



Summary of Content

Workshop on the Development of National Strategies for Countering Violent Extremism

Abu Dhabi, 27-28 January 2014

1. *General Reflections on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and the Development of National Strategies*

- Violent extremism represents a transnational threat. By sharing good practice approaches to CVE (and lessons learned), including in the development of national strategies, countries can improve their own national security.
- It can be helpful to have a more holistic approach to CVE. Where resources allow, a national CVE strategy can be an effective tool as part of a wider counter-terrorism framework, which includes more traditional security approaches.
- In more challenging environments where a national strategy is unattainable at the present time, realistic first steps can include dialogue between Government and communities that are at risk for radicalization or recruitment; and inter-agency collaboration to agree shared objectives and joint work plans.
- There is a real appetite from the international communities to learn and share good practice and lessons learned in countering violent extremism. Hedayah and others can serve as effective link between governments, and between the governmental and non-governmental sector, to facilitate this flow of information.

2. *Common Observations from 2-day Workshop*

- **Added value of a comprehensive approach** – emphasis on embedding a CVE Strategy in the broader CT framework, on the international, national, regional as well as local level, while allowing for flexibility and learning.
- **Need for interagency collaboration** - between traditional law enforcement agencies and other parts of the government.
- **Focus should be on the international exchange of information** – given the trans-national nature of the violent extremist threat.
- **Importance of early intervention with emphasis on prevention when possible** - detection, identification and analysis of dynamic situations. Followed by counter-radicalization or de-radicalization if the previous fails.
- **Complexity of applying monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to CVE programming and activities** – need to identify timeframe, metrics, and indicators, drawing on other disciplines and allowing for flexibility.
- **Support for a robust empirical body of research and analysis** – CVE is a new field and needs a better understanding of the situation, and dedicated research funding.
- **Use of the internet by those espousing use of violence** – remains a major challenge.



- **Government may not always be the most effective messenger** - emphasis should be on empowering influential figures within civil society in certain areas.
- **Need for trust building between government and communities at risk of radicalization and recruitment** - including an emphasis on cooperation and dialogue with civil society.
- **Strategy implementation is often a great challenge** - particularly given capacity limitations in terms of personnel, financial resources and institutional capacities.
- **Need to tailor interventions at the grass-roots level with local implementation** - by promoting local projects and networks.
- **There is a need to continue to evolve National CVE Strategies** - to adapt to the changing threat.
- **There should be sector-specific strategies** - to address particular CVE challenges (e.g. private sector, education sector, health sector).
- **The private sector should be important partners in communications strategies** - allowing governments to tap into their expertise on marketing and branding.

3. Potential Next Steps:

The following suggestions were made by meeting participants as potential next steps and follow-up activities.

- Meetings where international actors in CVE come together to share good practices and lessons learned are important to developing and fine-tuning National CVE Strategies, and should therefore continue on a regular basis.
- Hedayah and others can be facilitators for coordinating international actors to address the transnational threat of violent extremism;
- Independent bodies such as Hedayah can foster the development of knowledge, and play a role, upon request and in partnership with countries. They could assess the opportunities and risks for national CVE strategies and facilitate technical assistance between countries that have a need to develop a strategy and countries that have potential solutions to those needs.
- Methods for how national strategies can be adapted to apply to new situations and environments should be explored.
- There should be training for international CVE actors on the methodology of CVE approaches and CVE strategy development.
- A series of meetings on specific elements of National CVE Strategies should be held, bringing together the professionals and practitioners working in that area. Countries could focus on the particular topics that are most relevant to them, for example on developing prison de-radicalization strategies, communications strategies, education strategies etc.
- A series of regional meetings on CVE strategies should be held, for countries from the same region that may have similar experiences and challenges.
- It would be particularly useful to hold a workshop where countries focus on sharing their challenges, failures and lessons learned.