



Workshop on Multi-Disciplinary Thinking and Innovative Action: Collaboration Around the P/CVE Agenda

Summary¹

Oxford University
20-21 June 2018

Overview

On 20-21 June 2018, the [Prevention Project: Organizing Against Violent Extremism²](#) (Prevention Project) and the [Royal United Services Institute](#) (RUSI) hosted a workshop at the [Department of Politics and International Relations](#) (DPIR), University of Oxford, on *Multi-Disciplinary Thinking and Innovative Action: Collaboration around the P/CVE Agenda*. The event convened a group of experts from diverse fields, including mental health, urban planning, democracy promotion, human rights, peacebuilding, neuroscience, gang violence, comedy, social entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, and law enforcement. The objective was to reflect on the existing global preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE)³ agenda and identify innovative approaches to maximize its impact long-term, including understanding what works to prevent and counter violent extremism, with a focus on local level actors and implications. Participants addressed key questions and explored seminal challenges in the P/CVE area. They agreed that innovations are not only critical to building trust and collaboration between government stakeholders (i.e., law enforcement and non-law enforcement and national, sub-national, and local government institutions) and between government and civil society, and within civil society, in order to sustain effective P/CVE efforts but also are inevitable in order to adapt to the ever-evolving landscape. The workshop discussions will inform a report on the state of the global P/CVE agenda that the Prevention Project and RUSI will present on the margins of the high-level opening of the 73rd UN General Assembly in late September 2018 in New York.

The event featured a series of short “Ted-Talk”-style presentations on a range of topics such as: *15 years and 4 lessons in 6 minutes Or The evolution of a Boston-based program to prevent violent extremism: Community Connect; The Dubai Effect: How can modern 'Muslim' cities provide an alternative vision for the future?; F.O.C.U.S. Toronto - Furthering Our Communities Uniting Services; Multi-Disciplinary Hubs: Challenges/Good Practices for Developing and Sustaining Them in the Developed and Developing World; Our Extremist Brains: A Social Neurobiological Approach to P/CVE; What makes a*

¹ The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of all meeting sponsors, hosts, or participants.

² The Royal United Services Institute, along with the Global Center on Cooperative Security, are core partners of the Prevention Project.

³ The terms “countering violent extremism” (CVE) and “preventing violent extremism” (PVE) used interchangeably, with the former now being interpreted to include a heavy dose of preventative measures. The workshop summary uses “P/CVE”, an amalgamation of the terms, in order to highlight the centrality of prevention, while avoiding a terminological debate between CVE and PVE advocates.

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Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



city resilient to violent extremism? Future Proofing Cities for the 21st century: Migration and Urban Resilience; Resilience and Creativity; Fighting Terror with Comedy; CVE as a component of peacebuilding; Child Violence in Ivory Coast “Enfants Microbes”; Parliamentary Institutions and their potential role in passing legislation on P/CVE; A radical response to a radical problem: Women’s empowerment to prevent violent extremism; and Multi-disciplinary approaches to risk reduction, with some reference to radicalization and violent extremism.

This was followed by a series of breakout sessions on four topics designed to encourage participants to critically reflect on existing P/CVE practices and draw on their non-P/CVE expertise to develop practical recommendations for advancing P/CVE. The sessions were organized around four, inter-related questions: 1) “how can we counter the malevolent creativity of terrorist organizations?”; 2) “what makes a city resilient to violent extremism?”; 3) “what are the challenges to and good practices for developing and sustaining multi-agency and disciplinary local prevention hubs⁴ in both developed and developing world contexts?”; and 4) “are there lessons and opportunities from other fields (crime/gang prevention, conflict and peacebuilding) that can be translated across to P/CVE and to disengagement, deradicalization and reintegration”?

Throughout the discussions, participants stressed the need to overcome barriers in three areas in order to make more progress in developing sustainable and effective multi-disciplinary approaches to P/CVE:

- *coordination* (there are often multiple actors and activities addressing the same issue in the same space, which leads to duplications, gaps, and conflict between and among the stakeholders);
- *collaboration* (there are too few incentives to collaborate, which leads to competition between actors; and the barriers to cooperation are often high, which only reinforces silos and diminishes innovation with and cross-learning among the relevant disciplines; and
- *community* (too often “outsiders” are identifying the problems and designing and developing programs without active community participation in design and implementation).

Following the breakouts, participants identified innovations and ideas for strengthening multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approaches to P/CVE. Select recommendations include:

- *Don’t under-estimate the role that municipalities and urban planners play in P/CVE:* Cities should create more open spaces with universal access to reduce segregation, polarization, and perceptions of isolation and non-belonging and enable more safe spaces for people to discuss, and exchange different viewpoints, as limiting or restricting such spaces can lead people to relocate expressions of difference and vulnerability to private fora, which can generate an echo chamber and in turn generate violent extremism. Professional associations for urban planners and universities that teach urban planning should be encouraged to link P/CVE to training and education related to physical design of the urban environment and the skills needed to deliver urban security.
- *Invest more in multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) to “off-ramp” individuals away from the path of extremist violence:* MDTs should be based on trust with the respective communities; rely on solid analysis to develop a clear understand of the local context and a common understanding of risk, and represent varied backgrounds and skill sets, including, where appropriate, the local police.

⁴ Multi-agency or multi-disciplinary “hubs” or “tables” involve representatives from a diversity of (often) municipal agencies and local organizations -- police, education, health, social welfare, corrections – meeting on a regular basis for the identification, development, and delivery of interventions for individuals/families referred to the hub or table by a concerned member of the community.

- *Involve “creatives” more in P/CVE:* the P/CVE community should become more creative, including by drawing on poetry, drama (e.g., soap opera), comedy, which have potential for changing behavior.
- *Incentivize more multi-disciplinary initiatives and collaborations,* including by allocating 10% of all P/CVE funding to grantees that are new to the P/CVE space, making cross-disciplinary collaboration obligatory in requests for proposals, and prioritize network-building.
- *Don’t over-estimate the impact of “counter-narratives” and strategic communications in countering the terrorists’ narrative* and focus more attention on developing local, offline responses to actually address the needs that terrorists seek to exploit with their propaganda.
- *Don’t assume that the pathology is on the side of those who get involved in violent extremism and terrorism,* and that the policies of the mainstream do not contribute and should not have to change in so far as they are better directed to mitigating the extremism. Violent extremism may not also be a pathological reaction but sometimes an understandable, though not excusable, one to unacceptable external policy actions.

Opening Session

Presented by *The Prevention Project*

In the opening session, Eric Rosand, the Director and Founder of the Prevention Project provided a brief overview of the Project’s work to date and the current state of the global P/CVE agenda. He noted how the Project has spent the past two-plus years working with a wide range of partners, including governments (both national and local), multilateral organizations, and a diverse group of civil society actors around the globe. The overarching objective has been to promote locally-led, “whole of society” approaches to addressing the threat of violent extremism, ones that complement more traditional, security-focused counterterrorism efforts and rely, in part, on traditional development and peacebuilding tools. He emphasized that how the overarching focus has been on tracking the progress in advancing the P/CVE agenda, with a particular emphasis on the role of civil society organizations (CSO), municipal authorities, and other local actors in this effort and the steps that national and global actors should be taking to enable more locally-led action. This focus, he stressed, is driven by the changing nature of the threat and increased understanding of what motivates individuals to join violent extremist groups and that there are certain areas where local stakeholders are better-placed to act than their national or global counterparts. With respect to civil society specifically, he said that CSOs have proven to be strong allies in the design, development, and implementation of P/CVE programs and policies, including national action plans (NAPs), across the full-spectrum of P/CVE efforts, including both on- and offline, whether working at the community or individual level. However, he lamented that too many governments continue to view CSOs as adversaries rather than allies when it comes to P/CVE and that too often CSOs and other local actors are not being provided the necessary legal and political space, as well as resources, to maximize their contributions in this field.

Signs of progress

Mr. Rosand highlighted some recent progress in advancing P/CVE efforts. This includes:

- The growing number of national and sub-national P/CVE action plans and strategies that are inspired by the [UN PVE Plan of Action](#);
- Deepening involvement of development institutions such as the UN Development Programme and World Bank in P/CVE;
- Increased contextualized research on the drivers of violent extremism, coupled with growing interest in exploring what works and doesn’t to prevent and counter violent extremism;

- A dramatic rise in the number of locally-led P/CVE initiatives – by [one](#) estimate there are over 1,000 in some 100 countries, including 263 UN projects in over 80 UN member states;
- Heightened awareness of constructive ways of engaging youth and women play in pushing back against violent extremism and how these stakeholders need to be engaged, empowered, and listened to across all aspects of P/CVE policy-making and program-design; and
- A better understanding of the need to develop multi-disciplinary and multi-agency collaborations, networks, and initiatives to identify those possibly most vulnerable to or at the early stages of engaging with extremist violence to steer those individuals down a different, non-violent path.

Remaining Challenges

Mr. Rosand also flagged some of the challenges in the P/CVE arena that impede progress and will need to be overcome in order to maximize the impact of P/CVE efforts and sustain the agenda over the long-term. These include:

- Definitional and scope issues, including over the differentiation between “terrorism” and “violent extremism”, the lack of legal clarity around the term “violent extremism” let alone “P/CVE”, inconsistent use of terminology (e.g., are we talking about “PVE”, “CVE”, “P/CVE”, or “P/CVERLT”), the preference of some to focus on extremism without a direct link to violence, and concerns about focusing on a single (as opposed to all) form(s) of violent extremism;
- Lack of shared understanding on what are the drivers of violent extremism in a particular community, city, country or region;
- The fact that too much existing research is not widely translated or otherwise accessible (e.g., government-commissioned research is sometimes kept internal) or digestible by government policymakers or those involved in the design and/or implementation of P/CVE initiatives;
- Limited understanding on why some communities are more or less vulnerable than others to violent extremism;
- The need to ensure that P/CVE interventions are informed by evidence and not solely dictated by political considerations;
- The importance of striking the appropriate balance between efforts to counter the narrative or message of violent extremism and those focused on changing the conditions on the ground;
- Sensitivities around labelling and framing programs and the need to attract broad-based support from the relevant communities;
- Ensuring NAPs involve self-reflection by the government and involve a “whole of government” and “whole of society” approach, rather than reinforce bad practice;
- Striking the appropriate balance between national and local action in an environment where many capitals remain reluctant to relinquish their authorities to sub-national actors;
- The difficulty in quantifying the overall level of P/CVE funding, in parts due to the lack of both a common definition of P/CVE among donors and a consistent approach to applying a label to initiatives, given the political and other sensitivities associated with the P/CVE agenda; and
- The inherent difficulty in finding ways to measure the impact of initiatives that aim to prevent something from happening.

Mr. Rosand noted how the RUSI-led component of [phase II](#) of the Prevention Project is aimed at helping to address some of the M&E-related challenges and thus help increase support for P/CVE efforts.

Moderated/Presented by *Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)*

RUSI scholars shared updates on “Prevention Project II” (PPII), which is conducting a meta-level evaluation of P/CVE interventions to explore “what works and what does not” in the P/CVE space, interrogating the validity of underlying theories of change, and seeking to improve the evidence-base for preventive best practice. The research aims to address the following interlinked problems:

- There is little consensus regarding the effectiveness and impact of preventive programming: there are problems with data collection, the data quality and publicly available or accessible data.
- There is a tendency to rely on assumption-based logics that seem intuitive but require further testing.
- There is a concern that intervention models are not necessarily transferrable or applicable across different contexts.

The goal is to enhance the delivery of P/CVE programmes, developing and sharing a better understanding of P/CVE theory and practice across all stakeholders, including governments and civil society organisations (CSOs), to ensure a ‘whole of society’ approach to tackling violent extremism.

Preliminary Research Findings

They presented preliminary research findings, which, beyond the conceptual problems described by Mr Rosand, include:

- **The Problem of Attribution:**
Programmatic logic of an intervention can be incoherent as the path from delivery to impact on end-target groups is ‘long and winding’. Diagnosing and tracing these relationships is especially difficult in the context of upstream P/CVE activities, many of which are conducted on a small scale. The lack of short and manageable causal chains makes it tricky to exclude rival explanations for a specific result, particularly if concurrent interventions are operating in the same space. Intended outcomes in P/CVE also usually involve ‘nothing happening’, leaving evaluators reliant on an imperfect set of proxies to ‘prove a negative’. However, this is not unique to the field of P/CVE: peacebuilding and similar disciplines experience analogous limitations when it comes to ascertaining impact.
- **Indicators of Success:**
It is hard to formulate indicators of success that relate specific measures to impact on program-recipients, particularly when these metrics need to be linked to the specific operational context and identified factors contributing to violent extremism. Many expected outcomes in P/CVE involve changes in cognition and opinion, which are tough to rigorously track, especially when there is paucity of secure baselines for comparison.
- **Operational Challenges to Evaluation:**
Monitoring and evaluation processes are frequently time consuming and expensive. As a result, there is often little commercial appetite for allocating resources to it. Recipients of donor investment may be averse to highlighting ‘lessons learned’ if conclusions are based on their own failings, as it may jeopardize future funding opportunities. Short time-horizons and the immaturity of CVE projects also diminish the veracity of many assessments and sharing information is difficult when data is sensitive, securitized and heavily regulated.

- **The Lack of Evaluation at Outcome Level:**

P/CVE monitoring and evaluation regimes tend to concentrate on programmatic outputs, which are often impossible to generalize and offer no substantive assessment of impact. Where attempts have been made to map the effectiveness of projects, data is often anecdotal and descriptive or not focused on factors of violent extremism.

Assumptions

The team outlined a number of the problematic assumptions in the P/CVE space including:

- **Gender:**

Many programs are based on assumptions regarding women's ability to exert benign influence over young people and stop radicalization if they are empowered to do so, given that they are more inherently peaceful. Many schemes have therefore focused, for example, on mothers, on the premise they are better able to detect the signs of radicalization in their children. In some contexts, women can, and do, play a significant role in countering violent extremism. But many of these interventions risk prioritizing women's agency as 'mothers' above the variety of other roles they play in society, which can perpetuate disempowering and racialized stereotypes. Crucially, research also suggests that the mothers of children involved in violent activities tend to be more disillusioned and skeptical of preventative measures. There are often operational challenges in contexts where women are not viewed as having authoritative viewpoints. This has inspired a range of gender equality programs based on the assumption that progress on broader gender empowerment indicators can prevent radicalization to violence and ensure women can attain positions of respect. Conflating empowerment agendas with security-focused ones could also be counterproductive and risk undermining both agendas. Context, above all, is key.

- **Use of Faith Actors and Religious Institutions:**

The use of faith actors and religious institutions in P/CVE interventions often prioritizes the role of ideology and discourse in radicalization processes, assuming malign ideas are a principle factor precipitating violent extremism. Evidence instead suggests cognitive conversion and indoctrination can often be retrospective, occurring once individuals have subscribed to and joined a terrorist output. Disproportionately focusing on ideologically or religiously oriented initiatives could therefore overlook more important dynamics, or exacerbate structural and individual incentives driving recruitment.

- **Counter-Narratives:**

Counter-narratives similarly lack a fully articulated theory to underpin their impact, with many interventions assuming that the consumption of violent words leads to violent deeds; that counter-narratives can replace terrorist narratives; and that the threat of violent extremism can be mitigated through discourse. Responding to violent extremist narratives and its intended audience with specifically designed counter-narratives may fail to address why violent extremist rhetoric is 'appealing in the first place'. In contrast, alternative narratives and 'preventive communications' show more promise, drawing on experiences in development and peacebuilding. Issues of sourcing the right medium, message, and messenger are essential.

Methodology

The purpose of PPII is to help unpack these assumptions and build the evidence base of what works and in what context/s.

The first stage focuses on collecting evaluation and monitoring literature across different P/CVE interventions. This will include a mix of academic studies, policy papers and grey literature alongside evaluation material (public and private), which will then be classified through a rapid evidence assessment, creating a hierarchy to weight reliability and relevance. The literature review will be followed by a series of key informant interviews with practitioners, donors and associated stakeholders of P/CVE programs to help develop a granular understanding of their experiences, successes, failures and lessons learned. Three thematic areas will be prioritized during this second, more detailed analysis: counter-narratives/preventive communications, gender-centric programming, and the role of faith actors/religious institutions. Fieldwork will be the final strand of data gathering, adopting a case-study approach in multiple countries to explore pre-identified programs in each country.

Crucially, no project or organization will be publicly identified during the course of the research. The research will instead focus on intervention approaches drawing together the analysis from a range of projects and programs in different contexts.

PPII is expecting to generate a number of outputs:

- *Concrete P/CVE impact Assessments and Evaluation*: developing policy recommendations and evidence about what works, what doesn't, and in what context, to improve P/CVE programming.
- *An Annual Report on the 'State of P/CVE Globally'* to provide guidance to provide government and non-governmental actors with guidance on P/CVE programming and policymaking.
- *Evidence-Based Guidance* on how to best work together to ensure a 'whole of society' approach to P/CVE is provided to governments and civil society.

Breakout Sessions: Key Themes and Recommendations

1. Multi-agency/multi-disciplinary local prevention hubs

Certain multi-disciplinary and multi-agency intervention programs (including referral mechanisms) were discussed, including examples from Canada, Jordan, Lebanon, and the United States. Among the key inter-related questions considered were:

- Should these programs be singularly focused on P/CVE or include P/CVE as part of violence prevention?
- Is violent extremism sufficiently different from other forms of violence to justify exceptionalism (i.e., a stand-alone program)?
- How should these programs be developed in a context where there may be a lack of capacity within the relevant institutions and/or professions and trust with the community?
- How to ensure the necessary transparency? and
- What is the appropriate role for the local police in these programs?

Participants discussed key ingredients required for a successful program, including: 1) trust: establishing a strong relationship between MDTs and the respective communities; 2) knowledge: solid analysis to develop a clear understand of the local context and a common understanding of risk; and 3) diversity: representation of varied backgrounds and skill

sets on the MDT. The point was emphasized that the “wrap-around” (i.e., multi-disciplinary) approach involves increased focus on working with individuals and underscores that the issue is not a community-wide problem but a societal one manifested in certain individuals.

Participants shared some of the challenges in developing, implementing, and sustaining these programs. These include:

- Striking the balance between privacy and information sharing (e.g. particularly between non-law enforcement professionals and the police) and coordination among members of the team;
- Ensuring sustainable funding from the government (or other sources) and support from the relevant agencies represented on the team, as well as the community;
- Gaining trust from the concerned community, particularly where “securitization” has been an issue;
- The lack of data related to the referrals that can create barriers to inspiring public confidence; incentivizing participation from relevant agencies in the hub;
- Ensuring the participants in the MDTs have the necessary P/CVE expertise; and
- Incentivizing sustained participation from a diversity of actors, while avoiding “tokenistic” participation.

The trade-offs between a stand-alone P/CVE hub like the one in [Calgary](#) and one that integrates P/CVE into a broader violent prevention agenda were also highlighted. It was noted that hubs that cover all forms of “safeguarding” may be more likely to get traction from a wider swathe of the non-law enforcement community than a P/CVE-only hub. The point was made that the approach chosen needs to be informed by consultations with the concerned community to ensure that it is addressing their concerns and takes into account the capacities and existing work-loads of the relevant agencies involved. It was noted that the integrated model, such as the one developed in [Toronto](#), may allow for a more efficient use of resources than one dedicated to P/CVE, particularly in a context where there may not be a sufficient caseload to justify the allocation of resources to the single issue.

While taking note of the growing number of violence prevention or P/CVE-focused MDTs in the developed world, participants highlighted some of the difficulties in translating these approaches to less developed contexts. These include:

- Cultural barriers to seeking professional help, e.g., from mental health professionals or social workers;
- The need to involve and train informal actors, e.g., family members, particularly in societies that are more likely to support non-government-led, family-based interventions; and
- The historic lack of trust between the police and community members in certain societies.

2. Malevolent creativity

Discussions focused on three core questions: 1) How do terrorist groups use creativity, including emotional appeal and artistry? 2) Is it possible to disrupt that creative process? and 3) What can be done to generate more *benevolent* creativity?

Participants noted how effective terrorists have been appealing to a small audience with their emotionally appealing messages, to exploit and fill the needs of susceptible youth and others. They added that governments and the P/CVE community more broadly have tended to seek to disrupt the terrorists’ creative process at the end stage (and thus too late in the process) using counter-narratives and messages that focus too often on *telling* the audience what not to believe rather than *showing* a positive alternative. The response, it was argued, needs to focus more on the *showing* rather than the *telling*.

Participants discussed how the P/CVE community should become more creative, including by drawing on poetry, drama (including soap opera), comedy, which have potential for changing behavior. They noted that creative industries, beyond the advertising and communications firms, should add more of a P/CVE dimension to their work.

Participants noted the limitations of traditional “counter-narratives” or strategic communications, which are generally “boring” and too often are not designed to correlate to the individual needs, and thus are unlikely to counter narratives sufficiently. Continuing, they noted that one should not expect a terrorists’ message aimed at tapping into an individual’s sense of lack of belonging can be “countered” with a positive message around belonging. More attention needs to be given to developing local responses to actually fill the gap that the terrorists seek to exploit with their propaganda and the P/CVE community needs to get better at listening and responding – in particular in the off-line space – to the needs in specific, local contexts.

Participants underscored the need to avoid ideas, messages, and initiatives that are manufactured by external actors and invest more in identifying, building the capacity, and empowering local agents of change, including but not limited to civil society.

3. Building cities resilient to violent extremism

During this discussion participants focused on questions, including:

- What makes a city resilient to violent extremism?
- How do we measure resilience and what does a resilient city look like?
- What are some ways that public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be created and leveraged to support cities’ resilience against violent extremism?

Participants highlighted the need to create cities where citizens are less likely to be open to recruitment to violent extremism and less likely to become polarized following a terrorist incident.

They noted the important role that cities play in fostering belonging, strengthening trust in fellow citizens, and institutions, and ensuring equality before the law and thus deepening the involvement of local authorities in P/CVE moving forward. Participants considered the different dimensions of “belonging”, which can mean belonging to a neighborhood, city, or profession, with each one providing some level of protection against violent extremist recruitment, and the need to focus on the interplay among these different vectors.

Participants considered what makes a city “strong”. They cited criteria such as a city that adopts policies and approaches that are proportionate to the local risk profile, does not equate violent extremism with any one religious or ethnic group; tackles discrimination; advances inclusive messaging; and avoids stigmatization when developing and implementing P/CVE policies.

In terms of measuring resilience, it was suggested that one way to approach this was to use three criterion: 1) social bonding: what makes you feel part of a group; 2) social bridging: what makes you connect with other groups; and 3) social linking: what makes you connect with the different levels of government and society more broadly.

The importance of designing cities that foster belonging and trust in government was highlighted; it was noted that open spaces with universal access can reduce segregation, polarization, and perceptions of isolation and non-belonging. Increased collaboration between municipalities and the private sector to develop open spaces that bring communities

together was encouraged, with one participant stating that “if corporations are reliant on their communities for employees and customers they should shoulder more responsibility for building social cohesion”.

Participants discussed the importance of municipalities creating safe spaces for people to discuss, and exchange different viewpoints and how limiting or restricting such spaces can lead people to relocating expressions of difference and vulnerability to private spaces, which can in turn generate an echo chamber, which can feed into violent extremism. It was further noted how “integration” is not a silver bullet to addressing marginalization, but that the key is ensuring that all groups in a community or city find “equitable standing before the law.”

4. Lessons and opportunities from other fields

Lessons learned and opportunities from other fields, including crime and gang prevention and conflict and peacebuilding, that can be translated to P/CVE, including disengagement, deradicalization and reintegration efforts, were shared with the participants. For example, there are lessons from anti-gang work, including understanding why people join gangs and the risk factors linked to gang violence, that can help enrich our understanding of why young people become radicalized to violent extremism. They underscored exploring including a neuroscientific dimension to P/CVE research and program design, in particular in relation to monitoring and evaluation processes. More broadly, the point was made that there is need for more science-informed P/CVE programming and more P/CVE-informed science research. At the same time, it could be explored whether P/CVE research questions can be included in public and mental health research and vice versa. Moreover, donors should be supporting and incentivizing cross-disciplinary P/CVE research and collaboration, as well as to invite new industries and new disciplines into the P/CVE arena, including through the grant-making process.

Limited incentives for innovation and short time-horizons for P/CVE projects were cited as among the barriers to infusing more cross-disciplinary thinking and collaboration around P/CVE issues. If we hope to see more innovation in the P/CVE field, participants suggested the creation of spaces to fail in a field where there are at least as many questions as answers to the fundamental question of “what works”. There is a need to ensure M&E efforts allow more opportunities to reflect disagreement or negative outcomes and to map information about previous P/CVE failures for learning purposes. Participants noted that by creating such spaces and undertaking these mappings, P/CVE actors may become more willing to take the risks that will help generate much needed innovation.

Innovations and Ideas for Developing and Sustain Multi-Disciplinary and Multi-Agency P/CVE Approaches

Following the discussions in the break-out sessions, participants used the Pecha Kucha⁵ format to present their ideas for developing and implementing multi-disciplinary approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). A number of concrete recommendations relevant to the sessions’ themes were put forward. These include:

Multi-agency/multi-disciplinary local prevention hubs

- MDTs should not be driven by a single agency and rather requires representatives from a range of stakeholders with equal voice, with all agencies accountable to the MDT for their individual roles;
- Information-sharing processes need to be established and agreed upon before any MDT hub or table becomes operational;

⁵ Drawing its name from the Japanese term for ‘the sound of chit chat’, Pecha Kucha was devised in Tokyo in February 2003 as a venue for young designers to meet, network, exchange ideas and show their work in public. It rests on a presentation format that is based on a simple idea: 20 slides in 20 seconds for a total presentation time of 6 minutes and 40 seconds.

- When considering whether to develop an MDT in a fragile or conflict-affected state (or the developing world more broadly), there is a need to balance between the local needs and the feasible local institutional tools, interventions, and capacity more broadly;
- Agencies involved need to be relevant to the issues with the hub’s mandate and individual agencies should avoid becoming involved solely to exploit funding opportunities.

Malevolent Creativity:

- Avoid “knee-jerk” reactions, *e.g.*, relying too heavily on “counter-narratives” where there is little evidence to support the terrorists’ narrative or message as a central driver of violent extremism among the target audience.
- Figure out why violent extremist narratives work at the mechanistic level and for whom, relying on research, data collection and robust analysis;
- Isolate why a terrorist narrative works and then counter-act it, while remembering that countering a narrative will often require more than a slick video or other neatly packaged “counter-narrative”;
- Leverage available expertise from a cross-section of stakeholders, including the private sector, “formers”, and a diversity of social and traditional media outlets to identify what will be most effective in countering the terrorist narrative;
- P/CVE efforts should take into account that it is often extreme thinking, rather than extreme feelings, that are the drivers of extreme actions.
- Be prepared to work with a range of actors, including those with whom the relationship might be uncomfortable at first; and
- Include more emphasis on creative approaches in P/CVE programming and integrate such approaches into more traditional multi-disciplinary efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Building cities resilient to violent extremism

- More should be done to integrate P/CVE issues into existing resilience frameworks, city-level networks, and approaches and ensure they address upstream issues;
- Draw on understanding and knowledge about trust, bonding, and belonging as one seeks to build cities resilient to violent extremism;
- Consider ways to expand the concept of corporate social responsibility to include P/CVE as businesses look for ways to engage with communities;
- Integration is but one factor in understanding resilience; perhaps more important is access to justice and accountability before the law.

Lessons and opportunities from other fields

- Mainstream conflict and context analysis into P/CVE research, project design, and project delivery;
- Recognize limitations: projects may be successful in specific contexts, but do not translate elsewhere or might not be appropriate for upscaling;
- Avoid privileging the Executive Branch over other branches of government, parliament, civil society, and the private sector and thus risking undermining good governance;
- Adopt a participatory approach and include local feedback mechanisms for P/CVE interventions when evaluating “what works”;
- Reduce competition for funds and incentivize collaboration among CSOs, including through joint mappings and proposals, and leveraging existing and/or creating new CSO networks to facilitate the sharing of information;



- Allow the space for failure and the sharing of these experiences to encourage learning.

A roadmap to resilience

During this final session, a roadmap to strengthening multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approaches to P/CVE was set forth in order to overcome the coordination, collaboration, and community-related challenges identified during and discussed throughout the conference. This includes:

- Mapping and identifying the ‘right’ stakeholders and their capacities
 - Identifying what (e.g., programs) has been done before (including what’ has been deemed successful, what has not, and why); existing strengths and capacity gaps among the relevant stakeholders; and existing services and resources available to support such approaches.
- Partnering with communities
 - Listening and responding to the needs of the respective community;
 - Consulting widely across the relevant community;
 - Building on existing networks;
 - Not rushing the process.
- Including a robust M&E component that encourages innovation and is under-pinned by the “do no harm” principle.
- Incentivizing new initiatives and collaborations to help make multi-disciplinary approaches more achievable, including by allocating 10% of all P/CVE funding to grantees that are new to the P/CVE space, making cross-disciplinary collaboration obligatory in requests for proposals, and prioritizing network-building.