



The Prevention Project
Organizing Against Violent Extremism

Lessons from Development Actors on Integrating PVE: Challenges and Opportunities

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Brookings Institution, Washington, DC

OVERVIEW¹

On July 27, 2017, the [Prevention Project](#) convened some 40 representatives from multilateral and national development agencies, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, international NGOs and other relevant development actors for a roundtable discussion hosted at The [Brookings Institution](#). The purpose was to share experiences and lessons learned on integrating preventing violent extremism (PVE)² into broader development efforts. The meeting also provided an opportunity to highlight some of the challenges faced and make recommendations for overcoming them. The discussion recognized the continuing erosion of longstanding divides between development and security actors and assistance based on solid evidence that violent extremism poses a serious threat to development and that effective strategies for preventing and countering violent extremism need to include a development response.

The workshop – conducted under the [Chatham House Rule](#) – explored the practical significance of recent multilateral developments, in particular those at the Organization for Economic and Development Cooperation (OECD), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and World Bank, and how governmental, multilateral, and non-governmental institutions and organizations are grappling with them, including by integrating PVE into their traditional development-oriented programs, practice, and policies. Participants shared their experiences and lessons learned, highlighting some of the challenges to further progress in this field and possible solutions for overcoming them.

Some of the key challenges identified were a) the fragmentation of PVE; b) coordination (including between security and development actors, among donors, between donors and implementers, and among donors, implementers, and host governments); c) the development of a shared understanding of the drivers of violent extremism and an integrated approach to problem diagnosis and appropriate solutions; d) the appropriate balance between engaging national governments, including those who are fomenting violent extremism themselves, and local actors; e) the collection and dissemination of PVE data; f) monitoring and evaluation; g) the segments of the population that need priority attention; and h) the inconsistent use of the “PVE” label.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

During the course of the workshop participants put forward a range of practical recommendations to address some of the challenges and facilitate the further integration of PVE into development efforts.

¹ The views expressed in this summary, including in the recommendations, do not necessarily reflect those of all workshop participants.

² Much as was the case with the roundtable discussion itself, this summary uses the terms “PVE”, “CVE”, and “P/CVE” inter-changeably.

- **Realize the OECD’s full potential to influence PVE programming and facilitate PVE coordination.** This could involve the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC), including through its Secretariat: a) updating the OECD’s PVE guidelines and further populating the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Casebook on Conflict, Peace and Security Activities to include more varied examples of PVE assistance in order to provide donors greater clarity on the specific activities that fit within the PVE guidelines and to facilitate the identification and sharing of both good and bad PVE practice; b) assigning a [Creditor Reporting System](#) (CRS) “code” to PVE in its databases to enable the Secretariat to gather data on how much OECD members are spending on PVE (as part of its ODA-eligible expenditures), where the money is being spent, and on what types of specific activities; c) providing guidance on PVE labelling for donors and recipients; d) leveraging its [program evaluation](#), [peer review](#) and [networking](#) tools for purposes of improving the *quality* and *effectiveness* of PVE aid; and e) serving as a platform for convening discussion on the use of development aid for, and the collection of data on, PVE activities so that the sector is more closely monitored and understood from a development perspective.
- **Coordinate around global frameworks.** Better coordination around the UN 2030 Agenda and, in particular, [SDG 16](#) is critical to further integrating PVE into traditional development work and further breaking down barriers between security and development actors in the context of PVE. With the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to undertake an in-depth review of SDG 16 in 2019, governments should begin to take stock of which PVE activities are also being undertaken in furtherance of SDG16. UNDP, or another appropriate entity, could collect and analyze this data for a report it could prepare and present in advance of and to inform the 2019 review on how the linkages between PVE and SDG16 are being realized in practice and how such linkages could be further strengthened.
- **Recognize the important role that the state plays, but don’t work exclusively with or through national authorities when engaging on PVE.** The state can be a promotor of PVE and a fomenter of violent extremism and development agencies and other actors need to be conscious of this when engaging on PVE at the national level. The national PVE action plan process provides an opportunity for meaningful examination of the role of the state in PVE and a possible the first step in reaching a shared understanding of the drivers of violent extremism in the particular country. While recognizing the importance of securing the buy-in of national governments for PVE engagement, national and multilateral development agencies involved in PVE should also intensify their engagement with local authorities, civil society, and the private sector. This could include intensifying support for mechanisms that provide small grants to local actors without having to work through the national government.
- **Don’t over-emphasize ideology.** Recognize that the grievances linked to strong perceptions of exclusion and unfairness rather than ideology (or poverty) are the primary drivers of violent extremism and development agencies should program accordingly. Development actors should focus more attention on those groups with the strongest feelings of exclusion and marginalization – and on building resilience within them – if they hope to reduce the likelihood of violent extremism (or conflict more broadly) from emerging.
- **Recognize the unique role that development agencies can play in helping to address key structural drivers of violent extremism in specific contexts.** These include ones related to the economy, service delivery, and decentralization.
- **Move beyond the traditionally country-focused approaches of development agencies** to take into account that the drivers of violent extremism are often both local and not only regional, but more widely transnational.

- **Pursue more coordinated engagement by development and security actors, while ensuring a clear division of labor between them.** This is particularly important where development interventions and tools alone will not be able to address the governance and human rights deficits and other drivers of violent extremism linked to the behavior of the state. For example, at times, security and development actors may need to join forces to develop and deliver a coordinated, “tough love” message around the behavior of security forces, the allocation of natural resources, and policies that create perceptions of exclusion.
- **Encourage more country-level donor coordination among the growing number of PVE actors, moving beyond the current, largely ad hoc approach.** This should involve the host government and consideration should be given to providing UNDP with a mandate and resources to lead this effort in relevant countries. Among other things, this could facilitate more cross-learning and transparency.
- **Make a stronger case for the relevance of ODA programs for PVE and why development programs need to include a PVE dimension.** This could include developing and disseminating guidelines to governments, including local embassy officials, multilateral organizations, and NGOs, for determining the potential PVE-relevance of ODA programs and to assess the impact of PVE-specific programs.
- **Expand and share more project-focused research on and analysis of the drivers of violent extremism among donors and implementers of PVE programs, within and among partner governments.** This could influence policy and programming choices beyond the narrow project to which the research and analysis was originally linked.
- **Share and incorporate lessons-learned into PVE program development.** These lessons include the need to a) take into account the local context; b) be based on sound and rigorous analysis, c) be implemented by credible local actors with the relevant knowledge, experience, networks, and credibility, d) aim to do no harm, e) integrate human rights, f) incorporate a gender perspective, and g) be carefully labeled to avoid potential local or host government sensitivities around terminology.
- **Recognize the critical importance that civil society organizations (CSO) play in PVE, while doing more to address some of the challenges in this area.** These challenges can included a) the lack of capacity of CSOs; b) the closing political and legal space for CSOs to operate; c) security risks associated with working on PVE in certain settings; and d) the proliferation of local CSOs, some lacking the necessary expertise and experience, seeking to access the perceived growing pot of PVE resources.
- **Integrate across development, prevention, and security.** Analysis and response are both more effective when they are fully integrated across development, prevention, and security, from long-term response to short-term interventions.
- **Broaden the focus of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts to look beyond micro-level, single-program evaluation and include a macro approach that involves measuring the overall resilience of a particular community or geography to the lure of violent extremism.** This would involve looking at the impact that a wide range of interventions (both programs and policies) have on levels of resilience. Currently, the search for better data on what “works” in order to justify PVE spending is too narrowly focused and does not take into account the need to expect some failure in a field where it remains difficult to demonstrate the impact of an isolated program.
- **Address the increasing fragmentation of the PVE field, which exists at every level, and complicates efforts to pursue more integrated and coherent PVE approaches.** The fragmentation is due, *inter*

alia, to the growing number of small-scale programs, often in the absence of any integrated national-level plan or strategy and with mainly episodic coordination among donors, the lack of a common approach to applying the PVE label among donors and implementers, and the increasing use of development tools and resources for PVE. In addition to some of the follow-up work proposed for the OECD, other ways to overcome the fragmentation challenge include:

- Creating more opportunities for sustained dialogue and information sharing among the donors, implementing organizations, and multilateral organizations, building on the nascent CVE community of practice; and
- Developing a pilot initiative in one or two countries to pursue a more integrated approach to problem diagnosis, programmatic and policy response, and M&E in order to arrive at a shared understanding of the drivers of violent extremism in a specific context, what interventions are needed to address them, and which actor should be responsible for funding or implementing each of them. This could be linked to ongoing efforts to support the development of national PVE action plans, where there is a receptive host government.

SUMMARY

Session I: The Evolution in the Multilateral System – Lessons from the OECD, World Bank, and UNDP in Integrating PVE into their traditional development portfolios

1. Participants were reminded that discussions about the role of development actors in addressing terrorism and violent extremism go back more than 15 years, with development agencies voicing concern in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks that their funds were being used to fight the “war on terror”. In 2003, the OECD produced a document, “[A Development Cooperation Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry Points for Action](#),” which noted that “linking acts of terrorism and their prevention with the goals of development cooperation in developing countries is highly problematic,” and addressed a number of issues and concerns that continue to be relevant today. These include the role of development tools and programs in preventing terrorism, the need to avoid the securitization of aid, the importance of community-driven responses to “resist extreme religious and political ideologies based on violence,” and the need to focus more on programs that elevate the job and educational opportunities of young people.
2. Participants discussed the evolving role of the OECD in this field, in particular the 2016 [revision](#) of the OECD’s ODA guidelines to allow its 35 member states to report funding for PVE activities as part of their annual development targets and the implications for PVE efforts. Key motivations for “modernizing” the guidelines included the need to a) clarify ambiguous wording to prevent the abuse of aid, b) respond to developmental challenges in conflict situations, and c) create a new impetus toward achieving [Peace-building and State-building Goals](#) and the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).
3. Among the key changes in the guidelines are ones related to military training and use of the military to deliver development and humanitarian aid, as well as the inclusion of PVE. ODA-qualified PVE activities identified include education, rule of law, working with civil society to prevent radicalization, some security and justice systems capacity building, and research into positive alternatives to violent extremism. The point was made, however, that the PVE guidelines are broad and thus open to interpretation. Refinement is thus required in order to increase their impact and influence in a politically sensitive area.
4. Participants discussed how the OECD is not just concerned with what is and is not “ODA” eligible, but improving the quality and impact of aid as well. For example, through the “[Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation](#)” it encourages the effectiveness of development assistance and cooperation, the OECD Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) [Network on](#)

[Development Evaluation](#) identifies program evaluation good practice to learn what works and what does not, and, and the DAC's [peer reviews](#) provide in-depth examinations of development systems and policies, including lessons learned. Participants stressed that with PVE now “ODA-eligible” there is an opportunity to leverage the range of OECD tools and expertise, including its policy analysts and statisticians. This could help improve the quality and impact of PVE assistance. However, it was also pointed out that there has been no PVE-related follow-up action within the DAC since the guidelines were revised in February 2016.

5. To catalyze deeper OECD engagement on PVE, it was recommended that the DAC request the OECD Secretariat to assign a Creditor Reporting System (CRS) “[code](#)” to PVE in its statistical database, something that was not done following the February 2016 High-Level meeting of the DAC which produced the revised guidelines. This would enable the OECD DAC Secretariat to gather data on how much OECD members are spending on PVE (as part of its ODA-eligible expenditures), where the money is being spent, and on what types of activities. In addition, the OECD was encouraged to use the examples collected for its ODA Casebook on Conflict, Peace and Security Activities to provide donors greater clarity on how the specific activities fit within the PVE guidelines and to facilitate the identification and sharing of both good and bad PVE practice.

6. Some participants welcomed the prospect of activating the OECD’s data collection and statistical analysis expertise, noting that there are a lot of assumptions and perceptions as to what is happening in the PVE funding space, but there is generally a lack of data to confirm them. Others urged caution. Some cited the sensitivities about the increased sharing of PVE data that deeper OECD involvement might trigger. Others said that a data collection exercise might produce a skewed picture of the PVE assistance landscape. The reason is that some donors, due to sensitivities surrounding the “PVE” label, might use that label only on rehabilitation and reintegration and other programs targeting violent extremists directly, while choosing a different one for prevention-focused efforts aimed at addressing the drivers of and building community resilience to violence extremism. Thus, a data collection exercise would need to be sophisticated enough so that it could capture a full-picture of the effective work being done to prevent violent extremism, even that which is not taking place under the PVE label. Another concern raised regarding the collection and sharing of PVE data in general was linked to security and how that data, which might reveal certain security vulnerabilities or the names of local organizations working in high-risk environments, might fall into the hands of violent extremist groups.

7. UNDP’s burgeoning, demand-driven PVE work was presented and discussed in terms of its conceptual and guiding principles, grounded in UNDP practice, and current programming. Since 2014, UNDP has been developing an understanding of how to look at PVE through linkages among radicalization, development, and conflict and violence prevention, and in March 2016 it developed [a global PVE framework](#) for inclusive engagement that was launched in December 2016 as the PVE Global Program. The framework prioritizes local solutions and cross-sector, cross-border linkages organized around twelve guiding principles, which include: do no harm, context is everything, technical is political, drive for complementarity with existing development programs, gender sensitivity, evidence and human rights-based, civil society partnership, and donor coordination. UNDP’s PVE work falls into three broad categories: a) “PVE-relevant”, which includes anti-corruption, transparency, rule of law, economic empowerment programs designed to address drivers of violent extremism; b) “PVE-specific”, which are programs that target specific groups at risk of embracing terrorist propaganda or to reintegrate and rehabilitation former violent extremist offenders; and c) policy/research-related, which include programs focused on the role of youth/gender, development of national action plans, and measurement and impact. UNDP’s PVE portfolio currently includes some 63 projects (43 PVE-“specific”) and 20 PVE-“relevant”) across 47 countries. It is implementing more PVE projects than any other member of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force.

8. Participants highlighted some of the challenges UNDP is facing in its work on PVE. These include those related to identifying the right local partners, striking the appropriate balance between providing guidance to and encouraging innovation by governments and local partners, integrating human rights and PVE, donor coordination in a field that is increasingly fragmented, and bridging the lingering divide between security and development actors. Participants also stressed the importance of ensuring that bilateral and multilateral development agencies involved in PVE do not work exclusively with national authorities, but intensify their engagement with local authorities, civil society, and private sector.

9. The World Bank is looking at deepening its PVE focus within the framework of a forthcoming [UN-World Bank report](#) on the role of development in the prevention of violent conflict, which is due out later this year. World Bank research has found that violent extremism is built on much deeper issues than ideology. Rather, it is the grievances linked to strong perceptions of exclusion and unfairness in a population wider than the traditional targets of PVE. The Bank is increasingly focused on identifying what factors play a catalytic role in transforming perceptions of exclusion to violence. The increased awareness that the drivers of violent conflict are rooted in deeper societal issues linked to exclusion has led the Bank to begin to rethink its approach. The point was made that development programs have traditionally focused on the poorest segments of the population rather than on those with the strongest feelings of exclusion and unfairness. However, because it is the latter group that is more prone to becoming radicalized to violence, the development community may need to focus more attention on that group – and focus on building resilience within it – if it hopes to reduce the likelihood of violent extremism (or conflict more broadly) from emerging.

10. Participants briefly explored the World Bank’s research findings in three countries, which are receiving a lot of attention from the PVE community, to offer a sense of the different structural issues at play. Tunisia, it was pointed out, was found to be relatively resilient to violent extremism, despite the high number of foreign terrorist fighters from there. The primary structural driver of the perceptions of exclusion and marginalization were [found](#) to be economic rather than political. Whereas the Tunisian government has opened the political dialogue to all parts of the society, progress on opening up the economy has stalled, with some segments of the population feeling that that they are not receiving their fair share of resources and economic opportunities. In contrast, the problem in Nigeria is less an economic one than a deficit of service delivery in the north that is generating the perception of marginalization and exclusion by some communities. In Kenya, the key issues are the regional imbalance within the country, the lack of political participation at the local level in certain regions, and the abuses being committed by security forces against local populations. Increased focus on decentralization and devolution and dialogue and broader trust building efforts between law enforcement and local populations in certain parts of the country were identified as among the key areas of PVE focus.

11. Participants discussed the need (e.g., to ensure integrated national development strategy that includes PVE and coordination across the government) for and challenges (e.g., can be fomenter of violent extremism through its economic, political, and or security policies) related to PVE engagement by development actors with the national government. For example, how do development approaches to PVE work in a country where national government policies or behaviors are drivers of violent extremism? How does one get the national government to understand they are part of the problem and that further decentralization, equalization of service provision, dialogue between the police and communities, and/or the reallocation of economic resources are linked to addressing the drivers of violence? It was stressed that development interventions alone will never be able to address the governance and human rights deficits that are drivers of violent extremism in certain settings. Rather, comprehensive engagement by, but with a division of labor among, development, diplomatic, and security actors is required. Participants focused particular attention on the need to strengthen cooperation between security and development actors, especially when it comes to reinforcing the links between progress in addressing issues of marginalization and exclusion and reducing recruitment and radicalization to

violent extremism. For example, at times, security and development actors may need to join forces to develop and deliver a carefully, but pointedly shaped and coordinated message around the behavior security forces, the allocation of natural resources, and policies that can create perceptions of exclusion.

12. More broadly, some participants questioned whether the increasingly recognized linkages between development and politics and political systems can be fully realized in world where mandates and approaches of the major multilateral institutions are defined by the world as it existed when they were created some 70 years ago.

13. Another challenge highlighted was the increasing fragmentation of the PVE field (and of development assistance more broadly) at every level complicates efforts to pursue more integrated and coherent PVE approaches. Participants highlighted the growing number of small-scale programs, often in the absence of any integrated national-level plan or strategy and with mainly episodic coordination among donors. Further, it was noted how the lack of a common approach to applying the PVE label among donors and implementers increases the challenge of getting one's arms around the totality of relevant programs for purposes of a PVE coordination discussion and of sharing good and bad practices. The increasing appetite for using development tools and resources for PVE is further complicating matters. Participants commented on how some of the proposed OECD follow-on work on PVE might help address these challenges.

14. Participants underscored the importance of increased donor coordination, particularly at the country level, and involving the host government in the effort. Although some coordination is taking place, including in Kenya, which some highlighted as a good practice, the view was expressed that it should be intensified, including possibly by having UNDP play more of an active role at the country level.

Session II: Breaking Down the Security-Development Divide – Lessons from National Governments in Integrating PVE into Traditional Development Work

15. Representatives from donor governments shared the varied approaches being taken to integrate PVE into traditional development work and foreign assistance more broadly. For example, in the Netherlands, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' 2016-2020 budget includes €42.6 million for counterterrorism (CT) and CVE assistance. This marks the first time that the Dutch Parliament allocated specific CT/CVE funding to the MFA. Some €29 million is dedicated to CT/CVE programs in six "risk regions" (as opposed to individual countries given the fluid nature of the threat that can easily cross borders), with the funds channeled through local governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) where possible in order to ensure local ownership. Thematic areas of focus include "youth in CVE" and "civil society's role in developing and implementing national CVE strategies, with priority being placed on "testing innovative and local approaches." In 2016, €10 million was allocated to 50, targeted pilot projects in the different regions, with small budgets and potential for upscaling.

16. Although the priority from a non-ODA angle in the Netherlands is to make more funding available for PVE from developmental perspectives and funding channels, currently all Dutch PVE funding comes from non-ODA budgets. The Dutch development minister remains very skeptical of PVE programs as a whole and reluctant to allocate ODA funds to address the drivers of violent extremism that are interconnected with those of insecurity, instability, or even migration. The reason for this reluctance stems from a Dutch development money being "misused" to support the influx of Syrian/Iraqi refugees into The Netherlands in 2015-2016.

17. The MFA sought UNDP's assistance to make the case that development efforts need to include PVE, particularly in fragile states in Africa, asking UNDP to produce a study that assesses the PVE relevant of Dutch ODA programming in 13 African countries. Among the conclusions of the 2017 study

were that all Dutch ODA-programming is de facto relevant for PVE-purposes, with the potential to increase this relevance further by steering ODA programs more towards specific locations and target groups. The study said that a bold articulation of the relevance of ODA programs for PVE was critical and that Dutch embassy officials would benefit from guidelines for determining the potential PVE relevance of ODA programs and to assess the impact of current Dutch-funded (non-ODA) PVE-specific programs. In order to address the study's recommendations, the MFA is supporting the development of "CVE-sensibility toolkit", which will be piloted in Mali and Tunisia.

18. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) focuses on the development of PVE-specific programs informed by its 2011 "[Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency](#)" guide. USAID, also relying on the 2016 [international CVE strategy](#) it developed with the Department of State, targets specific drivers of recruitment in specific geographic areas aimed at a specific population and in collaboration with a distinct implementing partner and managing unit. USAID wants to avoid diluting existing development programs to address CVE objectives, which could involve changing the target population and thematic focus of the project. The State Department/USAID [FY18 budget](#), linked to the joint State/USAID international CVE strategy, includes an increase for CVE programming to \$240 million (up from \$185 million the previous year). In addition, USAID (together with the Department of State) is developing a strategy focused on women and girls at risk of violent extremism, which will be released in the fall.

19. Australia has advocated for global changes (including at the United Nations and within the OECD) to ensure development assistance remains fit for purpose in addressing contemporary challenges. Following the 2016 update to the DAC guidelines, Canberra developed a [Policy Framework and Guidance Note on Development Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism](#) (March 2017) to guide the delivery of development assistance to counter violent extremism in developing countries. The policy framework and guidance aims to inform Australian Government officials in designing CVE-related development programming and advocates that decisions take into account the local context; are based on sound analysis; and aim to do no harm. The new framework did not come with new funding, however, with future funding for ODA-eligible CVE activities expected to come from existing country program allocations. That being said, it was pointed out that Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has used non-ODA funding to quietly support, small-scale CVE programs in Southeast Asia for over a decade, but has only recently started to include CVE objectives in ODA-funding programs including in Indonesia, Pakistan and The Philippines. It was estimated that some AUS \$10 million (out of an overall AUS \$4 billion aid budget) is allocated to PVE-focused programs.

20. In the UK, the Department for International Development (DFID) is a key player in the UK's Prevention strategy, with the [Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund](#) (CSSF) – involving DFID, Ministry of Defense, and the Foreign Commonwealth Office. The fund focuses on addressing poor governance, corruption, inequality, marginalization, lack of economic opportunity, building stronger states and societies, and responding to the threat of terrorism and is evenly split between ODA-eligible and non-ODA-eligible funds.

21. DFID's PVE work is focused in fragile or vulnerable states, primarily Pakistan, the Middle East and East Africa where radicalizing activity can have a direct impact on communities in the UK. Spending is now at £300 million across co-benefit and targeted programming. DFID's approach emphasizes "do no harm" and the need to ensure PVE and broader development work are mutually supportive and need to be part of a comprehensive approach that balances "hard" and "soft" interventions.

22. Following the recent attacks in the UK, the government is reviewing its overall CT strategy of which Prevent is a part. It is focusing more attention on the need to address long-term drivers of violent extremism and the need for stronger linkages between PVE and wider conflict prevention and peacebuilding work.

23. Participants highlighted a number of lessons donor governments are learning and challenges they are facing as they look to integrate PVE into their traditional development work. For example, securing government buy-in is critical to pursuing bilateral CVE programming, e.g., Pakistan's acknowledgement that violent extremism is a priority issue has led to an increased willingness to work with donors in this field and has allowed donors to pursue opportunities for collaboration and cross learning on CVE. However, this can take time in a field where there continues to be some wariness about "foreign interference". Moreover, in the absence of a national plan or strategy linked to CVE, programs tend to be *ad hoc*, inter-agency coordination in the host government is often limited, and CVE investments are less efficient than they could be. This underscores the priority that should be placed on supporting the development of coherent, national strategies for addressing violent extremism. One issue that merits further attention is the tendency of national CT or CVE coordinating agencies to have weak mandates and be under-funded, with the locus of power on CT and CVE approaches often lying in individual agencies. This can result in the politicization of CVE programming, disjointed approaches that can undermine the effectiveness of donor approaches to CT and CVE, and continued effort from donors to ensure all relevant agencies in the target country are aware of the different CVE activities across the country.

24. A second lesson/challenge is that civil society are key partners for working at the local level on supporting social cohesion and addressing inter-communal violence, but often lack capacity and face shrinking legal and political space to operate. The hope is that the results of local activities will influence national policies and approaches, with donors acting as a bridge between national and local actors in the target country. Participants did caution, however, that the perception of increased funds for PVE work is leading to a proliferation of local civil society partners keen to access these resources, but who may lack the necessary knowledge, experience, networks and credibility to implement PVE projects.

25. A related issue flagged was the identification of the most effective and trusted local partners and, if appropriate, intermediaries. This recognizes that local CSOs might provide the greatest access to community leaders, but may lack the technical capabilities to be able to qualify to receive funds directly from donors. Participants recognized that intermediary partners such as international NGOs can provide increased assurance and help build the capacities of local NGOs.

26. A third lesson/challenge identified focused on labeling, with participants recognizing that donors need to be cautious of how to "badge, classify, and publically present" some PVE work. In some cases, the term "radicalization" is used instead of "violent extremism" and in others, PVE work is embedded into larger social cohesion, youth engagement, or peacebuilding work, with nary a mention of either "violent extremism" or "radicalization". In some instances, the donor will avoid publicly associating itself with the program it is sponsoring, recognizing the need to avoid putting implementing organizations and targeted populations at risks.

27. Participants identified the need for rigorous analysis to inform PVE, noting that absent such analysis PVE interventions may not adequately address the drivers of radicalization or otherwise show little positive impact. It is often difficult to gain a strong understanding of the local context that tests assumptions of PVE and adequately considers gendered approaches, as well as the different local, regional, and global drivers and participants noted that undertaking the appropriate analysis can be time consuming, expensive, and difficult (e.g., given the security situation). Participants therefore underscored the importance of targeted sharing of research findings, including with partner governments as this could influence policy and programming choices beyond the narrow project to which the research was originally linked. Participants also underscored how drivers are both local and transnational and thus there is a need to look beyond the usual country-focused approach of development agencies.

28. In addition, participants cautioned against over-emphasizing ideology as a key driver of violent extremism (and conflict more broadly). The growing body of research on drivers and analysis of violent extremism and broader conflict dynamics reveal that the principal triggers include economic inequality and lack of educational opportunity, previous exposure to violence (and desire for revenge), sense of injustice, or poor governance. Ideology, on the other hand, is generally a secondary response to political and identity-based violence.

29. Participants also highlighted the ongoing challenge around monitoring and evaluation and attesting causation. Building in M&E beginning, and testing throughout the life of a project is important, but it is also time consuming and costly. Further, the national and regional survey instruments measuring attitudes to violent extremism that exist are often insufficiently granular to provide meaningful program data. Moreover, some local partners lack the capacity to conduct pre- and post-intervention studies and security concerns or restrictions can impede access to programming locations.

30. Nevertheless, donors continue to prioritize improving M&E methods and more broadly to help improve the evidence base for PVE. For example, Australia is working with the Asia Foundation to develop guidance on how to measure perceptions of violent extremism and how they are changing through PVE interventions. This guidance will help aid agencies and their implementing partners use funding for surveys more effectively – whether to assess national attitudinal trends or evaluate project-specific results.

31. Participants highlighted how the focus of current M&E efforts, which are often focused on the individual program and geared toward trying to demonstrate 100% success, may be misguided. Some argued that the search for better data on what “works” in order to justify PVE spending is too narrowly focused and does not take into account the need to expect some failure in field where it remains difficult to demonstrate the impact of an isolated program. Some asserted that consideration should be given to adopting a broader or macro approach to M&E, including by measuring the overall resilience of the community to violent extremism and looking at the impact that a wide range of programs and policy have on levels of resilience in a particular community.

32. Additionally, participants debated whether it was necessary to re-examine existing theories of change of development programs focused on PVE, given shifts in use of terms, audiences, violent extremism dynamics, and target populations since the creation of many programming guides. As an example, USAID is reviewing its 2011 “Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency” to see if its original hypothesis about countering drivers continues to hold and DFID is undertaking a similar review.

33. The challenge that development agencies face in supporting programs focused on reintegrating and rehabilitating “foreign terrorist fighters” or other violent extremists was highlighted as especially complex given the legal restrictions that can prohibit support to terrorists and ambiguity surrounding the status of those returning from having traveled to Iraq and Syria, specifically.

34. A final lesson learned/challenge discussed centered on the need to work more effectively at the global level to integrate PVE and related development efforts and frameworks, building on the structures that already exist, including the SDG16 framework and the PVE community of practice.

Session III: Breaking Down the Security-Development Divide – Lessons Learned from Peacebuilding NGOs and Other Non-Governmental Partners in Integrating PVE into Traditional Peacebuilding or Other Development Work

35. Participants enumerated some of the ways in which peacebuilding NGOs in particular are involved in PVE. These include: a) prevention, e.g., programs focused on the drivers, youth empowerment; b) disengagement; c) enabling effective government responses, and d) creating platforms for pluralist, positive, narratives. Some participants asked whether peacebuilding NGOs should develop PVE-focused programs or simply expand their conflict prevention and peacebuilding portfolios, noting that the vast majority of violent extremism exists in situations of violent conflict. The related point was made that there is a need to provide greater conceptual clarity to differentiate PVE and broader humanitarian and peacebuilding work. This challenge was illustrated by the observation that the root causes of violent extremism are often talked about in the same way as the root causes of instability on the ground. Additionally, the point was made that conversations around PVE can color the conception of the problem in countries where they work, which can lead to too much of an emphasis on violent extremism.

36. Participants highlighted how there are too few opportunities for NGO and private sector implementers of donor-funded PVE projects to have frank conversations with the funder, with most conversations focused on the technical aspects of the project. There need to be more conversations and sharing of analysis between donors and implementers.

37. The dilemma of integrating PVE while maintaining the peacebuilding NGOs' traditional role as a conduit for engaging communities most vulnerable to producing violent extremism needs to be resolved. Emphasizing the relationship-based nature of the peacebuilding process, some questioned how best to facilitate the relationships needed for effective PVE work while remaining impartial. Others queried whether some development actors are too reluctant to acknowledge the enemy (e.g., the violent extremists) at the macro-level.

38. Participants recognized that PVE increases security risks for peacebuilding and other non-government development organizations and the need to mitigate them. They identified the additional problem of the security of information being at risk due as PVE donors often demand microanalysis, which can involve gathering information from trusted local community partners who may not want to see this information shared with governments. This can put peacebuilding organizations in the position of potentially compromising their ability to operate in-country to accommodate this.

39. The point was made that NGOs should realize that their PVE impact cannot hope to match government contributions in terms of scale, but must rather focus on small acts with big returns. It was also noted that “scaling” is not being talked about in the right ways. Different funding levels require different levels of expertise, and small, local programs may be better situated to accomplish the necessary work.

40. Particularly given the growing number of actors in the PVE field, including increasing numbers from the development sector, participants underscored the need to elaborate a more integrated (and less fragmented) approach to problem diagnosis, programmatic and policy response, and M&E. Participants stressed that the goal should be to arrive at a shared understanding of the drivers of violent extremism in a specific context, what interventions are needed to address them, and which actor should be responsible for funding or implementing each of them. This integrated approach, which should include involvement from the host government, could be realized at a number of different, reinforcing levels (e.g., country and regional). Participants suggested considering either the use of a “basket fund” (although the challengers to operationalizing such a fund were highlighted), where donor resources are pooled and subject to joint decision-making, based on joint analysis and monitoring or donors making separate contributions under the framework of a partner strategy (in the PVE context this could be a national PVE action plan).

41. Given the scope of the challenge, participants recommended first developing a pilot initiative to try to overcome it. This pursuit of a more integrated approach to PVE problem diagnosis and solution development could be driven by a group of donors and linked to ongoing efforts to support the development of national PVE action plans one or two countries, where there is a receptive host government.