Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Community Engagement in West Africa and the Sahel

An Action Agenda

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Acronyms

ACSRT	African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism
AU	African Union
CGCC	Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation
CTITF	UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force
CVE	Countering violent extremism
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOWARN	ECOWAS Warning and Response Network
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
PSPDN	Programme Spécial pour la Sécurité et la Paix et le Développement au Nord-Mali (Special Program for Security, Peace and Development in Northern Mali)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOWA	UN Office for West Africa
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WACI	West Africa Coast Initiative
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

Introduction

On 18–19 April 2013, the governments of Burkina Faso and Denmark hosted a workshop in Ouagadougou on the subject of countering violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel. The workshop was hosted under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and its Sahel Region Capacity Building Working Group, which focuses on community engagement as one of its five workstreams. Convened by the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (CGCC), the workshop brought together 141 participants from 27 countries, four regional and international organizations, and 28 civil society organizations, providing a forum for discussions that highlighted the drivers of violent extremism in the region and explored practical ways of addressing their impact on regional stability, security, and development.

As the workshop participants noted, violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel is fueled by a combination of complex circumstances, including societal conflicts, intercommunal tensions, an underdeveloped sense of citizenship and national loyalty and identity, organized crime, illiteracy, and other challenges related to weak governance, inadequate justice systems, and insufficient service delivery. Violent extremists are exploiting these circumstances and creating what members of the UN Security Council have called an "arc of instability" spanning the Sahara and Sahel.[1]

In May 2013, the UN Security Council issued a statement on terrorism in the Sahel that recognized that "terrorism will not be defeated by military force or security forces, law enforcement measures, and intelligence operations alone" and underlined "the need to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, including, but not limited to, strengthening efforts for the successful prevention and peaceful resolution of prolonged conflicts, and also promoting the rule of law, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, good governance, tolerance and inclusiveness."[2] That statement highlights the need for concerted action from states, civil society, and international partners to work together to build trust with local communities and help them to counter violent extremism.

There is no agreed definition of countering violent extremism (CVE) programming although it has been described as efforts to "prevent non-radicalized populations from becoming radicalized. The objective is to create individual and communal resilience against cognitive and/or violent radicalization through a variety of non-coercive means."[3] CVE programming can

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[1] UN Department of Public Information, "'Arc of Instability' Across Africa, If Left Unchecked, Could Turn Continent Into Launch Pad for Larger-Scale Terrorist Attacks, Security Council Told," SC/11004, 13 May 2013.

[2] UN Security Council, S/PRST/2013/5, 13 May 2013.

[3] Bipartisan Policy Center National Security Preparedness Group, "Preventing Violent Radicalization in America," June 2011, p. 16, http://bipartisanpolicy.org/sites/default/files/NSPG_0.pdf.

also focus on the need to reduce support for or active participation in violent extremist actions through noncoercive means.[4] Therefore, the range of CVE and terrorism prevention programming and the practitioners involved is quite broad.

Numerous actors, including bilateral donors, regional and international bodies, states in the region, and civil society organizations, are pursuing a wide range of activities that contribute to countering violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel. In many cases, CVE measures build on existing initiatives and policies to address violence and insecurity and promote good governance and development. By addressing conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, these measures can be understood as relevant to countering violent extremism without the need to explicitly label them as CVE measures.

In the co-chair's summary at the workshop's conclusion, Danish Ambassador to Burkina Faso Bo Jensen highlighted four recurring themes that capture the range of CVE and CVE-relevant programming.

1. Empower local community, government, and traditional leaders to work on conflict prevention and resolution in a region that has been plagued by several prolonged conflicts.

2. Strengthen law enforcement, criminal justice, and security sector actors through training and technical assistance focusing on community engagement, the rule of law, and human rights.

3. Actively engage and support civil society at the regional and international level.

4. Identify and prevent violent extremism by addressing its structural and ideological drivers.[5]

Building on those four themes and other inputs collected from participants during the meeting, this Action Agenda outlines a range of proposed activities to enhance existing CVE-relevant efforts.

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[4] For a more extensive discussion of the definition of countering violent extremism, see Will McCants, "Countering Violent Extremism, Pt. 1: Definition," Djihadica, 24 February 2012, http://www.jihadica.com/countering-violent-extremism-pt-1-definition/; Will McCants and Clint Watts, "U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment," *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*, December 2012, https://www.fpri.org/docs/McCants_Watts_-_Countering_Violent_Extremism.pdf.

[5] For the full text of the co-chair's summary, see annex 2; http://www.thegctf.org/documents/10299/44331/Co-Chairs+Summary-English.

Ideas for Action

The core ideas in this Action Agenda are targeted toward (1) states in the region; (2) regional and international actors, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), the European Union, and the United Nations; and (3) civil society organizations and the media. Each of these groups can consider implementing the ideas in this document themselves or in conjunction with partners who may be able to offer additional resources, including by providing subject matter experts and financing to help apply these ideas within concrete future projects.[6] Additionally, these ideas are formulated with the intent of furthering strategic goals that have been articulated in a number of key documents, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the AU plan of action on the preventing and combating of terrorism, the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, the ECOWAS counterterrorism strategy, the GCTF Sahel working group's work plan, and the EU External Action Service Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and its corresponding plans of action.

The holistic approaches highlighted in these strategies should be considered by states in the region, donors, and other partners if or when the ideas articulated in this Action Agenda are implemented. Coordination among these actors will be critical to the prioritization of initiatives and the sharing of good practices and findings and should be based on lessons learned from successes and pitfalls.

I. Recommendations for Action by States in the Region

Participants in the workshop acknowledged that preventive efforts to address underlying drivers of violent extremism are vital components of an effective counterterrorism strategy.[7] As member states of the United Nations, every state in West Africa and the Sahel has adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which emphasizes the importance of preventing and combating terrorism by engaging communities, working with civil society, and protecting human rights.[8] At the regional level, AU members have adopted a plan of action on the prevention and combating of terrorism. At the subregional level, all 15 ECOWAS members formally adopted their own, similarly holistic counterterrorism strategy in February 2013. ECOWAS member states have also endorsed

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[6] The proposed ideas included in this Action Agenda, which were developed by CGCC, have not necessarily been endorsed by the governments of Burkina Faso or Denmark or the GCTF.

[7] Eboe Hutchful, "Economic Community of West African States Counterterrorism Efforts," in *African Counterterrorism Cooperation*, ed. Andre Le Sage (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2007). Examples of bilateral civil-military programs include the EUCAP Sahel Niger program and the U.S. Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.

[8] UN General Assembly, A/RES/60/288, 20 September 2006.

the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, which stresses the need for sustained and inclusive partnerships with local communities and civil society actors to help prevent conflict and violent extremism.[9]

This first section focuses on concrete action that states can take with partners to counter violent extremism in accordance with the international, regional, and subregional strategic objectives of the United Nations, the AU, ECOWAS, and the EU. These recommendations acknowledge and build on the numerous ongoing community engagement and CVE efforts by states in the region.[10] Subsequent sections will look at what other stakeholders, including regional and international organizations and civil society, can do to help implement these strategies as well.

The following ideas are presented as specific actions that can be taken by states in the region by engaging at the community level on issues such as improving policing and the delivery of justice, helping states in the region build capacity to enhance public interaction, and enhancing service delivery and security sector reform.

1. Conduct national assessments of the drivers of insecurity and violent extremism.

States in the region could undertake a series of perception studies to better understand the drivers of insecurity and violent extremism in communities and the influence of those drivers on citizens' perceptions

of government and international responses to violent extremism, i.e., through counterterrorism policies. A 2009 study by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on the drivers of violent extremism listed seven: (1) denial of basic political rights and civil liberties, (2) gross violations of human rights and government repression, (3) widespread corruption and perceived impunity for elites, (4) poorly governed areas, (5) protracted violent conflicts, (6) perceptions of governments as illegitimate, and (7) previous support to violent extremist groups in the service of national strategic interests. These environmental conditions may be considered "push factors" prompting individuals to support violent extremism, but the USAID report and others have also highlighted the importance of "pull factors," those that make violent extremist ideas and groups appealing. Among these factors are social networks and personal relationships, the material and social benefits of membership in a violent extremist group, and charismatic leaders or attractive ideas and causes.[11]

As part of this Action Agenda, states in the region could begin by surveying local communities, taking care to select a group that is particularly representative of the diversity of their own country, and providing opportunities for citizens to directly voice their concerns. Efforts should be made to ensure that such meetings fit cultural norms, for example, by holding separate meetings for men and women so that citizens feel comfortable sharing their views. These

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[9]   ECOWAS, "The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework," MSC/REG.1/01/08, 16 January 2008, para. 4, http://www.ecowas.int/publications/en/framework/ECPF_final.pdf.

[10]   For example, Mauritania's Comprehensive National Strategy to Fight Terrorism has five components: communication, political, doctrinal and religious, cultural and academic, and justice, defense, and security. Mali has been engaged in efforts to implement the EU-supported Programme Spécial pour la Sécurité et la Paix et le Développement au Nord-Mali (Special Program for Security, Peace and Development in Northern Mali [PSPDN]), a program focusing on security, employment, women and youth projects, and income generation. Mali has also launched the Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation aimed at providing a forum for dialogue between communities so that peaceful elections can be held as scheduled in July 2013. In Niger, the Haute Autorité à la Sensibilisation de la Paix (High Authority for Promoting Peace) has a mission of promoting the spirit of peace and dialogue between communities to build trust and tolerance and the will to live together peacefully.

[11]   Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter, "Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism," USAID, February 2009, http://transition.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/publications/docs/guide_to_drivers_of_ve.pdf. The report acknowledges that poverty may contribute to violent extremism, but more likely on a macrolevel than microlevel. Although most terrorists have not themselves been poor, the report argues that "national poverty increases a country's propensity to produce terrorism." It adds that if low-, middle-, and high-income countries are considered together, per capita income does not correlate with terrorism, "but if low-income countries are examined by themselves … increases in per capita income diminish vulnerability to terrorism." Consequently, in the long run, economic development can contribute to reducing the appeal of terrorism. See Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

assessments could be used to gain a better understanding of how local communities view the problem of terrorism and violent extremism and how they feel the problem should be addressed. This recommendation could build on a project undertaken in the Horn of Africa in 2012 by CGCC and Integrity Research, which produced a report titled "Mapping Perceptions of Violent Extremism: Pilot Study of Community Attitudes in Kenya and the Sahel."[12] This project collected and analyzed individual, community, business, and civil society perceptions based on a mixed-methods research approach in key areas in coastal Kenya and Somaliland.

2. Conduct CVE training and sensitization for frontline officials and practitioners.

States in the region could work with partners to develop a general introduction to CVE concepts for frontline officials (law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, judges, judicial officials, and corrections officials, as well as officials working on related areas of development, education, and conflict mitigation) who may not have exposure to addressing multidimensional challenges such as countering violent extremism and developing interagency responses. Such trainings could provide officials working in different issue areas with a broad introduction to the multidimensional challenge of countering violent extremism and how it impacts efforts to foster development and security in their region. In particular, such trainings could highlight how adherence to the rule of law, stronger and more meaningful state-society relationships, and a broader movement against violent extremism can contribute to creating an inhospitable environment for extremist groups and their violent and divisive ideologies. Such trainings could offer officials more accustomed to working with a focus on security or development issues an opportunity to increase their understanding of how these two areas are related, as detailed in a recent report on post-2015 development

objectives, which highlights the critical importance of security to sustainable development.[13]

3. Support justice and security sector reform.

Participants in the workshop stressed the need to build trust between civilians and security forces in the region and to enhance capacities within the criminal justice sector. In many cases, encounters with the police are the only contact citizens have with government, and those interactions are often not perceived as positive. Citizens who reside outside capitals or other larger population centers in West Africa and the Sahel often lack access to the judicial system, making informal justice systems more attractive. Programming on justice and security sector reform should be designed so that it reaches and benefits residents at the local community level. Effectively implemented support for justice and security sector reform efforts will help to improve governance and thereby reduce the injustices that extremist groups can exploit in developing their narratives.

The recommendations for supporting this reform fall into two broad categories. The first set is directed at states in the region and their partners on the development of a comprehensive justice and security sector reform program. The second set encourages tailored support to particular actors within each sector. These can serve as building blocks for future, more comprehensive reform, especially when such efforts are not feasible because of a lack of sufficient resources or political will on the part of states in the region or their donor partners.

3a. Develop and conduct a mentoring program for selected frontline justice and security sector officials.

Working with partners, states could develop a mentoring program in which professionals working on CVE-related issues and familiar with the development

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[12] Liat Shetret, Matthew Schwartz, and Danielle Cotter "Mapping Perceptions of Violent Extremism: Pilot Study of Community Attitudes in Kenya and Somaliland," CGCC, January 2013, http://www.globalct.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Jan2013_MPVE_PilotStudy.pdf.

[13] UN High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development*, 2013, http://www.beyond2015.org/sites/default/files/HLPReport.pdf.

of policy and programs would be matched with state and community leaders to help improve the capacities of frontline officials. Such efforts must include senior managers, whose engagement and commitment to these ideas will be critical in ensuring the support of officials more broadly. With training and support from partners, the state could enable its officials to work with mentors across the different agencies that need to work together on a regular basis. This mentoring initiative could serve as a "train the trainers" program and be a useful building block for the more comprehensive effort discussed above. These professionals, drawn from across the justice and security sector, could transmit their training and experience to their peers and serve to widen and deepen efforts to strengthen these crucial sectors.

3b. Conduct a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a comprehensive justice and security sector reform program in individual countries.

Initial reform programs, focused on portions of the security sector, are ongoing in Mali and Niger, with support from the EU. In Mali, the program focuses on the military; in Niger, it focuses on the police and its cooperation with the judicial sector in the counterterrorism context.[14] One major lesson of past and ongoing programs, however, is that they need to occur in the context of broad reforms in the national security and criminal justice systems, including an examination of constitutional and legal structures for providing security and justice in a rule of law– and human rights–abiding state and society. States could focus such programs on developing a comprehensive legal framework that encourages the development of the justice and security sectors to be responsive to the needs of its citizens. Another major lesson of past and ongoing programs is that political will and local ownership are essential to determining the timing, methodology, and eventual success of justice and security sector reform efforts.

Each state in the region, with support from partners, could conduct an initial three- to six-month study to assess whether conditions are propitious for the establishment of a comprehensive justice and security sector reform program. As part of this assessment, states in the region could conduct interviews of departing or longtime officials to track their progress. For example, states could conduct such interviews with development, education, police, justice, and corrections officials to help determine lessons from previous reform efforts, needs for incoming and longtime employees, and other challenges that each category of professional faces depending on the country in question. These "progress" and "exit" interviews could help ensure the development of an archive of core institutional knowledge on these issues that can inform officials newly rotating into the department. In the second phase, states in the region could decide whether they are willing and interested in implementing a comprehensive reform program.

4. Work with experts to improve conditions and standards in prisons to determine the risk of radicalization and recruitment in prisons.

As noted by workshop participants, poor prison conditions provide a troublingly conducive environment for the spread of violent extremist ideologies. Overcrowding and unsanitary conditions, inconsistency in separating female and juvenile prisoners from other prisoners, human rights abuses, and prolonged pretrial detention have been documented in correctional facilities in West Africa and the Sahel, as in many other regions.[15] In several countries, new programs have sought to work with detainees and support their disengagement from violent behavior or stop them from rejoining extremist groups following release. In some cases, programs have sought to stop violent actions ("disengagement"); in others, they have sought to transform behaviors and ideas. Programs in many countries have also attempted to prevent detainees

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[14] For more information on the EUCAP Sahel Niger program, see http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations/eucap-sahel-niger. For more information on the EU training mission in Mali, see http://www.eutmmali.eu/?page_id=222.

[15] For more information on prison conditions, see U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012," n.d., http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper.

from radicalizing their fellow inmates. The evidence suggests that vocational training, educational opportunities, and postrelease support are critical to the effectiveness of such initiatives.[16] Yet, it is unclear whether prisoners in West Africa have access to such support during their incarceration.

To address the enabling conditions in prisons that help foster radicalization, national authorities can undertake a number of initiatives. In the short term, cost-neutral measures such as ensuring the cessation of any human rights abuses and the access of prisoners to basic amenities such as food and water and possibly segregating already radicalized detainees would be helpful. Beyond that, measures such as reducing overcrowding and pretrial detention periods and increasing collaboration among national law enforcement, criminal justice, and corrections authorities can help improve prison conditions and reduce opportunities for radicalization.

To address the challenges of violent extremism and detainee participation in extremist groups more directly, national and independent experts could assess facilities to determine whether they are properly managed and include programs utilizing credible messengers who can relate to and resonate with prisoners in an effort to prevent recidivism and radicalization. Based on these findings, states and correctional authorities could work with partners to develop training materials to enhance prison management and rehabilitation and risk reduction programs. States may continue to develop and support the implementation of such practices following the completion of training. Knowledge and good practices from other regions that have implemented such programs could form a valuable foundation for the development of such materials and training. For example, the GCTF

CVE working group has done work on prisons with the Hedayah International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi. This work could be expanded to focus on the Sahel and West Africa, and Hedayah could serve as a hub for training law enforcement and corrections authorities.

5. Develop rehabilitation programs for former fighters in West Africa and the Sahel.

In West Africa and the Sahel, many citizens traveled to Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, and other conflict hotspots to serve as mercenaries. After the fall of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi and the resolution of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, however, many of these fighters—experts estimate between 2,500 and 4,000—returned to their home communities.[17] In addition, others joined the ranks of violent extremist groups across the region, in particular in Mali, where there are also increasing reports of some armed groups recruiting children, often by offering large amounts of money to their families at the beginning of their "service" and then on a monthly basis.[18] Because it is in the national security interest of states to permanently disarm, demobilize, and rehabilitate former combatants, states in West Africa and the Sahel could work with partners and build on practices from other regions, perhaps from East and Central Africa, to design and implement a support initiative for such fighters.

The precise number of fighters belonging to extremist groups across West Africa and the Sahel is not well documented and varies widely depending on the location of the group to which they reportedly belong and the definition of membership in the group, i.e., whether those who provide material or other support, but are not active combatants, are included. Transnational, ideologically motivated violent extremists are different

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[16] Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Hamed El Said, "Transforming Terrorists: Examining International Efforts to Address Violent Extremism," International Peace Institute, May 2011, http://www.ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/2011_05_trans_terr_final.pdf.

[17] Jeremy Keenan, "Mali's Tuareg Rebellion: What Next?" Al Jazeera, 20 March 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/20123208133276463.html; "Tuaregs' Ties to Libya Linked to Mali's Crisis," Deutsche Welle, 5 October 2012, http://www.dw.de/tuaregs-ties-with-libya-linked-to-malis-crisis/a-15937336.

[18] IRIN, "Mali: Children Take Up Guns," 8 October 2012, http://www.irinnews.org/fr/Report/96484/MALI-Children-take-up-guns. The article describes how families were forced to rent or sell their children to Islamist groups.

from insurgents based on tribe, region, or ethnic group or those simply motivated by money. Yet, former fighters clearly could benefit from a comprehensive rehabilitation program that includes deradicalization and disengagement components.

Such programs could build on good practices developed through combatant demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs or from deradicalization and counterradicalization programs established in other regions. The lessons from each type of program indicate that vocational training and support, in particular, education and aftercare support (e.g., counseling, assistance with employment, and support to family members or medical assistance), is an integral part of helping to ensure the fighters' reentry into society.[19] One effort to address these issues is the Children of War Rehabilitation Center in Uganda, which may offer some valuable good practices. Fighters severing ties with extremist groups may require assistance in finding employment and reentering mainstream society; states that face such a problem could work with partners to establish demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs for such fighters, particularly if they do not already exist as part of a UN Security Council–mandated peace operation. Again, Hedayah could play a role in collating and facilitating the sharing of experiences in this regard.

6. Support enhanced community-oriented law enforcement.

Community-oriented policing, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), is "based on the principle that community participation in enhancing safety and solving community-related crime should be promoted since the police cannot act in isolation. In order to engage civil society in sharing this responsibility, the police must build trust and develop a partnership. This partnership should be characterized by mutual responsiveness and an equal footing."[20] Workshop participants emphasized the need for building trust between police and citizens. To counter violent extremism, experience in other regions suggests that adopting a community-oriented policing approach to law enforcement can contribute significantly to terrorism prevention, early identification of problems, and increased trust between governments and populations.

6a. Conduct a mutual evaluation program to assess current policing practices and training needs for community-oriented policing.

By working with a partner, police academies from West Africa and the Sahel could hold a regional practitioners' evaluation workshop to discuss and learn from current policing practices in urban and rural areas. The program could invite participants from training centers that prepare regional police contingents for deployment to peace operations, bringing a broader range of perspectives and expertise to the sessions. The program could use experts to introduce the concept of community-oriented policing, examine its relevance to each particular context, and determine how existing training could be adapted to include good practices for new community police officers across the region. The program would gather experienced trainers and police and law enforcement officers from across the region to help determine whether certain aspects of community-oriented policing are already being practiced and whether they offer any useful lessons in this particular context.

Building on this evaluation seminar, subsequent national-level evaluations may be held in states across the region to further develop these ideas and provide "in-depth knowledge" workshops for professionals in relevant ministries. The newly trained professionals could then serve as advocates emphasizing the strategic importance of community-oriented policing to

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[19] Chowdhury Fink and El Said, "Transforming Terrorists."

[20] UNODC, *Training Manual on Policing Urban Space*, February 2013, p. 12, http://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/crimeprevention/Training_Manual_Policing_Urban_Space_V1258164.pdf.

countering violent extremism as part of their everyday work, which helps to educate their colleagues on the job. The substance of these evaluative consultations could inform the development of training workshops and materials for use by frontline law enforcement officials and senior managers, as indicated in recommendation 6b.

6b. Conduct a pilot community-oriented policing program with an urban police force in a select Sahel country.

Building on the assessment described above and given the current, very challenging situation in Mali, the government could select an urban community, perhaps outside the capital, and work with partners and local police to train officers and implement community-oriented policing practices, initially as a pilot program. The government could work with a partner to develop a training curriculum and a train-the-trainers program adapted to that context, deliver the curriculum, and then mentor forces for an initial period as they conduct operations. A train-the-trainers approach also ensures that the training and expertise developed through the program can be further disseminated throughout the police force and other relevant agencies and adapted to each context.

7. Engage local communities as part of cross-border management.

Open borders present an opportunity and a risk not only in terms of potential transnational terrorist violence, but also in terms of the more frequent instances of pastoralists encroaching on farmer lands, which is a major source of contention and insecurity for local residents in the region. Border areas in West Africa sometimes thrive on the trade and exchange that occurs there, but in other cases, the border area suffers from increased tension between the communities that live on either side. In the Sahel, remote border communities where the state is absent and where extremist groups take advantage of that absence to operate can be particularly vulnerable to violent extremism.

Workshop participants noted that information about potential cross-border threats rarely reaches the relevant national or immigration authorities because of the regional open-border policy and a lack of capacity at the local and community level, making it difficult for states to monitor or respond to the movement of suspicious persons. One speaker spoke of the value of civil society organizations working with governmental authorities to alert them to possible threats. Such partnerships are critical to supporting governments in managing cross-border movements or activities.

7a. Continue to build the capacity of customs and immigration officials.

Working with partners and based on previous and ongoing support, states in the region could focus on increasing the capacity of border management agencies and personnel and initiate discussions on the prospect of joint investigations teams. Although programs to support border management capacity are currently ongoing, in particular for officials assigned to major airports, such programs have not necessarily benefited those assigned to major and more remote land crossings, despite the fact that many violent extremists use such land crossings and their immediate surroundings. The program could begin with a needs assessment and capacity gap analysis for the major, remote land border crossings across the Sahel; develop a training and equipment assessment; and deliver the training to the relevant officials. The program could build on existing and widely used terrorism prevention programs of this nature.

Up to 500,000 people have been displaced by the fighting in Mali, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Given the magnitude of the refugee problem in the region, the training could include modules on processing returnees, determining whether they might have been radicalized in refugee camps, and suggesting resources for their

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[21] For refugee figures, see http://data.unhcr.org/MaliSituation/regional.php.

resettlement.[21] Former combatants could be linked to available disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs, including the recommended program discussed above.

8. Promote state and civil society partnerships through the creation of local security committees.

Governments and civil society in the region could work together to create local security committees, building on the structure of those already established in the region and described by workshop participants. The committees could include civil society organizations, women's groups, youth groups, market associations, and other relevant players and enhance engagement between local communities and governments. In urban areas, the committees could exist at the neighborhood level, while they could be set up at the village level in more rural areas.

It will be important to identify local groups as partners to ensure that initiatives reach and have the confidence of local citizens. Working with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) or groups such as the West Africa Civil Society Institute to identify the most suitable and willing groups from their networks would be one approach.

9. Develop civic engagement or educational programs that promote public service and volunteerism for course credit.

States and their state-supported education, youth, and sports programs, including ministries, where applicable, devoted to education, youth, and sport, could work to develop school programs to promote a deeper understanding of national histories or identities and the usefulness of public service outside the military. Workshop participants reiterated the fact that citizens feel disassociated from the state and their national identities. As a result, competing groups, including extremist groups, can offer messages and ideas that build a false but sometimes alluring sense of belonging and shared history.

10. Ensure that the voices of victims of terrorism are heard.

The defense of and assistance and support for victims of terrorism is crucial, not merely due to a basic principle of justice, but also due to the delegitimizing effect on terrorists that is produced by honoring the memory of victims and disseminating their testimony.

Mechanisms to protect the rights of victims of terrorism should be strengthened. Supporting the formation of organizations of victims of terrorism is a first step toward the recognition and defense of their rights. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the safety, privacy, and physical and psychological well-being of victims.

Victims' organizations have also proven to be very effective at disseminating their experience and their testimony. Their word is a very effective counternarrative to messages inciting violent extremism. Through their testimony, victims challenge and deglamorize violent extremists' narratives.

Governments and public authorities should support victims in their efforts and their struggle against violent extremists. States in the region and their partners should promote the creation of associations of victims to facilitate appropriate mechanisms of assistance and support and the participation of victims of terrorism in elaborating and disseminating relevant counternarratives against radicalization and violent extremism.

II. Recommendations for Action by Regional and International Bodies

Regional and international intergovernmental bodies such as ECOWAS, the AU, EU, and United Nations are well placed to help improve partnerships between states and civil society across the region. Indeed, because of their interest in cross-cutting and panregional issues, such organizations not only encourage, but help to bring together states and civil society groups to address the threat of violent extremism.

Economic Community of West African States

ECOWAS member states adopted a political declaration on a common position against terrorism in February 2013, along with a counterterrorism strategy and implementation plan.[22] The strategy and implementation plan are the first regional documents to focus specifically on terrorism. The ECOWAS strategy has three pillars: prevent, pursue, and reconstruct. The prevent pillar requires member states to ratify and implement existing regimes, work to alleviate conditions conducive to terrorism, and improve early-warning and operational intelligence, as well as take other preventive steps, including to protect human rights and democratic principles. The pursue pillar aims to help states investigate and disrupt terrorist activities in accordance with the rule of law. The reconstruct pillar aims to support responses to terrorism that address the aftermath of an attack and help to rebuild societies that suffer from terrorism.[23]

11. Enhance implementation of the CVE elements of the ECOWAS counterterrorism strategy.

The prevent pillar of the ECOWAS counterterrorism strategy envisages enhancing CVE-specific initiatives across the region. ECOWAS could work with its member states to assist them in their implementation of this part of the strategy. The program could focus on developing member state and civil society networks to implement the community engagement portions of the strategy. Although it currently focuses on early-warning measures, the program could focus on supporting or creating, if necessary, cross-regional civil society networks, in particular, networks focused on women and youth civil society organization coalitions, which play a crucial role in developing local and sustainable responses to security challenges. Such networks could help to feed information about needs, threats, and challenges back to ECOWAS for further

analysis and incorporation into community-level national responses to violent extremism.

11a. Add a CVE dimension to the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network.

The 1999 ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security led to the establishment of an innovative early-warning mechanism for the ECOWAS region to monitor and report to the ECOWAS Commission on signs of potential conflict. The mechanism aims to allow preventive steps to be taken before such situations become violent and lead to protracted conflict. The ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) evolved into a partnership between governments and civil society across the ECOWAS region. The system involves two monitors from each ECOWAS member state, one from government and another from civil society, allowing information from grassroots, community-level sources to provide a more localized and complete picture of the potential for violent conflict.

The civil society component of ECOWARN is facilitated by WANEP, a network of nongovernmental organizations that describes its partnership with governments as the institutionalization of early-warning mechanisms, particularly community-based early-warning mechanisms, as an "integral part of peacebuilding [that] has yielded tremendous dividends and constituted the basis for the WANEP-ECOWAS partnership for conflict prevention that has existed since 2002."[24]

ECOWAS could expand its capacity for early warning. Workshop participants highlighted the critical role of early-warning indicators in preventing violence and suggested that greater support was needed to enhance the early-warning capacities of security

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[22] See Martin A. Ewi, "West Africa: The New ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Its Implications," 13 March 2013, http://allafrica.com/stories/201303140599.html?viewall=1.

[23] In addition, the ECOWAS strategy calls for the creation of an ECOWAS Counterterrorism Unit, an ECOWAS arrest warrant, and an ECOWAS blacklist of terrorist and criminal networks; the development of a training manual; and training on these issues.

[24] See http://www.wanep.org/wanep/warn.html.

forces and local communities. ECOWAS could work with WANEP and other partners to leverage existing early-warning mechanisms, in particular ECOWARN, which has national cells to manage and analyze information on early warning.

ECOWARN currently relies on information gathered from local news stories rather than on semistructured information gathering at the community level. Yet, building on the model of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism, which includes a CVE dimension, ECOWAS could enhance the capacity of local communities to identify relevant information about potential threats from violent extremism. Through that mechanism, ECOWAS could work with local communities to help them identify the presence of violent extremists and traffickers in persons and valuable commodities, such as drugs, cigarettes, and vehicles, who may be supporting the operations of extremist groups and could identify when these threats or dynamics become transnational.

11b. Promote interreligious dialogue at the regional level.

Workshop participants emphasized the need to strengthen opportunities for inter- and intrafaith dialogue and engagement. They called for greater organizational support for developing platforms of engagement within and among faith-based organizations, which include religious leaders and credible messengers.

ECOWAS could build on the 2011–2015 plan adopted by the ECOWAS Parliament.[25] In 2012 the parliament held consultations among religious representatives on one side and between various religions and the state on the other. It focused on preventing religious conflict and promoting interreligious dialogue. This initiative, including the organization of workshops and community-wide dialogues focused on religion and its role in government, education, and

daily life, could be extended and enhanced across the region. The program could begin by organizing such meetings in one or two countries in the region and determining whether it would be useful to expand them to others.

African Union

The AU has sought to promote practical counterterrorism cooperation through the work of its technical counterterrorism-related arm, the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), which is based in Algiers and was established as a result of the 2002 AU plan of action. Its mandate is to support national efforts to implement the AU counterterrorism framework, including by improving counterterrorism information sharing (e.g., sharing best practices and other national experiences) and cooperation and coordination among its members, the regional economic commissions, and the United Nations, with a view to raising awareness of terrorist threats across Africa and helping African states gain access to needed capacity-building assistance. The ACSRT was envisaged as a highly integrated network of regional economic commissions and national focal points coordinated centrally through Algiers, with each AU government setting up a counterterrorism coordination unit involving representatives from the relevant ministries and appointing someone to liaise with the ACSRT, depending on the issue.

12. Share good practices across Africa and support subregional organizations such as ECOWAS with expertise and experience from other regions of Africa.

With its continent-wide presence and perspective, the AU is in a unique position to share good practices across subregions in Africa and support subregional organizations such as ECOWAS with expertise and experience from other regions of Africa. The AU could work with Hedayah in developing training

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25 ECOWAS Parliament, *Strategic Plan of the ECOWAS Parliament, (Third Legislature) 2011–2015,* n.d., http://www.parl.ecowas.int/doc/Strategic_Plan_Final_Eng.pdf.

opportunities for officials from West African member states or experts on CVE-related issues.

13. Conduct a perception study to identify sources of insecurity and levels of trust between communities and local law enforcement and security personnel and the governments.

The AU could commission the ACSRT to support member states in conducting such studies across West Africa and the Sahel, spanning ECOWAS and non-ECOWAS states. The study could be used to inform future CVE engagement in those countries with a focus on disseminating the results of such studies and ensuring buy-in from actors across the region, governments in particular.

14. Bring regional religious leaders together to discuss the role of faith-based organizations in CVE efforts.

The AU could organize workshops, in cooperation with the UN Alliance of Civilizations; the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; and relevant religious institutions, such as Al Azhar University in Cairo, to build the capacity of religious leaders to engage with the media and contribute to the development of messages and communications strategies to counter the narratives of violent extremists. The AU could also work with those partners to support states who request such assistance in developing means of systematizing or accrediting religious educational institutions. For example, several states in South Asia have a system of government-sponsored public education and a system of religious schools that are recognized and accredited by the government to

mitigate the challenges of unregulated or unaccredited education. A parallel system in West Africa could help states gain deeper awareness of the educational institutions in their territories and support graduates from such institutions, if accredited and recognized by the state, in seeking further educational and employment opportunities.

European Union

The 2011 EU Sahel strategy focuses on four major lines of action: governance, development, and conflict resolution; diplomacy; security and the rule of law; and the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization. As part of this work, the EU has agreed to contribute approximately €650 million to related activities, of which all but €200 million, which would be aimed at Maghreb countries, would be focused on Mali, Mauritania, and Niger and the rest of West Africa.[26] CVE-specific programs under the strategy's fourth line of action could include, for example, promotion of governance through citizenship teaching, interfaith dialogue, and support to families of detainees to help avoid their radicalization. CVE-relevant programs include European Development Fund support to the region, assistance to peace-building efforts in Mali, and assistance to police and justice sector reform in Niger through the EUCAP Sahel Niger program.[27] The EU has also supported improved cooperation between states in West Africa and the Sahel, for example, by supporting the West African Police Information System, the creation of the Sahel Security College, and the ECOWAS drugs and crime action plan.[28]

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[26] Luis Simon, Alexander Mattelaer, and Amelia Hadfield, "A Coherent EU Strategy for the Sahel," EU Directorate-General for External Policies Policy Department, 2012, pp. 26–29, http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/a-coherent-eu-strategy-for-the-sahel-pbBB3212171/.

[27] Support for peace-building in Mali takes the form of support for the PSPDN. The EU has set up the EUCAP Sahel Niger program, which aims to train police to fight terrorism in a coordinated and effective way. To date, trainings have included all of the different kinds of police from Niger and judges, prosecutors, and other professionals with whom they might have to work in the context of criminal terrorism cases. See http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations/eucap-sahel-niger. The EU is also promoting economic development and stability in the northern Sahel regions and in the Niger Delta. See Kalilou Sidibé, "Security Management in Northern Mali: Criminal Networks and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms," *IDS Research Report* 2012, no. 77 (August 2012): 67.

[28] Simon, Mattelaer, and Hadfield, "Coherent EU Strategy for the Sahel," p. 30.

As the EU assesses the implementation of initiatives under the framework of its Sahel strategy, it could examine and recalibrate its programming, given the dynamic situation in the region since the strategy was adopted in early 2011.

15. Examine the role the nascent Sahel Security College could play in supporting justice and security sector reform across the region.

The Sahel Security College, based in Niger to train police and magistrates and modeled on the European Police College, aims to support the training of rule of law, justice, and security sector personnel. It is beginning its activities and could accordingly be leveraged to take a more active role in promoting more-effective CVE efforts.[29]

16. Revive or continue supporting the Northern Mali Network for Peace and Security and similar community-level forums on issues of peace, security, and development.

In October 2009, an intercommunity forum was organized and held in Kidal (northern Mali), hosting more than 1,400 participants from across Mali and the Sahel, as well as Libya and Algeria. The forum led to the creation of the Northern Mali Network for Peace and Security, which "brought together locally-elected representatives, chiefs, community leaders, dignitaries and senior executives … to foster social cohesion, promote non-violent approaches to resolving disputes, and prevent conflict."[30] Although follow-on meetings were held with Swiss, EU, and UN Development Programme (UNDP) support in 2011, it is unclear whether this kind of work continues. If not, the EU could revive support for this type of intercommunal, intergenerational, community-level

forum on issues of peace, security, development, the administration of nomadic areas, and the role of Islam in promoting peace.[31]

United Nations

Various UN bodies are active throughout West Africa and the Sahel in implementing CVE-related programming.[32] Among the traditional counterterrorism bodies, the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office and its counterterrorism-focused member entities, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch, have been the most active in focusing their efforts on enhancing national legislative frameworks and criminal justice and other law enforcement–related capacities, as well as trying to promote greater cross-border cooperation on terrorism-related matters. Other CTITF members such as UNDP; the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and other parts of UNODC are also engaged in a diverse array of initiatives and programs that contribute broadly to addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism without explicitly labeling them as counterterrorism or CVE activities.

17. Conduct CVE awareness trainings among CTITF members in the field in West Africa and the Sahel

The CTITF could convene its members in the field, including resident coordinators from UNDP and regional office staff from UNESCO and UNODC, to learn more about CVE issues in the context of their ongoing work in West Africa and the Sahel. For example, the CTITF could raise awareness of CVE issues in practice by focusing on how Pillar I of the United

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[29] "Seminar on Security in the Sahel Opens in Niamey," Panapress, 26 September 2012, http://www.panapress.com/Seminar-on-security-in-the-Sahel-opens-in-Niamey–13-844547-18-lang1-index.html.

[30] Shivit Bakrania, "Conflict Drivers, International Responses, and the Outlook for Peace in Mali: A Literature Review," *GSDRC Issues Paper,* 31 January 2013, p. 17, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/IP14.pdf.

[31] Sidibé, "Security Management in Northern Mali," pp. 87–90.

[32] See UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 17 January 2012 From the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council,* S/2012/42, 18 January 2012 (*Report of the Assessment Mission on the Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Sahel Region*).

Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy includes many ongoing CVE-relevant UN initiatives (e.g., the implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, the post-2015 development agenda) as an integral part of addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. These CVE awareness-raising trainings could be modeled on a similar initiative developed and implemented by the EU in November 2012 in Brussels.[33]

17a. Adapt the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) multiagency Transnational Crime Unit cooperative model to the Sahel and pilot its use in Mali.[34]

WACI is aimed at strengthening the national capacities of some of the region's most fragile states and is part of growing cooperation among UN actors to address the threat posed by illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. It could consider systematically including terrorism prevention and CVE efforts in its ongoing and future work. In addition, the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) could play a stronger role in identifying and monitoring regional security threats relating to violent extremism and terrorism.

Because the program is built on the presence of a UN mission and was initially started in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau, the United Nations through the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and UNOWA could create such a unit as part of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, set to begin operations on 1 July 2013. Alternatively, UNDP, the DPKO, Interpol, UNODC, and UNOWA could use lessons gained from WACI experiences to set up a similar unit, drawing from the relevant agencies, in a country without a UN mission, perhaps Niger because it currently benefits from EU support in the context of the EUCAP Sahel Niger program. The objective would be to share information and work together to

prevent terrorism and help to prevent the illegal trade and trafficking that contributes to funding violent extremist groups.

17b. Increase community-oriented policing initiatives as an integral part of the UN governance, peace, and security programming in the region.

UNDP, working with the Malian authorities and with support from Switzerland and Luxembourg, is implementing a governance, peace, and security program in Mali. The program aims to establish community police units within each district, help traditional and customary chiefs to form associations to help secure populations, and help to create local neighborhood watch brigades to collect weapons, among other initiatives.[35] Including CVE-relevant community-oriented policing as part of other UN initiatives in West Africa could be encouraged, particularly as part of any future justice and security sector reform and rule of law initiatives.

III. Recommendations for Actions to Build the Capacity of Civil Society and the Media

This section includes ideas for initiatives that support the development and capacities of civil society actors. These may be involved in supporting state authorities to deliver services and goods, working with communities and leaders to address grievances and concerns or promote civic and political engagement. As workshop participants noted, civil society actors can be valuable resources in mitigating political isolation and marginalization for some communities and increasing their resilience in the face of violent extremism. The ideas presented in this section should first consider and, when necessary, help build civil society capacities to absorb and program donor CVE funding.

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[33] The objective of the Brussels event was for EU staff to learn more about CVE efforts and their relevance to work by the EU Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid and other development-related actors within the EU.

[34] For more information on WACI, see http://unowa.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=841.

[35] Sidibé, "Security Management in Northern Mali," p. 69.

18. Conduct awareness raising and sensitization in the media.

Several workshop participants voiced concerns that the media in West Africa and the Sahel was not performing the role of an impartial reporter. Instead, they recounted instances where the media has appeared to contribute to intercommunal tensions and misrepresented events or actors. As a result, the media contributed to negative stereotypes and narratives about fellow citizens. There are few oversight mechanisms on the side of government or within the industry to hold media outlets or practitioners to a code of conduct, and few resources or training opportunities exist for reporters.

International and regional actors could work with civil society organizations to develop training opportunities and materials for media practitioners and facilitate platforms for the development of voluntary codes of conduct among members of the industry. Such training could focus on investigative methods, writing and presentation training, research and verification skills development, and the development of codes of conduct for print, broadcasting, and radio. In Burkina Faso, for example, civil society organizations with relevant journalism and media expertise could work with the Conseil Supérieur de la Communication, which guarantees press freedom but also has ethics rules for the media. If such institutions exist in other countries, civil society could partner with them to improve training and awareness of limitations on freedom of the press as applicable.

19. States and civil society could work toward developing the idea of civic engagement and accompanying narratives.

States and organizations could focus on developing their own strategic communication to provide alternative, positive narratives to counter those disseminated by extremist groups and promote a sense of citizenship and belonging. Civil society organizations can be critical partners in working with states, citizens, the media, and other relevant stakeholders to identify the key elements of such a narrative that would resonate with target audiences and to help disseminate them. Civil society can also help national and regional actors in actively countering extremist narratives in newspapers, on the TV or radio, or online.

19a. Support community-based and cultural organizations.

Civil society could work with partners to conduct civic education workshops focused on the roles of citizens and the state and mechanisms for conflict prevention. Communities in West Africa and the Sahel have long developed locally based mechanisms to help prevent and resolve conflicts. Indeed, the local culture values tolerance and nonviolence; and certain expressions, in particular relating to moderation, respect, and harmony, are often used in songs and stories to educate the population. Greetings exchanged between people often take the form of jokes, which help decrease potential tension. Community leaders play a significant role in trying to get parties to mediate potential problems, rather than forcing a decision on the parties, using principles of Islamic law, in particular, equality, solidarity, and mutual assistance.[36] Insecurity and conflict fray these informal structures and resilience mechanisms, but these also present regional and international actors with valuable entry points where support can strengthen organic forms of resilience against violent extremism.

20. Build the capacity of civil society organizations working with youth and women.

Civil society organizations that work with women are often an important source of resilience against violent extremism. Although such organizations may not work directly on programming with the CVE label, many of their objectives and achievements, especially in the realms of development, education, civic rights, and political activism, are threatened by extremist

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36 Ibid., pp. 81–87.

agendas. Moreover, the capacities that such groups have sought to enhance, including the education of women, the improvement of maternal and infant health, and increased roles in addressing conflict and insecurity, are vital to addressing violent extremism. Yet, many such groups require increased capacity, first, to interact with wider portions of their own communities and relevant regional partners and, second, to build their capacity for dialogue on good governance and conflict prevention, particularly in relation to violent extremism. Given the place of women in the family, they can play a unique role in sensitizing and preventing youth from adopting violent extremist views. At the same time, women also may be vulnerable to the same grievances that prompt young men to support or participate in extremist groups, so the development of prevention strategies or CVE programs in response to women's grievances and concerns is essential.

20a. Work with women's civil society organizations to build their capacity to access national, regional, and international support and become local partners.

The critical importance of local partners for national and regional CVE initiatives was repeatedly highlighted at the workshop. Participants noted, however, that many civil society organizations established by women or focusing on women's issues are more informal and locally oriented and often lack the administrative and management capacity to formalize their organizations and receive capacity-building assistance or act as local partners. In particular, civil society groups around the world have raised concerns that they are negatively impacted by terrorist groups and counterterrorism regimes that impose administrative requirements they are often unable to meet. As a result, many local partners may not have access to CVE initiatives. Training workshops may be developed, for example, at Hedayah to raise awareness of civil society organizations on the risks and challenges associated with violent extremism and to develop the

administrative capacities necessary to meet legislative and donor requirements necessary to partner on CVE projects.

20b. Work with civil society organizations to strengthen capacities to access and influence informal justice systems.

Another area of capacity-building assistance involves access to justice. A major concern that partners have with communities relying on informal justice systems is the perception that they tend to disregard women's rights and human rights in general. Given the lack of capacity of formal justice institutions in much of West Africa and the Sahel, it would be useful to help women's civil society organizations interact better with the only system of justice to which their communities might have access. In Niger, the UN Children's Fund conducted a baseline study on the protection of women's and children's rights and informal justice systems.[37] Working in Niger and based on that assessment, a donor partner could work with a Nigerien women's civil society organization to develop the capacity of women to interact more positively with the informal justice system there. Such a program also would have the benefit of increasing women's skills when it comes to interacting with the formal justice system, when that becomes more feasible.

21. Create a regional assembly for youth in the region.

ECOWAS and the AU could support the creation of a Youth Assembly in the region, modeled on initiatives such as the Model UN program run in educational institutions around the world. Boys and girls could be selected to participate in workshops and discussions about violent extremism, conflict, conflict prevention, CVE topics, and other issues. This would be useful in providing initial training and experience to the next generation of regional leaders and help them feel connected to power centers and their communities. When inviting youth to participate, ECOWAS and the AU

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37   Danish Institute for Human Rights, "Informal Justice Systems, Charting a Course for Human Rights–Based Engagement," 26 September 2012, http://www.unicef.org/protection/INFORMAL_JUSTICE_SYSTEMS.pdf.

should ensure equal participation between boys and girls. A regularly held Youth Assembly and sustained support for participants through school programs or certification for academic credit could contribute to developing a cadre of youth leaders at the university level who are likely to constitute the incoming classes for government and public service in the countries of West Africa.

21a. Provide training to youth civil society organizations on CVE issues, conflict prevention, and the role of youth in communities.

The "youth bulge" and the corresponding problem of youth unemployment were raised as key challenges for West Africa by workshop participants. To address these issues, an international civil society organization or university could provide training to youth civil society organizations in countries in the region to help youth feel less disenfranchised, provide them with skills that could be useful in the job market, and encourage them to form organizations that peacefully promote youth participation in political life. To help youth better understand the dangers of participation in extremist groups and demystify lifestyles that have been glorified by extremist messages, a civil society organization could facilitate visiting lectures by former members of violent extremist groups so they could tell their stories about the negative aspects of life within extremist groups. In particular, the speakers could highlight how poorly they were treated, how they were separated from their families, or other challenges. The international civil society organization or university could work through student organizations at high schools and universities,

thereby helping to ensure that extremist narratives are not permeating through these important structures. In addition, the civil society organization could work to contribute to countermessaging materials that respond to extremist groups independently.

IV. Next Steps

This Action Agenda has presented more than 20 ideas for projects and initiatives that can be implemented to help communities engage and undertake concerted effort to address the scourge of violent extremism that is destabilizing parts of West Africa and the Sahel. These ideas were drawn from the broad array of perspectives and insights of the participants from West Africa, the Sahel, and beyond who attended the Ouagadougou workshop in April 2013 on community engagement to prevent violent extremism. Countering violent extremism is a task that requires active participation from a constellation of actors ranging from states in the region, partner governments, the EU, and GCTF, as well as regional, subregional, and nongovernmental organizations. The contributions of many of those stakeholders will be rendered more effective if they follow the strategic guidance that the United Nations, AU, and ECOWAS have developed and adopted as a blueprint for coordinated action. Starting with manageable goals is important. With that in mind, the governments of Burkina Faso and Denmark are planning to choose one of the options outlined in this Action Agenda to implement in the fall of 2013, and hopefully more can be taken forward in the coming years.

ANNEX 1

Ouagadougou Workshop Participants

Workshop on Countering Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
18–19 April 2013

Total Number of participants: 141

Countries Represented: 27

Algeria	Denmark	Guinea-Bissau	Niger	Togo
Belgium	France	Liberia	Nigeria	Turkey
Benin	The Gambia	Mali	Saudi Arabia	United States
Burkina Faso	Germany	Mauritania	Senegal	
Canada	Ghana	Morocco	Sierra Leone	
Côte d'Ivoire	Guinea	Netherlands	Sweden	

Organizations represented: 28

ABC Development (Guinea)
Burkinabé Movement for Human and Peoples' Rights
Center for Democratic Governance (Burkina Faso)
Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Centre for Strategies and Security for the Sahel Sahara
Circle of Research Studies and Islamic Education
Danish Demining Group
Danish Institute for International Studies
Danish Refugee Council
Federation of Islamic Associations in Burkina Faso
Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed
    Forces
Hedayah, International Center of Excellence for
    Countering Violent Extremism
Human Security Collective
International Relief and Development

Interpeace
"Living Together in Peace" Network (Burkina Faso)
Malian Association for Peace and Salvation
Mauritanian Institute for the Access to Modernity
National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and the
    Fight Against the Proliferation of Small Arms (Mali)
Regional Association to Counter Racism and
    Ethnocentrism (Benin)
Social Watch Benin
Union Fraternelle des Croyants de Dori (UFC-Dori)
    (Burkina Faso)
United Nations Development Programme Burkina Faso
University of Central Florida Institute of Simulation and
    Training
University of Kiel Institute for Security Studies
University of Niamey
West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP)

Regional and International Bodies: 4

African Union, ACSRT/CAERT

European Union (also a GCTF member), Burkina Faso delegation, EUCAP Sahel Niger

GCTF (Administrative Unit, member states)

United Nations (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, UNDP Burkina Faso)

ANNEX 2
Global Counterterrorism Forum

Workshop on Countering Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel
Co-hosted by Burkina Faso and Denmark
Ouagadougou, 18–19 April 2013

Co-chair's Summary

On 18–19 April, 2013 West African and Sahel countries, Member States of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), regional and international organisations, representatives of civil society, academia and the GCTF Hedayah International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi came together in Ouagadougou under the auspices of GCTF for a workshop co-chaired by Burkina Faso and Denmark. The workshop aimed to better understand the sources and drivers of violent extremism in the region and to discuss concrete ways of addressing the issue, which is of growing concern for the development and security of countries of the region and beyond.

The discussions highlighted the critical value of positive engagement between governments, civil society and local communities, in identifying and preventing violent extremism, addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and enhancing human security and regional stability. The workshop was conducted in French and English under the Chatham House rule.

Workshop participants underscored the importance of mutual trust—between governments and communities and also among communities themselves—as essential preconditions for strengthening the state-society relationship and the resilience of communities confronted with security challenges, including violent extremism. The discussions also demonstrated the importance of West Africa and the Sahel's vibrant network of civil society organizations as essential partners in advancing the common goal of overcoming terrorism and other sources of violence and insecurity that threaten the sustainable development of communities in the region.

We heard about a number of ongoing programs, some of which are directly aimed at addressing violent ideologies and groups. These programs may be more specifically labeled as "CVE." But we also heard about the many programs, including educational services, which contribute to addressing violence extremism though they may have other primary goals. Such programs may be focused on conflict transformation, peacebuilding or development, but they contribute to addressing the drivers of violent extremism. Recognizing the nexus between security and development, participants highlighted the importance of a multi-layered and multi-stakeholder approach to CVE that builds on good practices developed over decades in these development and security fields, and leverages existing expertise in the region.

Four broad thematic areas were reflected throughout the discussions:

1. Conflict transformation

a. Prolonged conflicts have been found to be an important driver of violent extremism.

b. At the local level, community leaders, religious leaders, local governments, and civil society groups have been essential to conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. The need to empower such groups and focus on local actors who already enjoy the confidence of the local population was reiterated by a number of participants.

c. Experience from the region suggests that the role of religion and the potential positive impact of inter-religious dialogue should be considered in designing CVE interventions.

d. Regional bodies have also played an important role in addressing conflict and mitigating its effects, and in developing early warning mechanisms like ECOWARN.

e. At the international level, the humanitarian aid, development support and technical assistance provided by bodies like the United Nations were deemed important to addressing the conditions conducive to violence.

f. The need to ensure state presence in vulnerable zones beyond the security and defense forces was highlighted in improving and enhancing the state/citizen rapport.

g. The role of the media, including internet-based sources, was a recurrent theme. Participants noted that media could play a negative role when poor reporting can incite violence or prompt social division and discord. On the other hand, the media could play a critical role in providing a diversity of information and narratives that challenge extremist messages.

h. The idea of improving media standards, incentives for the development of new and varied channels, and of developing credible counter-narratives was highlighted across several sessions.

2. Strengthening law enforcement, criminal justice and security sector actors

a. Participants highlighted the importance of restoring civic trust in state institutions and of improving citizens' experience of the state, which in many cases was shaped by negative interaction at the hands of law enforcement officials.

b. Disillusionment with criminal justice and judicial processes was also highlighted as contributing to the appeal of some extremist groups. Indeed, if such groups provide even a rudimentary rule of law, they can appeal to communities which have not had any.

c. The idea of establishing local security committees, in particular in border regions, was raised. These committees could bring together civil society actors, government representatives and security actors. They could serve as a potentially valuable model for bringing key stakeholders together.

d. Attention was drawn to the need of including CVE awareness modules in training curriculum for law enforcement officials, prison staff, prosecutors and judges (in fact the entire chain of justice). Such modules should also include material pertaining to human rights and the rule of law.

e. At the regional and international level, organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, the UN, the EU and the GCTF were cited as important sources of support and technical assistance

in strengthening the capacities of security, criminal justice and judicial actors, and strengthening mechanisms like regional early warning systems.

3. The role of civil society

a. Workshop participants reiterated the critical role of civil society and the importance of empowering them to be partners in strengthening civic engagement, supporting service delivery and mitigating conflict.

b. The increasingly active role of women in addressing violence and conflict was highlighted by participants. The importance of empowering and enhancing the capacities of women's groups to address threats related to violent extremism was underscored.

c. At the regional and international level, cross-regional interactions of civil society groups could provide important opportunities for an exchange of expertise, good practices and lessons learned, as well as support and guidance, particularly across regions facing a similar combination of structural and proximate challenges.

d. Participants also noted the importance of creating an enabling environment for civil society organizations to operate and succeed, and of ensuring that non-profit organizations can be protected from exploitation by extremist groups. Nonprofit groups, it was noted, also must be provided training and capacity to meet the requirements of national and international partners.

4. Identifying and preventing violent extremism

a. Speakers recognized the importance of mapping ongoing CVE initiatives that could contribute to identifying and preventing violent extremism.

CVE programs need not start from scratch but could build on existing programs where relevant.

b. The critical importance of youth was underscored throughout the sessions, with an emphasis on improving education (both access to education and the quality of education) as well as employment opportunities for the masses of discontented and frustrated youth who might become susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups.

c. The complex development and security challenges in West Africa and the Sahel highlight the importance of addressing both structural and ideological drivers of violence—though this could be achieved through a mix of "CVE-specific" and "CVE-relevant" programming.

In addition, the ideas shared at the workshop might contribute to programming within the framework for instance of the newly established GCTF Hedayah International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi. The Center was seen as a potentially important partner and platform for ongoing work on CVE in general including in the Sahel and West Africa.

Next steps

As an immediate next step the co-chairs will produce a draft Action Agenda in French and English which will outline in greater detail the findings of the workshop and set out a series of concrete recommendations to relevant actors at the national, regional, and international levels. The Action Agenda is intended to provide a roadmap for the delivery of innovative, practical and tailored community engagement initiatives in West Africa and the Sahel. This Action Agenda will be designed to empower local communities, civil society organizations, and government officials to respond to the growing threat of violent extremism, particularly since it can compound many of the region's existing

challenges. The draft Action Agenda will be shared with workshop participants who wish to provide feedback.

The findings will also form part of the basis of the Danish Sahel Initiative which is to be presented in the autumn of 2013 and which will include actionable ideas of intervention in the framework of the following three broader areas: Mediation & Reconciliation, Security Sector Reform, and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). In this regard the Government of Denmark will make available over the next five years the amount of 22 million USD. In this process the co-chairs will continue to draw on the expertise of the workshop participants.

The participants expressed support for the intention of the co-chairs to bring forward, as a matter of priority, a road-map to promote the workshop findings and recommendations and ensure they inform the deliberations of the international community at the highest political levels. In this regard the co-chairs, Burkina Faso and Denmark, intend to use international bodies such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the United Nations, the European Union, ECOWAS and the African Union as vehicles for promoting this objective. This could include the following package of steps:

- The co-chairs intend to present the outcome of the workshop at the next meeting of the Global Counterterrorism Forum Sahel Working Group and seek additional support from donors.

- The co-chairs intend to present the outcome of the workshop to the highest political level including, inter alia, at the next Ministerial Plenary of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and meetings of the United Nations in New York.

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