STRONG CITIES NETWORK
Programme Summary
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Introduction

The sustained and coordinated challenge posed by violent extremism must be understood and addressed at both global and local levels.

Whilst ‘homegrown’ terrorism owes much to transnational factors, it draws invariably on locally or individually specific circumstances. As cities, towns and local communities the world over have borne the human, economic and social costs of terrorist attacks and social polarisation, so too are they best positioned to effectively counter and prevent them. For too long, prevention-focused policy has centred on national governments and their security infrastructure. Local leaders, frontline services and the communities they represent and serve have been directed to merely comply with or enforce national policy and security objectives. Worse still, many have had no role at all in informing, developing and implementing credible and effective prevention approaches to make their environments safer and their communities stronger.

The Strong Cities Network has turned this on its head, putting cities, municipalities and subnational regions at the heart of both policy change and the practical implementation of prevention programmes. Cities’ unparalleled understanding of their own community dynamics represents a critical asset in developing effective and locally-owned and tailored approaches that can support and strengthen governmental commitments to reduce terrorism and the conditions that can foster it. Devolving responsibility alone, however, cannot address the complex challenges we face. Cities cannot and should not develop approaches in isolation, nor may they have the requisite capacities, capabilities and resourcing to turn insight into workable strategies.

On this basis, the SCN connects leaders, skilled frontline practitioners, and credible community actors in more than 100 global cities to work as peers, share learning and create a support network that means no city need start this process without the tried and tested evidence of what works. To drive this transformation, the SCN delivers world-leading training and support, providing knowledge, skills, partnerships and infrastructure with a steadfast commitment to improving local prevention on a global scale.

This brochure provides a snapshot of some of our efforts to date, working in partnership with cities and communities in every major global region. We hope it also shows what can be achieved when national and local governments, international organisations, businesses, NGOs and civil society unite behind a purposeful, coherent and sustainable strategy for change, resilience and thriving, diverse, peaceful and supportive communities.

We look forward to continuing to build this unprecedented effort with you over years to come.

Inaugural SCN International Steering Committee, New York City, 2015
Meet the Team

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About the Strong Cities Network

Led by ISD and launched at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, the Strong Cities Network (SCN) is the first ever global network of mayors, governors and local practitioners united in building social cohesion and community resilience to counter violent extremism in all its forms. Since launching, the SCN has delivered over 70 events worldwide, reaching nearly 2,000 P/CVE practitioners including 500 city officials and over 100 mayors from 61 countries.

WHAT WE DO

The SCN helps regions, cities and municipalities access the tools and insights needed to challenge and reduce the presence of violent extremism within their communities and support those working on the frontline. The five pillars of the SCN’s work include:

1. KNOWLEDGE AND DATA
   The SCN provides granular research and insights based on our expertise of designing, delivering and evaluating programming to challenge polarisation and hate, across five continents.
   - SCN Risk Assessment / Local Risk Profile
   - Online Extreme Speech and Polarisation Mapping
   - SCN Online Hub

2. POLICY, STRATEGY & INFRASTRUCTURE
   The SCN provides policy and strategy advice, to build evidence-based, locally-owned prevention strategies and establish the necessary networks and infrastructure within a city.
   - Local Action Plan Consultation
   - City-level Prevention Coordinator
   - Multi-agency / Multi-stakeholder Local Prevention Network

3. TRAINING
   The SCN provides training and capacity building to empower communities and local professionals to play active roles in violence prevention.
   - Table-top planning exercises
   - Engagement and Dialogue Forums
   - Best practice training materials for police officers, social workers, and teachers.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FOR COHESION
   The SCN provides research and communications advice to cities to build cohesive, integrated communities.
   - Campaign / communications design
   - Tackling hate crime, speech
   - Youth engagement strategies

5. PARTNERSHIPS & CITY REPRESENTATION
   The SCN provides opportunities for policy makers and political leaders to convene globally and discuss challenges and solutions and to forge partnerships with international organisations, other cities and businesses.
   - Annual SCN Global Summit
   - UNGA events
   - GCTF Action Plan Developments
   - SCN Public Private Partnership Taskforce
Member Cities

Since 2015, SCN membership has grown to more than 125 cities, regions and municipalities from across every major global region, demonstrating the strong demand for support in developing P/CVE at the local level. SCN’s membership is highly diverse, including large megacities from London to Mumbai, as well as smaller municipalities from Kristiansand to Kolofata and al-Karak. SCN members have a broad array of experiences and expertise relevant to P/CVE policy and programming. Uniting them is the desire to share good practice, learn from others and build community resilience against the division of all forms of violent extremism.

The SCN is guided by an International Steering Committee of mayors and local subnational leaders whose primary functions include:

- Determining the overall strategic direction of the SCN and annual thematic priorities for action and delivery.
- Sharing information related to existing projects, programming and practices, and working to populate the online platform with practice, programmes and lessons learned.
- Endorsing and publicising the SCN including assistance in the growth of the overall membership base.

**International Steering Committee Members**

- Aarhus, Denmark
- Antalya, Turkey
- Atlanta, USA
- Beirut, Lebanon
- Copenhagen, Denmark
- Dakar, Senegal
- Denver, USA
- Kaduna, Nigeria
- Kano, Nigeria
- Kiffa, Mauritania
- Kristiansand, Norway
- London, UK
- Medellín, Colombia
- Mombasa, Kenya
- Montréal, Canada
- Mumbai, India
- New York City, USA
- Oslo, Norway
- Palermo, Italy
- Paris, France
- Puno, Peru
- Rotterdam, Netherlands
- Stockholm, Sweden
- Tunis, Tunisia
- Victoria, Australia
- Al-Karak, Jordan
- Anaheim, USA
- Antwerp, Belgium
- Aracino, Macedonia
- Augsburg, Germany
- Aurora, USA
- Bar, Montenegro
- Berane, Montenegro
- Berlin, Germany
- Bern, Switzerland
- Biel/Bienne, Switzerland
- Bihać, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Bijeljina, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Birmingham, UK
- Bordeaux, France
- Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Bujanovac, Serbia
- Buljize, Albania
- Cair (Skopje), Macedonia
- Cali, Colombia
- Centar (Sarajevo), Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Cerrik, Albania
- Chaguanaus, Trinidad & Tobago
- Chanchamayo, Peru
- Chattanooga, USA
- Cuenca, Ecuador
- Dhaka North, Bangladesh
- Dhaka South, Bangladesh
- Diffa, Niger
- Doboj, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Dresden, Germany
- Edmonton, Canada
- Elbasan, Albania
- Envigado, Colombia
- Fierizaj, Kosovo
- Fuenlabrada, Spain
- Gentofte, Denmark
- Gjakova, Kosovo
- Gijon, Kosovo
- Gostivar, Macedonia
- Gračanica, Kosovo
- Guldborgsund, Denmark
- Gusiñe, Montenegro
- Hani i Elezit, Kosovo
- Helsinki, Finland
- Jablanica, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Kaçanik, Kosovo
- Kicevo, Macedonia
- Kolofata, Cameroon
- Kousseri, Cameroon
- Kumanovo, Macedonia
- Librazhd, Albania
- Louisville, USA
- Luton, UK
- Majdal Anjar, Lebanon
- Malaga, Spain
- Malé, Maldives
- Malmö, Sweden
- Meri/Diamaré, Cameroon
- Mitrovica South, Kosovo
- Mokolo, Cameroon
- Montfort, France
- Narayanganj, Bangladesh
- Novi Pazar, Serbia
- Nowshera, Pakistan
- Ohrid, Macedonia
- Ottawa, Canada
- Peja/Pec, Kosovo
- Peshawar, Pakistan
- Pignon, Haiti
- Priévid, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Pristina, Kosovo
- Prizren, Kosovo
- Quetta, Pakistan
- Rožaje, Montenegro
- Saida, Lebanon
- San Diego, USA
- Sarcelles, France
- Srebenik, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Struga, Macedonia
- Tetovo, Macedonia
- The Hague, Netherlands
- Tirana, Albania
- Tripoli, Lebanon
- Tutin, Serbia
- Tuzla, Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Ulcinj, Montenegro
- Utrecht, Netherlands
- Viborg, Denmark
- Vilvoorde, Belgium
- Viti, Kosovo
- Vushtrri, Kosovo
- Yaoundé, Cameroon
- Zanzibar, Tanzania
- Zarqa, Jordan
- Zvecan, Kosovo
Local Action Planning

Why is it necessary?

The SCN vision is for cities to not just implement but to lead and direct the prevention and countering of violent extremism. To set their own policy and strategy agenda for prevention at local community levels, it is important for cities to have well-designed and effective Local Action Plans. SCN Local Action Planning training and the policy and strategy support we provide to member cities seeks to provide a step-by-step guidance framework for cities to either design their own Local Action Plan where none has previously existed, or strengthen their existing policy framework or local strategy. Not all cities require training on the same areas, nor necessarily to the same depth. Our training model is therefore designed to be flexible and to enable multiple areas of benefit to different cities, depending on their specific needs.

What can it achieve?

To date, we have delivered training workshops to key practitioners and policymakers in 62 cities in 21 countries across Africa, South Asia and the Western Balkans.

Whilst we are proud that this training has supported the development of new city-owned and city-led Local Action Plans like that recently launched by Mombasa County Government, we are equally proud that our training has enabled others to achieve different aims, no less important in their own context. For instance, SCN training for the mayors of key communes in the Far North Region of Cameroon has helped local actors formulate their existing knowledge and project proposals in line with international best practice standards and thus helped them feel better placed to attract donors and partners. In the Western Balkans, many cities drew benefit from our focus on matching local drivers of violence and radicalisation to key institutional risks and vulnerabilities, enabling them to better identify the range of city-wide resilience considerations that can support the sustainability of their P/CVE approaches. In Kolkata, cities hitherto unengaged in any municipal-led P/CVE policy were able to understand the impact they can have by partnering with and supporting multiple civil society-led efforts that identify and address key localised risks, whilst also being able to align this process with national policy objectives and ask questions of those leading on national CVE policy design. In our training to date, we have sought to draw out what we believe are the three core tenets of sound local policy:

- An informed, accurate and evidenced understanding of local risk
- A clear map of key partners and a proportionate allocation of resources
- A comprehensive understanding of methodological approaches to prevention and mitigation

How can it be delivered?

As a core part of our leadership on municipal policy and strategy, training and support on local action planning is currently delivered under the following workstreams:

- Regional training workshops
- City policy consultations
- National-level workshops and engagement
- In-depth pilot programmes and action plan development
Youth Engagement

To effectively challenge violent extremism, it is essential to support and galvanize young people to become active citizens and provide them with the tools to compete against the narratives that are commonly used by violent extremists with bold and positive visions for social change. However, many existing programmes that target youth and seek to get them engaged in the political process suffer from a disconnect between the youth and the institutions of local governance they are seeking to influence.

Our key aim in empowering youth voices is to help them take a more active role in shaping their own future, and to work more closely with local government to build resistance to extremism in their communities. As a unique collaboration with ISD’s Youth Civil Activism Network (YouthCAN), our joint programmatic structure combines top-down policy development from the SCN with bottom-up capacity building from YouthCAN to help establish better collaboration on building a model for sustainable youth engagement in different global regions.

**SCN youth engagement work targets two key groups:**

- Young activists aged 15-30 interested in peacebuilding, prevention and counter extremism efforts
- Municipal leaders and practitioners, including mayors, civil servants, municipal employees and frontline service personnel

To deliver this work across the Middle East, East Africa, the Western Balkans and South Asia, the SCN delivers both Campaigns Labs and Policy Workshops in local communities to empower and enable young people and bring them together with municipal leaders to share the campaigns they create, own and disseminate; and support municipalities in developing local youth engagement strategies.

**Latest Campaigns**

**Washwasha (Whispers) – Saida, Lebanon**

Aiming to break the negative stereotype of Ain El-Hillweh Palestinian Refugee Camp, this campaign aims to create a media studio inside the camp, filming dialogue sessions between refugees and non-Palestinian Lebanese and enabling refugees to create original content and tell their own stories.

**Farha Tayshe (Stray Bullets Kill Joy) – Tripoli, Lebanon**

Targeting northern and rural areas of the country, this campaign uses actors to recreate a scenario in which a wedding celebration turns to tragedy with the spraying of bullets in the air, aiming to challenge the prevalence of gun culture and their use in celebrations. Developed by young people directly affected by this issue, the campaign will be disseminated across social media. The Mayor of Tripoli recently met with the team behind the campaign, lending official endorsement to their work and their collaboration with the SCN Local Prevention Network in Tripoli.
Local Prevention Networks

One of the most important roles for municipality-led prevention work is to coordinate and facilitate a local network leveraging existing professional groups who work with local communities.

In Denmark, this local prevention coordination mechanism is known as the SSP Network. Established in the 1970s as a criminality and violence prevention mechanism, the SSP’s ‘multi-agency’ approach involves collaboration between the social services, the education sector, the health-care system, the police and security institutions.

This whole-of-society approach is at the heart of municipality violence prevention programmes across the world, from the UK’s Prevent programme, Boston’s Community Connect programme, and intervention schemes in countries like the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Norway. However, no such programmes existed in the Middle East prior to 2016.

In the municipalities of Saida, Tripoli and Majdal Anjar in Lebanon, and Irbid, Al-Karak and Zarqa in Jordan, the SCN has helped to establish six Local Prevention Networks bringing together over 95 local leaders and professionals in coordination with local municipalities.

LPN members include mayors, religious leaders, teachers, young people, psycho-social support providers, municipality workers and representatives from local civil society organisations.

Impact & Activities

LPNs have established Terms of Reference, received training and capacity building on P/CVE and violence prevention, taken part in team building and organised community outreach activities, developed local PVE guides, and have launched publicly in their local communities, reaching over 1,000 members of the public.

Ongoing activities include:

• Developing a teachers training manual for PVE in schools.
• Organising activities addressing PVE through art and theatre for vulnerable youth.
• Organising roundtables and workshops for religious leaders, awareness raising sessions for teachers and local scout leaders.
• Participating in dialogue sessions with youth and supporting implementation of youth-led campaigns.
• Delivering social media trainings for youth.
• Organising social cohesion activities for communities.
Mapping Extreme Speech and Polarisation

Our mayors have identified tackling extreme and polarising speech and related crime and violence against individuals and groups in their communities as one of their key priorities to prevent the rise of extremism and violence. Cities across the world are contending with an increase in community polarisation and, in some cases, explicit instances of violent extremism. Whilst these issues are traditionally seen as offline challenges, technology plays an ever-increasingly role to sowing community discord.

ISD’s experience in monitoring and responding to extremism has shown the importance of the specific contexts within which each Strong City operates. Threats to society differ around the globe, and the technology must reflect this.

To tackle these challenges, ISD has partnered with the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media (CASM) to develop a tool for cities that will enable the SCN to use social media data to understand when and where there is increased risk of violent hate crime or extremist-related confrontation.

This work follows a pioneering project carried out by CASM, the London Mayor's office and the Metropolitan Police in London, UK, involving the following core steps:

- Open-source data collection across multiple online platforms using purpose-built tech tools
- Enrichment of data conducted by world leading researchers in Natural Language Processing
- Accurate geo-location of online speech to a country or borough level using the latest tech capabilities
- Cross referencing of online data mapping against city-wide offline crime data, in partnership with the Mayor of London and the Metropolitan Police.

As a result of these efforts, London has been able to evidence a positive correlation between online extremist speech and offline extremist-related crime. With the ability to work across multiple forms of extremism and discriminatory behaviours, we believe this work can deliver the following benefits for Strong Cities globally:

**Mapping Extreme Speech and Polarisation**

- Real-time monitoring of a city’s online extremism profile based on publicly available social media data.
- Identify and anticipate extremism-related demonstrations or coordinated propaganda dissemination.
- Understand when and where online extremist speech affects a community, and when communities are at increased risk of extremism.
- Channel resources more effectively to mitigate the impact extremism in local communities.
# SCN Global Highlights: Global Summit 2017 - 2018

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1. **SCN Global Summit 2017**  
**LOCATION: Denmark**

476 delegates from 170 cities across 47 countries came together for the SCN Global Summit 2017 hosted by Aarhus Municipality, Denmark, providing a forum for sharing knowledge and learning, strengthening local capacity, and delivering innovative practical training.

2. **Western Balkans Regional Practitioners' training workshops**  
**LOCATION: Albania/Kosovo/Montenegro**

The SCN delivered a series of training workshops for local and municipal policymakers and practitioners from across multiple cities across the Western Balkans with workshops in Peja, Kosovo, Ulcinj, Montenegro and Durres, Albania, focusing on local risk assessment, referral mechanisms, intervention approaches and best-practise.

3. **SCN @ UN General Assembly 2017**  
**LOCATION: USA**

The SCN was highlighted at the 72nd UNGA in New York, noted as a unique mechanism in advancing subnational P/CVE approaches by the Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Norway and Jordan and represented my SCN members from Jordan, Kosovo, Lebanon and Senegal.

4. **Dakar-Montréal City Exchange**  
**LOCATION: Canada**

The first SCN bilateral City Exchange took place in October 2017, with practitioners and policymakers from Dakar, Senegal travelling to Montréal, Canada to exchange learning and challenges on prevention, meeting with City Hall officials, local police, community projects and the Centre for the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violence (CPRLV).
5. Official Launches of SCN Local Prevention Networks in Jordan and Lebanon
LOCATION: Jordan/Lebanon

Building on a major SCN in-depth local capacity-building project in the Middle East, member municipalities across Lebanon hold public community launches of their multi-stakeholder SCN Local Prevention Networks, an unprecedented move towards growing local control and ownership of prevention and community resilience.

6. SCN City Consultations
LOCATION: Pakistan

In November 2017, the SCN delivered our first round of direct consultations with the cities of Quetta, Peshawar and Nowshera in Pakistan, looking at the key challenges affecting District Governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces, as well as the opportunities for developing key prevention, peacebuilding and resilience capacities and the local level.

7. SCN Youth Engagement Lab and Municipal Workshops
LOCATION: Jordan

Youth activists and municipal officials came together in Amman, Jordan in November 2017 for an SCN youth engagement innovation lab and municipal workshop, developing innovative community campaigns with expert training and working together on local prevention approaches.

8. SCN-Against Violent Extremism training for Seattle Police Department
LOCATION: USA

In partnership with ISD’s Against Violent Extremism (AVE) network, the SCN led an in-depth training workshop in November 2017 with frontline members of the Seattle Police Department, imparting key international best practice to guide community engagement and law enforcement, drawing on unique insights from the AVE network’s decade of engagement with former extremists and survivors of violent extremism.
9. South Asia Regional Practitioners’ Workshop
LOCATION: India

30 Local municipal and civil society practitioners from 14 different cities across India, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Sri Lanka joined the SCN South Asia workshop in Kolkata, India in January 2018, sharing local experience and receiving training on local risk assessments and action planning.

10. SCN Mayoral Public Private Partnerships Taskforce and US Conference of Mayors Resolution
LOCATION: USA

SCN Mayors from across Europe and the U.S. convened in Washington and London to launch a major international Taskforce to galvanise public private partnerships to build social cohesion and counter the rise of violent extremism. In June, the Chair of the Taskforce, Mayor Andy Berke of Chattanooga TN submitted a resolution to the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Summer 2018 meeting in Boston MA, calling for action against hate crime and violent extremism through public private partnerships for community safety and cohesion.

11. SCN U.S.-India Mayoral Exchange
LOCATION: India

In February 2017, the SCN delivered a Mayoral Exchange between the U.S. and India, with the Mayors of Anaheim and Louisville travelling to Mumbai, New Delhi and Dharamsala to engage with municipal counterparts, visit community projects and hold an audience with HH the Dalai Lama on kindness and compassion leadership for cities.

12. Mombasa-Kristiansand City Exchange
LOCATION: Norway

The second SCN bilateral City Exchange took place in March 2018, with Mombasa’s local prevention coordinator and policy advisor travelling to the City of Kristiansand in Norway, meeting with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in addition to the city’s Crime Prevention Coordinator and a number of key local practitioners driving effective prevention efforts.
13. SCN Youth Engagement Lab and Municipal Workshop  
LOCATION: Lebanon

In May 2018, the SCN brought together young activists and creative talents from across Lebanon to learn from experts in social media, tech and creative industries to develop effective campaigns for peacebuilding and cohesion at the community level. In a further workshop with mayors and municipal officials, young people were given a platform to engage with local government and help shape their approach to preventing violent extremism.

14. SCN Global Summit 2018  
LOCATION: Australia

216 delegates from 94 cities across 32 countries came together for the SCN Global Summit 2018 hosted by the State Government of Victoria, Australia, providing a forum for sharing knowledge and learning, strengthening local capacity, and delivering innovative practical training.

15. SCN City Consultations  
LOCATION: Western Balkans

Following an engagement and training phase that led more than 40 municipalities across the Western Balkans to join the network, the SCN conducted consultation activities with member cities and local stakeholders in Kosovo and Macedonia. This was part of a wider initiative to deepen engagement in the region and support local infrastructure and capacity building initiatives in selected partner municipalities.

16. Peshawar - Birmingham City Exchange  
LOCATION: UK

The Strong Cities Network (SCN) held its third bilateral city exchange between the cities of Peshawar, Pakistan, and Birmingham, United Kingdom. Two District Council members from Peshawar travelled to Birmingham and Luton to attend the exchange, which aims to promote and share, on a city-to-city basis, vital practical tools and initiatives to reduce local risk, prevent violence and build cohesive communities.
SCN Online Hub

Launched at the 2016 Global Summit in Antalya, Turkey, the SCN Online Hub provides a member-only online resource and training centre available in English, French and Arabic, with valuable digital training resources including a library of research and case studies, city profiles and online training modules and toolkits.

Library

A one-stop-shop for research, strategy papers and analysis related to local P/CVE, the SCN members’ library is a central repository featuring more than 200 documents of interest to member cities. As well as collating public documents for ease of access, the library also hosts documents contributed by member cities, including local action plans and evaluations. All documents are available for download, and can be easily searched and sorted by theme, city, region or language. Visit the library at www.strongcitiesnetwork.org/library.

City Profiles

The SCN’s aim is to increase the opportunities for peer learning across cities around the world. We have launched online city profiles for SCN member cities, providing comprehensive overviews of the core challenges and approaches in each of our cities. City profiles are searchable by thematic tags, making them a practical resource for frontline practitioners and policymakers. If your city is interested in developing activities and programming, for example, in mentoring or youth engagement, you can search these themes to bring up a selection of cities carrying out leading work in these areas. If you find specific programmes you are interested in learning more about, the SCN team can put you directly in touch with a relevant counterpart in another member city.

Online Training Modules & Toolkits

Delivering world-class practical training to our member cities is central to the work of the SCN. In addition to face-to-face training sessions and capacity-building workshops, members can access online training modules and toolkits via the Online Hub.

Each of the SCN working groups has a dedicated toolkit, covering background research, interest pieces, case studies from around the world, and relevant work in member cities.

Documents are easily accessible and downloadable. Interactive training modules to support practitioner development are also available covering topics including counter-narrative campaigns and individual interventions.

Online training resources can be accessed at www.strongcitiesnetwork.org/training.
Strong Cities Network

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ISD | Powering solutions to extremism and polarisation

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