LOCAL VOICES, GLOBAL LESSONS

Tackling Urban Violence Together

February 25-27, 2025
Nairobi, Kenya

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INTRODUCTION AND MAIN TAKEAWAYS

From February 25 to 27, Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) members and experts, particularly from the African continent, met in Nairobi, Kenya, for the first Regional Workshop of the PiOC network, organized in partnership with the Life & Peace Institute (LPI). This regionally-focused workshop brought together PiOC member cities and representatives for knowledge exchange and experiential learning on topics such as gender-based violence, youth, data and technology, climate change, and organized criminal violence in the unique context of Africa's rapid urbanization and social change. The three-day workshop included discussions, training sessions, and site visits to informal settlements of Nairobi, all to explore community-specific violence prevention strategies on the most pressing topics related to urban violence in the region.

Cross-cutting insights across workshop elements included:

– **Violence as a complex phenomenon:** Participants emphasized that violence is a multi-pronged and interconnected crisis, involving issues related to governance, gender, inequality, housing, climate change, unemployment, political participation, and more.

– **Prevention over suppression:** Participants agreed that it is not enough to take action to stop violence as it happens, but that governments and other stakeholders need to identify and address the root causes of violence through holistic and whole-of-society approaches.

– **The need to build trust between the community and law enforcement:** Participants expressed the importance of creating bridges between the community and the police. Although policing cannot be seen as the sole solution to violence prevention, it is crucial that community members can see law enforcement as reliable, safe, and responsive.

– **Young people as agents of change:** Throughout the discussions, participants remarked that young people feel alienated from political conversations and decision-making, highlighting the need to elevate young people's voices in discussions related to violence prevention.

– **Data as a tool for violence prevention:** Participants highlighted the importance of using data to understand the violence that affects their communities and design more effective and better-targeted violence prevention strategies, while expressing their concerns surrounding resource constraints.

– **Responding to challenges with better institutions and effective governance:** Participants remarked on the need to build institutions and governance practices that can answer emerging global challenges such as organized crime, changes in the international funding landscape, and climate-related threats.

– **Networking and strategic partnerships:** different sessions throughout the workshop brought to the fore the importance of coalition building between civil society actors and partnerships with key state actors to bridge the gap between policy and practice and ensure long-term sustainability of efforts to address urban violence. The workshop provided an opportunity for PiOC members to share their approaches and explore critical linkages for continued engagement.

Below is a detailed summary of these discussions.

DAY 1

Opening Session

At the opening session, **Kelsey Paul Shantz, PiOC network co-facilitator**, on behalf of the PiOC Secretariat, welcomed participants to the first regional meeting of the PiOC network, a unique global network of more than 25 city governments and over 40 civil society partners, including international organizations, all committed to reducing and addressing violence in their communities. She emphasized that this workshop was member-driven and informed by members on current critical issues across the African continent. She highlighted that PiOC is a learning community and invited all participants to share openly about the challenges faced by their communities in this trusted, supportive environment.

Michelle Nyandong, Country Manager at LPI, welcomed participants to Nairobi and remarked that this conference reinforces the collective commitment to building safer communities in the face of complex violence, and that Nairobi, with its challenges but also its innovative and resilient spirit, is a fitting backdrop for these conversations. She stressed the potential for transformation when governments, civil society actors, and communities come together to forge pathways for peace.

David Wanyonyi, Nairobi County Commissioner, highlighted the power that local solutions have in addressing the root causes of violence, such as the youth employment programs and drug awareness initiatives that are producing measurable progress in reducing violence in some of Nairobi's settlements. He referenced the Gen Z movement and noted the need to utilise both peace champions and social media to mentor young people.

Peace in Our Cities: Our Why and Our How

Rachel Locke, PiOC's co-founder, went in depth on the motivations behind the network and how this translates into its work. The idea for the network, which started as a campaign in 2019, stemmed from the acknowledgement that cities need to be included in global policy conversations on violence prevention and reduction. The network's approach is based on three "A"s:

– **Amplify** policymakers' awareness of the genuine scope and scale of urban violence and opportunities available to help cities address it.

– **Advance** evidence-informed policy solutions and peacebuilding approaches to reduce the most severe forms of violence in urban contexts.

– A**ccompany** city leaders, community partners, and civil society through peer exchanges and information access to realize ambitious targets for violence reduction.

She highlighted some success stories from member cities, such as Pelotas, Brazil, which reduced homicides by 89 percent in only four years, and Oakland, United States, which reduced homicides by roughly 50 percent pre-pandemic through a partnership-based and data-driven violence reduction strategy. She emphasized that success stories can be achieved, but are not easy—they require large investments, multi-sectoral approaches, and an understanding of the local context.

Finally, she acknowledged that African cities experiencing rapid urban growth face unique challenges, particularly with youth populations and informal settlements. However, examples from West Africa show that

urbanization does not always lead to increased violence and can offer growth, investment, and peacebuilding opportunities. Despite challenges such as over-criminalization, funding cuts, and fear-inducing narratives, PiOC advocates for sustained collaboration, resource investment, and inclusive approaches to build safer and more resilient urban communities.

Preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Cities

The first panel of the day focused on GBV, an issue that is one of the priority concerns for many cities in the region. **Flávia Carbonari (PIOC Secretariat)** was the moderator for the panel and framed the discussion by remarking that GBV is a global problem with multi-pronged consequences. As she noted, one in three women experiences GBV; in Africa specifically, over half of the countries have a GBV rate higher than 40 percent. Beyond the effects on the individual, she highlighted that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that for every 1 percent increase in GBV rates, economic activity may be reduced by up to 8 percent.

Sara Serin-Christ, GBV Program Planner for the City of Oakland, United States, shared her experience implementing a successful violence deterrence program to reduce violence against women in the city. The project includes crisis response, long-term support for individuals caught in the cycle of violence, including life coaching and legal assistance, and funding for community organizations. She also highlighted how having accurate data on GBV is critical to better understanding the issue and formulating effective strategies, but that GBV is too often underreported.

Dean Peacock, Director of the Mobilizing Men for Feminist Peace Initiative at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, spoke on the importance of engaging men and boys to end violence against women, which he cited as being rooted in patriarchal gender norms and misogyny. As he noted, experiencing violence against children is a strong predictor of men's use of violence, as well as hunger and the use of alcohol. He remarked that it is crucial to address these root causes to prevent future violence, and that criminalization by itself is not always effective in reducing violence.

Elsa Marie D'Silva, Founder of the Red Dot Foundation, spoke about the SafeCity platform, which relies on crowd-sourced data to make previously invisible incidents of GBV visible, enabling education, advocacy, and the identification of patterns at the local level. She noted that around 80 percent of GBV incidents are not reported through official channels, so platforms like SafeCity, which collects data from urban and rural areas in 86 countries, are critical to preserve a record of these stories and enable effective responses to prevent different forms of GBV and improve support services to survivors.

Olive Nabisubi, Technical Manager - VAW Prevention Team at Raising Voices, introduced SASA!, a community mobilization approach to prevent violence against women. The project started in 2008 in Uganda, but has now expanded to more than 30 countries worldwide. It is being utilized by over 75 organizations, from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to UN agencies. She stated that the program's goal is to shift norms around gender and power in intimate relationships to prevent violence, and that essential elements of this intervention include benefits-based activism, holistic community engagement, institutional strengthening, and a gender/power analysis.

Questions from the audience focused on the effective implementation of similar initiatives in different contexts, how to better engage men and boys in these efforts, how to provide support to social workers and violence interrupters, and how to address the issue of under-reporting in GBV. Panelists emphasized the importance of getting the buy-in of all sectors of government to implement GBV-focused initiatives, especially in male-dominated

environments. They asserted that it is critical to engage the community and have coordinated community responses to violence against women. They also spoke about the importance of finding culturally appropriate processes for trauma healing.

Training session: Exploring the Concept of Power and its Intersections with GBV

Following the conversation on GBV, participants had an opportunity to join an interactive exercise to experience the SASA! approach, which allowed them to reflect on their understanding and experience of power, which is crucial in addressing the drivers of GBV. The debriefing revealed diverse interpretations of this concept, including its potential for change, connection to authority, transient nature, and potential for corruption. To close the discussion, Olive presented SASA! Together's application of the concept of power, divided into four phases: Start (reflecting on power within), Awareness (understanding power over and negative uses), Support (building power with collective action), and Action (empowering the community with power to sustain prevention efforts).

Organized Crime and Urban Violence

The day's final panel discussed the relationship between organized crime and violence at the urban level. The moderator, **Rachel Locke**, started by noting that it is not enough to talk about the interpersonal dimension of the violence that happens in cities, and that it is important to acknowledge the very entrenched and organized dynamics that use violence to retain power. She remarked that crime in Africa, both organized and dispersed, has increased since the COVID-19 crisis, due to a fragmentation of resilience factors.

Antônio Sampaio, Thematic Lead on Cities & Illicit Economies at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), spoke on how the patterns of urbanization in Africa and the emergence of new municipalities are creating governance challenges that leave openings for the entrenchment of criminal governance. He noted that from 1975 to 2015, cities in Sub-Saharan Africa tripled, and as rural communities grow and become more dense, national governments, international organizations, and civil society must collaborate to build quality institutions that can answer these new demands and prevent the rise of violence through organized crime.

Carmen Corbin, Head of Program - East Africa for the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), remarked that across Africa, organized crime tends to organize similarly, using their own tax systems and taking hold of communities through the provision of alternative social services. She noted that while smaller crimes associated with these organizations tend to happen outside of large cities, in ports and airports, the central powers of these networks tend to be concentrated in cities. She noted that crime is mainly committed against women and children, yet women do not feel that they can report these crimes. She added that law enforcement is an important component in addressing organized crime, though it cannot be the only answer, and that it is crucial to build trust between the communities and the system of protection they offer, so that they know they have someone to report to and that there will be an appropriate response.

Jairo García Guerreiro, Secretary of Security and Justice of the City of Cali, Colombia, talked about his experience dealing with a highly sophisticated network of organized crime in Cali, and its complex manifestations, including its intersection with environmental crimes. He mentioned that law enforcement, civil society, local governments, and larger government entities need to come together and work collectively to find solutions to these networks' quick shifts and adaptations. It is important to move fast and be more assertive in implementing policies and finding responses to combat the advancement of these groups. He also highlighted the significant impact that austerity measures had, starting in the 1970s, in fostering the conditions for organized crime to thrive in Latin America.

Juma Asiago, Programme Management Officer - Human Settlements at UN-Habitat, remarked that his organization is particularly concerned about organized crime's impact on urban development, as well as the quality of life and well-being of its residents. He noted that when organized crime takes hold of cities, they act as a replacement for local governments, and that, in order to address the issue, it is crucial to unpack the complexities of city life as a social system and understand how the interactions between formal and informal actors impact safety and security.

Participants' questions focused on solving these governance issues to ensure that communities do not have to rely on organized crime, how local governments can receive funds to support their efforts to combat organized crime, and how organized crime organizations can influence land and territories. Panelists reacted to that by emphasizing the importance of governments being more agile in responding to emerging threats and fostering collaboration across sectors. They also noted that it is a reality of the Global South that, in many cities, the informal economy generates far more wealth than the formal economy, and that criminal governance is deeply embedded in many of these informal systems. For that reason, they remarked, it is essential to embrace a more inclusive, realistic approach to development that considers the importance of informal economies.

Plenary Discussion

The day closed with a plenary discussion moderated by Daniel Friedman (PiOC Secretariat) in which participants had a chance to share challenges they have faced, reflect on opportunities for action, and voice how the PiOC network can support them in these efforts. A significant part of the discussion focused on the current global context, particularly the dramatic shifts in global policy and accompanying cuts in foreign assistance funding from numerous donors. Key points emphasized during the plenary included:

– The need to adapt to changing funding landscapes and reduce dependency on traditional donors, including by exploring innovative ways to mobilize local resources.

– The importance of finding the right balance between law enforcement and more holistic, preventative approaches to violence reduction.

– Acknowledging the complex and interconnected nature of violence, encompassing factors like poverty, gender inequality, organized crime, and political instability.

– The continued importance of resources, good data, and effective partnerships, including engaging non-traditional partners such as religious leaders and the private sector.

DAY 2

Engaging Youth in Governance, Peace, and Violence Reduction

The panel, moderated by **Beatrice Kizi Nzovu, Team Lead of African Country Programmes at LPI**, discussed the importance of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda in Africa, the need to understand the dynamics behind it, and to address the role of youth in political violence. The moderator framed the session by referencing the Gen Z movement in Kenya in 2024, where young activists successfully advocated against the Kenyan Finance Bill, expressing the need to recognize young people as change-makers. She also stressed that there is a clear return on investment in working with the youth and mentioned her organization's work, which has engaged over 30,000 young people in the Horn of Africa.

Stephannie Kalonji, Peacebuilding Specialist, drew from her experiences to explain the challenges and opportunities of empowering youth. She noted that it is crucial to ignite a mindset shift and restore hope in young people who have suffered through violence. She highlighted the challenges the community-based organizations (CBOs) face in mobilising resources for long-term violence prevention actions, and being susceptible to political retaliation.

Vincent Kenvin Odhiambo, Executive Director of Wasanii Sanaa, highlighted the need to recognize young people's contributions to peacebuilding despite the fact that they are rarely included in decision-making processes. He noted that young people want a seat at the table, and it is important to let them shape their future.

Dr. Njoki Wamae, Assistant Professor of Politics and International Studies at the United States International University-Africa, focused her intervention on the structural, legal, and policy challenges that have contributed to the issues seen with the youth sector. She stated that the lack of genuine youth engagement leads to protests, which can escalate into violence. She mentioned that in the instances where young people are represented in policy structures like peace committees, the composition of these bodies is often skewed in favor of young men, leaving young women marginalized. She noted that it's not enough to use the term "youth" as a blanket term for all young people, but that it is crucial to explicitly recognize both young men and young women in policy and decision-making processes, ensuring equitable representation in peace and security structures.

Participants asked a range of questions on how to engage youth in different contexts, including young people who are involved in drugs and crimes, as well as youth entrepreneurs and young people in schools. Participants also asked about ways to better support youth-led organizations, particularly in the face of funding constraints. The panelists emphasized the need to highlight youth identities when engaging in politics, and to rethink the definition of adulthood for policy-making. They also highlighted a few successful initiatives in engaging youth in politics, such as creative expression, educational theater, and LPI's Resilience in Conflict Analysis toolkits.

Violence Reduction in Informal Settlements: Strategies from Community-led Efforts in Nairobi

This session, moderated by **Kelsey Paul Shantz (PiOC Secretariat)**, set out to discuss the specific challenges of violence in informal settlements in Nairobi, focusing on highlighting community-led solutions and inspiring success stories. In her framing remarks, she highlighted the importance of building trust and empathy between the youth and the police in informal settlements, where violence is highly concentrated, which can lead to stigmatization and the use of excessive force by law enforcement.

Beatrice Kizi Nzovu, Team Lead of African Country Programmes at LPI, talked about LPI's work in informal settlements in Nairobi since 2015. She mentioned that in 2019, when they joined the PiOC network, LPI started to rethink their approach to urban violence and acknowledged the importance of conducting research to truly understand the issue, which is not interchangeable with other aspects of peacebuilding. She mentioned that the urban violence landscape in Nairobi is multifaceted, with issues of trafficking of persons, substance abuse, sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), corruption, and more, which all interlink. She noted that LPI focused on a three-pronged strategy to address this: elevating the voices of communities, emphasizing inclusive policy engagement for peace, and prioritizing collaborative learning to enhance practice and policy.

Rose Mbone, Founder of The Legend Kenya, emphasized the importance of collaborating closely with local security actors when addressing the issues that affect communities on the ground. She also noted that they address peacebuilding through a lens of trauma healing and resilience, and that is crucial to help individuals break away from cycles of violence that turn victims into perpetrators. She acknowledged the unique role of religious leaders in this process, who can offer guidance through a spiritual perspective. She also noted that they work with women in the community to improve the relationship with security actors and to promote trauma healing.

Nashon Opio, Senior Chief of Korogocho, shared his experience working in a community that has often been prone to election-related violence but remained peaceful during the last election. He stated that they could only achieve this, as local administrators, by engaging all stakeholders, especially the youth, and collaborating with organizations such as LPI and The Legend Kenya, which helped them establish peace communities at every level. He also highlighted the importance of challenging stereotypes, breaking down myths within the security sector, and addressing traditional gender and domestic roles that often leave women in unsafe situations. However, he noted that challenges remain, particularly related to the high levels of unemployment in the community.

The moderator posed follow-up questions on how to address the perception of young men and the role they play in violence, and on how to ensure inclusivity in community forums. The panelists emphasized the importance of building lasting institutional relationships between the community and the police, and that government officials need to lead by example by fostering inclusivity, being approachable, and working together with partners in the government, security sector, civil society, and the community.

Site Visits

In the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to engage in an experiential learning activity, organized in partnership with The Legend Kenya. Participants were divided into three groups, each visiting an informal settlement in Nairobi, where they would have a chance to learn about different programs being implemented in these communities to prevent and reduce different forms of violence.

One group went to the community of **Korogocho**, where they learned more about trauma healing solutions and community resilience. Key stops included a people's park, showing the transformation of a previous garbage dumping site into a community recreation site, an art-based initiative promoting awareness of SGBV, and a police station with a community garden jointly maintained by youth and security actors.

The second group went to the community of **Mathare**, and the main topic of the visit was climate change and youth engagement. They witnessed the effects of the worst flood that the country has experienced in the recent past,

and learned of the efforts of young people to reclaim these places through initiatives such as planting trees and creating kitchen gardens.

The third group went to the community of **Kibera**, where the focus was on initiatives to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. Participants walked through the community, witnessing the murals, paintings, and street art created by members of the community, and talked to local GBV activists, and people involved in child protection efforts.

In all three sites, participants had the opportunity to witness a youth group performing traditional Kenyan dances with themes focused on community violence, GBV, and advocacy through educational entertainment. They also had a Q&A session with community members to learn more about their experiences and the initiatives they are working on. One of the key reflections that emerged was the importance of state actors having direct engagement with the communities they serve to inform responsive policies and community-informed interventions.

DAY 3

Spoken Words

The day started with a performance by spoken words artist Daniel Sirma, who presented a piece to the audience highlighting a range of specific violence challenges that cities face, while exalting the power of voices from young people and marginalized communities, and conceptualizing peace as a choice that can be made to build a new city of hope.

Insights on Urban Climate Migration Research: A Case Study of Kisumu

The first panel of the day discussed the challenges brought on by climate-related migration in urban centers, focusing on the research that LPI is doing in Kisumu. The moderator, **Martha Bakwaseya, Senior Global Peacebuilding Policy Advisor at LPI**, opened the conversation by stating that the Horn of Africa faces critical issues such as transitional justice, reconciliation, cross-border cooperation, and the intersection of climate, peace, and security, which creates unique challenges for anyone working or conducting research in the area. She mentioned that their work in the Horn of Africa region aims to identify and mitigate these climate-related security risks at the sub-regional, national, and local levels.

Rose Alulu, Program Officer at LPI, explained that the core goal of this study was to explore the interconnections between urban climate migration, environmental change, peace, and security dynamics, and the idea of climate change as a "threat multiplier." As she put it, climate change alone cannot be seen as a direct cause of conflict. However, it increases the risk by bringing in scarcity of resources and straining socio-economic, political, and security challenges.

Calvince Ouko, Research Fellow and Lecturer at the University of Nairobi, presented the study's findings in Kisumu, Kenya. He stated that the security concerns in the community manifested in various forms, including burglary, violent crime, SGBV, and political violence, and that there was a significant involvement of the youth in these activities. He also noted that the accelerated urban expansion was significantly impacting the region's biodiversity and land use, including shifts in temperature patterns, waste management, and water usage. He highlighted that the research underscored the importance of understanding the complexities of rural-to-urban migration and its impact on urban dynamics, and that building trust between the community, police, and local government emerged as one of the main recommendations to address the security concerns.

Participants asked questions related to the role of the county government in the study and how to better integrate the community in these efforts. The researchers clarified that the county has been involved in the project, and that its role is not just limited to applying the study's recommendations but also to monitor and evaluate their impact, ensuring the strategies proposed remain relevant and effective in addressing the dynamic nature of urban challenges. In terms of community participation, the researchers emphasized the importance of including them in decision-making and cited participatory, transparent and accountable policy-making processes to ensure communities are included.

Leveraging Data and Technology to Prevent Violence in Cities

The day's second panel discussed how local governments can better integrate data and digital tools to implement more effective violence prevention strategies. Moderator **Luisa Portugal (PiOC Secretariat)** framed the discussion by remarking that local leaders and those whose work is deeply embedded in their communities are the ones better poised to prevent and reduce violence, but that data has an important role to play in helping them understand the violence that is affecting their communities and supporting their decision-making.

Emma de Villiers, Director at Fixed Africa, highlighted that lived experience data is essential for understanding safety contexts beyond crime statistics, which are often underreported and not representative of the reality of places. She presented the Urban Safety Monitor, a tool that her team has developed with 15 safety indicators to support cities interested in embarking on a safety knowledge journey to address the safety and security issues affecting their communities.

Dan Foy, Principal of Global Analytics at Gallup Inc., presented the findings of Gallup's World Poll related to the perception of safety in the region of Africa. He mentioned that trust in local police and overall satisfaction with one's community are the strongest factors that correlate with feelings of safety, with confidence in local police playing a particularly significant role. He also mentioned the gender gap in the data, with men feeling much safer than women around the world.

Joshua Owino, Program Manager at Map Kibera, talked about his community-led efforts to develop a crowdsourced mapping of the settlement in which he resides, Kibera. He spoke about working with the community to decide what to prioritize in the mapping, and how this has evolved to other initiatives such as Voices of Kibera, an SMS reporting platform, and Kibera News Network, a platform for citizen journalism. He remarked that his main goal is to make the invisible visible, giving the people of Kibera a platform to drive change.

Caleb Gichuhi, Africa Lead at BuildUp, and Rana Taha, Peace Advisor at the UN Coordinator's Office in Kenya, presented the project their organizations are jointly developing, Zke. They mentioned how the youth population in Kenya feels disconnected from political processes, and that for democracy to work, there must be a deeper

commitment to listening to their voices. They developed Zke to create a future where the youth drive national engagement in Kenya. As they put it, the platform facilitates youth-led conversations around pressing issues. It relies on a multi-channel approach, through platforms such as WhatsApp and radio stations to disseminate these discussions further. They noted that sustained, inclusive, and hybrid approaches to public participation will be key to ensuring that Kenya's youth are actively engaged in shaping the nation's future.

Participants' questions revolved around how to ensure that the data one is working with is legitimate and accurate, how to integrated lived experience data with more traditional datasets, how to make better use of deliberative tools, and how to better use data to improve policy-making, particularly in places where there are resources constraints, such as lack of funds, internet connectivity or electricity. The panelists responded that it is important to remember that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution in data, and that it is crucial to meet communities where they are and find the data that works best for their needs and resources. In terms of ensuring the legitimacy and accuracy of the data, the panelists reflected that feedback loops and collecting data over longer time periods are some of the safeguards that one can put in place. Panelists also reiterated how important it is to create platforms where voices from the local communities can be heard and integrated into broader conversations, which can be done through both online and offline engagement methods, ensuring that even those with limited access to technology can still contribute to decision-making processes.

Offices of Violence Prevention

The last panel of the day, moderated by **Kelsey Paul Shantz (PiOC Secretariat),** discussed offices of violence prevention (OVPs). As presented by the moderator, these offices are local-level governmental or civil society-led entities—sometimes in a mixed form—dedicated to preventing and reducing various forms of violence. As she put it, although these offices can look very different from place to place, a typical approach for these units involves diagnosing the types of violence most prevalent in a given area, working with both community actors and local governments to

understand the causes and dynamics of that violence, and developing a whole-of-society strategy to address it.

Holly Joshi, Chief/Director at the City of Oakland, United States, spoke about her experience overseeing one of the largest and most established violence prevention programs in the United States. She mentioned that her department works by diagnosing the core issues of violence and providing solutions for it, which include gun violence prevention, school violence intervention, GBV initiatives, and community healing programs for long-term support after crises. She also emphasized the vital role that CBOs play in these efforts, particularly street outreach, life coaching, case management, and conflict mediation.

Martin Bisp, Chief Executive of Empire Fighting Chance, started by talking about his organization's support to young people involved, or at risk of being involved, in criminal and violent activities in his community. He explained that after learning about the concept of OVPs through PiOC, he decided to pursue that to empower organizations that were already doing the work on the ground, and had the community's trust. He reported that they are now in the process of implementing an OVP in their city of Bristol, United Kingdom, and are pushing for a new approach, one that doesn't involve arresting young people but addresses the root causes of violence.

Michael Olufemi Sodipo, Program Coordinator of the Peace Initiative Network, spoke about the delocalization concept and empowering local groups to drive change from the ground up. He talked about the Partnership Against Violent Extremism (PAVE) program, a national strategy his organization helped develop in Nigeria. He explained that they work closely with local governments to bring

together civil society organizations, security agencies, traditional leaders, and local communities. He stated that by amplifying local voices, working hand-in-hand with communities, and partnering with both local and global organizations, they are transforming peacebuilding into a collective effort.

Participants asked questions about strategies to prevent different types of violence, the relationship with CBOs, and the autonomy and challenges related to involving young people in prevention efforts. Panelists replied by stating that different forms of violence will lead to different prevention approaches. For example, when combating extremism, it's important to engage in a de-radicalization process, while more peer-driven approaches work better to prevent criminal violence. Panelists also noted that an effective way to work with CBOs is to give guidance and work closely, empowering them to address community-specific needs. On the issue of youth, they mentioned that it is crucial to empower youth to break cycles of violence and let their voices shape programs.

Breakout Groups and Plenary Discussion

Participants were then divided into three breakout groups, each tasked with answering a different question.

The first breakout group discussed how the PiOC secretariat and PiOC members can support one another from here, build coalitions, and facilitate knowledge exchange. In the plenary discussion, facilitated by **Daniel Friedman (PiOC Secretariat)**, they reported that it is critical to leverage the experiences gained through this conference and apply them within their organizations and government sectors. They expressed a desire for more peer-to-peer and knowledge-based

exchanges and emphasized the need to use technology to reach out to young people. They also mentioned that PiOC could play an important role in helping the continuity of projects and policies across administration changes.

The second breakout group was tasked with reflecting on their main takeaways from the conference. One participant working with law enforcement reported having experienced a paradigm shift regarding CSOs, which he had previously considered as an opposition force, but then came to see as a crucial partner. Another important takeaway for the group was that small initiatives can have a significant impact, and that it is important to use methodologies that work for that particular context.

The third breakout group discussed the challenges and opportunities post-conference, particularly when considering current global challenges and changing contexts for cities. The group reported to the plenary that they talked about the importance of all members becoming advocates for PiOC and helping disseminate the work of the network. In addition to that, they mention the need to think through how members of the network can fundraise together and support the network with broader and collective fundraising efforts.

Emerging Challenges and Inspiring Solutions

In the conference's closing session, **Rachel Locke (PiOC Secretariat)** looked back at the last three days and reflected on all that the network was able to accomplish. She mentioned how important it is to create spaces for understanding across people, communities, disciplines, and geographies, and that this work is not just intellectual but deeply emotional. She stated that the PiOC network affirms that they are not alone in their work. She urged participants not to forget their impact on one another as they return to their cities, to remember they are agents of change, and that the results will only be as strong as the effort put in. She concluded the conference by expressing her deep gratitude on behalf of the network to all those present, reminding them of the importance of keeping the momentum going and continuing to support one another in this shared peace-building mission.

Participants of the first PiOC Regional Workshop during the last day of meetings.

peace
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About Peace in Our Cities

Peace in Our Cities (PiOC) is a unique global network of 24 cities and over 40 community-based and international partners with the ambitious goal to halve urban violence by 2030. The network represents over 25 million people in cities across the world.

PiOC seeks to reduce and prevent urban violence worldwide—preserving lives and helping cities thrive. It does so by creating concrete, participatory, and evidence-based platform exchanges to reduce and prevent severe violence in member cities, while also building a global movement of urban-violence-reduction advocates. The PiOC approach is based on three lines of action:

– Amplify policymaker awareness of the genuine scope and scale of urban violence and opportunities available to help cities address it.

– Advance evidence-informed, balanced policy solutions and peacebuilding approaches to reduce the most severe forms of violence in urban contexts.

– Accompany city leaders, community partners, and civil society through peer exchanges and information access to realize ambitious targets for violence reduction.

Peace in Our Cities is co-facilitated by three US-based independent institutions: the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies at New York University's Center on International Cooperation; the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego; and the Stanley Center for Peace and Security. For more, visit: peaceinourcities.org.

Life & Peace
INSTITUTE

About the Life & Peace Institute

The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international peace-building organization that works in partnership with civil society in nonviolent conflict transformation. LPI Across the World Our approach is based on an understanding that conflict is a natural part of societies, with the potential for both constructive and destructive change, and that peace can only be achieved through the active involvement of the people that are affected by the conflict, and that their voices and their actions matter. LPI promotes inclusive community-based peacebuilding processes, with a focus on youth and women. For more, visit: life-peace.org.