time the P/CVE and related contributions of cities and other local authorities can be expected to increase, hopefully decreasing the threat in turn.

However, representatives of local governments and other African stakeholders who participated in this initiative were also asked to consider the larger, and perhaps more fundamental, question of what makes a 'strong city' in Africa when it comes to P/CVE, beyond the specific policies and programmes that a city develops or adopts to address these threats.

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Although there was some variation among stakeholders — depending on their region — there was broad consensus around five indicators:

1 **Stable governance** structures that are representative of a city's entire demography;

2 A **transparent local government** that opposes and challenges any corruption, is accessible and responsive to its citizens' priorities and needs, and includes trained and capacitated local officials able to understand and respond to the various extremist threats and related issues in their localities;

3 **Innovative and proactive local leadership** that consistently seeks to improve how it serves its people and demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity;

4 **A robust, independent local civil society** that can support prevention efforts and hold government and elected officials to account; and

5 **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 appropriate response.

Going forward, helping cities and other local authorities meet these indicators should be a priority for international and other stakeholders interested in seeing a whole-of-society approach to P/CVE not only operationalised but also **sustained** across the continent.

STRONG CITIES REGIONAL HUBS

Strong Cities Network

SCN Regional Hubs are staffed by small, in-region teams that build on the networking and targeted capacity-building work the SCN has already undertaken with select cities in that region to support local authorities with, among others:

Peer learning: facilitating the exchange of expertise, experience, challenges and good practices between cities and other local authorities in each country and the region, including through meetings, workshops and regional or thematic working groups;

Capacity building: identifying and, where appropriate, delivering support to address capacity and other P/CVE needs and priorities of cities in the relevant region;

NLC, local-local and multi-actor cooperation: delivering activities to strengthen coordination and cooperation on P/CVE, including, for example, by supporting cities with the implementation of the GCTF good practices on NLC in P/CVE;

Elevating local voices: ensuring the voices of local leaders and the perspectives of cities are more consistently reflected in national and global P/CVE policymaking and programme development conversations; and

Youth engagement: connecting young people and youth-focused CSOs (including those supported by GCERF) with local governments and facilitating the development of youth-led, shared solutions to community challenges, such as extremism, hate and polarisation that can lead to violence.

While all Hubs support cities with these five core areas, the specific programme of support is defined by the needs of cities per region. For example, SCN Hubs in Africa will support local authorities through the development of blueprints for how cities can operationalise their role in P/CVE, based on the needs identified in this mapping initiative. Hubs will also support cities by connecting them with the landscape of multilateral actors that are active in their respective regions, prioritising those stakeholders where enhanced synergies will facilitate the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

Regional Hubs also have the benefit of learning from Hubs in other contexts through the SCN Management Unit's Central Team, which oversees the SCN's global engagement and helps facilitate cross-region learning.

CONCLUSION

The violent extremist threats facing Africa are more acute, complex and localised than ever. Years of primarily military and other security investments in counter-terrorism measures and tools, and adherence to a centralised approach that paid little attention to addressing local drivers of violence, have produced few dividends. In fact, in many cases, this type of response has done more to exacerbate than mitigate the threats.

With the threat continuing to spread, there is increased recognition among policymakers and practitioners of the need for a more localised, balanced approach. This should focus more attention on the socio-economic and political grievances that fuel extremist and other forms of violence and conflict in Africa. It should move away from treating violent extremism and terrorism as exceptional threats requiring a distinct set of tools to prevent and counter them. In such a right-sized approach, cities and other local authorities, which have largely been overlooked as the concept of a whole-of-society approach to P/CVE has started to take root on the continent in recent years, stand to play an important role.

This report concludes with ten recommendations for international, continental, regional, national, and local actors, as appropriate, to consider implementing if they hope to see cities and other local authorities realise their full power in P/CVE and related challenges from emerging in their communities.

1. **Promote integrated responses to an interconnected threat:** Efforts to prevent violent extremism across the continent can and should learn from responses to different forms of violence, criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. In light of the connections among these behaviours, such responses should be situated within broader community safeguarding efforts. City officials should seek to leverage existing public services,

resources and programmes (including ones that address socio-economic and other basic needs) in their response to the rising levels of hate and extremism they are facing.

2. **Promote and communicate an inclusive local identity:** Local authorities should develop and promote the concept of 'city-connectedness'. This can make citizens from different ethnicities, tribes and religions feel connected to one another and foster trust in local government institutions. Developing such an identity can also help local authorities mobilise different local actors to build a unified, local front against extremism. This can be supported through connecting different communities with each other, including through communications campaigns that present an inclusive local identity that embraces all communities within a city.

3. **Prioritise inclusive and consultative prevention frameworks:** National P/CVE and related strategies in Africa should be informed by consultations with a multi-disciplinary set of local actors. This includes local authorities, practitioners, and underrepresented demographics like women and youth, and coastal, border and rural communities. Such an approach can help ensure that national frameworks capture the hyper-local, context-specific issues that drive extremism in Africa. Central governments should initiate a consultative process and a mutual, open line of communication with local authorities around the development and implementation of national prevention strategies and action plans. Such a process should remain in place even after a national strategy has been launched, to ensure local authorities and other local actors can provide feedback on how they are progressing with implementing their mandate, and how the central government can support them in doing so.

4. **Ensure local governments have the necessary mandate, capacities, expertise and resources to fully tap into their potential for prevention:** National governments should ensure that local authorities have a mandate for P/CVE and addressing related challenges that have historically been viewed exclusively through a security lens and seen as the sole responsibility of central authorities. Relevant multilateral bodies, donors and international NGOs should develop and deliver tailored P/CVE and broader, prevention-related training and other capacity-building programmes for local governments across the continent.

   These programmes could help cities and other local authorities to better understand the evolving and integrated extremist threat – including its often unique, ideological dimensions – and how to develop and implement effective local policies and programmes to address it. This should proactively engage young people and tap into existing or new multi-disciplinary local prevention networks that can help address a range of local concerns.

Other areas for targeted capacity building include:
- designing local action plans that are appropriate for the given context and complement relevant national prevention strategies;
- developing evidence-based, city-led, multi-actor P/CVE programmes, including ones focused on rehabilitating and reintegrating former extremists or those returning from conflict zones;
- monitoring and evaluating prevention policies and programmes;
- designing and/or enhancing national-local and local-local information-sharing protocols and processes;
- crisis response;
- engaging with and supporting young people and CSOs involved in P/CVE (in particular those funded by the GCERF); and
- advocacy at the national and regional levels for an enhanced role for local authorities in prevention.

5. **Engage national governments proactively:** Rather than waiting for a clear signal from the capital, local authorities in Africa should proactively engage their national governments in prevention. This could involve:
   - mapping and identifying existing local resources they can leverage, and consulting local civil society and community-based actors in their jurisdiction to this end;
   - meeting with other local authorities across their country to identify shared needs and the role they envision playing in P/CVE and addressing related threats; and
   - collectively presenting their vision to their national governments with the aim of securing buy-in and support for realising their full potential in prevention.

6. **Address the structural challenges and other barriers that are impeding on NLC:** This should involve:
   - ensuring an inclusive national prevention framework is in place that includes a clear role for local authorities;
   - demystifying P/CVE for local authorities, making the distinctions between counter-terrorism and P/CVE clear and framing the latter as part of existing city-led efforts to safeguard communities, rather than as an explicit security matter;
   - putting in place mechanisms and processes to facilitate information sharing and other types of cooperation between national and local government actors;
   - enabling a shared understanding at both the national and local levels on what type of information should be shared and with whom and what to do once that information is received;
   - ensuring that local governments have the resources they need, whether from their own budgets, allocated by their national government or contributed by international donors.

7. **Build trust between local governments and the communities they serve:** Local governments should take steps to enhance trust with their communities, including through policies and programmes that allow citizens to share their needs and concerns with public officials and, more broadly, foster accountability, transparency and good local governance. These can help improve trust in government institutions and strengthen feelings of a diverse and unified city (or local) identity, which build social cohesion and help push back against the polarising narratives promoted by extremist and other criminal groups. Where feasible, local authorities should seek to partner with relevant CSOs (including those funded by GCERF) and local businesses to develop public-private initiatives that work with and in local communities to enhance social cohesion and resilience against extremism and hate.

8. **Enhance local–local cooperation within countries and regionally:** Rapid urbanisation, a deficit in local government resources and capacity — especially in rural areas — and the ease with which extremist and other criminal groups move from one location to the other all underscore the importance of greater cooperation and coordination among local authorities. For example, local authorities in the same country can partner to better respond to urbanisation. This could include larger cities coordinating with each other to identify innovative ways to accommodate rapid population growth, and with rural areas to equip them with the skills and tools to address the root causes of large-scale migration. Cross-border, local-local cooperation is equally important, considering the continent's porous borders and the transnational nature of extremist groups. Existing regional city networks, like the East Africa Local Governments Association (EALGA), provide a perfect platform to facilitate such coordination. The SCN should partner with EALGA and similar networks to further support local-local cooperation, as part of its commitment to elevate the role of local authorities in P/CVE, including through peer learning.

9. **Address the disconnect between multilateral P/CVE policymaking and programming and local application:** The continent is littered with often redundant multilateral frameworks for addressing violent extremism and other security-related challenges, which national governments use to inform their strategies. However, these frameworks are either not informed by local voices, and thus disconnected from reality in the field or are inaccessible and challenging for local authorities to contextualise and apply. Addressing this disconnect should start with ensuring that mayors and other local leaders and officials are given a seat at the table when multilateral bodies such as the UN, the GCTF and AU are developing new or updating existing P/CVE and related policies and programmes.

   For example, relevant GCTF working groups, in particular those focused on East and West Africa, should prioritise cooperation with SCN, following the launch of SCN Regional Hubs in different parts of Africa in late 2022, as well as other relevant city networks.

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With SCN's on-the-ground presence (and access to local leaders and governments), the Hubs will provide the GCTF working groups with a mechanism through which to consistently engage these often overlooked prevention stakeholders and to access the local perspectives that need to inform the GCTF's work in those regions. In addition, the Hubs will create opportunities for collaboration between SCN and the GCTF Inspired Institutions on the ground. For example, this could involve the SCN partnering with the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ) to train interested municipalities on how to design and implement multi-actor P/CVE intervention programmes (drawing on the recently completed EU-funded IIJ curriculum on this topic).[136] Regional Hubs will also enable more synergies between GCERF-funded CSOs and the SCN member cities in which they are operating. With sufficient mandate and capacity, local authorities can play an important role in sustaining community-based CSO-led efforts by ensuring they are tied into a comprehensive local prevention framework and network.

10. **Create more opportunities for sharing and learning among local authorities across the continent:** Local authorities across the African continent would benefit from more opportunities to share learnings and experiences, speak candidly with each other about challenges and achievements of prevention, and gain greater access to international good practices. These opportunities should not be limited to 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 and leaving little space to focus on early preventative measures (i.e., ones where the role of local authorities is particularly salient). Cities and other localities that may not currently have a tangible extremist threat must be included.

City Spotlight: Monrovia, Liberia

Threat: In the wake of two civil wars, legacies of conflict remain a source of insecurity across the country and in its capital, Monrovia. City officials report that inter-communal division across ethnic, religious, social and economic lines remains, with electoral violence being a primary concern for the city. Uneven power relations and political representation among ethnic, tribal and religious groups in Liberia are considered a source of tension between communities at the local level. In the aftermath of the second Liberian Civil War (1997–2003), religious tensions mounted, and mosques and churches were burned down. The Muslim population continues to feel marginalised and unrepresented in the public sphere. There are concerns that inter-communal friction will escalate into violence in the run up to the 2023 elections. According to city officials, some groups, particularly youth, are vulnerable to being exploited by political party organisations to stir up tensions and intimidation among the electorate. Reminiscent of war-time Liberia, some of these groups don army fatigues, adopt battle cries, and in some instances, have formed roadblocks in the city during election time.

Response: Liberia has no NAP or strategy for P/CVE. However, Monrovia continues to be closely consulted in the development of a national-led five-year development plan focused on inclusive and sustainable social and economic development, which includes plans for peacebuilding and social inclusion as well as specific attention to preventing election violence. The city is leading the coordination of local actors to build community cohesion, support vulnerable groups including women and young people, and build interfaith dialogue, most notably through promoting public observation of all religious holidays, which has been a point of contention at the national level. The city also spearheads engagement with other local authorities and local actors across Liberia, with its mayor serving as president of the Association of Mayors and Local Government Authorities of Liberia.

Needs/Priorities: City officials expressed the need to connect more consistently with other cities in Liberia and the broader region on a localised prevention agenda and to further engage with stakeholders across the national-local spectrum on these issues. City officials also believe that they can learn from other contexts and cities on how to raise awareness among and sensitise communities to the threat of violent extremism and its drivers, a threat they said is often (mis)perceived by local communities as originating entirely outside the country.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF NETWORKS OF CITIES IN AFRICA

Association of Municipalities, Mali:
http://base.afrique-gouvernance.net/en/corpus_organismes/fiche-organismes-409.html

East Africa Local Governments Association (EALGA):
https://www.facebook.com/eaclgas/

Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI):
https://iclei.org/

National Association of Local Governments of Ghana (NALAG):
https://www.knowledge.ulgca.org

National Association of Mayors and Local Authorities in Liberia (LIMALGA):
https://www.uclga.org/news/welcome-to-limalga-the-national-association-of-mayors-and-local-authorities-of-liberia/

South African Local Government Association (SALGA):
https://nationalgovernment.co.za/units/view/171/south-african-local-government-association-salga

Uganda Local Governments' Association (ULGA):
https://www.knowledge-uclga.org/uganda-local-government-association-ulga.html?lang=fr

United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLG-A):
https://www.uclga.org/

Appendix B: Methodology

Data Gathering Process

A qualitative research approach was used for this report. Qualitative data was collected between March and June 2022 and was captured through four virtual roundtables, two in-person workshops, key-informant interviews and the dissemination of four stakeholder-specific questionnaires for the following groups: local government, national government, non-governmental organisations, and international non-governmental organisations and multilateral organisations. The SCN Management Unit led the delivery, dissemination, note-taking and analysis of all qualitative data collection activities. To maximise inclusion and participation across the four major regions of the continent, the questionnaires were translated and simultaneous interpretation was available in English, French, Arabic, Swahili and Portuguese.

Guiding Research Questions:
1. Which forms of violence are of most concern to the cities and countries?
2. Do local government authorities have a mandate to address extremism, hate and polarisation?
3. Is P/CVE the most relevant framework to address extremism, hate and polarisation?
4. What are the barriers to collaboration between the central government and local government authorities?
5. What types of support does the local government need to address extremism, hate and polarisation in the local communities?

Study Limitations

The nature of this mapping report and the SCN's institutional capacity posed various challenges to the research methodology adopted for mapping the P/CVE needs and priorities of African cities comprehensively.

1. **Representation:** the purposive sampling approach deployed for this research means that the sample and findings are not representative. The findings in this report, therefore, are not intended to be inferred to all cities in a given country, region, or across the continent. Rather, it serves as an important first step in understanding how local actors perceive violent extremist threats, their role in preventing them from taking root in their communities or responding to them, and how they can be supported to meet their potential as leaders in P/CVE efforts.

2. **Self-reporting**: All data collected from participants was self-reported. Due to the breadth and scale of participants reached, as well as resource and time constraints, it was not possible to control the relevance and authority of all participants. To mitigate response bias from participants, SCN ensured the anonymity of participants throughout the data gathering process to promote honest answers. Moreover, SCN relied on its partners' and

own institutional expertise to identify the most relevant stakeholders to include in the questionnaire data collection and in-person workshops, who would be best placed to answer the research questions. Given the varied degrees of autonomy and mandate of African local governments to address extremism, hate and polarisation, SCN faced some challenges in identifying the relevant points of contact within cities and municipalities.

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