

Border Municipalities Working Group Strategy

Last Updated: 2 September 2024

Context

One of the key findings of a European Union (EU)-funded [mapping](#) that the [Strong Cities Network](#) conducted in 2022 of the needs and priorities of African cities in preventing hate, extremism and polarisation is that **border towns and villages across the continent are particularly vulnerable to these threats**, with porous borders facilitating unregulated movement of people, often overwhelming already-limited municipal resources. The mapping also found that despite their vulnerabilities, border municipalities are often overlooked in national and regional prevention efforts, leaving them under-resourced and ill-equipped to respond to such threats.

This was reinforced by representatives of border towns from across East and Southern Africa (ESA) in a [regional workshop](#) that Strong Cities' [ESA Regional Hub](#), hosted by the [East African County and Local Governments Association](#), organised in Johannesburg (South Africa) in June 2023. There, leaders from border municipalities in Kenya and Uganda shared that although they are host to a number of migrants and refugees, they generally are not provided with the support (either by their central government or international donors) to accommodate such demographic changes. This strains their existing resources, critical infrastructure and service delivery, in turn risking broad discontent amongst residents and rising levels of anti-migrant and xenophobic hate. Of additional concern is exploitation of the region's porous borders by extremist and other militant actors, with the [June 2023 school shooting](#) in Kasese District (Uganda) and the [December 2023 attack](#) in Kamwenge District (Uganda) but two recent examples. In both cases, perpetrators are believed to have travelled from neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo to commit the attacks.

In light of these challenges – and on the margins of the Johannesburg workshop – mayors and other local leaders from border municipalities explored how they can sustain the peer learning that was facilitated in that event and draw from practices that were shared to strengthen their own prevention capacities. As a result, and with encouragement from the ESA Regional Hub, they agreed to form a **Border Municipalities Working Group** to serve as a peer support forum to learn from each other and from other cities across the region, as well as enhance collaboration between cities located on or near borders.

As a first step in the ESA Regional Hub's commitment to supporting the Working Group, the Hub convened its founding members and other border towns in Cape Town (South Africa) in December 2023 for a [learning visit](#) about Cape Town's approach to community safety. The visit came at the request of the Working Group after they saw a presentation about Cape



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Town's prevention framework during the Johannesburg regional workshop. Importantly, the convening in Cape Town also offered Working Group members the opportunity to discuss shared challenges and how they can be supported – by the ESA Regional Hub, other cities and external parties – to better address those challenges. Amongst the priority needs they identified were:

- Capacity-building of local councils on good prevention practices, in particular on multi-actor collaboration and youth and other community engagement;
- Implementation of community empowerment programmes such as the Neighbourhood Watch and Youth Cadets initiative deployed by the City of Cape Town;
- Practices for developing inclusive, robust and data-driven policies and programmes;
- Awareness-raising amongst communities and municipal officials around cultural, religious and ethnic similarities and differences between residents, in particular that these should be celebrated rather than exploited to cause harm;
- Opportunities for sustained engagement and collaboration with municipal officials and communities that share borders, with a focus on developing joint peacebuilding and prevention programmes and enhancing information-sharing;
- Greater engagement with a) national government counterparts on prevention and b) capital cities and/or other urban centres, recognising that border towns are often transit points for migrants that seek to find employment in larger cities.

Informed by these needs, this document outlines a series of strategic priorities for the Working Group, its complementarity with other border-focused initiatives across the region and proposed (joint) activities for the Working Group and Strong Cities' ESA Regional Hub to meet the strategic priorities.

Strategic Priorities

The Working Group serves as a platform through which border municipalities can come together to discuss and explore solutions to the complex challenges they face as border towns. It operates with support from and under the auspices of Strong Cities' ESA Regional Hub, with its priorities as follows:

1. Enhance the capacity of border municipalities to prevent hate, extremism and polarisation

The Need: Border municipalities have requested support to build their capacities on prevention practices ranging from multi-actor collaboration to youth-city engagement, broader community engagement and data-driven/evidence-based programming.

Approach: Through peer-learning opportunities, whether specific to border municipalities (such as the learning visit to Cape Town) or for a broader audience (such



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as Strong Cities' regional workshops), dedicated technical support and other expertise (e.g., through Strong Cities' Global Expert Pool¹), the ESA Regional Hub will both enhance awareness amongst border municipalities of prevention good practices *and* help them contextualise and apply such practices. Working Group members will support this objective through advising the ESA Regional Hub on topics for capacity-building activities, pursuing the implementation of good prevention practices in their own cities and sharing experiences and approaches with their peers.

2. Enhance collaboration between border municipalities – particularly those that sit on opposite sides of the same border

The Need: Whilst there are numerous programmes dedicated to enhancing cross-border cooperation across ESA, few – if any – include local governments, despite it being local governments that face the brunt of the challenges that accompany unregulated cross-border migration and exploitation of the region's porous borders by mal-intended actors. Border municipalities have shared that they would benefit from opportunities to engage cities with which they share a border, with a view to enhancing cross-border city-city information-sharing on local threats and addressing the potential for such threats to “spill over”, as well as to explore joint prevention and peacebuilding initiatives.

Approach: The ESA Regional Hub will collaborate with Working Group members to facilitate and sustain cross-border city-city dialogues. Where necessary, the Hub will leverage its strong relationships with local government associations to connect with relevant border municipalities, inviting them to join the Working Group and supporting with regular virtual dialogues that enhance cross-border city-city collaboration. Where feasible, Working Group members will host such dialogues in person.

3. Enhance cooperation between border municipalities and their national government

The Need: Strong Cities recognises that [national-local cooperation](#) (NLC) is key to sustainable and effective whole-of-society prevention as it enables actors at both levels to work collectively to maximise the impacts of their prevention efforts. The EU-funded mapping and discussions with ESA cities since then show that NLC remains a significant gap across the region, impeding the implementation of relevant national prevention frameworks and leaving cities – particularly remote municipalities such as those near

¹ As part of Strong Cities' commitment to supporting mayors and the local governments they lead with implementing sustainable, human rights-based prevention structures, programmes and policies, Strong Cities has a pool of experts that it consults and/or connects cities with to build their capacities on relevant topics. This growing, global pool comprises multi-disciplinary experts that are deployed to support the Strong Cities Management Unit (which includes Regional Hubs) with projects and/or resources it is developing for cities *and* directly to cities to build their capacities on topics ranging from community engagement to rehabilitation and reintegration.



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borders – with a lack of information, tools and resources to adequately address emerging threats.

Approach: As part of its commitment to enhancing NLC, Strong Cities has developed the [Global Counterterrorism Forum's \(GCTF\) NLC Toolkit](#) that provides guidance for the implementation of the GCTF's [Memorandum on NLC good practices](#). Strong Cities also regularly facilitates national-local dialogues that convene local governments, other local actors and national government representatives to raise awareness of a) relevant national strategies, b) the role of cities in prevention and c) how enhanced NLC can maximise the impact of prevention efforts at all levels.

Responsibilities: the ESA Regional Hub vs. Working Group members

To achieve these priorities, **members** commit to:

- Establishing bilateral partnerships between municipalities with shared borders to coordinate prevention efforts and response mechanisms;
- Implementing learnings and practices from capacity-building activities;
- Advocating for the role of cities in prevention with other (border) cities and especially with national government counterparts;
- Sharing knowledge, resources, strategic approaches and emerging issues related to hate, extremism and polarisation with each other and the ESA Regional Hub;
- Sending regular updates to the ESA Regional Hub on the above items.

While the **ESA Regional Hub** commits to:

- Coordinating core functions of the Working Group, including reporting and communication protocols;
- Ensuring border municipalities are well-represented at relevant ESA Regional Hub activities, such as regional workshops and especially in national-local dialogues;
- Providing a platform through which to track members' progress with enhancing their prevention programmes and policies, and ensuring such progress is captured in "impact stories" that are shared with other members and Strong Cities' global membership;
- Facilitating connections between border municipalities and national and regional border-related initiatives;
- Fundraising to scale and sustain Strong Cities' support for border municipalities.

In line with Strong Cities' NLC workstream and to meet this strategic priority, the ESA Regional Hub commits to ensuring there is adequate representation of border municipalities at national-local dialogues it facilitates and will raise awareness of the NLC Toolkit and related resources, while Working Group members will – where possible – pursue greater collaboration with their national government, including by advocating for the role of cities in prevention.



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Complementarity with Strong Cities' Mission

These objectives align with Strong Cities' [Global Strategy 2023-2025](#), particularly the following priorities:

- Strengthen interaction among cities and local governments within and across different country and regional contexts to allow for local leaders and governments with shared interests to learn from each other;
- Promote effective NLC to ensure that national policies and programmes are informed by local government needs and priorities;
- Support cities and local governments to develop or strengthen mandates and programmes to prevent and respond to hate, extremism and polarisation;

Importantly, the ESA Regional Hub's support for the Working Group speaks to one of Strong Cities' core principles: **to respond to the needs of cities as reported by cities**. By collaborating with the Working Group and providing the Group with an existing brand and structure (e.g., of Strong Cities Network) under which to operate, the Hub is not only elevating city leadership and city-driven initiatives, but also ensuring its support to border municipalities is driven by their actual – rather than assumed – needs.

Complementarity with Regional Partners

The Border Municipalities Working Group additionally complements efforts by regional partners to strengthen safety and security in border areas across the African continent. This includes the [African Union Border Programme](#) (AUBP), which has been active since 2007 to promote peace, security and stability through delimitation and demarcation of borders, cross-border cooperation and related capacity building. The AUBP has also worked closely with Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to support their border-related programmes and interventions. For example, amongst the initiatives the AUBP has supported is the East African Community's (EAC) [Peace and Caravan Benchmarking Tour](#) for border communities in Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan, which sought to “[promote] peaceful co-existence, good neighbourliness and peaceful resolution of disputes among border communities through experiential learning from best practices of other border communities in the region.”

Further, the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) hosts an [Africa Borderlands Centre](#), which offers expertise and technical advice to “borderland communities” – primarily civil society and community-based actors – related to a number of Sustainable Development Goals, including 10 (reducing inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), which are relevant to the work of Strong Cities. [Research](#) conducted by the Centre in 2022 underscores “the importance of joining up cross-border local governance systems to address the structural causes of conflict at local, bi-national and regional levels”, a need that the Border Municipalities Working Group seeks to address through its second strategy priority.



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Finally, the Border Municipalities Working Group complements broader regional safety and security investments. For example, the [Intergovernmental Authority on Development](#) in East Africa's (IGAD) [Peace and Security Division](#) focuses on (transnational) conflict prevention and its [Regional Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism](#) outlines a commitment to working with local governments to “manage and mitigate potential areas of conflict or instability in communities”, including to “support existing peacebuilding infrastructure such as local peace committees”.

Other regional authorities such as EAC and the [Southern Africa Development Community](#) (SADC) also run various peace and security programmes that the Border Municipalities Working Group complements. SADC, for example, has a [Support to Peace and Security Programme](#) (SPSS) it delivers with support from the EU, which focuses on strengthening the capacity of member states to uphold democratic electoral processes; deliver gender-sensitive conflict prevention, management and resolution; to address sexual and gender-based violence; and – of greatest relevance to the Working Group – to “uphold and enhance cross-border safety and security”.

Strong Cities – through its support to the Border Municipalities Working Group – seeks to build on and collaborate with these regional efforts by adding a dedicated focus on local governments that can leverage global insights and almost a decade of experience working with cities on prevention.

Proposed Activities and Timeframe²

Working Group-wide

- Regular (every other month, schedules dependent) virtual meeting between Working Group members for peer learning and exchange. Every other meeting, external experts (e.g., practitioners from other cities or non-city experts from relevant fields) will be invited to present on a specific prevention practice;
- Quarterly in-person training (depending on funding, this could be a dedicated convening of the Working Group or a smaller training on the margins of other ESA Regional Hub activities);
- Creation of checklists and other guidance for city-led prevention, based on and to support implementation of Strong Cities' [Guide for Mayors](#), [Guide for Cities](#) and [City-Led Incident Response Toolkit](#);
- Implementation of practices learned in capacity-building activities;
- Provision of technical support and other expertise by the ESA Regional Hub as Working Group members develop and implement local prevention policies and programmes.

² Outputs, frameworks, case studies and other resources that are developed will be shared beyond the Working Group to inspire other (non-border) cities across ESA to enhance their prevention efforts.



Cross-Border Cities

- Regular virtual and/or in-person dialogues between representatives of cities that share borders;
- Development of frameworks or strategies for collaboration between cities that share borders, outlining information-sharing protocols and opportunities to deliver joint prevention programmes;
 - Based on this effort, development of a template framework and case studies that other border municipalities can learn from and replicate;
- Joint development and delivery of peacebuilding initiatives by cross-border cities.

Other

The ESA Regional Hub will also fundraise for a **pilot capacity-building project** that enables a more in-depth provision of support to select border municipalities. The project would a) convene multiple cross-border municipalities to enhance collaboration and build their capacities to address hate and extremism, achieved through multi-day trainings and provision of technical support to enable implementation of good practices and b) enhance NLC and domestic city-city cooperation by convening border municipalities with other cities and their national government.

Proposed Timeframe for 2024 (subject to change)

- **January – June (completed)**
 - Development and sign-off of Working Group Strategy (led by ESA Regional Hub and Working Group co-chairs)
 - Continued implementation of priorities identified at the Cape Town learning visit (led by the Working Group members; monitored with support from the ESA Regional Hub)
 - Reconvening of the Working Group (e.g., virtually and/or on the margins of a ESA regional workshop)
 - Expansion of Working Group in consultation with existing members
- **July – December (ongoing)**
 - Development of accessible checklists and short-form guidance for creating local prevention frameworks (based on Strong Cities' guides and global experience; led by the ESA Regional Hub with input from Working Group co-chairs)
 - Facilitation of initial in-person cross-border city-city dialogues (led by Working Group members with technical support from the ESA Regional Hub)
 - Based on these initial engagements, the development of a live resource that contains guidelines and considerations for other border municipalities (led by the ESA Regional Hub with input from Working Group members)



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- Presentation of checklists, templates and considerations (e.g., for cross-border dialogues) to the whole Working Group on the margins of the regional workshop in Arusha (Tanzania; led by ESA Regional Hub with input from Working Group members)
 - Based on this, Working Group members will start developing local frameworks (using Strong Cities guides and tools developed as well as their growing familiarity with prevention good practices) and will continue implementing practices they learn from other cities (led by Working Group members with support from the ESA Regional Hub)
- Continued implementation and collation of lessons learned (led by Working Group members with support from the ESA Regional Hub)
- Presentation of successes and lessons learned on margins of Strong Cities' Fifth Global Summit in Cape Town (led by the ESA Regional Hub with support from Working Group members)
- Year-in-review and updating the strategy for 2025 (led by the ESA Regional Hub with support from Working Group members)

Membership

The Working Group is open to any border municipality in ESA, regardless of whether they are a Strong Cities member.³ Further, in line with Strong Cities' commitment to elevating city-led practices and facilitating city leadership, cities that are not border municipalities but have established practices and frameworks from which the Working Group want to learn (e.g., the City of Cape Town, Stellenbosch Municipality) are invited to join as "City Experts".

Expansion of the Working Group is a joint effort between the ESA Regional Hub and Working Group. Several border towns have already been proposed for inclusion by existing members, which include, among others:

- Mahagi (DRC), recommended by existing member, Nebbi Municipality (Uganda), as they share the border;
- Musina (South Africa), which sits on the border with Zimbabwe and is known to be a significant transit point for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The ESA Regional Hub will lead outreach with proposed members, introducing the Working Group, expectations of members and (if needed) the work of Strong Cities more broadly.

Current City Members (as of September 2024)

Country	Municipality	Representative
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³ While membership is open to any relevant municipality in ESA, city-specific technical support funding is prioritised for Strong Cities members.



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Burundi	Mukaza Commune	Sindayihebura Renovat, Councillor
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Bukavu City	Francois Venance Alwende, Director International Relations
Kenya	Busia County	Peter Odima, County Executive Committee Member
Kenya	Elgeyo Marakwet County	Philemon Sabulei, Speaker
Kenya	Mombasa County	Munira Hamisi, County Director: Resilience & Youth Affairs
Kenya	Trans Nzoia County	Philomena Kapkory, Deputy Governor
Kenya	Wajir County	Ahmed Abdullahi, Governor
Kenya	West Pokot	Robert Achaulle, Deputy Governor
Malawi	Zomba City	Munira Bakali, Councillor
Mozambique	Maputo City	Nercio Duvane, Councillor for Youth and Knowledge Creation
Somalia	Cadaado City	Farah Warsame, Mayor
South Africa	Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality*	TBC
South Africa	City of Cape Town**	Mzwakhe Nqavashe, Portfolio Chairperson: Safety and Security
South Africa	Stellenbosch Municipality**	Charl Kitching, Senior Manager: Protection Services
Tanzania	Kakonko District	Ndaki Stephano, District Executive Director
Tanzania	Songea Municipality	Michael Mbanu, Mayor
Tanzania	Tanga City Council	Abdulrahman Shiloow, Mayor
Tanzania	Tunduru District	Hairu Hemed, Mayor
Tanzania	Zanzibar Urban Municipal Council	Mwajuma Abadi, Head of Division
Uganda	Kasese District	Elias Byamungu, Chief Administrative Officer
Uganda	Koboko Municipality	Wilson Sanya, Mayor



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Uganda	Kyengera Town Council	Joseph Semugera, Councillor
Uganda	Masaka City	Florence Namayanja, Mayor
Uganda	Nansana Municipality	Regina Bakitte, Mayor
Uganda	Nebbi Municipality	Geoffrey Ngiriker, Mayor

* Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, while not a border town, is included to sustain its peer-learning with other cities as they face similar challenges – particularly around xenophobia and managing fluctuating demographics – as border towns.

**The City of Cape Town and Stellenbosch Municipality join the Working Group as “City Experts”.

Other non-city members:

Country	Organisation	Representative
South Africa	South African Local Government Association	Zoyisile Gcilitshana, Manager: Stakeholder Relations
Tanzania	Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania	Mohamed Maje, Secretary General
Tanzania	Zanzibar Association of Local Government Authorities	Mohamed Mohamed, Acting Secretary General
Tanzania	Southern Africa Development Community	Amanda Chare, Officer: Policy Coordination, Generation and Development Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Affairs

About Strong Cities

Strong Cities is an independent global network of more than 250 cities and other local governments dedicated to addressing all forms of hate, extremism and polarisation, while promoting a human rights-based prevention framework. Through in-person and online convenings, exchanges and trainings, Strong Cities facilitates sharing and learning among mayors, other local leaders and municipal-level practitioners. By doing so, it helps local authorities leverage their full potential in prevention, while complementing national, regional and global efforts.

To deepen its engagement with cities and local authorities across the ESA region, and with support from the EU’s [STRIVE Cities](#) initiative, Strong Cities [launched](#) the ESA Regional Hub in late 2022, which serves as a helpdesk for cities across the region, supporting them with city-city sharing, localising international good practice and elevating their voices on a



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global stage. The ESA Regional Hub is hosted by the [East African County and Local Governments Association](#).



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