Improving PVE Practice

10 Steps to Designing and Implementing Inclusive National Action Plans to Prevent Violent Extremism

The United Nations Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism calls on each member state to "consider developing a national plan of action to prevent violent extremism which sets national priorities for addressing the local drivers of violent extremism and complements national counter-terrorism strategies where they already exist." It further reinforces the need for a "whole of society" approach to PVE and encourages member states to engage fully the breadth of civil society and other local actors in the development of national plans, including women's and youth organizations. This recognizes that a vibrant independent civil society is a critical pillar for preventing violent extremism and promoting social cohesion.

Below are 10 steps[1] that should be taken to design and implement NAPs that are inclusive and reinforce linkages among the promotion of human rights, good governance, rule of law, and social cohesion particularly involving marginalized sectors of the population, and do *not* reinforce counter-productive counterterrorism (CT) practice. These steps are underpinned by the recognition that such an approach will ensure ownership that facilitates successful implementation and that collaboration between government and civil society *and* between national and local actors will lead to more effective and sustainable efforts to prevent violent extremism and foster peace, resilience, equality, and pluralism in local communities and beyond.

Process – Ensure the NAP development process:

1. **Prioritizes the inclusion** of representatives from security and non-security agencies, municipal or other sub-national authorities, independent civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector in consultations to articulate the key concerns, priorities, and outcomes that a NAP should address, and reflects gender and youth dimensions, as well as involves the different sectors of government and society, including education, health, and socio-economic, which are critical to reducing the (perceptions of) marginalization and exclusion that often drive recruitment.

2. **Includes a mechanism to coordinate** between national government and CSOs and other local actors in order to create an atmosphere of trust, transparency, and accountability throughout the design and implementation phases of the NAP process.

3. **Allows for meaningful and sustained contributions by a diversity of civil society actors**, such as youth- and women-led organizations (with specific minimum numbers if appropriate) to coordination and broader implementation efforts, including by raising awareness among CSOs about the NAP process and consulting them in the design, implementation, and evaluations of practical actions.

4. **Builds on existing PVE efforts**, including ongoing community-led approaches to build resilience and social cohesion in the relevant country; and relies on evidence-based research on the drivers of violent extremism in different communities, as well as the drivers of social cohesion, peace, and effective community and institutional practices, so that they strengthen the positive forces and do not inadvertently do harm. Conflict- and gender-sensitive needs assessments should be conducted to ensure that the NAP is responsive to specific contexts.

5. **Aligns with other relevant national plans and strategies**, both in the security (e.g. CT, Women Peace and Security NAPs) and non-security (e.g. education, economics) realms, underscoring the need for those involved in PVE NAP development to acknowledge the multi-disciplinary nature of the agenda.

Plan – Ensure the plan:

6. **Addresses: a) all forms of violent extremism** to avoid stigmatization and both real and perceived grievances; b) **the need to build trust with local communities**; c) the **regional dimensions** of the threat of violent extremism and how best to prevent it; and d) the **importance of sub-national plans** to help translate the NAP into the different local contexts across a given country.

7. **Includes specific deliverables for each relevant institution and actor**, which can positively affect the coordination and communication among all stakeholders during the implementation phase. The NAP should include a monitoring and evaluation plan to assess successes, challenges, and impact and allow for periodic (e.g., every five years) review to ensure the NAP can be updated, as necessary, to maintain its relevance to addressing the evolving threats.

8. **Provides CSOs and other relevant local actors with the necessary legal and political space**, as well as capacity building assistance, to support implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the relevant components of the plan.

Implementation – Ensure implementation efforts

9. **Support the development and implementation of NAPs with the necessary resources, while ensuring gender sensitivity and participation of women as a consistent criteria in activities**. This could include:
   a. Providing relevant government agencies with dedicated resources to support the implementation process; and
   b. Creating a NAP implementation fund for CSO- and other locally-led implementation projects and/or leveraging existing PVE "small-grants" programs; and

10. **Encourage more sharing of good practices, lessons learned, and challenges** among countries developing/implementing PVE NAPs, as well as between those involved in the development and implementation of PVE and other relevant NAPs.