Evaluating Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programming

BACKGROUND

The transformation of the contemporary terrorism threat into one that is increasingly unpredictable, transnational, and centered on independently motivated individuals or groups—the so-called lone wolves—has prompted increased interest in preventive approaches. Consequently, governments and civil society have focused greater emphasis on countering violent extremism (CVE). These efforts aim to deny extremist groups resources, recruits, and support while offering compelling counter- or alternative narratives to challenge those propagated by extremists. Although the field of CVE policy and practice is in its early stages, numerous questions have been raised regarding the efficacy and impact of such programming, and efforts to integrate monitoring and evaluation into CVE projects have been challenged by limitations in funding and expertise and the relative novelty of the work for many practitioners. Beyond that, a gap remains between the expectations of many donors for evaluations and the abilities of implementing partners on the ground to meet those expectations.

To explore these issues, the Global Center on Cooperative Security and Public Safety Canada, with additional support from the Government of Canada under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), co-organized a symposium in March 2013 that focused more deeply on the evaluation of CVE programming and the sharing of good practices and lessons learned from recent CVE efforts. Drawing from these discussions, the Global Center produced “Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism Programming: Practice and Progress,” a report analyzing CVE practice and offering suggestions for further development in the field of evaluation and its application to CVE programming.
ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The current project aims to develop a practitioner handbook on monitoring and evaluating CVE programs, primarily for use by civil society partners in the field. With support from the Kanishka Project, an initiative of the Government of Canada that invests in research on terrorism and counterterrorism activities, such as CVE efforts, the Global Center will research current practices and challenges in evaluating CVE programming and develop a set of recommendations to help practitioners in this regard. Included in the handbook will be a set of illustrative examples and good practices for evaluating CVE efforts, as well as a reference for further support and research. To inform the handbook, the Global Center will survey relevant government agencies and civil society organizations that are undertaking, have complemented, or plan to evaluate CVE programs, including those programs that may not be related specifically to CVE efforts but could guide evaluation practice. As part of this project, the Global Center will organize a workshop in fall 2014 for practitioners and policymakers to reflect on the current state of CVE practice and future needs. The handbook will be available in summer 2015.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL CENTER ON COOPERATIVE SECURITY

The Global Center works with governments, international organizations, and civil society to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to complex international security challenges through collaborative policy research, context-sensitive programming, and capacity development. In collaboration with a global network of expert practitioners and partner organizations, the Global Center fosters stronger multilateral partnerships and convenes key stakeholders to support integrated and inclusive security policies across national, regional, and global levels.

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