



# STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TO PREVENT AND COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM:

GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR A  
COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO REHABILITATION  
AND REINTEGRATION OF VEOS



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## Preface

The scope of this book is to present the work of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute (UNICRI) in the field of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PVE/CVE), and sharing the lessons learned and good practices developed in this area of work. The publication refers to the experience and expertise gained during the implementation of several UNICRI programmes in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism and in particular in prison settings.

UNICRI grounds its CT and PVE activities on a comprehensive end-to-end approach. This end-to-end approach, from prevention and intervention to rehabilitation and reintegration, considers the broader context and involves those who are at high risk of failure in the community, individuals within the criminal justice system, and those who are attempting to reintegrate back into society. UNICRI provides Member States with context-driven, actionable knowledge to strengthen national capacity with this comprehensive end-to-end approach that considers all steps in the life-cycle of a terrorist, violent extremist offender, or foreign terrorist fighter, including their social and institutional environment and the criminal justice system.

The approach of UNICRI includes pilot projects assessing alternative measures and diversion programmes in juvenile justice systems, the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in detention settings, and action to strengthen civil society actors in the work of reintegration into communities. Technical training for public actors and civil society actors, such as religious leaders, are an inherent part of project work. Action-oriented research grounds project work and feeds into the development of evidence-based strategies and policies. Evaluation of PVE initiatives is part of ongoing project work, especially in relevant regions, such as the Maghreb and Sahel.

I would like to thank all UNICRI staff for their contributions to this publication, as well as the Member States, the experts, the partners, stakeholders and donors that through the years have contributed to the advancement of UNICRI initiatives preventing and countering violent extremism.

Leif Villadsen,  
Deputy Director,  
Senior Programme Officer





## Executive summary

This publication is based on the work conducted and the knowledge collected by UNICRI in the past 15 years by implementing counter-terrorism projects. The book will contribute to the PVE/CVE international debate, especially concerning lessons learned and challenges in the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts of violent extremists.

The first part of the publication will provide an overview of the initiatives launched by the UN to prevent and counter terrorism and a description of UNICRI's experience and expertise in this area. The second part will focus on procedural and operational implications of designing and implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programmes addressed at preventing radicalization in prison settings and reducing recidivism after release. A brief description of the main topics addressed in the book is provided below:

- **Pathway model: towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program**  
UNICRI developed a pathway model towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program. This model combines practical experience from work in the different countries with a theoretically-grounded background framework, taking into account specific national and regional contexts. Together, a pathway model was developed that highlights the needs and contexts of Member States and streamlines knowledge and experience into a good practice that can inspire other Member States to start the process of developing comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs.
- **Engagement process of counterparts/stakeholders**  
Successfully countering violent extremism requires employing a holistic approach that involves engagement with multiple stakeholders across an array of different sectors, including government, civil society, the private sector, academia, and regional and international institutions. This part of the book examines the ways in which the engagement of stakeholders has played a pivotal role in the UNICRI initiative on the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders, in regard to developing frameworks for cooperation, carrying out the implementation of activities, and planning for the achievement of joint objectives over the short, medium, and long term. UNICRI's experience and approach to stakeholder engagement is mapped, starting from the institute's role in international fora, through the development and implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programming in Member States.
- **Designing national strategies/action plans**  
National action plans are crucial in developing measures to prevent and counter terrorism, as emphasized in several UN instruments and recommendations/guiding principles. Various and diverse national and regional strategies/action plans have been developed worldwide in the past decade. UNICRI has developed a unique experience in supporting the government of Indonesia in designing a national strategy/Action Plan (Grand Design and Road Map) in the rehabilitation and reintegration of high risk inmates including VEOs.
- **Risk Assessment in prisons**  
In the field of violent extremists, risk assessments form part of a broad strategy for the early prevention and curbing of terrorism, terrorism-related behaviour or violent extremism. Risk assessments in the field of countering radicalization serve to identify risk factors that reduce security threats within prisons and at the same time inform the development of successful rehabilitation programmes. UNICRI has worked to support a number of requesting Member State Governments to develop and administer country- and context-specific risk assessments for violent extremist offenders (VEOs) in prisons. The risk assessments carried out in the different countries have served similar overarching purposes in their respective prison institutions. In some countries they have provided prison personnel with previously unknown data on potential security threats concerning inmate management, they have also allowed for rehabilitation programmes to be developed by local teams with UNICRI support.
- **The importance of research in the design of rehabilitation and reintegration programs in prisons**  
Despite increased number of VEOs rehabilitation and reintegration programmes worldwide, evidence-based initiatives are very limited because of lack of structured data collection and

analysis. Notwithstanding, research is essential for designing effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Data collection in prison for the development of rehabilitation and reintegration activities poses various challenges ranging from security concerns to clear definition of research purposes and methods. The first part of this chapter aims at explaining the importance of research in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. The second part addresses challenges that research in prison settings implies. The third part describes how to conduct research taking into consideration the limitations and challenges identified, making reference to the experience gained by UNICRI in this domain.

- **Evaluating Counter Violent Extremism (CVE): a fundamental challenge to be addressed**  
Counter Violent Extremism (CVE), which represents a novel approach in the field of policies oriented towards combatting terrorism, enjoys today a great boost despite the fact that its effectiveness needs to be tested by solid evaluation methods and proved by empirical evidence. This article aims to show that, while it seems likely that CVE will continue in the global agenda in the upcoming years - possibly due to a general fatigue of relying exclusively on security-based counter-terrorism measures such as military force or law enforcement - it appears essential for the successful evolution of the CVE agenda that the aforementioned lack of solid evaluation techniques be urgently remedied. Adequately attending to emerging concerns related to the need for addressing - within the CVE models - issues of political scope also seems relevant according to existing evidence on radicalization and terrorism.
- **Towards a comprehensive approach in rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs**  
The implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration program to address VEOs and FTFs implies several challenges, arising mainly from the political environment, the specificity of the context, security issues, actors to be engaged and the legal framework.



## List of Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asia Nations
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CT	Counter-terrorism
CTC	Counter-terrorism Committee
CTED	Counter-terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
CTITF	Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
FTFs	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
GCCS	Global Center on Cooperative Security
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
GCTF	Global Counter-terrorism Forum
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICCT	International Centre for Counter-terrorism – The Hague
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IPJJ	Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organized for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
TIJ	Thailand Institute of Justice
UNCCT	United Nations Counter-terrorism Centre
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VEOs	Violent Extremist Offenders
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth



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Mary Yaku

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Lydia Habila

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ACTION!  
COMMITTEE

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Na'omi

A FOREST  
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# OVERVIEW OF THE UN COUNTER TERRORISM ARCHITECTURE

By Noël Klima

## ***The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy***

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is a unique instrument designed to foster and enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism globally. It was adopted by consensus on 8 September 2006 by the UN General Assembly, when all Member States agreed to a common strategic and operational approach to fight terrorism. Through this action, Member States have sent a clear message that condemns terrorism in all its forms, while also resolving to take practical steps, both individually and collectively, in order to prevent and combat this global threat.

The Strategy, with its relevant resolution and Plan of Action, is composed of four key pillars:

- Addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.
- Measures to prevent and combat terrorism.
- Measures to build States' capacities to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard.
- Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

In response to the reality of a constantly evolving terrorism landscape, the Strategy is revised every two years by the General Assembly, making it a constantly updated, and hence, a living document. Revisions to the strategy respond to new challenges and threats and include recommendations to address them.

For decades, the issue of terrorism has been on the agenda of the United Nations. Within the UN system, there are specific entities and programmes that are mandated to carry out and monitor mechanisms to more effectively implement and assess the components of the aforementioned Strategy. The current section comprises a summary of the activities that different UN entities carry out on counter-terrorism.

Since 1963, the international community has promulgated 19 international legal instruments to address terrorism. One landmark Security Council Resolution (1373) was adopted in 2001, calling on States to implement legal and judicial measures related to combating the financing of terrorism. The Resolution led to the establishment of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). The CTC is guided by Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) and is mandated to support Member States in their prevention efforts, both within their borders and across regions. Due to the complex nature of the activities carried out, the CTC is assisted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), which was established in 2004 to conduct expert assessments and to implement its policy decision. Other tools have been adopted to enhance the capacity of Member States to counter-terrorism, such as the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, as well as the 1540 Committee on the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

A central component of the UN architecture is the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which was established by the UN Secretary-General and endorsed by the General Assembly. The CTITF was created in adherence with the requirements and recommendations set out by the aforementioned Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The CTITF consists of 38 international

entities and INTERPOL, each with individual mandates. These entities are assigned to carry out efforts in order to maintain consistency across the UN system and aim to strengthen coordination, given the multilateral nature of terrorism and the systematic response needed to counter this phenomenon. Although the Task Force's major responsibility is to observe, implement and improve the recommendations of the Strategy, its mandate is to ensure that the UN system is adaptable to the evolving needs of Member States with respect to countering terrorist activities. Moreover, this mandate refers to offering policy support, improving in-depth knowledge of the Strategy, and, where necessary, expediting the delivery of technical assistance.

Another entity that supports the Strategy is the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT). The Centre was established within the office of the CTITF in 2011 with the aim to promote international cooperation and support Member States in the implementation of the Strategy.

On 15 June 2017, the UN Office of Counter Terrorism was established through the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 71/291. The new UN Office for Counter Terrorism incorporates both the CTITF and the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (CTC), which were moved out of the Department of Political Affairs. The office is headed by an Under-Secretary-General, maintains close relationships with the Security Council bodies and Member States, and aims to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.

Numerous agencies, offices and programmes throughout the United Nations system are assisting Member States in their counter-terrorism efforts. The diversification and multiplicity of the efforts undertaken by the UN system reflect the fact that terrorism involves a multitude of issues and must be addressed comprehensively. The combined endeavours of all these entities make for a multi-disciplinary and tailored approach to counter-terrorism.

### ***The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute***

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) is part of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). The Institute is one of six training and research Institutes of the United Nations. It was established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1968 pursuant to Economic and Social Council Resolution 1086 B (XXXIX) of 1965, which called for an expansion of UN activities in crime prevention and criminal justice. Its mission is to advance security, serve justice and build peace in support of the rule of law and sustainable development.

The Institute works on specialized niches and in selected fields of crime prevention, justice, security governance, counter-terrorism and social cohesion. The goals of UNICRI are:

- To advance understanding of crime-related problems.
- To foster just and efficient criminal justice systems.
- To support the respect of international instruments and other standards.
- To facilitate international law enforcement cooperation and judicial assistance.

The Institute's programmes (divided into thematic areas) aim to create and test new and holistic approaches in preventing crime and promoting justice and development. The Institute supports the design and implementation of comprehensive and innovative modalities to confront traditional and emerging threats, at both the national and cross-border levels. UNICRI's work is mainly focused on: assessing countries' threats and needs; developing and sharing knowledge; acting as a worldwide training and capacity-building centre; acting as a global forum to identify, tailor and test strategies and practical models; assisting countries in strengthening national and international law enforcement cooperation and judicial assistance; establishing platforms for consultation and cooperation; and providing advisory services.

Using research as a foundation for its activities, the Institute delivers training and technical cooperation programmes to requesting Member States. The Institute organises specialised trainings

and workshops as a direct way to disseminate knowledge and build capacity for a range of targeted actors, including policy makers, practitioners (i.e. law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges) and international experts. UNICRI promotes the exchange of expertise and fruitful discussion among representatives from different sectors that lead to concrete recommendations and identification of areas in need of more understanding and cooperation.

UNICRI serves as a platform for consultation and cooperation, acting as an honest broker in bringing together different partners such as Member States, local governments, research institutions, international organizations, private entities and civil society at large in forging a common approach to address common challenges.

As part of the CTITF, UNICRI contributes to the implementation of coordinated and coherent efforts across the United Nations system to prevent and counter violent extremism. In this framework, the Institute supports Member States in preventing and countering the appeal of terrorism and recruitment into violent extremism by strengthening national and regional capacities.

UNICRI plays a leading role in a number of initiatives. Within the Counter-terrorism (CT) field, the Institute works on numerous projects that together cover a vast array of topics. Some of UNICRI's main projects are cross-cutting in the field of CT and cover different thematic areas, including: chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk mitigation; cyber-crime; addressing hate speech and hate crime; returning foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs); rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists in prison settings; juvenile justice and diversion, or alternatives to incarceration, and; the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism. Exploring the intersection of these topics in greater depth makes UNICRI's work multi-dimensional and builds a more detailed picture of the areas of need in the field of crime and justice.

In addition, UNICRI has conducted several initiatives to support Member States in fulfilling their international commitments (starting from UNSCR 2178) to address the threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters by increasing awareness, understanding and capacities of national and international stakeholders. Moreover, activities aim to provide technical assistance in the identification of risks to be addressed, capabilities to be strengthened and actions to be undertaken for developing and implementing a comprehensive and holistic strategy to address the FTF phenomenon. UNICRI liaises with other international organizations to ensure that various and separate efforts are incorporated into one coherent approach in order to build up and strengthen capacities for addressing the threat posed by returning FTFs. The Institute is working in close cooperation with selected target countries to collect relevant data and promote the implementation of a tested method based on real case scenarios. Such activities facilitate the preparation of action plans addressing the issue of rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs with respect to different stakeholder perspectives.



UNICRI has implemented a research project to assess the pre-conditions for developing a juvenile diversion pilot program for potential FTFs and other at-risk juveniles. The Institute conducted a preliminary analysis of the juvenile justice systems and alternative measures/diversion programmes in place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco, Nigeria, Kenya and Tunisia.

Furthermore, UNICRI is conducting a pilot project to counter radicalization and violent extremism in the Sahel-Maghreb region. The initiative integrates international, regional and local resources to support the countries of the region in preventing and countering the growing threat of violent extremism. The initiative promotes inclusive activities through the development of more responsive and inclusive societies. The project is based on the assumption that civil society actors can offer key assets in the implementation of actions to limit the influence of violent extremist ideologies and challenge the narratives of extremists by offering positive alternatives to violence. While being context-specific and focused on the human dimension, the project facilitates the sharing of experiences, guidelines and good practices in the region and among different stakeholders. It supports cross-border cooperation and the establishment of synergies and mutual understanding between civil society groups and institutions.

A key topic of concern for many Member States is the financing of terrorism. Organised crime has been identified as one of the sources of terrorism financing, thus leading to a nexus between organised crime and terrorism. The nexus can go further than simply the financing of terrorism, particularly if we consider the entire continuum of alliance and convergence. Security Council Resolution 2195 (2014), on threats to international peace and security, called upon Member States to better understand and address the nexus between organised crime and terrorism as a threat to security and development. In line with this Resolution, UNICRI has undertaken several initiatives on this topic. In May 2016, UNICRI organized a meeting in Bangkok, in partnership with the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ), to examine the nexus and the threat that it poses to security and development. Representatives of 15 Member States and prominent international experts in the field were invited to discuss the issue in depth. During the meeting, participants reviewed the current evidence basis and conceptual theories around the nexus, drawing from their knowledge of lessons learned and good practices, all with the aim to define better policy and programmatic responses. Moreover, UNICRI has worked in close partnership with the TIJ to carry out a research project concerning the state of transnational organised crime in Thailand as a result of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) Economic Integration. Apart from examining forms and trends of current and emerging transnational organized crime, criminal groups operating in Thailand and illicit transit routes for trafficked goods, the question of the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism (both at local and international level) was explored.

UNICRI's work in PVE/CVE has been inspired by, and connected to, the work of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). The Institute implements a variety of methods in the area of rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders, and the Institute plays a key role in supporting Member States in translating into national policy the good practices identified in the Global Counterterrorism Forum's (GCTF) Rome Memorandum, which specifically addresses the rehabilitation needs of incarcerated violent extremists. In the field of rehabilitation and reintegration programs for violent extremist offenders (VEOs) in prison settings, UNICRI has enhanced its cooperation with a number of Member States (Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, the Philippines, and Thailand) in order to support them in the design and implementation of tailored programs. Prisons represent a priority area for preventing and countering violent extremism. It is important to address possible risks in prison settings, environments where incarcerated terrorists can network, compare and exchange tactics, radicalize and recruit new members, and command and control operations beyond the prison, namely in the community. At the same time, it is critical to take into consideration that many imprisoned or detained extremists will eventually be released. Thus, in order to reduce risk upon release, there is a universal need to find mechanisms to stimulate disengagement and/or de-radicalisation.

# UNICRI'S PROGRAM ON REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST OFFENDERS: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

*By Noël Klima and Elena Dal Santo*

## **Introduction**

The UNICRI program on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, developed within the framework of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), is aimed at supporting Member States in their efforts to design, develop and implement effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs for violent extremist offenders and foreign terrorist fighters, and to address the broad range of issues related to radicalisation in prison settings and beyond, thus enabling inclusion and participation within societies.

Rehabilitation and reintegration are broad terms that encompass a variety of practices as well as different expected outcomes. Efforts focus on preventing and countering violent behaviour and on enabling inclusion and participation in society. Two concepts that underpin rehabilitation are de-radicalization and disengagement, which have generated debate as to their respective definitions and utility for rehabilitation programs. Two commonly used definitions are as follows:

A) De-radicalization: the social and psychological process whereby an individual's commitment to, and involvement in, radical ideas is reduced to the extent that he/she is no longer at risk of involvement and engagement in violent activity.

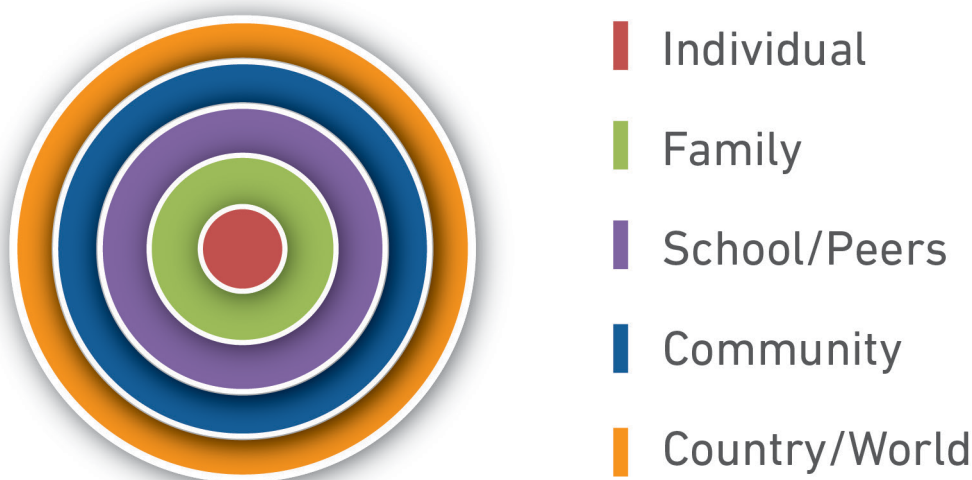
B) Disengagement: the process whereby an individual experiences a change in role or function that is usually associated with a reduction of violent participation. It may not necessarily involve leaving the movement, but is most frequently associated with significant temporary or permanent role change.

In other words, de-radicalisation represents an attitudinal change resulting from a psychological process. Typically, the de-radicalized individual adopts more moderate views and renounces violence. Disengagement refers to behavioural change whereby a person lessens his/her engagement in violent activities. Indeed, it is important to keep in mind that many Member States opt for disengagement as an outcome for their rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, since it is very difficult to really know if an individual is de-radicalized, whereas disengagement is easier to assess. However, rather than being two clear-cut processes, de-radicalisation and disengagement interact, making it difficult to focus explicitly on one or the other in a rehabilitation programme. For instance, radical ideas are not dangerous in themselves, even though they may remain a risk factor for violent behaviour in some circumstances. While there is general consensus on the broad definitions presented above, the nuances of these phenomena are not taken as a given, but continue to be disputed.

Rehabilitation and reintegration efforts need to be considered long-term (before detention, during detention and after release) and should be embedded in the general CT/CVE policy and practice structure. To design successful rehabilitation and reintegration programs, expertise from different agencies (multi-agency) and disciplines (multi-disciplinary) are highly beneficial. Furthermore, as the theoretical model demonstrates, families and communities play a crucial role in this process, as well as other civil society actors. UNICRI assists in the development of platforms to achieve strengthened cooperation between state actors and civil society entities. A specific initiative, developed by the Institute in this regard, will be further discussed in this publication.

## ***Theory of change (concentric circles model)***

The theoretical basis for UNICRI's rehabilitation and reintegration technical assistance work arises from theories of behavioural change, which are widely used in a variety of different fields. Whereas in psychology much emphasis is put on the individual and individual agency, social sciences incorporate social environments (family, friends, institutions, political environment). The *concentric circles model* (Figure 2), which UNICRI applies to its theory of change, comprises both. The work is based on the assumption that context matters. The concentric circles model argues that any successful approaches to changing the behaviour of a radical individual through rehabilitation and reintegration efforts can only be effective and sustainable if the different layers (circles) are involved in the process. If the individual changes, but does not have his/her family's support, he/she will probably revert back (green circle around the individual). If families do not have the support of their peers and schools (purple circle), together they will not sustain their change and the individual will probably revert back. If the community (blue circle) does not have support from the national government or region (orange cycle), they cannot sustain their change and the school/peers, family and individual will probably revert back.



*Figure 2: UNICRI's concentric circles model for rehabilitation and reintegration*

This dynamic leads to comprehensive end-to-end, long-term programming with all actors involved in order to obtain effective and sustainable changes of behaviour in violent extremists.

## ***Programme Development Pathways***

UNICRI has been working for several years on developing comprehensive, end-to-end and long-term rehabilitation and reintegration programs with Member states. The approach of the Institute is tailored to cultural, national and regional contexts, as well pressing needs, while always involving relevant program's actors and stakeholders. Over the course of UNICRI's work with Member States, it was proven that there is not a one-size-fits-all way to achieve comprehensive programming: in order to develop comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs in countries, different pathways have been designed. Each pathway is tailor-made, taking into account national and regional contexts. According to different Member State needs, the following pathways have been identified and can serve as good practices for other countries interested in developing comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Moreover, the following pathways pinpoint important steps and lessons learned in the different contexts. All pathways share the pre-condition of a mandate for starting collaboration with the respective Member States, which then leads to a comprehensive, multi-faceted needs assessment. UNICRI's pathways for the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs are summarized below:

### *Pathway 1: The "traditional approach"*

This approach is a linear, consecutive process towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programme. A multi-disciplinary team is central in developing the programs.



#### *Pathway 2: Towards changing attitudes by experiencing results*

This approach is a rather adaptive and non-linear process towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program based on scientific research results. Scientific research is an important accompanying and informing element to the continual development of programs.

#### *Pathway 3: From framework to program approach*

This is a consecutive pathway where framework and program development are strictly separated. The first focus lies in the development of a comprehensive and detailed framework and the second one lies in the implementation of the framework towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program.

#### *Pathway 4: Targeted approach*

Based on needs assessments and gap analysis in several countries, a targeted approach is applied. This approach is an adaptive way of dedicating support that addresses specific gaps to complement already existing rehabilitation and reintegration programs. This approach is non-linear, starting with identified gaps instead of a general situation assessment. This approach is usually applied when rehabilitation and reintegration activities are already present and/or in the case of interest in specific support instead of a total systemic revision of the programs that are in place.

Determining which pathway is most suitable in any given situation depends on many factors. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that approaches to the development of programs on rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) need to be adaptive to specific contexts.

## **The traditional approach**

This approach is a linear, consecutive process towards the development of a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program. Engagement with a multi-disciplinary team is central for developing and implementing activities. This model applies to countries where no specific VEO rehabilitation and reintegration activities are in place, and authorities are interested in developing a full-fledged rehabilitation and reintegration program.

#### *Needs assessment*

The process usually begins with high level and management meetings that are carried out to identify the visions and needs of policy makers and practitioners in the country. A visit to a prison facility is extremely useful in order to complement the needs assessment and support the understanding of daily prison operations and the nature of the interaction between prison personnel and the detainee population. The main goal of the needs assessment is to obtain a realistic picture of the different national and thematic contexts in order to direct forthcoming technical assistance activities. As a result of the needs assessment, a prison can be selected in which to carry out a comprehensive pilot program.

#### *General staff awareness training*

If prison staff has no knowledge or experience on how to work with VEOs, general staff awareness training is required to provide them with the basics and reduce biases and prejudices that can cause tensions with inmates. This includes training for corrections personnel from different professions, such as corrections officers, social workers, clinical psychologists, classification officers, and penologists. During this initial training, concerns and challenges that the staff face in their daily work are discussed and documented in order to feed the development of follow-up steps.

#### *Training for the creation of classification and risk assessment tools*

In the absence of any classification tools, a general training on the notion of classification and risk assessment, and on how these tools can be designed and applied, must be inserted into program development. As a first step, a group of specialists should be identified and assembled to create a classification team mandated to elaborate a pre-pilot program index to be tested through interviews with VEOs. Based on the collected data, points are ascribed to the index as a means of evaluation. The developed risk assessment index can then become an extended part of the existing classification process, including the intake assessment. The development is usually followed by training for all staff issuing the questionnaire in order to educate them on the processes of conducting a survey with VEOs.

#### *Creation of a multi-disciplinary team to develop rehabilitation and reintegration programs*

To respond to VEO needs and specific situations, rehabilitation and reintegration treatment programs are multi-disciplinary by nature, and also depend upon regional, national and local detention contexts. Therefore, a multi-disciplinary team consisting of professionals is the proper catalyst for delivering tailor-made programs. The team shall include experts who are in the position to work directly with inmates and to develop specific rehabilitation and reintegration programs for these individuals. Interaction with this team in the development phase creates synergies, avoids duplication and gaps, and ensures comprehensiveness. Based on the data collected during the assessment phase, program components and standard operating procedures are developed and implemented.

#### *Development and implementation of programs*

Based on the identified needs, the multi-disciplinary team starts developing concrete programs. It should be stressed that, considered the possible limitations in place, the team may identify program options, namely elements that could be realistically delivered in the short term. The program options can include religion, family, education, vocational training, creative arts, sports, and psychological treatment. The team can select one or more components out of the options to pilot the process of creation. Once the options are identified and agreed upon, relevant national and international experts should meet to outline all the necessary elements and discuss each part of the program in depth. This process can be repeated for additional options and components.

#### *A comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program*

When viewed together, all steps lead towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program. The results of the risk assessment provide information for the adaptation of the program and for the development of complementary programs to be established in the future. At the end of this process, a national (local) multi-disciplinary team forms a nucleus for the development of a comprehensive program that can be implemented and evaluated.

#### *Achievements as a result of the process*

Dialogue and cooperation among relevant stakeholders are improved during the process of development. The capacity and tailored skills among prison personnel, especially in risk assessment, are enhanced. Moreover, the establishment of a multi-disciplinary expert group strengthens the self-reliance of the Member State and prison management officials, and treatment programs for VEOs are designed and implemented.

#### *General considerations*

Good prison management lies at the foundation of all rehabilitation and reintegration programming. Prison infrastructure needs to be appropriate, for instance, overpopulation should be avoided. Prison staff need sufficient knowledge of the inmates and their backgrounds in order to be able to recognize and apply religious and cultural nuances. In addition, prison management and staff need to establish rapport and trust with VEOs and need to develop communication strategies to effectively interact with them. Provision of a safe and secure environment for staff members to work with VEOs is a critical success factor. Awareness raising among staff on VEO characteristics, the reduction of personal biases and the fear of working with these types of inmates support improvements. Staff needs to be specifically trained to work with VEO leaders in prisons. Data collection and information exchange with other agencies helps to close information sharing gaps. Good functioning requires that prison management address the languages spoken by VEOs through involving staff that speak those languages, or by providing reliable translations. Prison management needs to specifically address the role of religion and ideology in the program. A classification tool should be applied, and staff should be trained to use it. The developed programs should be practically feasible and applicable for use. In order to achieve implementation, a rehabilitation and reintegration program for VEOs requires sufficient staff and infrastructure resources.

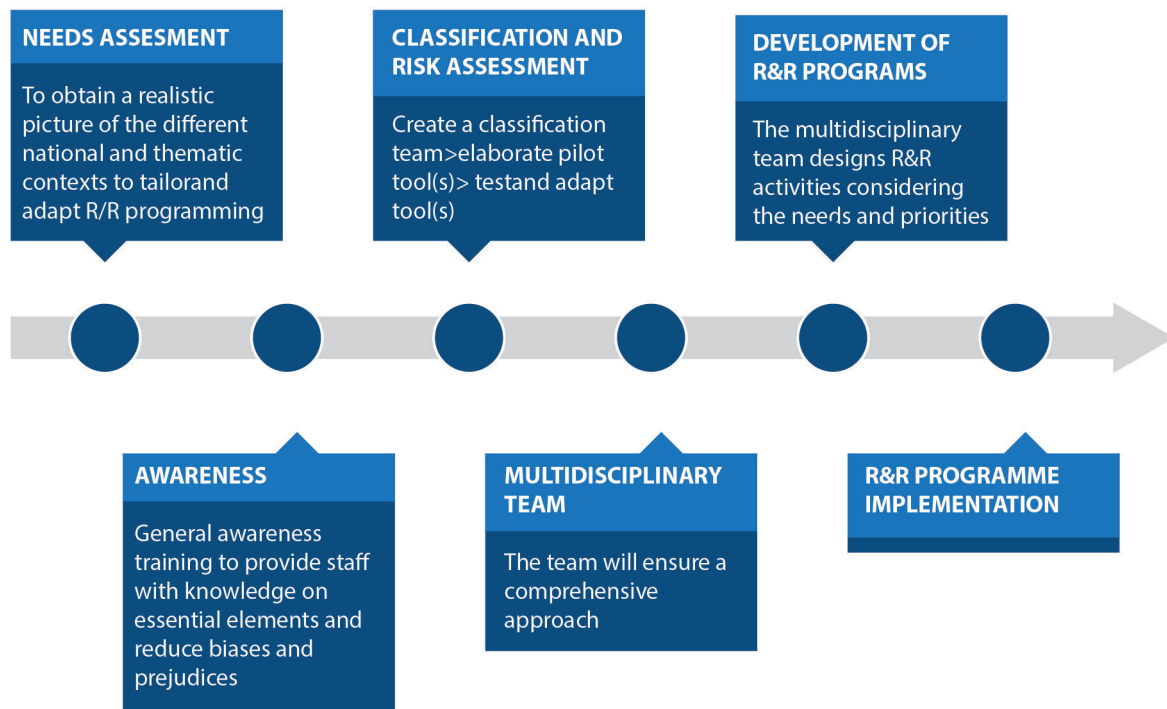


Figure 3: Phases of the “traditional approach”

## Towards changing attitudes by experiencing results

VEO rehabilitation and reintegration efforts may be geared towards changing attitudes by experiencing results. This approach is a rather adaptive, non-linear process towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program based on scientific research results. Scientific research is an important accompanying and informing element for the development of programs.

### *Initial research and data collection*

Data collection can be performed through different methods and strategies according to the local context. One of the easiest ways to gain a general overview of the situation of VEOs in a country entails the administration of a questionnaire addressed to the national prison authorities. This data collection may represent the initial phase of a broader needs assessment process. Based on the results of the survey, a first outline for a tailor-made rehabilitation and reintegration program can be designed and shared with relevant country institutions in order to start the discussion on essential elements of a rehabilitation and reintegration program.

### *Needs assessment*

The first draft of the designed program can serve as the basis for a further assessment of needs. Needs assessment requires engagement with key national and international stakeholders from different relevant local and national institutions. Comprehensive and in-depth discussion and debate on needs and priorities may be fostered by the organization of workshops and may be enhanced by the participation of experts who can contribute to the debate. Discussion with stakeholders can lead to the analysis of the phenomenon of violent extremism in the country, the revision of current national and international practices for rehabilitating and reintegrating VEOs, and the elaboration of a clear definition of an action plan for the implementation of a rehabilitation and reintegration program for the short and medium term.

### *Scientific research to inform operational activities*

At the foundational level of the concrete development of a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program lies both research into the situation of VEOs in the country, including individual push and pull factors, and the improvement and enrichment of operational activities. An information and data collection mechanism should be set up and may include, for example, qualitative data collection through interviews and meetings with relevant actors. The gathered data can be organized

in a research database, which can serve as a precious source of information throughout the process of program development. The needs assessment and the research process should lead to the identification of targeted components to be implemented in the framework of a rehabilitation and reintegration program. Furthermore, the research results can be used to support the elaboration of risk assessment tools.

#### *Creation of a multi-disciplinary team to develop rehabilitation and reintegration programs*

In order to engage in the development of the previously identified components for the rehabilitation and reintegration program, a multi-disciplinary team with national experts and professionals should be established. This team is in the position to address the concrete needs and particular situations of the VEOs, considering the regional, national and the local detention contexts. Therefore, a multi-disciplinary team of professionals has been proven to be in the position to deliver tailor-made programs. The team is composed of experts who are able to work directly with the inmates and develop rehabilitation and reintegration programs for them. Interaction with this team in the development phase creates synergies, avoids duplication and gaps, and ensures a tailor-made program development.

#### *A comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program*

Based on the continuous accompanying research, all parts taken together lead towards the development and implementation of a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program. The results of the research provide information for the program, while the multi-disciplinary team actually leads the program development component. Furthermore, the definition of a joint action plan guarantees the mandate and buy-in by the relevant national actors.

#### *Achievements as a result of the process*

The process of engagement with the national and local authorities, as well as regional and international actors active on the ground, generates a unique environment of trust and cooperation on a very sensitive subject. Moreover, scientific research can be of added value, not only for the Member State under consideration, but also for broader PVE/CVE work in the region.

#### *General considerations*

Involving all relevant actors working in the region in the process of identifying needs and priorities avoids duplication and maximizes efforts. The engagement of all relevant national actors in the process of the development of a rehabilitation and reintegration program guarantees a tailor-made result based on a multi-disciplinary approach. Accompanying research supports authorities in identifying needs and in setting the right focus for achieving a comprehensive program on rehabilitation and reintegration for VEOs in prison settings. Research into the root causes of terrorism is relevant to lay the groundwork for the identification of needs and priorities, and for the tailor-made development of rehabilitation and reintegration programs. There is a need for continuous research that aids in formulating practice and policy. The involvement of civil society actors in rehabilitation and reintegration work is important to extend the national authority's vision on the phenomenon and to cover all dimensions of the areas of action. Cooperation with other research institutions increases the impact and avoids duplication of data collection.



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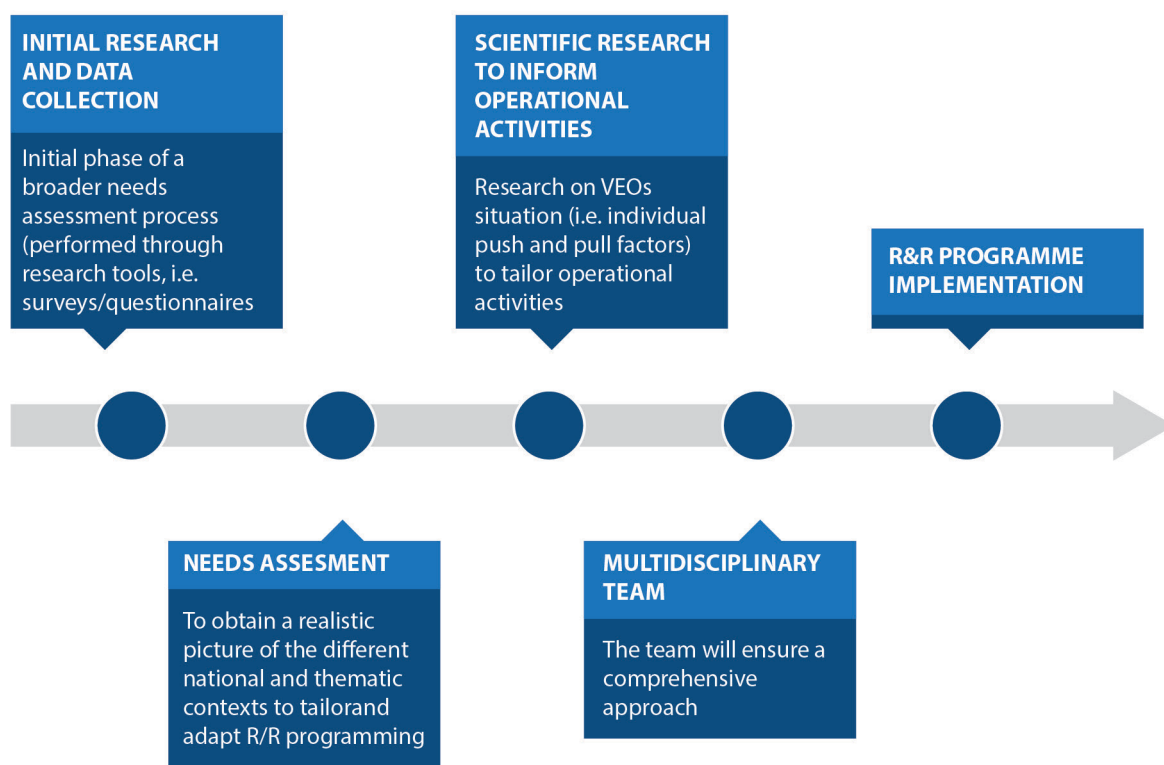


Figure 4: Phases of Pathway 2 - Towards changing attitudes by experiencing results

## From framework to program approach

The expression “from a framework to a program approach” refers to a consecutive pathway where framework and program development are strictly separated. The first focus lies in the development of a comprehensive and detailed framework, and the second one lies in the implementation of the framework towards a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program. The separation of framework and implementation is central in this approach. This approach is particularly effective when the Member State has solid experience in the area of VEO rehabilitation and reintegration, and is driven by the main purpose of identifying and aligning existing initiatives.

### *Needs assessment*

The needs assessment can be initiated by meetings with key government officials, international institutions, and civil society organizations active in the country. Over the course of one or more bilateral meetings with high-level national and international officials, existing activities and needs can be identified and mapped. The aim should be to reach the most complete picture possible as a basis for a framework, and to align this framework with initiatives already in place. This process can be further complemented with dedicated meetings with experts from the detention authorities in order to complete the needs assessment.

### *Design of a road map*

Based on the comprehensive needs assessment and mapping of existing initiatives, a roadmap for medium and long-term development of a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program should be developed with the support of corrections authorities. A national focal point can be appointed to facilitate liaison with relevant partners and to centralize the efforts taken by different stakeholders and supporting organizations.

### *Multi-disciplinary team of experts is established at the central level*

A network of experts on the subject matter and with knowledge of the ideological context should be established at the central level to support the process of implementation, more specifically through training activities. Within a train the trainer format, experts can be trained to use their expertise and share it in a structural way with other staff members. In addition, these trainers should be equipped

to provide specialized trainings at the international level and to share their country knowledge and expertise with other Member States.

#### *Multi-disciplinary capacity building workshop*

The first step of the roadmap envisages the organization of a technical workshop with high-level prison managers from all over the country to discuss macro-level characteristics and how to design effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs. The training should be carried out through an interactive methodology stimulating the maximum input from the expert participants.

#### *Comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program*

The development of a stable and holistic framework is at the core of reaching a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program in the country. The high-level engagement, structured needs, and situation assessment are laying the groundwork for a substantive action plan. This long-term process leads towards the development of a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program for VEOs in the country. A centralized multi-disciplinary expert group supports the training implementation and is able to disseminate the country's expertise and experiences nationally and internationally.

#### *Achievements as a result of the process*

A comprehensive mapping and assessment of the country's needs on the topic of rehabilitation and reintegration should be conducted. During the process, dialogue and cooperation among relevant national and international stakeholders are enhanced and expertise on the subject matter can be centralized, ready to be transferred through training activities. High-level prison management are trained and made aware of the development of comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programming. In addition, the awareness of key staff can be raised on the relevance to connect efforts in detention and outside detention.

#### *General considerations*

Duplication of efforts can be avoided through an inclusive needs assessment that takes place together with national and international stakeholders. To address political and religious ideologies, a specialized service needs to be set up and involved in the overall rehabilitation and reintegration program. Short term efforts are awareness training for prison staff and related professionals on the threat of extremist ideologies in society and in prison settings. Cooperation with international institutions is vital for success and for the development of comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs; and, public services need to work together with civil society organizations and local communities in order to form close ties with the part of society in which (former) extremist offenders will be reintegrated. Public services need to engage directly with communities addressing hotspots to create more cohesion that supports the reintegration of (former) VEOs. The geopolitical situation in some conflict areas may affect the phenomenon and increase the need for effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Security and safety of prison staff can be enhanced through training, guidelines and the protection of human rights under effective prison management. Good practice exchange with other countries supports validation of initiatives and provides inspiration for further development of rehabilitation and reintegration programs. An understanding of the push and pull factors of radicalization in the specific country context supports the development of comprehensive, tailor-made rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Existing rehabilitation centers need to improve their capacities to cope with the increasing number of VEOs, and avoid overcrowding. The participation of VEOs in existing rehabilitation and reintegration programs is possible with an adequate infrastructure and prison management supporting the improvement of security and safety of staff and inmates. A well-structured framework of cooperation between the prison authorities and aftercare programs outside prison reinforces the reintegration process. External religious leaders need to be accepted by inmates to ensure exposure to non-extremist ideologies. All staff need to be trained on how to work with VEOs, including: psychologists, social workers, religious leaders, staff, managers, and educators. The contact between detainees and their families is considered an important factor in the rehabilitation and reintegration process.

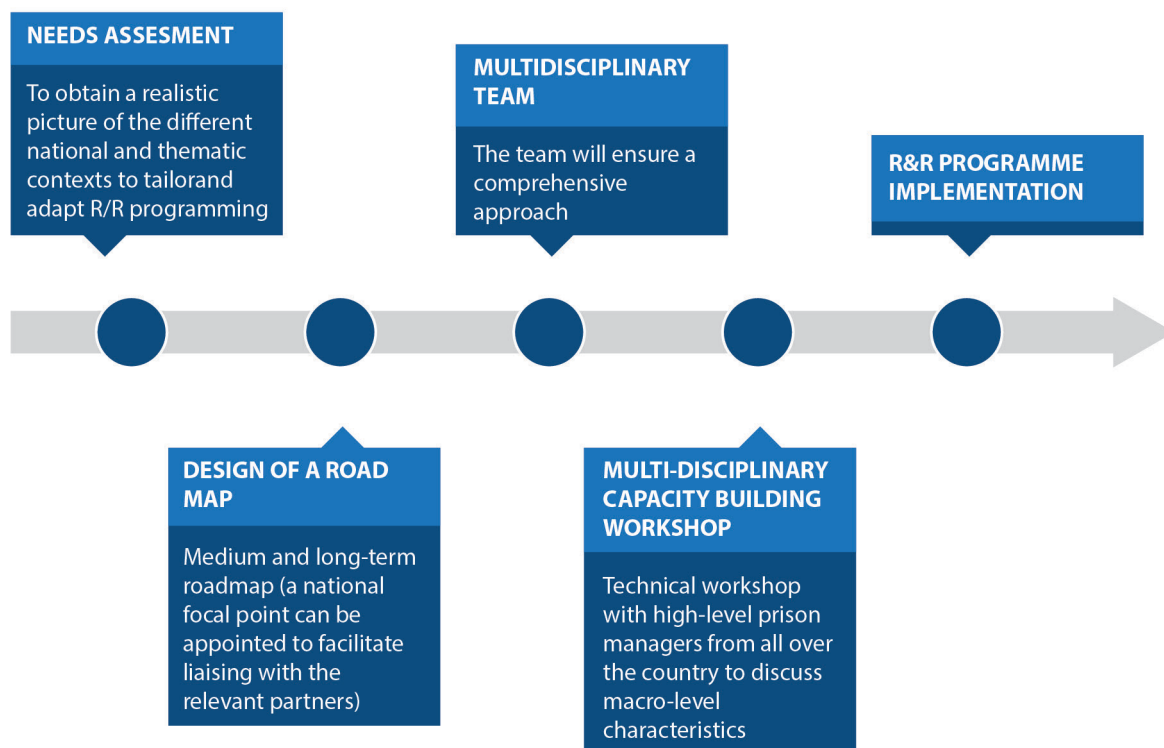


Figure 5: Phases of Pathway 3 - From framework to program approach

## Pathway 4: Targeted approach

Based on needs assessments and gap analysis of a specific country's situation, a so called "targeted approach" can also be developed and applied. This approach is an adaptive way of dedicating support to address specific gaps complementing already existing rehabilitation and reintegration programs. This approach is non-linear, starting with identified gaps instead of a general situation assessment. This approach is applied by Member States with a relatively advanced level of maturity in rehabilitation and reintegration work, and/or having interest in specific support, instead of a total systemic revision of the programs in place.

### *Needs assessment through high-level engagement*

Even in the case of a targeted approach, high-level meetings represent a starting point for engagement. A high-level mandate is necessary to guarantee a national approach to the subject and to avoid scattered approaches within one country. Moreover, the high-level meetings ensure that both the political and national contexts are taken into account, through which a national policy on rehabilitation and reintegration can be developed.

### *Needs assessment at the management level*

Expert meetings at the management level complement the high-level meetings, and are often combined during missions or visits. They are held to identify concrete needs at the practitioner level and to identify concrete gaps and programs already in place. In the examples presented below, meetings have been complemented both by prison visits and field missions in order to exchange ideas with professionals at the field level. Together, all information-gathering meetings and missions provide inputs for the needs and gaps assessment.

### *Gaps identified and filled: towards a comprehensive program*

Through the targeted approach, specific gaps can be addressed in a short period to ensure the proper functioning of programs already in place, or to improve them in order to move towards a comprehensive program.

*Example 1: Multi-disciplinary workshop on the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs*

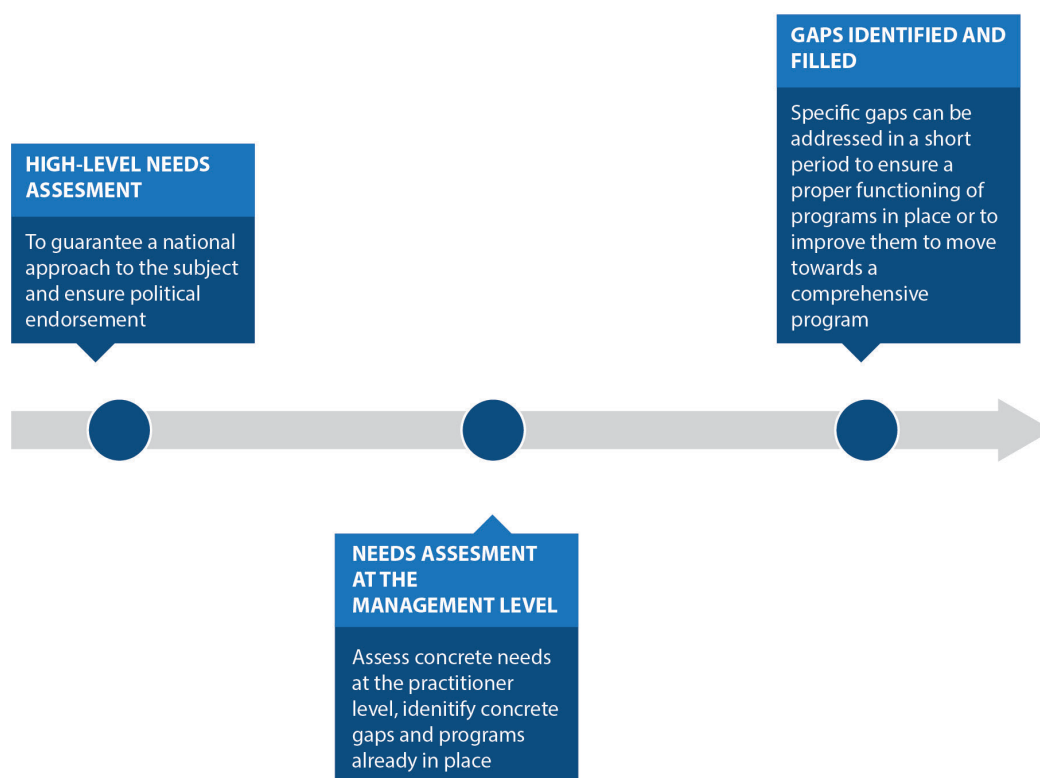
Through a multi-disciplinary technical workshop, an identified gap can be addressed. An example of the challenges faced by Member States could be the specific need to address the development of the competencies of national officials as they relate to the management of VEOs in order to prevent radicalization and prepare them for re-entry into society. A training workshop can help to clarify concepts and definitions and provide an overview of good practices in the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

*Example 2: Workshop to enhance the capacity of prison staff*

A different level of intervention can address the need to improve the skills of prison staff working directly with inmates. A workshop can be organized to provide targeted technical support related to substantive aspects in the day-to-day management of VEOs in order to prevent radicalization and to prepare them for re-entry into society. The content of the workshop can be tailored to address the specific country needs, thus subsequently involving specific staff categories, such as social workers or psychologists working with VEOs.

*Achievements as a result of the process*

Despite the specificity of the approach adopted, a general needs and gaps assessment should be conducted involving high-level and management-level representatives and professionals. The individual country specific level of maturity in rehabilitation and reintegration programs should be taken into account to avoid duplication with existing initiatives.



*Figure 6: Phases of the targeted approach*

## **Conclusions**

The pathway model highlights that the context of a country and region is crucial for the choice and the development of a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program. The ownership and involvement of a national multi-disciplinary expert team is key to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. Also, the training component in the process is important, but the target groups are dependent on countries' needs. Finally, the development of a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program is a long-term effort in which UN organizations and other international actors can play a facilitating role.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT WITH NATIONAL COUNTERPARTS AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY STAKEHOLDERS

By Arthur Brocato

## ***General introduction and theoretical background***

The overall mission of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) is to assist inter-governmental, governmental, and non-governmental organizations, in formulating and implementing improved policies in the fields of crime prevention and criminal justice. This includes advancing an understanding of crime-related issues, fostering just and efficient criminal justice systems, supporting respect for international instruments and other standards, and facilitating international law enforcement cooperation and judicial assistance.

None of these objectives can be accomplished without the positive and effective engagement of stakeholders. As defined by Reed et al. in 2009, stakeholders can be defined “as those individuals, groups or organizations affected by (or who can affect) a decision or action and who are potentially prioritized in decision-making on a particular issue” (as cited in O’Brien, Marzano, & White, 2013, p. 52). Therefore, liaison with all relevant entities, including, government officials and practitioners, civil society, academic institutions, international organizations, and subject matter experts, among others, is critical to successfully carrying out UNICRI’s mandate, and the overall mission of the UN.

The principle of stakeholder engagement is often associated with the private sector and the responsibility of companies to engage with all parties having a stake in their respective activities. However, the importance and understanding of this concept has very much evolved, and can now be understood as a crucial element for the work of all organizations, especially as civil society and the public and private sectors have developed an increasingly interdependent existence (Aakhus & Bzdak, 2015, p. 198). This is particularly relevant for international institutions such as the UN, which work globally on a range of varying issues, affecting the livelihoods of millions of individuals and requiring expertise from a plethora of different actors. As pointed out by Neil Jeffery (2009, p.3), “stakeholder engagement is relevant to any type of organisation: business, public or civil society. It is particularly important in the context of running an organisation responsibly and is integral to the concept of Corporate Responsibility.”

Furthermore, Jeffery (2009, p.3) states that: “Stakeholder engagement is crucially different to stakeholder management: stakeholder engagement implies a willingness to listen; to discuss issues of interest to stakeholders of the organisation; and, critically, the organisation has to be prepared to consider changing what it aims to achieve and how it operates, as a result of stakeholder engagement.”

In this regard, UNICRI, and the UN system as a whole, have strived to incorporate stakeholder engagement throughout their initiatives. This approach, rather than attempting to manage stakeholders, is already a somewhat inherent characteristic of the UN due to its mandate having been shaped by the Member States themselves. Moreover, non-political stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector, and experts within academia also represent vital actors whose viewpoints cannot be simply “managed” with respect to the design and implementation of initiatives led by international institutions. On the contrary, consensus must be achieved through participatory engagement with stakeholders from all of these sectors, with the failure to do so resulting in programming gaps, losses of information, divisions among stakeholders, increased potential for the duplication of efforts, and a lack of comprehensive local ownership, among other negative possibilities.

With respect to the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders, engagement with multiple stakeholders is fundamental. Rehabilitation and reintegration represents an important component of counter terrorism efforts at the national, regional, and global levels. Nevertheless, focusing on rehabilitation and reintegration alone, without concretely linking efforts to the overall context, will not solve the extremist phenomenon. Successful rehabilitation in prison settings can break the cycle of recruitment and radicalization behind bars; however, efforts in this field should be closely coordinated with post-release reintegration efforts along with prevention and diversion activities taking place at the broader levels of national societies. In turn, these national programs can ideally be linked to international strategies on preventing violent extremism (PVE), and further contribute to their development and compendium of lessons learned.

In effect, stakeholder engagement in rehabilitation and reintegration involves forging working relationships with various actors inside prison facilities, decision makers at the national level, entities working in the community, and strategic partners carrying out complimentary activities in the area of countering violent extremism (CVE).

As described in detail within the introduction of this volume, the UNICRI initiative on the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs has been developed within the framework of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which is composed of 38 international entities (CTITF, 2017). Therefore, through cooperation in the CTITF instrument, UNICRI works with the international community to achieve the overall goals of the UN Counter Terrorism Strategy and to develop initiatives through a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach at the international level.

Moreover, this approach is echoed through UNICRI's role as a key partner to the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). Through this multi-stakeholder forum, the institute helped to develop the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, a document that serves as a cornerstone in the international compendium of CVE literature.

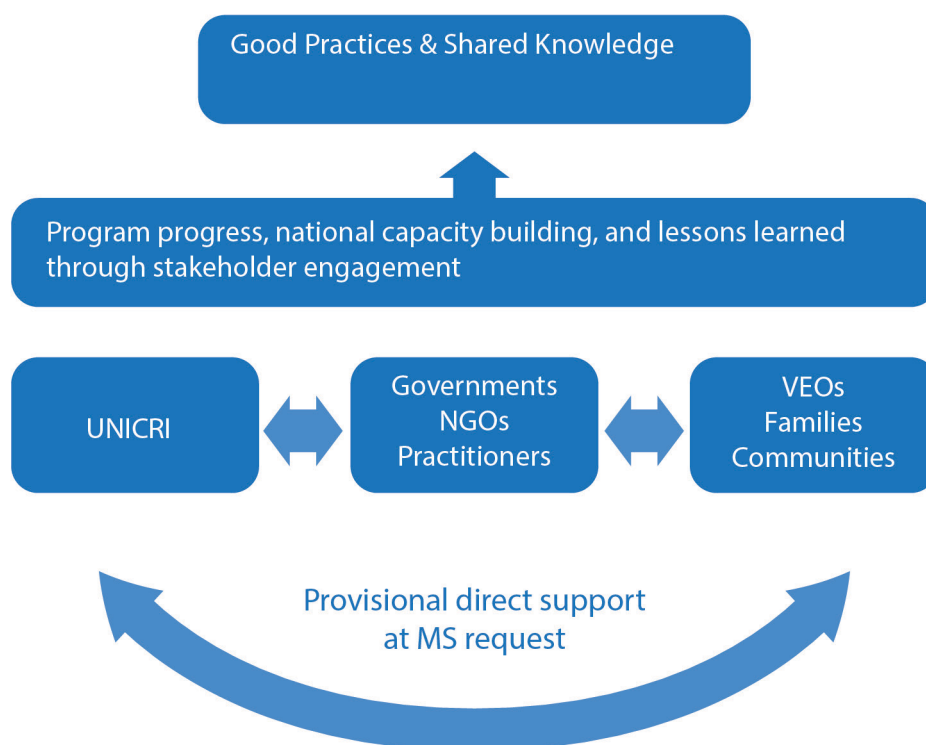
UNICRI continues to regularly engage with stakeholders in both the CTITF and GCTF through participation in meetings and workshops, with the goals of sharing and absorbing knowledge and good practices, providing updates on initiatives, coordinating programming efforts, and carrying out joint activities with respect to CVE.

With international multi-stakeholder engagement serving as a backbone to UNICRI's CVE work, the institute imparted on the development of its rehabilitation and reintegration initiative to support Member States in the design and implementation of efficient and customized rehabilitation and reintegration programs for violent extremist offenders in prison and for the period following their release. The engagement process encompasses a long term, collaborative effort between UNICRI, the requesting Member State and local and international stakeholders to ensure the development of effective strategies and work plans in strict cooperation with, and tailored to, the country's needs. The initiative is active across seven countries worldwide, and while programming is tailored and based upon individual country needs, certain trends with respect to stakeholder engagement are identified within this chapter.

Stakeholder engagement in rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives is complex, as not only should individual country programs be tailored to local needs with regard to the overall structure, but once in place, these programs should then be able to adapt themselves to the needs of particular violent extremist offenders (VEOs) in order to facilitate the best chances of successful rehabilitation and reintegration. UNICRI has based its approach to rehabilitation and reintegration on the concentric circles model, which has been outlined in the introduction to this volume. This model requires that all stakeholders work together for the good of the individual at the center of this scheme. Rehabilitation and reintegration of the individual is therefore achieved via a holistic approach, giving VEOs a strong support structure throughout their journey from rehabilitation to reintegration. Stakeholder engagement in setting up and maintaining this structure is critical for the rehabilitation and reintegration process to succeed. Therefore, a key challenge is garnering the perspectives of all actors involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration process. The failure to do so creates gaps in VEOs' support networks, opening up the possibility of pitfalls in this structure that could lead to recidivism among VEOs taking part in rehabilitation and reintegration activities.

This dynamic nature behind this model means that stakeholders engaging directly with VEOs will change, depending on the VEO's needs. This scenario, therefore, initially demands continuous engagement by UNICRI with actors directly in contact with VEOs, such as prison officials, civil society organizations, and groups of practitioners (social workers, psychologists, religious counsellors, etc.), to ensure that these actors are furnished with the toolkit that they need to achieve programmatic goals and engage directly with an array of stakeholder types who change on a case-by-case basis, e.g. VEOs themselves, societal peer groups, local community influencers / village elders, and local employers. This form of engagement fosters increased national capacity, promotes local ownership of rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and can lead to enhanced sustainability subsequent to UNICRI's in-country assistance. At the time of writing, UNICRI has engaged with a number of different stakeholders active across the Member States participating in the rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives. This includes, but is not limited to, holding meetings and training events with civil society organizations, coordinating action plans and developing programmatic goals with government officials, and providing training courses for psychologists, social workers, prison managers, and other key stakeholder groups serving in the capacity of policy makers and practitioners.

To better illustrate this concept, the graphic below outlines the relationship among stakeholders engaged in rehabilitation and reintegration activities under the initiative, and how this relationship leads to program progress, increased national capacity, lessons learned, and the development of good practices that can be shared within the international sphere. As mentioned previously when discussing the concentric circles model, UNICRI has worked to ensure that actors directly in contact with VEOs (governments, NGOs, practitioners) are furnished with the tools they need to increase their capacity and self-reliance for effectively rehabilitating and reintegrating VEOs, and working with local stakeholders who may change on a case-by-case basis (families, communities, etc.). The following graphic highlights this programmatic relationship, while also underlining UNICRI's readiness to temporarily provide direct support to local stakeholders, including VEOs, on an as-needed basis, and at the request of Member States. Within the framework of the current initiative, this provisional support has only been provided to one Member State, in the form of interviews with VEO inmates. The objective, in this case, is for national stakeholders to have information on VEO needs while corrections personnel are simultaneously building their capacity to effectively implement rehabilitation and reintegration programs and develop their skills for working with VEOs.



*Figure 1: UNICRI relations with stakeholders for the achievement of good practices and shared knowledge under the institute's rehabilitation and reintegration program*

The information above has aimed to provide a broad overview and introduction to the importance of stakeholder engagement via a participatory approach in UNICRI's initiative and to stress the critical nature of this practice in establishing productive working relationships with Member State entities and across the international community in general. Specific information with respect to the process undertaken to engage with national stakeholders under UNICRI's rehabilitation and reintegration program will be outlined in the following section.

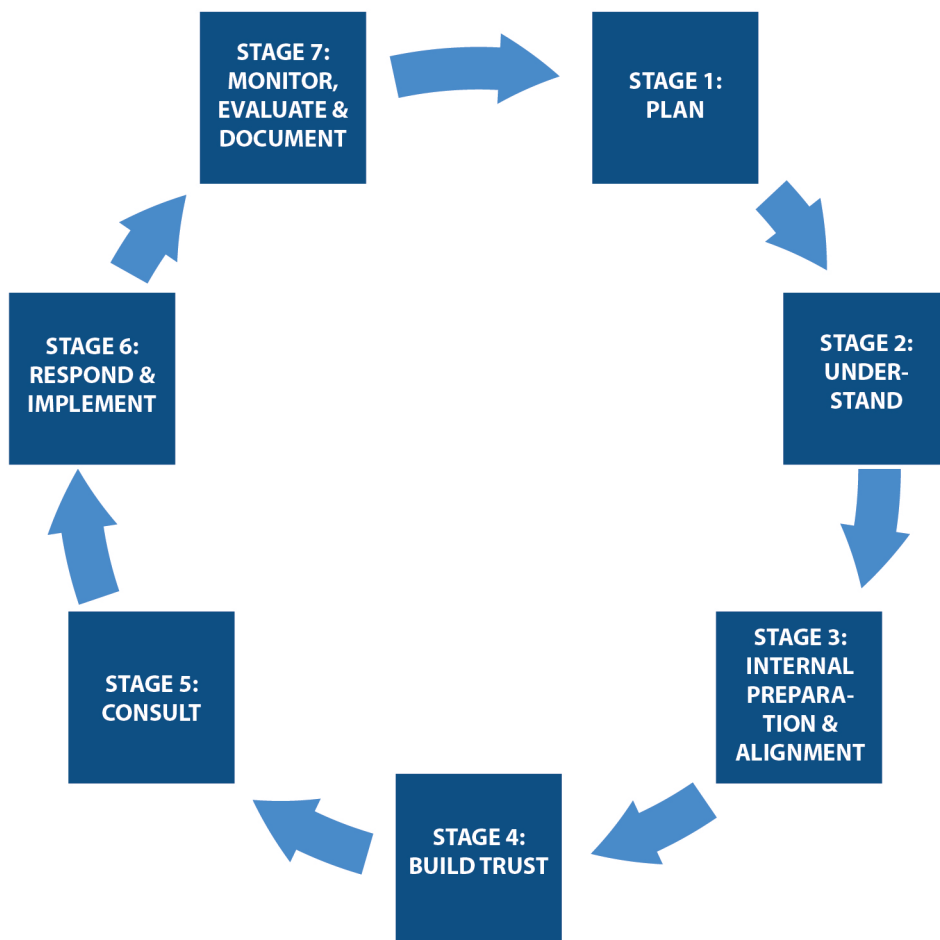
### ***The experience of UNICRI: stakeholder engagement for developing rehabilitation and reintegration programming in Member States***

Engagement with governments has represented the foundation of UNICRI's rehabilitation and reintegration programming across all countries participating in the initiative. Government representatives, including policymakers, diplomats, high level corrections officials and law enforcement, facilitated cooperation and provided a gateway through which UNICRI could work in their respective countries. The process of engagement for CVE programming requires extensive preliminary engagement with counterparts in order to build trust, exchange ideas, coordinate objectives, exchange information, and eventually design a roadmap for short, medium and long-term activities, all prior to program implementation. Building this cooperative framework, before activities begin, establishes a trusted sphere and network in which international institutions and Member State entities can work together to address challenges arising during implementation.

The concept of building trust serves as the lynchpin to successful cooperation, both during the establishment of relations between international institutions and government stakeholders, and throughout the life of a program. Overcoming cultural barriers and language issues, establishing equality among all parties, understanding diverse methods of work and building rapport through informal social interaction can all contribute to building trust.

The process for stakeholder engagement under the rehabilitation and reintegration initiative can be likened to the cyclical Process Flow outlined by Neil Jeffery in his previously mentioned article. However, while the building of trust is dedicated to stage four of the cycle below, UNICRI, through its rehabilitation and reintegration programming, has strived to include trust building throughout the entire cycle. This began with the initial engagement of Member State governments and joint planning and coordination meetings held both at UNICRI HQ and in the field.





*Figure 2: Stages in a meaningful stakeholder engagement process (Jeffery, 2009, p. 9)*

This network of stakeholder engagement for the rehabilitation and reintegration initiative is expanding over the course of programming development to include more entities from civil society and other organizations working on VEO reintegration. However, governmental entities have been the primary partners/entry points for establishing rehabilitation and reintegration programs and developing cooperative frameworks.

The section below tracks the general steps taken in the initial engagement process with government stakeholders. Similar steps for initial engagement were taken in all Member States taking part in the initiative; and, the process laid out in the following section can serve as an example for successful stakeholder engagement in the development of rehabilitation and reintegration programming.

### **Initial engagement**

The initial outreach for participation in the rehabilitation and reintegration initiative was achieved through an exchange of letters between UNICRI and the ministers of foreign affairs of Member States eligible under the program's funding framework. Interested Member States were invited to send high-level delegations to UNICRI's headquarters in Turin (Italy), to discuss the overall goals of the initiative, designing rehabilitation and reintegration programs in prison settings, and to identify gaps, needs, and national priorities across the rehabilitation and reintegration spectrum, including legislative gaps and issues related to both in-prison care and post-care.

Prior to meetings in Turin, UNICRI staff were invited to take part in an initial field visit to one of the countries interested. This gave UNICRI the opportunity to meet and exchange views with a variety of stakeholders on the ground, not only government officials, but also civil society organizations, and UN institutions active in the country. UNICRI staff were able to meet with individuals and organizations with whom the institute would be working over the medium to long term, including prison officials and national entities tasked with overseeing the reintegration of VEOs back into the community. This allowed the UNICRI team to gather relevant information from stakeholders for conducting initial assessments, map existing rehabilitation and reintegration treatment programs in the national context, gain a better understanding of national frameworks and regional relationships, and to discuss how to bring good practices and lessons learned in-country to the international stage.

During the visit, the staff of UNICRI also took the opportunity to present the overall rehabilitation and reintegration initiative, gathering feedback from national counterparts, as not all of these stakeholders would be able to attend meetings in Turin. Field visits of this kind served to build professional relationships and rapport with key stakeholders, accumulate background information for upcoming meetings in Turin, and to generally lay the groundwork for developing an in-country program for rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremists. Eventually, field visits of this kind were held in each of the countries participating in the initiative, leading to vital relationships being forged between UNICRI and the array of multidisciplinary stakeholders that are needed to engage in rehabilitation and reintegration.

### **Delegation visits to UNICRI Headquarters**

High level Member State delegations travelled to UNICRI headquarters to attend three-day meetings during which UNICRI staff outlined the principles of the Rome Memorandum, highlighted the importance of including rehabilitation and reintegration in national CVE efforts, and formally presented the framework of the institute's initiative on the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs. Operating with a closed-door modality, participants had the chance to discuss and share ideas, challenges and concrete ways to design, develop and implement effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs. An example of the major topics addressed at the meetings in Turin over the first two days can be found below:

- Objectives of the UNICRI program, scope of the meeting and round-table presentation of participants.
- An overview of current practices, challenges and priorities in the participating Member State, as related to VEOs in prison.
- Defining objectives and goals of rehabilitation programs for VEOs in prison settings.
- Discussion on prison management, inmate classification systems and risk assessments as key components of rehabilitation programs for VEOs.
- Discussion on training and support component for prison staff and external actors involved in disengagement and rehabilitation programs.
- Exchange of views on aftercare programs: design and assessment of needs.

This format allows for overview presentations to be made by both the international institution (in this case, UNICRI) and Member States, with discussion sessions providing an opportunity to openly discuss vital issues, including national goals, classification and risk assessment, training needs, and aftercare programs. Other relevant topics, such as legal frameworks and standard operating procedures can also be openly addressed using this modality.

On the final day of each of the meetings, a field visit was arranged to one Italian prison. These trips provided delegates with an experience to tour an Italian corrections facility and engage in dialogue with prison management personnel. Discussions were held on inmate facilities and statistics, treatment programs, security procedures, classification and risk assessment, and the management of high-risk inmates. Engagement among the corrections practitioners fostered exchanges of ideas and knowledge at the international level, and built rapport among all the stakeholders involved.

The final sessions of the meetings in Turin were dedicated to the development of a way forward with respect to cooperation between UNICRI and the visiting Member State. In the spirit of the initiative, pilot trainings were agreed to, and a list of national priorities and general training needs were presented, along with plans for a future coordination meeting in the Member State's capital in order to concretely agree upon specific activities for developing a roadmap for longer term cooperation.

### **Roadmap development and establishment of program focal points: a case study**

Following the period of initial engagement, which was generally similar across all Member States, UNICRI and national stakeholders began moving along different pathways, as described previously in this volume. Therefore, the degree and type of engagement with different stakeholders varied on a country-by-country basis, in accordance with a nationally tailored approach. As a result, the remainder of this section will specifically track stakeholder engagement in one of the Member States involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration program, therefore serving as a case study and model for successful stakeholder engagement practices.

Following the meetings held in Turin, a coordination activity took place in order to further outline programmatic goals and discuss the implementation of capacity building activities. Held in the national capital with a multidisciplinary group of government counterparts, the one-day meeting streamlined the general topics discussed at the Turin meeting, and, following a more in depth needs assessment by government officials, effectively laid out a clear roadmap for program activities that could take place over a three-year period. For the short term, meeting delegates agreed to carry out four capacity building activities that would take place over the ensuing six-month period.

The meeting saw the participation of the director of prisons, support staff, training experts, individual prison managers, and public security officials. The coming together of experts facilitated the elaboration of specific capacity building goals, such as mapping the number and type of staff to be trained on rehabilitation and reintegration, and how these activities would contribute to sustainable outcomes, including the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEO prisoners and the sharing of best practices at the regional and international levels. While religious counsellors, educators, and general staff are all scheduled to undergo training, in addition to a small group being selected to participate in training of trainers courses, prison managers, psychologists, and social workers were the groups immediately chosen to take part in capacity building activities.

Prison managers and their deputies, in particular, were the first stakeholder group chosen to undergo multidisciplinary training on rehabilitation and reintegration, as they represent the gateway to setting up and managing holistic rehabilitation and reintegration programs for VEO inmates. As a proactive measure, UNICRI and the Member State chosen for this example did not only train prison managers whose facilities currently house VEOs. As all prison wardens and their deputies may likely take up new posts in VEO facilities at some point in their careers, UNICRI and the Member State government



saw it as important that almost the entire prison management structure of the country be trained on rehabilitation and reintegration programming. This approach broadened UNICRI's network of stakeholders in the field of prison management, and contributed to a coordinated approach to the rehabilitation and reintegration that can be sustained, even with an anticipated influx of VEO inmates entering the national penal system as returning foreign terrorist fighters. Additionally, planning for broad prison manager training on rehabilitation and reintegration allows wardens responsible for dealing with VEOs to be transferred easily in the case of burn out, or as a security precaution, while having a trained official ready to replace them.

The second group of practitioners scheduled for training and enhanced dialogue included psychologists and social workers. This stakeholder group was seen as critical due to its direct interacting with VEOs, both during the rehabilitation process and upon release from prison. The role of these stakeholders, particularly in prison, was considered vital for developing standardized risk assessment and classification tools for working with VEOs in the country's correctional facilities, and for providing authorities with information on rehabilitation and reintegration program progress for individual inmates. Therefore, setting up clear channels of communication and frameworks for capacity building between these stakeholders and UNICRI was a primary objective in the area of stakeholder engagement during the first stages of program implementation.

In summary, at the coordination meeting in the capital, the multi-stakeholder group and UNICRI agreed to organize two uniform, multidisciplinary rehabilitation and reintegration training activities, one for each half of the country's prison management structure. Two other trainings were agreed to in the short term for psychologists and social workers, these consisted of one basic and one advanced training event on rehabilitation and reintegration programming for VEOs. All activities were planned to last for three days each, in order for stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogue and identify common challenges in the work with VEOs, facilitate learning with an expert trainer, and build relationships with UNICRI representatives so that operational hurdles could have been addressed via a trusted channel once enhanced rehabilitation and reintegration programs were up and running. For coordinating all future activities between UNICRI and the host country, focal points were established in the government and at UNICRI to facilitate program workflow and to serve as primary points of contact. Furthermore, the specific medium and long-term activities, outputs, and outcomes laid out at the meeting, and which represent a roadmap for cooperation, were subsequently developed into a joint program proposal by UNICRI and the Member State government.

## **Commencement of training activities involving multiple stakeholders**

Based on the decisions taken at the coordination meeting, UNICRI and government focal points worked together on an almost daily basis to organize the four training activities and to formulate the long-term program proposal document, based on the roadmap produced at the previous coordination meeting. Carrying out this work in parallel allowed for the start-up of activities, while the proposal document mapped specific needs and desired outcomes that could be have been presented to donors in order to maintain funding for programming over the long term. The ability of UNICRI and the Member State government to formulate the program proposal together is a testament to positive stakeholder relations that had been built up over the previous months, and adds legitimacy to the needs mapped out by the document, as it was compiled via a participatory approach and team effort between UNICRI and multiple governmental entities.

The first training activity held within the framework of the initiative was a multidisciplinary pilot training for half of the country's prison management structure. The event brought together approximately 15 prison management officials from the Member State, and a UNICRI team that consisted of program staff and two expert rehabilitation and reintegration trainers who work in academia and concurrently carry out field research on VEOs in prison settings.

The training event presented UNICRI with the opportunity to work hand in hand with the practitioners who will be approving rehabilitation and reintegration programming at the prison level. For those managers, not currently dealing with VEO inmates, the event served to familiarize with the VEO issue, and to learn from both their colleagues and UNICRI trainers on lessons learned thus far. Case studies were presented from around the world, and prison managers were able to discuss which specific aspects could work in their facilities. Attendees exhibited a high level of participation





in the event, contributing to discussions and offering frank feedback with respect to both the positive aspects of rehabilitation and reintegration activities already existing in the country, as well as those areas in need of improvement. By the final day of the event, UNICRI trainers worked with prison managers, specifically elaborating upon rehabilitation and reintegration activities in the country via that KISS Principle, mapping out which programs prison managers would like to **Keep, Improve, Start, and Stop**. The successful outcome of the mapping exercise, along with the elaboration of a list of good practices was due to the engagement and dialogue with the key group of stakeholders established over the previous two days. The attendees to the event all expressed an interest to continue with future training activities, and found the event and project goals to be valuable in their work.

An identical training was carried out a few months later with the second half of the country's prison management personnel, leading to uniform training taking place at the national level, and strategic relationships being built with all prison managers to facilitate the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programming, effective monitoring and evaluation, and trusted cooperation with UNICRI over the long term.

The next step in the area of capacity building and the facilitation of dialogue with key stakeholders involved the basic and advanced training courses held for psychologists and social workers.

The introductory three-day training course for psychologists and social workers employed within the correctional system provided approximately 12 participants with an introductory knowledge on the psychological and social needs of incarcerated VEOs with respect to achieving disengagement from violent extremism, rehabilitation, and eventual reintegration back into society.

Topics included an overview of violent extremism, the psychology of terrorism and martyrdom, and subsequently honed in on classification and risk assessment of inmates, methods and tools for working with violent extremists, and the introduction of role play and group exercises for simulating interaction with VEOs. The participants were highly skilled and enthusiastic, as they worked directly with VEOs on a daily basis. Their experience and wealth of knowledge on the topic facilitated a forum through which both UNICRI and the participants could engage in mutual learning. Examples and case studies from different countries added to the participants' knowledge base, while UNICRI learned about existing strategies and tactics employed by psychologists and social workers at the national level. Due to the experience and high degree of participation on the part of the attendees, training content quickly focused on specific issues, such as the analysis of classification and risk assessment systems used internationally, and how elements from these systems could be employed at the national level.



As a follow-up, an in-depth advanced training was held for the same group of participants, expanding upon the topics covered in the introductory training, and focusing in the implementation of practical exercises that could be used when treating VEO inmates. The curriculum of this second training was based upon direct feedback received from the participants regarding areas of interest and topics upon which they wished to improve their skills. It should be noted that without in-depth engagement between UNICRI and the participants, the development of a tailored curriculum for the advanced training would not have been possible and would have risked making the training irrelevant. The topics for the advanced training included: practical approaches to conducting individual vs. group interviews, lie detection techniques, enhancing communication skills, methods for discussing rehabilitation programs with inmates, ways to prevent and deal with recidivism, and exercises for using risk assessment tools, among other issues. Fittingly, many of these topics directly relate to ensuring effective stakeholder engagement between practitioners and VEO inmates, leading to trust building and rehabilitation and reintegration program progress, as outlined in the graphic presented at the beginning of this chapter.

Both the trainings with prison managers, psychologists and social workers led to increased capacity building, an exchange of information on the many good practices already employed at the national level on the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs, combined with the introduction of new practices from the international sphere, and the creation of foundational networks at the practitioner level through which UNICRI can work to facilitate the implementation of enhanced rehabilitation and reintegration programs for VEOs in the national prison system. Participants at each training requested that UNICRI carry out a training of trainers program on rehabilitation and reintegration for prison managers, psychologists, and social workers, so that the knowledge transferred can be passed down internally for new practitioners entering the prison service. These activities, along with similar trainings for other stakeholder groups, are planned in the long-term cooperation roadmap.

### **Forging synergies with civil society stakeholders and complimentary initiatives**

Starting with the initial field visits to Member States participating in the rehabilitation and reintegration initiative, UNICRI has strived to engage with civil society organizations working on PVE issues. While civil society organizations primarily have a prominent role in reintegration efforts, more than being actively involved in rehabilitation in prisons, it is important that these stakeholders are kept informed of UNICRI's work on this issue. It is fundamental that a trusted network is built so that once VEOs are released, they have a clear path to societal reintegration that is supported by civil society.

Within the case study analysed above, three civil society organizations have been specifically briefed on UNICRI's overall initiative in the country, and the positive work carried out in cooperation with government counterparts. While each organization works in some capacity on CVE issues, one in particular is working to rehabilitate and reintegrate juvenile extremist offenders. UNICRI has therefore worked closely with this organization and its project management team in order to share experiences, follow the development of outputs (e.g. training manuals), and to take part in workshops organized for multi-sectoral stakeholders, including government officials, academics, and civil society actors. Collaboration with this organization has allowed both UNICRI and the NGO to expand their stakeholder networks, explore synergies between their respective initiatives, exchange ideas, and build a framework for more sustainable cooperation following the implementation of activities devoted to the reintegration of adult VEOs.

## ***Conclusions, lessons learned, and the way forward***

In conclusion, stakeholder engagement has played a major role in establishing programming activities within all countries taking part in UNICRI's rehabilitation and reintegration initiative. Initial engagement with high level government stakeholders has set the stage for program implementation and the expansion of stakeholder networks to include practitioners working with VEOs, along with civil society organizations prepared to take part in reintegration work within the community.

The hosting of multiple coordination and planning meetings at the outset of the initiative allowed UNICRI to build relationships and trust with key officials, understand national needs through frank dialogue in a closed-door environment, and align program objectives accordingly. Through this modality, UNICRI was able to further consult with stakeholders, respond to their needs, implement tailor-made training activities, and monitor, evaluate, and document results, closely following the classic seven stage stakeholder engagement process. As UNICRI continues to carry out capacity building activities, this cyclical process again takes place with individual stakeholder groups at the micro level (in this case, practitioners in prisons), leading to the implementation of training activities that build upon one another to comprehensively address participant needs and knowledge gaps.

## **Lessons learned**

In regard to lessons learned on stakeholder engagement during the period starting from the initial engagement until the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration activities, five points have been made below:

- Liaising and building a formidable degree of trust with high-level government officials represents the first step in designing and eventually implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programs in any Member State. This group of stakeholders serves as the gateway to country engagement, and inviting high-level delegations to meet in a relaxed location over multiple days builds rapport and presents the opportunity for open dialogue on sensitive issues.
- Participation in preliminary field visits provides the opportunity for international institutions to carry out an analysis of the situation on the ground, expand their knowledge basis for program planning, and meet with a wide array of stakeholders (officials, NGOs, practitioners, and other UN entities) who may not be part of high-level national delegations.
- While having a general initiative and set of desired outcomes is fundamental to begin the engagement process, international institutions must be flexible with respect to delineating program objectives, being prepared to realign planned activities, outputs, and outcomes in order to tailor programs to meet Member States' needs and even to accommodate feedback received at practitioner trainings. This dynamic process will often be repeated until all stakeholders reach consensus, and at that point international institutions should be prepared to monitor results and make changes through mutual consent when necessary.
- The development of a medium to longer term roadmap in conjunction with national authorities, along with the adoption of focal points, provides a sense of programmatic vision for the long term, opens a clear channel for communication, and supports the notion of commitment to continuous engagement between international institutions and host governments.

- Civil society organizations represent key stakeholders in the rehabilitation and reintegration process, particularly in relation to the reintegration of VEOs. NGOs are a main point of contact with communities, families, and peer groups, along with VEOs themselves, following their release from prison. Therefore, it is important to first build a network and engage with multiple NGOs able to work on VEOs reintegration and cover the communities where these individuals are likely to be released. Secondly, while rehabilitation is taking place inside of prisons, international institutions should begin in parallel to provide capacity building for NGOs on reintegration, based on the thematic needs of individual NGOs, following the classic stakeholder engagement cycle (e.g. skills training for working with VEOs, family engagement, development of awareness campaigns within the private sector, provision of training for social workers, etc.)

## **A look towards a way forward**

The way forward with respect to further program development and implementation requires that stakeholder engagement remain at the core of all program activities. Engagement with government stakeholders served as the foundation for UNICRI's initial opening with Member States; however, this relationship must be continually nurtured through open dialogue and monitoring and evaluation of program activities. Moreover, engagement with government actors is expected to grow as other stakeholders from different sectors (NGOs, the private sector, academics, non-governmental practitioners) are gradually brought into the rehabilitation and reintegration framework, requiring a wider, inter-ministerial effort to ensure the creation of self-sustaining national networks that promote local ownership of rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

At this stage, the work of the international institution sponsoring the program is fourfold. Namely, the institution must focus on involving civil society and other stakeholders as much as possible, particularly with regard to VEO reintegration; the institution should then foster relationships and create direct linkages among these actors and government stakeholders, forging cooperative, self-sustaining networks that will last beyond the life of the externally funded program; the institution must continually track program results, adjusting when necessary to the capacity building needs of stakeholders in order to address gaps in skills and knowledge; and, finally, lessons learned and good practices should be incorporated into the international sphere through liaison with other UN institutions and neighbouring countries.

This final component serves to bring the work of the rehabilitation and reintegration initiative full circle, providing lessons learned and good practices back to stakeholders in the international community. This opens dialogue among policymakers on the international stage, helping them to formulate improved PVE strategies at the global level, via a bottom-up approach based on comprehensive stakeholder engagement. The strategies and policy developed through this cycle will serve as tested resources from which Member States can draw in order to tackle violent extremism.

# DESIGNING NATIONAL STRATEGIES/ACTION PLANS IN THE FIELD OF COUNTER-TERRORISM (CT) - PREVENTION/COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (P/CVE)

*By Alice Rena and Adhi Adrian Kustiadi*

## **Background**

Nowadays, terrorism is one of the world's biggest challenges. It has progressively turned into a severe threat to international and national security, as well as a major concern for a number of governments and communities. In addition, its evolving nature – in terms of drivers, financing sources and mechanisms, targets and modus operandi – makes it difficult to both predict how it will manifest globally and to reach a consensus on a comprehensive definition. This contributes to the complexity and fragmentation of the international counter-terrorism framework.

Many countries worldwide still experience poorly functioning legal regimes, inadequate responses to criminal justice and a lack of effective short, medium and long-term strategies to prevent and tackle terrorism to its fullest extent.

In this regard, a number of international and regional instruments, as well as various standards, guidelines and recommendations (with no binding force) were elaborated under the auspices of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and other national, regional and international entities. Most of these instruments encourage Member States to develop comprehensive, multi-sectorial and sustained blueprints in the fight against terrorism, which shall include effective international criminal justice cooperation, context-specific interventions and prevention mechanisms.

A milestone in the global fight against terrorism is represented by the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288), which was adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006 and is reviewed every two years. The Fifth Review of the Global Strategy led to UN Resolution A/RES/70/291 of 1 July 2016. The outcome is based on the status of implementation of the Global Strategy throughout the 10 years since its adoption – as addressed in the Secretary General's Report A/70/826 and examined by the General Assembly – as well as on the Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674-A/70/675 – hereinafter referred to as UNSG's Plan of Action).

According to the UNSG's Plan of Action, the foundations of counter-terrorism strategies lie in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in Member States' obligations under international law. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the guiding principles for counter-terrorism strategies (as identified at the 2013 Bogota International Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies) represent a further guidance for the development of national and regional plans of action.

These aspects are particularly relevant, as the UNSG's Plan of Action calls on each Member State to “consider developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and complements national counter-terrorism strategies where they already exist.” It also points out the importance of national ownership and of respecting international law. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach, a message that is reinforced through numerous Security Council resolutions and other national and international frameworks.

For instance, in Security Council Resolution 1963 (2010) the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate<sup>1</sup> (CTED) is encouraged to “arrange meetings with Member States in various formats, with their consent, including for the purpose of considering advising, as appropriate, on the development of comprehensive and integrated national counterterrorism strategies and the mechanisms to implement them that include attention to the factors that lead to terrorist activities, in accordance with their obligations under international law, and in close cooperation with the CTITF and its Working Groups, with a view to ensuring coherence and complementarity of efforts and to avoid any duplication.”

Within the CTITF, a Working Group on National and Regional Strategies was established to support Member States in the development of national and regional counter-terrorism strategies. According to the CTITF Working Group, their development shall include a number of steps:

1. Carrying out a comprehensive analysis of the terrorist threat and of the counter-terrorism responses.
2. Defining the objectives of the response.
3. Identifying stakeholders and priorities.
4. Identifying existing institutional mechanisms for inter/intra agency cooperation, coordination and information exchange.
5. Evaluating availability of financial resources and technical expertise.
6. Creating realistic, balanced and concrete plans of action.
7. Defining measures to prevent terrorism, in line with international law and human rights standards.

On the occasion of the 2016 Review of the UN Global Counter- Terrorism Strategy in New York, a side event was held on ‘National Action Planning on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Mechanisms and Lessons’.<sup>2</sup> The event was organized by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Global Center on Cooperative Security (GCCS).

The panellists taking part in the event, all counter terrorism experts from different countries and organizations, identified 12 key elements to take into consideration for the development and implementation of national action plans on Counter-Terrorism (CT)/ Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). The key principles are:

1. Shifting concepts
2. National ownership
3. Multi-stakeholder approach engagement
4. Mainstream youth and gender-balanced participation
5. Taking time to build trust, to establish a common understanding
6. Identify sustainable solutions
7. Governance structure
8. Work towards a theory of change
9. Identify areas for capacity building
10. Accountability
11. Monitoring and evaluation
12. Strategic communications

General guidelines for the development of national CVE strategies<sup>3</sup> have also been provided by Hedayah,<sup>4</sup> the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism. These guidelines include steps for the development of P/CVE strategies and Action Plans, good practices and principles. Practical examples of the topics to be included and addressed in a comprehensive CVE

1 The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) was established by the Security Council under resolution 1535 (2004) to assist the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and coordinate the process of monitoring the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001).

2 Further information on the event can be found at the following link: <https://www.icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ICCT-Meeting-Report-UN-Side-event-30-June-2016-final-1.pdf>

3 Further information can be found at the following link: <http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-1792016192156.pdf>

4 Hedayah is an independent and multilateral center based in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E., created by the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum to carry out research, analysis, capacity building and communication initiatives in the field of countering violent extremism.

## STEPS

1

### CONDUCT AN ANALYSIS OF THE THREAT

to identify the local push and pull factors associated with radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism as well as to identify the threat level of violent extremism. This includes taking stock of the prevailing understanding(s) of CVE and its factors conducive in the country by different stakeholders from government (local and foreign), civil society, academia, media, and international/regional/sub-regional organizations.

2

### ASSESS THE CURRENT STATUS OF CVE STRATEGIES AND POLICIES THAT EXIST IN THAT COUNTRY. This includes:

Identifying and assessing the relevance of past, ongoing or planned initiatives in the field of preventing terrorism, whether by public authorities at state, regional and local levels, civil society, academia, international/regional/sub-regional organizations, or bilateral assistance projects.

Identifying main lessons learned in the country through a trends and perceptions analysis, drawing also on relevant lessons from related fields like development, education, communications and community engagement.

3

### REVIEW THE EXISTING RELEVANT RESEARCH ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND CVE.

4

### REVIEW OTHER EXISTING NATIONAL CVE STRATEGIES, GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED INTERNATIONALLY TO DRAW ON THE EXISTING BODY OF KNOWLEDGE.

5

### IDENTIFY THE KEY ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS TO CONSULT AND INVOLVE THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS,

including security organizations, non-security parts of government, non-governmental organizations, religious actors, civil society, community leaders and private sector partners.

6

### CREATE A DESIGNATED FORUM,

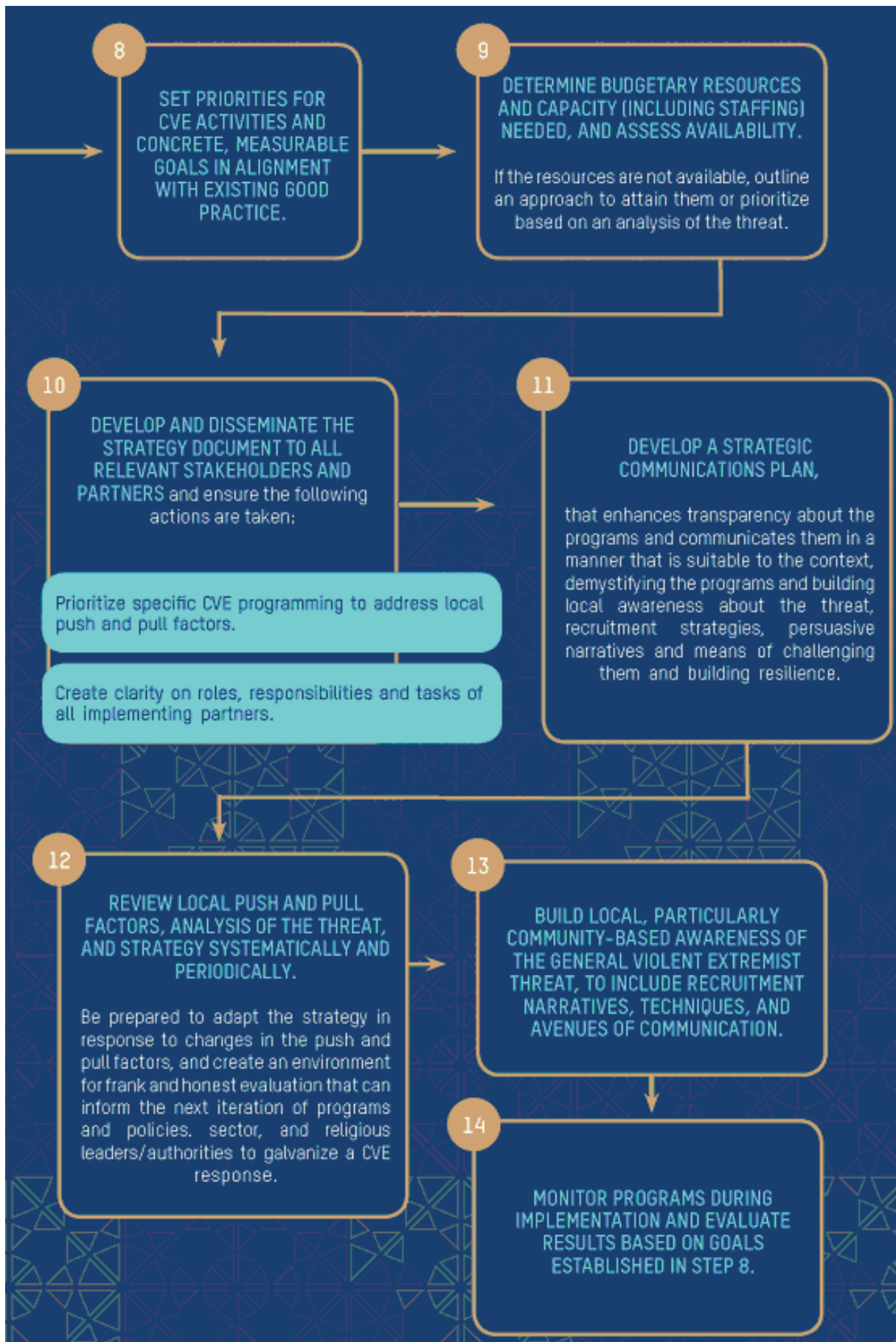
such as a "working committee" to develop the strategy with clear tasks and responsibilities. Build a coalition; broker understanding and build bridges between civil society organizations, communities, law enforcement, private sector, and religious leaders/authorities to galvanize a CVE response.

7

### CREATE A TIMELINE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THE STRATEGY,

with key objectives and milestones that includes time for non-working committee stakeholders to review and provide feedback.

When identifying these stakeholders, be sure to include individuals and groups that could play a critical role in CVE, including women, youth, and local traditional and nontraditional leaders and religious authorities. Also, evaluate the potential of these stakeholders as implementing partners to, for example, promote peer-to-peer action to counter violent extremism or address factors conducive.



strategy are also provided. For ease of reference the steps are the summarized in Figures 9 and 10: *Figures 9 and 10: Steps for the development of national CVE strategies*



## ***UNICRI's work and experience in designing national strategies/action plans in the field of counter terrorism***

As previously indicated, UNICRI is a member of the CTITF and supports the Global Strategy, particularly focusing on its first and fourth pillars. These pillars are related to measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and those called for to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

### **The Indonesia experience on developing a National Action Plan on the Treatment of High Risk Offenders, including Violent Extremist Offenders**

Since 2014, UNICRI supported Indonesia in the development of its own culturally-tailored risk assessment tool for high risk inmates, including VEOs, and in the preparation of a National Action Plan (hereinafter referred to as the Grand Design and Road Map<sup>5</sup>) for the treatment of this category of offenders. The latter was developed with the further intent to convert it into a potential legal instrument to be encompassed within the national counter-terrorism policy.

#### **General scope and contents of the Grand Design and Road Map**

The design and development of the Grand Design and Road Map aimed at defining roles, duties and responsibilities of all relevant actors involved in the treatment of high-risk inmates, including VEOs. It clearly sets mid-term programme priorities, objectives and timelines for their achievement, with the purpose of improving the treatment of this category of offenders throughout all the different phases of the criminal justice process, from pre-conviction to post-release.

Complementary information regarding the specific actions to be undertaken with respect to planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the treatment of high-risk inmates are also included and shaped as part of a medium-long term strategy. To facilitate the implementation and monitoring of these actions, the Grand Design is divided into three sections, which encompass strategic guidelines and indicators of achievement regarding the treatment of high-risk offenders, including VEOs, in Social Reintegration Centres, Detention Centres and Prisons.

The strategy developed provides specific indications on the registration, assessment, placement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and aftercare of high-risk inmates, including VEOs, within and outside of the correction system. Such indications are in line with international instruments and standards, such as the UN Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners and with the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremists, which specifically addresses the rehabilitation needs of incarcerated violent extremists.

Within this framework, one of the priorities of the strategy is mainstreaming security to prevent prison radicalization. This includes the recruitment of general inmates from VEOs, the spread of violent extremism, and any other potential threat that may result in planning terrorist acts from behind the bars. The Grand Design also aims to promote and facilitate coordination and information sharing among the institutions involved in the criminal justice system (intelligence, law enforcement agencies, prison system, judiciary, etc.) to support the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs for offenders in prison and on probation/parole.

#### **The process for the development of the Grand Design and Road Map**

The development of the Grand Design and Road Map entailed an extensive process, which included a number of steps and activities, in line with the principles and guidelines provided by the instruments already mentioned in the introduction. The final result was planned to be as tailored as possible to the local context and adequately respond to the country's specific needs and priorities in this field. Its development process comprised assessments and consultations among relevant stakeholders involved in the treatment of high-risk inmates, including VEOs, at all levels. Within this framework, one of the critical steps of this process was to stimulate dialogue on issues pertaining to the national strategy to be developed. With this purpose, a field workshop was held in the initial phase of the

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<sup>5</sup> Terminology chosen by UNICRI's counterpart referring to the National Action Plan.

process, which served as a platform for sharing knowledge and information. The initiative also represented a valuable opportunity for UNICRI and the main counterpart to identify local expectations and major gaps perceived, defining objectives on relevant issues of the strategy. Such issues cover classification, assessment, rehabilitation and reintegration of high-risk inmates, including VEOs.

Another relevant step in the development process of the national strategy was to carry out an analysis of the current situation at the national and the international level. As mentioned in the General guidelines for the development of national CVE strategies, and in many other instruments providing this type of guidance for action plans and strategies, a research and assessment component within the initial phase of the process is crucial to allow comparison with similar and different realities, and to identify gaps and good practices.

The creation of a working group in this first-assessment phase was crucial to enhance knowledge and understanding on the challenges, gaps and constraints of existing practices and regulations for the treatment of high-risk inmates, including VEOs, within the Indonesian context. To ensure a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach throughout all phases of the process, professionals and experts with different backgrounds and expertise (e.g. religious scholars, psychologists, prison staff, government representatives, monitoring and evaluation experts, members of civil society organizations, etc.) were selected as members of the working group. They were responsible for carrying out a number of activities, critical for developing a strategy as tailored as possible to the local characteristics, needs and culture.

As a first step, the working group carried out a comprehensive data collection process, which included desk research, consultations and interviews with key actors involved in the treatment of high-risk offenders inside and outside of the correction system. The objective was to obtain in-depth data and information, which served as a substantive background for the development of the Grand Design and the planning of treatment and rehabilitation programmes for high-risk inmates. The desk research was based on a literature review of regulations and current practices at the national and the international level regarding the treatment of high-risk inmates, including VEOs, throughout the different phases of the criminal justice process. The following gap analysis, based on the results of the desk review, was conducted with the aim of identifying the issues to be further explored through consultations and interviews carried out in some correction facilities in the country. The gap analysis also facilitated the development of the data collection tool, which consisted of a series of key questions on issues pertaining to regulations, policies, current practices, and organizational structures of the social correction centres, detention centres and prisons.

The information gathered through the mentioned activities allowed a comparison between the current and the ideal situation regarding regulations, policies and operational procedures for the treatment of high-risk inmates, including VEOs. In particular, the situational analysis was conducted on the process of intake, assessment, allocation, correction, security and release of inmates. Along with the identification of challenges, gaps and constraints, such activities also allowed for the elaboration of recommendations for possible sustainable solutions. With the assistance of national and international experts, as well as the guidance of high-level representatives from the corrections system, a first draft document was produced. Once shared among the stakeholders, the document was then subjected to a revision, according to the inputs received. Throughout the entire process for the development and revision of the Grand Design and Road Map, high level consultation meetings were carried out among representatives of UNICRI, relevant Ministries and the stakeholders involved. The purpose was to ensure high-level political consensus for the strategy and for its possible inclusion into national counter terrorism policy/regulation. The establishment of trust, as well as the regular liaison and communication between UNICRI, the main counterpart and all other entities involved in the process, were crucial to ensure a smooth implementation of the activities and the achievement of expected results.

### Challenges encountered throughout the process for the development of the national strategy

From a substantive point of view, the definition of “high-risk inmates” represented a central aspect in the debate among the stakeholders, especially in the initial phase of the process. In fact, different definitions of “high risk inmates”, which relied on different interpretations, prevented the use of standard criteria and procedures in the treatment of high-risk inmates, especially VEOs.

Within this scenario, the priority was to establish a common conceptualization of “high-risk”, which represented one of the major challenges. After a long debate among the key actors and stakeholders, a new dimension of risk<sup>6</sup> was introduced and a consensus on its definition was finally reached. This dimension includes internal risks (risks for individual inmates) and external risks (risks for the entire population, including prison staff and facilities), to be properly assessed<sup>7</sup> along with the individual needs of each offender. The results of such an assessment shall facilitate the classification of inmates, which is considered as one of the critical steps for the treatment of high-risk inmates,<sup>8</sup> including VEOs. The classification is also useful for guiding the decision-making process on issues pertaining to the management, rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders throughout the criminal justice process.

For what concerns the implementation of each step of the development process of the strategy, various challenges had to be faced, ranging from the complexity of the topic to the frequent turn-over of institutional key-figures. In addition, the evolving nature of the terrorism-related dynamics, as well as of the priorities related to specific categories of offenders, such as the VEOs, required flexible mechanisms of implementation and constant communication among all the stakeholders involved in the development of the strategy. The sustainability of its implementation mechanisms, as well as the flexibility to changes were also considered as key challenges to be addressed, especially due to the complexity of the organizations-environment relationship.



6 The risk-related dimensions are consistent with classification of risk provided by UNODC in the “*Handbook on the Management of High Risk Prisoners*”, published in 2016.

7 The level of risk posed by the offender is divided into three categories: high, medium and low, to be identified through the assessment of the following risk-related factors:

Safety: risk to the safety of others. Inmates who show dangerous behaviour towards correctional facility staff or other inmates.

Security: risk of escape. Inmates who require comprehensive security measures to keep them in custody.

Stability: risk to the order of the correctional facility. Inmates who require a range of control measures to ensure that their behaviour complies with the rules of the correctional facility.

Society: risk of conducting criminal activity outside the correctional facility. Inmates who direct activities related to organized crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, or the intimidation and corruption of witnesses, the judiciary, lawyers or jurors.

Health: risk of spreading disease. Inmates with infectious diseases (tuberculosis, HIV, hepatitis, etc), or mental disorders (or dependency on the medical device or disability.)

8 As stated in Rule 93 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules (the so called Nelson Mandela Rules) for the Treatment of Prisoners, the purpose of the classification shall be:

To separate from others those prisoners who, by reason of their criminal records or characters, are likely to exercise a bad influence;

To divide the prisoners into classes in order to facilitate their treatment with a view to their social rehabilitation.



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## **Conclusions**

The lack of specific counter-terrorism laws, regulations and policies still represents a major challenge in many countries worldwide. The absence of official instructions on “what” can be done, “how” it can be done, and “who” is responsible to do it, do not permit official designations and specific interventions.

Other factors, such as the lack of engagement, coordination, and effective communication and information exchange among Government entities and all other stakeholders belonging to civil society, the public and the private sectors, may exacerbate the need to develop and implement responsive and inclusive strategies. In fact, this condition may lead to significant confusion in terms of objectives to be reached, actions to be undertaken and a time frame to be observed. An important role may also be played by the national stakeholders’ political agendas and by the complex relations with each other.

Throughout the whole development process of the Grand Design and Road Map, the high level of engagement and commitment, as well as the collaborative effort demonstrated by the Government, the local stakeholders, and all the professionals and experts involved in the initiative, were key elements to ensure a multi-sector approach to the strategy and national ownership. The importance of establishing an open dialogue among all parties, encouraging their active involvement, participation and cooperation at all levels, is indeed stressed as key factor in all the guiding instruments for the development of national strategies and action plans.

To ensure the sustainability and a multi-stakeholder approach of the strategy, UNICRI worked in strict cooperation with all the stakeholders involved, both in the drafting and in the revision process of the document. The engagement and active participation of Government bodies, key actors and stakeholders also belonging to civil society and the private sector, was crucial for maximizing national ownership and for ensuring that all aspects related to the treatment of high-risk inmates were adequately addressed in the strategy. This was considered a crucial aspect in view of turning the final document into an official guidance for the treatment of high-risk inmates, including VEOs, to be used at the national level.

# RISK ASSESSMENT IN PRISONS

By Chiara Bologna

## **Introduction**

This article will focus on the role of risk assessment in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) in prisons. Against the backdrop of UNICRI's experience in working within the framework of a wide range of programming on counter terrorism, and more specifically concerning the Institute's project for the reintegration and rehabilitation of violent extremists in prisons, UNICRI has worked closely with interested Member States to support local relevant authorities in developing, administering and analysing a culturally sensitive and context-specific risk assessment. The article is divided into three sections: the first provides a general introduction of what risk assessments are from a theoretical perspective. It subsequently expounds on the uses of risk assessments and explains their importance in the area of the P/CVE strategy. The second section consists in a brief analysis of which risk assessment tools are globally available, and where they are used.

## **Risk assessments, their importance and uses for P/CVE**

The term risk assessment can refer to "any process involving the systematic gathering and interpretation of information pertaining to an individual to predict the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behaviour of concern in the future" (Sarma, 2017, p.279). Understanding and specifying the behaviour, or behaviours of concern, is essential to the design of any risk assessment. However, what needs to be understood is what the behaviour of concern is in the case of P/CVE. The challenge for risk assessments in this field lies in "the heterogeneous nature of the hazard" (Herrington and Roberts, 2012). For instance, numerous researchers have made the distinction between being involved in terrorism (including both non-violent and violent roles) and engaging in violent terrorist behaviour (Herrington and Roberts, 2012, p.281). Conceivably, each has a slightly different set of hazards, and predicting the risks of one will not necessarily cover the risks of the other.

In the prison context, there are multiple behaviours that can be attributed to an individual posing a risk to him/herself or to others, including the risk of radicalization. When considering how radicalization within prisons is purported to take place, it becomes clear that efficient tools and mechanisms that support the identification of individuals at risk are highly useful to prison management. In the counterterrorism realm, ideologies of violent extremism range across a wide span of political and social views that can lead the most adherent proponents to rationalize violence as a pivotal part of their group's agenda, which they readily engage in. The psychology of such individuals must be investigated, and this must be carried out after such a threat can be identified, namely through a risk assessment mechanism (Egan, Cole, Alison, Waring & Eintib, 2016). The use of risk assessment to reduce radicalization within prisons is paramount as a first step in identifying and later developing a response to the at-risk individuals.

## The phenomenon of radicalization

Sinai (2014) developed a seven-phase model of radicalization into violent extremism and terrorism, depicted in Figure 1. This model conveys critical patterns based on research within the U.S. prison system. In each phase, specific factors are identified as crucial for the progression of radicalization processes:

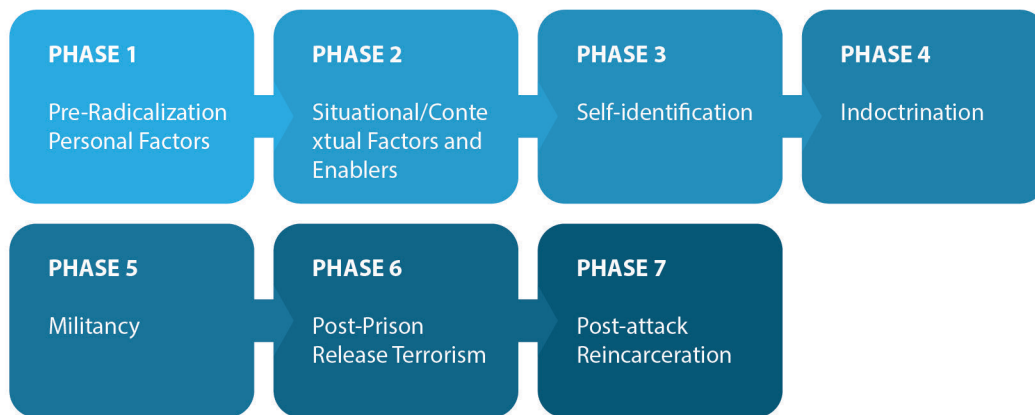


Figure 1. Extremist ideology box of levels of radicalization. Source: Sinai, 2014

On the personal level, various factors, either on their own or in combination, contribute to an individual's susceptibility to the influence of radicalizing narratives. These factors include life experiences, such as the phenomenon of alienation and the search for belonging, feelings of grievance, trauma, a sense of dissonance between life expectations and reality, and even biological processes, such as hormonal changes or normal brain development, which are regularly referred to in explanations of juvenile delinquency (Loeber et al, 2006). These are some of the factors which are often referred to as 'push' and 'pull' factors which lead to radicalization.

To fully explain the series of phenomena that radicalization entails, is, however, to account also for those systemic (community-level and beyond) factors conducive to the emergence and maintenance of radicalizing settings at certain times in certain environments, and without which the exposure of susceptible individuals to radicalizing influences would not occur (Bouhana and Wikström, 2011).

The chart in Figure 2, elaborated by UNICRI with information taken from Bouhana and Wikström (2011) provides a wider sense of the multi-level analysis of what makes an individual more prone or susceptible to being radicalized:

Psychological level	Socio-physical level	Biological level
Life experiences	Moral rules influenced by perceived trustworthy and legitimate individual or group of individuals	Hormonal changes
Experience of alienation	Agreement with radicalizing teachings from members of the community	Normal brain development
Search for belonging	Individual vulnerability to moral change	
Feelings of grievance	Exposure to radicalizing teachings in particular settings	
Trauma		

Figure 2 – Elaborated by UNICRI from information contained in Bouhana and Wikström, 2011

Seeing as how several of these factors are developmental themselves, and that an individual may accumulate a combination of them over time, radicalization appears to be a process, not an event, which means that it develops gradually.

As a gradual process, it may occur at three levels: individual, group, or mass public, and it may also involve change in attitudes, ideology, beliefs, motivations, worldview, ideals, goals, aspirations, willingness and/or behaviour. Subsequently, those aspects, which are related to political, social, religious, or societal issues, become extreme, and, as a result, radicalized people may advocate, support, or practice violence and commit terrorist acts to achieve their goals (Sarma, 2017).

### Radicalization within prisons

It should be underlined that even where existing risk assessments in prisons are perceived to be successful in one state’s context, they may not necessarily produce the same results in another state’s prisons. That is not to say that taking other assessment models as an example is not advisable, but simply that there are many socio-cultural factors that are relevant and need to be considered. This works on the assumption, based on research into violence risk assessment (including systematic reviews) that an instrument has better predictive validity when the core demographic profile of the population to which it is applied is similar to that of the validation samples in the designing stage of the instrument (Sarma, 2017; Singh, Grann, & Fazel, 2011). At the very minimum, risk assessment of prisoners should be adequately adapted to the wider societal and cultural context, if not freshly designed and tested on its own contextual basis.

In certain contexts, when violent extremist offender (VEO) inmates are housed within prison structures, they tend to either be housed with the rest of the prison population, hence giving them an opportunity to engage with all inmates, or they are separated from the rest of the population and remain isolated amongst themselves. The former arrangement can prove to be a high security risk, as VEO inmates can often easily radicalize other inmates who previously did not share a similar violent extremist ideology. However, even in the latter case, where VEOs are kept separate from the rest of the prison population, there is the risk of the most ardent extremists to further radicalize the lesser-engaged inmates. In such cases, the use of a tool such as a risk assessment proves to be necessary in aiding prison management to identify the ‘level’ or ‘degree’ of radicalization of different inmates as a means to take the necessary steps for their rehabilitation and reintegration back into society.

<b>Assessment of the risk of prisoners becoming radicalized</b>				
Prison policies regarding the assessment at entrance, the management and the placement of extremist prisoners	Presence of social networks	<b>Conversion</b>	Presence of extremist ideologies	Degree of under-staffing
		<b>Identification of vulnerable prisoners at risk of becoming radicalized</b>		Prison staff’s ability to recognise and deal with signals of radicalization
Degree of overcrowding	Presence of terrorist leaders		Presence of extremist prison chaplains	Degree of cooperation between prison service and police/intelligence services
Presence of inhuman and degrading conditions of confinement	Presence of charismatic extremist inmate leaders		<b>Recruitment</b>	Virtual presence of terrorist organisations

Figure 3. Source: R2PRIS Methodological Framework for analysing radicalization within prisons, 2017

R2PRIS<sup>1</sup> developed a methodological framework for analysing radicalization within prisons, which serves as a way to assess the risk associated with factors related to prison service and the existing environment.

It distinguishes two ways through which vulnerable prisoners may be at risk of becoming radicalized,

The first refers to **conversion**, which happens when there is the presence of extremist social networks, such as religious-based gangs, or the presence of extremist religions/ideologies. The second relates to **recruitment**, which is more prone to happen or be fostered by the presence of charismatic extremist inmate leaders, the presence of outreach programs of external extremist organizations or the “virtual” presence of terrorist organizations, or even the presence of terrorist “kingpins” or prison chaplains.

It is important to mention that both processes are determined by dynamic interactions between the aforementioned variables and the degree of under-staffing or the lack of the prison staff’s ability to recognize and deal with signals of radicalization, inefficient prison policies regarding the assessment at the entrance, and the management and placement of extremist prisoners. Moreover, the presence of cruel, inhuman, and degrading conditions of confinement, the degree of over-crowding and the degree of cooperation among prison services, police, and intelligence services are factors that complement the assessment.

### ***Importance of risk assessment in the context of PVE and prisons***

In the counter terrorism context, risk assessments are paramount when used in prison to determine the level/degree of radicalization (or threat) posed by each individual. Through a thorough risk assessment, the threat that an individual poses can be deduced, and in this way the level of threat towards other inmates and to general prison management and security, can be discerned.

Over the last decade, numerous countries have introduced policies to manage and facilitate the re-entry process of extremist prisoners back into society, such as Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Sri Lanka (Ionescu et al, 2017). Most experts agree that this specific group of prisoners requires special attention, as they pose unique challenges to the corrections system while incarcerated, as well as to society during reintegration. However, there are significant knowledge gaps relating to the extent of the problem of radicalization and violent extremist contagion in prison, as well as the risk of recidivism among released extremist offenders.

### ***Adoption of risk assessments in prisons***

Risk assessment tools are useful to inform a number of risk management decisions and interventions (more on this will be discussed later in the chapter), to provide an audit trail for decision-making, they may reduce errors during decision-making, and very importantly, they strengthen understanding across multidisciplinary teams working within prisons (Helmus & Thornton, 2015). Indeed, having a team allows staff in different roles, for example, psychologists, prison officers, and religious scholars, to exchange information about the offender and to coordinate an approach accordingly (Hedayah & ICCT, 2013). This applies to the rest of the management and rehabilitation process, just as it does to the risk assessment. Training of all prison staff, resources permitting, to understand the rationale behind the risk assessment, and even learn how to conduct one where it is not possible to employ psychologists for this purpose, is a key part of the broader strategy for a multidisciplinary team.

The importance of using validated and objective offender assessment tools cannot be overstated. An assessment is the engine that drives effective interventions with offenders, and is important for a number of reasons (Latessa, 2004). A general risk assessment of inmates can be designed for the following purposes:

- Helping to identify the offenders most at risk for recidivism.
- Identifying who needs the most intervention.
- Identifying crime-producing needs that should be targeted for change,
- Helping to guide decision making by providing more information in a systematic manner.

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1 R2PRIS Methodological Framework for analysing radicalization within prisons, 2017.



- Helping to reduce bias by following objective criteria rather than personal intuition and judgment.
- Improving the placement of offenders.
- Improving the utilization of resources.
- Enhancing public safety.

This applies to VEOs, as it does to other offenders, and arguably, the use of objective risk assessments is even more important for the former who are almost inevitably met with fear and mistrust, leading to potential bias.

Furthermore, an initial risk assessment of an offender is, of course, cross-sectional and on its own cannot follow the individual's trajectory. For this reason, periodic assessments are vital to see the changes in behaviour over time, in line with a longitudinal approach.

Risk assessments also form part of a broader strategy for the early prevention of terrorism. Outside of prison, those who have a responsibility for countering violent extremism, including state agencies (i.e. security, education, health and youth services), civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), strive to intervene in the lives of individuals who appear to potentially be going through the process of violent radicalization. It is often that such 'suspected' individuals come to the attention of the relevant organisations through policing and intelligence work, or based on concerns expressed by health care workers, educators, or members of the community (Sarma, 2017, p.279). Within prisons, the same occurs, albeit in a different context, whereby prison staff can reduce security threats while simultaneously deradicalizing or disengaging through rehabilitation and later reintegration, an individual who was undergoing a process of (further) violent radicalization within the prison setting.

## **Risk factors for violent extremist risk assessment**

The special concerns of risk assessment are the selection of factors to assess, and the methods for combining these factors into an overall evaluation of risk (Hanson, 2009, p.172). Proponents of risk assessment in this context have argued that it can play a valuable role in counterterrorism, maximising the efficiency of the counterterrorism effort in directing resources where they can generate a strong impact. However, effective risk assessment tools need to be able to distinguish between individuals who are on violent and non-violent trajectories. This, in turn, requires a body of research that has isolated indicators that are sensitive to the different processes. While it is easy to immediately jump to the risk factors, it is worth considering the value of resilience factors, the characteristics that make the person less likely to hold attitudes or concern or engage in problematic behaviours, in order to build a more complete picture of the individual being assessed and to avoid ill-informed conclusions.

Having said this, identifying the risk and resilience factors that can accurately predict the level of violent extremism remains a significant challenge. The lack of empirical evidence, largely due to the difficulties of conducting research on such a sensitive topic and with a population often unwilling to participate, has meant that this kind of risk assessment draws upon a small pool of knowledge. Further efforts to enrich the empirical evidence can be complemented by both relevant theories and practitioner experience as a way to overcome this initial obstacle.

There are important ethical considerations that make the task of identifying risk and resilience factors even more complex. Chiefly, these are the problems of false negatives, false positives, and the low base-rate (Hanson, 2009, 2017). An imperfect risk assessment process can lead to misdiagnoses of offenders, labelling some as being extremist who in reality are not and those who are actually likely to be extremist being assessed as not posing this risk. When either or both of these happen, many problems can arise. A fear for the security risk of the false negatives pushes the risk assessment design in the direction of broader factors as a way of casting a wider net. The fact that this could quite easily increase the number of false positives is often deemed to be a secondary concern.

Figure 4 gives some insight into a few key factors that should be considered when designing a risk assessment of VEOs. This is not an exhaustive list, and there are nuances to each in different socio-cultural contexts that ought not to be neglected.



Figure 4. Source: Silke, 2014, p.113

These risk factors are dynamic, which means that unlike static factors, they can change or be changed. Dissecting this further, there are multiple sources of information that can help assessors to understand the individual offender better. According to the Radicalization Awareness Network (2016, p.5), these are: actuarial data about the individual and the offence; dynamic factors, such as employment, housing, mental health, and family support; clinical factors: based on professional judgement; information from different partners in a multi-agency framework, this means, information coming from social workers, the police, and intelligence services.

As such, an initial risk assessment can aim to include all of the above. The periodic risk assessments thereafter would need to reassess information related only to those factors that are subject to change.

In addition to risk factors, there are often personal characteristics of an individual that should be assessed, since these factors can affect their engagement in treatment. These would include areas like mental and emotional problems, cognitive functioning, and level of motivation and readiness to change. For example, an offender might be a moderate risk to offend, but due to a low level of cognitive functioning they would not be successful in a programme that requires normal functioning. Assessment of these areas can often improve the placement of offenders and the effectiveness of correctional treatment (ibid., p. 209).

## Risk of recidivism

It is important to note that most offenders (violent extremist or otherwise) are not at high risk for recidivism because they present one risk or need factor, but rather are at high risk because they have multiple factors. As a result, programs that target only one factor may not produce the desired effects (Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Holsinger, 2006). For example, while unemployment is correlated

with criminal conduct for many probationers and parolees, by itself it is not that strong of a risk factor. After all, if most of us were to lose our job, we would not start selling drugs or robbing people; we would simply start looking for another job. But if you think a job is for someone else, if you have no problem letting someone else support you, or if you think you can make more in a day illegitimately than someone can make in a month legitimately, then being unemployed does add considerably to your risk of offending. Identifying criminogenic needs is an important part of offender risk assessment - it tells us what to focus on to reduce the risk (Latessa & Lovins, 2010, p. 209).

## Target population for risk assessment

The identification of vulnerable prisoners at risk of radicalization is of decisive importance. Therefore, in recent years, risk assessment of terrorist prisoners has emerged as a particularly critical issue in the field.

Silke (2014) identifies the following issues to be of critical importance in considering risk assessment of extremists in prison. First, it is important to know the particularities of the terrorist movement and the characteristics of each individual involved in terrorist activity. Secondly, it is important to recognize that there are different types of terrorist prisoners. Silke identified four categories of people that should be considered when assessing the risk for terrorism and extremism within prison settings, as described in Figure 5.

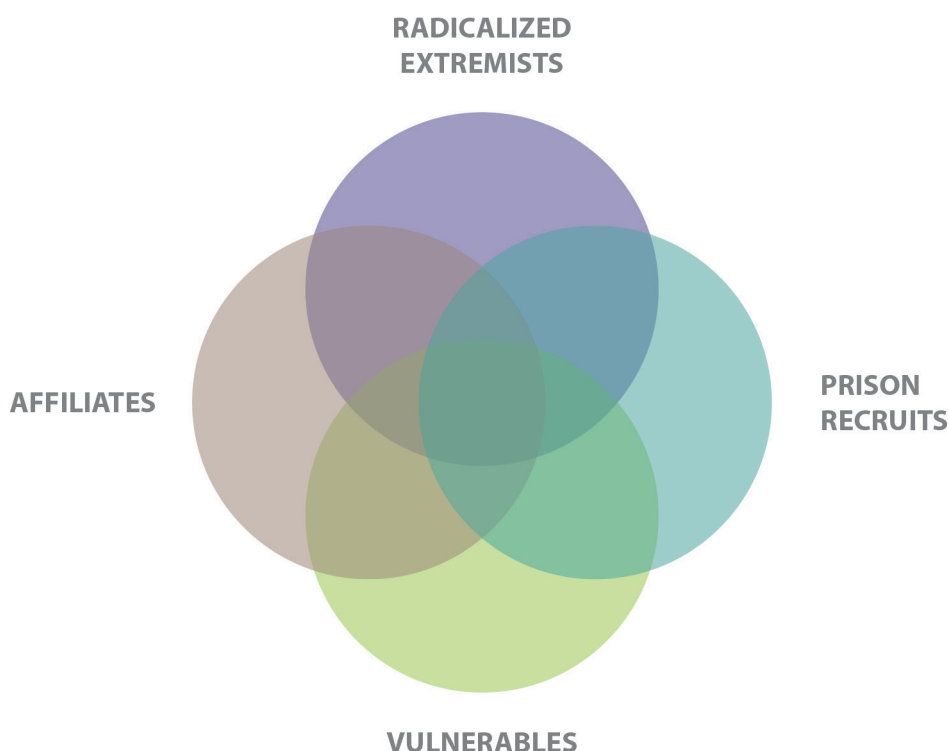


Figure 5. The different populations of concern for terrorist risk assessment in prison.  
Source: Silke, 2014, p.109

- The first group that should be assessed with respect to the risk of terrorism includes prisoners who have entered prison already holding extremist views and who before entering prison had engaged in various extremist actions. These would include killers, bombers, would-be suicide terrorists, as well as ideologues, recruiters, fund-raisers and online propagandists in this category.
- The second group of concern includes prisoners who have been convicted of involvement in extremism or terrorism, but who may not have been radicalized when they committed these acts. Such prisoners may have been coerced to become involve in terrorist activities or may

have been friends or family members of the first group, but they often tend to have a minor role to play in the terrorist acts. Nevertheless, within the prison system they tend to be treated as terrorists.

- The third group includes prisoners who have been radicalized within prison, possibly as a result of the contact they have had with extremist prisoners. These individuals may not have committed acts that were politically-motivated, and thus risk assessment processes should consider that for some of these prisoners, there is a lack of knowledge of the implication of extremism.
- The fourth group includes the ‘vulnerables’, in other words, individuals that have not radicalized, but under favourable circumstances may easily do so. Thus, they are a vulnerable category.<sup>2</sup>

Existing risk assessment models for other types of offenders, for instance, violent offenders, can be useful resources for the design of a P/CVE-oriented risk assessment. However, it is worth being cautious and avoiding an over-reliance on such models since there are psychological differences among categories of prisoners. Without an adapted assessment, indicators of VE behaviour can easily be missed.

A risk assessment may have a uniform format for all those being assessed, but it can nevertheless be tailored to the individual when administered, particularly if the assessment requires the professional judgement of the assessor. The heterogeneity of offenders in their characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, motivations and other aspects requires an understanding and response to reflect the individuality of each offender. In contrast to a one-size-fits-all approach, a risk assessment tailored to each individual gets closer to the real type and extent of the risk the individual poses. The same can be said for a needs assessment, which focus both on the needs of an individual for his or her wellbeing, and also addresses the risks that they pose. Introducing a tailored approach to assessments at the very early stages sets a precedent for the later stages of the rehabilitation and management of an offender to be tailored likewise to the individual.

### **Current practice**

Although there is a lack of evidence to support the adoption of one risk assessment approach over another, or to show the degree of success that comes from performing risk assessments of inmates for the purposes of P/CVE, there is nevertheless a selection of models that have been put in place by states.

There are currently at least two measures that have been specifically designed for their use in prison settings, especially with the first of the groups of prisoners, radicalized extremists. These are the Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ (ERG22+), which is used principally in England and Wales, and the Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA-2), which is in use, for example, in Australia and has been designed to be used specifically with ideologically motivated violent offenders (Ionescu et al, 2017, p.66).

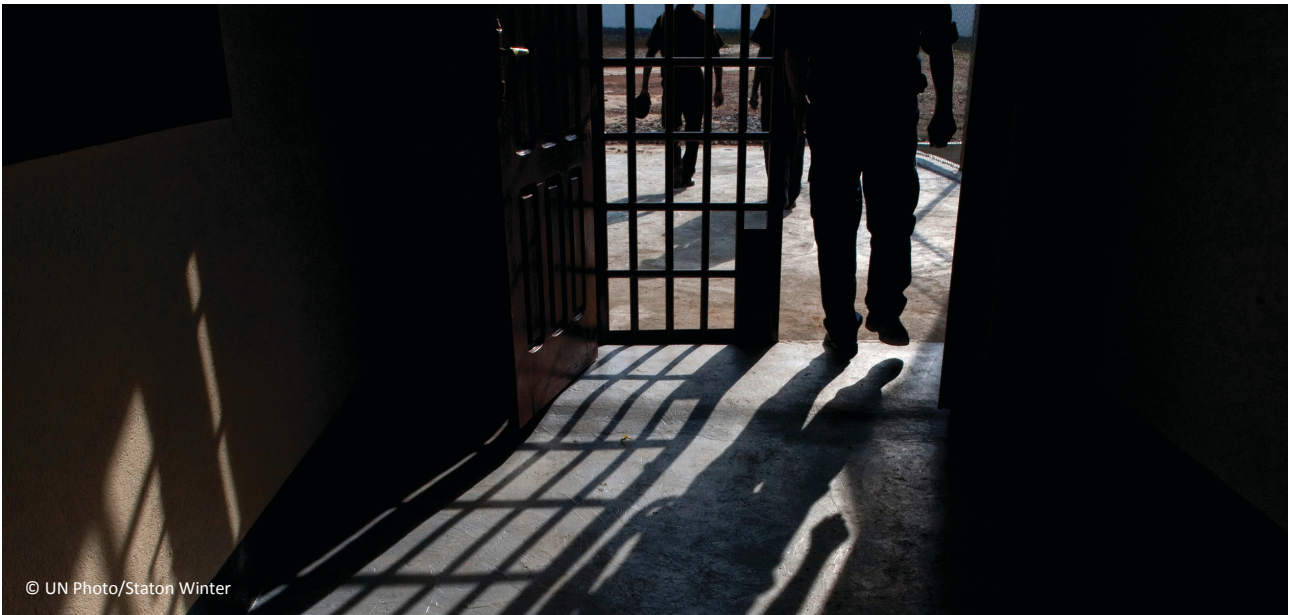
### **ERG22+**

The Extremism Risk Guidance 22+ (ERG 22+) is an assessment tool developed by the NOMS Operational Intervention Services Group that was launched in 2011.<sup>3</sup> The ERG assesses offenders on 22 factors that are theoretically related to extremist offending (the “+” in the title is a reflection that the model will consider other factors beyond the 22 if they have shown to be relevant in a particular case). ERG is a theoretical model, and as yet does not have an evidence base demonstrating clear links to future offending. Currently, all the 22 factors carry equal weight in the assessment, but this is likely to change as the number of longitudinal follow-ups on prisoners assessed through this measure increases.

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2 Silke, 2014, p.109

3 Rehabilitation Services Group, 2011



## VERA-2

The VERA-2 is composed of five categories of items: Beliefs and Attitudes, Context and Intent, History and Capability, Commitment and Motivation and Protective Items. Out of 31 total items, 25 are risk indicators and 6 are risk-mitigating indicators. The Vera-2 risk assessment was developed to serve as a generic approach for the range of violent extremists. However, Pressman and Flockton (2014, p.125) note that the final risk decision is not based on VERA-2 interviews alone. All available information, reports, and intelligence from multiple sources are used to determine the ratings for each indicator and the final risk judgements. A detailed picture of the ideological nature, motivators, background, training, capacities, worldview and other relevant aspects is constructed for each offender using the VERA-2 risk indicators within the provided framework. This represents the unique constituent elements of risk at a given time for a specific individual in a given situational context (Pressman and Flockton, 2014, p. 126).

In contrast to ERG 22+, VERA 2 does supply an overall risk assessment score for the individual terrorist. Like the UK test, VERA-2 currently gives equal weighting to the different factors in arriving at this score, and this is likely to change as follow-up data become available.

## *Further assessment features*

### **Discerning between the different challenges and solutions to risk assessing**

Typically, the user of the risk assessment report expects more than a number. Not only do decision-makers want an estimate of the likelihood of failure, but they also want an estimate of the potential consequences, and what can be done to mitigate the risk.

The ideal risk assessment would have other desirable features as well. The following list summarises (Hanson, 2005, p.172) some features to which risk assessment procedures should aspire:

- Assess risk factors whose nature, origins, and effects can be understood.
- Enable reliable and valid assessment of clinically useful causal factors.
- Provide precise estimates of recidivism risk.
- Allow all relevant factors to be considered.
- Inform the development of treatment targets and risk management strategies.
- Allow the assessment of both long term and short-term changes in risk.
- Incorporate protective factors, as well as risk factors.
- Facilitate engaging the patient/offender in the assessment process.
- Be easy to implement in a broad range of settings.

# RESEARCH AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS IN PRISONS

*By Elena Dal Santo and Sonia Amelio*

## **Introduction**

The importance of rehabilitation programmes is recalled in the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, as a means to strength good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

In recent years, the trends and processes of radicalisation leading to violent extremism have evolved and broadened, taking root in detention and prison facilities, which have become breeding grounds for radicalization and recruitment. Therefore, an increased number of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes have been designed and launched in the last decade in response to a growing terrorist threat and as a strategy to counter terrorism. One of the concerns that leads to the development of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes is that prison is a peculiar environment, where inmates are more vulnerable to radicalization. Vulnerability is mainly due to restrictions of freedom, the loss of means of subsistence, personal effects and housing, the loss of important personal relationships and the deterioration of social and family ties. In the period immediately following their arrest, pre-trial detainees can be particularly vulnerable and therefore more exposed to radicalization. This is particularly true in the many countries where individuals suspected of terrorism-related offences can remain incarcerated for years before being sentenced.

Notwithstanding, there are very few empirical studies on the radicalization process in prison, and it is challenging to prove that radicalization is primarily a result of the time spent in prison. Some scholars suggest that the adoption of radical ideologies and acts of terrorism can be motivated, for example, by experiences occurring both before and after imprisonment. In addition, prisons also represent a unique environment for tailored rehabilitation activities, including targeted treatments, capacity-building initiatives and awareness raising opportunities. Rather than terrorist offenders attempting to radicalize and recruit other prisoners, incarceration under certain circumstances may reduce the risk and instead mark the beginning of a disengagement process.

It is nevertheless undeniable that prisons can play a multi-faceted role in identifying, assessing and countering radicalization and recruitment. In addition, prisons represent a unique environment for tailored rehabilitation activities, including targeted treatments, capacity-building initiatives and awareness raising opportunities. Rather than terrorist offenders attempting to radicalize and recruit other prisoners, incarceration under certain circumstances may reduce this risk and actually mark the beginning of a disengagement process, leading to the positive change of extremist detainees. In this regard, the design and development of effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs can prevent further radicalization and help deradicalizing inmates convicted of terrorism-related offences. In order to ensure effectiveness, the development of rehabilitation and reintegration activities should be anchored to empirical results and inspired by action-research methods and proper research methodologies.

## ***The role of research in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes***

The effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and initiatives can benefit from an increased understanding of the “situation and the underlying social dynamics responsible for social change” to develop tailored policies promoting targeted strategies and solutions (Veldhuis and Kessels, 2013).

Although the importance of a common approach within a global strategy is widely recognized, intervention programs and policies need to be realistic and specifically tailored to each context. In this regard, research is essential to ensure the effectiveness of the programmes implemented, as well as to develop efficient policies and programming responses.

Prison represents a peculiar and fragile environment, where high levels of vulnerability lead inmates to identify coping strategies. Imprisonment often represents a challenging environment for inmates and requires a “set of psychological adaptations [...] in response to the extraordinary demands of prison life” (Travis, J., and Waul, M., 2003). This process, also referred to as “prisonization”, leads detainees to absorb the prison-life norms and adapt to them, not just with reference to the behaviour, but also in terms of feelings and thoughts. Incarceration, besides affecting the socio-economic wellbeing of inmates, may be linked to distress, mental health problems, or forms of victimization. Imprisonment may also produce effects beyond the time spent in detention, thus reducing the possibility of inmates to successfully reintegrate into society after release.

Religion can play a role in this sense, providing meaning, a framework for identity and interpretation of the surrounding context. Religion can support the inmate in dealing with the sense of culpability, provide new, alternative life-styles and may strengthen strategies to cope with freedom restrictions. Extremist recruiters can manipulate religious discourse, along with socio-economic and political grievances, to take advantage of the vulnerabilities linked to imprisonment. Unfortunately, empirical data on the phenomenon of radicalization in prison settings, as well as on religious recruitment strategies, are very limited and usually based on limited and anecdotal cases (Mezzetti, 2017). Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, for example, is believed to have founded a fundamentalist organization in prison, gaining the support of his fellow inmates by challenging correctional officers and the penitentiary administration (Brisard, J. C., and Martinez, D., 2005). Prison can also play a role in fostering and strengthening linkages among radicalized individuals. For example, Cherif Kouachi, one of the attackers against the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, and Amedi Coulibaly, who killed four hostages at a kosher supermarket in Paris, met in Fleury-Merogis, the largest prison in France, located on the outskirts of Paris (Walklate, S. and Mythen, G., 2016). During the time spent in prison the two fellow prisoners are believed to have strengthened their bonds as well as to have been mentored by Djamel Beghal, an al Qaeda recruiter in Europe arrested in 2005 for planning an attack towards the U.S. Embassy in Paris.

Programmes aimed at rehabilitating and reinserting violent extremist offenders into society shall be based on substantial evidence. In this framework, research efforts are extremely beneficial to identify gaps and challenges and enhance and improve the design of tailored rehabilitation and reintegration activities. An assessment phase envisaging field research is beneficial to evaluate the actual risk of radicalization, identify and address the factors that allow or fuel the risk of radicalization (i.e. how inmates are housed, including exposure to recruiting leaders; lack of tailored rehabilitating interventions for inmates; length of the judicial process; etc.) and assess the effectiveness of counter-radicalization measures already in place on different categories of offenders (juvenile and adult offenders; juvenile and adult women; the influence of the programmes on recidivism).

UNICRI’s experience in implementing rehabilitation and reintegration projects has shown that empirical research can also support the identification of the categories of professionals (e.g. prison staff, social workers, psychologists, etc.) that benefit the most from rehabilitation and reintegration capacity building and training components.

Finally, this process entails gaining a better understanding of the root causes that can be conducive to violent extremism, in order to identify recognizable trends and patterns. Hence, empirical studies should be turned into actionable knowledge bases enabling the identification of priority actions and strategies in the area of rehabilitation and reintegration. Figure E1 shows how primary data can be used to develop and improve the broad range of interventions envisaged in a rehabilitation and reintegration programme.



*Figure E1 – How empirical studies can be turned into actionable knowledge base enabling to identify priority actions and relevant strategies of intervention*

### ***What are the challenges in and the strategies for conducting research in prison settings?***

Research represents the “Achilles’ heel” of terrorism studies: despite a huge number of articles, policy papers and books published on this subject, very limited research has been conducted, and only a small percentage of publications are based on primary data. Lack of investigative work in this domain can be explained by several factors, such as, for example, the violent nature of the subject, the reluctance of the groups involved in terrorist activities to participate in research activities, the complex and multidisciplinary nature of the phenomenon and the political sensitivity of the topic (Silke, 2001).

Doing research in prison, and on such a sensitive subject as terrorism, entails various challenges and limitations, and not all criticalities can be foreseen and addressed preventively. Moreover, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes would benefit from analysis of empirical data. Drawing from the experience of UNICRI in implementing rehabilitation and reintegration components in various countries and diverse contexts, some possible solutions and recommendations will be proposed in the following paragraphs.

### **Challenging subject and environment**

Conducting research in prison entails various challenges, even when the focus of the data collection and analysis is neither violent extremism nor radicalization. This is due to the fact that the penitentiary environment poses some critical contextual challenges, ranging from access to the prison environment to issues in data collection. Prison represents a unique environment driven by peculiar dynamics of power and clear distinctions of roles. Because of the intrinsic vulnerabilities linked to the penitentiary context, it is difficult for an external researcher to gain participants’ trust and to establish an emotional connection that may allow data collection to occur. Although there are strategies and methods to facilitate the establishment of a positive relationship of trust, unfortunately there is no golden rule on how to build rapport with research participants. Building rapport requires



time and the trust and confidence gained should not be taken for granted, as the rapport can be easily disturbed by several exogenous and endogenous factors that may disrupt the “conversational dance”, such as emotional involvement or specific attitudes. Finally, the type of relationship and the level of trust, along with other contextual factors, may affect the content of the answers provided by the respondent (Bosworth, et al., 2005).

The situation is even harder when research is focused on terrorism, as participants are reluctant to share information due to various reasons, ranging from fear of legal implications to social desirability (Fisher, 1993). Some participants may feel obliged to participate in the research or may be motivated by little incentives, thus negatively affecting the rapport. In addition, some participants may be unwilling to interact with some researchers on the basis of ethnic origin, nationality or language barriers. Within their fieldwork, UNICRI personnel experienced difficulties of this nature when liaising with inmates: language as well as ethnic origins represented a challenge in some contexts. Hence, it is crucial to conduct research and take into consideration possible challenges and potential solutions before beginning with data collection. Given the complexity of the penitentiary environment, researchers should establish contacts with relevant local and national authorities, correctional officers and other relevant prison actors in order to collect contextual information on the settings they will be working in. Collection of information on the context in which research will be carried out could be done through different channels and sources, such as, informal and unstructured interviews, as well as by conducting analysis of the existing literature and official documents. This inception phase, envisaging the collection of data on the research context, is crucial for shaping the research methods, the content and the attitude that the researchers should adopt while in the prison context. Sound knowledge of the context will also be particularly useful to prevent security risks and violent situations.

### The role of the researcher

Several criticalities are strictly linked to the researcher and his/her role in the data collection and analysis: conducting research on terrorism can be an exciting and unique opportunity and there may be a tendency to overestimate anecdotal cases or provide “journalistic portrayals” (Horgan, 2012). In order to ensure reliability of data and a transparent approach, the researcher should reflect on and define in advance the research methodology, its theoretical underpinnings and the methods to be used to collect data. Furthermore, when conducting research on social phenomena, such as violent extremism, it is always essential to remember that correlation is not causation, in order to avoid the risk of sensationalism (Veldhuis and Kessels, 2013).



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Before conducting research on the ground, the researcher needs to clarify his/her theoretical standpoint, define his/her methodology and list possible challenges and limitations arising from work in the field. Additionally, doing research in the field of terrorism requires a clear definition of the researcher's role: as the topic is intrinsically emotional, efforts shall be made in order to maintain neutrality and objectivity, as the researcher is not meant to "fight the terrorist fire" (Schmid, 2011). Also, it is important to keep in mind that, besides recommended reading, preparatory work and erudition efforts, there are "lessons that the researcher can only learn through experience by talking to individuals involved in violence" (Silke, 2004).

## **Sensitive data**

Conducting research in prison environments and/or on the topic of violent extremism implies a collection of sensitive data requiring a rigorous approach and management of the information in all phases. Given the sensitive nature of the offence, this is particularly true when conducting research on detainees accused of, or sentenced for, terrorism. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity is the first step to establish trust, not only from the interviewees, but also from the local and national authorities involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration programmes (Lee, 1993). Confidentiality is crucial in order to protect the individuals involved in the research as well as the sensitive data that may impact national security. As a matter of fact, research on terrorism develops in a complex environment, where information collected may expose individuals to certain risks, if not managed correctly and consciously. In particular, in the case of qualitative data, it is much more difficult to break the linkage between the data collected and the individual it refers to (Lee, 1993). Secondly, storage of data requires protective measures to avoid leaks. Finally, publication and dissemination of research findings pose some challenges when the research subject is sensitive. For example, publication may require authorization and clearance from the authorities involved in order to ensure the protection of participants in the research and of society at large, as well as to protect sensitive details of intelligence operations (Lee, 1993).

Protection of data and sensitive information is essential to ensure credibility and gain the trust of the participants. This would not only facilitate access to fieldwork, but would also ease the development of a rapport between the researcher and the research participants. Various options and security measures are available to do secure data, such as the adoption of passwords to protect files or the use of tailored data management software, and researchers should explore them beforehand. In addition, it is essential to clarify the use of data collected with local authorities before starting the research.

## **Controversial content and concepts**

In terms of content, research on violent extremism, terrorism and radicalization, refers to controversial concepts that pose a definitional challenge and are vulnerable to politicization (Veldhuis and Kessels, 2013). As underlined by Schmid, there are several reasons for which it is extremely difficult to reach an agreement on a definition of terrorism. As different definitions can lead to different methodological approaches and interpretative perspectives, it is a responsibility of the researcher to clearly identify and spell out the scope of his/her work, as well as its limitations (Schmid, 2004).

Combining data collected within the prison settings with other sources of information would help researchers to avoid sensationalism and would ensure a more comprehensive and complete analysis of the phenomena under consideration. It is estimated that approximately "90 percent of all information possessed by intelligence agencies is available in open sources" (Dolnik, 2011). The challenge in this subject area is not only about getting more data, but also in combining different sources and providing a solid interpretation of data. The combination of diverse primary sources, such as "interviews and government archives", would enhance the understanding of the terrorist phenomenon, its causes and its patterns (Schuurman and Eijkman, 2013). In this sense, establishing good contacts with local researchers and other entities conducting study on related topics may also be useful to avoid duplication and get the most out of research efforts. This is particularly true when conducting research in areas where access is difficult because of conflict and security concerns. Collaboration among research entities and institutions, on the other hand, requires a clear definition of the nature of the cooperation in order to ensure that data are managed in a secured manner.



## Monitoring and evaluation

Finally, data collection and analysis in this specific thematic field is also crucial in terms of monitoring the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. The paucity of authoritative statistical data makes it difficult for the competent authorities to make data driven decisions as well as to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes. The very few empirical studies conducted in this area only enable the drawing of general conclusions, overlooking any other distinguishing features of the prison population for each country. Monitoring and evaluation require a well-structured approach to be in place before, during and after the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration activities. In addition, comparability of data among countries and case-studies would benefit from a broader regional and international harmonization of data collection mechanisms and analysis. In some countries, for example, Standards Operating Procedures (SOPs) are still missing, and this entails a lack of information and data that would need to be addressed. Moreover, databases on terrorism are intrinsically built around a conceptual interpretation of the phenomenon, thus affecting the results of research conducted on available data: transparent normative criteria would improve the quality of the research, would allow comparability efforts and replicability, along with the integrity of observations.

Generally speaking, it is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies and literature, an aspect that is still very limited. Continued data collection would allow for the development of a solid monitoring and evaluation process, which in turn can be used to elaborate robust methodologies and appropriate tools to assess the effectiveness of the rehabilitation and reintegration programmes implemented. Indicators of success derive from the theory driving the rehabilitation and reintegration interventions. UNICRI's work in the field of rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs, for example, is based on a theory of change that is grounded in a combination of treatment models, including an expansion of the concentric circle model of treatment provided for juveniles in conflict with the law: indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the efficaciousness of the projects implemented by UNICRI in this domain are rooted in this theory of change. In addition, it is important to remember that monitoring strategies should be discussed with actors on the ground to ensure their sustainability and applicability.

## Conclusions

Detention of violent extremist offenders represents a crucial moment where recidivism or rehabilitation can occur. The importance of effective and tailored rehabilitation and reintegration programmes is undeniable to rehabilitate terrorists as well as to prevent recruitment and radicalization in prison. As every context requires tailored activities and strategies, research, initial assessment and continued monitoring, is essential to ensure that rehabilitation and reintegration components reflect the needs of the situation and provide the necessary tools and answers to the beneficiaries. Although conducting research in this specific field implies several challenges, it is a crucial way to address the phenomenon of violent extremism from a mature and sound perspective.

# EVALUATING COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE): A FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGE TO BE ADDRESSED

*By Itziar Arispe*

## **Introduction**

The extraordinary increase of foreign fighters from all over the world joining the ranks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq in recent years has been as worrying as unexpected for the international community. In 2014, around 15,000 foreign fighters from 80 countries joined ISIL, mainly from Muslim-majority countries such as Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, but also from Asia, Europe and the United States (Cronin 2015). Moreover, the total number of foreign fighters almost doubled by December 2015, amounting to 27,000 at that time. The number of Europeans fighting for ISIL also shockingly increased in 2015, growing to 5,000. They were mainly from France, Great Britain, Germany and Belgium (Gaub 2016).

At the heart of this major concern rests the fact that some of these foreign fighters return to their places of origin and carry out terrorist attacks that are characterized as being both violent and unpredictable, leaving civil society and governments immersed in an unprecedented bewilderment. The already labelled foreign terrorist fighters represent possibly one of the largest fears of our day in many countries of the world. Even the most optimistic voices in the international arena agree unambiguously on the fact that terrorism has worsened over the course of the last decade.

It is not surprising then that it has become common to hear that security-based law enforcement and military approaches alone have not been able to solve a problem that continues to worsen over time. The need to change the global strategy to fight terrorism is in some ways reinforced by the increasing number of attacks perpetrated by so-called 'lone-wolf' terrorists. Such a menace has inevitably diverted the centre of attention from those places of conflict (i.e. Syria, Iraq) in which terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda and ISIL, display their military potential, towards the Western societies where the terrorist attacks are not only carried out, but where the terrorists are also born and raised.

In these new circumstances, a set of grassroots initiatives undertaken at the community level have emerged - first among countries such as UK, spreading later to other Western societies as well as to the multilateral institutional arena - in order to address the problem of extremism from a non-violent preventive perspective (Luengo-Cabrera and Pauwels, 2016).

These relatively new efforts, framed under the new label of 'Countering Violent Extremism', look for innovative, multifaceted and non-coercive strategies that place civil society at the centre of the fight against extremism (Parker 2014). The large number of initiatives that are emerging in this area of prevention - ranging from dialogue-based local workshops on sensitive topics, counselling, educational activities, vocational training, mentorship programmes - rest on the assumption that local non-violent and grassroots activism can contain, mitigate and reverse the threat of violent extremism. Strengthening local communities, as well as their bonds with the institutional framework at different levels, has become a core feature of this approach. Moreover, beyond pursuing the decline of violent extremism, such efforts are also expected to offer a voice to social causes and a channel of expression for the minorities by promoting a culture of tolerance, pluralism and social cohesion (Kaldor and de Oliveira 2005, Makus and Kirpitchenko 2007).

Although counter violent extremism today enjoys great credibility - possibly greater than empirical research can support - this new approach, was promoted from different angles by observing preliminary findings and spread quickly over the last decade. The purpose of this article is precisely to underscore these lessons and in turn identify the major challenges that CVE might face in the future according to the specialized literature on the subject, as well as the way in which those challenges could be better addressed. To this end, the following section will briefly review CVE's historical path from the earliest programs to its adoption by multilateral institutions such as the United Nations system. Before some final thoughts for further discussion, section three points to two crucial challenges that CVE faces today and analyses how institutions such as UNICRI can contribute to adequately address them.

### **CVE: from the UK Contest/Prevent strategy to the United Nations system**

The international military campaign in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks - widely known as the 'war on terror' - was embedded in a warfare approach based on security counter-terrorism measures to tackle the new terrorist threat. However, a series of events gave rise to critical voices that called into question the true effectiveness of such a strategy to fight the menace of global terrorism. The virulent attacks carried out in an unprecedented way in March 2004 in Madrid and in July 2005 in London, as well as the presence of jihadist cells in countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States, showed that terrorism had not only not declined, but had become an even bigger threat to 'the West'. Thus, greater attention began to be placed on the Western countries themselves, as well as on the processes of radicalization that happen within their boundaries, rather than solely on terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Middle East (Harris-Hogan, 2015).

For the first time, in 2003, the UK adopted its counter-terrorism strategy, "Contest", which unfolded into four strands: pursue, prevent, protect and prepare. The strategy included the component 'prevent' from where to address a set of efforts directed at stopping people born and/or socialized in the UK from radicalising and engaging in terrorist attacks in their own territory.

After the UK, other countries in Europe began progressively to work on CVE. The Netherlands, for instance, introduced the "Polarisation and radicalisation Action Plan" in 2007, and Denmark, its homologous national plan against extremism in 2009. In many countries it took several years to recognize the need to empower local leaders and strengthen community partnerships in preventive work, and establish a specific regulatory framework

### **United Nations System**

The turn of the United Nations towards comprehensive strategies including engaging with local communities as a means to effectively combat extremism is no different from the turn taken by other key actors in the international arena.

Assuming a leading role in the fight against terrorism, after 9/11 the UN Security Council began a period characterized by intense regulatory activity. Resolution 1368, adopted the day after the attacks, invoked for the first time the right of self-defence against terrorist attacks. Resolution 1373, also adopted in September 2001, imposed legally binding duties on all Member States "to intensify their efforts to eliminate the scourge of international terrorism" through a set of actions, such as strengthening border controls or controlling financial flows. The list of resolutions to combat terrorism mainly through security-based procedures is long, but perhaps another example worth mentioning is Resolution 1540 of April 2004, which similar to Resolution 1373, establishes binding obligations for all Member States to prohibit support to non-state actors seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction; to adopt and enforce laws criminalizing their possession, acquisition and financing and to enforce domestic controls over nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

Criticism from Member States and different spheres of NGOs and civil society did not take long to emerge. The approach towards the establishment of a global regulatory framework that rests on sanctions to enforce a number of resolutions that have not been adopted directly by the countries generated certain rejection that was no doubt accentuated by the fact that the Security did not human rights issues were not adequately incorporated into the said framework. The Csanctions architecture, for instance, did not contemplate mechanisms to review those cases in which the affected individuals claimed their innocence (Von Einsiedel 2015).



The widespread doubts about the ability of security-based measures alone to effectively combat terrorism in light of the attacks of Madrid and London appear to be the climate in which CVE arose in the United Nations. Thus, after creating the Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) in 2005 to ensure unity within the United Nation system, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented to the General Assembly, in April 2006, a Report entitled "Uniting against terrorism: recommendations for a global counter-terrorism strategy," which for the first time underlined the importance of moving beyond the agenda of the moment and "address[ing] conditions conducive to exploitation by terrorists." It also highlighted the centrality of "defending human rights in the context of terrorism and counter-terrorism," as well as "the role civil society can play in promoting a truly global strategy against terrorism." These elements are relevant since their incorporation into the global debate represent a clear shift in the discourse on combatting terrorism, which was now developed in more comprehensive terms than in previous years.

On 20 September 2006, the General Assembly unanimously endorsed a slightly modified version of the Secretary-General's proposal, giving birth to the influential UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which explicitly requires Member States to adopt a set of measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. While recognizing that none of these conditions can excuse or justify acts of terrorism, the strategy focuses attention for the first time on the need to address the root causes of extremism to effectively combat terrorism, such as, for instance, prolonged unresolved conflicts or issues related to human rights. This is central to the concept of CVE because by highlighting the need to adequately address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism it reveals the recognition by the international community that extremism "cannot be prevented through repressive measures alone. It is also essential to take account of grievances that may be exploited by terrorists [...] and to develop constructive solutions." Another further example of the rhetoric shift that was happening at the time is represented by the explicit encouragement in the strategy (UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy 2006, p. 4) "to promote dialogue, tolerance and understanding among civilizations, cultures, peoples and religions, and to promote mutual respect for and prevent the defamation of religions, religious values, beliefs and cultures."

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has gradually become a reference document of global scope within and outside the United Nations system. Since its unanimous endorsement by the General Assembly in 2006, the strategy has thus far been already reviewed by the same General Assembly five times (every two years since its inception) in order to keep the document fine-tuned and aligned to the changing times and the priorities of the Member States. Perhaps an important moment that should be highlighted is the 10th anniversary of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy when, on the occasion of the fifth and last review of the strategy (1 July 2016), the General Assembly appraised and endorsed two crucial documents developed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon: a report on the progress made with the strategy; and a proposal on a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, expected to become the global guide to combatting violent extremism. It is certainly significant that, while recognizing the advances made in the last decade, the Secretary-General

emphasized in both documents the necessity of increasing Member States' efforts to adequately address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law while countering terrorism. This is important since it reminds the essential values that have grounded the United Nations since its inception.

Finally, with a view to completing this examination of the evolution of CVE-related matters within the United Nations system, resolution 2178 (2014) of the Security Council cannot be overlooked. In it, the Security Council makes explicit the connection between violent extremism and terrorism and recognizes the need for prevention. Moreover, it specifically devotes one of its four sections (section III) to underscoring the importance of community engagement and the need to undertake measures to counter violent extremism. Actually, CVE is named for the first time in this UN resolution. Nevertheless, while adopting the CVE language, as well as paying far greater attention to human rights than previous Security Council resolutions (i.e. resolution 1373), the other three sections are strongly focused on addressing the new threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters through security-based means (i.e. border controls, intelligence, cooperation and sanctions). Therefore, CVE practitioners have expressed concerns about the risk that the resolution - although adopting CVE language - could be used as an instrument for governments to exert higher control over local actors at the community level (Fink 2014). In any case, the impact of the resolution remains to be seen and will depend largely on the Member States. What is certain is that the resolution represents a new opportunity for the countries to engage a constructive dialogue with communities to prevent CVE.

In short, the Secretary-General and the entire United Nations system, including the General Assembly as well as the Security Council - both of which play a major part in developing the current UN counterterrorism agenda - openly recognize that terrorism cannot be defeated by military force, law enforcement measures and intelligence operations alone. To further focus on preventive measures for addressing violent extremism is at the core of the UN resolutions in general and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in particular. The latest, explicitly encourages the development of national and regional action plans by Member States that adopt community-oriented models to combat extremism. This certainly represents a paradigmatic change in the field of international relations. With regard to its response to the treat of terrorism, the United Nations today is in a very different position than it was right after 9/11.

### ***Evolution of the concept and praxis of CVE***

CVE has become a recurrent term in recent years - within the United Nations system and beyond - to refer in general to community-based non-coercive initiatives that aim to reduce the involvement of individuals in violent extremism (Harris-Hogan et al. 2015). However, as with other related terms, the concept of CVE has evolved to become a 'catch-all category that lacks precision and focus' (Heydemann 2004, p.1). To a certain extent, this should not appear strange since UN Member States have, for instance, been unable to agree so far on a definition of 'terrorism' itself, mainly because governments do not agree on whether a state that exerts violence on its citizens should be considered a 'state terrorist', or on whether a citizen of an occupied state that resists such occupation using force should be considered a terrorist (Von Einsiedel 2016).

In any case, returning to the enterprise of demarcating as much as possible the concept of CVE, Khalil and Zeuthen offer a definition that has gained widespread consensus among CVE practitioners, outlining CVE as a 'broad range of non-coercive and preventative activities that are united by the objective of counteracting the key drivers of violent extremism specific to the locations in which the programmes are taking place' (Khalil and Zeuthen 2016, p.6). Such a definition excludes, however, those projects oriented towards reducing exclusion, promoting education and increasing employment (to name a few traditional community-focused activities), which of course could reduce vulnerability to terrorist recruitment, but whose developmental nature does not make them CVE-specific.

Khalil and Zeuthen's above-mentioned definition contains certain features that are essential intrinsic features of CVE initiatives, differentiating them from traditional development projects. Thus, the definition makes reference to the fact that a CVE programme must specifically aim at countering the key drivers leading to extremism, which, far from being the same in all settings, are dependent on the idiosyncrasies of each particular context.

Although Khalil and Zeuthen contributed substantially to identifying CVE-related initiatives and separated them from development programs, the reference that they include in the definition to the “key drivers” of violent extremism introduces new difficulties. It implies that CVE-prevention activities require addressing the root causes conducive to the spread of extremist ideas and ultimately terrorist acts. This inevitably brings the attention of CVE practitioners to the necessity of analysing radicalization factors, or key drivers, that trigger the process to violence. CVE then operates on the basis that there is a causal relationship between underlying political, sociological, economic and physiological factors and violent extremism (Newman 2006, Romaniuk 2015), which makes it essential to uncover such factors. In other words, understanding the radicalization process of an individual and the elements behind it becomes central to the CVE work.

This notion, although advanced, creates difficulties. The analysis of root causes of radicalization is not without controversy. Let us pause here for a moment.

An open and global analysis of the root causes behind the radicalization of individuals began to proliferate in the mid-2000s after the Madrid and London bombings and the emergence of ‘home-grown’ terrorism. Unveiling the root causes of extremism conducive to terrorism, was then seen as a mean to provide policy makers and practitioners with a solid analytical foundation on which to ground the new preventative agenda that appeared essential to combat the new forms of terrorism. Until then, however, such open debate on the root causes seemed hard to find.

In light of the new terrorist threats, discussions on radicalization started to emerge, but perhaps with a rather simplistic approach that was centred on the widely known ‘push and pull’ factors of radicalization. Defining the CVE activities under this approach requires uncovering and reversing the push factors - or ‘the negative social, cultural and political features of one’s societal environment that aid in pushing vulnerable individuals onto the path of violent extremism’ - as well as the pull factors, or ‘the benefits of an extremist organization that pull vulnerable individuals to join’ (Hassan 2012, p. 18).

However, framing the ‘root cause’ question in such a way (i.e. ‘push and pull’ factors) concentrates the answers on issues that are intrinsic to the individual and/or to ‘one’s societal environment’, displacing other circumstances that move far beyond one’s community. Focusing entirely on a social-psychological perspective can be problematic and presents obstacles to the very goals that CVE pursues, because such an approach restricts the spectrum of possible factors that, according to existing empirical evidence, can play a role in the process of radicalization, such as foreign policy related issues (Kundhani 2012, Pape and Feldman 2010).

This new research perspective is part of a second wave of work on radicalization that unveils the relevant role of foreign policy as part of the root causes of extremism and terrorism. Such aspects are often excluded from the traditional ‘push and pull’ approach and played little role in the first wave of research on the topic, which occurred right after 9/11.





It is also common to refer to two waves of initiatives in the field of CVE, the second wave being characterized as incorporating fresh measures that refine the new CVE projects and programs by following the findings of the scarce evaluations that have been conducted. In this regard, one of the main efforts of the second wave has been centred on separating the objectives of community cohesion from those of CVE, thus avoiding the stigmatization of particular groups (Romaniuk 2015). Linked to this lies another of the strongest criticisms raised in evaluations about CVE, which claim that CVE government programmes target the entire Muslim community and use the programmes as mechanisms of surveillance for monitoring a specific segment of the population (Kundnani 2009, Khan 2009). Assessments of the first wave also show a certain degree of general frustration with government-led CVE initiatives, which on occasion were seen merely as instruments to divert attention from the real causes of extremism, often linked to the anti-Muslim foreign policy of some countries. To avoid these types of issues, another of the key features of the second wave involves shifting emphasis to the micro-level rather than the whole community, and primarily addressing those at risk of behavioural radicalization (Romaniuk 2015).

In short, CVE and the debate on the root causes of terrorism have evolved towards more open forums where discussions on radicalizing factors and CVE programming approaches are perhaps less conditioned by ideological factors or policy prescriptions. In this regard, some of the initiatives that have had the biggest echo in recent years are the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), created in 2011 to share experiences and expertise on a range of topics related to combatting terrorism, including CVE; Hedayah, established in Abu Dhabi one year later to focus on CVE research; the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJJ), established in Malta, also in 2012, to provide training on how to address terrorism within a rule of law framework; and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), a foundation established in Geneva in 2014 to fund CVE initiatives worldwide.

Although there are some elements that show substantial changes in CVE based on the lessons of the (recent) past and oriented to effectively strengthen the resilience of communities to violent extremism, there is still no empirical data on the effectiveness of the new efforts, which although growing exponentially, still represent an incipient approach in the struggle against terrorism.



## ***CVE challenges: a glimpse into the multilateral efforts***

There are perhaps two specific challenges that are particularly relevant for the implementation of future CVE initiatives. Challenges, that institutions such as GCERF and UNICRI are currently addressing through their CVE actions. In the case of UNICRI, such actions are being implemented - in a pilot phase - in countries of the Sahel and Maghreb regions, where there are individuals and groups at potential risk of radicalization. The fact that the initiative is headed by a multilateral institution in a group of countries, undoubtedly generates a series of additional difficulties to the traditional CVE work, since it demands a greater degree of coordination with key actors at all levels (local and national). Let us nevertheless examine in detail two crucial challenges that seem to be common to every CVE initiative.

The first one is related to establishing adequate partnerships at the local level. This is essential because CVE relies on the fact that local actors are best positioned to identify and mobilize resources to intervene and prevent extremism and therefore the CVE approach attaches great importance to partnering with the appropriate actors (Mirahmadi 2016). However, the identification of key community partners is not easy. Moreover, wrong decisions in this regard can yield negative unintended consequences in the community (Romaniuk 2015). Although there is widespread agreement about the need to engage actors with a demonstrable record of non-extremist positions, further research is still needed to uncover adequate criteria for selecting and engaging with local actors as well as to define appropriate standards to monitor their performance.

In this regard, UNICRI has placed particular emphasis on standardizing the processes of identifying and selecting adequate community actors in different countries, which, through a series of grants, will later implement the corresponding CVE projects that they themselves have designed. In particular, the proposed selection process combines the principles applicable in the UN for engagement with third parties (i.e. fairness, integrity, transparency, effective competition, good value for money, and the principles and interest of the United Nations) with a set of indicators related to the suitability of the organizations to prevent and counter extremism within the specific local contexts in which the projects will be implemented.

Specifically, UNICRI has defined a two-step process for the identification of local partners who, as mentioned above, are responsible not only for the implementation of the CVE projects but also for their initial design. The process starts by launching an open call addressed to civil society organizations, where they submit a brief CVE proposal. The selection relies on formal criteria (i.e. registration under the relevant laws of the country) and technical aspects related to the proposal, such as relevance of the problem to be addressed, added value of the proposal to existing, on-going initiatives and a clear identification of the target group. Within the second step, a pre-selected group of organizations per country are called to develop a full-fledged project proposal, which is further evaluated according to a predefined assessment framework that focuses on three main features of the intervention (resilient, inclusive and organic) through a set of five indicators per area. The assessment using the above-mentioned framework requires extensive consultation with local partners (including interviews), which ultimately aim to establish strong alliances with organizations that are prepared and motivated to undertake CVE work.

This bottom-up approach, where both the design and implementation of CVE projects and programs lies within the scope of civil society organizations themselves, avoids a series of potential stigmatization problems discussed in this article. In turn, this strategy allows the grassroots organizations themselves to offer a framework of fluid dialogue and purposeful action where issues related to injustice or political grievances (whether perceived or real) that clearly surpass the boundaries of the community can be openly discussed and channelled peacefully.

The second crucial challenge in the field of CVE has already been mentioned in this article and refers to the lack of solid evaluation work capable of guiding future CVE actions.

On one hand, the lack of rigorous designing procedures of CVE interventions is frequently criticised in the specialized literature, claiming that practitioners rarely adequately consider the contextual elements of the initiative and usually focus on anecdotal and isolated event-driven observations (Heydemann 2014, Denoeux and Carter 2009). On the other hand, most evaluations reviewed within the context of CVE interventions lack robust methods to substantiate their findings (Thomas 2010, Christmann 2012). Therefore, either favourable or negative positions about the success of CVE work are often based on 'assumptions, gut feelings and opinions' (Hemmingsen 2015 p. 40).

In particular, two main difficulties emerge frequently in the literature with regard to evaluating CVE interventions: i) lack of standard metrics to measure a negative outcome, such as 'prevention of violent extremism'; and ii) lack of longitudinal measurements to assess progress of the interventions over time, including long after the interventions finished for impact evaluations (Feddes and Gallucci 2016).

Well aware of such limitations, the evaluation community opts often for a pragmatic approach by collecting information and responding to the evaluation requirements using the available resources in terms of data and budget, which are both frequently scarce. This explains the abundance of cross sectional methods in CVE evaluations through one single measurement at a specific point in time and the use of quantitative indicators related to project outputs as core measures of success.

Experimental research design through the establishment of treatment and control groups, which are widely recognized as preferable for impact evaluations (Rossi et al. 2004), requires more resources and intense evaluation planning, aspects that generally are not considered for relatively small community-based interventions. Thus, published impact evaluations are almost non-existent in comparison with process evaluations in this field (Romaniuk 2015), which are mainly oriented to determine the quality of the project design and its outputs in order to provide recommendations about how to improve the way projects and programmes are implemented in the future (mainly under the criteria of efficiency).

UNICRI's initiative, due to its pilot nature has a particular advantage with regard to the necessity of raising empirical evidence for its achievements, as that is precisely one of its major objectives: to produce enough data through formative evaluations to guide future interventions in this area. Thus, in order to adequately measure progress during the implementation, the individual projects that comprise the initiative are first coded according to a set of variables such as the time frame proposed for the intervention; the target group (journalists/media, women, religious groups, community leaders and youth); method of the intervention (awareness-raising, counter-narratives, skills development, conflict management and educational dialogue) and geographical scope (single community, communities within a region, communities at the national level and different communities in more than one country). This categorization represents an adaptation from the evaluation methodology guidance toolkit developed by IMPACT Europe, which is a consortium of partners specialised in academic and applied research, evaluation and community engagement (IMPACT Europe 2016).

Once coded, the progress made by individual projects is assessed within each category through a set quantitative and qualitative research methods, placing a particular focus on longitudinal data (multiple measurement points along a period of time). In particular, the metrics considered are meant to capture the improvement of cognitive skills towards non-violence as well as the increase of positive behaviours (i.e. engaging in youth club activities, participation in peace building initiatives, among others).

Moreover, standard templates for progress reports are distributed to the local organizations at the inception meeting. The templates allow for detailed analysis of the progress made over time through a predefined scale to measure a set of indicators that correspond to each category of projects. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted with the different target groups at different moments of the projects complete the data collection system established to capture their perception towards CVE during the implementation period.

The monitoring and evaluation tools put forward by UNICRI address the challenge of providing accurate and verifiable empirical data on the progress of CVE projects in their different forms and contexts. Although the results remain to be seen, the objectives set out to produce more and better evidence certainly respond to a pressing need in the CVE field.

## ***Further discussion***

As Peter Romaniuk underscores in his seminal work, *Does CVE Work?* (2015), the field of 'CVE has risen to prominence in a manner disproportional to its achievements'. (Romaniuk 2015, p. v). It appears therefore wiser to search for the reasons behind the exponential growth of CVE, not in empirical evidence that cements its results (which is still under construction), but possibly in the

practitioners', policy-makers' and general public's discontent with a security-based agenda alone to combat terrorism. Nevertheless, despite having made many headlines in recent years, CVE accounts for only a small portion of the total budget devoted to combatting terrorism. Most of the efforts carried out to date continue to focus on law enforcement measures, intelligence operations and military force (Romaniuk 2015).

Although scarce and certainly needed, evidence progressively shows that it is not wise to leave out of the counterterrorism agenda political aspects related to foreign policy. There is already enough evidence to agree on the fact that terrorist attacks - specifically suicide terrorism, which has become a major concern today - are correlated and particularly sensitive to foreign policy acts. Hence, we have reached a point in which it becomes difficult to deny that foreign policy, in the name of combatting terrorism, can in occasions produce more terrorism than what it fervently pursues to terminate. As former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon emphasized in the Report submitted to the General Assembly in April 2016 revising the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and analysing the global terrorism landscape in the past 10 years, 'the world cannot afford to create more terrorists while trying to counter them' (A/70/826, p. 7).

Keeping this in mind, although still somewhat unpopular, it is more and more frequent to hear voices from practitioners, academics, policy-makers and civil society organizations pointing to the need to keep reinforcing a preventative non-coercive CVE agenda, which in its attempts to strengthen communities' resilience to extremism, also recognizes foreign issues and proposes ways to approach conflicts and political grievances peacefully.

Finally, multilateral actors such as UNICRI seem to now possess a key opportunity to greatly contribute to strengthening CVE in these early stages, by developing a comprehensive set of monitoring and evaluation tools, metrics and measurements that can be soundly integrated into the CVE initiatives. This can certainly contribute to discovering empirical evidence on the impact of such programmes, as well as on which activities and approaches - of the many that CVE contemplates today - offer better results in one context or another.



# TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH IN REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF VEOs

*By Elena Dal Santo, Alice Rena and Arthur Brocato*

## **Challenges**

Implementing a rehabilitation and reintegration program addressed to VEOs and FTFs implies several challenges, arising mainly from the sensitivity of the topic and themes of the project, as well as from the context in which the activities took place.

### **Political environment**

Developing initiatives in the area of rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs, identifying strategies to deal with returning FTFs and improving disengagement and rehabilitation efforts occurring in non-prison settings require a strong support from national institutions and a political endorsement during the implementation of the activities. In this regard, assessment missions, bilateral meetings and coordination platforms are crucial to ensure a constant dialogue among key actors and to allow a smooth implementation of the activities on the field.

### **Context specificity**

Flexibility is also a key requirement along the implementation process because, as it is generally recognized, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts need to be adapted to the local context in order to ensure effectiveness. Being prone to adapt methods and strategies in order to meet countries priorities and needs is a crucial factor.

### **Security issues**

Some of the activities foreseen in a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration program cannot be implemented due to external causes and mainly to the political instability and the security risks that scourge certain regions and countries expressing their interest in the initiative.

### **Lack of beneficiaries' interest**

Not all potential beneficiaries are interested in developing rehabilitation and reintegration projects because of different priorities in the country. International organizations should stand ready to accept the prominence of other needs and to adapt their support according to the local context.

### **Duplication of efforts**

In the last fifteen years, various entities and actors have launched CT-related measures. The great interest in the topic is not always supported by an appropriate level of coordination among implementers. Regular meetings among national, regional and international stakeholders would facilitate coordination and enhance collaboration, thus reducing the risks of duplication of efforts.

### **Broader judicial reform**

The implementation of VEO rehabilitation and reintegration projects may be negatively affected by the gaps and lacunae of the broader criminal justice system. In some cases, broader reforms on the judicial level are required in order to ensure effectiveness of the rehabilitative measures. Solid assessment of the local context is thus essential to better tailor the activities and address gaps and needs that might precede the implementation of specific rehabilitation and reintegration measures.

## ***Lessons learned and way forward***

Addressing the issue of violent extremism requires a holistic approach that involves engagement with multiple stakeholders active across an array of different sectors, including government, civil society, the private sector, academia, and international institutions. In this regard, establishing/strengthening networks and improving synergies between services/agencies/institutions inside and outside of prisons is crucial to ensure a more effective implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs addressed to VEOs. The importance of stimulating an open dialogue among all parties, encouraging active participation and cooperation at all levels, has been experienced by UNICRI as a key factor to allow for the establishment of trusted relationship and effective information sharing. Such exchange is crucial to ensure a multi-perspective dimension, strong asset in the development and implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

Multi-stakeholders' engagement is also necessary for the development of tailored national action plans to prevent and counter terrorism. The action plans shall represent a national framework which incorporates strategic guidelines on rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs, objectives, timelines, indicators of achievement, actions, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders/actors involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration process, monitoring and evaluation measures, etc. The action plans shall also provide agreed definitions of relevant terminology in the field of rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as proper information on processes and procedures. The use of a common language and standard practices is considered relevant to ensure consistency in the rehabilitation and reintegration strategy, as well as effective implementation of clear, goal-oriented and inclusive approaches. The identification of expectations and major gaps perceived by the local actors/stakeholders is useful for the definition of concrete objectives and actions to be undertaken in the development and implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

Rehabilitation activities taking place in prison settings should always be based on the principle that no intervention occurs in a vacuum, and the prison regime and management may be conducive or counteractive of any rehabilitative efforts. Promoting the integrity of the prison environment, meeting international standards with respect to human rights, and adhering to international guidelines and good practices regarding all aspects related to prison life is vital in this regard. This requires coordination and synergies among all the actors that play a role in prison settings within national governments. Carrying out effective needs and risk assessments throughout the different phases of the criminal justice process, from pre-conviction to post-release, is a critical component of rehabilitation and reintegration inside and outside of detention settings. Punctual risk and needs assessment should also be carried out after release and, when necessary, continuity in psychological and religious counselling, as well as employment assistance, should be ensured. Community-based interventions aimed at facilitating the individual reintegration process are considered as an essential component of PVE and CVE strategies.

Rehabilitation of convicted or strongly suspected VEOs can begin at the very earliest stages of the criminal justice process, even before any conviction or before entering prison. The advantages of doing so apply most strongly in cases where the person is unlikely to be convicted, or when the period of pre-trial detention is prolonged. Some of the key ways to introduce rehabilitation at this stage are diversion, alternative measures, and pre-trial interventions. Diversion and alternative measures are particularly relevant and applicable to specific groups such as juveniles and women, who, in light of their vulnerabilities, are granted an increased protection under international legislation, often reflected in the national legal frameworks. Juveniles allegedly involved in VE related activities benefit more than adult offenders from rehabilitation and early intervention programmes tackling the radicalization life cycle at the earliest stage.

Bridging the gaps between custodial and non-custodial settings in rehabilitation and reintegration programs emerged as a priority issue in many countries. rehabilitation and reintegration programs needs to include specific interventions aimed at supporting the individuals in their transition from detention to freedom. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs should include prison-based interventions for preparing the inmate for re-entry in the community, as well as individual release plans. Such plans should take into consideration the circumstances and the needs of the person to be released. It should also include clear indications on the type of community-based intervention that the person should access, in order to maximize the opportunities for a successful reintegration.

When possible, families should be involved in rehabilitation and reintegration programs during the

detention phase and after release. They represent a valuable source to support the rehabilitation and reintegration process of VEOs. In the re-entry phase, families can also play a relevant role in monitoring VEO's behaviour. Communities and families can play a crucial role to ensure effectiveness in the longer term, thus decreasing recidivism. However, cases in which families are part of the problem, undermining the rehabilitation and reintegration process, have to be taken into due consideration. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance to properly assess the role of the family in the personal background of the individual. Raising awareness initiatives on the importance of a welcoming environment during the reintegration process for VEOs should be targeted to communities as part of rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. Educating societies on establishing the basis to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration process does not mean promoting "soft approaches" but it might contribute to prevent recidivism. Avoiding prejudices and stigmatization is vital in this regard. The engagement of civil society organizations in rehabilitation and reintegration programs should be promoted and strengthened in many countries. CSOs play an active role in assisting prisoners' transition from prison to life in the community. In countries where a probation system exists, collaboration between NGOs and the probation system are invaluable. Funding for post-release reintegration at the community level is limited in most countries, where volunteers work with little or no governmental support. In addition, CSOs are to ensure that the social, psychological and medical support needs of the offender are met and continued after prison.

Monitoring measures should be defined and implemented during detention and after release. In this regard, the information sharing among the stakeholders involved in the reintegration process is vital. Formalizing roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved in the reintegration phase might facilitate the monitoring and the supervision of the individual, ensuring effective coordination in case of certain intervention is required. Despite an increased number of VEO rehabilitation and reintegration programmes worldwide, evidence-based initiatives are very limited due to a lack of structured data collection and analysis. Notwithstanding, research is essential for designing effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs and should be further enhanced. This is particularly true for those programmes addressing juveniles and women as there is allegedly neither aggregated data available or evidence of their effectiveness in the longer term. The effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures needs to be tested by solid evaluation methods and proved by empirical evidence: it appears essential for the successful evolution of the CVE agenda that the lack of solid evaluation techniques be urgently remedied.

Despite increased knowledge on this topic, challenges in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes are numerous and of varying natures. Initiatives in this field should be targeting medium and long-term objectives to allow cooperation, facilitate the adoption of a holistic approach and bridge the gap between custodial and non-custodial settings.



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