



HOW-TO NOTE

Integrating the Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Policy in the Program Cycle

Policy Series

This Note is a practical approach to integrating the USAID Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Policy.

How-To Notes provide guidelines and practical advice to USAID staff and partners related to the Program Cycle. This How-To Note supplements USAID's *Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Policy*.

INTRODUCTION

This How-To Note provides an approach to integrating the USAID *Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency (VE/I)* Policy into Program Cycle processes. The document is divided into three sections. The first section describes the initial analytical process Missions should consider in determining whether VE/I is an important concern for their country. The second section guides Missions through a more in-depth analysis if VE/I is a relevant concern. Included in this section are links to tools and other resources that may be helpful as the analysis is conducted. Finally, section three provides specific tips for CDCS preparation; project design and implementation; and monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

This How-To Note will be periodically reassessed and updated based on feedback from Missions.

INITIAL ANALYSIS: DOES VE/I MATTER IN MY COUNTRY?

No matter where a USAID Mission is in the Program Cycle, it is important for staff to conduct some analysis to examine the role of VE/I in their country's context. This initial analysis focuses on determining whether VE/I is relevant for the Mission and if it warrants further in-depth analysis. Whether it is in preparation for a dialogue between Washington and the Mission, for a CDCS launch, or beginning a concept paper for a project design, it is important to develop a clear picture about whether VE/I matters in the country and if additional staff time and resources should be devoted to further analysis.

Step 1: To determine whether VE/I is a priority issue that warrants more in-depth analysis, Missions should consider:

- Is VE/I a U.S. foreign or national security policy consideration in your country? (e.g. mentioned in a Presidential Policy Directive or in the latest National Counterterrorism Strategy)
- Is your country on the list of USAID VE/I priority countries (see <https://sites.google.com/a/usaid.gov/vei/home/priority-countries>)?
- Is VE/I a concern when reviewing economic, social, political, demographic or security indices?

Step 1 Recap:

If the answers to any of these questions is YES → More in-depth analysis is recommended to understand the extent to which VE/I is a concern in the given country context.

If the answers to all of these questions is NO → VE/I is not a significant issue for your Mission. No additional analysis is needed.

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING THE VE/I PHENOMENON

If it is determined that VE/I may be a relevant issue, it is recommended that the Mission conduct further analysis to understand the specific VE/I phenomenon in the country context. This analysis may be completed through a variety of approaches including in-house analysis done at the Mission, commissioning research, or requesting assistance from the USAID VE/I Steering Committee¹.

- **Step 2:** More in-depth analysis should consider the following questions: What is the nature of the VE/I phenomenon in your country context?
- How serious is the threat? How does it manifest itself? Is it emerging from a specific organization, group, or movement, or is it diffuse and amorphous?
- Which populations, geographical areas, and/or institutions are particularly vulnerable and why?
- What are the different roles men and women play in relation to the VE/I phenomenon and why?
- What are the social processes and group dynamics that are critical to facilitating or undermining recruitment and/or community support?
- What social resiliencies exist that help prevent or mitigate VE/I?

Step 3: Now that you have an initial assessment of the nature of the VE/I phenomenon, consider the following questions:

- Does the Mission consider VE/I a significant concern to the country context?
- Could ignoring the issue negatively affect the development outcomes the Mission is seeking to achieve?

Step 2-3 Recap:

If the answer to both of these questions is YES → continue onto step 4.

If the answer to both of these questions is NO → VE/I is likely not a priority issue for the current country context.

If answers include BOTH yes and no, or ARE NOT CLEAR → the Mission should consider a plan to monitor the situation and revisit the issue periodically.

ANALYTICAL RESOURCES

Three different resources may be useful during the analysis of the VE/I phenomenon. For more information, see the link to the VE/I resource site provided at the end of this note under “additional resources”:

1. Level of seriousness of a VE/I threat: See Annex A in the USAID *Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming*.
2. Resilience: See USAID’s *Conflict Assessment Framework 2.0*.
3. Additional analytical questions: See pg. 3 of the USAID *Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming*.

¹ For more information about the Agency’s VE/I Steering Committee see: <https://sites.google.com/a/usaid.gov/vei/>

Step 4: Analysis already completed provides a good foundation for understanding the nature of the VE/I phenomenon. Next, it is important to conduct an initial assessment of the drivers of VE/I. Drivers are the structural “push factors” that favor the rise of VE/I and the “pull factors” that have a direct influence on individual level radicalization and recruitment.

Step 5: Based on your initial assessment of the VE/I phenomenon and drivers, consider whether there is host country (both government and population) commitment to addressing the problem.

- Is there political will on the part of the government to address the challenge?
- Do attitudes, perceptions, and/or actions of the local population indicate that there is political will in segments of the population to address the challenge?
- Are there host country efforts already underway (government or population-led) to address VE/I?

Step 6: Determine if an adequate level of security exists to permit implementing partners to operate and communicate with USAID.

- Coordinate with the Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) or MILGROUP Representative
- Determine the threat-level of the country based on the Security Environment Threat List (SETL). The SETL is a classified document published by the Department of State on a semi-annual basis that defines the counter-intelligence program requirements at post. The SETL is available on the classified network via links on the State Department's Web site and is also maintained by USAID/SEC.
- Check for current travel warnings.
- Liaise with Diplomatic Security at Post and the Emergency Action Committee (EAC).
- Consult the in-house security operations unit.
- Consult private security and analysis companies (Frontier-Medex, Stratfor, Control Risks, Kroll, etc.)
- Consult UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS)

Step 7: Identify the risks to the Agency, our partners and related development investments, as well as potential options to mitigate risk.

- What are the financial, political, and security-related risks to the Agency, our partners?
- What steps could be taken to mitigate these risks?

Step 8: Consider the program, management, and resource considerations for addressing VE/I.

- It is recommended that VE/I programs build in staffing and resources for *more intensive* oversight, analysis, systematic coordination, and collaboration than other development programs to successfully address VE/I challenges? It is worth noting that effective VE/I interventions typically require high levels of staff engagement. This includes the need for VE/I technical capacity, strong feedback systems, flexibility in mechanisms, and substantial oversight of activities which can result in rising costs, increased workloads, and complex indices for monitoring.
- Are the staffing levels at the Mission conducive to a more intensive management model to successfully address VE/I challenges?

Step 9: Map current efforts already underway to address VE/I challenges.

- Are there other parts of the USG that are addressing VE/I challenges in-country? Particularly, is the State Department or Department of Defense undertaking efforts to address the VE/I challenge?
- What are other donors doing to address VE/I challenges?
- Are there opportunities to align and collaborate with other stakeholder interventions to address VE/I including host country efforts?

Step 10: Based on the Mission's initial assessment of the VE/I challenge, consider whether development cooperation² is an appropriate response.

- Does the VE/I challenge in-country lend itself to a prevention-oriented or early mitigation strategy?
- Is USAID better placed over other USG partners or donors to address VE/I in your country context?

Step 4-10 Recap:

If the answer to these questions is YES → proceed to Step 11.

If the answers to these questions is NO → a development response may not be an appropriate way to address VE/I in your country context.

If the answers to these questions ARE NOT CLEAR → proceed to step 11 with the understanding that USAID may have a limited role in addressing VE/I.

Step 11: Consider the Mission's strategic advantage in addressing VE/I:

- Which drivers to VE/I is the USAID Mission best placed to address based on analysis conducted? Are there social resiliencies that the Mission could build on to address VE/I? This consideration should include an examination of the technical capacities in the Mission, capabilities of the current networks and relationships USAID has already developed, relationship(s) with the host country government, and legal considerations.
- Based on your answer to the above question, does the Mission believe there is a role for USAID to address VE/I?

Step 11 Recap:

If the answer to these questions is NO → the Mission may want to include a brief description of the analysis and resulting determination in relevant Program Cycle documents (CDCS, concept papers, PADS).

If the answer to these questions is YES → the Mission should continue on to integrating VE/I into the Program Cycle.

INTEGRATING VE/I IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE

Integrating VE/I varies according to the part of the Program Cycle. Below is a brief discussion on considerations for CDCS; project design; and monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

CDCS

Here are some considerations to think through when finalizing a CDCS in a country context where VE/I is relevant:

Determine USAID's strategic approach for addressing VE/I: When developing the CDCS, it is important for Missions to utilize the analyses that have been completed in order to determine what will be USAID's overarching strategic approach for addressing VE/I. Will the focus be on preventing or disrupting recruitment? Building on positive resiliencies in the community? Addressing some key long-standing grievances fueling support for VE/I? Include multiple sectors?

Articulate the theory of change (TOC) for addressing VE/I and integrate with the broader TOC and development hypothesis: USAID should articulate the logic behind how the Agency's efforts to address VE/I drivers will prevent or mitigate the problem. The theory should make a clear link between *if USAID does X, then the outcome will be Y*, clearly linking the theory to disrupting VE/I driver(s). This theory

² Development cooperation includes the diversity of development tools available to USAID including funding and non-funding related responses.

should link to the broader CDCS development hypothesis, which explains why and how USAID will achieve the CDCS development objectives and ultimately the CDCS goal given the role and resources of USAID and its partners in addressing the development problem. For more information on TOC, see the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation's (CMM) *Theories and Indicators of Change Briefing Paper*³.

Link the results framework to specific VE/I drivers: Missions are recommended to consider the most appropriate level for addressing VE/I in the CDCS results framework. The appropriate level for addressing VE/I in the framework may be the DO, IR, or sub-IR level. In some countries, VE/I may be a cross-cutting issue touching several IRs or DOs. Whatever the level in the framework, linkages between the drivers (of VE/I) to be addressed and the anticipated results should be clear. Missions are encouraged to consider including the following in the results framework and supporting narrative:

- How the Mission will coordinate with non-USAID efforts addressing VE/I (other USG actors, donors, etc.).
- How selectivity and focus was exercised to address VE/I including targeted geographic location, populations, and issue areas of focus.
- Critical assumptions that are required for achieving VE/I related results and risks identified during the analysis that lie beyond USAID's control.
- Performance indicators and their link addressing prioritized drivers of VE/I.⁴
- How *not* addressing VE/I could affect the ability of the Mission to accomplish other developmental and sectoral outcomes and ultimately the overarching CDCS goal.

PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Missions, as appropriate, should incorporate VE/I into project designs. Here are some tips to think through when working through the project design process.

CONCEPT STAGE

Define the Project Design Team:

Cross-sectoral membership: It is common for a project designed to address VE/I to be cross-sectoral in nature. Therefore, it may be necessary for the project design team to be composed of members from multiple technical teams in the Mission contributing to a common project with VE/I goals. In other cases, the Mission may be addressing VE/I drivers that contribute to one sector of the Mission's portfolio and, therefore, the project design team technical members will be composed of members from one technical team.

Importance of RLA and CO participation: Given the often unique legal and contractual challenges of VE/I projects, it is highly recommended that Missions include the resident legal advisor (RLA) and contracting officer (CO) on the project design team from the beginning. The RLA can ensure the team has considered and addressed all legal considerations. Operationally, many Missions have found value in allowing for flexible implementing mechanisms when addressing VE/I. As the Mission often considers implementing mechanisms during the latter part of the design process, it is recommended that staff consider the level of flexibility needed in the country context to address VE/I earlier and consider the level of flexibility made available by different implementing mechanisms. To this end, CO participation from the beginning of the design process is critical.

Define the Problem: A problem statement for a VE/I project should be drawn from completed analysis. This statement will form or contribute to the project purpose and should be within the Mission's manageable interest(s). Missions should be realistic about what the project can accomplish in addressing VE/I and clearly

³ http://inside.usaid.gov/DCHA/CMM/documents/THINC_Briefing_Paper_2013_FINAL.pdf

⁴ See the section on monitoring, evaluation, and learning in this document for more information.

link the prioritized driver(s) the Mission will address to these goals. Neglecting to link efforts to specific VE/I drivers can result in a problem statement with mismatched activities that fail to address the problem.

Develop Preliminary Logical Framework:

Realistic assumptions: During the conceptual stage and initial development of a preliminary logical framework, the Mission is cautioned to carefully consider the assumptions necessary for accomplishing the output, project purpose, and goal of the project. For example, is the Mission overly relying on host country capacity or partnership when the host country capacity is weak or unstable? Does the project's success link to an overreliance on external contextual factors, such as successful democratic elections or a stable transitional government, when the outcome is extremely uncertain or unlikely? These may be listed/noted as killer assumptions in the assumptions column of the log frame that need to be addressed to ensure project effectiveness.

Identify and analyze stakeholders: Stakeholder analysis is important for any project design, particularly projects designed to address VE/I. Missions should consider who may be supporters or opponents to achieving project results. Some key stakeholders on VE/I can include: law enforcement, faith-based civil society organizations, religious or tribal leaders, media, and youth associations (particularly female leaders who may not be a part of a religious hierarchy, but may play an influential role in their community), and the host country government.⁵ Key stakeholders should be identified and incorporated into the final design as well as considered for consultation during problem analysis.

Targeted analysis to further focus and selectivity: The project design process is an opportunity to conduct more targeted analysis on key areas needing further examination to ensure a strong design. Digging deeper into questions on focus and selectivity is often necessary. This can include identifying the geographic “hot spots” of radicalization or common characteristics of those most vulnerable (to VE/I) including gender, age, location, geographic origin, education, profession, socioeconomic status, and ethnic or religious affiliation.⁶ There are multiple ways the Mission can complete this meta/micro level analysis including the commissioning of further research, requesting an assessment team, or gathering further information through consultations with key stakeholders including community members, journalists or independent and academic experts.

Define Strategic Partners: During the project design process, Missions are encouraged to engage country stakeholders to conduct additional analysis and if appropriate, provide feedback on initial design ideas. Such strategic partners may include local or international journalists, independent experts, academics, and others who have conducted research or interviews relative to VE/I.

USING ANALYSIS TO INFORM STRATEGY AND DESIGN

USAID/Philippines completed two assessments on violent extremism and insurgency. These analyses have:

- ✓ Provided justification for applying geographic selectivity, reducing USAID programs from 26 to 6 area provinces.
- ✓ Led to the prioritization of conflict-related programming within the Mission's CDCS.
- ✓ Supported the Mission's ability to define where a development response to VE/I was appropriate and where USAID cannot support Inter-Agency efforts.

⁵ The Mission should understand the relationship of the host country government with VE/I. Does the host country government acknowledge that VE/I is an issue of concern? Do their actions contribute (positively or negatively) to addressing the challenge?

ANALYTICAL STAGE

While analysis is conducted during the conceptual stage, the analytical stage of the project design process should focus on additional depth, required analyses, and addressing any analytical gaps identified during the conceptual stage. Analytical gaps may remain as the Mission begins to look at questions on how to target development efforts to have the most impact.

Sustainability analysis considerations: Considerations around local ownership and demand should be included in analysis. It is advisable as the Mission considers broader sustainability considerations during the design process to examine how USAID efforts can build up the skills and capacity of key local stakeholders who can continue the work of preventing or mitigating VEI in the future. While this is key for all project-related issues, given the highly sensitive nature of the subject and the consequences VEI can have on other development results, building sustainability into the design over the long-term is important to achieving higher level results. However, this is balanced with the understanding that some activities may be transitory in nature, particularly in fragile or unstable environments and therefore may not be fully sustainable. The nature of the design and sustainability considerations may call for a phased approach to “rolling out” the design during implementation.

Develop a strategic communications approach: Given the sensitive nature of efforts to address VEI, Missions should consider the establishment of an overarching strategic communications approach for the project. This should include the way the project will be framed and the language used to describe it throughout implementation. Talking directly about addressing VEI in many country contexts may be appropriate; in others, it may not only be inappropriate but also harmful to the project. In these sensitive environments, it may be more effective for the Mission to discuss the project in terms of which drivers it is seeking to address or how the project is supporting social cohesion, resilience, and empowering communities. Missions should develop a common communication approach to be implemented throughout the project’s activities and mechanisms. Included in this approach may be considerations of an influence strategy to increase the success of the project to address VEI.⁷

Utilize flexible implementing mechanisms: As mentioned earlier, Missions should consider flexible implementing mechanisms during the development of an implementation plan. In the next section, ongoing learning considerations are discussed including the need to reassess drivers, geographic area, and populations. If a Mission finds that dynamics on the ground dramatically change, it is advisable to have flexible implementing mechanisms that enable the Mission to adjust accordingly to what the team is learning on the ground.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems and processes provide essential feedback for successful implementation and adaptation of VEI projects. Yet it remains an underdeveloped area and opportunity for improvement in USAID. In 2012, MSI was commissioned by the

THIRD-PARTY MONITORING

In non-permissive environments, the use of third-party monitoring mechanisms have provided a reliable way to ensure that project outputs are implemented according to quality standards and benefit their intended recipients. USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) in Pakistan has used a local partner to provide third-party monitoring of all small-scale infrastructure activities in insecure regions that are extremely difficult for USG personnel to access. The partner also runs a hotline for communities to report waste, fraud, and abuse, and collects data for qualitative case studies on the results of USAID/OTI activities.

⁷ Collaboration/influence mapping is one tool that can be used to build on the analysis of stakeholders and strategic partners completed during the project design conceptual stage. These maps can help Missions concentrate their efforts on the most important stakeholders and partners. You can learn more on Programnet: <https://programnet.usaid.gov/forum/collaboration-mapping-webinar-discussion-forum>

Middle East Bureau to inventory and review several major monitoring and evaluation systems established for VE/I activities. Results in that study show that many systems are still in the initial pilot phase of implementation. Additionally, investing in monitoring and evaluation and learning (MEL) for VE/I is time-consuming and costly (particularly as it pertains to staff time/level of effort). These are important considerations when planning for effective MEL. However, several brief recommendations can be made to ensure the monitoring, evaluation, and learning of VE/I efforts are successful. For further depth of information including indicators, data sources, and theories of change, see *An Inventory and Review of Countering Violent Extremism and Insurgency Monitoring Systems*⁸

Link context indicators to drivers: In VE/I programming, context indicators, including those used to monitor assumptions, are extremely important and should be linked to VE/I drivers identified in the planning stages. Performance indicators should be included for results identified in the logical and results frameworks at the DO, IR, and sub-IR levels, but should be kept to the minimum necessary as plans and projects related to VE/I are likely to be adapted frequently.

Reassess drivers, geographic area, and populations: Establishing processes to periodically reassess drivers, targeted geographic areas, and vulnerable populations are critical to the success of Mission VE/I efforts. These processes should be documented in the Mission learning plan and in project or activity-level MEL plans, as appropriate. Opportunities to re-assess the situation include portfolio reviews, regular strategy sessions or retreats, evidence summits, , discussions with strategic partners, as well as reoccurring periodic meetings with implementation partners. . Experience shows that such reassessment processes should occur more frequently than usual in VE/I programming. If the Mission sees that drivers, geographic area, or target populations are shifting, this should be a trigger for reassessment, reflection, and dialogue around possible implications and responses. The Mission may determine whether a change is required at the appropriate strategy, project, or activity level.

Identify and monitor “game changers” and trends: Missions should identify and monitor game changers and trends that could impact the success of their efforts to address VE/I. This could include broader political or economic trends in the country context, the activities of particular groups or organizations that may negatively impact USAID efforts, or local efforts that emerge that could propel USAID efforts towards achieving the Mission’s goals and increase effectiveness.

Consider evaluations of VE/I-related projects: Evaluations to examine VE/I specific questions remain few in number at USAID. Missions are encouraged to conduct evaluations that will examine the changes in drivers, social resilience, the VE/I phenomenon in-country, and to consider pursuing methods and approaches that allow USAID to understand its relative contribution to addressing VE/I.⁹

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources provide more information on the integrating VE/I in the Program Cycle:

- USAID Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Policy: http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/policy_planning_and_learning/documents/VEI_Policy_Final.pdf
- The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency Resource site includes tools for conducting analysis, the latest risk assessments on key countries, political and social indices, and the names of resource peoples for additional technical assistance back in USAID Washington: <https://sites.google.com/a/usaid.gov/vei/>

⁸ See <https://docs.google.com/a/usaid.gov/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=dXNhaWQuZ292fHZlaXxneDozOGM2M2NiZjBIOTVmNDdm>

⁹ Two examples evaluations of a USAID effort to address VE/I is the *Mid-Term Evaluation of USAID’s Counter-Extremism Programming in Africa* (http://inside.usaid.gov/AFR/sectors/counter_terrorism/Final_Mid-Term_Evaluation_of_USAID_Counter_Extremism_Programming.pdf) and the *Mid-Term Evaluation of Three Countering Violent Extremism Projects* (<https://sites.google.com/a/usaid.gov/vei/usaid-ve-i-projects/africa>).

Appendix A: Steps for Initial Analysis

Step 1: Is VE/I a relevant issue for your Mission?		
Yes	No	
More in-depth analysis is recommended, continue to step 2.	VE/I is not a relevant issues for your Mission. No additional analysis is needed.	
Step 2: Analyze the nature of the VE/I phenomenon in your country context.		
Step 3: Does the Mission consider VE/I a significant concern to the country context? Could ignoring the issue negatively affect the development outcomes the Mission is seeking to achieve?		
Yes	No	Unclear
Continue to step 4.	VE/I is likely not a priority issue. No additional analysis is needed.	Consider developing a plan to monitor the situation with period check-ins.
Step 4: Assess the drivers of VE/I.		
Step 5: Analyze host country (both government and population) commitment to addressing the problem.		
Step 6: Determine whether there is an adequate level of security that exists to permit implementing partners to operate and communicate with USAID.		
Step 7: Identify the risks to the Agency, our partners and related development investments, as well as potential options to mitigate risk.		
Step 8: Consider the program, management, and resource considerations for addressing VE/I.		
Step 9: Map the current efforts already underway to address VE/I challenges.		
Step 10: Is development cooperation an appropriate response?		
Yes	No	Unclear
Proceed to step 11.	A development response may not be the appropriate response to address VE/I.	Proceed to step 11 with the understanding that USAID's role may be limited.
Step 11: Does the Mission have a strategic advantage in addressing VE/I?		
Yes	No	
Continue integrating VE/I into all phases of the Program Cycle.	Consider including a brief description of the analysis and resulting determination in relevant Program Cycle documents (CDCS, concept papers, PADS).	