

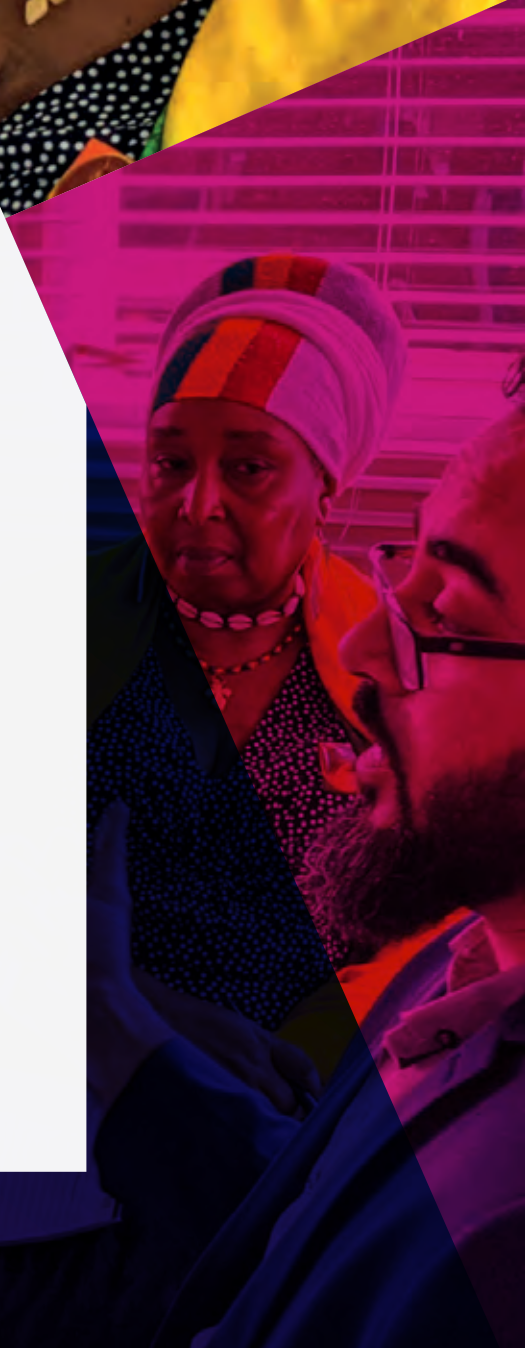


Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

A Development Framework for Non-Profit
Organisations in Trinidad and Tobago



The Commonwealth



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CariCom	Caribbean Community
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
IMPACS	Implementation Agency For Crime And Security
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NPO	Not for profit organisation
OCG	Organised Crime Group
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
PCVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution



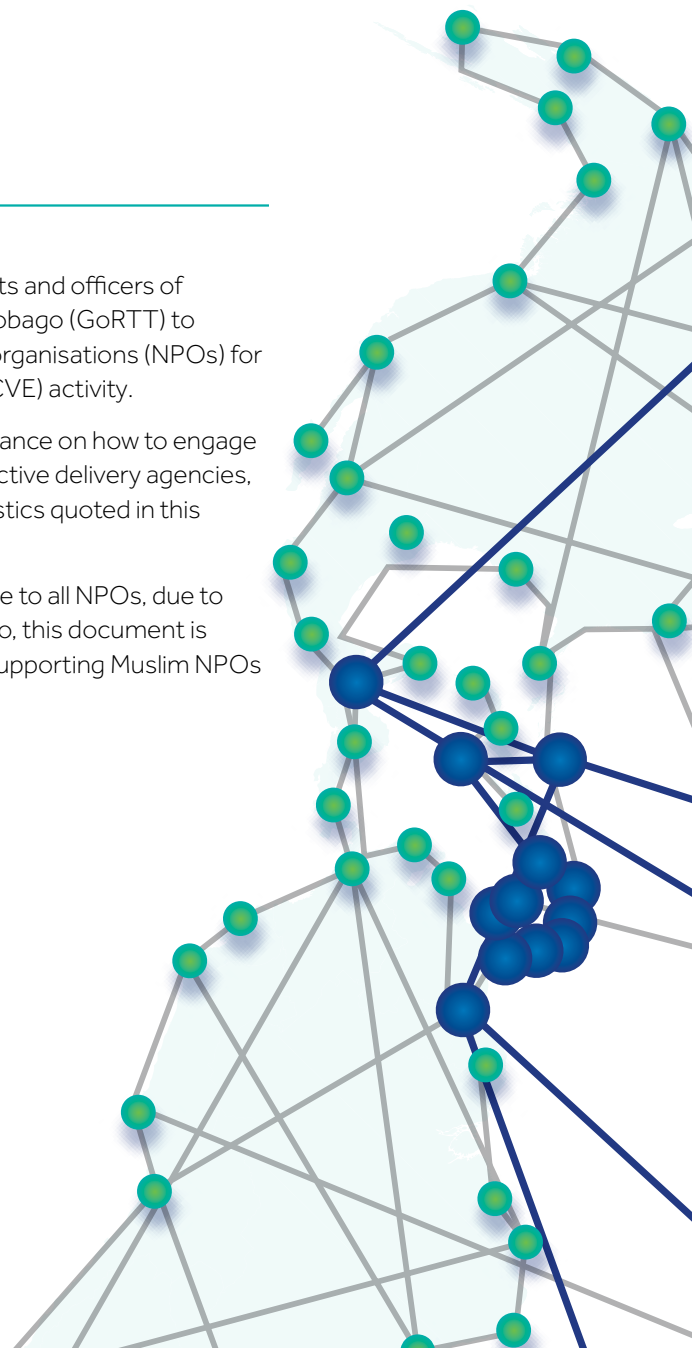
Introduction

Purpose

This document is intended to support departments and officers of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) to effectively engage and capacity-build non-profit organisations (NPOs) for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) activity.

The Framework provides practical advice and guidance on how to engage NPOs, assess and develop the capacity of prospective delivery agencies, co-design interventions and manage risk. All statistics quoted in this document are available in the public domain.

While principles from this Framework are applicable to all NPOs, due to the nature of the challenges in Trinidad and Tobago, this document is primarily focused on engaging, working with and supporting Muslim NPOs to prevent and counter violent extremism.





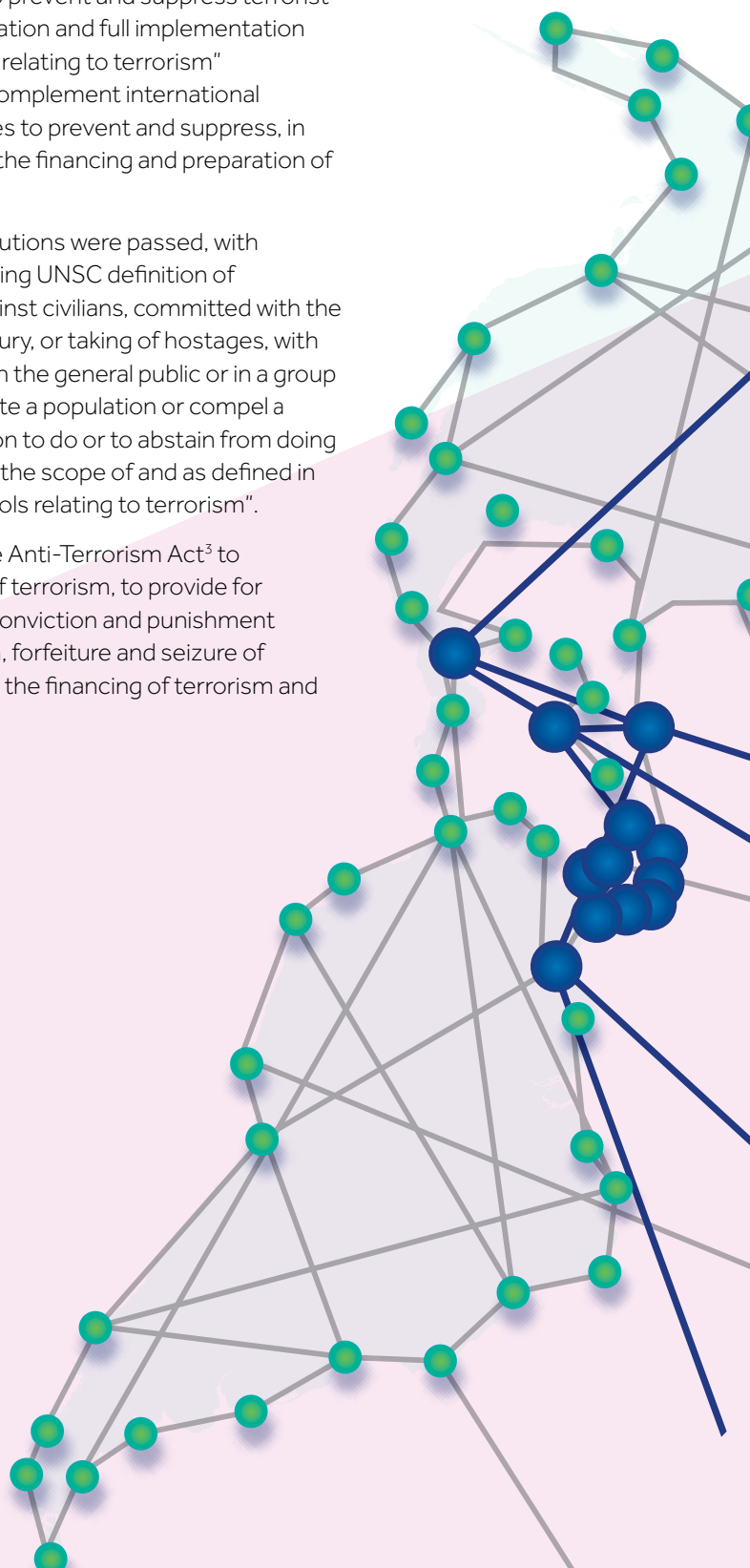
Background

International Obligations and Trinidad and Tobago Law

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the USA in 2001, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373¹ was unanimously adopted. It called on all states to “work together urgently to prevent and suppress terrorist acts, including through increased cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international conventions relating to terrorism” and recognising “the need for States to complement international cooperation by taking additional measures to prevent and suppress, in their territories through all lawful means, the financing and preparation of any acts of terrorism”.

In subsequent years, further UNSC Resolutions were passed, with Resolution 1566 (2004)² providing a working UNSC definition of ‘terrorism’ as “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offences within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism”.

In 2005, Trinidad and Tobago enacted the Anti-Terrorism Act³ to “criminalise terrorism and the financing of terrorism, to provide for the detection, prevention, prosecution, conviction and punishment of terrorist activities and the confiscation, forfeiture and seizure of terrorists’ assets and of those involved in the financing of terrorism and for related matters”.





The Extremist and Terrorist Threat

While all UN member states have an international obligation as outlined above, Trinidad and Tobago has experienced the dangers of violent extremism first-hand, with the attempted coup d'état by Jamaat al Muslimeen in 1990 and, over the past several years, an estimated 150 individuals (including entire families with children), inspired by ISIS rhetoric and propaganda, have left Trinidad and Tobago to join the ISIS "Caliphate" in Syria. Although this number only represents 0.2 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's Muslim population, it is the highest rate of ISIS recruits per capita in the western hemisphere.

The international military offensive against ISIS has significantly reduced the group's territory (and appeal) and many of those who were swayed by propaganda promising a better life, free of poverty and discrimination, have found this to be untrue. This has resulted in some Trinidad and Tobago citizens who had left for ISIS now seeking a return home, bringing an increased risk of domestic terrorist incidents by returnees and/or others that they may radicalise upon their return. However, there is also humanitarian concern for the return of children, those who had left under duress or the false promise of better socio-economic conditions (as opposed to any ideological extremist beliefs) and even those who have realised the error of their ways and are seeking (re)integration into mainstream Trinidad and Tobago society.

Finally, concerns regarding homegrown violent extremism remain, particularly among disaffected young people in areas of high deprivation who may be involved in criminality. Research indicates that there is a strong intersection between violent extremism and criminality, with an estimated 30 per cent of ISIS recruits from Trinidad and Tobago having had a criminal record or been involved in criminal activities prior to their departure.⁴

This is an international phenomenon. According to Europol, investigations into the terrorist attacks in Paris (2015) and Brussels (2016) "uncovered the involvement of some of the perpetrators in different types of serious and organised crime including the trafficking of illicit drugs, as well as personal contacts with criminal groups involved in the trafficking of firearms and production of fraudulent documents".⁵

Europol goes on to state that, "The threat emanating from links between serious and organised crime and terrorism is two-fold. Firstly, the potential exploitation of OCG infrastructures to procure tools, such as firearms or fraudulent documents, and move goods and people may deliver lethal weapons used in attacks in the EU to terrorist groups. Secondly, involvement in serious and organised crime may allow terrorist actors to generate funds to finance terrorism-related activities".

Commonwealth Secretariat

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Countering Violent Extremism strategy draws upon the Commonwealth Charter, specifically the goals of Democracy, Human Rights, International Peace and Security, Tolerance, Respect and Understanding, Rule of Law, Good Governance, Sustainable Development, Gender Equality, Importance of Youth and the Role of Civil Society.

The strategy continues to closely track the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and the Global Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG16), which seeks to 'promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit works with member countries to develop, define and understand the phenomenon of violent extremism as it relates to their specific context, and then to strategise, plan and act accordingly. It operates in five key areas:

1. **In-depth technical assistance** for countries with un-addressed vulnerability to violent extremism. The Unit assists these countries to improve their understanding of national gaps and strengths, and to implement CVE policy and programming that supports the development of an intrinsic capacity for managing CVE threats effectively.
2. **Training and support** for youth and civil society organisations (CSOs) to strengthen their knowledge and skills to counter violent extremism, and to help expand their networks with the aim of encouraging positive CSO-Government collaboration in order to build communities that are resilient to violent extremism.
3. **Capacity-building and awareness raising** activities to improve knowledge about CVE among Commonwealth member governments and across the networks and sectors of the Commonwealth to integrate and mainstream CVE into our broader co-operation and to increase the ability to deal with violent extremism in all forms.
4. **Research, communication, and information** campaigns to advance understanding of CVE through the mechanism of the Commonwealth CVE Cadre of Experts established in 2018 and endorsed by the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).
5. **Advocating for Small States** that may not be able to support routine engagement with multilateral forums, such as the Global Counter Terrorism Forum or industry-led initiatives such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

150+

150+ individuals, including women and children, have left T&T to join ISIS

- The CVE Unit's first technical visit with the GoRTT and Muslim community representatives took place in **June 2017** where initial discussions explored priorities and potential partnership opportunities
- In **January 2018**, the CVE Unit engaged GoRTT and other international partners at the Counter Narratives Workshop, supporting religious, youth and community leaders to understand and respond to the prevalence of extremist theological narratives used in Trinidad and Tobago and the lack of effective counter narratives and alternative narratives
- A youth-focused inter-faith roadshow, exploring the intersection between gangs, criminality, violent extremism and citizenship, toured Trinidad and Tobago from January to **April 2018**.
- A week of PCVE workshops for both GoRTT and wider communities took place in **July 2018**, on the topics of PCVE, engaging NPOs and community representatives (including female community leaders), print and digital media training, and exploring counter-narratives to extremist rhetoric.
- The CVE Unit provided in-kind support in **July 2018** to an inter-faith project in Port of Spain that aimed to foster greater community cohesion via events, seminars and exhibitions.
- A series of workshops examining strategic approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism in prisons, including how to utilise the different domains of prison management such as facilities, risk assessment, intelligence, interpersonal relationships, interventions and rehabilitation programs and managing reintegration into the community, began in **October 2018**. This programme is still live with the next workshop due to take place in late 2020.
- In January and **July 2019**, selected organisations and individuals from the Muslim community, who had expressed an interest in working on PCVE, participated in workshops on the subject of 'returnees', with a view to supporting a multi-agency approach to prevent and counter violent extremism
- A Women's Empowerment Project that delivered eight modules to empower a wide cross-section of Muslim women in central Trinidad and Tobago was delivered in **March 2019**, covering topics such as CVE, returnees, global citizenship and spirituality and Islam.
- In **July 2019** the CVE Unit partnered with CariCom IMPACS to deliver a conference and series of workshops to explore the current trends and challenges in PCVE, including the topics of returnees/foreign fighters, online extremism and radicalisation and terrorist financing.
- In **March 2020**, a series of workshops and discussions had been arranged to explore how CSOs, Government and other stakeholders could work together. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, only the first workshop took place, with the remaining workshops postponed.

As a continuation of this work, the CVE Unit commissioned the development of this Framework as the next stage of its PCVE programme, which aims to support GoRTT departments to prepare NPOs for PCVE activity.

The Commonwealth CVE Unit believes in a 'whole-of-society approach' to effectively prevent and counter violent extremism and, since 2017, the CVE Unit has maintained a good working relationship with members of Trinidad and Tobago's Muslim and non-Muslim communities.



The Role of NPOs in PCVE

Our Approach

A whole-of-society approach seeks to create effective and sustainable solutions to societal issues through the meaningful collaboration of government and non-governmental actors.

While the Trinidad and Tobago government has the authority and expertise to develop, enact and enforce counter-terrorism law, effective PCVE interventions require collaboration with various branches of society, including NPOs.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's CVE Unit's Strategy (2017) defines CVE as a "broad term to categorise responses that seek to prevent or mitigate violent extremism and reduce the vulnerability of at-risk communities to the malign influence of violence extremists, through non-coercive measures". CVE exists within a wide spectrum of distinct and yet overlapping responses that also include:

- **Counter-terrorism strategies** – to undermine and restrict the paramilitary capacity of violent extremists, and have served to liberate communities in conflict zones from the direct influence of extremists.
- **De-radicalisation and disengagement** – focuses on those already deeply involved in violent extremism.
- **Risk reduction** – refers solely to initiatives that target individuals with previous involvement in violent extremism or related forms of violence; for instance, defectors or those already serving sentences on terrorism charges.

CVE programmes seek to counter the key drivers of violent and extremism and NPOs, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) more generally, have a crucial role to play. Governments have strategic insight into the national/international context of violent extremism, access to state resources and international expertise and experience; NPOs can complement this with:

Local insight: NPOs often have a nuanced understanding of what is driving extremism within their respective communities. They understand the grievances and context driving the radicalisation process and, unlike government actors who often rely on formal research findings, have real-time knowledge of current and emerging trends, including the ability to identify and challenge extremist agitators and recruiters.

Community assets: Access to local physical assets (e.g. community centres) and human resources (e.g. community leaders, workers and influencers, religious experts, volunteers, etc.) that may be required to deliver an effective intervention.

Local reach: Government actors tend to lack the opportunity, ability and/or credibility to engage with communities at the grassroots level and particularly those vulnerable to extremist rhetoric and radicalisation. Credible NPOs can reach and engage their communities in ways that the government cannot and, due to their existing relationships and channels, are often able to do so quickly and in more cost-effective ways than government actors.

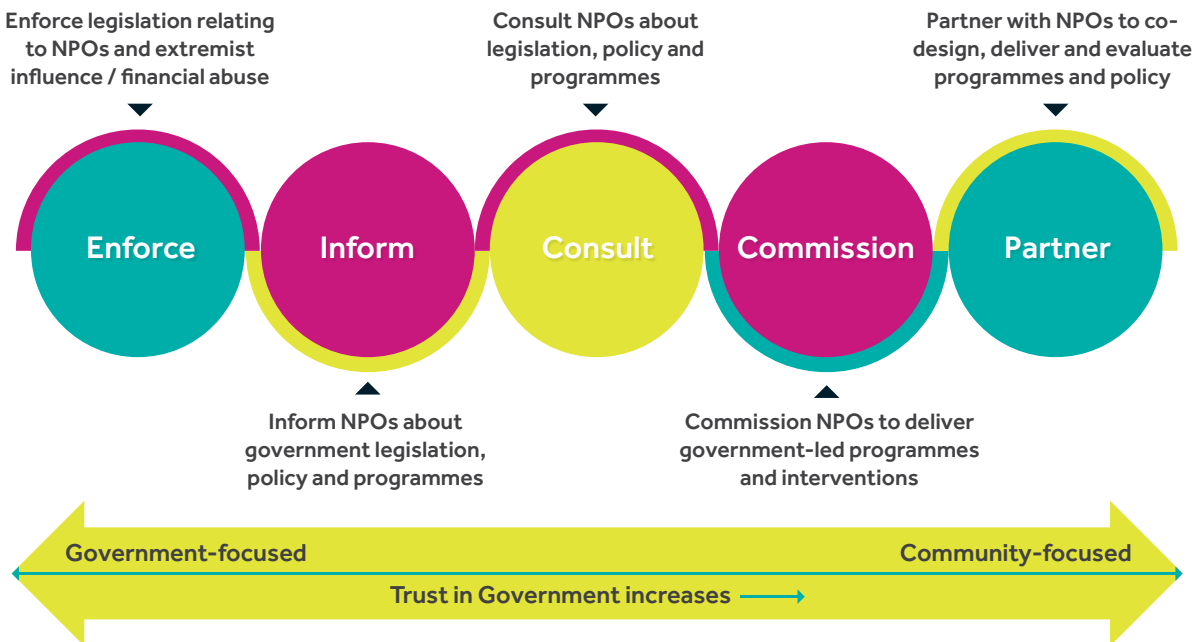
Figure 1: GoRTT / NPO relationship diagram



Neither NPOs nor GoRTT can tackle extremism alone – a co-operative and symbiotic relationship will be required to achieve this common goal.

Figure 2: Interaction and Engagement

Governments have the opportunity to interact with NPOs in several ways:



As shown in Figure 2, different types of interaction engender differing levels of trust and, while GoRTT are likely to interact with NPOs in most (if not all) of the ways above, true partnerships with NPOs will yield the greatest results when it comes to building trust and preventing and countering violent extremism.

However, successful partnerships of this nature can be difficult to establish and maintain, and, like any relationship, are built on the principles of honesty, respect, parity, and accountability.

Partnerships also require consistent and meaningful contact and engagement.

There are still pockets of extremists in Trinidad and Tobago whose influence is far reaching and there are still socially vulnerable groups who may gravitate towards extremist views.



Engaging NPOs

Given past challenges and what the country now faces with the ISIS terrorist threat (including calls for domestic attacks in Trinidad⁶), it is appropriate to focus efforts on engaging NPOs with good links to Trinidad and Tobago's Muslim communities in order to establish partnerships to prevent and counter the threat from both overseas and homegrown violent extremists. A nuanced understanding of Muslim communities in Trinidad and Tobago will be required to better identify and engage with Muslims NPOs and the wider Muslim community.

It is estimated that approximately 40 per cent of ISIS foreign fighters of Trinidad and Tobago origin are converts to Islam. The phenomenon of 'reciprocal radicalisation', whereby a growing in-country extremist presence gives rise to a counter-movement that is itself extremist, resulting in both groups fueling each other in an ever-increasing cycle of extremism, may also be of concern.⁷ Successful engagement of non-Muslim NPOs will therefore be critical in any whole-of-society approach to tackling violent extremism.

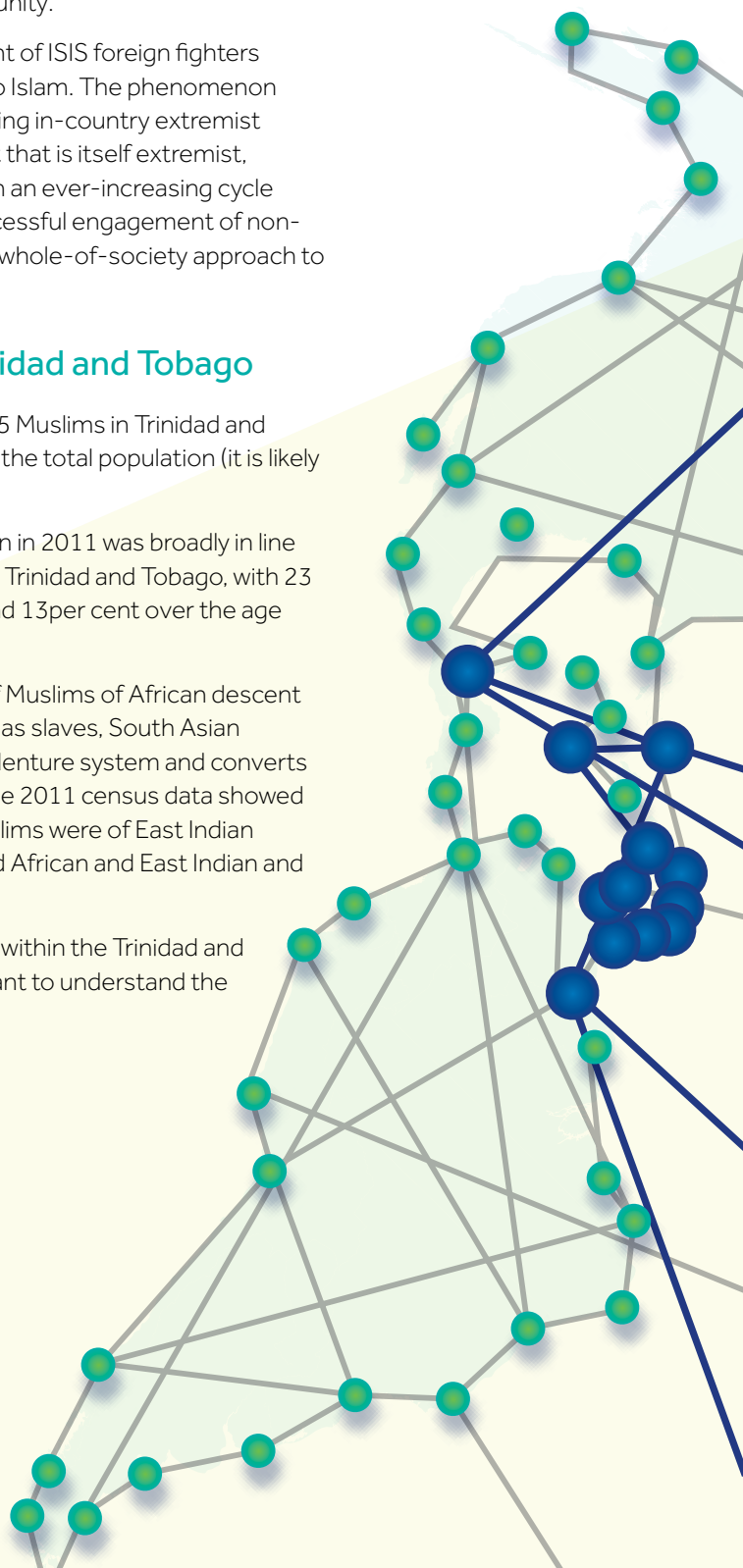
The Muslim Community in Trinidad and Tobago

According to census data⁸ there were 65,705 Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago in 2011, constituting 5.6 per cent of the total population (it is likely that the current figure is higher).

The age breakdown of the Muslim population in 2011 was broadly in line with those of other religious communities in Trinidad and Tobago, with 23 per cent being aged 0-17, 65 aged 18-59 and 13 per cent over the age of 60.

The Muslim community consists primarily of Muslims of African descent who were brought to Trinidad by colonialists as slaves, South Asian Muslims who arrived as part of the Indian indenture system and converts of African and other ethnic backgrounds. The 2011 census data showed that 84 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago Muslims were of East Indian ethnicity, 6 per cent African, 4 per cent mixed African and East Indian and the remainder from other ethnic groups.

In addition to the ethno-cultural differences within the Trinidad and Tobago Muslim community, it is also important to understand the theological and doctrinal divisions.



Ninety per cent of the world's Muslims adhere to Traditional Islam which includes three major theological branches.⁹

- Sunni Muslims, also known as Ahl as Sunnah wal Jama'ah (People of the Prophetic Tradition and Community), who make up 90 per cent of the world's Traditional Muslims
- Shia Muslims who make up 9.5 per cent of Traditional Muslims
- Ibadi Muslims who make up 0.5 per cent of Traditional Muslims

Anecdotal evidence from conversations with Muslim groups engaged by the CVE Unit indicates that the overwhelming majority of Trinidad and Tobago Muslims are Sunni, with very few Shi'a (possibly several hundred in total). The Ibadi community resides primarily in Oman and some parts of Africa, and there is no known significant Ibadi presence in Trinidad.

The majority of the world's Shi'a community reside in Iran (37-40%), Iraq (11-12%), Pakistan (10-15%) and India (9-14%)⁹. Despite the Sunni and Shi'a communities both being part of Traditional Islam, there have been incidents of historical animosity between the sects and this has become more prevalent in recent times, particularly in the Middle East.¹⁰ however this tension does not appear to be present within Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago also has a small community of Ahmadiyya who have built a few mosques in the country. The Ahmadiyya, who have an estimated worldwide following of between 10-20 million, believe that the movement's founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, is the promised Mahdi (Guided One) and Messiah foretold by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH¹¹) to appear in the end times. This belief is rejected by traditional Muslims, who consider the Ahmadiyya to be outside of the fold of Islam (i.e. not Muslims).

Sunni Theology can be further broken down into the following theological schools:

- **Sunni Orthodoxy**, followed by the vast majority of Sunni Muslims, consisting of the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools
- **Salafi School**, who differentiate themselves from the majority of Sunnis through literal anthropomorphic interpretation of God, literal interpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith (the

recorded sayings, actions and silence of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and skepticism towards the role of human reason in theology. Salafism is sometimes also referred to as 'Wahhabism' after to the 18th Saudi-based century scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, although technically Wahhabism is one of many strands of Salafism.

- **Mu'tazili School**, whose thought relies heavily on logic, including Greek philosophy, and who believe that the Qur'an was created (contrary to the Orthodox Sunni view that it is eternal and uncreated) and advocate using rationalism to understand allegorical readings of the Qur'an.

It is estimated that Salafis make up 8 per cent of the world's Muslims and the movement is growing in numerous parts of the world – particularly among young people and new converts – due, in part, to significant investment by Saudi Arabia to propagate Salafi creed. Sunni Orthodox Muslims will undoubtedly make up the majority of Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago and anecdotal evidence suggests that Salafis constitute 15-20 per cent of the Trinidad and Tobago Muslim community.

Salafis tend to reject Orthodox schools of jurisprudence, seeking instead to refer to primary texts, taking a literal interpretation in an effort to follow 'traditional Islam'. This often leads to Salafis claiming the title of Ahl as Sunnah wal Jama'ah (People of the Prophetic Tradition and Community) for themselves, to the exclusion of all others. They also have a disdain for followers of Orthodox mystic (Sufi) orders, as they believe that many of these practices go against the foundational doctrines and teachings of Islam.

There have been many links drawn between Salafism and ISIS, particularly as the group itself claims to follow the Salafi creed and seeks to restore a 'pure' version of Islam based on their interpretations of the beliefs and practices of the early generations of Muslims, however many Salafis across the world reject ISIS, their claims to follow the Salafi creed and violent extremism.

Indeed, the fundamentalist Madkhali strand of Salafism is at another extreme and Madkhali elements continue to be in opposition to ISIS, often militarily¹². Therefore, the common conflation of Salafism/Wahhabism and ISIS is incorrect and a problematic generalisation.



Muslim Civil Society in Trinidad and Tobago

It is estimated that there are 100 to 150 mosques (Muslims places of worship) in Trinidad and a handful in Tobago.

In addition to prayer facilities, many mosques run religious education classes and schools (madrassahs) and some will also deliver or host activities/services to benefit the wider community.

Islamic schools and madrassahs, separate to mosques, also exist across Trinidad and Tobago and there are numerous NPOs run by and/or for Muslims that exist purely as community-oriented organisations without any formal affiliation to a mosque.

Although there is no hard data on the number of Muslim civil society organisations in Trinidad, the sector appears to be both vibrant and active.

While there are no formal umbrella organisations for Trinidad and Tobago Muslim NPOs, there are networks such as the Muslim Roundtable whose membership consists of representatives from many of the main Muslim organisations, such as ASJA (Anjuman Sunnat-ul-Jamaat Association), Tackveeyatul Islamic Association (TIA), Trinidad Muslim League (TML), Darul Uloom Trinidad and Tobago, National Islamic Counselling Services Islamic Resource Society, National Muslim Women's Organization of Trinidad and Tobago, FIRST and others.

NPO Concerns and Priorities

The "Safeguarding Trinidad and Tobago Together" workshop took place on 14 March 2020 was organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat's CVE Unit, sought to gain deeper insight into

the concerns and priorities of Muslim NPOs and the wider Trinidad and Tobago community regarding extremism.

The specific aims of the workshop were to:

1. Discuss and debate the current issues relating to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) as they relate to Trinidad and Tobago
2. Explore whether NPOs felt that a 'whole-of-society' approach is required to address these issues
3. Develop some practical actions that can be taken forward

The workshop was attended by representatives of the following organisations:

- All Mansions of Rastafari
- Felicity Hindu Community
- FIRST (Foundation of Islamic Relief, Support and Training)
- FISCAL (Foundation of the Institution of Services, Caring & Learning)
- MRTG (Muslim Roundtable Group)
- National Muslim Women's Organization of Trinidad and Tobago
- Port of Spain Mosque
- Reach n' Inc
- Roots Foundation
- ROU (Revival of the Ummah)
- WINAD (Women's Institute for Alternative Development)

Unfortunately, the event coincided with the beginning of the spread of COVID-19, which prevented GoRTT, UNDP and other international partners and NPO representatives from attending.

Following presentations from the CVE Unit and a guest speaker from the US Embassy, attendees participated in a series of breakout sessions (see Table 1). Post-event questionnaires were also sent out to stakeholders.

The following common themes emerged from the workshop and subsequent consultation:

1. Despite the loss of territory for ISIS (which has resulted in a reduced pull factor for the group), extremism remains one of the highest concerns for both Muslim and non-Muslim NPOs

2. Push factors are still strong and include ideological (extremist) narratives as well as socio-economic factors

3. More work needs to be done to address push factors and this requires a well-coordinated, whole-of-society approach, underpinned by the principals of co-creation and co-delivery

4. The topic of returnees is controversial and requires greater thought and preparation, although there was consensus that children should be allowed to return if the appropriate safeguards and support structures could be established

5. (Re)Integration of both adults and children could be possible, however this would require much more careful planning and investment to ensure that ideological, psychological and social factors are all addressed (requiring a whole-of-society approach)

6. Neither the Government nor NPOs have the necessary expertise or resources to be able to address the extremist threat alone

7. Muslim NPOs want to work with GoRTT, however there some concerns that more work needs to be done to strengthen trust between the Government and Muslim NPOs

8. NPOs are willing to be assessed for suitability to deliver PCVE interventions in partnership with GoRTT

9. NPOs would like further opportunities to develop their knowledge and capacity to deliver PCVE interventions

10. NPOs are keen to work with GoRTT to co-create an effective PCVE action plan

Table 1: Safeguarding Trinidad and Tobago Together Workshop

Breakout Session Observation Notes

Workshop 1:

Are Trinidad and Tobago citizens still vulnerable to joining extremist groups (post the destruction of the physical ISIS 'caliphate')?

- The push factors still exist, i.e. the propagation of extremist narratives
- Pull factors have gone, i.e. no physical caliphate
- The absence of clarity, i.e. not enough denouncing of extremist narratives from mainstream Muslims
- There is a perception that Christians and Muslims are not united
- The drivers for VE are still present, but there is less take-up due to increased CT/CVE measures and initiatives, i.e. increased border control, more awareness in civil society, more counter narratives.
- A lot of factors have not been addressed, i.e. ideology – which still exists in the community
- A minority, including whole family units, still believe in ISIS ideology
- Harder to join ISIS, e.g. more anti-travel measures in place
- The drivers for VE still present (participant gave an example of VE narrative they heard very recently)
- Push factors still present – even more so now. People are now looking for a cause
- Continuum of violence. Trinidad and Tobago has a high level of tolerance for violence – need to understand this, as is it contributing to VE
- Easy to obtain tools to encourage violence
- Borders not patrolled, so those returning or freely moving can do easily

Workshop 2:

Can Returnees be (re)integrated into Trinidad and Tobago society? If so, what are the challenges?

- Mixed views on whether Returnees should be allowed. Majority agreed children were innocent, so should be prioritised
- Need for social campaigns to raise awareness of returnees, i.e. to sensitise Trinidad and Tobago and to dispel myths and fake news
- If society are opposing the return of returnees, then this will reinforce push factors, i.e. Muslims are not seen/treated as mainstream Trinidad and Tobago citizens
- The Muslim and Rastafarian representatives at the meeting all agreed that the 'Muslim city' and 'Rasta city' gangs do not represent their respective religions. There needs to be more done, with faith leaders speaking out and denouncing this conflict (but being mindful of sensitivities and potential backlash)
- The good inter-faith work done in Trinidad and Tobago needs to continue and be more widely publicised

Workshop 3:

Is a whole-of-society approach required to tackle extremism?

If so, who are the key stakeholders and what are the challenges to partnership working?

- Ownership of issue has a lot to do with the lack of progress, e.g. GoRTT PCVE plan has yet to be released
- Example given of a returnee who attempted to rejoin the community that they'd left behind in Trinidad and Tobago, but was rejected by the community
- The CSO sector needs to coordinate better in matters of PCVE
- The CSO sector need more PCVE sensitisation to current issues, as there is a lot of misunderstanding present and they need to build alliances
- GoRTT need to make more public decisions / raise awareness on matters of PCVE and get GoRTT policies 'on the table', including the PCVE plan, FTF and policy on returnees
- The preparation of CSOs and individuals to work on PCVE interventions is crucial and a community-led response and co-creation is essential.
- The coordination of CSOs working on PCVE needs to be effectively managed to avoid duplication and potential conflict

Developing a Partnership

NPOs regard the PCVE agenda as a key priority and are keen to collaborate with each other and GoRTT to develop a plan of action. Proposed next steps include:

Organising a meeting with the Muslim Roundtable Group (possibly facilitated by the CVE Unit) and other relevant stakeholders to continue the positive discussions regarding the development of a whole-of-society approach to tackling violent extremism.



Possible outcome: The establishment of a dedicated working-group to continue in-depth conversations regarding the causes of, and potential solutions to, violent extremism. The PCVE Working Group should have a defined Terms of Reference, be representative (with representation from both NPOs and GoRTT) and be built upon the principals of honesty, respect, parity, and accountability.

PCVE Working Group, with the support of international partners, to explore local needs and examples of PCVE best practice elsewhere that may be relevant to Trinidad and Tobago.



Possible outcome: A co-designed (draft) PCVE Programme that may require the development of more localised partnerships, perhaps at the city or municipal level.

Explore the feasibility of establishing a GORTT role or team whose primary function will be to provide consistent engagement with NPOs on PCVE.



Possible outcome: Strong relationships with NPOs, facilitating greater information sharing, coordination and impact.

Continue to strengthen relationships with international partners and organisations operating in the PCVE arena.



Possible outcome: Greater co-ordination and sharing of international expertise, knowledge and resources.



Risk Management

Reputation

Government PCVE programmes can be viewed with suspicion by communities and this can have a profoundly negative impact on the effectiveness of programmes, the reputation of those delivering or supporting PCVE programmes and the government. This is particularly true where governments have developed programmes with little or no collaboration or consultation with the very communities they seek to support.

To avoid this, GoRTT should consider adopting a whole-of-society approach previously described and ensure that programmes are co-created with a group of representative community members.

Another aspect of reputational risk that bears consideration is working with, and potentially funding, NPOs that have an extremist ideology or are sympathetic to ISIS or other such groups. Due diligence strategies should be developed to ensure that potential partners are fit-for-purpose, have robust governance arrangements and financial management procedures, and generally have the knowledge, expertise and experience required to deliver effectively. As aforementioned, NPOs also consider this to be important and have indicated a willingness to undergo assessment and capacity building.

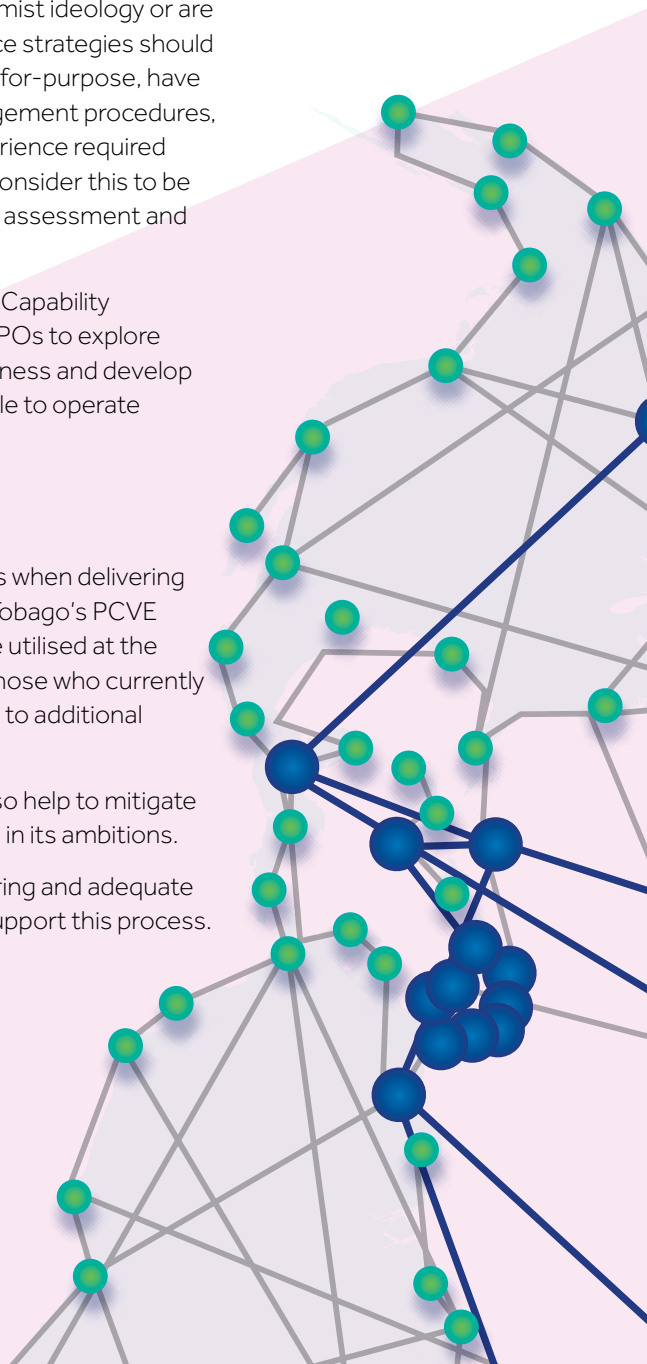
To support GoRTT, the CVE Unit has commissioned a Capability Assessment Toolkit that can be used with individual NPOs to explore these issues, mutually identify areas of strength/weakness and develop capacity-building programmes to ensure NPOs are able to operate effectively in the PCVE arena.

Delivery

Under-delivery and not meeting expectations are risks when delivering any programme. To mitigate this risk for Trinidad and Tobago's PCVE Programme, the Capability Assessment Toolkit can be utilised at the outset to assess capacity and capability, filtering out those who currently lack the capability to deliver effectively, and refer them to additional capacity-building support.

Co-designing the PCVE Programme with NPOs will also help to mitigate these risks by ensuring that the programme is realistic in its ambitions.

During the delivery stage, regular contact and monitoring and adequate resources (human and otherwise) will be required to support this process.





Evaluation

One of the most challenging aspects of any PCVE programme is developing a robust evaluation framework. Most interventions aim to achieve some type of attitudinal change, which can be difficult to measure.

Due consideration to evaluation should be given at the outset by those designing the PCVE programme to ensure that outcomes, and ultimately impact, are measurable (the CVE Unit are able to help with the development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks).

Sustainability

With any funded programme, there is a risk that all activity comes to a halt once the funding ceases.

Building the resilience of communities to extremism, by developing the capacity of CSO institutions, individual community leaders and citizens, is vital. The ability of these organisations and individuals to recognise and counter the extremist narrative within their communities will ensure lasting impact.¹³

During the early stages of this journey, it is likely that expertise may be brought in from international partners who are further along the PCVE process. However, the Trinidad and Tobago PCVE

partnership should consider from the outset how to develop in-country expertise; This may take many forms, including assessing and developing the capacity and capability of GoRTT representatives and NPOs, developing a group of in-country experts in countering the ideological narrative, and so on. This will allow the PCVE partnership to develop 'train the trainer' programmes across the country, allowing for sustainable growth of the programme and its impact.

Finally, the PCVE partnership should prioritise the identification of the drivers and channels for radicalisation and seek to address them, cutting off future routes to radicalisation at the earliest possible point. This will require the PCVE partnership to undertake deep-dive analysis into the issues, have open and honest conversations and develop effective programmes that have the buy-in of all stakeholders.

The programmes that result from these deep-dives may result in interventions focused on young people or prisons, for example. It will also require identifying and addressing the grievances that push people towards extremism, be they ideological or socio-economic.

Conclusion

While Trinidad and Tobago's PCVE journey is still in its early days, and the country has some very real and stark challenges to face, the opportunity exists to learn from those who have set out on this journey earlier and to benefit from the experience and expertise of international partners.

However, Trinidad and Tobago should not underestimate its unique strengths: a well-integrated multicultural community, a strong and reputable CSO sector and mainstream NPOs that are openly willing to work with each other and with the government to tackle violent extremism.

This will only be possible through genuine partnership working and a whole-of-society approach. This Framework presents some information and initial recommendations that may help the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to begin this process.

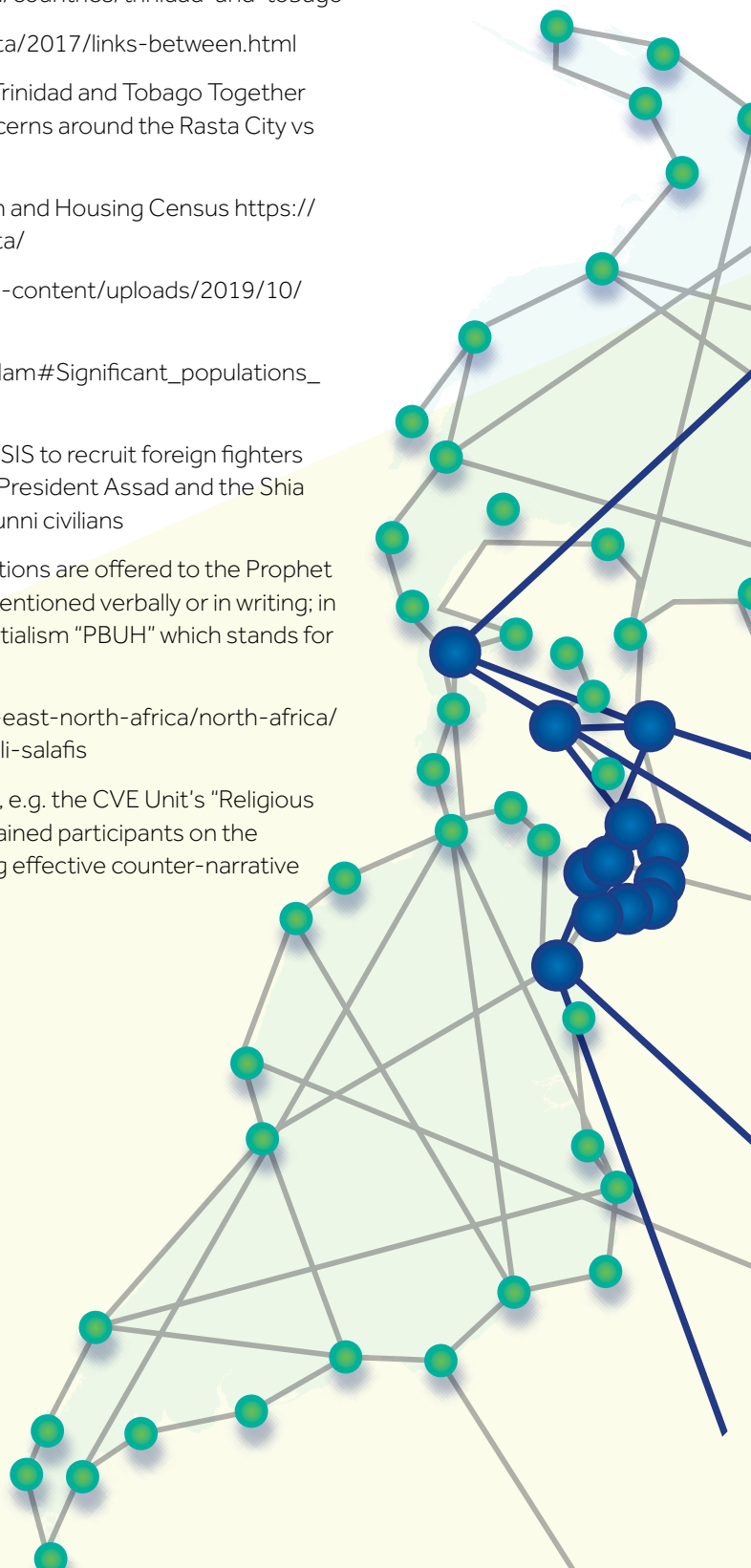
It will require strengthening existing bridges and building new ones, honest conversations, and hard work – on all sides. But, ultimately, a successful partnership can significantly reduce, if not fully eradicate, the problem of extremism in Trinidad and Tobago.





Endnotes

- ¹ Table 1: Safeguarding Trinidad and Tobago Together Workshop
- ² <http://unscr.com/files/2004/01566.pdf>
- ³ https://agla.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/simple-file-list/ATU/Legislation/Anti-Terrorism-Act-Chap_-12_07.pdf
- ⁴ <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/trinidad-and-tobago>
- ⁵ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/socta/2017/links-between.html>
- ⁶ This was raised at the Safeguarding Trinidad and Tobago Together workshop in March 2020, due to concerns around the Rasta City vs Muslim Gang/Unruly ISIS conflict
- ⁷ Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census <https://cso.gov.tt/census/2011-census-data/>
- ⁸ <https://www.themuslim500.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TheMuslim500-2020-low.pdf>
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam#Significant_populations_worldwide
- ¹⁰ The Sunni/Shia conflict was used by ISIS to recruit foreign fighters and supporters as they claimed that President Assad and the Shia Syrian regime were killing innocent Sunni civilians
- ¹¹ Islamic etiquette requires that salutations are offered to the Prophet Muhammad whenever his name is mentioned verbally or in writing; in English this is often shorted to the initialism "PBUH" which stands for "peace be upon him"
- ¹² <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/libya/addressing-rise-libyas-madkhali-salafis>
- ¹³ Some of this work has already begun, e.g. the CVE Unit's "Religious Actors workshop" in January 2018 trained participants on the radicalisation process and developing effective counter-narrative knowledge and techniques



Commonwealth Secretariat

Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

thecommonwealth.org

