

STRIVE Cities: Year in Review

September 2022 – September 2023

In **September 2022**, the [Strong Cities Network](#), a global network of 200+ cities dedicated to enhancing city-led prevention of hate, polarisation and violent extremism, [launched](#) STRIVE Cities. A three-year **global** action funded by the European Union (EU), STRIVE Cities supports Strong Cities Regional Hubs in [East and Southern Africa](#) (ESA), and the [Middle East and North Africa](#) (MENA), as well as global activities.

Regional Hubs

In the year since STRIVE Cities launched, Strong Cities Network has not only operationalised both its ESA and MENA Regional Hubs, but through them has also:

Added **21**
new member cities
from **7** countries

Engaged **300+** local
government officials, including
80+ mayors/city leaders

Delivered **3** regional
workshops and **7** country-
specific activities

Mapping City Needs and Good Practices

Through regional workshops and virtual and in-person consultations with cities, the ESA and MENA Regional Hubs continue to build on the EU-funded [mapping](#) Strong Cities conducted in 2022 of priorities of African cities as this relates to the prevention of hate and extremism. This is to ensure their work is always driven by the actual – rather than perceived – needs of cities. For example:

- The **ESA Regional Hub** hosted its [inaugural workshop](#) in Nairobi (Kenya) in October 2022, inviting local government officials from across the region to share their perspectives on emerging threats and how the Regional Hub can support cities with preventing them from taking root or responding where they have already manifested.
- The **MENA Regional Hub** hosted its [inaugural workshop](#) in Rabat (Morocco) in partnership with the Municipality in March 2023, which convened 80+ representatives from local governments, central governments and civil society across the region, inviting them to inform the Hub's workplan over the three-year period of STRIVE Cities.

Regional activities such as these, which will take place regularly over the next years, are supplemented with dedicated country- or city-specific engagements, where Regional Hubs meet with city leaders and other local government officials to further develop their understandings of key threats and needs, and to identify the most effective and sustainable avenues through which they can help address these needs. In MENA, for example, the Regional Hub has met with cities ranging from Greater Amman Municipality (Jordan) to



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Sousse (Tunisia) and Oujda (Morocco) to ensure it considers the breadth and diversity of the region as it identifies opportunities for enhancing city-led prevention.

Strengthening City-Led Prevention

Since launching, and informed by needs through the inaugural workshops, both Regional Hubs have supported cities with enhancing their prevention capabilities. For example:

- In [Burundi](#), the ESA Regional Hub hosted the first-of-its-kind convening of Burundian mayors to discuss the hate, polarisation and violent extremism landscape in their communities, raising awareness amongst them of their role in preventing and response to these threats.
- The ESA Regional Hub partnered with the [City of Cape Town](#) (South Africa) to provide South African cities with the opportunity to learn from Cape Town's experience with developing and launching a framework for the prevention of hate and extremism, which sits within its existing public safety infrastructure.
- In [Johannesburg](#) (South Africa), the ESA Regional Hub convened 60+ representatives from 25 cities from across the region to inspire one another on mayoral leadership in and city practices for prevention. A number of the participating cities then developed a cross-border working group to continue this city-city learning.
- The MENA Regional Hub hosted a meeting in Tripoli (Lebanon) with the City's prevention stakeholders to support them with reinvigorating the work of their Local Prevention Network.

Enhancing National-Local Coordination (NLC)

Both Regional Hubs have also made concerted efforts to address gaps in NLC on hate and extremism prevention, as this continues to be raised as a key obstacle to scaling and sustaining city-led contributions to whole-of-society prevention efforts.

- In [Baghdad](#) (Iraq), the MENA Regional Hub held a multi-actor roundtable to raise awareness of the role of local governorates in implementing the country's National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism. The roundtable resulted in a series of recommendations for how the national government can better include governorates in the deployment of this strategy, as well as a partnership between the International Organisation for Migration and Strong Cities on the implementation of local action plans for prevention.
- In [Entebbe](#) (Uganda), the ESA Regional Hub hosted a national-local dialogue, convening 30+ national and local government representatives on the topic of city-led

"We are appreciative of Strong Cities convening representatives of national and local authorities in Uganda to discuss these important issues. This is the first time we have been in the same room with representatives of national government ministries to exchange views on preventing extremist violence in our country."

Senior Local Government Representative, Uganda



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prevention. Among other outcomes, the dialogue resulted in commitment from the national government to include local government officials in a steering committee for implementation of the country's national prevention strategy.

Global Activities

As a **global** action, STRIVE Cities has also supported Strong Cities activities beyond the two focus regions of ESA and MENA.

Fourth Global Summit

Strong Cities' [Fourth Global Summit](#) took place in New York City on 19-21 September 2023 on the margins of the high-level opening of the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly. With support from the EU through STRIVE Cities and additional funding from the US State Department and Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Summit:

Convened **80+** mayors and other city leaders alongside **100+** local government practitioners

Had **115+** cities represented from **50+** countries globally

Included **30+** mayors and local government practitioners from ESA and MENA secured with support from the Regional Hubs

Leveraging the comparative advantages of Strong Cities being a global network, the Summit provided a rare opportunity for cities as diverse as Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Koboko (Uganda) and Sarajevo (Bosnia & Herzegovina) to come together at scale specifically on the topic of city-led prevention. It featured opportunities for cities to engage directly with different UN agencies and offices and the [Global Counterterrorism Forum](#) (GCTF), learn from good prevention practices in other cities and inspire one another to show leadership against hate and extremism. Among the 11 summit activities – and underscoring Strong Cities' multi-disciplinary approach to prevention – included ones co-hosted by the [Mayor of New York City](#) and its [Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes, Columbia University, New York University](#), the UN [Office of Counter Terrorism](#), the UN [Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate](#) and the UN [Office of the Special Adviser against Genocide](#).

Strong Cities Guides

Since launching, STRIVE Cities also supported the development of two Strong Cities guides: one for **mayors**, which outlines the steps mayors can take to be leaders against hate and extremism; and the other for **cities**, which details how local governments can become involved in prevention. Both guides were informed by consultations and interviews with dozens of mayors and local government practitioners from across the world, facilitated through Regional Hubs, and desk research to accompany these first-hand insights. The guides were launched in Arabic, French and English at the Fourth Global Summit.



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What's Next?

In a year's time, STRIVE Cities has enabled Strong Cities Network to significantly scale its reach and impact globally. For example, while Strong Cities has always had a footprint in both ESA and MENA, this was historically limited to Kenya, Lebanon and Jordan. **As a result of STRIVE Cities, this engagement has increased tenfold, and has expanded to reflect the geographic breadth and diversity of both regions.**

Going forward, the Regional Hubs will build on this momentum and continue to provide mayors and local governments with opportunities to learn from one another, benefit from global good practices, engage with their national governments on city-led prevention, and to address their needs as they arise. Further, Regional Hubs will support mayors and local governments with localising and applying the Strong Cities guides, as well as [the NLC toolkit](#) that Strong Cities developed for the GCTF, which was launched by the GCTF in September 2023.

As part of the global remit of STRIVE Cities, Strong Cities will also drive this effort with cities outside of these two regions, including, for example, in West Africa, the Sahel and North and South America, and will continue to advocate for an enhanced role for mayors and local governments in prevention amongst national, regional and international peace, security, development and human rights stakeholders.

Contact Us

For more information about Strong Cities Network or STRIVE Cities, please contact Charlotte Moeyens, Senior Manager, at cm@strongcitiesnetwork.org.



Pictured right:
Participants of the MENA Regional Hub's Inaugural Workshop in Rabat.

Pictured left:
Participants of the ESA Regional Hub's workshop in Johannesburg.



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