



**The American Center For Combating
Extremism And Terrorism**

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Civil Society's Role in Combating Violent Extremism and Terrorism

**A Guide for Civil Society
Organizations and Activists**



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COMBATING EXTREMISM & TERRORISM

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE FOR CSOs AND ACTIVISTS

This guidebook is a practical resource for civil society organizations (CSOs) and activists working to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE) in their communities. It combines established best practices, recent research findings, and emerging insights from CSOs operating in diverse contexts worldwide.

Drawing from field experiences and expert analysis, the guidebook provides actionable strategies for CSOs while emphasizing the critical balance between program effectiveness and security. Each section addresses specific challenges faced by organizations working in P/CVE, offering practical tools, frameworks, and implementation guidance.

The guidebook is organized into seven interconnected sections:

1. **Introduction:** Establishes key concepts and CSOs' role in P/CVE work
2. **Understanding Violent Extremism:** Examines VEO tactics and operations
3. **Civil Society's Role:** Details effective engagement strategies while maintaining security
4. **Building Digital Resilience:** Provides guidance for safe online P/CVE work
5. **Countering Extremist Narratives:** Offers approaches for effective counter-messaging
6. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Explores building secure networks and alliances
7. **Legal and Ethical Considerations:** Outlines rights-based approaches to P/CVE

Throughout the guidebook, you'll find:

- Practical examples and case studies
- Security considerations and protocols
- Implementation tips and checklists
- Best practices and lessons learned
- Key points for CSO practitioners

This resource emphasizes the importance of context-specific approaches while providing frameworks that can be adapted to local conditions. Special attention is given to security considerations, protecting vulnerable populations, and maintaining community trust while conducting P/CVE work.

The guidance provided draws from both academic research and real-world experiences of CSOs, ensuring recommendations are both evidence-based and practically applicable. This guidebook aims to help CSOs develop effective, secure, and sustainable P/CVE programs that respond to their specific contexts while building on global best practices.



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01

Introduction

Introduces key concepts and definitions of violent extremism and terrorism while outlining civil society's critical role in prevention and response efforts.

02

Understanding Violent Extremism & Terrorism

Examines the causes, root factors, and operational strategies of violent extremist organizations (VEOs) to help CSOs better understand and counter their influence.

08

The Role of Civil Society in Combating Extremism

Details how civil society organizations can effectively engage in P/CVE work while maintaining security and community trust.

17

Building Digital Resilience

Provides guidance on developing secure media literacy programs and digital strategies to counter online extremist content.

24

Countering Extremist Narratives

Outlines approaches for understanding and effectively countering VEO messaging while protecting those involved.

31

Partnerships and Collaboration

Explores how CSOs can build effective partnerships and international networks while maintaining security and independence.

35

Legal and Ethical Considerations

Examines key principles and frameworks for ensuring P/CVE work respects human rights, civil liberties, and ethical standards.

KEY WORDS

Adaptive Programming An approach to program implementation that emphasizes flexibility and continuous adjustment based on changing circumstances, emerging threats, and lessons learned.

Alternative Narratives Positive stories and messages that challenge extremist ideologies by offering different perspectives and promoting values of peace, tolerance, and inclusion.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Non-governmental organizations, community groups, religious institutions, advocacy groups, and other entities operating independently of government and business sectors to advance social causes and serve community interests.

Competitive Control A strategy used by violent extremist organizations to establish dominance over populations through a combination of coercion and provision of basic services, directly competing with state institutions for legitimacy.

Counter-Narrative Messages, stories, or communications designed to challenge and discredit extremist propaganda and ideologies.

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) A proactive approach that combines security, prevention, and intervention strategies to address the causes of violent extremism and prevent individuals from joining extremist groups.

Deradicalization The process of changing an individual's belief system, rejecting extremist ideology, and adopting mainstream values.

Digital Literacy The ability to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information online, including the skills to identify and resist extremist propaganda.

Early Warning Signs Observable indicators that may signal an individual's or community's vulnerability to radicalization or the presence of extremist influence.

Evidence-Based Programming Program design and implementation based on documented research, proven methodologies, and systematic evaluation of outcomes.

Governance Gap Areas where state institutions fail to provide adequate services or maintain authority, creating opportunities for violent extremist organizations to establish parallel systems.

Note: This glossary provides general definitions of key terms used in the context of countering violent extremism and terrorism. Specific usage and interpretation may vary depending on local context and organizational frameworks.

GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS

Illicit Economies Illegal economic activities, including trafficking and extortion, often used by violent extremist organizations to fund operations and maintain control.

Information Sharing The supervised exchange of data, intelligence, and insights among organizations while maintaining security protocols and protecting sensitive information.

Media Literacy The ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms, particularly important in recognizing and resisting extremist propaganda.

Parallel Governance Alternative administrative structures established by violent extremist organizations to compete with legitimate state institutions.

Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Proactive measures aimed at addressing the root causes and drivers of extremism before violence occurs.

Radicalization The process by which individuals or groups come to adopt extremist beliefs and behaviors, potentially leading to violence.

Resilience The capacity of individuals and communities to resist, adapt to, and recover from extremist influence and related challenges.

Shadow Governance Systems of control and administration established by violent extremist organizations that operate parallel to official state institutions.

Social Cohesion The strength of relationships and sense of solidarity among members of a community, including trust, shared values, and collective identity.

Strategic Communications Planned and coordinated messaging efforts designed to support CVE objectives while avoiding unintended amplification of extremist narratives.

Targeted Recruitment Specific strategies used by violent extremist organizations to identify and recruit vulnerable individuals or groups, often exploiting local grievances and social dynamics.

Violent Extremism The beliefs and actions of individuals or groups who advocate or use violence to achieve ideological, religious, or political goals.

Violent Extremist Organization (VEO) A group that uses violence or advocates for violence to achieve ideological, religious, or political objectives.

Youth Engagement Programs and initiatives specifically designed to involve young people in positive social activities and prevent their recruitment into extremist groups.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

DEFINING EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

While there are many definitions of violent extremism and terrorism, this guide uses these definitions:

- **Violent extremism** refers to the beliefs and actions of individuals or groups who advocate or use violence as a means to achieve ideological, political, or religious goals (United Nations, 2016).
- **Terrorism** involves the use of violence, intimidation, or coercion to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives by creating fear and disrupting society (United Nations, 2016).

? What Role Do Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Play in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and Terrorism?

Prevention and Early Intervention	CSOs identify early signs of radicalization and implement prevention programs within communities. They compete directly with VEOs for influence, requiring targeted interventions based on understanding of extremist tactics (Horgan, 2014).
Building Resilient Communities	CSOs promote social cohesion and inclusivity to counter extremist narratives, with particular focus on marginalized groups targeted by VEOs. They foster dialogue and solidarity to build community resistance (Borum, 2011).
Advocacy and Awareness	CSOs advocate for policies addressing root causes of extremism while raising awareness about VE dangers. They promote human rights and mobilize public support for counterterrorism efforts (Council of Europe, 2018).
Empowerment and Engagement	CSOs work with youth, women, religious leaders, and marginalized communities through education and civic engagement. This includes addressing gender dynamics in youth transitions, as VEOs exploit these in recruitment (RAN, 2019).
Monitoring and Accountability	CSOs monitor government responses to ensure respect for human rights and rule of law. This oversight helps prevent conflict escalation while requiring careful navigation of state relationships (Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2017).
Strategic Coordination	CSOs balance independence with security coordination, humanitarian principles with prevention work, and community protection with impact measurement. Success requires understanding local contexts and evidence-based approaches.



SUMMARY

CSOs play a critical role in countering violent extremism and terrorism by addressing root causes, promoting dialogue and inclusivity, advocating for human rights, empowering communities, and ensuring accountability in counterterrorism efforts. Collaboration between civil society, government, and other stakeholders is essential in creating a comprehensive and effective approach to combating extremism and terrorism.

SECTION 2

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM & TERRORISM

Understanding Violent Extremism and Terrorism involves a comprehensive analysis of the causes, root factors, types of ideologies, and impact on societies. Critically, it requires understanding how violent extremist organizations (VEOs) operate on the ground and compete for influence within communities.

? What Are the Causes and Root Factors of Violent Extremism and Terrorism?

Understanding the causes and root factors of violent extremism and terrorism is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. These factors are complex and multifaceted, encompassing a combination of structural, ideological, psychological, and governance-related elements that create environments conducive to radicalization and violence. From systemic grievances and failed governance to the exploitation of individual vulnerabilities and societal fractures, violent extremist organizations (VEOs) leverage these dynamics to recruit, radicalize, and sustain their influence.

! KEY DRIVERS

● that contribute to the emergence and persistence of violent extremism and terrorism

Grievances and Marginalization	Social, political, economic, and historical grievances can lead to feelings of marginalization and injustice, creating fertile ground for radicalization (Krueger & Malečková, 2003).
Ideological Indoctrination	Extremist propaganda and recruitment strategies foster ideological radicalization by promoting divisive beliefs and values (Borum, 2011).
Psychological Vulnerabilities	Factors such as alienation, identity crises, and the desire for belonging make individuals more susceptible to extremist narratives (Horgan, 2008).
Instability and Failed Governance	Political instability, conflict, and ineffective governance create environments where extremist ideologies can thrive (Gunaratna, 2009).
Predatory Governance	Corrupt or exploitative governance practices allow VEOs to position themselves as viable alternatives to the state, gaining local support.
Targeted Recruitment Strategies	VEOs use sophisticated approaches that exploit gender dynamics and critical transitions, such as youth moving into adulthood, to recruit members.
Control of Illicit Economies	Engaging in illicit trade and providing alternative services enable VEOs to consolidate power and strengthen their influence in vulnerable communities.



What Are the Different Types of Violent Extremism and Terrorist Ideologies?

- ➡ **Religious extremism:** based on radical interpretations of religious doctrines, often leading to violence in the name of religion (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007).
- ➡ **Political extremism:** driven by radical ideologies seeking to overthrow or challenge existing political systems through violence (Malthaner & Waldmann, 2014).
- ➡ **Nationalist extremism:** rooted in extreme nationalism, xenophobia, and supremacy, leading to violent actions against perceived threats (Kalyvas, 2006).
- ➡ **Ideological extremism:** based on extremist ideologies, such as anarchism or eco-terrorism, promoting radical change through violence (Taylor & Horgan, 2006).
- ➡ **Single-issue extremism:** focusing on specific causes like animal rights or environmentalism, advocating for violent means to achieve goals (Baker, 2016).



Prominent Violent Extremist and Terrorist Groups

Several extremist and terrorist groups around the world pose serious threats to global security and stability. Some of the most significant and notorious groups include:

ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)	Also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), ISIS is a transnational jihadist group that has carried out numerous attacks in the Middle East and beyond. Though its territorial control has diminished, ISIS maintains an online presence and continues to inspire and coordinate attacks worldwide (Lynch, 2023).
Al-Qaeda	Established in the late 1980s, Al-Qaeda remains a prominent global terrorist network responsible for multiple high-profile attacks, including the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States. While its capabilities have been degraded, Al-Qaeda affiliates and sympathizers continue to pose a threat (Raphel, 2021).
Boko Haram	Operating primarily in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region, Boko Haram is known for its brutal tactics, including mass abductions, bombings, and attacks on schools and villages. The group has caused significant humanitarian suffering and instability in the region (Owolabi, 2020).
Taliban	The Taliban remains a formidable insurgent group in Afghanistan, with a history of violence and extremist ideology. Following the withdrawal of US troops in 2021, the Taliban's resurgence has raised concerns about the impact on Afghan civilians and regional security (Ghafoor, 2022).
Al-Shabaab	Based in Somalia, Al-Shabaab is an Islamist militant group affiliated with Al-Qaeda. The group has carried out attacks in Somalia and neighboring countries, targeting government institutions, security forces, and civilians (Khan, 2020).
Hamas	Operating in the Palestinian territories, Hamas is known for its militant activities against Israel and its control of the Gaza Strip. The group has engaged in armed conflict with Israel and is designated as a terrorist organization by several countries (Bard, 2020).
Hezbollah	Based in Lebanon, Hezbollah is a Shia militant group with a strong political and military presence. Designated as a terrorist organization by numerous countries, Hezbollah has been involved in regional conflicts and has close ties to Iran (Harb, 2021).

These are just a few examples of extremist and terrorist groups that have been active in different regions around the world. The threat landscape is dynamic, with new groups emerging and existing groups evolving their tactics and alliances.



What Are Common VEO Operational Strategies?

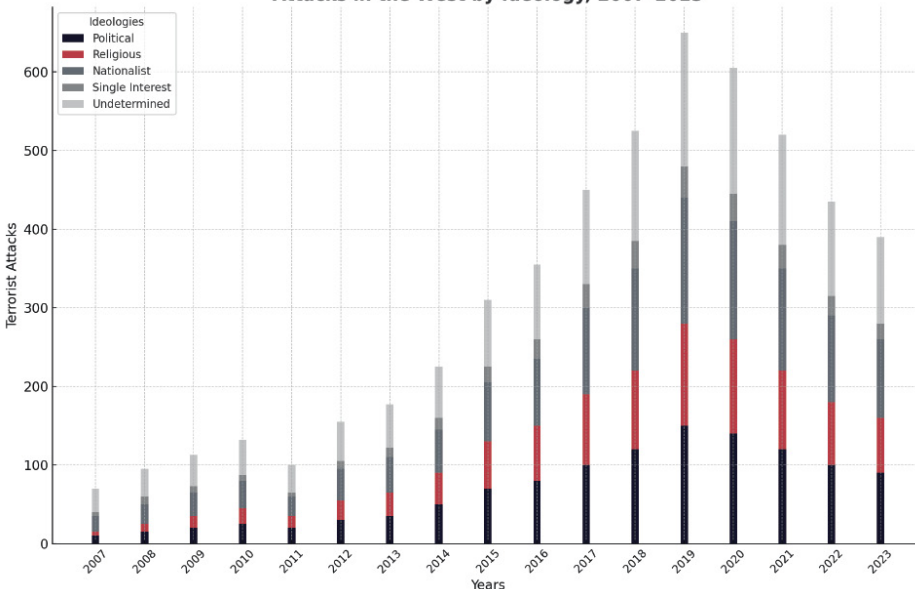
Violent extremist organizations (VEOs) have adapted their strategies to prioritize control over populations rather than solely focusing on territorial dominance. They employ a combination of coercive and persuasive methods to establish influence and consolidate power.

! KEY TACTICS OF VEOs INCLUDE:

"Competitive Control" of Populations	VEOs focus on dominating populations rather than capturing and holding territory. This approach allows them to avoid direct military confrontations while embedding
Shadow Governance Systems	VEOs establish parallel governance structures that directly compete with state institutions. By providing services such as dispute resolution, social welfare, and basic infrastructure, they present themselves as viable alternatives to failing or absent governments.
Sophisticated Propaganda Networks	Leveraging advanced media and communication strategies, VEOs spread their ideologies, recruit members, and manipulate public opinion. They use local languages, cultural references, and tailored messaging to resonate with specific demographics and increase their appeal.
Economic Domination through Illicit Means	VEOs gain financial resources and local control by taxing goods, extorting businesses, and engaging in illicit trade, including trafficking and smuggling. This economic domination not only funds their operations but also reinforces their authority within affected communities.
Exploitation of Marginalized Populations	By capitalizing on social grievances, political exclusion, and economic disparities, VEOs mobilize support from marginalized groups. They strategically exploit feelings of injustice and alienation to build loyalty and recruit members, further undermining social cohesion and stability.

This combination of tactics enables VEOs to maintain resilience and adaptability, posing complex challenges for civil society organizations (CSOs) and governments working to counter their influence.

Attacks in the West by Ideology, 2007-2023



Terrorist attacks in Western nations increased significantly between 2007-2023, with politically and religiously motivated incidents accounting for the majority of identified attacks. While total attacks peaked in 2018-2019 with over 600 annual incidents, recent years show a gradual decline, though numbers remain substantially higher than pre-2014 levels.

Source: TerrorismTracker, IEP Calculations



CASE STUDY: THE RISE OF EXTREMIST GROUPS IN EUROPE

An analysis of the rise of extremist groups in Europe reveals a complex and multifaceted landscape shaped by various factors. Here are some key points to consider:

Far-Right Extremism: Europe has seen increased far-right activity promoting nationalist and xenophobic ideologies, capitalizing on economic uncertainty and cultural fears. These groups target marginalized communities through both online and offline campaigns (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017).

Jihadist Extremism: The challenge of returning foreign fighters and domestic radicalization has led to increased security concerns. Jihadist groups have demonstrated sophisticated recruitment and attack planning capabilities in urban centers (Neumann, 2016).

Ethno-Nationalist Movements: Several regions experience ongoing ethno-nationalist tensions, ranging from non-violent activism to militant separatism. These movements often exploit historical grievances and identity politics (Smith, 2020).

Anti-Government Activity: Various groups oppose state policies through methods ranging from civil disobedience to targeted violence. These movements often overlap with other forms of extremism (Hoffman, 2020).

Digital Dynamics: Online platforms serve as key recruitment and coordination tools for extremist groups. Social media enables rapid dissemination of propaganda and cross-border networking (Winter, 2019).

Network Effects: Extremist groups maintain transnational connections, sharing tactics and resources. This creates complex challenges requiring coordinated responses from both security agencies and civil society (Kaho, 2021).



SUMMARY

The convergence of multiple extremist threats - from far-right to jihadist networks - combined with sophisticated use of digital platforms and transnational connections, requires CSOs to develop nuanced, context-specific approaches. Success depends on balancing security awareness with community engagement, while addressing the underlying grievances that extremist groups exploit (Della Porta, 2018; Kaho, 2021).



What Are The Impacts of Violent Extremism and Terrorism on Societies?

Violent extremism and terrorism have profound and far-reaching effects on societies, disrupting lives, communities, and nations. Beyond the immediate toll of death and destruction, these acts create enduring psychological, social, and economic challenges that weaken societal structures and impede development. The repercussions often extend beyond the affected regions, influencing global security, human rights, and governance.

! KEY IMPACTS ON SOCIETIES INCLUDE:

Loss of Life and Physical Harm	Resulting in widespread fatalities, injuries, and destruction of critical infrastructure (World Health Organization, 2011).
Widespread Fear and Trauma	Generating lasting psychological distress and insecurity among affected populations (Fischer, 2008).
Erosion of Social Trust	Undermining social cohesion, trust, and multicultural harmony, further dividing communities (Mavris & Georgoulas, 2019).
Economic Devastation	Damaging businesses, deterring tourism, reducing foreign investment, and destabilizing economies (Ghosh, 2009).
Civil Liberties Under Threat	Leading to restrictions on rights and freedoms as states implement counter-terrorism measures (Amnesty International, 2018).
Social Polarization:	Fostering divisions and radicalization within communities, fueling cycles of violence (Borum, 2011).
Undermined State Legitimacy:	Allowing violent extremist organizations (VEOs) to create alternative governance systems that weaken state control.
Development of War Economies	Strengthening VEOs through illicit trade, extortion, and conflict-driven profits.
Forced Displacement	Driving mass migrations of targeted populations, exacerbating humanitarian crises.
Exploitation of Local Conflicts	Manipulating grievances to fuel violence and recruit supporters. approach that addresses root causes, strengthens security measures, and promotes cooperation at the national and international levels (Menkhaus, 2022).



SUMMARY

Violent extremism impacts communities across multiple dimensions - from immediate physical harm to long-term social and economic damage. For CSOs, understanding these impacts is crucial as they often manifest at the local level through eroded social trust, community polarization, and exploitation of existing grievances. Key effects include widespread trauma, economic disruption, and the emergence of parallel governance systems where state legitimacy is weak. These challenges require CSOs to develop holistic, community-centered approaches that address both immediate needs and underlying vulnerabilities.



What Are The Emerging Challenges in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)?

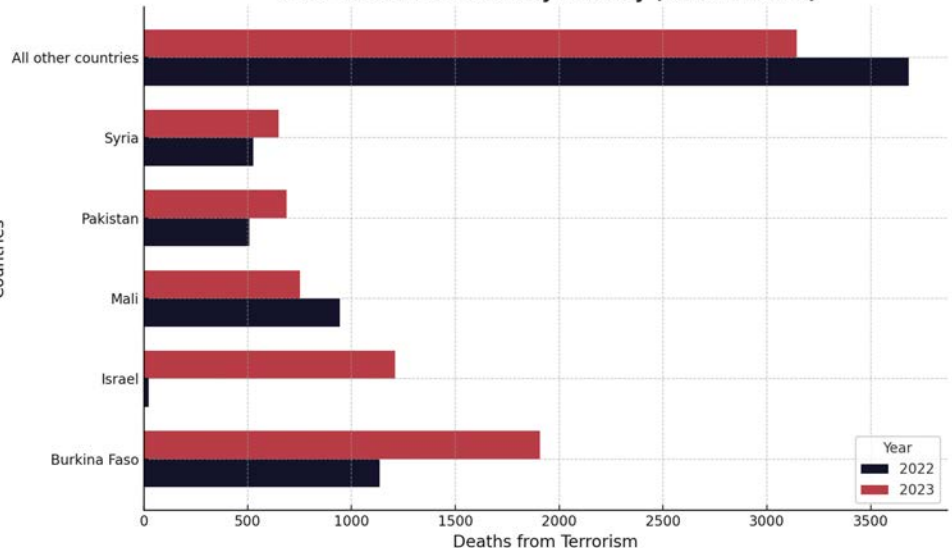
Efforts to counter violent extremism face an evolving landscape of challenges as violent extremist organizations (VEOs) adapt to changing conditions and refine their tactics. These groups demonstrate remarkable resilience, leveraging innovative strategies to circumvent traditional counterterrorism approaches. From exploiting governance failures to capitalizing on illicit economies and local grievances, VEOs employ complex and multifaceted methods to sustain and expand their influence.

! UNDERSTANDING NEW VEO STRATEGIES

Increasing Adaptability and Resilience	VEOs continue to outmaneuver traditional counterterrorism measures, demonstrating flexibility in their strategies and operations.
Sophisticated Use of Gender Dynamics	Leveraging gender-specific recruitment methods and roles to maximize their reach and operational impact.
Exploitation of Governance Failures	Taking advantage of weak governance and service delivery gaps to present themselves as viable alternatives to state institutions.
Control of Illicit Economies	Profiting from illegal trade, extortion, and other shadow economies to finance their activities and sustain influence.
Manipulation of Local Grievances	Strategically exploiting community frustrations and unresolved conflicts to recruit supporters and deepen divisions.

Understanding the multifaceted nature of violent extremism and terrorism requires addressing the complex interplay of causes, ideologies, and impacts on societies. However, effective prevention and response must be based on precise understanding of how VEOs actually operate and compete for influence within specific contexts, rather than relying solely on general assumptions about radicalization and extremism (USIP, 2024). Efforts should combine attention to root causes with strategic responses to VEO tactics and operations on the ground.

Total Terrorism Deaths by Country (2022 vs 2023)



Source: TerrorismTracker, IEP Calculations

While some traditional hotspots like Syria and Pakistan maintained relatively stable levels of terrorism-related deaths in 2022-2023, there were concerning increases in Burkina Faso and Israel, underscoring the dynamic nature of violent extremist threats and the need for adaptive prevention strategies that respond to both persistent and emerging challenges.

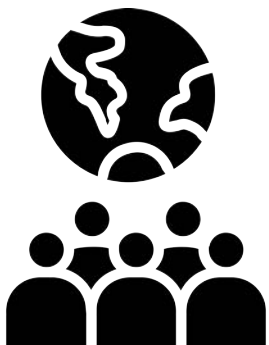
SECTION 3

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN COMBATING EXTREMISM & TERRORISM

Civil society plays a crucial role in combating violent extremism and terrorism by addressing root causes, fostering social cohesion, and promoting inclusive narratives that counter extremist ideologies. However, the growing sophistication of violent extremist organizations (VEOs) poses significant challenges, as they often compete directly with civil society organizations (CSOs) for influence and legitimacy within communities (USIP, 2024). To succeed in this endeavor, CSOs must adopt strategic, evidence-based approaches that empower local actors, build community resilience, and respond effectively to the specific tactics and structures employed by VEOs.



How Do We Define Civil Society?



Civil society refers to the collective action of individuals, organizations, and institutions outside of the government and the private sector (Felbab-Brown, 2015). It encompasses a wide range of non-governmental actors, including community groups, religious organizations, human rights advocates, and grassroots movements. Civil society plays a crucial role in promoting democracy, social justice, and human rights, as well as in fostering community engagement and empowerment (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

! THE IMPORTANCE OF CSOs FOR P/CVE

In the context of combating violent extremism and terrorism, CSOs are critically important for two key reasons:

- ➔ **Bridging Communities and Institutions:** CSOs are uniquely positioned to address the underlying grievances, provide alternative narratives, and build resilience within communities (UNDP, 2016).
- ➔ **Leveraging Local Trust and Networks:** Their independence, grassroots connections, and ability to mobilize diverse stakeholders make them key actors in prevention and intervention efforts.

However, to be effective, CSOs must carefully navigate complex relationships with government actors while maintaining independence, especially in contexts where state practices may enable VEO expansion.

CASE STUDY

CSOs have demonstrated innovative and impactful approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism. By addressing root causes, empowering marginalized groups, and fostering community resilience, these initiatives showcase the diverse strategies CSOs employ to reduce the influence of violent extremist organizations (VEOs).

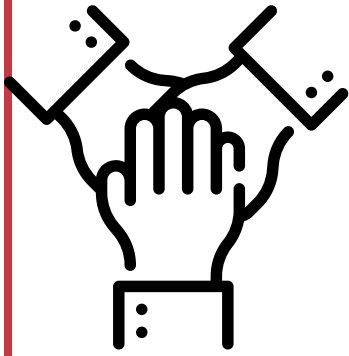


PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE P/CVE EFFORTS BY GLOBAL CSOs

FATE (Families Against Terrorism and Extremism)	A network of families affected by terrorism who share personal stories and provide peer counseling to prevent radicalization. Their approach demonstrates how family-based initiatives can effectively counter extremist narratives while providing crucial support systems for vulnerable individuals and affected families.
Women's Prevention Networks	Organizations like Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) and Women Without Borders focus on education and economic empowerment to prevent radicalization. These initiatives are particularly effective when they address both male and female youth transitions, recognizing the complex gender dynamics in prevention work.
Strong Cities Network (SCN)	This global network connects local authorities with civil society leaders to prevent extremism at the municipal level. Their success demonstrates how city-level coordination between government and civil society can effectively address local drivers of radicalization while building community resilience.
Horn of Africa Civil Society Forum (HoACS)	A regional platform that enables civil society collaboration across the Horn of Africa through shared research, advocacy, and capacity building. Their work shows how regional CSO networks can effectively address cross-border challenges while strengthening local prevention efforts.
Community Rehabilitation Programs	CSO-led programs offering psychological support, vocational training, and social reintegration services for at-risk individuals. These initiatives demonstrate how community-based approaches can support prevention and rehabilitation while building local resilience against extremist influences.
The Kenya National Counter-Terrorism Centre	A model of collaboration between the National Counter-Terrorism Centre and civil society organizations, showing how CSOs can effectively partner with government institutions while maintaining their independent role in community engagement and prevention work.



Why Are Strategic Partnerships Essential for Sustainable P/CVE?



Collaboration between civil society, government agencies, law enforcement, and other stakeholders is essential in developing comprehensive and sustainable strategies to combat violent extremism and terrorism (United Nations, 2017). However, these partnerships require careful navigation, particularly in contexts where state practices may inadvertently enable VEO expansion (USIP, 2024).

! EXAMPLES OF JOINT INITIATIVES BETWEEN CSOs, GOVERNMENT, & LAW ENFORCEMENT INCLUDE:

Shared Resources and Expertise	Partnering across sectors to pool knowledge, tools, and information for early detection and intervention (Bennett, 2017).
Coordinated Prevention and Rehabilitation Efforts:	Implementing integrated programs that combine prevention, community engagement, and support for reintegration of former extremists (González, 2018).
Fostering Dialogue and Trust:	Encouraging inclusive decision-making and trust-building to strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of interventions (Fisher, 2017).
Rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation:	Ensuring accountability and improving strategies by assessing the impact of collaborative efforts (O'Neill, 2019).





What Are Effective Ways To Manage These Complex Relationships?

Effective P/CVE work requires CSOs to carefully balance partnerships while maintaining independence and protecting communities. Understanding how to navigate these relationships is crucial for program success and community safety.



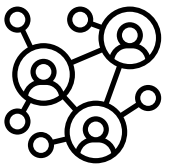
WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

- Establish clear protocols for information sharing and engagement
- Maintain organizational independence while supporting constructive reform
- Document all interactions and agreements
- Set clear boundaries around sensitive community information
- Develop exit strategies for situations where partnership may compromise your work



NAVIGATING SECURITY SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

- Create explicit frameworks for necessary coordination
- Protect humanitarian principles and community trust
- Maintain transparent communication with communities about any security cooperation
- Establish clear redlines for information sharing
- Develop risk mitigation strategies for staff and beneficiaries



STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORKS

- Build secure channels for information sharing
- Coordinate responses while protecting vulnerable participants
- Share resources and learning without compromising security
- Develop joint advocacy strategies where appropriate
- Create mutual support mechanisms for organizations under pressure

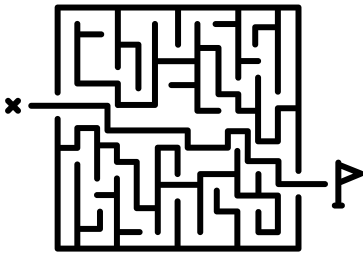


KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Regular review of partnership risks and benefits
- Clear internal policies on engagement with different actors
- Consistent communication with communities about partnerships
- Protection strategies for staff and beneficiaries
- Documentation of all formal relationships



How Can CSOs Maximize Impact While Managing Risk?



CSOs operating in P/CVE contexts must navigate complex challenges while maintaining effectiveness and safety. Success requires understanding how violent extremist organizations compete for influence, while ensuring programs remain community-driven and secure.

! 4 STRATEGIC AREAS CRITICAL FOR SUCCESS IN HIGH-RISK ENVIRONMENTS

Competing with VEO Influence	VEOs often present themselves as alternative service providers and governance actors. CSOs must offer credible, reliable services that address community needs while demonstrating transparency and maintaining trust. This requires understanding local dynamics and delivering consistent value that strengthens community resilience.
Managing Security Risks	Security protocols must protect staff, beneficiaries, and sensitive information without compromising program effectiveness. This means regular risk assessment, clear security procedures, and careful information management. Building community trust while maintaining security requires balancing openness with necessary protective measures.
Evidence-Based Programming	Programs should be based on concrete evidence about local contexts, VEO activities, and community needs. Regular monitoring helps ensure interventions remain relevant and effective. Success requires adapting to changing dynamics while maintaining focus on measurable outcomes that demonstrate value to communities.
Strategic Coordination With Partners	While partnerships can enhance impact, CSOs must preserve their independence and community trust. This requires clear protocols for engaging with government and security actors, ensuring activities remain community-driven while benefiting from strategic collaboration where appropriate.

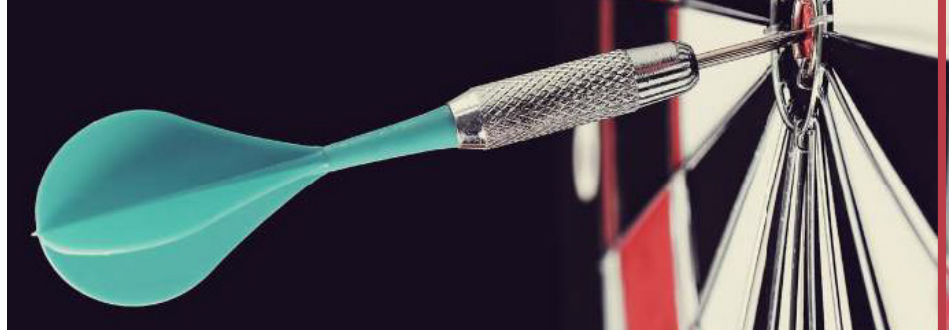




What Are The Latest Approaches For Civil Society's Response?

Recent experience highlights several crucial approaches for CSOs engaging in P/CVE work. Below are six key recommended approaches learned over the past 20 years.

1. PRECISE TARGETING



To effectively counter violent extremist organizations (VEOs), **CSOs must move beyond broad prevention strategies and focus on precise interventions tailored to specific vulnerabilities and contexts.** This requires identifying the populations and regions most at risk, understanding the dynamics of VEO influence, and addressing governance gaps that these groups exploit. By targeting efforts strategically, CSOs can directly undermine VEO recruitment and operational capacity while reinforcing community resilience.

Key strategies include:

Targeted Population Identification	Pinpointing communities and demographic groups actively targeted by VEOs for recruitment.
Mapping VEO Influence	Locating regions where VEOs are establishing dominance or shadow governance systems to gain control.
Addressing Governance Gaps	Targeting specific failures in state governance—such as justice provision or dispute resolution—that VEOs exploit to build legitimacy.
Supporting Marginalized Communities	Prioritizing interventions in areas where populations are caught between VEO coercion and government neglect.
Competitive Service Design	Developing programs that directly compete with VEOs by providing alternative services and support to communities.

By focusing on these precise strategies, CSOs can effectively disrupt VEO recruitment pipelines, diminish their influence, and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations.

2.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION



Accurate and secure evidence collection is fundamental to designing impactful counter-extremism programs. **CSOs must gather reliable data on VEO activities, community dynamics, and program outcomes while ensuring the safety of their staff and sources.**

CSOs must develop secure methods to:

Document VEO Activities Safely	Gather intelligence without endangering team members or vulnerable communities.
Leverage Local Networks	Use trusted local contacts for insights rather than relying on formal focus groups, which may be risky or ineffective.
Ensure Data Security	Implement robust protocols for storing and transmitting sensitive data to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands.
Measure Impact Effectively	Track program outcomes with specific indicators that reflect changes in VEO presence or influence.
Share Data Responsibly	Collaborate with trusted partners while protecting the identity and safety of sources.

3.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

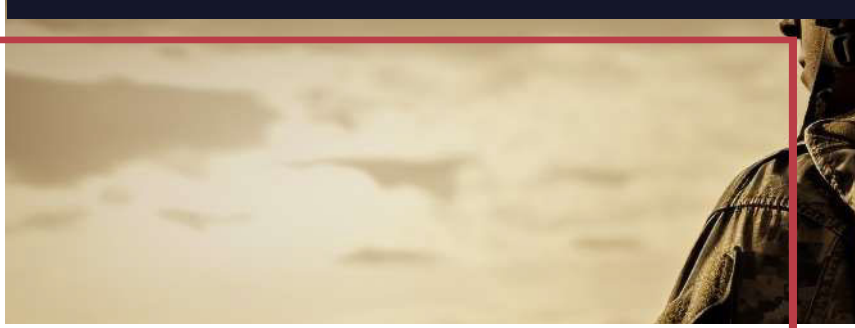


Local leaders play a pivotal role in fostering trust, mobilizing communities, and addressing grievances that VEOs often exploit. **For CSOs, partnering with legitimate, respected leaders is essential to achieving sustainable impact.** Effective programs should:

Engage Legitimate Leaders	Partner with respected individuals who have deep community trust and credibility.
Train in Risk Management:	Provide local partners with security training to manage threats in high-risk areas.
Enable Secure Communication	Establish safe channels for local leaders to voice concerns and share critical information.
Address Community Grievances	Support initiatives led by local leaders to resolve the root causes of VEO exploitation.
Balance Visibility and Safety:	Protect leaders by managing their exposure to reduce risks without undermining their authority.

4.

ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING



In the rapidly evolving landscape of violent extremism, **CSOs must adopt adaptive programming to remain effective.** This involves monitoring shifts in VEO tactics, maintaining flexible operational plans, and responding quickly to emerging threats or opportunities. By building resilient networks and learning from both successes and setbacks, CSOs can ensure their initiatives stay relevant and impactful. CSOs need systems to:

Monitor VEO Tactics	Stay updated on shifts in extremist activities and their evolving strategies.
Adjust Quickly	Build the capacity to revise programs swiftly in response to emerging security challenges.
Enable Flexible Operations	Ensure funding and implementation plans are adaptable to changing conditions.
Strengthen Resilient Networks	Develop partnerships and networks that can sustain operations even under adverse circumstances.
Learn Continuously	Evaluate successes and failures to refine approaches and maximize impact.

5.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS



Effective communication strategies are critical in countering extremist narratives and building trust within communities. **CSOs must craft messaging that resonates with local audiences while avoiding unintended amplification of VEO propaganda.** Effective programs should:

Avoid Amplifying VEO Narratives	Frame messaging carefully to prevent unintentional reinforcement of extremist propaganda.
Elevate Credible Local Voices	Support trusted community figures who can authentically challenge extremist narratives.
Protect Participant Identities	Safeguard the privacy of individuals involved in programs to ensure their safety.
Use Secure Communication Channels	Implement robust systems for safe messaging, especially in areas with high VEO activity.
Anticipate Misinterpretation	Consider how messaging could be exploited by VEOs and adjust strategies accordingly.

6.

RISK MANAGEMENT INTEGRATION



Integrating comprehensive risk management into every aspect of counter-extremism programming is essential for ensuring the safety and effectiveness of CSO operations. Regular security assessments, clear safety protocols, and robust contingency planning enable CSOs to navigate volatile environments while maintaining their independence and protecting both staff and community members. Successful implementation requires the following key elements:

Regular Security Assessments	Continuously evaluating risks and updating strategies to address evolving threats.
Clear Safety Protocols	Developing detailed guidelines to ensure the protection of staff and partners in volatile regions.
Secure Information Systems	Implementing systems that safeguard sensitive data against unauthorized access.
Balanced Security Relationships	Fostering strong yet measured relationships with security forces to avoid compromising neutrality.
Comprehensive Contingency Planning	Preparing for various scenarios with well-developed plans to ensure continuity and effectiveness.



SUMMARY

The success of these approaches depends on CSOs' ability to maintain a delicate balance: they must be precise and targeted enough to address specific VEO activities, while being flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. They must build strong local relationships while protecting those same local partners, and they must coordinate with security actors while maintaining the independence and trust that makes civil society effective.

These emerging approaches represent a shift from general prevention work to more strategic engagement that recognizes CSOs are in direct competition with VEOs for influence and legitimacy within communities. This requires sophisticated understanding of both VEO operations and the complex dynamics of local contexts.

SECTION 4

HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO EXTREMIST THREATS?

Building resilience and preventing violent extremism require a multifaceted approach that addresses underlying factors, promotes community engagement, and strengthens social cohesion (UNDP, 2016). However, recent experience indicates that effective resilience-building must directly compete with VEOs' sophisticated recruitment and community engagement strategies (USIP, 2024).

? What Are The Traditional Early Warning Signs For Radicalization and Extremism?

Recognizing and addressing early warning signs of radicalization is crucial in preventing individuals from being drawn into extremist ideologies (Horgan, 2008).

Some common indicators include:

! COMMON INDICATORS INCLUDE:

Behavioral Shifts	Sudden changes in attitudes, beliefs, or actions may signal the onset of radicalization (Mackenzie, 2017).
Social Withdrawal	Isolation from family, friends, or community networks is a common early indicator (Borum, 2011).
Extremist Expressions	Open endorsement of extremist views or threats of violence can be key warning signs (Enders & Sandler, 2012).
Consumption of Propaganda	Engagement with extremist content, especially online, suggests growing exposure to radical ideologies (Gemignani, 2019).
Suspicious Activities	Involvement in or support for radical groups or actions warrants close attention (Bennett, 2017).

While traditional indicators focusing on individual radicalization remain important, recent experience demonstrates that VEOs often establish presence through subtle changes in community dynamics and local governance structures.



How Do We Recognize Early Signs of VEO Activity?

The identification of VEO influence at the community level requires careful observation of subtle changes in local dynamics and governance structures. Civil society organizations must develop systematic approaches to monitoring these changes, as early detection can be crucial for effective intervention.



CSOs MUST WATCH FOR EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Changes in local governance and dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEOs establish alternative dispute resolution systems • Offer "faster" solutions than government institutions • Create parallel justice mechanisms • Build legitimacy through service provision
Shifts in economic patterns and resource control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New informal taxation systems appear • Changes in market prices and trade routes • Emergence of checkpoints • Shifts in local business operations • Unexplained wealth patterns
Alterations in traditional power structures and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional leaders become less vocal/active • New "community leaders" emerge suddenly • Changes in community decision-making • Shifts in resource access • Marginalized groups face new pressures



REMEMBER:

Early detection of these changes is crucial for timely intervention. Focus on understanding what's "normal" in your community to better spot concerning shifts.





How Do We Recognize the Early Signs of VEO Activity?

Understanding the broader context in which communities operate provides crucial insights into growing VEO influence. This contextual analysis requires examination of both formal and informal systems, with particular attention to changes in community-state relationships and economic patterns.



KEY CONTEXT CHANGES TO MONITOR:

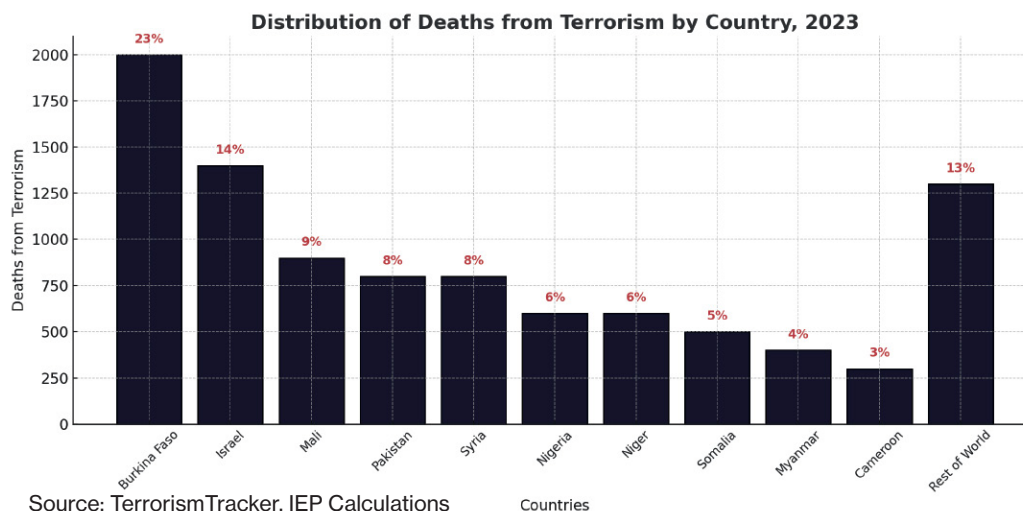
Shifting relationships between communities and state institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced cooperation with authorities • Less engagement with government services • Shifts toward informal systems • Growing distrust of officials • Changes start small, then spread wider
Economic Warning Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New informal financial systems emerge • Unexplained local wealth changes • Construction without clear funding • Business practice changes • Informal taxation appears
Changes in social and gender dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in women's mobility • New marriage practices emerge • Youth behavior patterns change • "Traditional" rules increase • Community customs shift suddenly



ACTION POINTS FOR CSOs:

- Document what's "normal" in your community
- Build trusted local information networks
- Watch for gradual changes over time
- Focus on multiple indicators together
- Report concerning patterns securely

The data reveals that Burkina Faso experienced the highest proportion of terrorism-related deaths in 2023 at 23%, followed by Israel at 14% and Mali at 9%, highlighting how the impact of terrorism remains concentrated in specific regions while also affecting countries across multiple continents.





How Do We Build Safe and Effective Response Networks?

Professional networks and coordinated response systems are essential for effective P/CVE work. Success requires balancing security with accessibility while maintaining trust across different community actors. Here are the key components for building these networks:

! KEY COMPONENTS FOR BUILDING NETWORKS

Information Management: Protecting What We Know	Establish secure systems for gathering, storing, and sharing sensitive information using encryption, coded documentation, and clear protocols for information sharing across trusted partners.
Professional Engagement: Empowering Community Leaders	Build networks of healthcare workers, educators, religious leaders, and social workers who can identify concerns early. Provide comprehensive training on recognizing signs while maintaining confidentiality and cultural sensitivity.
Network Coordination: Working Together Safely	Create secure channels for CSO collaboration, engage trusted community leaders, and establish formal agreements with professional networks that protect both roles and relationships.
Ongoing Support: Maintaining Effectiveness	Ensure regular training updates, provide supervision for complex cases, and support self-care practices. Include stress management resources and peer support systems for professionals doing this challenging work.

! BALANCING SECURITY AND ACCESS

Working securely doesn't mean working in isolation. Effective P/CVE work requires finding ways to maintain open communication while implementing necessary security protocols. The goal is to protect without creating barriers to essential services and support.



PRACTICAL TIPS

Signs of a Strong Response Network:

- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Secure communication channels
- Protected identities of vulnerable individuals
- Regular security updates and training
- Established emergency protocols
- Support systems for professional wellbeing

Key Questions for Information Security:

- Who has access to sensitive information?
- How is data encrypted and stored?
- What are our protocols for sharing information?
- How do we protect source identities?
- When and how should information be deleted?



How Do We Keep Our People and Information Safe?

Security must be integrated into every aspect of early warning systems, not treated as an add-on consideration. Organizations should develop comprehensive security frameworks that include:

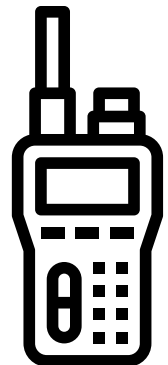
! MAKING A STRONG SECURITY FRAMEWORK

Risk Assessment	Regular, systematic assessment of risks to staff, partners, and communities. This should include analysis of VEO presence and tactics, state security operations, and community dynamics.
Source Protection	Detailed protocols for protecting informants and sources, including secure communication methods, information compartmentalization, and emergency response procedures.
Data Security	Comprehensive systems for protecting sensitive information, including secure storage, encrypted communication, and clear protocols for information sharing.
Emergency Response	Clear procedures for responding to security incidents, including evacuation plans, communication protocols, and support systems for affected individuals or communities.



PRACTICAL TIP: DAILY SECURITY CHECKS

- Are communication channels secure today?
- Have staff been briefed on current risks?
- Are emergency contacts up to date?
- Are backup systems functioning?
- Do all team members know today's safe locations?



RED FLAG BOX

When to Escalate Security Measures:

- Unusual interest in staff movements
- Changes in local security patterns
- Increased questions about your work
- Suspicious technological incidents
- New pressures on local partners
- Unexpected changes in access to areas

CASE STUDY

VOICES FROM THE FIELD: Building Resilient Communities



“
"The strongest protection against extremism isn't just what we teach —it's the resilient community we build together."
- Community Elder, Somalia
”

THE CHALLENGE

Communities facing violent extremism often struggle with polarization, lack of opportunity, and vulnerability to extremist messaging. CSOs must compete directly with VEOs that offer their own forms of belonging and purpose.

1. EDUCATION & AWARENESS <i>Success Story: Digital Literacy Initiative</i>	A program in Southeast Asia combined media literacy training with local context, helping youth identify and resist online recruitment tactics. Within six months, participants were creating their own counter-narrative content and teaching peers.	Key Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical thinking skills• Understanding local VEO tactics• Digital and media literacy• Peer education approaches
2. DIALOGUE & ENGAGEMENT <i>Success Story: Community Forums</i>	Monthly interfaith dialogues in a divided community led to joint projects between previously isolated groups, creating natural resistance to extremist attempts to exploit religious differences.	Key Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe spaces for difficult conversations• Cross-community relationship building• Cultural exchange opportunities• Secure venue protocols
3. EMPOWERMENT & PARTICIPATION <i>Success Story: Youth Leadership Network</i>	A regional youth network turned small community service projects into a movement, giving young people legitimate alternatives to extremist groups while building practical skills.	Key Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills development• Leadership opportunities• Civic engagement projects• Protected spaces for activities

LESSONS LEARNED: 1) Security must be integrated from the start; 2) Programs should address specific local contexts; 3) Sustainability requires community ownership; and 4) Success comes from combining all three pillars

? How Do We Build Resilient Communities Against VEOs?

Social cohesion and inclusivity are foundational to building communities resilient to violent extremism and terrorism. By promoting diversity, fostering community engagement, and implementing resilience-building programs, civil society organizations (CSOs) can address the divisions and vulnerabilities that extremist groups exploit. Strengthening these bonds requires deliberate efforts to bridge social divides, empower marginalized groups, and create networks of trust and solidarity. Such initiatives not only reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies but also build the collective capacity of communities to resist and recover from extremist threats.

! 3 CORE STRATEGIES FOR CSOs

Promote Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create inclusive spaces and programs• Celebrate shared community values• Address discrimination proactively• Bridge cultural and social divides• Protect vulnerable populations
Build Community Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster inter-group collaboration• Create safe spaces for dialogue• Support joint community initiatives• Establish secure communication channels• Implement careful vetting procedures
Strengthen Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop mental health support systems• Build conflict resolution skills• Create trauma recovery programs• Maintain confidentiality protocols• Protect support service providers



REMEMBER:

Strong communities resist extremism best when they combine inclusive practices with appropriate security measures.



SECTION 5

COUNTERING EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

Countering extremist narratives is a critical component of efforts to prevent and combat violent extremism (Horgan & Braddock, 2010). By understanding, deconstructing, and challenging these narratives, societies can promote critical thinking, resilience, and a rejection of violent ideologies. Recent experience demonstrates that effective counter-narrative work must directly compete with VEOs' sophisticated communication and recruitment strategies while protecting those involved in these efforts (USIP, 2024).

? How Can We Better Understand and Counter VEO Messages?

For CSOs and activists working to counter violent extremism, understanding and deconstructing extremist narratives is a critical step in reducing their appeal and influence. Extremist groups craft powerful messages designed to exploit grievances, manipulate identities, and foster division, often adapting their narratives to resonate with specific local contexts. By carefully analyzing these narratives, propaganda techniques, and recruitment strategies, CSOs can develop targeted counter-narratives that challenge the legitimacy of extremist ideologies, address underlying grievances, and offer positive alternatives.

! COUNTER-MESSAGING REQUIRES CSOs TO:

Identify Key Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Map key messages and beliefs• Understand local grievances used• Track identity-based narratives• Document calls to violence• Note context-specific appeals
Analyze Propaganda Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognize manipulation tactics• Study emotional triggers used• Monitor local language/references• Track targeted messaging• Document media strategies
Examine Recruitment Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Map online/offline tactics• Identify vulnerable groups targeted• Document exploitation methods• Track radicalization pathways• Monitor recruitment patterns

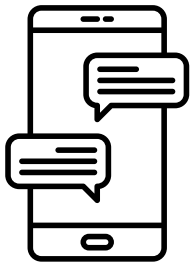


REMEMBER:

Understanding VEO messaging helps create effective counter-narratives, but always prioritize security when monitoring extremist content.



How Do We Create Effective Counter-Messages?



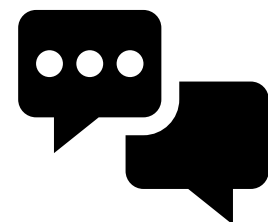
Key Points for CSOs

- Focus on promoting solutions, not just rejecting extremist ideas
- Build locally relevant narratives that respect cultural contexts
- Prioritize security in all aspects of message development
- Ensure authentic voices are protected and supported
- Create sustainable, long-term messaging strategies

! COUNTER-MESSAGES: 3 PROVEN METHODS

Build Solution-Focused Narratives	Your messages should go beyond simply rejecting extremist ideas. Focus on promoting peace, tolerance, and concrete solutions to community challenges. Frame these in culturally relevant ways that acknowledge local traditions and concerns. Remember: effective narratives offer hope and practical alternatives.
Leverage Authentic Voices Safely	Former extremists and survivors can provide compelling testimonials that challenge extremist narratives. Personal stories and testimonials of resilience offer persuasive arguments against violent ideologies (Horgan, 2008). However, their security must come first: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Implement robust protection protocols ◦ Carefully manage how stories are shared ◦ Create secure communication channels ◦ Develop emergency response procedures ◦ Provide ongoing support for contributors
Engage Local Influencers Strategically	Partner with trusted community voices - religious leaders, educators, artists, and youth advocates. These partnerships require careful management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Provide security training for all partners ◦ Establish secure communication methods ◦ Create contingency plans for threats ◦ Support partners' continued community engagement

? What Does Counter-Messaging Look Like in Practice?



Key Points for Implementation

- Successful programs combine multiple approaches
- Security measures must be built into every component
- Local context determines which approaches work best
- Digital and in-person strategies require different security protocols
- Evaluation and adaptation are crucial for long-term success

CASE STUDY

"Not Another Brother" Campaign



This UK-based campaign effectively countered extremist recruitment by focusing on family bonds and community ties. The campaign centered on a powerful video showing a sister's imagined message to her brother who had joined an extremist group, combined with real stories from families affected by radicalization. Its success came from:

- Creating emotional resonance through authentic family narratives
- Emphasizing prevention and hope rather than condemning past choices
- Protecting participants through careful identity management
- Using multiple channels (social media, community events, local media) to reach different audiences
- Supporting families to share their stories safely and on their own terms

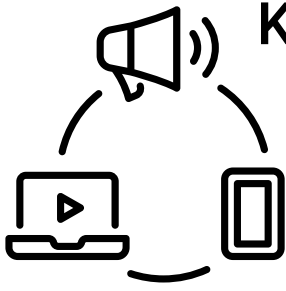


PRACTICAL EXAMPLES AND APPLICATIONS

- **Personal Stories:** Former extremists sharing their journey out of violent groups through facilitated community dialogues
- **Youth Leadership:** Training young people to create counter-narrative content in their own voice and style
- **Cultural Expression:** Using local art, music, and traditional storytelling to promote alternative messages
- **Community Forums:** Creating safe spaces for dialogue between different groups about sensitive topics
- **Family Support Networks:** Building support systems for families affected by extremism



How Can CSOs Build Digital Resilience Against Extremist Content?



Key Points for CSOs

- Digital spaces require specific strategies and security measures
- Media literacy programs must address local context and language
- Monitoring efforts need robust security protocols
- Platform partnerships should focus on context-specific solutions
- Staff and participant protection is paramount in digital work



3 KEY AREAS FOR BUILDING DIGITAL RESILIENCE

<p>Develop Context-Aware Media Literacy Programs</p>	<p>Recent evidence shows that traditional media literacy approaches need updating. VEOs now adapt their messaging to local contexts, using community-specific issues and cultural references (Hollander & Evers, 2021). Your programs should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Teach context-specific analysis skills ◦ Address local language and cultural elements ◦ Include security protocols for participants ◦ Focus on practical identification of manipulation tactics ◦ Build long-term digital resilience
<p>Create Secure Monitoring Systems</p>	<p>As VEOs develop sophisticated information networks, monitoring work has become more complex and dangerous (Schmidt & Young, 2020). Protect your team by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Implementing encrypted communications ◦ Establishing secure data storage ◦ Creating clear handling procedures for sensitive information ◦ Training staff on safe monitoring practices ◦ Developing emergency response protocols
<p>Engage with Digital Platforms</p>	<p>Platform partnerships are crucial but must be approached carefully (Nedić, 2021). Focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Building secure reporting channels ◦ Protecting local partner identities ◦ Addressing context-specific VEO tactics ◦ Promoting safe community moderation ◦ Maintaining confidential communication channels



Practical Implementation Tips

<p>For Program Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with local context analysis • Build security measures into every component • Create clear reporting mechanisms • Establish participant protection protocols • Develop emergency procedures 	<p>For Digital Safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use encrypted communication tools • Train staff on digital security • Protect participant identities • Monitor for potential threats • Regular security updates 	<p>For Sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document lessons learned securely • Share best practices safely • Build local digital literacy capacity • Maintain secure support networks
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PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF MEDIA LITERACY INITIATIVES

Practical examples of media literacy initiatives for countering online violent extremism and terrorism include:

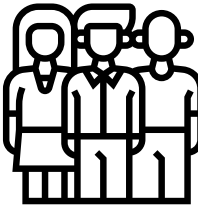
 <p>Digital Civics Toolkit by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)</p>	<p>The Digital Civics Toolkit developed by ISD offers a comprehensive set of resources and guidance to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among young people to recognize and respond to extremist narratives online. The toolkit includes interactive modules, case studies, and practical tools for educators and youth workers (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2021).</p>
 <p>tech against terrorism</p>	<p>Tech Against Terrorism is a global initiative that collaborates with tech companies, government agencies, and civil society organizations to counter online terrorist content through capacity-building, knowledge-sharing, and the development of best practices. By promoting digital literacy and responsible online behavior, the initiative aims to disrupt the dissemination of extremist propaganda on digital platforms (Tech Against Terrorism, n.d.).</p>
<p>Media Literacy Programs in Schools</p>  <p>social media literacy for change</p>	<p>Several countries have implemented media literacy programs in schools to educate students about online safety, digital citizenship, and discerning credible information. For example, Finland's Media Literacy Project in Schools integrates critical media literacy skills into the national curriculum to empower students to navigate the online environment responsibly and resist extremist influences (Tanmoy, 2020).</p>
<p>Online Awareness Campaigns</p>	<p>Civil society organizations and government agencies leverage online awareness campaigns to raise public awareness about the dangers of online extremism and promote media literacy skills. Initiatives like the #ThinkBeforeSharing campaign in Indonesia educate social media users about identifying and reporting misinformation and extremist content to prevent their spread online (Indonesian Government, 2021).</p>
<p>Social Media Monitoring and Reporting Tools</p>	<p>Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) have implemented reporting mechanisms and content moderation tools to allow users to report extremist content and prevent its dissemination. By empowering users to flag harmful content and providing resources for media literacy training, these platforms contribute to countering online violent extremism and terrorism (Norris, 2019).</p>

These practical examples demonstrate the diverse approaches and strategies employed to enhance media literacy for countering online violent extremism and terrorism, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among stakeholders and the integration of digital literacy into educational initiatives.



How Can CSOs Effectively Engage Youth in P/CVE Programs?

Key Points for CSOs



- Youth programs must balance visibility with protection
- Education initiatives should address how VEOs specifically target youth
- Successful programs provide legitimate alternatives to VEO recruitment
- Security protocols shouldn't compromise youth leadership opportunities
- Local context determines which approaches work best



CORE PROGRAM APPROACHES FOR CSOs

Education-Based Initiatives	What Works: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking development that addresses real-world challenges • Media literacy focused on local VEO recruitment tactics • Peer-to-peer learning opportunities • Discussion of complex issues in safe environments 	Security Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen educational materials for sensitive content • Protect student identities in discussions • Train educators on security protocols • Create safe reporting mechanisms
Youth Leadership Programs	Effective Elements (Holloway, 2018): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-to-peer mentorship opportunities • Community service projects • Youth-led initiatives • Skills development workshops 	Protection Protocols: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance visibility with security • Screen mentors carefully • Monitor for potential VEO infiltration • Establish emergency response procedures
Creative Expression Projects	Successful Approaches (Millet, 2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and cultural programs • Storytelling initiatives • Theater and performance projects • Digital media creation 	Safety Measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect participant identities in public displays • Secure venue locations • Screen content for sensitive information • Create safe sharing platforms



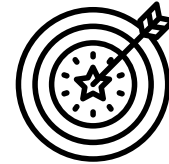
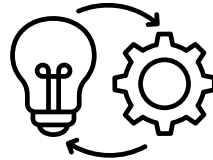
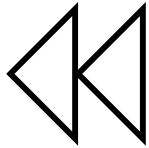
Understanding Youth Engagement in P/CVE

Youth programs work best when they provide three key elements (Bennett, 2021):

- Genuine sense of purpose and belonging
- Opportunities for leadership and recognition
- Safe spaces for exploring complex issues



Practical Implementation Tips for Youth and Education P/CVE Programs



Before Launch:	During Implementation:	For Program Success:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct youth needs assessment • Map local VEO recruitment tactics • Develop security protocols • Create emergency procedures • Build partnerships with local actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular security reviews • Ongoing participant support • Flexible programming • Youth feedback mechanisms • Partner coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on genuine youth empowerment • Maintain consistent security measures • Build trust with communities • Create sustainable initiatives • Document lessons learned



4 Key Lessons From The Field

1. Focus on Local Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how VEOs target youth in your area • Address specific community challenges • Use culturally relevant approaches • Build on existing youth initiatives
2. Prioritize Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create clear security protocols • Train all staff on safety measures • Establish reporting mechanisms • Develop emergency responses • Regular security updates
3. Enable Authentic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give youth real decision-making power • Create safe spaces for dialogue • Support youth-led initiatives • Provide mentorship opportunities
4. Build Sustainable Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop local partnerships • Train youth facilitators • Create support networks • Plan for long-term engagement



Remember: Youth engagement in P/CVE requires careful balance between empowerment and protection. Programs should provide genuine alternatives to VEO recruitment while maintaining robust security measures (Fritz, 2020).

SECTION 6

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

To effectively combat violent extremism and terrorism, a multi-faceted approach that emphasizes partnerships and collaboration across sectors and borders is essential. These collaborative efforts, which involve government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community leaders, religious groups, and other key stakeholders, help to create a coordinated and comprehensive response to the evolving threat of violent extremism. However, recent experiences underscore the importance of carefully navigating these partnerships to ensure both effectiveness and trust. This section outlines the key elements of successful collaboration in countering violent extremism and terrorism.

? How Can CSOs Build Effective P/CVE Partnerships?

Key Messages for CSOs

- Multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential for effective P/CVE
- Balance coordination with organizational independence
- Protect both partners and beneficiaries
- Maintain community trust while working with various actors
- Clear protocols and boundaries strengthen partnerships

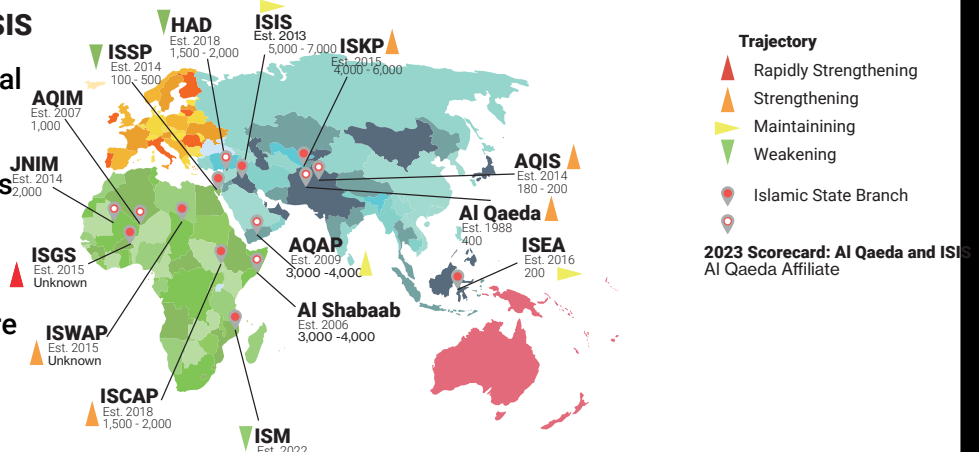


! BUILDING STRONG P/CVE PARTNERSHIPS

<p>Core Partnership Principles</p>	<p>Essential Elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for partner autonomy • Clear roles and responsibilities • Transparent communication channels • Shared security protocols • Joint accountability measures 	<p>Trust Building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain organizational independence • Protect community relationships • Establish clear boundaries • Regular stakeholder engagement • Open dialogue mechanisms
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2023 Scorecard: Al Qaeda and ISIS

The map reveals a complex global network of ISIS and Al Qaeda affiliates as of 2023, with the largest concentrations of fighters in groups like ISKP and Al Shabaab, while the trajectory indicators suggest that newer groups established after 2015 are generally strengthening, particularly in Africa and South Asia.





How Can CSOs Share Knowledge and Build International Networks?

Sharing Best Practices:

Building effective knowledge-sharing networks requires understanding these fundamental elements that form the backbone of successful P/CVE collaboration:

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Systematic exchange of successful strategies and lessons learned
- **Resource Pooling:** Combining expertise and tools for greater impact
- **Learning Networks:** Communities of practice focused on P/CVE
- **Innovation Exchange:** Sharing new approaches and solutions
- **Secure Communication:** Protected channels for sharing sensitive information



When and How Should CSOs Engage in Cross-Border Collaboration?



Core Decision Points for CSOs:



Before engaging in cross-border work, assess your organization's readiness by considering:

1. **Need:** Is cross-border collaboration necessary for your objectives?
2. **Capacity:** Do you have the resources to maintain secure partnerships?
3. **Risk:** Can you protect local partners and sensitive information?
4. **Value:** Will collaboration significantly enhance your impact?
5. **Timing:** Is the current context conducive to safe collaboration?

Types of Safe Collaboration	Low-Risk Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing public research and reports • Participating in regional networks • Joint capacity building programs • Public advocacy initiatives • General trend analysis 	Higher-Risk Activities (Requiring Extra Security): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence sharing • Sensitive data exchange • Cross-border programming • Work with vulnerable populations
Building Effective Partnerships	Start Small: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with low-risk activities • Build trust gradually • Test security measures • Document lessons learned • Expand carefully 	Scale Safely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase activities based on proven security • Add partners strategically • Enhance protection measures • Maintain regular reviews • Adjust based on context



CASE STUDIES IN GLOBAL COLLABORATION



GCTF

GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM FORUM



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)

Radicalisation Awareness Network



GIFCT

Global Internet Forum
to Counter Terrorism

**Strong Cities
Network**

Initiatives Involving International Networks in P/CVE Include:

These practical initiatives demonstrate the significance of international networks in facilitating coordination, cooperation, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders to address the complex challenges of violent extremism and terrorism on a global scale. By leveraging expertise, resources, and partnerships across borders, these networks play a crucial role in advancing effective counterterrorism strategies and building resilient communities against extremist threats (Williams, 2021).

Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)	The GCTF is an international platform that brings together governments, multilateral organizations, and civil society partners to address key challenges in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. The forum facilitates dialogue, capacity-building, and information-sharing among member countries to develop and implement best practices in counterterrorism efforts
United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center (UNCCT)	The UNCCT serves as a global focal point for coordinating counterterrorism initiatives and enhancing international cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism. Through technical assistance, training programs, and policy guidance, the center supports member states in strengthening their capacities to address terrorism threats effectively and in compliance with human rights standards
European Union Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN)	RAN is a network of practitioners, policymakers, and experts from EU member states working together to prevent radicalization and promote community resilience against violent extremism. By sharing knowledge, exchanging good practices, and conducting research on preventing radicalization, RAN supports local initiatives and national strategies to counter terrorism across Europe
Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT)	GIFCT is a collaboration among tech companies, governments, and civil society organizations to prevent the spread of terrorist content online and promote counter-speech initiatives. By developing technology-driven solutions, sharing intelligence, and engaging in capacity-building programs, GIFCT addresses the challenges of online extremism and facilitates a coordinated response to terrorist propaganda on digital platforms
Strong Cities Network (SCN)	SCN is a global network of local government authorities, civil society organizations, and community leaders working together to prevent and counter violent extremism at the local level. By fostering city-to-city partnerships, sharing best practices, and promoting community resilience, SCN strengthens urban responses to radicalization and supports inclusive approaches to countering terrorism in diverse contexts

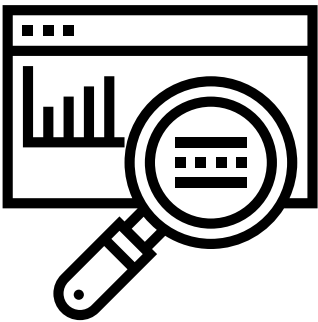
Building effective partnerships, sharing best practices, and engaging in international collaboration are integral components of any strategy to combat violent extremism and terrorism. By pooling expertise and resources, stakeholders can create a more resilient, coordinated, and comprehensive response to this global challenge. However, the success of these efforts depends on the careful integration of security measures, ensuring that the protection of partners and communities is never compromised. Ultimately, the effectiveness of these partnerships hinges on a sophisticated understanding of both local contexts and VEO operations, supported by robust security protocols and collaboration (USIP, 2024).

SECTION 6

MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN P/CVE

Monitoring and evaluating efforts to combat violent extremism and terrorism are essential to ensure that interventions are effective and impactful. Establishing clear indicators and metrics allows organizations to track progress, measure outcomes, and make informed decisions about adjusting strategies. These efforts help to determine whether initiatives are meeting their objectives and provide the necessary data to refine and optimize approaches.

? How Do We Know If Our P/CVE Programs Are Working?



Key Points for CSOs

- Security must be prioritized in all M&E activities
- Data collection requires careful protection protocols
- Indicators should balance insight with safety
- Information sharing needs secure systems
- Continuous improvement depends on safe evaluation

? Why Evaluate P/CVE Programs?

! KEY POINTS

- Evaluations reveal program effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, helping CSOs understand what works and guiding future decisions (Masters & Ortega, 2023)
- Comprehensive evaluations uncover best practices and lessons learned that can be shared across the P/CVE community (Smith & Thompson, 2020)
- Regular evaluation helps programs stay relevant to community needs and achieve lasting impact (Masters & Ortega, 2023)
- Evaluation findings strengthen the global P/CVE evidence base, contributing to more effective responses to violent extremism
- Systematic evaluation enables programs to adapt to evolving threats and challenges in real-time



How Do We Monitor P/CVE Programs Safely?

Data collection through trusted networks	Build relationships with reliable local partners who understand security risks and can gather information discreetly. Use encrypted platforms and protected channels for sharing monitoring data
Protection of sources and information	Implement systems to protect identities, secure data storage, and manage sensitive information
Regular security assessments	Conduct frequent reviews of your monitoring systems to identify and address potential vulnerabilities
Clear documentation protocols	Establish standardized procedures for recording information that protect sensitive details



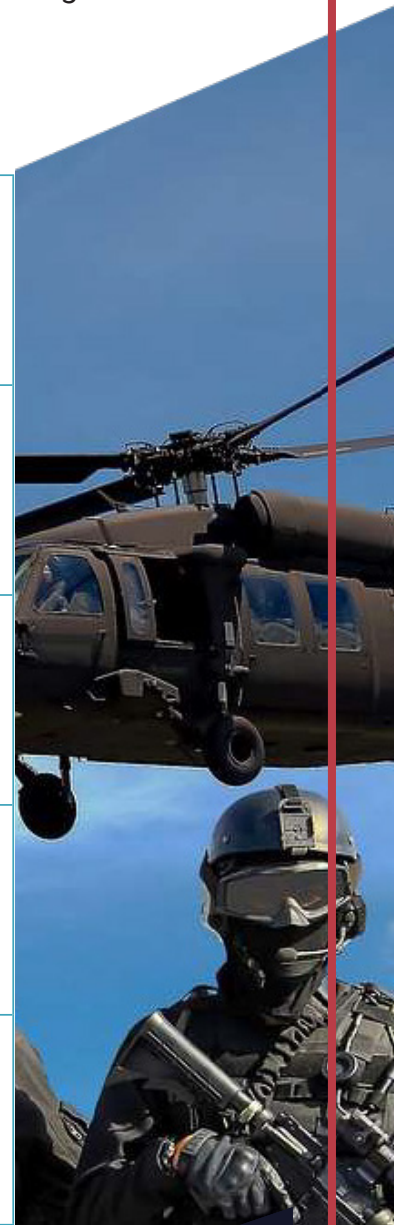
What Security Steps Must CSOs Take for Safe M&E?

Before implementing monitoring and evaluation activities, CSOs must establish robust security protocols to protect staff, partners, and data. These five core action steps provide a systematic approach to building secure M&E systems that protect while delivering valuable program insights.



BEST PRACTICES FOR SECURE M&E

Establish secure data collection methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create anonymous reporting systems • Use coded identification systems • Implement encrypted data storage • Train staff on secure collection • Regular security audits
Create protected reporting channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up encrypted communication • Establish secure filing systems • Create information classification levels • Define sharing protocols • Regular channel security checks
Train staff on security protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular security briefings • Emergency response training • Information handling procedures • Risk assessment skills • Security incident reporting
Monitor for potential risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular threat assessments • Security incident tracking • Partner safety checks • Environmental scanning • Risk mitigation planning
Regular security reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly protocol assessments • System vulnerability checks • Staff security refreshers • Partner safety evaluations • Emergency procedure updates





How Do We Select Effective P/CVE Indicators?

Key Points for CSOs

- Indicators should directly link to program goals and objectives
- Mix quantitative and qualitative measures for fuller picture
- Consider both direct and indirect measures of change
- Track short-term outputs and long-term outcomes
- Choose indicators that are feasible to measure in your context



KEY MEASUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS

For Quantitative Indicators:

- Define clear measurement units
- Establish reliable data sources
- Set realistic targets
- Consider baseline needs
- Plan tracking frequency

For Qualitative Indicators:

- Develop assessment rubrics
- Define quality standards
- Create measurement tools
- Plan analysis methods
- Document collection protocols



SECURITY NOTE

While measuring these indicators, always consider local security context and protect sensitive information through appropriate protocols.



Illustrative P/CVE Goals, Objectives, and Indicators

Selecting the right indicators is crucial for understanding program impact. Below are common P/CVE goals with corresponding indicators, including both easily measurable outputs and more complex outcomes that can suggest prevention success.

Goal 1: Reduce Youth Vulnerability

Objective	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
Create meaningful alternatives to extremist involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of youth programs implemented • Participation in skills training • Mentorship matches established • Youth-led projects initiated • Educational opportunities provided • Number of referral mechanisms established • Early warning training sessions conducted • Family support programs implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth engagement in positive activities • Skills application by participants • Quality of youth leadership • Program sustainability • Community integration levels • Reported interventions in recruitment attempts • Cases of family/community prevention of recruitment • Reduction in engagement with extremist content • Successful reintegration of at-risk individuals • Number of individuals seeking early support

Goal 2: Enhance Prevention Capacity

Objective	Output Indicators	Outcome Indicators
Improve local P/CVE response mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of trained prevention actors • Prevention activities conducted • Coordination meetings held • Response protocols established • Resources mobilized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of response mechanisms • Quality of partner coordination • Information sharing efficiency • Adaptation to emerging challenges • System sustainability • Documented cases of successful early intervention • Number of individuals choosing to exit extremist involvement • Reduction in recruitment success rates in target areas • Increased reporting of recruitment attempts • Community interventions that disrupted recruitment processes

Note on Prevention Measurement: While direct causation between programs and prevented radicalization is difficult to establish, these indicators can provide evidence suggesting prevention success. They should be considered alongside other indicators as part of a comprehensive evaluation approach.

SECTION 7

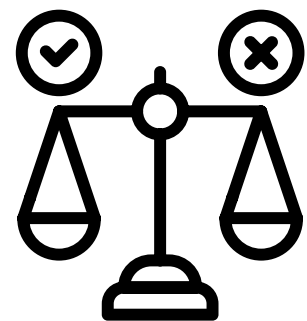
LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Countering violent extremism and terrorism requires careful adherence to legal and ethical principles to ensure that human rights, the rule of law, and democratic values are respected. Upholding these principles in counter-terrorism efforts is crucial to prevent violations of fundamental freedoms and to maintain the legitimacy and effectiveness of initiatives. This section outlines key legal and ethical considerations for organizations involved in countering violent extremism, emphasizing the importance of balancing security measures with individual rights, ensuring accountability, and fostering inclusivity.

? What Legal and Ethical Principles Must Guide P/CVE Work?

Key Principles for CSOs

- Human rights must be central to all P/CVE activities
- Security measures should not override civil liberties
- Transparency builds trust but must protect vulnerable populations
- Inclusive dialogue prevents marginalization
- Regular ethical review keeps programs on track



Essential Rights-Based Checklist for CSOs

✓ Program Design	✓ Security Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporates human rights standards• Prevents discrimination• Protects privacy rights• Ensures due process• Maintains transparency• Includes grievance mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportional to threats• Legally compliant• Protects civil liberties• Regularly reviewed• Community-consulted• Clear safeguards in place



How Do We Balance Security and Rights?



WHAT to Protect: A Framework For CSOs

Individual Privacy	Civil Liberties	Community Rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal information • Confidential data • Private communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of expression • Right to assembly • Religious freedom • Due process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-discrimination • Equal treatment • Cultural respect • Collective dignity



HOW to Protect: A Framework For CSOs

Clear Protocols	Oversight Mechanisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written guidelines • Staff training • Regular review • Update procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review committees • Regular audits • Community feedback • Adjustment processes



CSO Accountability Framework

Internal Measures:	External Measures:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear governance structure • Written ethical guidelines • Regular staff training • Documentation systems • Review mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community consultation • Transparent reporting • Feedback channels • Public accountability • Partnership protocols



Remember: Success in P/CVE requires balancing effective programming with ethical considerations (Martin, 2023). Regular review helps maintain this balance.

CONCLUSION

MOVING FORWARD: KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR CSOs

Civil society organizations play a vital role in P/CVE work, but face evolving challenges as VEOs become more sophisticated. Here are the essential takeaways for CSOs engaging in this critical work:

1. Understanding Your Role

- CSOs provide unique value through grassroots connections and community trust
- Local knowledge gives CSOs advantages in addressing root causes
- CSOs must directly compete with VEO influence in communities
- Security and protection need to be balanced with accessibility

2. Key Areas for Impact

- Fill governance gaps that VEOs exploit
- Provide alternative justice and dispute resolution
- Counter VEO economic influence
- Build digital literacy and counter-narrative capabilities
- Foster community resilience through local leadership

3. Emerging Challenges

- VEOs are adapting quickly to local contexts
- Online radicalization requires new response strategies
- Funding sustainability affects program continuity
- Community polarization can hinder effectiveness
- Security threats to staff and partners are increasing

4. Critical Success Factors

- Evidence-based programming targeting specific vulnerabilities
- Real-time monitoring of VEO tactics and adaptation
- Strong local partnerships and leadership
- Flexible funding models for rapid response
- Protected communication channels

5. Future Focus Areas

- Build stronger digital response capabilities
- Enhance security protocols while maintaining access
- Strengthen community-led initiatives
- Improve monitoring and evaluation systems



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