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SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report explores lessons from a three-year project by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) to strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations working to address violent extremism in their home communities. The findings and lessons are for funders and practitioners whose goal is to make an impact on the countering violent extremism (CVE) landscape through education and training.

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Lessons from Strengthening Capacity in Countering Violent Extremism

Summary

- Approaches that seek to rebuild social relations and bridge identity divides are increasingly being applied to provide non-kinetic responses to address the persistent threats and challenges of violent extremism around the globe, especially in fragile states.
- Beginning in 2013, the US Institute of Peace, working with multiple partners, sought to distill thirty years of peacebuilding knowledge to strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations seeking to address violent extremism.
- The project leveraged three thematic approaches: developing strategies for preventing youth radicalization in educational settings; creating alternative narratives, rather than reactive counternarratives, to violent extremists through the media and messaging stream; and developing approaches for identifying and leveraging community resilience to prevent and counter violent extremism (CVE) through the community empowerment stream.
- An evaluation of the project revealed that effective project design, thoughtful recruitment strategies, and tailored course content that adequately covers approaches across the spectrum of preventing to countering are critical to effectively strengthening the capacity to address the drivers of violent extremism.
- Project designers need to incorporate strategies that mitigate risk and encourage context-sensitive thinking, as well as developing techniques to ensure sensitivities that may arise can be handled appropriately and safely.
- In adult-learning contexts, informal networks sometimes emerge and become a valuable tool to sustain engagement and learning between participants. Accordingly, project designers or funders should consider intentionally building in a mechanism to encourage sharing and mentoring opportunities.

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

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- Engagement in the project resulted in participants applying what they learned to adjust existing CVE programs or develop new programs altogether. The majority of those surveyed, 94 percent, said that their understanding of the dynamics of violent extremism in their communities increased.
- Recommendations for funders and project implementers include a focus on project design, recruitment, and suggestions for developing course content that draws on tried-and-true peacebuilding approaches.

Background

At its core, peacebuilding work seeks to rebuild social relations and bridge identity divides while working through issues of marginalization and political grievances, often in areas afflicted by violent conflict. In 2013, drawing on more than thirty years of peacebuilding and conflict-resolution approaches, the US Institute of Peace (USIP) began to implement a robust and innovative countering violent extremism (CVE) capacity-strengthening project. As part of this effort, USIP partnered with CVE and peacebuilding experts to deliver skills- and knowledge-based training to participants, including members of civil society organizations (CSOs) and governments, providing them with tools and resources to enhance CVE efforts. The project delivered nine courses in three categories to prevent and mitigate violent extremism: reducing vulnerabilities through education, developing alternative narratives in media and messaging, and working with communities to increase resistance to violent extremists and their ability to recover from successful infiltration.

In countries around the world, governments and their citizens are grappling with ways to prevent and halt the spread of violent extremism. This problem is especially acute in fragile states, which have the twin challenges of fertile conditions that enable violent extremism to flourish as well as more limited resources and capacity to confront the challenge posed to stability and peace.¹ The problem of violent extremism—the belief that violence is a legitimate and necessary way to disrupt the status quo and advance ideological or political aims—is old, but its diffuse nature and the rate at which it now spreads present new challenges. Moreover, an international consensus recognizes that thwarting terrorist attacks cannot be under the purview of the military, intelligence, and law enforcement alone; instead, measures should be taken to mitigate individual and collective grievances that fuel attacks and sympathizers. Because of this, practitioners across sectors have recognized the need for creative and adaptable ways to share their learning and strengthen the capacity of key actors in CVE.

CVE is typically used to describe a “range of policy, programs, and interventions designed to prevent individuals from engaging in violence associated with radical political, social, cultural, and religious ideologies and groups.”² Such upstream prevention activities—unlike downstream counterterrorism tactics such as investigations, arrests, and disruption of potential attacks—have increasingly gained support in recent years as policymakers and practitioners have come to see terrorism as a symptom of deeper root causes. In the years since 9/11, terrorism has come to be thought of as more than just a security issue.

Working in partnership with the Abu Dhabi-based Hedayah Center and the US Department of State’s Bureau of Counterterrorism (State/CT), USIP delivered nine courses at Hedayah. The center was founded to serve as a global hub for CVE, including capacity strengthening.³ The then-nascent organization’s mission was well suited to filling a gap in CVE training with a holistic, international capacity-building program where before there were only sector-specific, national-level engagements. USIP was also seen as a

well-established partner by State/CT to ably develop and deliver a CVE training project. This partnership was seen as a key component of the US government's support to Hedayah and commitment to CVE as a strategic goal.

This report aims to capture specific lessons gleaned from developing and implementing this capacity-strengthening project for CVE related to project design, project structure, and reported outcomes of the participants' work on related efforts.⁴ It draws on evidence from a post-project, mixed-methods evaluation that examined the outcomes from the two-year project delivered from 2013 to 2016. The evidence comes directly from interviews and survey responses from project participants representing twelve countries.⁵ Survey data was collected from the participants after each course and as part of the evaluation in a follow-up six months to a year after the courses. The authors also sought to gather qualitative information in key informant interviews with twenty-six former participants and three project staff members.

In conducting the evaluation, the team applied a participant-centered approach that derived findings based on data collected from participants about their experience before, during, and after the courses. Because a baseline assessment was not conducted, the team used a contribution-based logic, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative methods. Contribution logic is often used in evaluation of situations where the data collected to inform the analysis relies on subjective self-reporting from the audience, thus making attribution infeasible. Accordingly, the goal was to capture evidence that the training contributed to the learning of participants during courses and after their return home. It was also important to identify factors that may have improved or stymied participants' learning and performance. The evaluation team conducted a desk review of project documents, surveys and follow-up reports, data from the evaluation survey, and thirty key informant interviews with participants, staff, and one former Hedayah staff member. The evaluation was subject to several limitations related to causality, evaluation team bias, response bias, and community representation that need to be considered when reviewing this report.

- **Inferring causality.** It is difficult to identify a direct causal link between the training or a specific work stream (for example, education) and the subsequent work of CVE practitioners. The data collected in this evaluation represent participants' self-reported perceptions of changes in their knowledge and skills as well as changes they carried out in their work portfolios that resulted from their participation in the courses. In addition, participants often face a complex context that includes significant obstacles to the application of skills or knowledge outside of the manageable interest of the project when they return home. This can affect whether participants can use what they learned.
- **Evaluation team bias.** The evaluation team included one member who was part of the implementation team for the project and one who worked as an internal evaluator within the department in which the project was managed. However, the project is complete and no additional follow-up project is proposed.
- **Potential for positive response bias.** The data collected as part of this review rely on participants and staff to self-report on both individual and project performance. This may introduce positive response bias, given that the individuals most closely connected to the project may have incentives to answer more positively. The lack of third-party sources to triangulate and compare with self-reported data reduces the robustness of the overall analysis. Also, the country representation in the interviews was limited due to resource constraints (time and funding), which led the team to concentrate on only a handful of countries.

- **Inability to gather data from communities.** The evaluation team was unable to verify practitioners' self-reported data about their project activities through observation or follow-up interviews. The exclusion of the communities in which practitioners work in the data collection is a limit to assessing effectiveness of the CVE curriculum and its impact.

This report distills the experience into lessons for funders and practitioners whose goal is to have an impact on the CVE landscape through education and training.

The project strategy focused on three parallel streams of effort: education, media and messaging, and community engagement.

Project Approach and Thematic Focus

The project strategy focused on three parallel streams of effort: education, media and messaging, and community engagement. The approaches within these topics were mapped out through research and consultation with experts from relevant fields to ensure that the content was relevant in countries across contexts and professional sectors—from upstream prevention activities to efforts seeking to counter existing or spreading violent extremism.

During the first phase of the project in 2013, experts began by conducting literature reviews and convening workshops to understand current practice and knowledge and develop initial ideas for developing courses in each area of focus. With CVE and peacebuilding experts, the team discussed existing conceptual understandings, explored current tools and approaches, developed key modules of instruction in an ideal curriculum (including case studies), and determined the criteria for selecting participants, instructors, and other audiences to engage in the capacity-strengthening process. These workshops served to shape the initial course content and to secure buy-in from external academic and practitioner experts, some of whom participated in project implementation.

Table 1 presents a breakdown of the courses and workshops offered over the life cycle of the project.

Table 1. Project Courses and Workshops

1. Countering Violent Extremism through Education: How Schools Can Reduce the Threat	May 2014
2. Understanding Media and Communication for Countering Violent Extremism	December 2014
3. Empowering Communities for Countering Violent Extremism	February 2015
4. Countering Violent Extremism through Education: Project Development Workshop	March 2015
5. Understanding Media and Communication for Countering Violent Extremism	May 2015
6. Empowering Communities for Countering Violent Extremism: Strategies for Engaging Youth	October 2015
7. Understanding Media and Communications for Countering Violent Extremism: Professionalization	November 2015
8. Participatory Approaches to Facilitating Community Change: Countering Violent Extremism through Education	January 2016
9. Empowering Communities: Strategies for Fostering Resilience Course and Professionalization	June 2016

The courses and training in the education system were based on the premise that violent extremists can and do recruit in schools. Thus, educators can leverage methodologies such as participatory action research (PAR) or develop approaches to education within communities to decrease their students' vulnerability to the allure of extremism.

This PAR approach to research and social change is based on the premise that all communities have existing "funds of knowledge" that can be tapped to increase the agency of community members and foster bottom-up social change:

PAR recognizes that people who live in specific contexts and experience daily the challenges associated with those contexts are experts of these contexts and of their own experiences. Their insights can be revealing and powerful as they surface nuanced knowledge about factors which contribute to or reduce conflict in their communities. Moreover, when local actors take the lead on these processes, they have the information needed to develop action plans that address problems at the community level. PAR situates the locus of power within the communities. Instead of communities being passive recipients of knowledge produced from afar or by local elites, communities actively position themselves from the margins to the center.⁶

The first two courses in this stream focused on understanding the threats of violent extremism in schools and strategies for reducing the conditions that enable extremists to recruit in schools. The leads also established the practice of bringing participants back for subsequent courses to deepen learning. The leads in the third training in this stream built off of the original approach and used a location-based recruitment tactic: to bring participants from the same local community who represent the education sector (such as government officials, educators, civil society members, school administrators). The approach focused on bringing diverse groups together to collectively develop sustainable solutions to challenges associated with violent extremism in schools. The ecological approach was framed explicitly in one of the training modules, in which participants, according to the syllabus, would "explore how schools, embedded in larger systems, will impact as well as be impacted within the larger systems in which they are nested."

The media and messaging stream examined narratives and how extremists use them. In particular, courses focused on how networks of people interact with and disseminate narratives. The instructors had course participants practice using analytical tools for identifying network hubs. The course also examined how practitioners could disseminate proactive, alternative narratives effectively, rather than just reactively combating extremist ideas. During the courses, participants were expected to brainstorm specific narratives appropriate for their context. Instructors challenged participants to surface their assumptions when either analyzing existing narratives or developing new ones. For example, they were asked to examine the efficacy of existing messages with vulnerable populations and what conditions might make them resonate (or not). This probing was done to help enhance the design of the approaches that practitioners intended to apply following the engagement.

In the third and final stream, community engagement, courses targeted the effective approaches of human rights and peacebuilding CSOs to mobilize communities to address conditions that foster violent extremism. The initial course focused on the presence of trauma in communities and potential methods for addressing the resulting vulnerabilities to extremism. The second focused on the role of youth in violence and CVE. The third taught a community resilience framework to participants. The learning objectives varied widely from course to course in the community engagement stream, in part because the focus of partners changed and because of staff turnover.

Increasingly, practitioners in the peacebuilding field use the theory of change as a key management tool.

Increasingly, practitioners in the peacebuilding field use the theory of change (ToC) as a key management tool that “adds rigour and transparency, clarifies project logic, highlights assumptions that need to be tested, and helps identify appropriate participants and partners.”⁷ This project did not initially have a ToC for how training would affect conditions on the ground.⁸ However, the team iterated a number of versions to improve cohesion across the project. The final ToC for the project was as follows: if USIP trains government actors to strengthen their capacity to provide fair and responsive public services, and their civil society partners to mitigate risks and support resiliencies in their communities, then marginalization and radicalization will decrease while societal resilience against violent extremism increases.

Evaluation Findings

Several key findings from the project evaluation inform this report’s recommendations on lessons and approaches for practitioners and funders to consider when developing and implementing capacity-strengthening programs. The findings fall into three categories: project design, project structure, and reported outcomes.

Finding 1. Project design is critical to effective CVE capacity-building programs.

From the outset, capacity-building programs should consider the approach of the project and how it might help or hinder achievement of programmatic goals. This design should consider whether participants will attend one course or progress through multiple. Does the project seek to build narrow, specific capacities in many individuals? Or should a project seek out key participants to enhance a broader or deeper set of skills and knowledge in fewer people? And, after the project, is the creation of a professional network or community of practice a desired outcome? The benefits and drawbacks of each model should be examined because these logistical, design-related details in the pre-course phase will affect practitioners’ work in both direct and indirect ways.

Instructors identified course content that is applicable to both preventing and countering existing violent extremism as essential to the capacity-strengthening project. Some organizations have made distinctions between prevention of violent extremism in places it may not exist or is currently nascent, and countering existing, perhaps widespread, violent extremist activity. The US government couches both categories under the rubric of CVE, whereas some international organizations prefer P/CVE or PVE.⁹ The preventing versus countering discussion was not addressed directly in the project, but the content and the instructors’ approach allowed for utilizing the various approaches. For example, as mentioned, the content in the courses was based on evidence that violent extremists recruit in schools, so educators need tools to prevent radicalization by decreasing their students’ vulnerability to the allure of extremism. Such activity is not considered countering. Another example is within the media and messaging stream, where the emphasis was less on contextualizing specific goals or messages for participants toward either countering or preventing. Instead, instructors used a methodology focused on developing effective messaging strategies, regardless of whether extremist messages were being countered or set up as a prevention tool. For this project, instructors designed the content to be relevant for both preventing and countering, and participants were challenged to contextualize what they were learning to their unique environment.

The three project partners—USIP, State/CT, and Hedayah—ultimately saw the selection of relevant and motivated participants as vital, despite coordination challenges. Some challenges were related to clear criteria, sometimes misaligned priorities for the project, and

different timelines associated with having three organizations contributing to the selection of participants. Yet participants reported that they were motivated to gain a better understanding of the causes and consequences of violent extremism and learn about approaches to CVE in their communities. As evidence of appropriate selection, more than 70 percent of the survey respondents reported that their organizations implemented CVE-related work. In terms of the participants' ability to influence CVE work, 82 percent of the participants listed themselves as experts, executives, or management in their organizations—positions often associated with the ability to shape policies or programming. Moreover, probably most significantly, 87 percent reported in the follow-up survey that the courses were either relevant or highly relevant to their work.

As further indication of the appropriate selection of the participants, the clear majority of follow-up survey respondents reported either making changes to already established CVE programming (87 percent) or starting new programs (83 percent) as a result of what they learned in the courses. Some of these projects are described later in the report.

The project did not have a clear strategy throughout implementation, but the resulting adaptability may have been ultimately effective for navigating a developing field. Because of USIP staff turnover, project leadership varied during the project, which led to uneven design and implementation across the course streams. This, coupled with the nascent nature of the field, required the team to evolve and shift the approaches based on changing dynamics within staff and in the field. For instance, because there was no institutional or funder requirement for the development of a theory of change, the project team did not develop one to guide the project at the outset. Again, because project leadership was inconsistent, lines of effort did not fall within a holistic framework for achieving higher-level results, or fitting into the broader context of the field. This led to uneven methods of selecting topics and engaging participants. This absence of an overall strategy did, however, give the project team flexibility in designing courses, allowing the leads to evolve their approach throughout implementation. Yet staff changes meant a decreased ability for continuous learning as a result of the changeover costs to the fidelity of the implementation. Whether streams should have been coordinated to achieve overall project goals is uncertain given the development of the field at the time.

An example of the resulting disjointedness was in the empowering communities stream, in which the first course focused on individual resilience and trauma, the second on strategies for engaging youth, and the third on community resilience. Although these are not mutually exclusive topics, returning participants did not have the same guide to make the conceptual links between courses one and two for them (course three had an entirely new cohort of participants). In any case, objectives for individual courses were not tied to overall project results that could be measured. Instead, within each of the three streams, ad hoc approaches were used to assess whether capacity was being built.

Participants' awareness of risk is critical in mitigating harm while implementing CVE programs. During the courses, participants shared personal stories of challenges they faced in confronting violent extremists. And though not everyone faced significant personal risk while undertaking CVE work in their community, twenty-one of fifty-four participants surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they had faced a risk. One participant from Kenya relayed an incident when he confronted student violent extremist recruiters to counter their messages. The recruiters accused him of being "against their religion" and assaulted him. Since that altercation, to avoid physical assault in the CVE work he implements, he has framed the language in a noncontroversial way for the context.

Participants' awareness of risk is critical in mitigating harm while implementing CVE programs.

In several courses, a Hedayah expert told the story about framing a policing CVE project as “building safer communities” because his team assessed that it was more likely to gain support from the community than a CVE project might have. One of the courses on empowering communities focused on how CVE work must incorporate local values if the course is to resonate effectively and avoid opposition. Instructors were careful to highlight the dangers associated with engaging in work labeled CVE. Although specific self-protection tactics and strategies were not taught, it seems that the participants were motivated to take appropriate measures themselves to modify and reframe language around CVE work. One participant reported, for example:

This program made us really aware on what can be the consequence on the kind of language we use...if we are not careful with the kind of language we use, the programs can have negative impacts, and can create more reaction rather than creating more support for us. We will use terms like peacebuilding, building pluralism, creating alternative narratives, rather than saying countering narratives, countering extreme narratives, we will say building alternative narratives of peace and nonviolence—[this is] one of the most significant [post-course] changes.

Another interviewee in Kenya said that the work was “quite dangerous,” but claimed to have gained key risk-mitigating approaches to CVE through the courses by working “with and through the communities.” She elaborated:

[This is] so that you are not the one fronting the voice, so that you build a movement of people...Because if you were the only one fronting, it's very easy to be identified. But if every family, every person in the community is guarding against their youth being recruited and sharing the same message, and working together to reduce the influence, we think that makes...us a little bit safer because it's not easy to be targeted as an organization and as an individual... [This is helpful] also for sustainable results of the work.

At least one person said that the most significant change was that “the program exposed [him] to security risks involved in CVE programs and how to ensure [personal] safety.”

During one of the courses, tension arose between government officials and a CSO representative, who reported that their job is made difficult because of government secrecy about its CVE strategies. The official replied that he could make their job even more difficult if he wanted. A comment like this, from a government that has not always protected human rights, is threatening. This situation raised crucial questions concerning respective roles and whether different actors see violent extremism as primarily a social or security problem. Afterward, the course facilitator highlighted that CSOs must have “diplomatic skills to engage government actors on CVE-related matters.” In the end, the government participant and the CSO participant are forming a “formal” partnership, but it took these difficult moments in the course to transform the relationship.

Finding 2. Project implementation, including recruitment techniques and learning approaches, is also critical to successful CVE capacity-strengthening programs.

Recruitment efforts based on repeated engagements increased the effectiveness of the capacity-building effort. All three course streams, to one extent or another, leveraged repeat engagements with the initial cohort. This was done to build progressively on knowledge and skills or to add proximate ones. Indeed, those who took two or more courses rated the relevance of the courses higher (4.8/5) than those who took only one course (4.0/5). Repeat

participants also reported stronger agreement to a statement about whether they developed new CVE programs (4.4/5), which may be an indication of improved capacity. In addition, many of the participants interviewed recommended sustained engagement to deepen knowledge and increase the likelihood that they would be better equipped to address violent extremism in their communities.

For instance, the education lead took a merit-based approach, in which participants from the first cohort were invited to submit applications to the second workshop, in which they were asked to describe a project they would develop and nominate a team. The most promising project teams were then selected to attend. The lead of the empowering communities team realized the benefits of having the same group of participants come to all of the courses, rather than a new group of people each time. These participants thus had a further opportunity to expand their knowledge base, develop new skills, strengthen plans developed in previous courses, address challenges in implementation, and strengthen their network of practitioners.

Similarly, the lead for the three-course media and messaging stream leveraged repeated engagements with a different group to develop progressively more advanced skills around media and CVE. As one participant explained during an interview:

Once we had a background training [in the initial course]...the second training was a bit more specialized from the [lens of] communications message development....The third training was more...focused on...advocacy and how to do programs on the basis of that. So after the third training, ... we also set up our advocacy objectives for CVE and peacebuilding at [the] national level.... We have added a national and provincial advocacy plan which will help young people who are...part of [our] courses to influence the policies for CVE and peacebuilding.

For the third course, they competed for spots to bring counterpart government officials to encourage in-country collaboration. They were chosen based on performance in previous courses, and how likely they could successfully work together with officials if appropriate (submission of a joint work plan was part of the selection criteria).¹⁰ The lead made the logic explicit, and an attempt was made to apply it to other streams.

Participants benefited from applied learning approaches in the courses. Many data points indicated that case studies and applied exercises added value by allowing participants to test concepts applicable to their work and by creating a space conducive to receiving colleagues' feedback to refine approaches. Courses were designed this way. One executive-level interviewee stressed that "Hands-on, practical work...is key."

One survey respondent noted that a case study in the first community engagement course was useful for developing analysis skills for local contexts. The study examined an Italian CSO that used local values, like dignity, in anti-mafia communications campaigns. The central theme was that it is crucial for organizations to use strategies that enable locals to clearly see the personal benefit of opposition. During an interview, a Nigerian woman described her community's "perception ideology about terrorism" as different from the Italian case, but reported using the general principles from the study and applying them locally.

Moreover, the adult-learning principles used in course design likely contributed to positive learning experiences.¹¹ A Nigerian media professional described the capacity building as "broader" than previous training she had received, saying that the courses were "more practical...because we're putting [them] into practice" individually and in groups.

Exercises allowed participants to practice skills and ground their knowledge. Three participants specifically praised the opportunity to practice on-camera messaging approaches

One executive-level interviewee stressed that "Hands-on, practical work...is key."

during a media and communications workshop. One participant highlighted increased awareness on choosing language. An interviewee said that the idea of having a central message and using specific keywords was “very, very important,” proving “extremely useful” when he was interviewed by major Kenya media outlets and the US-based Public Broadcasting Corporation.¹² Of the survey respondents, six of forty-four specifically mentioned communications or messaging in response to the question about the most significant change in their work or life since the courses.

One exercise, which was field tested with Pakistani imams before the first education course, aimed to demonstrate pressures that drive leaders to adopt extreme ideologies. Participants were divided into five groups and asked to create sermons as if they were imams in mosques with different degrees of tolerance and acceptance. The five groups represented steps in the common path taken by religious leaders when their attitudes and beliefs transform from being rigid and closed to more accepting and open: defense of the faith, denial of any other legitimate path, tolerance and acceptance of others’ beliefs, respect for others’ beliefs, and appreciation of difference in beliefs. The different sermons demonstrated the unique difficulties that voices of tolerance and coexistence face when dealing with extremists. An interview revealed that a participant used this methodology when training imams (more than sixty were trained using this exercise as of early 2016). He said the exercise was “very useful” and that one outcome is that, in “the Friday sermons...of those that we have trained—[they are] now toned and objective.”

Finally, site visits can help ground concepts discussed in the courses into reality. For instance, participants in a community engagement course visited the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi. Emirati leaders built it to represent a shared culture with other Islamic countries and to serve as a source of national resilience. When feasible, capacity-strengthening projects should include site visits, which are valuable for understanding the nature of a given context and how CVE approaches can be directly adapted and applied.

Participants valued the opportunity to engage and learn from each other. The twelve countries represented in the project provided opportunities for learning from diverse experiences dealing with violent extremism across regions. Ninety percent of evaluation survey respondents agreed with the statement “I have learned a lot from other participants.” Half of those interviewed gave specific examples of learning from other participants, including how to include women in CVE work, how to stop recruitment in madrassas, and how to analyze the causes of violent extremism in their communities.

Some civil society participants reported that the inclusion of government officials in the media and communication courses contributed to the improvement of their relationship with relevant officials and, in some cases, increased support and collaboration in their CVE work. For example, one Kenyan interviewee, who nominated officials he already knew, cited the courses as “a totally fresh setting and...[a new] beginning...for our relationship because [we were] in an international setting...where people talk more freely, devoid of all the bureaucracy.”

Participants expanded their networks across the grassroots and national governments to enhance CVE work in their community. During and after courses, survey respondents said that they continued to communicate with each other. The evaluation team also found that participants made and maintained connections with national- and international-level actors.

As evidence of participant networks after the courses, 35 percent of those surveyed communicated with their fellow participants once a month and 39 percent once every few months. One participant noted, “With those from my region, we keep in touch and engage each other in regional activities. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the participants from

the other parts of the world.” Another said that they communicate with others “almost [daily through] Facebook, WhatsApp, etc., [and sometimes] through [e]mail and phones.”

Not only were participants able to network among themselves, they also made connections with institutions such as Hedayah, USIP, and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund that have exposure and access to higher-level actors, such as governments, funders, and the broader international community.¹³ To illustrate, one Kenyan rose to a top ten finish for a global “best teacher” prize for his CVE efforts in the classroom. He credited the project for providing opportunities to showcase his ideas and work. Other Kenyans now act as credible interlocutors for fellow grassroots organizations with national and international bodies such as the government of Kenya (GoK), the United Nations, the African Union, and the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

The GoK has also partnered with a Kenyan nongovernmental organization leader to implement a program called Learning to Live Together. During an interview, he said that this is an intercultural and interfaith, values-based education program that aims to nurture the ethical values of young people: to strengthen their sense of identity, develop their critical thinking skills, and sharpen their ability to make well-grounded decisions, all traits that the GoK has identified as crucial for counter-radicalization. These concepts were presented during a May 2014 training, and the GoK included the project information in the teachers’ guides for Learning to Live Together program implementation.

The networks that sprouted during the courses have also resulted in new regional coordination efforts. Representatives from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were at two community engagement workshops. These participants collectively identified the challenge of “non-traditional religious leaders” using extremist ideologies to pit religion against the state. Prior to their attendance, there was no space for regional discussion between the government and influential CSOs, and neither the state nor “moderate” religious leaders were equipped to counter harsher interpretations of faith. To address this situation, the representatives created plans that included outputs such as making policy recommendations for state-faith leaders in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan; teaching religious leaders, religious scholars, and government officials about how faith can be used in conflict resolution; and preventing violent extremism by collaborating on policy measures.

The participants then implemented these plans and, during the second course, presented on progress toward their goal “to transform the environment in which the states, citizens, religious leaders, and other stakeholders counter violent religious extremism through multilevel and multipronged approaches.” Some of the activities included hosting events on religion and peacebuilding, from police dialogue forums, community resilience activities, press and media cafes on CVE, to policy consultations; and the creation of a track 2 diplomacy organization, called the Central Asian Leadership Council, to further CVE national plans. A participant from this group reported, “We have developed joint research proposals and conducted at least two researches after the [empowering communities courses]. We also share resources with each other and advise on related initiatives.”

Finding 3. Capacity-strengthening projects see the biggest returns in participants’ application of learning, as evidenced by participants’ reported use.

The effects of any capacity-strengthening initiative can be difficult to pinpoint. However, evidence was strong that the course content influenced the work of participants at the individual and organizational levels. Further, practitioners began new projects and initiatives that resulted from their participation in one or more courses. These practical results of capacity-strengthening work can inform future endeavors.

Not only were participants able to network among themselves, they also made connections with institutions.

Participants translated learned knowledge and skills into their work. Many of those interviewed discussed value in being able to better understand causes and consequences of violent extremism in their environment. In particular, their work benefited from learning about the importance of context and conflict analysis, key project design approaches for peacebuilding, funds of knowledge, and the do-no-harm principle, all of which stood out among the responses.¹⁴ These well-established peacebuilding operating principles and approaches informed the content of the training. However, a few participants noted that not enough time was devoted in the courses to applying and translating certain concepts to their work clearly enough, including theories of change and funds of knowledge.

In relation to improving analysis of factors that contribute to violent extremism in their communities, 94 percent of participants were somewhat confident or very confident that they gained additional understanding. They specifically mentioned push and pull factors, the ecological framework, and the power of local knowledge as frames that were particularly helpful in analyzing their context and factors that drive violent extremism.¹⁵

Participants' understanding of CVE as a field deepened due to participation in the courses. In the evaluation survey, 83 percent of respondents reported that their definition of CVE changed because of their participation in the courses. These new understandings included a clarification of how different countries are trying to address violent extremism, a deepened conceptualization of violent extremism, and, in some cases, a change in attitude about how to address it in their communities.

A member of Hedayah gave a presentation at the beginning of each course to introduce a lexicon and conceptual framework for understanding CVE as a field of noncoercive policies and practices. This underpinning, combined with the multiregional participant makeup, was crucial in offering opportunities for participants to understand CVE efforts around the world. Simply by meeting and engaging with other participants, one course attendee, a Pakistani government official, came to understand that violent extremism "is a global phenomenon," not the fault of "the West."

Another reflected on how his thinking about violent extremism as a concept shifted:

[It] was very uncomfortable from the outset. The words made me imagine war fronts, crises, burnt houses, dead people...[The course] changed everything. The course...defined and broke it down for me. I now see it as something small which can grow uncontrollable if not handled from the early stage.

A Nigerian interviewee said that she was nervous before the workshop because it had been reported that her media organization was involved in work trying to counter Boko Haram. Her work had become "very scary." But the workshop demystified narratives and reasons for violent extremism, and it became clear how she could "try to counter narratives" through her work more effectively and confidently.

One of the education courses had students work on developing a ToC as a part of designing a CVE project during the course. One participant remarked, "The ToC [idea] is [so] highly relevant to my work that I cannot think of any project design without having the concept occupying the center of my thinking. It has provided me with a clear approach to successful CVE project design and implementation." Another noted, however, that there was not nearly enough time to fully work through and understand the theory of change concept in a way that they could apply going forward.

A Kenyan who had attended several training sessions in all of the project streams and runs a well-known organization credited the courses with sharpening her critical thinking about her own programs. She characterized a shift in how her organization analyzes the problems they are trying to address, explaining how the do-no-harm principle informs her work:

We do a lot of deep analysis of the problem which we were not doing before and... our approaches are now informed by the local context. [Before], we didn't look at the entire environment and ask ourselves [whether] delivering these programs like this [could] be causing more harm than good unknowingly. [This is] because we didn't understand the DNH [do no harm] concept until...we received the training. So that has changed a lot, even in our programming—we always have a paragraph that tells everybody how we are going to take care of that.

These concepts are especially important in a context such as Kenya because anecdotal evidence from the interviews with Kenyan participants indicates a saturation of recent CVE-labeled work. Given increases in funding for CVE, the risk of violating the do-no-harm maxim to not duplicate or undercut other institutions' efforts also increases. This underscores the importance of conducting a thorough conflict analysis, which considers these concepts when examining the context and how the activities will affect the wider situation. The skills she gained, which she then passed on to those in her organization, have helped her in trying to avoid common pitfalls in CVE or peacebuilding work.

Participants disseminated learning from the courses. They also reported hosting training or programming in their communities and engaging with their networks to disseminate information and to attempt skills-transfer activities. Two examples of this emerged from the education stream: a Kenyan working at a teachers' training college with thirty-three years of experience as a principal and teacher relayed that "after getting back [from the training], I shared the CVE course with the pre-service and in-service teachers." Likewise, a Jordanian school administrator trained 150 education professionals in how to promote positive values such as tolerance and coexistence within a religious framework after the third education workshop. He trained them in methods to facilitate similar dialogues with students. After he delivered this training, he "heard from some teachers that the behavior, the discipline, of the students has changed...as a result of such kind of workshop." Motivated by this, he "wishes to have another session to learn more and to share [his] knowledge [with the] six thousand teachers [he oversees]."

Participants also incorporated course content into their programming, ensuring that they expose beneficiaries to new ways of undertaking CVE efforts. For instance, as a Pakistani activist from the media and messaging courses explained in an interview, "Most of the content is now part of our curriculum on CVE, and we use it to help young people understand what narratives are, how narratives are developed, how we can develop alternative narratives." An evaluation survey respondent also mentioned the benefits of participatory action research after the course:

Participatory approaches to facilitating community change is a very powerful approach that has had a heavy impact on the sustainability of our initiatives. The communities are more engaged, more excited, and more committed to the projects. Instead of dictating what we feel will work, we share about the challenge of violent extremism with them, let them share their views about the subject, and also propose what they will do immediately and in the future to help address it. They feel empowered, and that their voice matters too. It's very uplifting as you see them willing to invest some of their small resources even when funding may not be readily available to get things done.

A Nigerian participant noted that increased knowledge and skills gained in empowering communities courses benefited women involved in her organization's projects. She helped open new avenues of engagement between police and communities to work jointly on security, trying to "improve women's economic status, [and] encouraging families to educate their children" to increase women's resilience to radicalization.

Among survey respondents, 85 percent reported that they began new CVE-related programming because they had participated in the courses.

As a result of the courses, participants developed and have implemented new programs. Whether by engaging new actors, undertaking proposals developed during the courses, or returning to reflect with colleagues on what they learned, participants reported starting new CVE efforts related to what they learned in courses. Among survey respondents, 85 percent reported that they began new CVE-related programming because they had participated in the courses. A Pakistani participant in the communications stream who had previously worked with USIP to help set up a network of facilitators tapped into this network to conduct a training-of-trainers using USIP course materials.¹⁶ This individual also collaborated with government officials he met at courses from the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, and National Heritage. They piloted media campaigns on giving alms to charities that do not support violent extremism. As he explained during an interview, “It was because of these workshops, which provided an opportunity to sit together, to come together, and discuss ideas...that we [now collaborate].”

The CEO of a production company gave a presentation in the first education course, which sparked an idea with a member of Iraqi civil society. The company creates entertainment-based educational programs, shown in eighty countries on premier networks, that teach civic values, democracy and the rule of law, and literacy. The presentation gave the Iraqi the idea to “deliver messages” through “small comic books” for young people that spread messages about shared problems, solutions, and the importance of civic values in Iraq. He is also planning on making an Arabic-language film about common human values and diversity in Iraq.

Other examples include working in Kenya with Islamic education teachers to address extremist narratives through their teaching, a call-in radio dialogue in Nigeria with youth on CVE, and a monthly sharing program in Uganda called Learning Tree in which young civic leaders from more than fifteen organizations discuss the importance of incorporating CVE programming into their work.

A Kyrgyz participant said that Central Asian participants jointly created “the youth network Stan 4 Peace, which mobilizes youth in deradicalization efforts across the entire Central Asian region.” Youth is an organizational priority, she explained: “The course has helped me conceptualize the importance of proactive[ly] engaging youth in CVE efforts, and equipped me with...innovative tools.” In November 2016, she implemented post-workshop plans, partnering with Muslim religious leaders, Ministry of Interior officials, and local police on a USIP-funded project. From 2015 to 2016, the project educated eight hundred Kyrgyz students in five schools on Islamic State tactics to recruit youth in Syria. Kyrgyz religious leaders reported that, after the workshops, they “had not heard of people from our [region] departing to Syria.”

Participants leveraged what they learned in the courses and modified ongoing CVE work at home. Participants were better able to change existing programs because of their increased ability to think critically about choices, messages, and narratives, as well as their own program and project theories of change. For instance, a Kenyan interviewee talked about how, without the courses, her organization could not have taught youth how to engage police properly. She saw the connection between communities trusting security services and their joint CVE abilities. The police need to “see the benefits of working with the community,” which is difficult when community members do not trust them and do not report “dangerous” members of groups like al-Shabaab. As she said,

It would have been really difficult [to teach youth how to build these relationships], but with the skills that we acquired through the USIP training, it appears quite easy on our side because we understand how to engage, [build] relationships, and...develop [shared messages]...Communities need to change [their] perspective, the perception of the historical relationships with the law enforcement, and to take advantage of the ongoing reforms...[which] interestingly provide for citizen participation in security matters, something that has never been exploited....[We host] training workshops for youth [to] know how to engage [peacefully and not always confrontationally], because a lot of... the main problems we've got in this country is that citizens know their rights but they don't know how to engage.

Recommendations

These broad recommendations are intended to inform practitioners and funders working on CVE capacity-strengthening programming. They fall into three categories: project design, content development, and recruitment.

Project Design

Spend the time to develop a theory of change founded on evidence. Practitioners or funders building a multifaceted capacity-strengthening project should have a clearly articulated theory of change. A strong theory of change creates a center of gravity around which new staff, partners, and beneficiaries can focus their efforts. Because of this, conceptual definitions, goals, and objectives should be clearly articulated. The ToC is a useful way to engage team members in developing clear project objectives and ultimately increases the likelihood that the project will lead to more effective CVE efforts. Without a cohesive ToC, it is much more difficult for everyone to be explicit about the problems they are trying to address, as well as the broader changes they hope to see through their efforts. It may be that a project with multiple streams, such as the project in this evaluation, does not need a cohesive strategy about how the streams fit together. However, this should be an explicit decision and not an unstated assumption or a consequence of not developing a solid, integrated theory of change. For CVE efforts in particular, given the distinct challenges and complexities, it is difficult to isolate the effects of any single effort. Accordingly, teams carrying out this work should include assumptions about how their efforts connect to the ecosystem they are operating in within their ToC to account for other influences on the problem they seek to address.

If aiming to create networks, convene country- or region-specific workshops. As a phenomenon, ideological violence crosses borders and is not confined to a particular country or region.¹⁷ But the evaluation team found evidence that participants in this CVE capacity-building project were more likely to communicate and work with other participants in their country or region after the courses ended. If one intended goal of such a program is to create a network among participants that is sustained after the training (that is, to build capacity in a given context), then programs should consider approaches to bolster a sense of community. CVE workshops might be an especially appropriate space for doing so, because the skills and knowledge taught are typically focused on topics like communication, education, and social science, themes that vary across the world and are often context-specific. Alternatively, if the primary goal of a capacity-strengthening program is to disseminate various approaches and tools for CVE, then cross-regional or global

If aiming to create networks, convene country- or region-specific workshops.

participation is recommended, considering the benefits of learning from each other in a diverse classroom. For either goal, instructors should emphasize that cookie-cutter approaches to effective CVE work are nearly nonexistent because of the complex nature of the problems. Context matters.

Consider how project design and participant selection will affect ongoing local and regional CVE efforts. The stated aims in the ToC will help team members have a starting point from which to create a recruitment strategy for a capacity-strengthening project. If participants are recruited from communities close to one another, then this interaction can have a positive impact on the effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy of existing CVE work. Encouraging connections locally can have the built-in benefit of increasing the likelihood that participants can develop actionable plans resulting from these engagements. Based on the feedback, the participants who stayed in touch after the course and began working on projects together tended to be from the same countries or regions. For instance, several Pakistanis consult each other regularly about their work. A partnership emerged among Central Asian participants, some of whom began an international forum after identifying common problems, demonstrating how shared history can lay the foundation for and help facilitate cooperation.

Implementers should build in activities that sustain engagement after the course as much as possible. As reported in the follow-up interviews, participants faced many challenges in implementing this work that continued mentorship could help overcome. Email exchanges and listservs are cost-effective ways to continue relationships without significant resource investment. This mentoring and advising relationship should be an articulated part of the original project design and budget, so that mentors and participants have agreed-upon expectations. If additional funds (as well as access points and opportunities) are available, then training can be coupled with peacebuilding or CVE initiatives to actualize some of the skills and knowledge gained. In addition, these activities should be designed as a mechanism to enable the participants to lead the follow-up that decreases the implementer's role in sustaining the work.

Dedicate time and funding to monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Capacity-strengthening projects should have enough funding and strong M&E methodologies to measure whether participants' learning translates into social change outcomes. In this evaluation, the team drew conclusions about the project based on self-reported evidence, but in most cases could not independently verify claims. Capacity-strengthening programs that want to contribute evidence-based learning to the CVE and peacebuilding fields should have robust M&E plans. Resources to implement these plans will also need to be accounted for to verify that the approaches and knowledge disseminated during courses are having the desired effect in conflict-affected communities. Without these, it is harder to discern which training approaches and content have the desired outcomes, and the proof of what works is less substantial.

Peacebuilding approaches and principles are directly relevant to the CVE field: use them.

Content Development

Peacebuilding approaches and principles are directly relevant to the CVE field: use them. New and existing CVE capacity-development programs should consider the evidence base from the peacebuilding field. Some actors have been working in the CVE space for years and have reliable approaches to their work; others are undertaking efforts that lack an evidence base because of the nascent, evolving nature of the field. Based on the fact that violent extremists thrive in conflict-affected areas, peacebuilding has tested tools and frameworks that are directly relevant for CVE.

For instance, conflict-analysis frameworks, which help capture the complex nature of conflict, could have relevance for people identifying root causes of violent extremism. Other peacebuilding skills, such as active listening, can help draw out information from people vulnerable to violent extremism, which, in turn, can help inform better program design.¹⁸ Other skills—such as facilitation, mediation, and negotiation—may be useful in situations where partnerships must be forged to halt violent extremism, such as in joint police-youth initiatives. CVE practitioners with facilitation skills will be able to navigate these sensitive issues more ably.

Ensure that CVE capacity-building programming is relevant along the spectrum of countering and preventing. When strengthening capacity to work on CVE issues, it is essential to convey knowledge and skills applicable for solving different parts of the radicalization puzzle, and to provide guidance on how to tailor and apply that knowledge to a unique context. For strengthening capacity, if confined to a narrow setting on a short time line, distinctions between preventing and countering to focus efforts could be useful. For example, purely preventive efforts to give educators skills to teach critical thinking could be tailored to a specific curriculum. Ideas that work across the spectrum—from upstream prevention efforts to more immediate, noncoercive countering—should be developed and taught accordingly. This is primarily because conflict environments that participants come from are fluid, which requires adapting CVE strategies to changing conditions.

Articulate risk to participants and teach strategies for reducing risk after the workshop. Best practices strongly encourage international practitioners to take do-no-harm approaches when bringing together people who may have been affected by violent conflict. Practitioners and those working on capacity-strengthening efforts need to be aware of the risks in pursuing CVE work and try to build in techniques for mitigating these dangers. One example might be changing descriptive language to reframe a CVE workshop as a resilience workshop, or perhaps for those working on communications campaigns, partnering with members of the target audience rather than delivering messages themselves.

Recruitment

When identifying participants from civil society and government, strategize how to address potential tensions around sensitive topics in advance of bringing them together. For many governments, the threat of violent extremism is a security-first issue with a social element second, rather than primarily a social problem that requires limited security-based solutions. Thus, the dominant approach to preventing or countering violent extremism may be unclear or, worse, represent an active conflict between parties working toward the same ostensible goal. Whether the government should lead in engaging the communities most vulnerable to violent extremism globally is debatable. After all, the reason that a community could be violent may be due to well-established grievances against the government. Thus, additional outreach, especially from law enforcement, could be counterproductive.

Benefits to bringing together these actors—new partnerships or a clarifying of roles as the results from the workshop tension between government and CSOs demonstrated—are entirely possible, but workshop conveners have a corresponding duty to consider carefully any potential challenges that may arise between participants. This is particularly true if CSO representatives are inexperienced, opposed to government actions, or possibly at risk for investigation or arrest after the course. For example, a CSO may divulge information about how they work with individuals returning from fighting abroad. If a country has laws about supporting terrorists that are broadly interpreted, then security services could misconstrue the CSO's work and suspect it of collaborating with terrorists.

Ultimately it is the organizations' decisions whether to attend an event and how much they share, thereby taking on risk. Even so, program conveners should fully consider these tricky dynamics and the do-no-harm maxim, particularly when bringing together private citizens and representatives from governments that contravene human rights. In addition, organizations need to not just take into account the inclusion of government actors, but also—government agencies and actors are not homogenous—ensure that the differentiation among government actors, levels, and roles and responsibilities are clearly understood. In particular, practitioners should consider prevailing attitudes toward civil society among government actors, particularly advocacy organizations that take oppositional stances to government policies and practices. Another point worth considering is whether repressive actions from the government are causing grievances against the government, which is fuel for violent extremists. This aspect of project development is ripe for advice from colleagues, experts, and locals with geographical knowledge.

Avoiding people because they do not meet these criteria could be a mistake if it means overlooking latent or unknown talents.

Develop detailed criteria for participant selection to maximize impact. The program team should have tight criteria for the inclusion of participants (such as years of experience, thematic focus and sector of their organization, role in their organization, and so on) and objective assessment criteria for deciding whether a nominee is appropriate. The goal is to recruit individuals with actual or potential influence, motivation, and opportunity to use the knowledge and skills after the course. Avoiding people because they do not meet these criteria could be a mistake if it means overlooking latent or unknown talents. Local CSOs are often doing the most meaningful work and could benefit from training.

Recruiters may also want to direct outreach to potential participants' supervisors, especially in highly bureaucratic organizations, to generate buy-in and increase the chances of positive outcomes. Paying close attention to protocol within organizations, particularly but not only governments, is crucial. It takes time but shows respect for the internal organizational decision makers and demonstrates thoughtfulness. For less bureaucratic organizations, a recommended recruitment technique after identifying the appropriate individuals is to ask them to reach out to their networks or to nominate additional practitioners or colleagues. This will increase the pool of participants while allowing the program team to maintain control over the final selections. For instance, leads for education asked participants to nominate relevant people because it was part of program design and a useful approach. This both generates buy-in and expands the reach of the hosting organizations. That said, teams should use this approach cautiously because the downside is that the participant pool may be limited to organizations plugged into the international community, and bar solid organizations that could benefit and expand the number of capable organizations doing this work.

Focus on creating positive social change locally to avoid brain drain. Recruitment and engagement strategies should consider possible harmful effects of strengthening capacity of talented local CVE practitioners who may leave their conflict-affected areas if given an opportunity. This brain drain could leave a vacuum, however small, that violent extremists could fill. Connecting grassroots-level individuals with national- or international-level institutions can enhance the individuals' profile, but it can also cause resentment in their communities or lead to their departure. A way to ensure a return to communities is to give micro-grants to promising individuals, who can then use this for programmatic work. This also sustains the program and allows for monitoring results after the course.

Conclusion

CVE practitioners seeking to build capacity effectively should have resources to inform their work. This report offers reflections and recommendations distilled from the experience of implementing a two-year CVE capacity-strengthening effort, as well as an evaluation of the project to guide practitioners in designing more purposeful CVE capacity-strengthening programs. Conducting evaluations requires significant time and effort, but dedicated efforts meant to inform future programming is ultimately a time investment worth making. It will save institutions future resources, enable CVE practitioners to learn from each other and achieve impact, and further advance the growing CVE field.

The findings from this project evaluation revealed the complex factors that need to be considered in capacity-strengthening projects that seek to address violent extremism. These include recruitment strategies, which are at the core of success or failure of these efforts. In addition, the evaluation found that program design and structuring—whether on a regional or global scale—presents complex issues and can impact outcomes. Peacebuilding approaches (that is, the content of this project’s courses) like participatory research methods and conflict-analysis skills were found to be directly relevant for CVE practitioners. Likewise, the theory of change methodology and the peacebuilding tenet of do no harm were also found to be useful to both CVE capacity builders and other practitioners.

Looking forward, the following questions require further exploration and research:

- To what extent should the field bifurcate countering and preventing in practitioner learning? Should practitioners be able to pivot across the spectrum or should they specialize?
- How can CVE practitioners become more aware of and use good practices in adult education to more effectively strengthen capacity of practitioners working to address violent extremism in their work?
- Which approaches and incentives are most effective in encouraging workshop participants to disseminate and apply learning after a workshop? In CVE work in particular, what are the most effective ways to ensure participants apply what they learned safely?
- What kind of activities are most effective in keeping people engaged and successful in reaching their goals after completing a course?
- When thinking about the roles for civil society and government actors in CVE, what factors should be considered most relevant when deciding the role for each?
- Peacebuilding approaches seem to be particularly relevant for CVE. What innovative approaches in CVE fall outside what is commonly known as peacebuilding? Which experiences in peacebuilding are most relevant for CVE efforts going forward?
- What are the key differences and similarities between people in the same group picking up arms for considered, ideological reasons and those arming themselves for other reasons? Should funders and practitioners consider these different groups when making programmatic decisions? How?
- What are a set of model social change goals relevant for CVE that funders can use to judge the possibility of project impacts. In other words, how is it possible to ensure that organizations are thoughtful when crafting proposals and do not simply include CVE as a goal to increase the chances of receiving funding?

As violent extremism continues to preoccupy government officials and CSOs, grappling with these questions will be crucial to building resilient and free societies.

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An online edition of this and related reports can be found on our website (www.usip.org), together with additional information on the subject.

Notes

1. Fred Strasser, "Defusing Violent Extremism in Fragile States: Cases in Sahel, Lake Chad and Other Regions Illustrate What Works," US Institute of Peace, June 14, 2017, www.usip.org/publications/2017/06/defusing-violent-extremism-fragile-states.
2. Georgia Holmer, "Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective," Special Report no. 336 (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, September 2013), www.usip.org/publications/2013/08/countering-violent-extremism-peacebuilding-perspective, 2.
3. Hedayah, "About Hedayah," <http://hedayah.ae/about-hedayah>.
4. At the beginning of the project, USIP had already begun teaching State/CT-funded policing for CVE courses in 2012 and other CVE projects not focused on education and training. Generally, police and other security services were not allowed as part of this project because of funding rules.
5. These countries included Iraq, Jordan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Chad, and Colombia.
6. Illana Lancaster, "Participatory Action Research (PAR) for Catalyzing Community Change," USIP internal project document, 1.
7. CARE International UK, "Peacebuilding with Impact: Defining Theories of Change," January 2012, www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/PSJ-2012-CARE-Defining-Theories-of-Change-document.pdf, 8. "Focusing on theories of change can improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. A review of 19 peacebuilding projects in three conflict-affected countries found that the process of articulating and reviewing theories of change adds rigor and transparency, clarifies project logic, highlights assumptions that need to be tested, and helps identify appropriate participants and partners" (2).
8. However, the original project document did articulate how "activities are intended to support the mission of Hedayah, foster heightened capacity and capability for member countries and institutions, and further the knowledge and expertise on countering violent extremism."
9. See, for example, International Committee of the Red Cross, "ICRC Guidance Note on P/CVE for National Societies," June 2017, www.icrc.org/en/document/guidance-note-national-societies-preventing-and-countering-violent-extremism-approach.
10. From the May 2015 Media and Communications After Action Report.
11. One principle, for example, is that adult learners are practical. They want to see how the theory being taught can be applied to their situation. For an overview of the principles, see "Malcolm Knowles' 6 Adult Learning Principles," Darlo.com, November 3, 2016, <https://darlo.com/news/malcolm-knowles>.
12. "How Al-Shabaab is recruiting young men from Kenya," PBS NewsHour, April 10, 2016, www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/how-al-shabaab-is-recruiting-young-men-from-kenya.
13. This organization, known as GCERF, is "a public-private partnership... established to serve as the first global effort to support local, community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas" ("Our Mandate," Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, www.gcerf.org/about-us).
14. Conflict analysis: "The systematic study of conflict in general and of individual or group conflicts in particular. Conflict analysis provides a structured inquiry into the causes and potential trajectory of a conflict so that processes of resolution can be better understood." Do no harm: "A maxim that acknowledges that any intervention carries with it the risk of doing harm. Practitioners should proceed with programs only after careful consideration and widespread consultation, including with other institutions in the field so as not to duplicate or undercut their efforts. In assistance activities, the maxim recognizes that resources inevitably represent the distribution of power and wealth and will create tensions if careful attention is not given to how they are distributed and delivered" (Dan Snodderly, ed., *Peace Terms: Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding*, US Institute of Peace, 2011, www.usip.org/sites/default/files/peaceterms.pdf).
15. Push and pull factors are common terms in the CVE field referring to, respectively, structural and individual catalysts of violent extremism.
16. For more information on this USIP-sponsored network of facilitators, see Nina Sughrie, "Workshop Series with Pakistani Peace Facilitators Concludes," US Institute of Peace, June 6, 2011, www.usip.org/publications/workshop-series-pakistani-peace-facilitators-concludes.
17. The Islamic State is of course the most recent manifestation of this deadly phenomenon. See, for example, International Crisis Group, "How the Islamic State Rose, Fell, and Could Rise Again in the Maghreb," Report no. 178, Middle East and North Africa, July 24, 2017, www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/178-how-islamic-state-rose-fell-and-could-rise-again-maghreb.
18. "What Is Active Listening?" US Institute of Peace, 2018, www.usip.org/public-education/educators/what-active-listening.

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