U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

POLICY FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

APRIL 2020

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

"There are far more terrorists today than there were on 9/11. It is imperative that the United States and the international community find more effective ways to both halt violent extremism's expansion, and ultimately to eliminate the drivers and root causes of this phenomenon. While we have made significant strides against terrorism, today I would argue the biggest deficit we have is not on the countering side, but on the preventing side."

- Lieutenant General Michael K. Nagata, former Director of Strategic Operations and Planning of the National Counterterrorism Center

Armed police officers stand guard outside the Al Noor Mosque during Friday prayers in Christchurch, New Zealand, ahead of the holy month of Ramadan, just a few weeks after a white supremacist killed 51 worshipers during Friday prayers on March 15, 2019. The increasing visibility and destructiveness of racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism (REMVE) is a serious concern.
Photo credit: Sanka Vidanagama, AFP

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◢ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A working group led by Julie Werbel and Kyle Beaulieu from the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) produced USAID's new Policy for Countering Violent Extremism Through Development Assistance, nearly ten years after publication of the Agency's original countering violent extremism (CVE) Policy, The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency.

The new CVE Policy benefited significantly from the dedicated collaboration and support provided by Matt Carpenter, Julia Drude, Stephanie Flamenbaum, Erica Frendach, Rachel Goldberg, Julie Lelek, Angela Martin, Kaley Nash, Irena Sargsyan, Patty Vargas, and the Agency's CVE Coordinator, Rob Jenkins.

The new CVE Policy is the result of exhaustive collaboration across USAID's bureaus, independent offices, and Missions, through the auspices of the Agency's CVE Sector Council, to include collaboration from David Alpher, Heather Britt, Melinda Campos, Maria Covalenco-Tietz, Vanita Datta, Elizabeth Dooghan, Danielle Dukowicz, Kipp Efinger, Tonya Giannoni, Susan Gearon, Todd Goehler, Angela Greenewald, Kelly Hall, Jennifer Hill, Jennifer Hawkins, Marta Herrera, David Hunsicker, Patrick Issa, Leah Kaplan, Richard Kimball, Jennifer Kuzara, John Langlois, Kevin Melton, Mike McCabe, Stephanie Molina, Linda Nico, Russell Porter, Sara Reckless, Aaron Roesch, Dale Skoric, Idriss Touijier, Brian Vogt, Nina Weisenhorn, Tristan Willman, and Sarah Wines.

The new Policy underwent rigorous consultations with key external stakeholders, including U.S. Government counterparts in the Departments of State and Defense, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the National Security Council, as well as bilateral and multilateral donors, think-tanks, the academic community, and numerous implementing partners. USAID is deeply grateful to our external partners for their tremendous support and collaboration, and we look forward to working with you to implement the new Policy.

USAID is proud to present this new CVE Policy.

Throughout this Policy we have attempted to illustrate our Agency's CVE work while ensuring we protect our partners and the communities we work with by de-identifying photos, given the very real threat many of our partners face from violent extremists.
Photo credit: USAID/OTI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s investments in countering violent extremism (CVE) serve U.S. national security interests by supporting peace, prosperity, and stability overseas and reducing threats to Americans at home and abroad. In the ten years since USAID issued The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency, the challenges posed by violent extremism have evolved, and the ability of violent extremist organizations (VEOs) to do harm has increased. New evidence that highlights what works to prevent or counter ideologically motivated violence and lessons-learned from our past programming have helped USAID to adapt to the changing context. In particular, USAID and other donors now understand that programming designed to strengthen and influence local institutions and communities systemically is likely to have a greater effect on radicalization and recruitment to violence than programming designed to address a particular driver. In keeping with the objectives outlined in the USAID Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance, this Policy provides updated guidance to ensure that USAID designs CVE programs that are focused, tailored, and measurable, and delivers them in a manner that supports the Journeys to Self-Reliance in our partner countries. [1]

As part of USAID's collective efforts to prevent or counter violent extremism and encourage peace in support of national governments, local authorities, and civil society partners, we will do the following:

- Build a community of partners with the commitment and capacity to prevent and counter violent extremism in their own countries and regions;

- Engage where U.S. development assistance can have a meaningful impact; and

- Anticipate how violent extremism will evolve and adjust programming accordingly.

The purpose of USAID's CVE programming is to foster self-reliance in our partner countries to prevent and counter the violent extremist challenges that threaten to derail their development. USAID will design our programs to accomplish the following:

1. Reduce the risk of recruitment into, and support for, violent extremism; and

2. Build the capacity and commitment of our partners in government, civil society, youth organizations, and the private sector to prevent and counter the violent extremist threats they face.

USAID will tailor our CVE programming to local violent extremist contexts and threats in ways that take account of broader regional and transnational dynamics. We will measure our investments through CVE-specific monitoring and evaluation, strive to incorporate new learning as it emerges, and adapt our programs accordingly. This Policy reiterates the importance of coordinating targeted CVE investments with other U.S. foreign-policy, security, and development objectives to achieve meaningful and sustainable impact.

As the U.S. Government lead implementer of development and humanitarian policy and programming, USAID protects U.S. national security by limiting the reach and impact of VEOs and strengthening the resilience of local partners.

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[1] *USAID,* Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance, *Washington, D.C., 2019.*

KEY TERMS

Violent Extremism refers to advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated violence to further social, economic, political, or religious objectives. [4]

Countering Violent Extremism refers to proactive actions to preempt or disrupt efforts by violent extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence, and to address specific factors that facilitate recruitment and radicalization to violence. CVE encompasses policies and activities to increase peaceful options for political, economic, and social engagement available to communities and local governments, and their abilities to act on them. [5]

Radicalization is a process by which a person or group adopts extreme ideas or beliefs and comes to view violence as a justified means to advance them. While most people who adopt radical views will never use violence, those who do often adopt ideologies that rationalize their actions. [6]

A mound of ashes remains following an attack on a village in northern Mozambique by a violent extremist group.
Photo credit: Marco Longari, AFP

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[4] *Updated from USAID,* The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Policy, *Washington, D.C., 2011.*

[5] *Updated from* Department of State & USAID Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism, *Washington, D.C., 2016.*

[6] *USAID, Radicalization Revisited: Jihad 4.0 and CVE Programming, Washington, D.C., 2016.*

INTRODUCTION

Reports of violence and atrocities perpetrated by violent extremists have increased in nearly every corner of the globe. More countries than ever endure acts of terrorism from a growing array of VEOs. The toll of ideologically motivated violence—in lives lost, communities destroyed, populations displaced, and resources expended—is an onerous burden that falls heavily on lower- and middle-income countries. USAID has built a significant base of evidence to demonstrate that tailored development assistance can reduce the risks of violence proactively.

In 2011, USAID issued one of the world's first formal development policies on CVE. Grounded in empirical research and practical experience, The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Policy focused the Agency's programming on the factors that drive extremism.[2] Since then, through in-depth research, analysis, and worldwide engagement, USAID has added significantly to our store of knowledge about how, when, and why violent extremism manifests itself and the ways in which development assistance can have the greatest impact. These lessons align with the vision articulated in the 2019 USAID Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance, which reorients our work toward encouraging commitment and building capacity in partner countries across all levels—individuals, communities, and governing institutions—so they can eventually solve their development challenges without U.S. assistance. [3]

The purpose of USAID's CVE programming is to foster the self-reliance of communities in partner countries to prevent and counter the violent extremist challenges that threaten to derail their development. USAID will design our programs to accomplish the following:

1. **Reduce the risk of recruitment into, and support for, violent extremism; and**

2. **Build the capacity and commitment of our partners in government, civil society, and the private sector to prevent and counter the violent extremist threats they face.**

To accomplish these goals, USAID works alongside our partners to strengthen local institutions and whole-of-society ownership.

Young auto mechanics practice their skills as part of USAID's positive youth development approach, which provides education, life skills, and other services to youth from marginalized communities where the pull of legitimate institutions is weak and extremist recruitment cells are active. Photo credit: USAID/Morocco

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[2] USAID, The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Policy, Washington, D.C., 2011.

[3] USAID, Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance, Washington, D.C., 2019.

The following principles, informed by the existing knowledge base as well as USAID's broader experience with stabilization and preventing conflict and violence, will drive USAID's CVE programming:

- **CVE interventions must be focused, tailored, and measurable.** USAID will set clear CVE objectives, design a focused set of interventions that account for complexity and uncertainty, and evaluate progress and impact systematically. Contextual analyses of the dynamics that enable or mitigate violent extremism will underpin all of our projects.

- **CVE programming must be part of a larger, coordinated strategy to prevent conflict.** USAID's CVE programs will use targeted development tools to affect an identified or emerging problem with violent extremism. CVE activities should nest within broader multi-sectoral development strategies to address political marginalization, weak governance, conflict, fragile social cohesion, threats to religious freedom, reduced economic and educational opportunities, and other structural conditions that lead to the spread of violent extremism.

- **CVE programs must support and enhance the commitment, capacity, and interaction of local partners.** USAID recognizes that local actors at all levels of society—government institutions, civil society, customary authorities, religious leaders, women's groups, youth organizations, the private sector, and communities—must lead their own CVE efforts. USAID will promote local ownership by supporting credible stakeholders who have legitimacy among program beneficiaries in the design, coordination, and implementation of our CVE programs.

- **USAID must ensure appropriate coordination and burden-sharing within the U.S. Government (USG), and with other donors.** A core tenet of all USAID's programming is to collaborate with

Photo credit: Brendan Hoffman

Peace activists lead their group to win a seed grant in a forum co-sponsored by USAID for their peacebuilding project in their home city." Photo credit: USAID/Philippines

international stakeholders and the USG interagency to increase efficiency and accountability, reduce duplication, and leverage our investments. We will ground our partnerships in international accords, such as resolutions of the United Nations (UN) Security Council; U.S. strategies, such as the National Security Strategy, the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy, the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, and the Stabilization Assistance Review; and country-level priorities as articulated in their national or subnational CVE strategies or visions.

- **CVE programs must be conflict-sensitive.** Violent extremism most often arises in conflict-affected and fragile states. USAID will consider the relationship between CVE, fragility, and violent conflict and will design, manage, and monitor programming to minimize unintended consequences and maximize positive outcomes. The Agency will be vigilant in those places where violent extremism and other forms of violence, state repression, and related governance failures, crime, and mass atrocity mutually influence one another, or where stove-piped interventions might inadvertently do harm.

- **CVE programs must be flexible, agile, and adaptive.** CVE is a complex and evolving problem that requires continuous learning and adaptation. USAID will specifically tailor our CVE programming to the local socioeconomic, cultural, and political environment; scale up successful approaches to sustain results; and discontinue ineffective investments. The Agency will pilot new methods of collaboration and expand our work with local partners. We will encourage informed risk-taking and experimentation to ensure our CVE investments have a measurable impact over the long term.

- **USAID will use transnational strategies whenever necessary.** CVE programs are most effective when they are tailored and focused, often at a hyper-local level. However, because the dynamics that drive or sustain violent extremism cross national boundaries, USAID will also explore and reinforce appropriate opportunities for regional coordination, cooperation, and information-sharing.

OUR KNOWLEDGE BASE

In the years since USAID issued its first CVE Policy, the Agency has remained committed to our original goal: to design and implement effective, evidence-based development programming while systematically learning from, and adapting, our approaches. Our work aims to transform attitudes, behaviors, and institutions to make them more prosocial and peaceful. The following lessons continue to inform our knowledge base, shape our programming decisions, and guide our thinking on how to reduce vulnerability to recruitment and support for violent extremism and instead foster self-reliance in our partner countries.

A Dynamic Approach to Risk-Reduction.

Over the last decade, USAID has shifted our programming from directly countering specific grievances to fostering the resilience, responsiveness, and risk-management of our local partners. An understanding of the drivers of violent extremism—such as the structural "push" factors and the highly personalized "pull" factors detailed in the 2011 Policy and associated research[7] — is still fundamental to reducing risk, as they shape the form that radicalization and recruitment take with different communities in different contexts. Effectively reducing risk, however, requires a recognition that these factors do not exist in isolation; rather, they constitute part of a dynamic process that can be influenced or interrupted. By adopting a systems approach and focusing on the interaction among VEOs, their target populations, and other stakeholders, USAID is better-positioned to affect the larger context in which VEOs operate.

Photo credit: USAID/OTI Macedonia

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[7] *Guilain Denoeux with Lynn Carter, Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism, USAID, Washington, D.C., 2009.*

As a rule, USAID's CVE programs begin with an analysis of the interplay among local grievances, key influencers, mobilizing factors, external forces, violence levels, and potential triggering events[8] to determine how VEOs exploit their operating environments and intertwine with local conflict dynamics. Mapping vulnerabilities against exposure to VEOs helps isolate risks and identify which structures, institutions, or interlocutors can affect the dynamics of violent extremism positively.[9]

Mobilizing and Empowering Communities is a Critical Component of Capacity-building

USAID programming to prevent violence, particularly in CVE, has shown that interventions are more effective when we involve local communities directly in setting priorities and implementing programs. As a result, influential community, private-sector, diaspora, and religious leaders, youth, women, and people with disabilities can contribute significantly to building local trust and resilience and disseminating narratives that emphasize peaceful coexistence.

USAID's risk-reduction programs address the conditions conducive to violent extremism, reduce the vulnerabilities of at-risk groups, and/or support the disengagement and reintegration of individuals formerly affiliated with VEOs. Because VEOs generally gain traction in conflict-affected or authoritarian countries where government institutions have been hollowed out and state-society relationships are fractured, the resulting CVE programs must address structural factors and community- or even country-wide dynamics as well as individual pathways. In West Africa, for example, USAID blends systems-level investments in the broader enabling environment with intensive, community-level programming in limited geographic zones at immediate risk of the influence of VEOs.[10]

Harnessing the Positive Power of Young People

VEOs disproportionately target for recruitment children and young people ages ten to 29. Youth are vulnerable to recruitment thanks to a complex mix of mutually reinforcing factors, such as discrimination, exposure to violence, social norms around gender, and access to technology, all of which the complexities of adolescent/youth development compound. A tailored approach to those most at risk is necessary to interrupt specific recruitment methods.

However, the vast majority of youth are not at risk. Instead, they engage actively in their communities and countries to prevent violence and promote peace. USAID and our partners have identified evidence that links approaches in positive youth development to improved outcomes and resiliencies for youth. Building a sense of agency, resilience, and cohesion can increase the engagement of youth and reduce their susceptibility to violent extremism. An evaluation of the USAID-funded Somalia Youth Leadership Initiative, for example, found that a combination of increased educational and civic-engagement opportunities collectively lowered young people's support for, and participation in, political violence.

See, USAID, Promising Practices in Engaging Youth in Peace and Security and P/CVE, 2017.

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[8] *Triggering events include, for example, experiencing abuse at the hands of security forces or witnessing the murder, mistreatment, or imprisonment of others.*

[9] *See, for example, USAID, Conflict Assessment Framework, Version 2.0, USAID, Washington, D.C., 2012, or the U.S. Department of State and USAID, Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework, Washington, D.C., 2008.*

[10] *USAID's risk-reduction approach builds on evidence from the World Health Organization related to primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention (see, for example, Violence Prevention: An Invitation) and on approaches advanced by the Global Counterterrorism Foundation (GCTF) Life Cycle of Radicalization to Violence as well our own field work in conflict and violence prevention.*

Bolstering the Resilience of Local Peace-Building Systems through Capacity-Building and Community-Mobilization

Whether and how radicalization or recruitment to violence occurs depends on the resilience of individuals, groups, societies, and institutions. In addition to systems-mapping for risk-reduction, USAID increasingly uses a systems lens to build capacity and commitment at the national, local, and community levels. In the Republic of Kenya, USAID worked with national and local counterparts to energize widespread support for county-level CVE action plans that nest under the national CVE strategy. The national commitment to incorporate civil-society and community-level partners into this planning helped to build trust, increase information-sharing, and limit radicalization among disaffected community members in areas vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists. USAID's investments helped increase knowledge and skills among at-risk populations and empowered local, sustainable CVE networks to take action to address violent extremism.

Building resilient and inclusive local institutions and communities requires engagement with an array of stakeholders and influencers across multiple levels. [11] In the Republic of Niger, for example, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) worked with 12 civil-society leaders in the Southern Diffa region to create the Nalewa Mada network to enhance the resilience of local leaders to Boko Haram (BH) and the so-called Islamic State-West Africa (ISIS-WA); today, the network includes more than 300 religious, traditional, youth, and women leadership in 30 villages. Although conflict continues to affect the region, communities and local authorities recognize the network as a key contributor to efforts to promote peace and reconciliation. In addition to mounting its own early-warning system, Nalewa Mada conducts local-level projects, including preparing communities for the reintegration of former BH/ISIS-WA defectors, improving livelihoods through temporary employment, and mediating community disputes.

Messages of peace outside of a youth-focused community center of one of USAID's flagship CVE programs, which has worked with over 30,000 marginalized and vulnerable youth. After seven years of USAID's investment in capacity-building, the program is being transitioned over to the partner government and civil society organizations, ensuring sustainability and illustrating the value of the Journey to Self-Reliance.
Photo credit: Kyle Beaulieu

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[11] *USAID, Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development, Washington, D.C., 2014.*

Telling a Different Story

Violent extremists employ the same strategies and tools as marketers. Both online and in person, they target and test content and build an engaged audience by advancing specific "calls to action" across platforms. Challenging these messages is a critical component of risk-reduction strategies. But emerging research suggests that the neurological impact of marginalization and exclusion strengthens belief in a cause to a point where simple counter messages might not have impact. Instead, communication strategies should convey accessible alternatives that dilute the potency of violent extremists' arguments while creating positive identities, opportunities for engagement, and expressions of agency. Marrying alternative narratives with activities designed to promote social and behavioral change can be an important means of interrupting the cognitive biases that underpin support for violent extremism.

Often, the drivers of violent extremism are rooted less in the inability of the state to deliver basic social services than in the manner in which the state distributes them, especially if it generates perceptions of inequality, exclusion, or discrimination. Because of this, USAID should provide assistance to public institutions only when governments demonstrate their commitment to reverse the patterns of poor governance that entrench the injustice, corruption, inequality, and exclusion that so often enable violent extremism, and instead adopt policies, norms, and values that guarantee citizens' security, human rights, and justice. Because credibility and trust, particularly of public institutions, is critical to successful CVE interventions, USAID seeks government partners whom populations view as legitimate.

Ultimately, understanding how actors interact, the roles they play, and the relationships that influence them is key to both effective risk-reduction and sustainable CVE capacity-building.

A man stands in a stadium in Ouagadougou where more than 10,000 people gathered to express their support for the defense and security forces of Burkina Faso, who have faced deadly and recurrent attacks from violent extremist groups since 2015.
Photo credit: Olympia de Maismont, AFP

POLICY GUIDANCE

The principles articulated in this document will drive USAID's decision-making and investments in CVE programming designed to help governments and communities in our partner countries prevent and counter violent extremism. These principles will ensure USAID's programs are responsive, adaptive, and contextualized so as to contribute to sustainable outcomes.

Develop CVE-specific interventions that are focused, tailored, and measurable. CVE programs that specifically **focus** on violent extremism differ from those programs that work in areas affected by violent extremism and related instability. Traditional development programs are not CVE activities simply because they work in marginalized areas or zones of violent extremist influence or presence, or with similar risk groups. USAID's CVE programming must have a specific objective to prevent or interrupt the spread of violent extremism.

USAID will conduct CVE-specific assessments to identify the factors that drive support for violent extremism; the means and motives of the key actors and organizations that mobilize extremists; and the contexts in which recruitment and radicalization occur. Resulting CVE programs will strengthen areas of resistance and resilience at the national, local, and community levels.

USAID's Operating Units (OUs) should **tailor** CVE programs to address concrete problems in specific geographic region(s), and/or with specific populations exposed to violent extremism or vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization to violence. A tailored approach is not short-term: sustained engagement is critical to generating change in perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and social networks that are fundamental to reducing violent extremism.

Photo credit: Franc O'Malley/USAID/OTI Niger

"One of the lessons USAID has learned over the years is that it is often lo   l community grievances that are the main drivers of tension and violence. When competition for resources is intense and individuals or communities feel marginalized or aggrieved, it is essential that there are institutions and voices actively promoting dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation."

- Ambassador Mark Green, former Administrator of USAID

CVE programs should also be **measurable.** USAID will invest in rigorous, multi-method monitoring, evaluation, and learning to measure CVE-specific processes and outcomes. Improvements in CVE require evidence-based theories of change, with both targeted measurement strategies and a commitment to community-wide learning.[12] USAID will develop baseline and endline studies to determine the impact of our programming, as well as continuously refine methods to adapt and improve programmatic effectiveness. Metrics to gauge the effectiveness of CVE programming include changes in public attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to issues such as governance and government legitimacy; shifts in the state-societal relationship; community cohesion or inter-ethnic or cross-confessional reconciliation and cooperation; or the ability of governments and civil society to prevent, mitigate, and manage the threat of violent extremism. Because most CVE programs take place in environments characterized by uncertainty, USAID will employ a range of traditional, technological, and complexity-awareness methods to develop a more thorough understanding of how the Agency's programming affects violent extremism.

Coordinate CVE programming as part of a larger strategy to prevent conflict. Fragility, conflict, and violent extremism coexist and reinforce each other. USAID's CVE efforts will be most effective when they constitute part of a larger and layered peace-building strategy aimed at decreasing the risk of conflict, violence, atrocities, and instability; reducing vulnerability to related crises and shocks, including those related to climate; or decreasing the influence of malign actors. While CVE programs address specific factors in specific settings, other prevention and development efforts will inform and complement them.

Ensuring coherence among development priorities and programs, particularly in complex contexts, aligns with and supports the vision articulated in the Agency's Policy Framework. While the causes of violent extremism are complex, multifaceted, and often rooted in personal experience, members of VEOs consistently attribute their support for violence to feelings of injustice associated with a system perceived as unfairly biased against them. Marginalization, exclusion, corruption, or gender inequality can exacerbate these perceptions. Conducted alongside tailored CVE interventions, USAID's traditional development programs can help committed government, civil society, and private-sector partners counter these trends by building more-inclusive societies; improving citizen-responsive governance; and providing opportunities to increase the voice, agency, and economic empowerment of at-risk populations, women, and youth. Additionally, such programming can help increase social cohesion, reduce grievances, and provide the economic and educational benefits that amplify political and social improvements.

Incorporating CVE into a broader prevention strategy makes good development sense: The vast majority of terrorism-related deaths have occurred in countries that are experiencing some form of conflict, which, in turn, has generated unprecedented humanitarian crises.[13] In addition, geopolitical competition, political repression, and fragility affect the contexts in which violent extremism spreads, including in comparatively peaceful countries. Focused and targeted CVE programs will yield greater success when appropriately sequenced and layered within an inclusive diplomatic and development strategy.

Support and enhance the commitment, capacity, and interaction of local partners. The capacity to prevent or interrupt the spread of violent extremism strengthens the resilience of communities and creates opportunities for

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[12] *USAID, Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development, Washington, D.C., 2014.*
[13] *Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2018: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, 2018, p.42.*

collaboration and peace-building. USAID will design CVE programs with the explicit intent to strengthen partners in support of a locally determined CVE vision or plan.[14] Doing so requires engagement with a wide range of actors, including national and sub-national government institutions, civil society, customary and religious authorities and organizations, women's groups, educational institutions, communities and/or local populations. Sustainable engagement with youth organizations is important for youth-sensitive interventions. These whole-of-society solutions allow communities to move beyond purely securitized responses to address the multidimensional nature of violent extremism.

Disengagement and Reintegration (D&R)

Effective prevention includes efforts to interrupt and stop violent behavior, in part by helping former violent extremists and affiliates to re-enter society peacefully. As a result, the disengagement and reintegration of former foreign terrorist fighters, their affiliates, and locally-recruited populations constitutes a growing component of USAID's CVE portfolio. While these programs have much in common with their antecedent, the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants and child soldiers in post-conflict contexts, the complexity of the VEO problem has necessitated innovation and additional rigor related to legal and policy guidelines, eligibility criteria, and operational procedures. Initial programming results also suggest that community preparedness and willingness to receive returnees must be a central component of our reintegration efforts.

A man walks past graffiti that reads 'Peace is in our heart — FARC EP'. USAID has over three decades of experience in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) activities, working with many partners, to include Colombia, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka.
Photo credit: Luis Robayo, AFP

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[14] *USAID,* Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance, *Washington, D.C., 2019, p. 38.*

Recognizing that women and girls play multiple roles

In line with the objectives outlined in the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security and the U.S. Strategy to Support Women and Girls at Risk from Violent Extremism and Conflict, USAID-funded case studies found that women play far more varied roles in violent extremism than the usual stereotypes of victim or peaceful bystander. Women can serve as recruiters, sympathizers, perpetrators, and combatants in conflict, and as negotiators, peace-builders, and leaders in preventing and managing conflict. In addition, many women and girls experience gender-based violence at the hands of violent extremists, which has caused a need for psychosocial and medical treatment, including voluntary family planning. Programming to prevent or interrupt recruitment or radicalization to violence must address the different needs and priorities of both young women and men and create opportunities that capitalize on their strengths and contributions.

A chief from Garissa Township (right) dances with an all-woman musical troupe at the Garissa County CVE Action Plan Launch. Kenya NiWajibu Wetu (NIWETU) promotes inclusive CVE activities that bring together government officials with the communities that they serve." Photo credit: Hank Nelson/NIWETU

Ensure appropriate coordination and collaboration within the USG, and with other donors and sectors.
USAID will continue to engage with multilateral institutions, international and regional organizations, and other bilateral donors to influence their allocations of resources and programmatic decisions. Key international agreements, such as the UN Security Council Resolution on Youth Peace and Security or relevant U.S. laws and strategies, the Women, Peace, and Security Act and the Global Fragility Act,[15] provide vehicles for coordination and shared prioritization. When violent extremism arises from, or creates, complex crises, CVE strategies often require a mix of security and development responses. As a result, USAID will collaborate with military and law enforcement as allowable by law; peace-builders and mediators; and other USG Departments and Agencies mandated to prevent terrorism in the United States under the National Strategy for Counterterrorism.[16] In conflict contexts, USAID will work to ensure the alignment of donors along the continuum of relief to development. Doing so will ensure that multilateral investments are complementary and sustainable and minimize inefficiencies.

Design for sensitivity to conflict. Violent extremism does not exist in isolation; it emerges from the conditions and dynamics that shape a given environment. Violent extremism and related acts of terrorism are inextricable from conflict and state repression. As a result, USAID's programs must be vigilant to the unintended consequences of

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[15] Global Fragility Act, 2019
[16] Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, November 2019, p 2.

decisions that can affect conflict dynamics or cause harm. Because development projects become a part of the context in which they operate, they can change local relationships and power dynamics, empower some people, and potentially disempower others. Conflict-sensitive CVE programs will anticipate unintended consequences and capitalize on opportunities to build positive relationships and bridges. Understanding partners' motivations and building trust with local people are critical. For example, if host-country governments are seen as repressive, illegitimate, or biased, government-to-government partnerships will cause suspicion within communities. Frequent and timely contextual analyses that integrate gender considerations can help ensure projects deliver their intended results without doing harm, even as relationships and circumstances change.

Be flexible, agile, and adaptive. Most CVE activities take place in highly fluid, complex operating environments. Consistent with USAID's Acquisition and Assistance Strategy, [17] the Agency will maximize procurement mechanisms that take into account the need for flexibility, risk-management, adaptive management, and rapid response in these types of environments. Within the USG, USAID has unique capabilities to conduct expeditious field and network analyses and deliver tailored programs to ensure speed does not come at a cost of conflict-sensitivity.

Additionally, USAID will adopt an adaptive approach to CVE programming that could require a different risk posture and more intensive efforts in monitoring, evaluation, learning, and adaptation to redirect interventions where necessary.[18] Initial small investments allow for experimental approaches or testing new, non-traditional relationships, such as with diaspora groups, new and underutilized partners, or private-sector actors,[19] which could broaden USAID's reach and impact.

Use transnational strategies whenever necessary. While deeply rooted in national dysfunction and state fragility, violent extremism is also a regional and global phenomenon whose effects ripple worldwide through social media's instantaneous delivery of messages, tactics, and ideology. Neighboring states are susceptible to the spillover effects of violent extremism and conflict. In West Africa, for example, violent extremist ideology is a regional threat. To build resistance, USAID helps local communities and their leaders, civil-society organizations, communities of faith, national governments, and regional organizations to build relationships and strengthen coordination while simultaneously targeting at-risk populations at the local level.

A girl walks past graffiti that reads "For those who yearn to be free" in Tunisia.
Photo credit: USAID/OTI Tunisia

[17] *USAID, Acquisition and Assistance Strategy, Washington, D.C., 2018*
[18] *USAID, Risk Appetite Statement, Washington, DC, 2018.*
[19] *USAID, Private Sector Engagement Policy, Washington, DC, 2019.*

◢ CONCLUSION

This Policy provides the foundation and guidance for USAID's CVE programs. It affirms the importance of targeted and smart investments in development to address this critical challenge to the security and economic prosperity of the United States and its allies. The principles defined herein set the Agency's CVE engagement criteria and demonstrate our resolve to work alongside governments, local communities, civil society, youth organizations, the private sector, women, and leaders of all faiths to build capacity and foster resilience to violent extremist influences.

A boy walks by a wall covered with art in Afghanistan toward sunflowers.
Photo credit: Farshad Usyan, AFP

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Cover Photo: A member of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) looks out from a building at the frontline in Raqqa on Oct 16, 2017, as the Global Coalition-backed SDF fought to liberate the capital of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Photo: Bulent Kilic / AFP