Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

Practitioners' Guide:
Training for Ghana National Peace Council (NPC)

The Commonwealth

NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

Practitioners' Guide:
Training for Ghana National Peace Council (NPC)

The Commonwealth

NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL

Published by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Contents

Acronyms

ACSRT	African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism
AU	Africa Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CSO	civil society organisation
CVE	countering violent extremism
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FemWise–Africa	African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
KLP	Key Learning Point
NAFPCVET	National Framework for Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism
NPC	National Peace Council
OAU	Organisation of Africa Unity
P/CVE	preventing/countering violent extremism
PoA	Plan of Action
PSC	Peace and Security Council
RPC	Regional Peace Council
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

About the Commonwealth Secretariat

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 independent and equal countries. It is home to 2.5 billion people and includes both advanced economies and developing countries. Thirty-two of the members are Small States, including many island nations. Member governments agree to the shared goals of development, democracy and peace. While the Commonwealth's roots go back to the British Empire, today any country can join the modern Commonwealth. The last country to do so was Rwanda in 2009.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is the intergovernmental organisation that supports member countries to achieve the Commonwealth's goals. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2018 affirmed that violent extremism represents a serious threat to international peace and security, shared values and aspirations, social harmony and economic and social development.

In line with the mandate given by leaders at the 2015 Malta Summit, a dedicated Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) unit was established within the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2017 to support national strategies to counter violent extremism.

About the National Peace Council

The National Peace Council (NPC) is an independent national peace institution established by the National Peace Council Act, 2011 (Act 818 of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana). The Council is mandated by the Act to develop and facilitate mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution and to build sustainable peace in Ghana.

Foreword

The capacity-building workshop on Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), on which this Practitioners' Guide is based, came at the right time for the Governing Board, Regional Peace Councils, Regional Executive Secretaries and Management of the Head Office of the National Peace Council (NPC), considering the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel and in other neighbouring countries.

Even though Ghana has consistently been celebrated as a stable democracy, growing fears of the spread of extremist groups across the sub-region — given the porous borders — have heightened discourse within security circles in the country. There are also notable domestic threats that provide fertile grounds for violent extremist actions, including chieftaincy and ethnic clashes, farmer-herder conflicts, violent demonstrations, armed robberies, the proliferation of arms, drug trafficking, political polarisation, vigilante groups, kidnappings and violent communication through the media.

Given these circumstances, it is important that the NPC is adequately prepared to play its part in dealing with such threats. Training on P/CVE was thus expected to help the NPC facilitate and promote peacebuilding and social cohesion and deepen inter-faith harmony and cross-cultural understanding in the context of global citizenship.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for supporting the NPC to hold this important programme and to reiterate the great value the NPC attaches to its partnership with the Secretariat. I would also like to commend the Executive Secretary and the staff at the NPC and Countering Violent Extremism Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat for their hard work in putting this programme together.

Rev Dr Ernest Adu-Gyamfi
Chairman of the Governing Board, National Peace Council

On behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat, I am delighted to introduce this Practitioners' Guide, which was produced as a resource to accompany training provided to the National Peace Council (NPC) of Ghana by the Commonwealth Secretariat Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit. This training, which took place in August 2021, was a collaborative effort between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the NPC and aimed to ensure that the Governing Board, Regional Chairpersons and Regional Executive Secretaries were better orientated to fulfil their roles and duties through:

- an understanding of the basics of violent extremism and approaches to preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE);
- an understanding of P/CVE within the Ghanaian context;
- increased and improved conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills that could be applied in local, regional and national scenarios; and
- increased and improved mediation and stakeholder management skills, especially in regard to project management and the interface between governance and civil society organisations (CSOs).

The foundations of democracy in the political landscape of Ghana manifest themselves in the conduct of periodic freely contested elections, peaceful power alternations between the two main political parties, respect for human rights, free media and the rule of law. In addition, inclusive participation in governance has been a hallmark of its democracy.

However, Ghana faces varied peace and security challenges, including threats of terrorist and violent extremist attacks. In this context, it was important that the Commonwealth Secretariat provide technical assistance, training and support to P/CVE initiatives within the country with a view to mitigating these security threats and enabling it to stay resilient against violent extremist overspill from neighbouring regions and not succumb to violent extremism that may challenge democratic processes.

This Practitioners' Guide aims to build on the legacy of capacity-building already initiated by the P/CVE training by summarising all the key points of the training into a resource that can be used by subsequent NPC Governing Board members, Regional Chairpersons and Regional Executive Secretaries, plus regional NPC branches, and any other NPC staff and members. It is for these reasons that I am proud to deliver this document to you today.

Mark Albon
Head of CVE Unit, Commonwealth Secretariat

Acknowledgements

This Practitioners' Guide is based on the knowledge and experiences gained from the training workshop on preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE), delivered by the Commonwealth Secretariat for the Ghana National Peace Council (NPC). It was harmonized and reviewed by Kojo Impraim, Deputy Director, Research Monitoring and Evaluation, NPC; Amy Longland, Programme Officer, Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit, Governance and Peace Directorate of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and Gabriel Sadat Alhassan. Other contributors were Mark Albon, Head of Unit, Anna Sherburn, Deputy Head of Unit, and Assan Ali, Capacity Building Officer, all from the CVE Unit, Commonwealth Secretariat, and George Amoh, Executive Secretary of the National Peace Council. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the NPC are grateful to them for their key contributions to the production of this Practitioners' Guide on P/CVE.

The work involved in the delivery of the training and the compilation of the Guide was supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat CVE Unit. The NPC is grateful to the Commonwealth Secretariat for the incomparable support provided to its programmes and activities in Ghana. Also, the Commonwealth Secretariat and NPC are grateful to the facilitators, moderators, Governing Board, Chairmen of the Regional Peace Councils, Regional Secretaries and Management at the Head Office of the NPC for their commitment to and participation in the training.

Introduction

Manifestations of a democratic dividend in the political landscape of Ghana are found in the conduct of periodic elections, peaceful transfers of power between the two main political parties, respect for human rights, a free media and rule of law. The tradition of peaceful election handovers and efforts to decentralise governance and development into six new regions have contributed to relative political stability and economic development in the country.

However, Ghana's democratic progress faces several peace and security challenges that include threats of terrorism and violent extremism originating from neighbouring West Africa countries and the Sahel. These existing and emerging challenges endanger national peace and human security. Given the porous borders across the sub-region, there are growing fears of the spread of extremist groups across West Africa including Ghana. Addressing these threats to the country's stability requires a number of hard and soft governance approaches including comprehensive preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) initiatives.

Besides the external factors, local threats to peace and security include chieftaincy and ethnic clashes, farmer-herder conflicts, violent demonstrations, armed robberies, the proliferation of arms and drug trafficking as well as sexual and gender-based violence. Additionally, recent occurrences related to threats of agitation for secession, increased political tension, the activities of vigilante groups, kidnappings and violent communication through social media, among others, have heightened security concerns in the country.

Discussions between the Commonwealth Secretariat Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit and the Executive Secretary of the National Peace Council (NPC) revealed that the newest members of the Governing Board of NPC, appointed just prior to the December 2020 elections in Ghana, had not been appropriately orientated to their roles as peace and security officials. The Board required training in P/CVE broadly, but particularly within the Ghanaian context, in other to be equipped with the knowledge and tools to carry out their roles effectively. The NPC therefore requested that the CVE Unit develop and deliver this training as part of a technical assistance project.

The capacity-building programme was in two parts: the first was a training for 40 young people titled 'Faith in the Commonwealth (FiCW)', delivered in May 2021; and the second was capacity building on P/CVE for the Governing Board, Regional Peace Councils (RPCs) and Management of NPC, delivered in August 2021.

The second training workshop was a 'hybrid' event whereby the Ghanaian contingent attended in-person, but the training was delivered virtually by the Commonwealth Secretariat. It offered the Governing Board the invaluable opportunity to meet with all the Chairmen of the RPCs for the first time since it assumed office in November 2020. Participants were able to gain valuable insights and information and made important connections with one another.

Arising out of the workshop, it was decided that a Key Learning Document, or Practitioners' Guide, would be produced to summarise the learnings, reiterate the key elements and secure a legacy of learning for subsequent NPC governing boards, regional chairpersons and regional executive secretaries.

The purpose of this Guide is to ensure that users:

- gain an understanding of the basics of P/CVE approaches;
- gain a better understand of P/CVE within the Ghanaian context;
- gain increased conflict and peacebuilding skills that could be applied in local, regional and national scenarios; and
- gain increased mediation and stakeholder management skills, especially with regard to project management and the interface between governance and CSOs.

Structure of the Guide

The Guide is presented around seven Key Learning Points (KPL):

KLP 1: Violent extremism and P/CVE core concepts and definitions

KLP 2: Analysing drivers of violent extremism

KLP 3: International approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism

KLP 4: Regional and multilateral approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism

KLP 5: Violent extremism in Ghana

KLP 6: Exploring mechanisms to prevent violent extremism

KLP 7: Developing successful P/CVE interventions

1. Key Learning Point (KLP) 1: Violent Extremism and P/CVE Core Concepts and Definitions

Violent extremism has no universally agreed definition and can sometimes be employed interchangeably with related terms such as 'terrorism'. However, a number of definitions have been developed at the national, regional and international levels.

According to *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policymakers* (UNESCO, 2017*),* what is critical to counter-terrorism discourse and efforts is not, per se, whether individuals hold 'radical' or 'extremist' views, but whether such views are translated into violent acts. How the terms 'violent' and 'violent extremism' are defined can vary contextually depending on the methodologies used (UNODC, 2015).

The Commonwealth Secretariat's definition of 'extremism' **is** 'belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable'. It thus refers to attitudes or behaviours that are deemed outside the norm, although this 'depends on who defines the norm and decides what is acceptable or not'. (UNESCO *Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policymakers,* 2017)

Controversial points of view that you may not agree with, or may not be comfortable with, still have a right to exist; however, there is the need to be aware and to recognise where the line is crossed. It is important to understand that though freedom of expression is protected under international law, there are certain limitations — such as speech that incites violence. It is therefore imperative to balance the right to freedom of expression with the need to uphold human dignity and protect marginalised groups.

The journey to violent extremism is extremely nuanced and does not follow a linear route; however, it usually passes through three phases: (a) alienation, (b) radicalisation and (c) adherence to violence.

a. Alienation

Alienation can emerge from a persistent pattern of exclusion, humiliation, selective mistreatment and prejudice towards particular groups or individuals by a community, the state and its institutions or the wider society. In this first phase, relations between a particular individual or group and the wider structures of family, society and the state are characterised by withdrawal, anomie, grievances and decreasing political or economic participation.

Alienation, however, does not explain all actions taken by religious, right- and left-wing nationalists and other extremists. Violent extremist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), al-Qaeda, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and

the former Red Brigade have been joined by educated persons from apparently well-adjusted, middle- or even high-income families. Some extremists were previously engaged in criminal activities, and analysts therefore point to more nebulous, and less well-understood, psycho-social factors (resentment against particular groups) that seem to orient individuals towards 'the cause', where they can seek empowerment through mass violence against others.

b. Radicalisation

Radicalisation is often used as synonymous with extremism but actually differs in meaning. The term 'radicalise' means 'to make someone become more radical (= extreme) in their political or religious beliefs' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

Radicalisation per se is not harmful unless a radicalised person uses violence as a tool to achieve certain objectives. 'The notion of "radicalisation" is generally used [by some States] to convey the idea of a process through which an individual adopts an increasingly extremist set of beliefs and aspirations. This may include, but is not defined by, the willingness to condone, support, facilitate or use violence to further political, ideological, religious or other goals' (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2016, para. 19). It is a term used to describe, 'what goes on before the bomb goes off' (Sedgwick, 2010) or what happens to someone before becoming a violent extremist.

Radicalisation can therefore be seen as a process that, if not managed effectively, can turn extremism into violent extremism. As frustration and grievances grow, individuals and groups begin to search for organisations or ideologies that can either help to channel their frustrations or lead them to blame these on external actors. The weakening of the institutions of the family and the community as instruments of social control plays a role in this process. Radical recruiters focus their attention on vulnerable alienated groups in society and manipulate their feelings of frustration and anger.

c. Adherence to violence

The final phase is what separates radicals from violent extremists. Radicals choose peaceful contestation or advocacy to accomplish their objectives. Violent extremists are those who have chosen violence as a means to impose their worldview on society. Violence gradually moves from being instrumental to become symbolic. Ritualised murder, such as practised by ISIS, al-Shabaab or the KKK, becomes a means of branding the group and providing collective inspiration.

This third phase in a sense also represents the failure of systems for early warning and response concerning emerging incidents and signs towards extreme violence. Inability to contain the immediate raw materials for violence — including the movement of illicit weapons and persons — and the inadequacy of essential security services also help to create an environment enabling acts of violent extremism.

Terrorism 'can be broadly understood as a method of coercion that uses or threatens to use violence to spread fear and thereby attain political or ideological goals' (UNODC, 2018, p. 1). It 'involves 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 organisation to do or to abstain from doing any act' (United Nations Security Council, 2004, para. 3).

Recruitment is the process of indoctrinating or enrolling individuals into violent extremist groups.

The meanings associated with these definitions/terms vary depending on ethnic, religious, political, social, ideological and other factors. For instance, a positivist understanding of violent extremism would differ from one derived from the application of a method of 'micro-narratives' or collecting life stories. For example, while Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) were branded as terrorists by the state, they were seen by others — particularly Black South Africans —as anti-apartheid activists.

Preventing/countering violent extremism

There is no universal consensus regarding what exactly constitutes 'preventing' or 'countering' violent extremism or what forms these should take (McCants and Watts, 2012). The absence of agreed definitions of key terms has resulted in 'conflicting or counterproductive programmes' that are more difficult to evaluate (ibid., p. 1).

A particular issue has been that without universal agreement on the parameters of CVE, there is the risk of it evolving into a 'catchall category that lacks precision and focus [and] reflects problematic assumptions about the conditions that promote violent extremism' (Heydemann, 2014). Preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is a global 'whole-of-society' approach that seeks to employ a wide range of mostly non-coercive activities to address the root causes that may ultimately result in violent extremism and acts of terrorism.

Preventing violent extremism (PVE) is proactive while countering violent extremism (CVE) is reactive. However, they are fairly synonymous as both include preventative measures that aim to address structural social, economic and political grievances that lead to radicalisation. The key elements of P/CVE tend to comprise the 'use of non-coercive means to dissuade individuals or groups from mobilising towards violence and to mitigate recruitment, support, facilitation or engagement in ideologically motivated terrorism by non-state actors in furtherance of political objectives' (Khan, 2015). As one commentator, Peter Neumann, has observed, the scope of P/CVE and its related activities are 'potentially unlimited' (Neumann, 2011, p. 18).

These may include the pursuit of wide-ranging activities by governments and other entities to prevent radicalisation, which generally include messaging through diverse media, both conventional as well as social media channels; community engagement and outreach through all available means, such as roundtable or advisory council discussions; capacity-building, especially among the youth and women together with other community development, safety and protection initiatives; and education and training for a broad range of stakeholders, including community leaders and law enforcement officials (Neumann, 2011, p. 18). Through the promotion of counter-narratives and the involvement of the community, supporting economic development and promoting conflict resolution, CVE meshes well into counter-terrorism initiatives and supports these efforts while ensuring long-lasting change. It would be better to view violent extremism within broader counter-terrorism strategies, starting at the root cause or, rather, nipping it in the bud before it flowers.

2. Key Learning Point (KLP) 2: Analysing drivers of violent extremism

The causes of violent extremism are extremely diverse and it cannot be predicted by one variable alone. For violent extremist movements to develop, and for individuals to join such groups, requires an alignment of situational, social/cultural, and individual factors. Several theories serve as tools and frameworks to understand the drivers and root causes but, unfortunately, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' theory or profile to anticipate the circumstances in which violent extremism may arise or who is at risk of radicalisation. It is therefore imperative not to make assumptions about a given group or individual in the context of CVE, and instead to let local insight and analysis inform decisions.

So, why do people carry out violence?

Is it because they are poor, mad or bad people? Is it because they are angry about injustice and think what they are doing is changing things for the better? The truth is that, while some of these factors could be involved, each individual's journey to violent extremism is nuanced, complicated and context-specific. Furthermore, these potential pathways to violent extremism must be contextualised not only with regard to local circumstances but also national and international issues.

Push and pull factors

A commonly used theory to understand and explain the different factors that might lead someone to become a violent extremist or partake in violent extremism is that outlined by the United Nations in its 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism' (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a). This theory distinguishes between two main categories of drivers: (a) 'push factors' and (b) 'pull factors'.

Push factors

are the conditions conducive to violent extremism and the structural context from which it emerges. These include lack of socio-economic opportunities; marginalisation and discrimination; poor governance and violations of human rights and the rule of law; prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and radicalisation in prisons (UNODC, 2015).

Pull factors

are the individual motivations and processes that play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action. These include individual backgrounds and motivations; collective grievances and victimisation stemming from domination, oppression, subjugation or foreign intervention; distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences; and leadership and social networks.

Put another way, push factors refer to those that are structural within society, while pull factors are psychological ones that can render an individual more susceptible to undertaking violent extremist behaviour.

It should be noted, however, that there is substantial overlap between what can be considered a push or a pull factor and attempts to separate the two can be an exercise in futility. In addition, there is a tendency to consider any source of grievance or discontent in an extremist group as a push factor, yet this does not explain why some members of a demographic are recruited and others are not. Group dynamics can significantly influence the form and shape of grievances that play into push and pull factors. Such dynamics may include how actors rationalise a conflict and formulate and justify their responses to it — including lashing out with violence and extreme rhetoric.

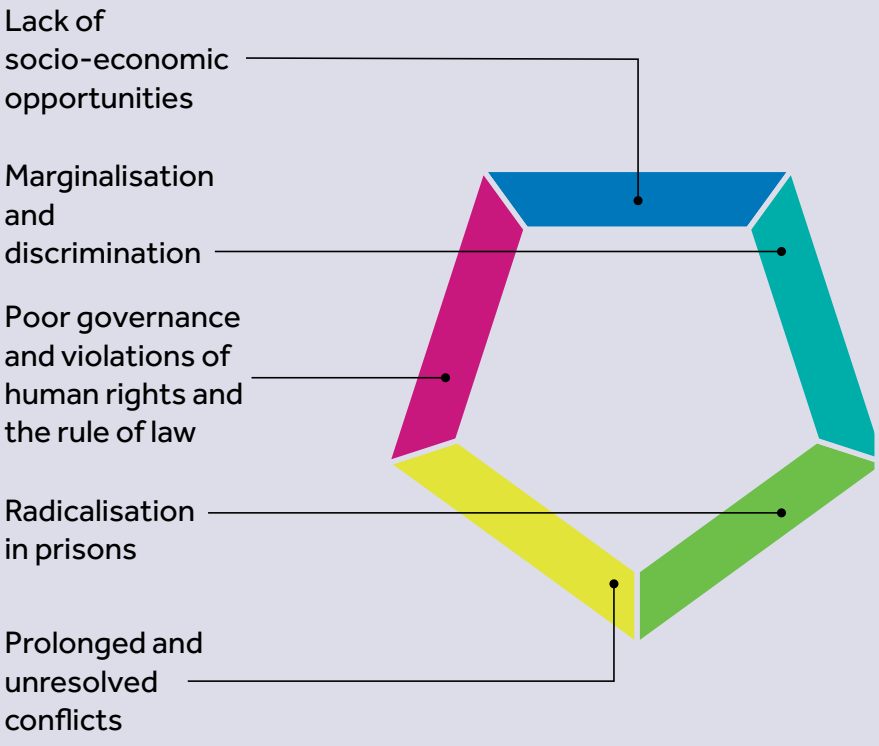
Understanding group dynamics

The vast majority of people never join a violent extremist movement, even if there are push factors in their community, which means we can work to identify the preventive factors that enable groups and individuals to resist violent extremist messages, narratives and recruitment. For example, having someone who cares about you or being exposed to different ideas and opinions could be a 'protective' factor. If you understand these protective factors, you may be able to better identify the persons who lack them, and are therefore more vulnerable to violent extremism, and look at programmes and activities that might strengthen the prevalence of these protective factors.

Violent extremism is most often a group-related phenomenon, so understanding group dynamics can significantly influence how we understand its drivers. Group contexts cultivate extreme attitudes — i.e., individual opinions and attitudes tend to become more extreme in a group context. Group decision-making is often more biased and less rational than individual decision-making. In 'groupthink', everyone agreeing is more important than the 'right' decision. Group perceptions are coloured by group membership, often called the 'in-group/out-group bias'. People tend to identify and classify in-group member behaviours more positively and to make more positive attributions about them. Others outside the group (including other groups) are identified as having more negative traits and behaviours.

The five primary drivers

There are five primary drivers (or push factors) that are considered to be conducive to violent extremism: (a) lack of socio-economic opportunities; (b) marginalisation and discrimination; (c) poor governance and violations of human rights and the rule of law; (d) prolonged and unresolved conflicts; and (e) radicalisation in prisons (UNODC, 2015).



a) Lack of socio-economic opportunities

One of the key 'unequivocal' findings of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report was that economic exclusion, unemployment and limited opportunities for upward mobility caused alienation or frustration, which could result in radicalisation leading to violent extremism (UNDP, 2017, p. 5).

In his assessment of young individuals not engaged in meaningful employment, Marke (2007, p. 7) determined that they are more likely to engage in activities that draw the attention of the political elite to their plight. Other researchers have also argued that when youths can no longer cope with their lack of basic needs, they display a higher tendency to react by engaging in violent extremist behaviour (Ikejiaki, 2009, p. 22). Indeed, statistical data suggest the existence of a strong correlation between violence and income inequality (Dixon, 2009).

In stark contrast, however, to such suggestions are the findings of Gries, Krieger and Meierrieks who, in their study of the correlation between economic growth and rates of terrorism in seven European States, concluded that only in some States was there an identifiable causal link between economic growth and violent extremism (Gries et al., 2011, pp. 493 and 496).

The World Bank concluded that the correlation between violent extremism and economic variables is unclear and, at best, of ambiguous influence (Devarajan et al., 2016, p. 18). A number of the most high-profile terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by highly educated individuals (e.g., graduates of university degree programmes and/or advanced professional training), such as the those who flew the planes in the 9/11 attacks.

b) Marginalisation and discrimination

These factors have long been recognised as drivers towards violent extremism, as illustrated by the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland between the 1960s and 1980s (Bonner, 1992, p. 173). Typically, as Silke identified in this context, before an individual was prepared to partake in violent activities, he/she first had to belong to a section of society that perceived itself as being marginalised. He further suggested that if such a marginalised group was discriminated against, 'there will always be those within such communities who will be receptive to radical ideologies' (Silke, 2003, p. 39).

Critically, marginalisation may result in individuals losing their vested interest in the maintenance of that society and so act as a driver towards violent extremism. Social scientists have observed that most foreign volunteers and supporters recruited by violent extremist groups fall into the mid-range of 'the normal distribution' in terms of being motivated by psychological attributes such as empathy, compassion, idealism and wanting mostly to help rather than hurt other people (Downey, 2015).

Alternatively, growing diversity in an increasingly interconnected world can arouse feelings of fear and anger. When some people feel that diversity threatens their interests or safety, it can lead to inter-communal tensions resulting in the rejection rather than the embracing of diversity. This is considered by some to be at least a partial explanation for the rise of far-right nationalist groups in Europe in response to the ongoing migrant crisis (Steinmayr, 2017, p. 24).

Closely related to this can be a general sense of disenfranchisement from the societies that these people live in; sentiments that can be further heightened through factors such as little or no political inclusion, limitations

on freedom of expression and shrinking civic space. Even in countries with a strong civil society, feelings of alienation by particular groups may lead individuals to reject available open platforms (safe spaces) to express their feelings and views in favour of alternative venues with 'like-minded' (frustrated) people, or else to live in isolation (UNDP, 2016, pp. 20-21).

Violent extremist groups are masters at exploiting increasing global economic inequalities together with the sense of injustice stemming from the current socio-economic and political system. They offer ideological alternatives to the narrative of free markets, democracy and multicultural diversity, namely ones that offer empowerment, order and security, with violence as a tool for imposing this view on wider society (UNDP, 2016, p. 21).

c) Poor governance, together with violations of human rights and the rule of law

These issues can have an undermining effect on the effectiveness of PVE/CVE efforts. Whilst it is true that non-State actors have perpetrated serious international crimes and gross violations of human rights law, some State actors have also committed significant rule of law and human rights violations.

The UNDP Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism reaches similar conclusions, calling for an urgent rethinking of 'state security-focused interventions' with accompanying increased levels of effective oversight to ensure that fundamental obligations to human rights are complied with and that effective accountability mechanisms exist where that is not the case (UNDP, 2017, p. 5). Actions by the State can be a prominent accelerator of recruitment, rather than the reverse (ibid., p. 5). A "transformative trigger", such as 'government action', including 'killing of a family member or friend' or 'arrest of a family member or friend' has been cited in data as an incident that can push individuals decisively from the 'at-risk' category to actually taking the step of joining an extremist group. (UNDP 2017, p. 5)

More generally, poor governance structures can be a significant source of frustration, including where these go hand in hand with 'democracy deficits, corruption and a culture of impunity' (United Nations General Assembly, 2015a, para. 3). For example, weak development outcomes may fuel citizens' mistrust in the legitimacy of their government; in turn, this may further weaken the effectiveness of state institutions in responding to violent extremism when it does occur. Other contributing factors can be 'insensitive policing or profiling in public locations and at security checkpoints and lack of awareness of social or cultural particularities of minority groups [that] can add up to a sense of persecution' (UNDP, 2016, p. 21).

On such issues, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has advocated that 'States should ensure that any measures taken in the fight against terrorism do not discriminate, in purpose or effect, on the grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin and that non-citizens are not subjected to racial or ethnic profiling or stereotyping' (2002, para. 10). Certainly, any governmental policies that result in the profiling of selected targeted groups of society can result in feelings of increased alienation that, in turn, may further fuel discontent and terrorist recruitment agendas (see, e.g., Aziz, 2017, p. 263).

d) Prolonged and unresolved conflicts

Conflicts can not only be the cause of human suffering and poor governance

but also facilitate the agendas of violent extremist organisations. For instance, in conflicts where the machinery of the State has been debilitated, the lack of effective State control can provide the space for violent extremist organisations to function, enabling them to promote their extremist narratives and activities in a largely unchecked fashion (USAID, 2009, p. 42).

The resolution of conflicts is essential for ensuring better socio-economic opportunities. Peacebuilding has a critical role to play in mitigating other drivers of violent extremism since it is a foundation on which a just and inclusive society can be built (United Nations General Assembly, 2015b, para. 35).

e) Radicalisation in prisons

Existing research suggests that 'harsh treatment in detention facilities can play a disconcertingly powerful role in the recruitment of a large number of individuals who have joined violent extremist groups and terrorist organisations' (United Nations General Assembly 2015a, para. 31). Factors such as poor prison conditions, ill-treatment of prisoners, institutional corruption and criminal activity can all serve as motivators for detained persons to seek the assistance and protection of violent extremist groups.

3. Key Learning Point (KLP) 3: International approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism

Commonwealth Secretariat

The Commonwealth Charter condemns terrorism in all its forms and commits member countries to take concerted and resolute action to eradicate it. In 2015, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) agreed to establish the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Unit to support member countries to build capacity to counter violent extremism in all its forms. The CVE Unit has been in operation since 2017 and operates in five key areas:

a. in-depth technical assistance for countries with unaddressed vulnerability to violent extremism;

b. youth and CSO training and support to strengthen their skills to counter violent extremism;

c. 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 cooperation and to increase the ability to deal with violent extremism in all forms;

d. research, communication and information to advance understanding of CVE through the mechanism of the Commonwealth CVE Cadre of Experts established in 2018 and endorsed by the 2018 CHOGM;

e. advocating for the Small States that may not be able to routinely engage with multilateral forums such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum or industry-led initiatives such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

United Nations

United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006)

The United Nations (UN) Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted by consensus in 2006, harmonises regional, national, and international efforts towards countering terrorism. It is concerned with 'addressing the conditions conducive to the spread

of terrorism' (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). P/CVE is a high priority on the UN Security Council's agenda due to the threats that violent extremism and terrorism pose to international peace and security. In addition, the Security Council has emphasised the need for strengthening international efforts to address rising levels of intolerance — which, together with extremism, are underlying motivators of the incitement of terrorist acts — through such efforts as increased dialogue and understanding among civilizations (United Nations Security Council, 2010, para. 3). It stresses that 'terrorism will not be defeated by military force, law enforcement measures, and intelligence operations alone' (ibid., para. 4).

UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015)

In the Plan, the UN Secretary-General calls for a comprehensive approach encompassing not only essential security-based counter-terrorism measures but also systematic preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalise and join violent extremist groups. The Plan is an appeal for concerted action by the international community. It provides more than 70 recommendations to Member countries and the UN system to prevent the further spread of violent extremism. It is accompanied by a Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly that puts forward an 'All-of-UN' approach both at Headquarters and in the field to support national, regional and global efforts to prevent violent extremism and assist Member countries in developing national plans of action (United Nations General Assembly, 2015c).

Resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly

Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015) urged Member countries and the UN system 'to ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's organisations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism' (United Nations Security Council, 2015a, para. 13). In addition, Resolution 2250 (2015) urged countries 'to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism' (United Nations Security Council, 2015b, para. 1).

The General Assembly's annual resolutions on measures to eliminate international terrorism have stressed the importance of increased interfaith and intercultural tolerance and understanding — including, most recently, resolution 72/123 (United Nations General Assembly, 2017) — as well as themes such as the effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of human rights, e.g., resolution 72/246 (United Nations General Assembly, 2018).

Global Counterterrorism Forum

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) is an informal, apolitical, multilateral counter-terrorism platform. It describes itself as 'small, nimble, inclusive and consensus-based' (GCTF, 2021). Its overarching mission is to reduce the vulnerability of people worldwide to terrorism by mobilising expertise and resources to prevent, combat and prosecute terrorist acts and counter incitement and recruitment to terrorism. The GCTF has 30 founding members but welcomes contributions from non-member countries, international and regional organisations and CSOs.

Key partners include:

- The African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT); Peace and Security Commission; African Police Cooperation Organisation (AFRIPOL).
- GCTF Inspired Institutions: the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), Hedayah and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ)

Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism

This Forum brings together the technology industry, governments, civil society and academia to foster collaboration and information sharing to counter terrorist and violent extremist activity online. GIFCT's strategic planning and programming centres on three pillars:

a. prevent: equipping digital platforms and civil society groups with awareness, knowledge and tools to develop sustainable programmes to disrupt terrorist and violent extremist activity online;

b. respond: bringing together key stakeholders to mitigate the impact of a terrorist or violent extremist attack; and

c. learn: supporting cutting-edge, practical research efforts at the intersection of extremism and technology.

Tech Against Terrorism

Tech Against Terrorism is an initiative launched and supported by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (UN CTED) working with the global tech industry to tackle terrorist use of the internet whilst respecting human rights. Their plan of action revolves around three pillars:

a. outreach: promote constructive working relationships between the tech and government sectors, and organise global workshops and e-learning sessions to conduct in-person training with tech companies.

b. knowledge-sharing: work closely with GIFCT and the global tech sector to share best practices (policy, guidelines, learning materials, practical workshops and tools) within the tech industry and across the private, public and civil society sectors; and

c. practical support: offer tech companies practical and operational support to help implement effective mechanisms to respond to terrorist use of the internet.

4. Key Learning Point (KLP) 4: Regional and multilateral approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism

African Union

Efforts by the African Union (AU) to prevent and combat the scourge of terrorism have a long history. During its 28th Ordinary Session, held in Dakar, Senegal, from 29 June to 1 July 1992, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted resolution AHG/Res.213 (38I) on the Strengthening of Cooperation and Coordination among the African States.

At its 30th Ordinary Session, held in Tunis, Tunisia, from 13 to 15 June 1994, the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted declaration AHG/Decl.2(30) on the Code of Conduct for Inter-African Relations, which rejected all forms of discrimination, injustice, extremism and terrorism and unequivocally condemned as criminal all terrorist acts, methods and practices. These efforts culminated in the 1999 OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and its 2004 Protocol.

The 1999 Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism

The Convention entered into force on 6 December 2002 and has so far been signed by 50 Member countries and ratified by 41. It provides a legal framework for preventing and combating terrorism at the continental level. Under the Convention, Member countries commit themselves to review their national laws, establish criminal offences for terrorist acts and make such acts punishable by appropriate penalties.

Member countries also undertake to refrain from any acts aimed at organising, financing, committing or inciting others to commit terrorist acts, or providing havens for terrorists. They pledged to take steps as well as to cooperate in preventing and combating terrorist acts through the strengthened exchange of information, mutual assistance concerning procedures relating to the investigation of terrorist acts and arrest of terrorists, exchange of studies and research, and provision of technical assistance. The Convention requires States to develop methods of monitoring and controlling land, sea, customs and immigration checkpoints to pre-empt infiltration by those involved in the planning, organisation and execution of terrorist acts.

The 2004 Protocol to the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism

While the adoption of the Convention constituted a watershed in Africa's efforts to address the threat of terrorism, it was noted that it did not provide for an implementation mechanism or adequate measures for the suppression of terrorist financing. The provisions on human rights protection were also deemed insufficient, and the risks of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction were not adequately addressed. It is against this background that the second AU High-Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the Prevention and Combatting of Terrorism in Africa, held in Algiers, Algeria, from 13 to 14 October 2004, encouraged efforts by the African Union Commission (AUC) to prepare an additional Protocol to the Convention.

Under the Protocol, States Parties commit themselves, inter alia, to implement fully the provisions of the Convention and to take several other steps, including cooperation on the suppression of the financing of terrorism; to submit, on an annual basis or at such regular intervals as shall be determined by Council, reports on measures taken to combat and prevent terrorism; to report to Council all terrorist activities in their countries as soon as they occur; and to become parties to all relevant continental and international instruments on terrorism. As of August 2014, the Protocol had been signed by 45 Member countries and ratified by 15. It entered into force on 26 February 2014.

The 2002 AU Plan of Action for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism

The Plan of Action (PoA) was adopted by the first AU High-Level Inter-Governmental Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa, held in Algiers, Algeria, from 11 to 14 September 2002. The PoA was intended to give concrete expression to the counter-terrorism commitments and obligations of AU Member countries as contained in the 1999 Convention and UN Security Council resolution 1373 (United Nations Security Council, 2001).

The PoA stresses the importance of joint action, coordination and collaboration among Member countries for the eradication of terrorism on the continent. It contains specific provisions on police and border control, legislative and judicial measures, suppression of the financing of terrorists, exchange of information, and coordination at regional, continental and international levels. It also specifies the role to be played by Council and the AUC. As a follow-up to the PoA, some steps have been taken to further counter-terrorism efforts on the continent, notably through the enhancement of the AUC's capacity and the establishment of the ACSRT.

The African Union Peace and Security Council

The Council is a 'platform for AU Member countries to project their foreign policy concerns in relation to the issues of peace and security'. As a result, it has stressed the need to combat extremism, urging Member countries to 'exert their utmost efforts in order to effectively address the root causes and the underlying conditions conducive for the spread of terrorism' (African Union Peace and Security Council, (2012).

African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

APSA is the umbrella term for the key AU mechanisms for promoting peace, security and stability in the African continent. Its the main pillar is the Peace and Security Council (PSC). The other pillars are the Panel of the Wise, Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), African Standby Force (ASF) and the Peace Fund. Additional components of APSA are the Military Staff Committee, a subsidiary body of the PSC, and the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC): The standing decision-making organ of the AU for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, the PSC is a collective security and early warning arrangement intended to facilitate timely and efficient responses to conflict and crises situations in Africa.

Panel of the Wise: The Panel supports the PSC and the Chairperson of the AUC in the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa, particularly in the areas of preventive diplomacy and mediation. The Panel's report 'Mitigating Vulnerabilities of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts in Africa' advocated at least four key actions to be taken by the AUC: the appointment of a permanent Office for Women, Peace and Security; formulation and launch of an AU Gender Peace and Security Programme (GPSP); establishment of a permanent Open Session of the Council on Women, Peace and Security; and the launch of FemWise–Africa (Ngandu, 2014).

Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise): The objective of PanWise is to strengthen, coordinate and harmonise conflict prevention and peace-making efforts in Africa under a single umbrella. In October 2017, the Council convened its 728th meeting to address 'the role of women in preventing and countering violent extremism in Africa' (African Union Peace and Security Council, (2017), reflective of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (United Nations Security Council, 2000).

African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation (FemWise–Africa): FemWise–Africa is a subsidiary body of the Panel of the Wise set up following recommendations by the Panel (see above). It focuses on strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation in the context of APSA by providing a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity building and networking. FemWise–Africa launched operations by providing technical and mediation support to four ongoing peace processes in Africa and was mandated in July 2017 by the Chairperson of the AUC to undertake efforts to operationalise fully.

Continental Early Warning System (CEWS): CEWS aims to anticipate and prevent conflicts on the continent, and to provide timely information about evolving violent conflicts, based on specifically developed indicators.

Peace Fund: The role of the Peace Fund is to provide 'the necessary financial resources for peace support missions and other operational activities related to peace and security'. (Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council, 2002) The PSC Protocol provides for the Fund to receive financial appropriations from the regular AU budget; voluntary contributions from the Member countries, international partners and other sources, such as the private sector, civil society and individuals; as well as through fund-raising activities.

Youth Division: Ibid. 2002

United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)

UNOWAS works closely with the AU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the G5 Sahel, as well as other regional partners, to support regional solutions to cross-cutting threats to peace and security such as terrorism and violent extremism, transnational organised crime, piracy and maritime insecurity. It assists regional institutions and Member countries to enhance their capacities to promote good governance and respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender in conflict prevention. UNOWAS leads the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, endorsed by the Security Council in June 2013.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS is a 15-member regional group with the mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries. Its Mediation and Security Council aims to continuously reaffirm the determination of ECOWAS Member countries to work collectively to prevent and more efficiently combat terrorism, strengthen cooperation and coordination and redefine their priority areas. The ECOWAS counter-terrorism strategy is based on three pillars: preventing terrorism, pursuing terrorism, and reconstructing communities in the aftermath of conflict.

5. Key Learning Point (KLP) 5: Violent extremism in Ghana

West Africa (the Sahel region and Lake Chad Basin) has experienced numerous acts of violent extremism over the last decade by groups including Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram recorded in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Ghana has not witnessed any violent extremist attacks but faces the risk of attacks from within and outside the country. Its vulnerability to violent extremism is influenced by the following characteristics:

a. proximity to countries — Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal — where violent extremist groups operate and have ambitions to mobilise for the Jihadist cause;

b. threat of home-grown violent extremism/terrorism by Ghanaian foreign terrorist fighters, especially from the Sahel-Sahara region, who have returned or are yet to return home;

c. influx of irregular and labour migrants and its impact on local conflict dynamics — for example, the presence of Burkinabe migrant labourers in the Upper West Region exacerbated inter-communal violence related to land access and the migration of farmers and herders (Doba and Kandega, Kologo and Navrongo, and Bavungnia and Wusungu);

d. participation of suspected militants in artisanal gold mining in the northern part of the country — forest between Wuru in the Sissala East district of Ghana and across the border in Kunu in Burkina Faso, being a transit zone for extremist funding and logistics — fertilizer smuggling, stolen livestock, electric cords for explosives, arms trafficking, etc.— with the disruption of supply chains possibly leading to attacks as violence could be used to protect hideouts, secure supply routes or attack border posts;

e. porous borders, land border disputes and weak border control and surveillance systems; and

f. compelling messages on the internet and social media with a mix of ideological, political, moral, religious and social narratives based on real and imagined grievances by violent extremists to inspire, radicalise and recruit young people.

Potential root causes

a. Governance challenges: discontent with democracy, widespread corruption, lack of trust/confidence in the state (encourage people to seek alternative, sometimes radical ideologies), injustice, human rights violations and abuses, etc.

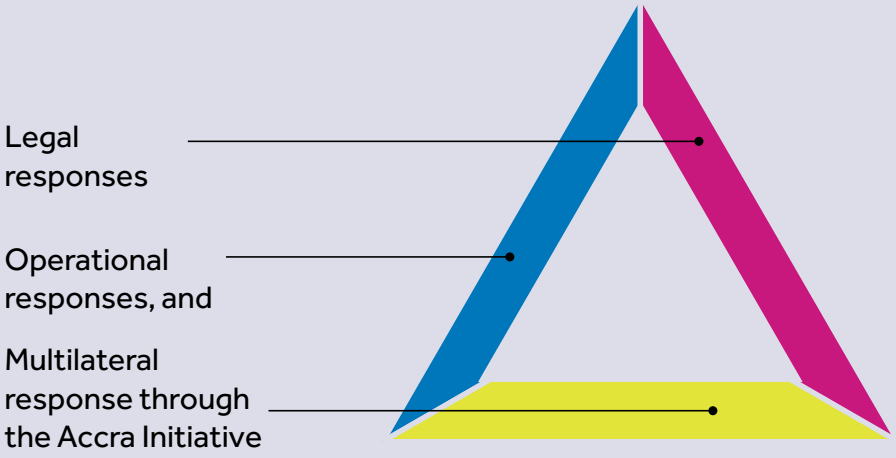
b. Socio-economic challenges: rising unemployment, extreme poverty, inequalities, exclusion and social marginalisation, development problems, etc.

c. Political violence: unresolved local conflicts and grievances with the state —vigilantism, farmer-herder conflicts, Trans-Volta Togoland Separatists rebellion, etc.

d. Weak family structures and inadequate parental guidance

Prevention and counter measures

Ghana's responses can be categorised into:



These responses are detailed below:

1. Legal responses

Ghana has adopted legal frameworks in line with regional and international conventions and protocols on terrorism/violent extremism. Key among these are:

- The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008 (Act 762) and its subsequent amendment in 2014
- The Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2008 (Act 749)
- The 2010 Organised Crime Act
- The National Framework for Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET).

These Acts include provisions addressing financing, recruitment and supporting of terrorist activities.

The National Framework for Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET)

The NAFPCVET aims to prevent violent extremism/terrorism and minimise the threat to Ghana and her interests so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. It operates through four mutually reinforcing pillars:

i. Prevent

a. preventing the youth and the vulnerable from being radicalised through wrongful religious teachings and interpretations, self-radicalisation and cyberspace,

b. educating and creating awareness about the implications of extremism and terrorism on individuals, families and the State,

c. countering violent extremist ideology from mutating into terrorism, and

d. addressing the underlying socio-economic and governance challenges that lead to violent extremism and terrorism.

ii. Pre-empt

a. enhancing the capabilities, cooperation and coordination of the security and intelligence agencies to detect, investigate and prosecute terrorist crimes,

b. disrupting the potential threat of violent extremism and terrorism before they are executed,

c. disrupting the financing of violent extremism and terrorist acts, and

d. ensuring rapid response to terrorist threats based on early warning signs.

iii. Protect

a. reducing to the minimum the vulnerabilities of critical national infrastructure,

b. improving security at crowded places, including malls, sports complexes, recreational centres, worship centres and educational and health institutions,

c. safeguarding Ghana through credible intelligence sharing among security agencies and contiguous countries,

d. reducing the vulnerability of the transport system, and

e. amending or reviewing counter-terrorism-related legislation where necessary.

iv. Respond

a. Fostering coherence between the strategic, operational and tactical level of responses in the event of an attack,

b. Enabling the different actors to quickly and effectively act simultaneously to halt a terrorist attack in all forms and manifestations,

c. Strengthening inter-agency coordination mechanisms for assistance delivery, relief operations and victim support in the event of an attack,

d. Limiting the societal consequences of a terrorist attack and bringing the incident under control, and

e. Facilitating effective and honest communication between the Government and the general public in the event of a possible or ongoing terrorist attack.

2. Operational responses

- establishment of a National Counter Terrorism Centre with a Fusion Operations Centre at the Ministry of National Security to coordinate responses and intelligence sharing,
- capacity-building programmes and counter-terrorism simulation exercises to test the preparedness of the security, intelligence and emergency services in the event of a terrorist attack,
- deployment of 'Operation Conquered Fist', a counter-terrorism operation, to the border areas to combat transnational crimes, violent extremism and to deter possible terrorist attacks,
- improving security at critical national infrastructures and crowded places, and
- awareness creation and sensitisation of vulnerable communities by the police, military, Immigration Service, NPC, National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), CSOs, media etc.

3. Multilateral response – the Accra Initiative

The Accra Initiative was launched in 2017 by Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo (with Mali and Niger as observers) to prevent the spill over of terrorism from the Sahel and to address transnational organised crime and violent extremism in the border areas. It has facilitated periodic meetings of ministers in charge of security, heads of security and intelligence agencies to share information and intelligence. In addition, Member countries have conducted a series of cross-border security-operation at Koudanlgou I (May 2018), II (November 2018) and III (November 2019), leading to the arrest of suspected militants and temporarily halting terror groups' activities and movements.

Successes and limitations

Successes	Limitations
Taking a preventive/proactive approach: Ghana has adopted various measures to prevent the occurrence of violent extremism in the country. Cross-border operations, intelligence sharing with neighbouring countries and various dialogue series have been employed to increase awareness and sensitise the public and vulnerable communities.	**Security-oriented responses with limited focus on governance/socio-economic development-oriented responses**. The current focus is on security-oriented responses rather than holistically tackling governance, economic, social and other root causes of violent extremism. Lack of a whole-of-society approach: There is limited involvement of state agencies outside the security sector and of CSOs, the media and citizens.

Successes	Limitations
Maintaining a resolute robust front that has deterred potential attacks: The establishment of specialised units within the security architecture of Ghana and the deployment of the military to undertake various counterterrorism operations have led to some arrests and deterrence.	**Limited coordination and cooperation between state and non-state actors**. There is no open channel of communication between state and non-state actors to harmonise their response strategies and facilitate the timely sharing of information and intelligence. Limited public education on the NAFPCVET and on their roles in countering terrorism.

Moving forward

Ghana's resilience against the threat of violent extremism needs to be strengthened by:

- developing a balance between military-oriented approaches and socio-economic development-oriented approaches,
- adopting a whole-of-society approach to prevent and counter violent extremism,
- engaging all the stakeholders in the fight against violent extremism by providing local actors with a channel to pass on and access information about current happenings with regard to countering terrorism and violent extremism in the country,
- enhancing public education to equip individuals and communities with basic knowledge on the NAFPCVET as well as their roles and responsibilities in countering terrorism and violent extremism in Ghana, and
- paying attention to the possibility of home-grown terrorism.

The National Peace Council needs to:

a. map all vulnerable communities across the country and the nature of the risk factors,

b. strengthen community engagement and public enlightenment campaigns on violent extremism,

c. engage youth and women as positive change agents in their communities,

d. promote dialogue and tolerance among citizens and communities,

e. engage traditional, religious and political leaders and the media on violent extremism, and

f. build trust and cooperation between communities, local government and security agencies to address the threat of violent extremism.

6. Key Learning Point (KLP) 6: Exploring mechanisms to prevent violent extremism

In cases where societies have managed to limit the problem of violent extremism, a multi-dimensional approach has been key. In other words, it is important to complement the countering of violent extremism with a broad range of preventive measures.

Ensure inclusivity, dialogue, tolerance, respect for diversity and conflict prevention

This entails a number of principles, such as:

a. explore opportunities to introduce alternative dispute resolution mechanisms;

b. engage religious leaders to provide a platform for intra and interfaith dialogue and discussions to promote tolerance and understanding between communities;

c. convene regional and national dialogues on preventing violent extremism with a range of actors;

d. increase the capacity of the justice and security sectors, not only to detect and prevent violent activities but also to ensure that the proper judicial processes are followed and the legal and human rights of those being prosecuted are respected;

e. employ well-trained staff to run prison facilities and to offer rehabilitation and reintegration support for inmates, in particular those convicted of violent extremism;

f. ensure that prisons become centres for deradicalisation rather than sources of recruitment for violent extremists. This also means working with national human rights institutions to ensure that the delivery of justice, security and surveillance is done with respect for human rights and the rule of law (UNDP, 2016).

Strengthen good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law

This includes the following:

a. provide disenfranchised men and women — particularly young people — with the space and platforms for civic engagement and participation in decision-making;

b. ensure regular engagement with political leaders and decision-makers, in particular at the local level, for important peace- and social-cohesion dividends;

c. provide opportunities for men and women to organise culturally, politically or for sports to help in managing frustrations;

d. encourage genuine participation in, or access to, decision-making to generate a strong sense of inclusion and tolerance and hence decreases alienation;

e. support the adoption of laws that protect fundamental freedoms and that entrench and strengthen human-rights protections, minority-rights guarantees and gender equality;

f. exercise caution in the passage of anti-terrorism legislation that could violate human rights and freedoms;

g. use legislation and budget allocations to help address the problem of exclusion;

h. champion national consensus-building around common values;

i. ensure that any restrictions on freedom of expression are clearly and narrowly defined and meet the three-part test of legality, proportionality and necessity;

j. provide access to justice for all and strengthen fair, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

k. foster non-discriminatory basic service provision, ensure accountability for service delivery and extend state services to remote areas; and

l. create an environment where entrepreneurship can flourish and societies can become more peaceful, just and inclusive.

Empower local communities, youth and women

This includes the following:

a. strengthen the capacities of local institutions, local economic actors and communities to develop and pursue the realisation of local development outcomes that are relevant to local needs and aspirations;

b. ground development choices in the needs of the people — particularly poor, marginalised and traditionally excluded groups — and foster transparency, accountability, participation and ownership, thereby enabling local governments to become forefront players in combating exclusion and reverse long-held perceptions of economic and social injustice;

c. develop joint and participatory strategies, including with civil society and local communities, to prevent the emergence of violent extremism, protect communities from recruitment into violent extremism, and support confidence-building measures at the community level by providing appropriate platforms for dialogue and the early identification of grievances;

d. adopt community-oriented policing models and programmes that seek to solve local issues in partnership with the community and are firmly based on human rights;

e. encourage a closer understanding that the roles women play in relation to violence and conflict is critical to the development of tailored strategies to strengthen resilience against violent extremism and to support victims and survivors;

f. ensure that the protection and empowerment of women is a central consideration of strategies devised to counter terrorism and violent extremism and that these strategies do not impact adversely on women 's rights;

g. integrate youth in meaningful ways so that they are less likely to engage in political violence, providing them with adequate mechanisms for participation and opportunities to partner with decision-making bodies;

h. highlight the positive role young people already play in transforming their communities, countering violence and building peace;

i. support young men and women and their organisations as leaders and peacebuilders, as promoters of social cohesion in their communities and as actors for early warning and re-integration.

Provide effective socio-economic alternatives

This includes the following:

a. improve the livelihoods of groups at risk (youth in particular) through increasing their skills and education levels and ensuring better access to jobs and upward mobility. The combination of these is important as supply-side vocational training projects that are not linked to meaningful employment in the marketplace risk raising expectations that cannot be satisfied, hence possibly aggravating perceptions of unfairness and discrimination (UNDP, 2016);

b. encourage individuals to leave violent extremist groups by developing programmes that emphasise providing them with educational and economic opportunities. To avert perceptions of injustice that might result from extending assistance to these perpetrators, such programmes should not draw from initiatives addressing the needs of the wider civilian population.

Prevent terrorist use of the internet

This includes the following:

a. develop and implement national communications strategies, in close cooperation with social media companies and the private sector, that are tailored to local contexts, gender-sensitive and based on international human rights standards, to challenge the narratives associated with violent extremism;

b. ensure the communications strategies are proactive to counter the narratives of radical groups to convince people to join their ranks and not only reactive to the seductive language used by extremists;

c. support the efforts of young people and CSOs to develop counter-narratives.

Instil a culture of global citizenship through education

This includes the following:

a. support the key role of education in fostering inter-cultural understanding and an ethic of global citizenship, which means tolerance and respect for human rights and different cultures, genders, religions and lifestyles;

b. implement education programmes that promote soft skills, critical thinking and digital literacy, and explore means of introducing civic education into school curricula, textbooks and teaching materials;

c. help young people develop the behavioural and socio-emotional skills that can contribute to peaceful coexistence and tolerance;

d. support young women and men entering the workplace to obtain access to continued learning and vocational resources and incubate their entrepreneurial talent; and

e. build the capacity of teachers and educators to support this agenda.

7. Key Learning Point (KLP) 7: Developing successful P/CVE interventions

There is no template or one-size-fits-all format for a successful P/CVE intervention. It is incredibly important that any intervention is context-specific and has local buy-in.

What a PCVE intervention could look like:

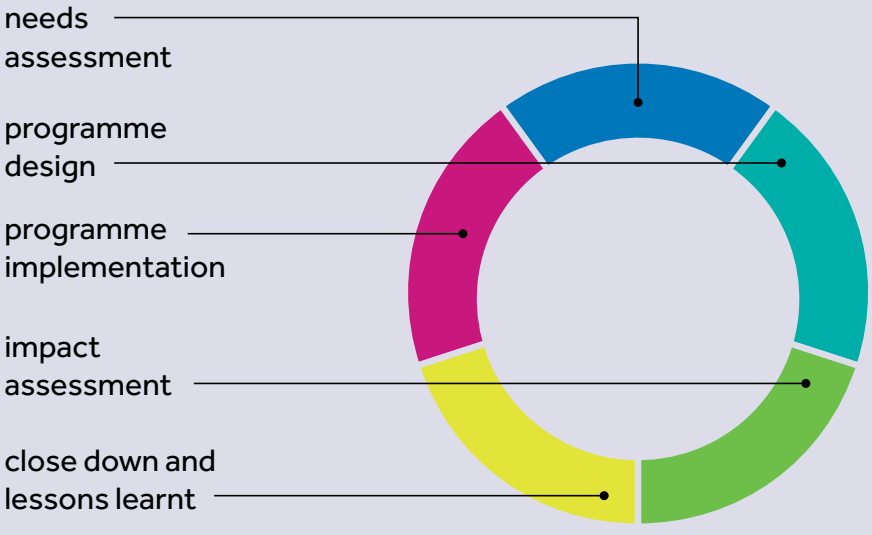
a. **public engagement**: media training and campaigns, counter-narratives/ alternative narratives/strategic communications and cultural and sporting activities;

b. **targeted interventions**: direct support to 'at risk' individuals or groups, mentoring activities; educational, employment or life skills programmes; religious and community dialogues; and youth debates;

c. **enhancing P/CVE capacities for government and CSOs**: capacity building in CVE for local social services, CSOs and law enforcement;

d. **provision of P/CVE interventions in different formats**. For example, a project could be 'CVE relevant', meaning that a different project with different aims might have P/CVE by-products. Some projects might have the PCVE component as an added dimension that would make it CVE relevant because it would slightly manoeuvre the project so that it also achieves P/CVE aims. Other projects are 'CVE specific' in that their primary purpose is to achieve a P/CVE-specific goal

When planning a P/CVE project, it is helpful to work through five elements:



i. Needs assessment (identification)

a. Understand the drivers of violent extremism and the local political, cultural and socio-economic context, including regional dynamics;

b. Decide on the key stakeholders and who should be engaged: it is important to work with local grassroots organisations or those with local contextual knowledge to ensure impact and longevity;

c. Identify the 'at risk' groups or 'target audience';

d. Find out what the local perceptions are: what do communities see as a threat?

e. Identify any cultural sensitivities, as what might work in London will not work in Accra.

ii. Programme design

Once you have identified the issues and potential solutions, brainstorm the key drivers, key target groups and appropriate P/CVE responses. It is imperative to shortlist the programme components, bearing in mind that drivers differ between contexts and that local expertise and input is valuable. Using theories of change can help to demonstrate exactly what drivers you are tackling, and how your project will achieve your intended goals.

iii. Programme implementation

When implementing the programme, it is important that you:

a. engage stakeholders to get local buy-in,

b. include local partners to ensure the longevity of the impact,

c. anticipate unintended consequences,

d. deal with unintended consequences,

e. build local capacity to cascade learning and empowerment long after your project has ended,

f. consider security, and

g. develop a communications strategy.

iv. Impact assessment

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is extremely important as it allows you to assess the impact of your work and to champion the great work that you are doing by making sure you can demonstrate it. Most effective M&E takes place continuously and enables you to be dynamic and responsive to changes in the landscape. Thus, if something is not working, it is more beneficial to cancel and reimagine the project than continuing with something that will do more harm than good. Lessons learnt must be recorded and referred back to.

M&E should be embedded throughout the whole project cycle, and the metrics and indicators developed during the programme design must relate to the theory of change that shapes the intervention.

Inputs, activities and outputs of a project can usually be easily measured in terms of costs, effort and immediate deliverables — numbers of participants, of products, of viewers, etc.

Outcomes and impacts — short-, medium- and long-term changes or effects — are usually more difficult to measure. They may be assessed through perception surveys, focus groups or one-on-one interviews.

v. Close down and lessons learnt

When closing down a project, it is important to think about how you are going to finish it and what effect this will have on your beneficiaries. For example:

- Is there a way to establish a legacy?
- How can you withdraw in a way that is positive rather than negative?
- Have the lessons learnt been recorded?
- How can you stay engaged and supportive?

References

Peace Council Act, 2011 (Act 818)

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008 (Act 762) and its subsequent amendment in 2014

The Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2008 (Act 749)

The 2010 Organized Crime Act

The National Framework for Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET)

McCants, William and Clint Watts (2012). " U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment." Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, December.

Heydemann, Steven (2014). " Countering Violent Extremism as a Field of Practice." United States Institute of Peace Insights, issue 1.

Counter-Terrorism Module 2 Key Issues: Radicalization & Violent Extremism (unodc.org) https://www.unodc.org/e4j/ar/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/radicalization-violent-extremism.html

UNGA Report A/70/674 (2017) Report to the Secretary General: Plan of Action to Prevenet Violent Extremism https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674

Marke, Daphne (2007). Will Africa Ever Be Able to Replicate Successful Economies? Standard Times Press.

Ikejiaku, Brian-Vincent (2009). " The Relationship between Poverty, Conflict and Development." Journal of Sustainable Development, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 15-28.

Dixon, Jeffrey (2009). " What causes civil wars? Integrating quantitative research findings. " International Studies Review, vol. 11, issue 4, pp. 707-35.

Gries, Thomas, Tim Krieger and Daniel Meirrieks (2011). " Causal Linkages between Domestic Terrorism and Economic Growth." Defence and Peace Economics, vol.22, issue 5, pp. 493-508.

Silke, Andrew (2003). "Becoming a Terrorist." In Andrew Silke ed. Terrorist, Victims and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and its Consequences. Great Britain: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

David Bonner (1992) United Kingdom: The United Kingdom response to terrorism, Terrorism and Political Violence, 4:4, 171-205, DOI: 10.1080/09546559208427180

Downey, George (2015). " Scott Atran on Youth, Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace." PLOS BLOGS, ARTIS Research and Risk Modeling.

Steinmayr, Andreas (2017). " Did the Refugee Crisis Contribute to the Recent Rise of Far-Right Parties in Europe?" DICE Report, vol. 15, pp. 24-27.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016). Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity: a development response to addressing radicalization and violent extremism . New York: UNDP.

Aziz, Sahar F. (2017). " Losing the 'War of Ideas': A Critique of Countering Violent Extremism Programs." Texas A&M University School of Law Legal Studies, Research Paper No. 17-22.

USAID (2009). Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism . February.

Organisation of African Unity (OAU) adopted resolution AHG/Res.213 (38I)

the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted declaration AHG/Decl.2(30)

the 1999 Algiers Convention and UN Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) adopted on 28 September 2001

African Union, Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council, 2002 https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37293-treaty-0024_-_protocol_relating_to_the_establishment_of_the_peace_and_security_council_of_the_african_union_e.pdf

Cambridge Dictionary (2021) 'Radicalize'. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/radicalize?q=radicalise

Devarajan, S, L Mottaghi, Q-T Do et al. (2016) 'Economic and Social Inclusion to Prevent Violent Extremism'. *Middle East and North Africa Economic Monitor,* October. Washington, DC: World Bank.

GCTF (Global Counterterrorism Forum) (2021) 'Who We Are'. https://www.thegctf.org/Who-we-are/Background-and-Mission

Ngandu, KY (2014) 'The Panel of the Wise: Its Role in Preventing Violent Conflicts in Africa'. UN Chronicle. https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/panel-wiseits-role-preventing-violent-conflicts-africa

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (2017) 'Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policymakers'. Paris: UNESCO.

United Nations General Assembly (2006) 'The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy'. A/RES/60/288, 20 September.

United Nations General Assembly (2015a) 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General'. A/70/674, 24 December.

United Nations General Assembly (2015b) 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. A/RES/70/1, 1 October.

United Nations General Assembly (2015c) 'Letter dated 22 December 2015 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly'. A/70/675, 24 December.

United Nations General Assembly (2017) 'Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism'. A/RES/72/123, 18 December.

United Nations General Assembly (2018) 'Effects of Terrorism on the Enjoyment of Human Rights'. A/RES/72/246, 18 January.

United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2002). CERD General Recommendation XXX on Discrimination Against Non Citizens . 1 October.

United Nations Human Rights Council (2016) 'Report on Best Practices and Lessons Learned on How Protecting and Promoting Human Rights Contribute to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights'. A/HRC/33/29, 21 July.

United Nations Security Council (2000) 'Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security'. S/RES/1325(2000), 31 October.

United Nations Security Council (2001) 'Resolution 1373 (2001) on the Creation of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC)'. S/RES/1373(2001), 28 September.

United Nations Security Council (2004) 'Resolution 1566 (2004) on Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts'. S/RES/1566(2004), 8 October.

United Nations Security Council (2010) 'Resolution 1963 (2010) on the Mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) until 31 December 2013'. S/RES/1963(2010), 20 December.

United Nations Security Council (2015a) 'Resolution 2242 (2015) on Women, Peace and Security'. S/RES/2242(2015), 13 October.

United Nations Security Council (2015b) 'Resolution 2250 (2015) on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security'. S/RES/2250(2015), 9 December.

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) *Education for Justice University Module Series on Counterterrorism: Module 1 — Introduction to International Terrorism.* Vienna: United Nations.

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

thecommonwealth.org

The Commonwealth

D17932