



## **‘Ensuring an Inclusive Approach to the Development and Implementation of National P/CVE Action Plans: The Role of Civil Society’<sup>1</sup>**

18 December 2017  
New York

1. As part of its ongoing effort to facilitate greater collaboration between civil society organizations (CSOs) and government, multilateral institutions, and other key stakeholders involved in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), and promoting ‘whole of society’ approaches to P/CVE more broadly, the [Prevention Project](#) convened a roundtable on ‘Ensuring an Inclusive Approach to the Development and Implementation of National P/CVE Action Plans: The Role of Civil Society’. The roundtable included different stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of P/CVE National Action Plans (NAPs), including a number of human rights non-governmental organizations. Participants highlighted progress in realizing inclusive NAPs and steps that have been taken to engage with CSOs and other local actors in the process and shared good practices, challenges, and lessons learned.

### **National Action Plans: the process and partners matter as much as the plan itself**

2. Alistair Millar, Co-Director of the [Hedayah-Global Center National Action Plan Task Force](#), noted how the Task Force has so far engaged with some 20 countries, with four having finalized their plans as a result of Task Force support: Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Somalia. He noted how the recent Memorandum of Understanding between the Task Force and UNDP is allowing the former to leverage the latter’s extensive national and regional field presence and reflected on the four ‘Ps’ connected to this work: *Process, Partners, Potential, and Pitfalls*.
3. In many respects, Millar stated, the *process* is more important than the plan itself. He spoke of the importance of reaching out across different government sectors (i.e., both security and non-security actors) and various levels of actors (i.e., national, municipal, and grassroots) and of including the diverse perspectives of women and youth and other local actors throughout the process. He noted how international donor support for NAP development has proven helpful, including in better aligning donor-supported P/CVE programs with a broader national P/CVE framework. Most importantly, the process can be a useful vehicle for encouraging the national government to be self-reflective with an honest appraisal of how it can be “part of the problem,” i.e., its policies or actions might be fueling radicalization to violence, and, related, whether there is a need “reboot” its relevant policies as a result.
4. Which *partners* are involved in the NAP process is also critical. For example, ensuring that the government actors leading or actively involved in the process place a strong emphasis on human rights, rule of law and good governance and understand that there can be no trade-offs between the security and liberties of the citizenry, is important. It was noted that donors have a responsibility and an opportunity to ensure that the support they provide to other countries to implement NAPs is human rights compliant.

---

<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of all participants.

### **National Action Plans: great potential but be aware of the pitfalls**

5. A NAP offers great *potential*, if it's the culmination of an inclusive process undertaken with leadership from government partners which are willing to be self-reflective and updating policies, programs, and practices, where necessary, is significant. However, Mr. Millar noted potential *pitfalls* of the effort, if national governments are unwilling to a) be self-reflective throughout the process, b) ensure the necessary political will and resources to allow for sustained implementation, and/or c) take steps to align existing national strategies in relevant areas, including counterterrorism, with the P/CVE NAP, or if the lead government agency in the NAP process lacks the necessary support from the political leadership to ensure the necessary inter-agency coordination to allow for a “whole of government” and ultimately “whole of society” approach.

### **Avoiding the “cut and paste” mentality and pitfalls from previous NAP exercises**

6. Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the [International Civil Society Action Network](#) (ICAN) and convener of the [Women's Alliance for Security Leadership \(WASL\)](#), reflected on her involvement in the development of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) NAPs over the past 15 years. She highlighted the risks of the P/CVE NAP process becoming a paper exercise, with limited commitment from the national government beyond the drafting of the document. She cautioned against a “cut and paste” mentality, with international consultants stepping in to help host governments draft a plan to respond to the growing calls from the UN and international donors for such plans. She shared ICAN/WASL's [review](#) of the existing published NAPs highlighting gaps and good practices.
7. Ms. Naraghi-Anderlini offered a number of suggestions for how to help ensure the P/CVE NAP process is a substantive one that produces a quality plan that has practical impact. These include a) incorporating gender perspectives, and involving women and women-led organizations, throughout the process, and b) using positive messaging that articulates what the plan is “for” (or trying to achieve), e.g., peace, resilience, education, and pluralism, rather than “against”. With respect to the former, she noted the absence of women's voices and gender perspectives in the Kenyan NAP and how a WASL member organization in Kenya is leading efforts to fill the gap by consulting women and developing a Women's PVE Charter to inform and complement the NAP.
8. Further, she spoke of the cross-cutting nature of P/CVE and thus the need to integrate PVE-sensitive practices into relevant disciplines, including education and policing, and ensure economic and social policies are not leading to feelings of marginalization or exclusion or other real or perceived grievances that can fuel violent extremism. She shared three reports offering practical guidance on the nexus of gender and extremism with [economic policy](#), [education](#), and [policing](#), produced by ICAN in 2017 based on field work, and consultations in thematic [Global Solutions Exchange](#) (GSX) meetings held in conjunction with UNDP and others.

### **The Swiss experience: balancing national leadership with local ownership**

9. Participants were briefed on the recently released P/CVE [National Action Plan for Switzerland](#), which complements Switzerland's 2016 [international PVE plan](#). Both are based on the [Secretary-General's PVE Plan](#), although the domestic plan is framed around “push” and “pull” factors that are specific to the Swiss context. The plan focuses on all forms of radicalization and includes 20 measures, with gender mainstreamed throughout the document, which is to be implemented in full compliance with human rights. The document adopts an inter-disciplinary approach, tying in policies and programs from relevant sectors such as crime prevention, integration, and education.

10. The “bottom-up” process that led to Swiss plan’s development, was highlighted. An inter-agency NAP working group solicited input from the Cantons and civil society organizations (CSOs) on what good practices to include in the plan. Given the critical role that communities and other local actors play in ensuring effective implementation and sustainability of any P/CVE NAP, participants underscored the importance of ensuring that civil society is an integral part of the NAP development process.
11. Participants highlighted how national governments cannot implement NAPs without local support, particularly in federal systems. The philosophy behind the Swiss plan is very much sub-national, with each canton called upon to establish a non-police authority which can work with radicalized or vulnerable individuals and try to bring them back to mainstream society. The action plan asks cantons, towns and communes to work together to share information, advise local authorities and specify the services they can offer. Education is also a key element, and the plan recommends developing more lessons and projects linked to violent extremism in an effort to reach youth. Among other key measures include the call for institutionalizing CSO-government engagement, the prevention of discrimination, and action to prevent online radicalization, which has already led to the development and launch of several civil society-led counter-narrative projects. The federal government has committed some \$5 million over five years to support local projects to implement the plan.
12. Among the challenges identified for the implementation phase of the Swiss plan include a) the need to support families whose members become targeted for recruitment or radicalized, b) ensuring communities are aware of the new plan and understand their responsibilities under it (Note: the federal government has announced a national day to raise awareness of the new plan in communities around the country), and, perhaps most significantly, c) ensuring there is the necessary trust between communities and the police so the former are willing to share information with the latter, without fear that their loved ones will not automatically end up incarcerated.

### **How GCERF can impact NAP development and implementation?**

13. Participants discussed the [Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund’s](#) (GCERF) work – providing grants to support grassroots PVE projects – and its relevance to NAP development and implementation. For example, GCERF funding is contributing to the implementation of NAPs at the local level. Participants highlighted how GCERF strives for a national response to violent extremism that is better coordinated and suited to local needs. It was noted that GCERF contributes to enhanced coordination among relevant PVE actors through the GCERF Country Support Mechanism (CSM), which includes government and non-government, security and development, and national and sub-national actors. Through the CSM, GCERF creates or strengthens a national forum for conversation and coordination on the funding of PVE as well as offers opportunities to promote political will to identify and address systematic issues for inclusive NAP development and implementation.
14. It was also highlighted how GCERF’s transparent funding processes serve as a best practice for governments looking to provide grants to support locally-led PVE projects that may be linked to NAP implementation and how GCERF’s emphasis on public-private collaboration could be a model for countries looking to involve their private sector in the NAP process or P/CVE efforts more broadly. Further, GCERF’s commitment to better understanding what works and doesn’t work to prevent violent extremism and to sharing lessons learned with those involved in NAP design and implementation was also stressed.

### **Aligning P/CVE NAPs with other relevant national plans and strategies**

15. Participants noted the importance of aligning P/CVE NAPs with other relevant NAPs or strategies, both on the security (e.g., CT) and non-security (e.g., education, economics), underscoring the need for those in P/CVE NAP development to appreciate the multi-disciplinary nature of P/CVE. Related, the point was made that given this-and how a P/CVE NAP needs to complement existing strategies/plans-more attention should be given to defining what policies, programs, and measures are P/CVE-specific, and thus should be captured in a P/CVE NAP, and those that are P/CVE-relevant and thus need not be.

### **Ensuring political will and government accountability**

16. There was broad consensus that national governments need to be politically committed to implementing a “whole of society” approach to P/CVE in order to minimize the risks that the P/CVE NAP process is just a paper exercise. Participants also discussed the importance of but challenges to ensuring that the P/CVE NAP process, where appropriate, addresses government accountability for human rights abuses, including those committed in the name of countering terrorism that can drive violent extremism. In this context it was noted that the necessary conditions for effective P/CVE measures and programs are unlikely to exist where counterterrorism measures themselves are driving radicalizations to violence that P/CVE. In fact, GCERF’s Independent Review Panel (IRP) has recommended that GCERF *not* provide funding to support local P/CVE projects in those areas where the IRP has concluded that CT measures or operations are driving radicalization.

17. Participants highlighted the importance of governments reporting annually to Parliaments on P/CVE NAP implementation—with Parliaments needing to understand why the NAP is important and where their oversight role is—and on NAPs being “living” documents that are adjusted over time to take into account the evolving local threat and “push” and “pull” factors. They also noted the challenges of balancing national “leadership” with local “ownership” over the plan, with the national governments accountable by Parliaments for implementation, but local actors are the ones needing to deliver on the ground.

18. A number of additional lessons learned on P/CVE NAP development and implementation were shared. These include the need to avoid having different elements of a plan or, where relevant, the wider CT strategy to which it might be linked, interfere with each other. In addition, participants emphasized the importance of training and involving local (vice international) experts to assist national governments with the development and implementation of P/CVE NAPs. NAP development processes should, where appropriate, consider the establishment of a fund to support locally-led P/CVE projects linked to NAP implementation. Developing countries may wish to seek international donor support, including via GCERF, for the establishment of such a mechanism.

### **Assessing the impact of P/CVE NAPs**

19. Finally, with the sixth biennial review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy scheduled for the summer of 2018, participants suggested that it would be appropriate to assess the impact of existing P/CVE NAPs, the role of the new UN Office of Counter-Terrorism in this regard, and UN PVE Plan of Action – which the UN General Assembly has linked to the Strategy – on that occasion.