

Event Report

Strengthening the Capacity of Border Municipalities to Prevent Hate, Extremism and Polarisation

Cape Town, South Africa
11 – 12 December 2023



Summary

With support from the European Union (EU) as part of its [STRIVE Cities](#) Initiative, Strong Cities Network's [East & Southern Africa \(ESA\) Regional Hub](#) convened mayors and other senior officials from local governments in Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda in Cape Town (South Africa) from 11 – 12 December 2023 for a roundtable on **Strengthening the Capacity of Border Municipalities to Prevent Hate, Extremism and Polarisation**.¹

The roundtable builds on findings from an EU-funded [mapping](#) of the prevention needs and priorities of African cities, which Strong Cities conducted in 2022. The mapping found that border municipalities are particularly vulnerable to threats of hate and extremism, largely as a result of the continent's porous borders. These vulnerabilities were further elaborated on at a [regional workshop](#) the ESA Regional Hub hosted in Johannesburg (South Africa) in June 2023, where leaders from border municipalities shared challenges with unregulated migration, cross-border smuggling of drugs and arms, and the exploitation of porous borders

¹ Participants included mayors, governors and other senior city officials from Busia County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Mombasa County, Trans Nzoia County and Wajir County in Kenya; Buffalo City in South Africa; Songea Municipality and Tunduru District in Tanzania; and Kasese District, Masaka City, Koboko Municipality, Nansana Municipality and Nebbi Municipality in Uganda.



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by terrorist groups (e.g., to commit attacks). Recognising that many of these threats are shared across border municipalities, and the need for greater collaboration between cities that sit on opposite sides of the same border, these leaders launched a **Border Municipalities Working Group**² on the margins of the regional workshop.

Why Cape Town?

This roundtable was organised in and co-hosted by the City of Cape Town, a Strong Cities member, at the request of the Working Group's founders, who saw a presentation of Cape Town's prevention framework at the regional workshop in Johannesburg and wanted to learn more about its development and scope.

The following key findings emerged out of the discussions:

1. By integrating prevention into an existing mandate, local governments can tap into existing resources and expertise to deliver prevention programmes even in the absence of a nationally given mandate (and dedicated national support) to do so.
2. Cities should invest in technology to support community safety: investments like CCTV can enhance feelings of security amongst residents and provide evidence to drive data-based solutions to local threats, while digital information-sharing dashboards can help cities more effectively coordinate and deploy their resources.
3. Coordinating community-level actors is one of the comparative advantages of local governments in prevention and they should tap into existing or invest in new multi-actor structures to do so.
4. Communities should be partners in (rather than just beneficiaries of) prevention. For example, local governments can build their capacity to support with identifying and mitigating emerging threats, delivering community-based prevention programmes, reaching marginalised individuals, protecting soft-targets and more.
5. Local governments should also partner with communities to consider how urban planning and regeneration can enhance social cohesion and reduce feelings of insecurity.

Based on these themes, participating cities identified a series of implementation priorities:

Kenya:

- **Busia County** will support Busia and Malaba Municipalities (the two biggest cities in the county, both of which sit on the border with Uganda) with improving their security infrastructure, including to install CCTV cameras and streetlights. The County also commits to supporting each municipality with establishing a community call centre through which residents can express concerns related to hate and extremism (and issues that drive this, such as cross-border migration). By providing a single, go-to space for open conversations about emerging threats, the County envisions these centres will

² Founders of the Working Group include John Kwoba, Municipal Director, Busia Municipality (Kenya), Philomenah Kapkory, Deputy Governor, Trans Nzoia County (Kenya). Sanya Wilson, Mayor, Koboko Municipality (Uganda); Florence Namayanja, Mayor, Masaka City (Uganda), Regina Bakitte, Mayor, Nansana Municipality (Uganda) and Geoffrey Ngiriker, Mayor, Nebbi Municipality (Uganda).

play an important role in building trust in local government, while also enabling the County to better understand local concerns and respond accordingly.

- **Mombasa County**, like Busia, seeks to streamline its resident reporting and communication infrastructure by establish a single, go-to call centre within the County Government's Inspectorate Department. Modelled after the City of Cape Town's joint operations infrastructure, it will serve as a central hub for residents to report hate-related and other safety concerns or incidents, and otherwise seek assistance, and will be used by Mombasa County Government to then coordinate relevant departments in response.
- **Trans Nzoia County**, which sits on the border with Uganda, commits to implementing a cross-border peacekeeping initiative that focuses on enhancing awareness around threats of hate and extremism. The initiative will also build the capacity of county government officials, youth and other community-based actors to respond. The County will seek to do so in partnership with local government officials across the border (e.g., from Mbale District in Uganda) with the intent to build positive relations and promote dialogue and collaboration between the two cities and their residents.
- **Wajir County** will establish a Safety and Civil Protection Department dedicated to the wellbeing, security and resilience of its communities. Learning from the City of Cape Town's Safety and Security Directorate, this department will oversee and coordinate different county-led efforts related to public safety and wellbeing, emergency preparedness, disaster management, and civil protection. It will further seek to deliver public awareness campaigns around hate and extremism and to engage communities in all the above efforts.

South Africa:

- **Buffalo City** will adapt and implement Cape Town's Safer and Healthier Places of Worship initiative and Neighbourhood Watch model. It will seek to do so in collaboration with the City of Cape Town by bringing relevant experts from the City to Buffalo City to guide development and implementation.

Tanzania:

- In its next budgeting process, **Songea Municipality** commits to safeguarding funds for the procurement of technological capacities that will enable it to better record and respond to hate and extremist incidents (and other safety concerns). This is one step in a long-term plan to implement a more data-driven approach to community safety that enhances the overall efficiency and effectiveness of municipal service deployment.
- **Tunduru District** will seek out partnerships with local governments across its border with Mozambique, particularly to improve city-city information-sharing in an effort to better prepare for, conflict spill-over and cross-border migrations, for example.



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Uganda:

- **Koboko Municipality** commits to hosting a cross-border exchange with local government, civil society and community-based leaders from neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a view to initiate a platform for dialogue that reduces stigma and ‘othering’ between residents of municipalities on both sides of the border.
- **Masaka City** commits to adapting Cape Town’s Youth Cadets programme and better involving marginalised communities in its policymaking and programmes. It will additionally liaise with the City of Cape Town for a training exchange to upskill municipal workers on digital and other technology skills, a first step in enhancing the City’s overall technological capacities.
- **Nansana Municipality** will adopt Cape Town’s and Stellenbosch Municipality’s Neighbourhood Watch model.
- **Nebbi Municipality** seeks to strengthen its collaboration with Mahagi Town (Democratic Republic of the Congo), including by jointly delivering a prevention capacity-building programme for relevant stakeholders in both cities.

Over the next six months, the ESA Regional Hub will support these cities in implementing the above priorities by providing expert support and additional opportunities for peer learning.

“We’ve gained valuable insights... what stands out to me is Cape Town’s approach to combatting insecurity through technology. While our cities have unique security challenges, the [Cape Town] model is universally applicable... It’s inspiring to see how effective strategies can be shared and adapted for the benefit of creating safer and more resilient communities.”

Philemon Sabulei, Speaker, Elgeyo Marakwet County (Kenya)



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Threats & Key Challenges

Participants pointed to porous borders, inadequate infrastructure to accommodate changing demographics and limited involvement of local government in security matters as among the challenges exacerbating hate and extremism in their cities. For example, **Geoffrey Ngiriker, Mayor, Nebbi Municipality (Uganda)**, shared that a **lack of local government capacity** to regulate and accommodate influxes of people crossing the border strains already limited resources, creating a rift between long-term residents and new arrivals, where the former feels the latter threatens their access to public services and other resources. He also shared that a **lack of communal awareness** about hate and extremism limits the ability for residents to identify and report where there are escalations of such threats.

Hairu Hemed, Mayor, Tunduru District (Tanzania), noted that his city regularly deals with conflicts between pastoral communities, including between local communities and those across the border with Mozambique. He also shared concerns about conflict and instability in Mozambique “spilling over” into Tanzania, and that the local government feels ill-prepared to respond.

Concerns about terrorist exploitation of porous borders were voiced by **Yahya Dahiye, Chief of Staff, Wajir County Government (Kenya)**, who commented that terrorist actors like Al-Shabaab take advantage of the lack of cross-border regulation to move arms, commit attacks and radicalise and recruit. These were echoed by **Elias Byamungu, Chief Administrative Officer, Kasese District (Uganda)**, whose city was [attacked](#) in June 2023 by a militant group that crossed into Uganda from neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similar [attacks](#) in Kamwenge District (Uganda) in December 2023 further underscore the severity of this threat.

Key Themes

1. Multi-Actor Collaboration

Local governments are well-placed to coordinate different local actors to enable the whole-of-society approach to prevention that is globally recognised as good practice. For example, the City of Cape Town’s prevention framework is situated within its multi-departmental [Safety and Security Directorate](#). This agency coordinates the City’s traffic services, fire and rescue, metro police, disaster risk management and emergency services, among others, while also partnering with other city departments, community-based actors, provincial actors, such as the Western Cape Emergency Medical Service, national agencies such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), and neighbouring municipalities, such as Stellenbosch. It has multiple structures in place to help coordinate these different actors, including through regular, structured meetings (e.g., between city departments, the [Mayoral Committee](#)), and has invested in technology to further enhance this coordination. For example, through its [Emergency Policing and Incident Command \(EPIC\)](#) infrastructure (see below), the City coordinates and tracks multi-actor responses to safety-related incidents, as shared by **Andrew Mortimer, Manager: EPIC, City of Cape Town**.



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Emergency Policing and Incident Command (EPIC), City of Cape Town

- **Challenge:** A challenging public safety environment with threats ranging from wildfires to metal theft, gang violence and extortion, all of which are exacerbated by rapid urbanisation.
- **Approach:** EPIC is a technology-based effort to streamline “dispatching across all the City’s emergency services”. It enhances real-time situational awareness and coordination both between the City’s various safety departments, and between the City and provincial actors such as the Western Cape Emergency Medical Service and national actors such as SAPS. It presents all live safety-related incidents on a single platform, populated by calls received to the City’s emergency number and incidents logged directly by the above agencies. The platform is accessible via desktop and mobile and enables the City to deploy and track (in real time) multi-actor responses per incident. CCTV, bodycams and other technology also feed into the platform, creating a thorough record of the City’s response per incident.
- **Impact:** Prior to EPIC and other technology investments the City has made, its safety departments worked largely in isolation, “making effective responses difficult, especially in large-scale disaster incidents”. EPIC addresses this by ensuring all incidents are referred to a single location, from which a multi-actor response is then coordinated. This also means the City has been able to more effectively manage its resources, as it has real-time awareness across all its safety departments of which services (and how many resources) are deployed at any given time. Finally, because it stores information about past incidents, it enables the City to analyse where there are hotspots, or when there are escalations of certain types of crime or other safety concerns, and is able to prepare and respond accordingly.

<https://www.itweb.co.za/content/6mQwkoq6Z2Gq3r9A>

Stellenbosch Municipality (South Africa) and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (South Africa) shared their Community Safety Forums as another model for multi-actor collaboration, which convene ward councillors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector, city departments and national actors such as SAPS. These actors come together on a quarterly basis to deliberate and track progress on all matters related to safety and security, providing an appropriate pre-existing multi-actor structure into which hate and extremism prevention can be absorbed. When sharing lessons learned from this model, **Gary Boshoff, Director of Community and Protection Services** and **Charl Kitching, Senior Manager for Protection Services, Stellenbosch Municipality**, advised that:

- Multi-actor structures rely on buy-in from the actors that are expected to take part and local governments should consider how to facilitate their commitment. Without this, implementation is difficult.
- Measuring success is essential to sustaining that buy-in and to ensuring continuity of the work that is implemented. Success requires community engagement: communities can tell local governments what is needed to ensure that programmes meet actual rather than assumed needs.



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- Local governments should invest in building the capacity of actors involved in such fora. Ensuring everyone has the same baseline understanding of good practice in community safety, and the ability to monitor, evaluate and effectively report back on their work, will contribute to the success of the forum.

Visiting city officials also shared examples of multi-actor structures they tap into to prevent hate and extremism. **Philomenah Kapkory, Deputy Governor, Trans Nzoia County (Kenya)**, shared, for example, that the County Government makes use of traditional conflict resolution structures, such as barazas, which are multi-actor community gatherings.

2. Local Ownership

Integrating prevention into an existing mandate and structure can help cities play a role in prevention when they don't have a nationally given mandate to do so, as is the case in South Africa. The City of Cape Town situated its prevention framework within an existing structure, allowing it to leverage existing resources, such as EPIC, to achieve its objectives. EPIC can be deployed to coordinate responses to hate and other related incidents, while other existing community engagement programmes (see Theme 3) can now also be implemented with the added intent to address drivers of hate and extremism. Further, situating prevention in an existing structure like the Safety and Security Directorate enables the City to respond effectively in the event of large-scale hate- or extremist-motivated incidents, as it can tap into its tested, multi-actor crisis response mechanisms.

“After our participation in a Strong Cities [workshop](#) in Nairobi in 2022, we realised things could easily escalate and that we are not immune to threats of hate, extremism and polarisation.”

JP Smith, Mayoral Committee Member for Safety and Security, City of Cape Town

3. Community Engagement

The roundtable highlighted the number of ways local governments can invest in communities as partners in prevention. One such model that both the City of Cape Town and Stellenbosch Municipality tap into is Neighbourhood Watch, which empowers residents to play a role in community safety. As **JP Smith, Mayoral Committee Member for Safety and Security, City of Cape Town**, noted, “Neighbourhood Watches are a community resource in enhancing social cohesion. They have the potential to become great agents of change”. In partnership with the Western Cape Government, both cities invest in Neighbourhood Watches with regular training that streamlines their functions and ensures a baseline of safety awareness for those involved. Accredited Neighbourhood Watches work closely with the local government to identify and holistically respond to local concerns and



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emerging threats, while also delivering safety and resilience-building programmes in schools and within the community.

Communities can also be engaged in **soft-target protection**. The City of Cape Town's [Safer and Healthier Places of Worship](#) initiative is a multi-actor effort to empower faith leaders with skills and tools to improve the safety of their places of worship. A model of **national-local cooperation**, the City partnered with SAPS to bring 14 faith leaders together to jointly discuss safety concerns and train them on topics ranging from fire safety to safety signage and other spatial planning considerations to how to respond to a bomb threat. Participants were then empowered to create emergency plans catered to their place of worship, which were reviewed by and finalised in partnership with the City's Disaster Risk Management Department. Underscoring the benefits of involving communities in such efforts, the emergency plan developed by one of the programme's beneficiaries – Claremont Mosque – is now being rolled out by SAPS to other places of worship across the country.

Recognising that marginalised youth are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, meaningful and sustainable **youth engagement** is another impactful way local governments can build resilience against hate and extremism. On the margins of the roundtable, visiting city officials attended a graduation ceremony of the City of Cape Town's Youth Cadets programme. The programme trains young people – particularly those from marginalised communities – on professional conduct, physical fitness, communication and various safety-related skills. Those that pass the free-of-charge 18-month course are then automatically employed by the Safety and Security Directorate. The ceremony both celebrated the graduation of more than 100 young people and welcomed the 1000 new candidates that will embark on the training. The initiative recognises that young people are an asset in community safety but often lack the opportunities – financial or otherwise – to get involved.

Finally, communities can also be engaged in **urban upgrading**. **Kayla Hanna Brown, Programme Manager, [South African Cities Network](#)**, presented on how urban planning can help local governments reduce polarisation, violence and crime, pointing to the example of **Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (South Africa)**. Here, the Municipality partnered with the Mandela Bay Development Agency and representatives of Helenvale (a suburb in Port Elizabeth) to [improve quality of life](#) and reduce crime through urban regeneration. The programme "[recognises that the involvement of the Helenvale community is key](#)" and developed a grassroots advisory committee to guide implementation. In the years since its launch, the programme has worked on enhancing the safety of public spaces and community facilities such as pedestrian routes, partnering with schools to create in-school counselling infrastructure, improving local housing to ensure residents feel better provided for, and engaging unemployed or idle youth in local waste management efforts to create a cleaner and more liveable environment.

Importantly, in all these examples, communities are seen as foundational to the solution, rather than as part of the problem. This was further emphasised by visiting city officials: **Sabino Lemeriga, Deputy Mayor, Koboko Municipality (Uganda)**, shared for example that in his city, the local government tries to engage refugees as it would any long-term resident of the Municipality – as part and parcel of the social fabric and prosperity of the city.



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It educates them on local and national law, safeguards 30% of municipal employment opportunities for refugees, and engages them (as well as long-term residents) in municipal planning and management decisions.

Similarly, in **Mombasa County (Kenya)**, youth are considered pivotal to the County Government's service provisions and are regularly engaged as partners in public service, as shared by **County Executive Committee Member Kenneth Ambani**. Strong community engagement efforts ultimately build trust in local government and ensure cities are driven by the needs of their residents.

Next Steps

The workshop concluded with visiting city officials sharing priorities for implementing learnings from the workshop and the ESA Regional Hub committing to support these efforts.

The workshop also provided visiting city officials with the opportunity to shape the Border Municipalities Working Group's forward agenda. To maintain momentum initiated by this learning visit, five participants were nominated to serve as Working Group leaders. They will be responsible for working closely with the ESA Regional Hub to both: a) inform future activities for border municipalities; and b) hold participating cities accountable for then implementing their learnings. As an immediate next step, the Hub and these leaders will collaborate to develop a Working Group strategy and identify which other border municipalities could be included in this effort. Current group leaders are:

- **Regina Bakitte**, Mayor, Nansana Municipality (Uganda)
- **Yahya Dahiye**, Chief of Staff, Wajir County (Kenya)
- **Hairu Hemed**, Mayor, Tunduru District (Tanzania)
- **Mzwakhe Nqavashe**, Portfolio Chairperson: Safety and Security, City of Cape Town (although not a border municipality, Cape Town will remain involved as a regional expert in city-led prevention)
- **Peter Odima**, County Executive Committee Member, Busia County (Kenya)

Finally, the ESA Regional Hub will also build on Strong Cities' Memorandum of Understanding with [UN-Habitat](#), and seek partnerships with other relevant organisations like the South African Cities Network, to jointly develop guidance on the role of urban planning and design to promote social cohesion, among other overlapping areas of interest.

Additional Resources

- [A Guide for Mayors: Preventing and Responding to Hate, Extremism and Polarisation](#) and [A Guide for Cities: Preventing Hate, Extremism and Polarisation](#), Strong Cities Network
- [Addressing the Overlooked Role of African Cities in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism](#), Strong Cities Network



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- Event Report: [Learning Visit on Enhancing City-Youth Engagement in Preventing and Responding to Hate, Extremism and Polarisation](#), Strong Cities Network
- [Municipal Case Studies](#), South African Cities Network
- [The Safety Case Studies Project](#), Safer Spaces

Donors & Partners

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Contact Information

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