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# USAID/WEST AFRICA REGIONAL PEACE AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAM

Despite progress made in promoting economic growth, consolidating democratic norms, reducing the rates of HIV/AIDS, and protecting the environment, much of West Africa continues to suffer the devastating effects of conflict and democratic backsliding.

USAID/West Africa's Peace and Governance program supports regional and national capacity and commitment to open, accountable, and democratic governance through: (1) strengthening participatory, representative, and inclusive political processes and government institutions; (2) promoting greater accountability of institutional leaders to citizens and to the law; and (3) supporting partner countries' pathways toward stability and peace. USAID also addresses the risks of instability from violent conflict, and prioritizes targeted conflict and violence prevention, peace building, and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) interventions across the region.

USAID/West Africa works with regional institutions like the G5 Sahel to build African capacity to proactively preempt the spread of violent extremism (VE) in the region. It also targets change at national and local levels through research, training, partnerships, disseminating information, and other programmatic efforts. Additionally, USAID prioritizes an interagency approach and collaborates with the State Department and the Department of Defense to bring a whole of government approach to bear on this critical challenge. The mission also coordinates closely with other USAID P/CVE-relevant programming in the region, including USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), which has ongoing cohesion and transition activities throughout the region.

## **PARTNERSHIPS FOR PEACE (P4P)**

The P4P program is a capacity building and networking effort that supports West African regional institutions, national governments, and civil society organizations to more effectively counter violent extremism in the Sahel region. Since 2016, P4P has supported the governments of Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mauritania to advance West African understanding of the root causes of vulnerability to violent extremism and apply the most effective means of countering it.

The project approach is rooted in empowering West African institutions and organizations to lead sustainable, long-term peace building efforts. At the regional level, the project supports the efforts of regional bodies, such as the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat, to assist member states in developing effective and sustainable programs to improve security, reduce conflict, and counter violent extremism. At the national level, P4P assists governments in developing national strategies for countering violent extremism (CVE) and programs to serve at-risk communities. Finally, the project supports networks of West African advocacy and practitioner groups to improve stakeholder coordination on CVE approaches among traditional and religious leaders, youth, and women's groups.

P4P works in target countries in the Sahel, but its flexibility allows it to change its geographic targets and partnerships as the dynamics of violent extremism shift in the region. It also can modify its approach as the needs and capacities of organizations evolve in response to technical learning in the CVE sector, and as opportunities arise.

## **VOICES FOR PEACE (V4P)**

V4P is a regional program aimed at countering violent extremism (CVE) and promoting democracy, human rights and good governance by leveraging both traditional and new media at the community level in areas affected by violent extremism. V4P works in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Chad, and northern Cameroon, building partnerships with respected leaders, institutions, and networks to address drivers and root causes of violent extremism such as marginalization, exclusion, and poor governance. It supports a culturally effective communications environment to empower locally influential voices, establish interactive media platforms, and engage at-risk youth, women, and communities. The project's approach is rooted in communities' culturally diverse traditions of social cohesion and solidarity that have effectively served in the past to promote resilience to increased radicalization and violence in the region.

V4P activities have successfully: 1) produced and broadcasted interactive media programs in over 30 local languages on 93 radio stations to promote peace, tolerance, good governance, and human rights; 2) engaged women, at-risk youth and CVE actors to serve as positive change agents in their communities; 3) promoted community engagement and civic action through listener discussion and action groups, radio station associations, media centers, tech camps, and civic action competitions; 4) expanded the reach and strengthened the capacity of local radio station partners in the front lines through technical and management training, material support, and peer-to-peer sharing; 5) enhanced regional collaboration among CVE actors to address common drivers of violence; and 6) promoted learning through pilot activities, project review workshops, CVE studies, white papers, and widely shared results within the greater CVE community.

## **REWARD II**

REWARD II is a follow-on activity to REWARD, which was implemented from September 2015 – 2020. The principal objective of REWARD II is to bolster the capacity of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) to monitor, gather, analyze, and disseminate human security information to its 15 member states to support peace and security in the region. REWARD addresses critical gaps in the conflict early warning and early response systems of ECOWAS through a two-tier approach by: (1) providing capacity building to ECOWAS to enhance conflict early warning and response systems in the 15 ECOWAS member states; and (2) supporting national and local stakeholders in five countries to mitigate electoral conflict triggers before they escalate into violence.

These efforts allow USAID/West Africa to minimize the backsliding of democratic processes, such as effects related to conflict and stabilization, including but not limited to political violence, civil unrest, and the evolving security threats in the region. Through a combination of approaches the mission, with its partners, are also helping to address existing security vulnerabilities that have been aggravated by COVID-19 related limitations and restrictions.

## **PEACE THROUGH EVALUATION, LEARNING, AND ADAPTING (PELA)**

PELA acquires and utilizes the knowledge needed to inform USAID/West Africa decisions, strategies, and initiatives to more effectively counter violent extremism, build regional resiliencies, and promote peace across West Africa. Based in Accra, Ghana, PELA is strengthening USAID's effectiveness in implementing its projects, coordinating its activities, learning from experience, and serving as an information, communication, and thought leader regarding peace, promotion and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in the West African Region.

PELA assists USAID/West Africa, surrounding operating units and implementing partners by: 1) conducting and developing analytical research through desk and field studies that expands knowledge and understanding critical to strategy development and decision-making; 2) building knowledge through monitoring and evaluation; 3) developing and implementing a Learning Agenda to provide a baseline and framework for continuous learning, knowledge sharing, strategic collaboration, and adaptive management; 4) analyzing and sharing knowledge through collaboration and learning events, and 5) developing communications products that reach target audiences.

## **PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM ACTIONS THROUGH INCREASED SOCIAL COHESION EFFORTS (PEACE)**

PEACE is an operational research and pilot activity to promote peace and stability in West Africa through the implementation of participatory community-based projects that seek to increase social cohesion between ethnic groups and, ultimately, resilience to VE influence. The PEACE program operates under the hypothesis that effective local initiatives and external interventions focused on social cohesion reduces the use of violence, including engagement and adherence to violent extremism.

The program employs a suite of qualitative and quantitative research tools to measure the presence of social cohesion and resilience to recruitment by violent extremist organizations (VEOs). The evaluation targets 40 villages across four departments of the Tillabéri Region where PEACE is establishing a base of evidence about the relationship between social cohesion and resilience to recruitment by and support for VEOs in the region. In close collaboration with community members, the program supports small-scale social cohesion projects that aim at increasing dialogue between conflicting groups, improving collective action for local development, and improving cooperation in the management of natural resources. These small-scale projects are then tested to determine their impact on social cohesion and resilience to VE influence.

The program works in close partnership with USAID, the Nigerien government, and a range of local and regional actors to disseminate information on program results. These results will eventually inform the design of new programming in the region to decrease VEO recruitment.

## **MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CIVIC VALUES TRAINING FOR INFORMAL EDUCATORS ON STUDENTS' VULNERABILITY TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

This research tests the impact of exposure to civic values and constructive pedagogy on extremist attitudes among informal educators and their students in the Lake Chad Region (LCR). Building on the U.S. Embassy-funded program implemented by the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, a series of workshops is organized to train informal educators in Chad and Cameroon. These educators learn to apply and teach civic values and critical thinking skills on social topics related to violent extremism, such as attitudes toward religious outgroups, peace building, and the management of prejudices toward religious and ethnic outgroups. The International Center of Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), along with a team of local and international research experts, are leading the evaluation of these trainings to determine how they affect both the educators (direct beneficiaries) and their students (secondary beneficiaries).

This impact assessment will identify whether and how attitudes among beneficiaries change, specifically along social, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of tolerance/prejudice toward religious outgroups and support for non-violence. Critical thinking skills will also be assessed as a suspected mediating factor. Ultimately, this project will provide new evidence on how interventions in constructive pedagogy and civic values may affect community resistance to violent extremism.

## **STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE TO EXTREMISM IN WEST AFRICA - THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES**

This operational research activity takes place in communities that are currently under threat of VEOs in the Ménaka and Gao region (Mali), in Tillabéri (Niger), and in the Sahel, East, and Center-North region (Burkina Faso), and strives to answer a central question: Do traditional authorities contribute to or weaken resilience against radicalization towards violent extremism in VEO-affected areas, and if so, in what manner?

Current research is looking at factors that increase resilience against violent extremism: 1) cohesion and solidarity in societies that face violent extremism; 2) commitment to democracy and the rule of

law; and 3) rejection of violence, divisive ideas and stereotypes. Findings will help USAID and partners to develop mechanisms that could help communities address concerns peacefully without resorting to violence.

## GENDER DIFFERENTIATED DRIVERS OF VIOLENT DRIVERS OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE CENTRAL SAHEL (SAHEL CVE RESEARCH)

This Sahel CVE research activity examines key violent extremism drivers and their interactions with gender in the Liptako-Gourma area shared by Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. It consists of: 1) a quantitative study examining the effects of individual characteristics and context on male and female attitudes towards VE; and 2) a comparative qualitative study generated from focus group discussions and key informant interviews that unpack the relationship between male and female attitudes towards VE and VE drivers.

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

Activity	Goal	Life of Program	USAID Funding	Geographic Focus	Implementing Partner
Partnerships for Peace (P4P)	Strengthening West African capacity to counter violent extremism	August 2016 – August 2021	U.S. \$18 million	Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Mauritania, ECOWAS and the Sahel G5	Creative Associates International
Voices for Peace (V4P)	Engaging communities against violent extremism by promoting good governance and social cohesion in West Africa	September 2016 – September 2021	U.S. \$ 31.5 million	Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Northern Cameroon, and Eastern Mali	Equal Access International
Peace through Evaluation Learning and Adapting (PELA)	Strengthen systems of nonviolent conflict management in West Africa through learning	January 2018 – March 2022	U.S. \$8 million	Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Mauritania, ECOWAS and the Sahel G5	International Business and Technical Consultants Inc. (IBTCI)

Reacting to Early Warning and Response Data (REWARD II)	Enhance early warning and response systems to reduce the risk of violence in West Africa	September 2020 – August 2022	U.S. \$6.3 million	15 ECOWAS Member States; with focus on elections in Niger, Ghana and Sierra Leone	Creative Associates International (lead implementer) with Fund for Peace and Karuna Center for Peacebuilding
Preventing violent Extremism Actions through increased social Cohesion Efforts (PEACE)	Increase social cohesion between ethnic groups and, ultimately, resilience to violent extremist (VE) influence	April 2019 – October 2021	U.S. \$1.8 million	Tillaberi Region, Niger	Mercy Corps
Sahel CVE Research - Gender Differentiated Drivers of Violent Extremism in the Central Sahel	Examine key VE drivers and their interactions with gender in the Liptako-Gourma area	March 2020 – October 2021	U.S. \$734,061	Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso	FHI 360
Strengthening Resilience to Extremism in West Africa – The Role of Traditional Authorities	Investigate whether traditional authorities (TAs) contribute to or weaken resilience against violent extremism (VE) in the Liptako-Gourma area	June 2020 – December 2021	U.S. \$745,995	Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso	Clingendael Institute and International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)
Measuring the Impact of Civic Values Training for Informal Educators on Students' Vulnerability to VE	Investigate the impact of exposure to civic values and constructive pedagogy on extremist attitudes among informal educators and their students in the Lake Chad Region	August 2020 – August 2022	U.S. \$1.5 million	Cameroon and Chad	The International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD), in partnership with the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice (Salam)