

Engaging Civil Society Actors in the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders and Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters

BACKGROUND

Promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) is a critical component of addressing the full lifecycle of violent extremist radicalization and recruitment. Amid growing numbers of returning foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and the active prosecution of suspected terrorists in general, the need to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs after imprisonment in order to optimize the chance that societies accept reintegrates and minimize the risk of recidivism has gained further significance and international traction. In recognition of the invaluable contributions that civil society organizations (CSOs) and community actors offer to programs aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), as reinforced in the UN Secretary-General's "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism" of December 2015, it is vital that government agencies and frontline practitioners engage these stakeholders in the effective rehabilitation and reintegration efforts of VEOs and FTFs.

Nongovernmental organizations, actors at the community level (such as religious leaders, family members, social workers, victims organized in groups, students, teachers, etc.), the private sector, and the media can and should play key roles in different stages of the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs and

FTFs. Despite early efforts to include such actors into comprehensive and holistic rehabilitation and reintegration processes, the experience and capacity of such actors, as well as governments' willingness to integrate this group of stakeholders, varies across and between different countries and subregions.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Global Center on Cooperative Security, in conjunction with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague and several subregional partners, has launched a 24-month initiative aimed at strengthening the networks, capacity, and readiness of CSOs and community leaders to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of terrorism offenders who have been released from custody, as well as returned FTFs, including via cooperation with governmental actors such as law enforcement and prison services. Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the project will focus on three subregions: the Sahel-Maghreb, the Greater Horn of Africa, and Southeast Asia.

The initiative consists of two core components. The first focuses on three concurrent subregional processes that bring together key government, law enforcement, and civil society stakeholders to:

1. conduct national and subregional assessments of relevant existing policies, programs, and

actors, as well as gaps and obstacles in relation to the role of civil society actors in the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs and returning FTFs; and

2. develop an action agenda with concrete programming ideas and policy recommendations tailored to each subregion, building on both local and international good practices including the Global Counterterrorism Forum’s “Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders” and the work of its Detention and Reintegration Working Group.

The development of the action agenda will run parallel to the second key component of this initiative: a series of pilot activities across the three subregions that aim to inform the action agenda in the early stages of the project, and to further disseminate and implement several of its recommendations in the later stages. Through the provision of small grants, a range of local organizations will be supported to enhance their capacity and technical expertise in order to translate the recommendations into concrete actions. Such initiatives could include but are not limited to:

- conducting country specific analyses of needs, actors, programs, and existing practices in order to develop a national framework for strengthening the engagement with civil society actors in rehabilitation and reintegration;
- providing training programs for civil society actors who want to engage in rehabilitating and reintegrating VEOs and FTFs;
- supporting the development of vetting and monitoring protocols for the involvement of external actors in rehabilitation and reintegration programs; and/or
- assisting with the dissemination of specific good practices and initiatives through subregional workshops.

PROJECT PHASES AND OUTPUTS

The following consecutive phases will be implemented in each of the three subregions:

1. *Subregional inception phase and desk research:* In each subregion, project partners will start identifying local, national, and subregional stakeholders (security sector authorities; prison administration; governmental actors; [I]NGOs, CSOs, community and religious leaders; and academics) who could provide valuable input during the drafting of the action agenda, should be consulted during the consultation visits, and/or may be interested in implementing a pilot project. Project partners will also conduct desk research on past, current, and planned policies and programs on rehabilitating and reintegrating VEOs and FTFs in the focus countries in each subregion with the aim of understanding the (potential) roles of different civil society actors and other stakeholders in such policies and programs, highlighting opportunities and obstacles to engage nongovernmental actors, and developing a range of recommendations to improve such efforts. Through desk research the project partners will systematically review a range of sources including reports, news and journal articles, and government material, as well as NGO data. Project partners will also include applicable international good practices, and benefit from the experiences gained and insights gathered during previous thematically- and geographically-relevant projects. The desk research will culminate in: a) an overview of past, current, and future policies and programs on rehabilitating and reintegrating VEOs and FTFs; b) a list of local, national, and subregional actors currently involved in or with the potential to become involved in such programs; and c) data/analysis gaps and other points that should be examined during the subregional consultations.
2. *Subregional consultations:* Subsequently, project partners will conduct consultations with identified stakeholders in each subregion to test the validity of the background research and international practices and to develop a better understanding of the potential roles of different civil society actors and stakeholders in rehabilitation and reintegration programs, as well as any opportunities and obstacles to engage nongovernmental actors, and obtain

recommendations on how to support and improve the role of CSOs in rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

3. *Drafting and validating subregional action agendas:* Based on the desk research, subregional consultations, international good practices, and the results or progress of any completed or ongoing pilot projects if applicable, a draft subregional action agenda will be developed on the effective engagement of civil society actors and communities in the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs and FTFs, containing concrete programming ideas and policy recommendations. The document will summarize findings of the subregional consultations before focusing on actionable and context-sensitive ideas and recommendations. Subsequently, a subregional workshop will be convened to discuss the draft recommendations with a range of governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders in order to further refine and finalize a subregional action agenda and start the identification of follow-up opportunities.
4. *Finalization of the action agenda:* The three draft subregional action agendas will be updated and incorporated into one comprehensive action agenda based on the input from the subregional validation workshops. The project partners will disseminate the finalized action agenda throughout their networks and among the previously engaged stakeholders.
5. *Pilot Projects:* As part of the project and throughout its duration, a range of local organizations will be identified and supported to enhance their capacity and technical

expertise in order to translate the recommendations into concrete actions. Several calls for proposals will be published to invite nongovernmental organizations from specific regions to apply for these small grants, the implementation of which will be closely supported and monitored by the project partners.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AND PARTNERS

This initiative concentrates its activities on three specific subregions. First, the Sahel-Maghreb region, with a particular emphasis on Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, as well as Morocco and Tunisia. The subregional project partners include the Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa (CSDEA) in Nigeria and the Centre for Strategies and Security for the Sahel Sahara (Centre 4s) in Mauritania. Second, the Greater Horn of Africa, with a particular emphasis on Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Somalia. The Youth Arts, Development & Entrepreneurship Network (YADEN East Africa), headquartered in Kenya, is the subregional project partner. Third, Southeast Asia, with an emphasis on Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines. Here, the Philippines-based Initiatives for International Dialogue is the subregional project partner.

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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.

The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) is an independent think-and-do tank providing multidisciplinary policy advice and practical, solution-oriented implementation support on prevention and the rule of law, two vital pillars of effective counterterrorism. Functioning as a nucleus within the international counterterrorism network, ICCT connects experts, policymakers, civil society actors, and practitioners from different fields by providing a platform for productive collaboration, practical analysis, and exchange of experiences and expertise, with the ultimate aim of identifying innovative and comprehensive approaches to preventing and countering terrorism.