The Asia Foundation

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

Countering violent extremism in Asia

The role of development assistance

Australian Government

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Prepared for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
by The Asia Foundation's Conflict & Development Team

THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN ASIA

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Executive summary

Countering violent extremism (CVE) is attracting more attention from donors, governments, and civil society in Asia. Yet funding remains limited because there is little evidence of what works. This report shows how development assistance and CVE intersect in Asia, in a step towards filling this evidence gap. It draws together desk-based research by The Asia Foundation with discussions from a workshop convening donors, Asian government representatives, civil society, and researchers in October 2016.

The global CVE agenda has drawn very little on Asian experiences. Yet countries like Bangladesh and Indonesia are increasingly the focus of dedicated CVE research and programming initiatives. CVE is highly sensitive to the political and security context, and thus lessons derived from within the region will be more useful for future investments. A stronger evidence base should in turn improve the effectiveness of responses.

Aid agencies, Asian governments, and civil society have a long history of programming that aligns with CVE. This report argues that CVE can be enriched by drawing lessons from this experience. Data on aid flows from 2006 to 2014, culled from open source databases, show that past programming is extensive and learning needs to be better captured and analyzed by donors planning to channel funding for CVE through bilateral and multilateral aid programs. 197 projects that fit most definitions of CVE programming were identified; 20 of these explicitly mentioned radicalization or extremism.

Research should inform CVE policy and program implementation. Broad definitions of violent extremism are themselves problematic in Asia. There are myriad forms of violence, from terrorism to communal violence, and many activities and beliefs can be construed as violent extremism. Research can help ground an otherwise unwieldy policy agenda. Locally owned, mixed methods research, informed by and connected to the global policy agenda on CVE, can help identify drivers and mechanisms leading to participation in or support for extremist violence. There is already consensus that granular research needs to inform CVE, and there are positive examples of such research already underway in Asia. Donors will need support from Asian governments and civil society in ensuring that their funding strategies for CVE align with research findings, and can be adjusted as the knowledge base grows.

Donors can incorporate CVE into development assistance in many ways. The balance between CVE-relevant projects tackling structural and institutional push factors, and CVE-specific projects addressing psychological and individual pull factors will vary across countries. Aid agency staff should conduct or commission a violent extremism analysis and assess intended and unintended CVE results from their existing programming before launching new CVE efforts. This will ensure that drivers particular to the local context are identified and existing programming is mapped against these to identify gaps and more effective strategies. Donors should also consider whether other forms of bilateral assistance with CVE objectives should be moved under the aid portfolio to improve coordination, strengthen results tracking, and ensure that CVE is sharply delineated from support for counter-terrorism.

Development assistance can support CVE objectives, but aid agencies and their implementing partners should proceed carefully. The CVE agenda in Asia is poorly defined. The lack of conceptual clarity about what violent extremism is and what CVE programming should aim to achieve raises the risks that projects could inadvertently make problems worse. To avoid these pitfalls, donors should recognize that CVE will look different across Asia – in the forms of violent extremism it tackles, in the drivers it addresses, and the kinds of interventions it uses. This is the best way to ensure that programming is tailored to context.

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Thanks are particularly due to all workshop participants who shared their insights and wisdom. The authors have tried to capture the essence of the lively discussions, and hope the conversations continue.

Peer review of this report was provided by Peter Romaniuk, Associate Professor of Political Science at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, and Senior Fellow at the Global Center on Cooperative Security; and Candace Rondeaux, Senior Program Officer at the United States Institute for Peace and Director of the Researching Solutions to Violent Extremism (RESOLVE) Network.

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Acronyms

CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GCTF	Global Counter-Terrorism Forum
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network
RESOLVE	Researching Solutions to Violent Extremism
SGIDU	Strengthening Grassroots Inter-faith Dialogue and Understanding
STRIVE	Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
USIP	United States Institute of Peace

Contents

1. Introduction and scope

The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) decided, in February 2016, to make non-coercive efforts to counter violent extremism (CVE) eligible as official development assistance (ODA).[1] The OECD decision paves the way for CVE to be closely integrated into the work of aid agencies, in recognition of the impact of violent extremism on developing countries.[2] It has also fed concerns about the securitization of development assistance.[3]

Because the global CVE agenda has been shaped with reference to other regions, it is crucial to ensure CVE is adjusted to reflect on-the-ground realities and experiences in Asia before funding is scaled up.

Violent extremism has important implications for development assistance in Asia.[4] Donors are worried by the stream of foreign fighters from Asia joining the Islamic State, violence against religious and ethnic minorities, the socio-economic impact of violent extremism on Asian development, and terrorist attacks. Whether viewed through the lens of development or security, preventing such violence is important for Asia's future.

In Asia, so far, there is still little new funding for CVE through development assistance. There is only a small amount available in comparison to money spent on "kinetic" – meaning counter-terrorism and security-focused – responses.[5] With governments worldwide increasingly recognizing the need to invest in prevention and community-based approaches as well, it is likely that more money for CVE will become available in the months and years ahead. Because the global CVE agenda has been shaped with reference to other regions, it is crucial to ensure CVE is adjusted to reflect on-the-ground realities and experiences in Asia before funding is scaled up. In light of this, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and The Asia Foundation jointly convened a workshop of Asian governments, donor representatives, civil society, and researchers from across Asia for two days of discussions in October 2016.[6] The workshop was held under the Chatham House rule and included panel discussions on overarching challenges facing CVE programming in Asia on the first day, and breakout group brainstorming on specific programming areas on the second day (summarized in Section 6).

This report focuses on the practical challenges of integrating CVE into development assistance in Asia. It draws on workshop discussions as well as desk-based research, primarily a review of CVE guidance from the United Nations, Western donors,

1. "[A]ctivities preventing violent extremism in developing countries are reportable as ODA, as long as they are led by partner countries and their primary purpose is developmental… Eligible activities include: education; activities that support the rule of law; working with civil society groups specifically to prevent radicalization, support reintegration and deradicalization, and promote community engagement; building the capacity of security and justice systems in specific skills required for the prevention of extremist or terrorist threats, such as in the collection and correct use of evidence or fair trial conduct, to ensure more effective and human rights-compliant behaviors; and research into positive alternatives to address causes of violent extremism in developing countries" (OECD 2016).
2. See publications by the Institute for Economics and Peace on the impact of terrorism on OECD and non-OECD countries in its annual Global Terrorism Index (for example, IEP 2015).
3. The debate about the securitization of aid is not new but the CVE agenda has renewed it. Hedayah and Human Security Collective 2013; Alliance for Peacebuilding 2015.
4. This report focuses on Southeast Asia and South Asia. While Afghanistan was included in the review of aid data in Section 2, there were no Afghan participants at the workshop.
5. On the resources allocated by the US government to CVE as compared to counter-terrorism, see Green and Proctor 2016.
6. There were 66 participants in the workshop, which was held October 11-12, 2016. Participants were from Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, and the United States

KEY TERMS

Violent extremism: Although widely used by policymakers, there is no standard definition of violent extremism. The UN Secretary-General has made defining violent extremism the prerogative of member states (UN General Assembly 2015). Generally, violent extremism denotes terrorism and a range of other political violence. For example, the Australian government defines it as "a willingness to use unlawful violence or support the use of violence by others to promote a political ideology or religious goal" (Australian DFAT 2017). While often violent extremism refers to Islamist jihadist terrorism, this report uses violent extremism more broadly.

Radicalization: Another contested concept, radicalization seeks to explain the process through which individuals embrace the use of violence in the pursuit of a given goal. There is extensive conceptual debate about radicalization, and its cognitive and behavioral dimensions (Schmid 2013, Coolsaet 2016, among others).

Push and pull factors: Push and pull factors distinguish between underlying conditions conducive to violent extremism (push factors) and proximate triggers to participation or direct support for violence (pull factors). Push factors are structural or societal and often include socio-economic marginalization, poor governance (especially in areas experiencing protracted conflict), corruption, and human rights abuses. Pull factors are specific to individuals, and have a bearing on recruitment and/or radicalization, such as the search for identity and the desire to belong. Push and pull factors can also simply be called drivers of violent extremism. This report uses both terms.

Countering violent extremism: This report treats countering, preventing, responding, and addressing violent extremism interchangeably, and uses CVE as shorthand. Like violent extremism, there is no widely accepted definition of CVE. Most policymakers use CVE to refer to non-kinetic and preventive efforts to thwart directly recruitment and radicalization of at-risk individuals, and to address underlying conditions that may make communities susceptible to violent extremism. CVE is distinct from **counter-terrorism** but is closely related to it. As the US Department of Homeland Security notes, CVE is those "efforts focused on preventing all forms of ideologically based extremist violence, to include prevention of successful recruitment into terrorist groups. It is distinct from disruptive actions which focus on stopping acts of terrorism by those who have already subscribed to violence" (US Department of Homeland Security, cited in Rosand 2016). However, CVE is a high priority in countries experiencing a rising number of terrorist attacks. A number of bodies with a counter-terrorism mandate, such as the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, have also developed policy guidance on CVE (GCTF 2013a).

CVE-relevant and CVE-specific responses: Depending on the target population or the factors being addressed, responses may be CVE-relevant or CVE-specific. Responses targeting known individuals at risk of radicalization and recruitment or pull factors known to be prevalent within a given community are CVE-specific. Other responses may be CVE-relevant if they address the broader population or push factors. CVE-relevant responses may be similar to other kinds of development assistance, but are informed by an analysis of local drivers of violent extremism. This distinction is widely used among policymakers and CVE practitioners (Brett et al. 2015, Romaniuk 2015, among others).

and think tanks, as well as published academic research on political violence and conflict, especially on Asia. To generate a bird's eye view of past programming, The Asia Foundation sifted through the OECD's Creditor Reporting System and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) databases to extract projects that seemed comparable to the kind of programming that is likely to be labelled as CVE going forwards, funded by Australia, the US and the UK, as a sample of donors.

The report aims to help donors weigh their options for funding CVE through development assistance in Asia. It highlights what evidence exists and where the gaps are. It reflects on the following questions:

- What has already been done on CVE in Asia?
- What challenges will aid agencies supporting CVE in Asia face?
- What methods have researchers used to study violent extremism in Asia, and how can their research be fed into responses?
- How might donors integrate CVE into development assistance in Asia? What are the trade-offs between different approaches?
- What specific programming areas are relevant for CVE in Asia? What lessons can be drawn from past programming and how does this compare to existing CVE guidance?
- What steps are needed to fill knowledge gaps in Asia?

The evidence base for CVE is thin but will become more robust in the years ahead. Dedicated research networks like RESOLVE have been established, and there are growing calls for independent evaluations of CVE projects, with results shared among the community of practitioners.[7] This report shows how donors can move forward in ways that would help build knowledge for effective programming.

7. The RESOLVE Network is aiming to advance the research agenda on violent extremism by building consensus around a core set of research questions and mentoring local researchers in priority countries around the world; see more at https://www.resolvenet.org/. On the need to share findings from evaluations of new CVE projects, see Rosand 2016.

2. A snapshot of aid data: 2006 – 2014

Aid agencies want to know what will work to counter violent extremism around the world. Past programming is one source of information, but it is most useful when the contexts or forms of violent extremism are comparable. There are plenty of past development projects across Asia that could be tapped for lessons to inform CVE.

To date, most empirical assessments of CVE have drawn on domestic programs, with much less discussion of development assistance. Very few have focused on Asia, with the exception of Afghanistan and Pakistan.[8] Yet, as one empirical study published in 2015 concluded, policymakers are increasingly gravitating towards certain kinds of interventions irrespective of context, believing these work. They include investing in education; countering narratives, often through social media; outreach, dialogue, and small grants at the community level; and mentoring.[9] As aid agencies reflect on how to respond to violent extremism in Asia through development assistance, there is reason to be cautious about emerging best practice derived from domestic CVE and applied to vastly different settings.[10] It may be equally if not more useful to look at past projects in Asia, even if they were not labelled as CVE at the time.[11]

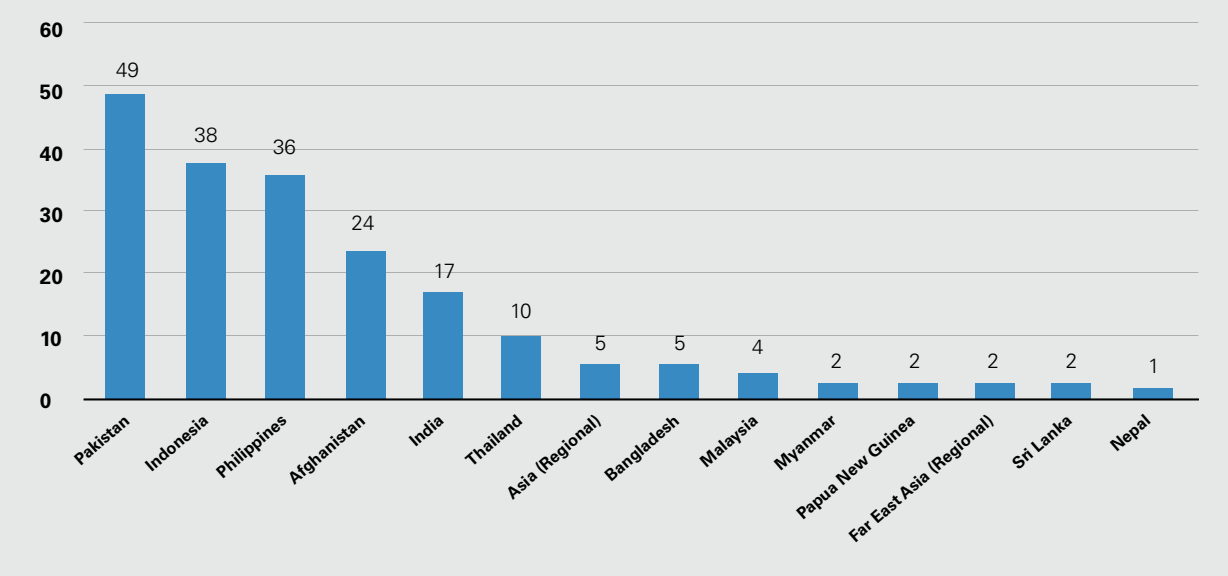
A database review found 197 projects funded by Australia, the UK, and the US from 2006 to 2014 across Asia that fit most definitions of CVE. These three major donors were selected as a representative sample of donors working across multiple sectors in the region. Projects were identified using the OECD and IATI databases, which code projects across a standard list of sectors.[12] It is important to note that neither database has a dedicated code for tracking projects addressing terrorism or violent extremism. Instead it was necessary to search manually using a combination of countries, sectors, and keyword searches.[13] Only 20 of the 197 projects identified mentioned countering violent extremism or radicalization.[14]

To date, most empirical assessments of CVE have drawn on domestic programs, with much less discussion of development assistance.

8. Exceptions to this include Mercy Corps 2015 on Afghanistan; Farsight 2016 on Pakistan; and Zeiger 2016a and 2016b on Southeast Asia.
9. Romaniuk 2015.
10. Development practitioners have devoted increasing attention in recent years to explaining why development interventions fail when they implement pre-defined solutions or programs. See Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews 2010, and a more recent 2015 piece by the same authors. This parallel debate about the perils of solution-driven development should temper expectations within CVE policy circles that it is possible to discern what kinds of interventions "work" in general.
11. "It is sometimes difficult to know what qualifies as a CVE-specific or CVE-relevant program and where CVE results may be an additional outcome or impact rather than the primary objective of a program." Fink et al. 2013, 3.
12. There are few datasets with disaggregated information by donor about projects in different countries. The two used provide details such as project title, project description, budget, inception data, closing date, and sector, etc. Project descriptions unfortunately are often truncated.
13. Countries (or regions) that were included in the search: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Asia (regional), Far East Asia (regional). Keywords used in manual searches included: radical or radicalization; fundamentalism or fundamentalist; terrorist or terrorism; Islam; faith; extremism; tolerance; moderate; Muslim; CVE; religion or religious; violent or violence; education; youth or young; conflict. Keywords were developed using an iterative process, as the language used in project titles and descriptions varied by donor. It was easier to include projects that could be deemed "CVE-specific"; the research team also included projects that suggested a secondary focus on CVE (e.g., that were "CVE-relevant") if there was sufficient information in the project description or title, and they were implemented in areas or in communities where violent extremism is prevalent. Many other projects – for example, providing direct support to peace processes, state-building (especially common among projects in Afghanistan), or tackling gender-based violence – may have addressed drivers of violent extremism, but this intent was not apparent from project titles and descriptions.
14. A full list of all 197 projects is available from The Asia Foundation on request.

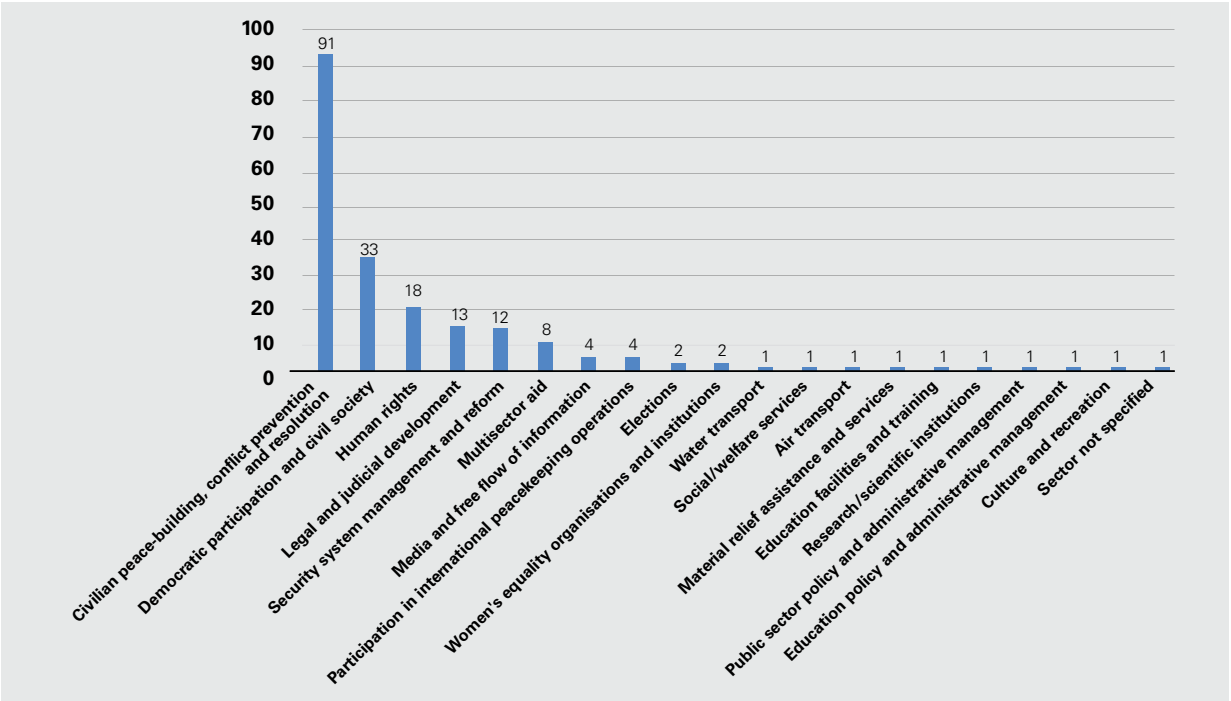
Most projects funded by these three donors in Asia were in Pakistan, roughly one quarter, followed by Indonesia, the Philippines, and Afghanistan (Figure 1). Only two of the projects in Pakistan were funded by Australia; 32 were funded by the UK; and 15 were funded by the US. The country with the second largest number of projects was Indonesia where Australia supported 19 projects and the UK supported 16; the US funded the remaining three projects. Of the 36 projects in the Philippines, all but two were funded by Australia. Thirty-one of these were small grants (average size just under US $470,000) through the multi-year Strengthening Grassroots Inter-faith Dialogue and Understanding (SGIDU) program. Roughly four-fifths of the projects in Afghanistan were supported by the US.

Figure 1: CVE projects per country



Almost half of the projects were coded as conflict prevention and civilian peacebuilding, followed by 33 coded as democratic participation and civil society. Figure 2 shows that CVE projects fall under many sectors, but there is considerable overlap with conflict prevention and peacebuilding in particular. Donors should work with the OECD to track CVE spending through development assistance going forward.[15]

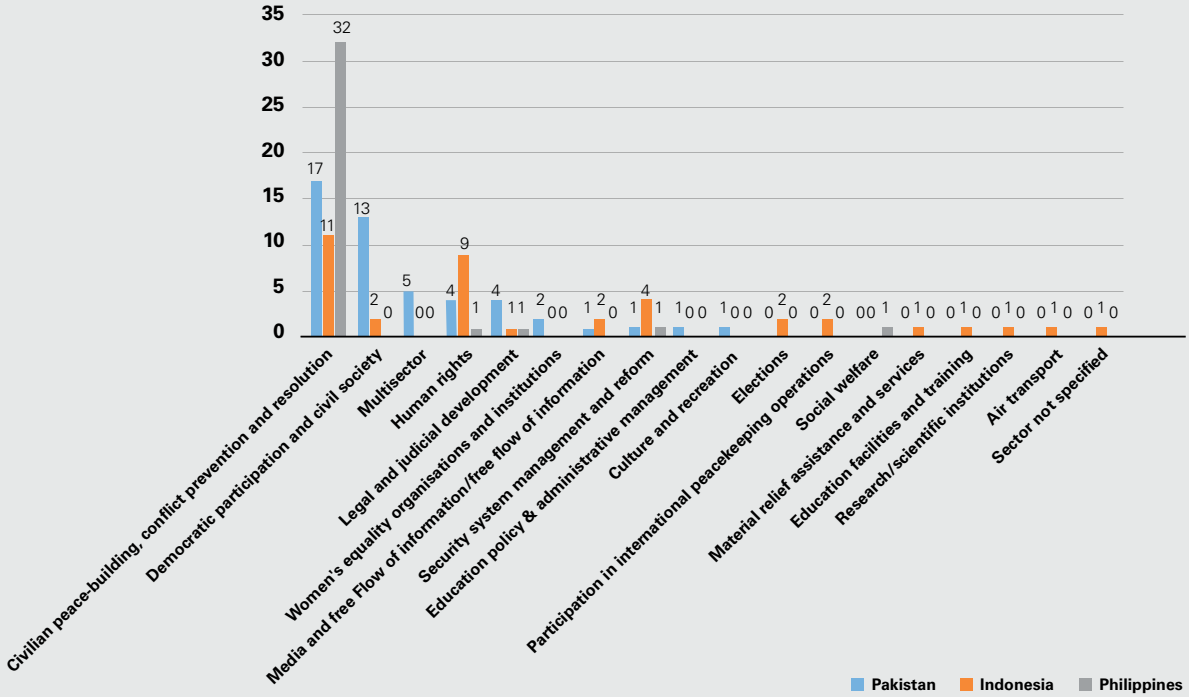
Figure 2: CVE projects per sector



15. As also recommended in Rosand 2016.

Given the large number of projects in Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Philippines, donors and their implementing partners should consider drawing lessons from programming in these three countries in particular. Classification by sector is shown for these countries below, and reveals that different approaches to CVE were used in each. Most Philippines projects were coded as civilian peacebuilding and conflict prevention, while in Pakistan many projects were also classified as democratic participation and civil society. In contrast, in Indonesia these three donors have pursued CVE objectives across a wider range of sectors. This offers an interesting variation for donors looking to use past programming to build an evidence base.

Figure 3: CVE projects in Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Philippines by sector



Of the 20 projects that explicitly mentioned extremism or radicalization in their titles or project descriptions, none had a budget above US $1 million. The average budget for these 20 projects was just over US $128,000. Projects in Pakistan and Indonesia made up more than half, with seven and five projects, respectively. While there is very little information available from the OECD and IATI databases, these projects primarily aimed to research and identify drivers of radicalization or engaged in counter-messaging, through training, networking through religious institutions, public awareness campaigns and the arts. Given similarities with potential future CVE investments by donors in Asia, it is important to learn from these projects, and others that were not identified through the public aid databases.

This section shows there is an existing body of evidence that can inform CVE in Asia. Little of it, such as project documentation and evaluations, is available in the public domain. Donors should spearhead an effort to extract systematically lessons from these and other projects. Successes and failures of individual projects would make CVE policy and programming guidance for Asia much more concrete. In particular, past programming could help donors and their implementing partners understand how to manage risk when focusing politically sensitive projects on a narrow group (and associated pull factors) as opposed to the broader population (all of whom are exposed to the same push factors); and the different monitoring and evaluation methods used to track results in CVE-specific versus CVE-relevant projects.

3. Overcoming challenges for CVE in Asia

Donors, governments, and civil society across Asia who participated in the workshop are aware of the difficulties of integrating CVE into development assistance. Many of these stem from the conceptual ambiguity of violent extremism and radicalization, and the limitations of policy guidance purporting to pinpoint causes and guide programming, as has been extensively discussed elsewhere.[16] The workshop echoed many of these concerns but also underscored five challenges.

CVE guidance conceptualizes violent extremism widely; as such, in Asia it includes many issues. Workshop participants agreed CVE in Asia is not just about violent Islamist extremism. Countries like Myanmar and Sri Lanka have experienced ethno-religious tensions building to violence involving people from different religions. Participants underscored that it is important to look across forms of violence and back in time to understand the historical roots of current problems, such as attacks carried out in the name of the Islamic State. Participants had many different interpretations of violent extremism in Asia, its nature, and causes, and discussed:

CVE efforts should vary across Asia – in the forms of violence they tackle, in the drivers they seek to address, and the kinds of interventions they use.

- What is violent extremism – and how threatening it is compared to other forms of violence and threats to human security and development in Asia.
- Whether present day violent extremism is irrational, the relationship between ideas and behavior, and the psychological effects of suicide terrorism.
- The importance of longstanding grievances and growing levels of inequality and deprivation that have been exploited by violent extremists for recruitment.
- The significance of geopolitical tensions (in particular between Saudi Arabia and Iran) and religious practices in the Middle East that have been exported to Asia and their ripple effects on Sunni theology and Sunni-Shia relations.
- The role of the state – in instigating violent extremism and failing to respond adequately to it.

The workshop affirmed that countries need to define what violent extremism means within their own borders, as urged by the UN Secretary-General in his 2015 Plan of Action.[17] Yet the workshop showed how the current conceptual ambiguity, with violent extremism covering such a wide range of types of violence, makes it hard to talk meaningfully about the problems and share experiences when there is no agreement on the phenomenon being discussed.[18] These difficulties aside, participants agreed with the emerging global consensus that CVE should be grounded in detailed research on the drivers of violent extremism, sensitive to context, and support community-based initiatives. CVE efforts should vary across Asia – in the forms of violence they tackle, in the drivers they seek to address, and the kinds of interventions they use.

The global CVE agenda draws very little on Asian experiences. This is despite the fact that Asian countries like Bangladesh and Indonesia are increasingly the focus of dedicated CVE initiatives.[19] This matters because it raises the risk that decontextualized best practice will be applied to Asia. Donors are eager to know what works but

16. From a human rights and legal perspective, see UN Human Rights Council 2016; on conceptual limitations, especially with regard to radicalization, see Borum 2011, Coolsaet 2016, Schmid 2013; on practical implications for programming in developing countries, see Khalil and Zeuthen 2016, Brett et al 2015, Glazzard et al. 2016.
17. United Nations General Assembly 2015.
18. The Asia Foundation will issue a subsequent report on ways of managing this conceptual ambiguity through a typology.
19. The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) is a public-private partnership for CVE, which has set up a country support mechanism in Bangladesh comprising government and civil society; it began disbursing grants in 2016. The RESOLVE Network identified Bangladesh as a priority country in need of policy relevant research to guide CVE investments.

acknowledge the difficulty of drawing on experiences from elsewhere to inform development assistance in Asia. One participant noted that supporting CVE abroad is much harder because it means working on the problem "third hand". Western countries have developed a whole-of-government approach to CVE, including close coordination between teachers, social workers, religious leaders, and local police.[20] In Asia, these approaches are difficult to replicate because social services are much weaker or even non-existent in more remote areas. CVE programs in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa could offer more useful lessons for Asia but only where the underlying conditions are comparable.[21]

Knowledge and experience in Asia can help build an evidence base for more effective CVE approaches. The workshop was convened due to growing interest in the complementarity between development assistance and CVE. Participants noted that new pathways of radicalization, particularly due to the rise of social media, and a better understanding of push and pull factors that lead to participation in or support for violent extremism have lay behind this shift. Better integration of societal prevention with security-focused responses will support more inclusive and resilient societies in Asia. One participant drew a parallel to the debate which surrounded counter-insurgency in the early years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as policymakers realized they could not "arrest our way to a solution". Workshop discussions reinforced what the aid data in the previous section showed: past development projects in Asia hold a wealth of lessons for new CVE initiatives.

Tensions between security and development can be balanced in Asia. The incorporation of CVE into development assistance is heightening longstanding fears about the securitization of aid. Workshop discussions acknowledged the risks of subordinating development aid to security objectives. Participants also pointed to the potential for traditional counter-terrorism measures to undermine preventative CVE. By and large, however, the workshop highlighted the opportunities CVE offers development practitioners to influence how funding to address violent extremism is invested. Participants re-emphasized the importance of practical and established solutions for managing the tensions between security and development objectives: principles like Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity, and risk management strategies used by donors in difficult environments, for example during and after violent transitions. Participants noted that CVE projects would likely take longer to design than mainstream development projects because they demand extensive engagement before activities start.

Coordination among actors with divergent interests will be challenging in Asia. The workshop underscored how CVE entails a complex web of relationships: foreign donors, Asian governments and their various line agencies, civil society, and communities – including victims and perpetrators. The interests of all these actors do not align.[22] Governments may use the CVE agenda for their own political ends, similar to how state responses to insurgency and terrorism in Asia have sometimes curtailed the space for civil society and allowed them to use legal tools against their political opponents. Participants also noted how Asian governments deny permits or restrict access for research on sensitive topics, which hinders efforts to design evidence-based responses. Another participant noted that CVE often entails choosing sides ("moderates" over "extremists") rather than just mediating among parties who disagree – this is not a role that all recipients of development assistance are willing to take on. Donors present also noted that it is hard for them to define their role – they need to stay in the background, but they also need to shape research and programming to ensure they show results. Similarly, development agencies must coordinate internally within their own governments, to ensure that other bilateral aid – especially for counter-terrorism – does not work at cross-purposes.

20. See Romaniuk 2015, which discusses the UK PREVENT program and its predecessors in detail.
21. See Khalil and Zeuthen 2014 for one assessment of programming in Africa. Factors such as political regime type, state capacity to respond, and conflict history are all important when comparing the success or failure of CVE programs. For more on the importance of context for development assistance in Asia, see Parks et al. 2013. The Institute for Economics and Peace has also shown how terrorism is sensitive to political regime type and state capacity (2015).
22. This is insufficiently acknowledged in much of the CVE literature, which emphasizes the need for whole of government, whole of society, or multi-sectoral responses without recognizing that in some political contexts this may not be possible. For example, see good practices 6, 7, and 8 in the GCTF's Ankara Memorandum (GCTF 2013a).

4. Advancing research on violent extremism in Asia – methods and uptake

Participants agreed that research is essential to CVE.[23] Based on the workshop discussions and a desk-based review of academic and policy literature, five points emerged.

Using mixed methods is important to analyze the drivers of violent extremism.[24] Much of the best research on violent extremism adopts mixed methods and uses tools like:

- Archival research – including newspapers and police reports.
- Content analysis – of social media, recruitment materials, or speeches by elites.
- Discourse analysis – to assess what rhetoric means, such as identifying when a word like jihad is used in a violent sense and when it is used to mean peaceful effort.
- Network analysis – to understand linkages among perpetrators and supporters.
- Interviews – often with perpetrators of extremist violence or those close to them.
- Big data – to uncover trends and variations in violence, and anticipate future patterns.
- Biographical and mental health data – to understand the psychological dimensions of behavior.
- Surveys – to gauge public perceptions of injustice and attitudes towards violence.

It is most effective to combine and sequence these various methods. The workshop highlighted examples of these methods in practice in Myanmar, Pakistan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The presentations showed that research on violent extremism in Asia is already underway, but that researchers across the region should be better connected.

Working with local researchers is essential for good research and future programming. The sensitivity and risks associated with researching violent extremism demand on-the-ground knowledge in the design and execution of research. Workshop discussions highlighted how working with local researchers may be beneficial for:

- Cultivating trust with communities where research is being conducted.
- Identifying data sources and ways of asking difficult questions.
- Working in local languages, and analyzing the meaning of words and messages in the specific context.
- Developing skills and bringing in funding that may help local researchers.

Donors funding research should be conscious that local and external researchers may not have the same training and perspectives on violent extremism, and working on externally-funded research may be risky for local researchers. If managed well, however, research – particularly participatory approaches – can also help nurture relationships and trust with communities. The workshop also discussed examples of research helping donors identify grassroots CVE initiatives for funding.

Comparison is necessary to test hypotheses about drivers. Literature reviews have attempted to distil generalizable lessons about individual drivers of violent extremism.[25] These heavily caveat their findings, pointing out that they only reveal the validity of certain hypotheses under precise conditions. Comparisons can help tease out more powerful conclusions from data. For example, research that compared

23. On the problematic relationship between policymakers and terrorism research, see Sageman 2014.
24. This point also is emphasized in RESOLVE 2016.
25. Allan et al 2015 and Nasser-Eddine et al 2011.

cases of non-violence and violence has contributed significantly to advancing understanding of the conditions under which ethnic riots in India erupt.[26] Comparisons within and across countries will produce better understanding of the mechanisms generating violent extremism and possible entry points for programming. Efforts by the RESOLVE Network to develop a consensus around a research agenda for violent extremism going forward are promising.[27] This is an essential step towards connecting local researchers with international networks where their findings can be shared and compared systematically for greater learning.

Disaggregation can help researchers make more meaningful comparisons. Given that definitions of violent extremism are very broad, it may be more useful to treat violent extremism as an umbrella term under which several distinct forms of violence exist. There are examples already of this approach generating more useful findings, such as one project on lone actor terrorism.[28] This would break down the complexity of violent extremism in ways more useful for research and, in turn, programming. Within Asia, a preliminary list of forms of violent extremism might include: hate crimes; popular justice; sustained identity-based attacks; ethnic riots; violent protests; insurgency; and terrorism.[29] A typology such as this would help advance a comparative research agenda by encouraging researchers to investigate the drivers of similar types of violent behavior across different countries and regions. Disaggregation would help gauge what works to address specific forms of violent extremism.

Solid research does not guarantee effective programming. Donors and their implementing partners need strategies for translating complex political analysis into program design.[30] The quantity and quality of research on violent extremism is improving, but donors still need to decide where and how to spend their funding. Research could identify drivers of violent extremism that cannot be influenced through development assistance; for example, civil war is correlated with mountainous terrain.[31] Violent extremism analysis will be more useful if it can show the relative importance of different drivers.[32]

Donors should use innovative approaches that integrate research and evidence-based best practice into programming. Violent extremism analysis is often done at the local level, as dynamics of recruitment and radicalization are specific to communities and individuals. Aid agencies are large bureaucracies staffed primarily by generalists responsible for many issues. They are not necessarily set up to process and react to finely grained information about violent extremism. Donors need to recognize their own limitations in this area and identify partners within Asian governments and civil society that can help them bridge the gap between acquiring knowledge about the dynamics of violent extremism and responding with development assistance. Donors can make this task easier for themselves and their prospective partners by drawing on the tools and approaches developed for working on difficult governance issues, such as flexible, adaptive management and "thinking and working politically".[33] For example, projects could be designed to explicitly test research-derived hypotheses about the local context, with scope for project staff to revise activities based on information gathered through monitoring and changes in the political context.

Donors should reassess their country-level CVE strategies regularly, using a mixture of formal review and informal learning.

26. Varshney 2002 and Wilkinson 2004.
27. RESOLVE 2016.
28. This project has generated useful definitional and practical guidance for understanding and responding to this form of violent extremism. See for example Pantucci et al 2015.
29. See forthcoming publication by The Asia Foundation on a typology of violent extremism.
30. Such failures are especially well documented in the field of conflict prevention. See, for example, on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Channel Research 2011.
31. The summary of research of findings on civil war by Blattman and Miguel (2010) shows how many are not "programmable" by development agencies.
32. This is one of the weaknesses of the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action which offers a laundry list of drivers. As one critic noted, "If almost anything can cause extremism, almost anything can prevent it" (Atwood 2016).
33. See the summary of working politically approaches in Denney and Barron 2015, 13.

5. Incorporating CVE into development assistance

CVE can be integrated into development assistance in a variety of ways. As noted earlier, CVE programming may be "CVE-relevant", tackling push factors and targeting a broader population; or "CVE-specific", tackling pull factors among a small group of people most susceptible to becoming participants or direct supporters of violent extremism.

Depending on the country, the balance between CVE-relevant and CVE-specific responses should differ.[34] What matters is that CVE programming strategies correspond to detailed research and violent extremism analysis that identifies both push and pull factors. Because these may vary even within a country, CVE programming – both relevant and specific – is likely to be rolled out on a smaller scale than other kinds of development assistance. This is similar to what aid agencies have learned with regard to development assistance in subnational conflict areas in Asia; customized, localized approaches within a country are necessary.[35] Donors should reassess their country-level CVE strategies regularly, using a mixture of formal review and informal learning. Bilateral and multilateral donors would also benefit from comparing strategies, coordinating programming, and sharing results, at the country level especially but also regionally.

Donors have three options for incorporating CVE into their development assistance in Asia. They may:

- Invest in new kinds of programming.
- Aim to capture CVE results of existing programming.
- Move other forms of bilateral assistance that deliver CVE results under the aid portfolio.[36]

Since CVE has gained prominence globally, new kinds of dedicated CVE programming have attracted attention. These include, for example, the multi-country initiative STRIVE, funded by the European Commission,[37] and counter-narratives, particularly online, which are receiving funding from both public and private sources (especially from technology companies like Google and Facebook). Evaluations of these new CVE programs are limited.[38]

As well as experimenting with new programming approaches, aid agencies should consider their existing country strategies and aid portfolios. As the analysis of aid data above showed, and workshop discussions confirmed, donors in Asia may already fund projects that are, in effect, CVE. A crucial step towards integrating CVE into development assistance is taking stock of current and recent programming. Current programs and projects should be assessed against a violent extremism analysis, either conducted by aid agencies themselves or commissioned from external researchers, much in the same way that most conflict programming involves detailed conflict analysis.

Where aid already addresses drivers of violent extremism, donors should place equal emphasis on capturing results from existing investments as on developing new CVE programs. As Section 2 showed, donors likely have some programming that would fit this description in Pakistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Afghanistan, and possibly other Asian countries too. For individual projects, aid agency staff should review the program design and objectives, identifying overlap with push and pull factors of violent extremism in the local context. Insights from

34. USAID's 2009 guidance suggests a stronger focus on pull factors, while RESOLVE's 2016 paper on the research agenda for CVE cautions that policymakers believe they are more important than researchers do. There has been a shift towards CVE-specific interventions in Western contexts, which rely on community leaders and social service providers identifying individuals who are already radicalized. See Romaniuk 2015 on the second wave of CVE projects in Western countries.
35. Parks et al. 2013.
36. The third option has not received as much attention to date in the CVE policy guidance but featured in workshop discussions.
37. The European Commission launched Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism (STRIVE) with an aim to initiate innovative CVE projects. It works with a diverse range of stakeholders including state actors, security institutions, local communities, and civil society. See European Commission 2015.
38. For example, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue has published an assessment of counter-narrative campaigns that ran starting from October 2015 (Silverman et al. 2016).

CVE guidance should also be helpful in determining whether existing projects could be considered CVE-relevant or CVE-specific; for the latter, it is particularly important to assess whether the projects are correctly targeted, based on the findings of a violent extremism analysis.[39] Aid agency staff should then assess what new kinds of programming may be needed, for example to address overlooked drivers. It is equally important to assess whether monitoring and evaluation systems of individual projects adequately track CVE results, so these can be aggregated to gauge progress towards CVE objectives in country strategies.

In countries facing new forms of violent extremism, or where aid portfolios are more focused on traditional development priorities such as poverty reduction, new programming is likely needed. The workshop emphasized that Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar are facing new risks from violent extremism. Aid agencies should still assess whether there is overlap between existing investments and push and pull factors in the local context. Some aid may be CVE-relevant, or it may support an environment more conducive to future CVE programming, for example by strengthening civil society.[40] CVE-specific initiatives to tackle pull factors will likely be missing, and should form the core of new programming.

Donors should consider whether to move other forms of bilateral assistance that deliver CVE results under the aid portfolio. The workshop highlighted small initiatives funded through political sections at embassies that would benefit from stronger oversight and results tracking by aid agency staff. This could enhance coordination with development programming, and ensure CVE is positioned under the aid portfolio and is distinct from bilateral or multilateral assistance for counter-terrorism. The February 2016 OECD decision to revise peace and security reporting guidelines for ODA will likely make it possible for donors to do so. Donors should also consider potential downsides, for example if it is harder to disburse money flexibly through aid agency funding mechanisms.

Donors should also assess the scope to work collaboratively with Asian governments and the availability of civil society partners. Donor approaches vary across Asia and in some places it will be easier to incorporate CVE into development assistance than in others, depending on the political context. Partners in civil society are essential for CVE but in some Asian countries they are under pressure themselves and unable to support research and engage communities in programming. Donors should take a different approach to CVE in each country.

Civil society partners will be central to community-based CVE and must be protected and supported. It is widely acknowledged in CVE policy and programming guidance that civil society will need to lead grassroots responses to violent extremism and must be given adequate resources to do so. At the same time, donors must be careful to ensure the credibility (and safety) of partners. Participants agreed it was essential to ensure partners can engage in autonomous and authentic ways to maintain their influence and safety within target communities. In many contexts, governments and regional bodies may not have sufficient trust in civil society to allow them to assume a leading and independent role. Here donors can help facilitate greater trust, including through showcasing positive examples of civil society initiatives in global CVE networks in which states participate.

Donors and their implementing partners need a common understanding of CVE objectives. As one workshop participant remarked, what exactly is it that CVE is trying to achieve and how is this different from mainstream development? Given the definitional, conceptual, and operational ambiguity of CVE, donors and recipients need to know what specifically they aim to prevent or counter, whether this is specific kinds of violence, or beliefs, and behaviors conducive to violent extremism.[41] Conflict prevention projects provide a useful parallel here – some aim to avert violent conflict while others are framed around an intermediate goal, such as building social cohesion.[42]

39. Khalil and Zeuthen 2016 on the importance of targeting at-risk communities.
40. Farsight 2016 on a strong civil society as a foundation for CVE.
41. RESOLVE (2016), however, concluded that there is "a strong convergence of views on what distinguishes extremist violence from other types of violence. Participants frequently cited targeted violence against civilians and civilian institutions, the embrace of ideological norms and moral discourses that include expansive definitions of combatants, and spectacular modes of attack against ideologically determined 'out groups' as part of the repertoire of violence employed by extremist groups."
42. See Cramer et al. 2016 for a recent "what works" study on armed conflict.

Clarity about the desired results of CVE programming is important, even if they are difficult to evaluate.[43] CVE-relevant programs will not have an immediate, discernible impact, but are no less important than CVE-specific responses. Results may need to be measured over a longer timeframe than the standard two to three year project cycle.

Mainstreaming CVE is not necessarily the best way forward. As the boundary between CVE and other kinds of development assistance to support governance, conflict prevention, and social inclusion is not clear, mainstreaming CVE would appear to be one solution. However, CVE may distort development priorities, by focusing on specific "at risk" communities in the context of service delivery,[44] or raising expectations that traditional development interventions like alternative dispute resolution generate results they were never meant to achieve.[45] Donors should look to historical parallels for guidance – for example, they could consider results from mainstreaming gender and conflict within development programs.

43. Fink et al. 2013; Dawson et al. 2014. See other resources at http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2015/12/monitoring-evaluation-of-cve/.
44. Aid agencies will need to be cautious here not to subvert service provision in developing countries to CVE objectives. See UN Human Rights Council 2016; Kessels and Nemr 2016.
45. On the different objectives attributed to local dispute mechanisms, see Valters 2016.

6. Reflections on nine programming areas for CVE in Asia

CVE can be incorporated into many development programming areas, nine of which were discussed at the workshop in breakout groups. These ranged from those addressing specific groups to the role of CVE in more traditional forms of development assistance like institutional strengthening. Below are short summaries of each area, starting with an overview of evidence and key debates, followed by highlights from the workshop. Discussions were not exhaustive, nor are these the only programming areas relevant for CVE.

6.1 SPECIFIC GROUPS

Women may be victims or supporters of violent extremism, or bulwarks against it – and how their roles are influenced by prevailing gender norms should inform CVE responses. The UN Secretary-General emphasizes women's empowerment in the context of CVE.[46] The GCTF also suggests women are critical stakeholders and can actively help prevent violent extremism depending on local context.[47] Often, they are seen to have influence because of the authority they wield within the family. Hedayah has proposed that mothers are critical for CVE since they can build resilience within their communities starting from their own families, and respond to children's early signs of violent extremism.[48] Academic research highlights that women can be active participants in violent extremism: there is no relationship between women and non-violence; and women participate for the same complex reasons as men.[49]

The breakout group focused on the varied roles of women in aiding and abetting violent extremism, particularly in South Asia. For example, in Pakistan, women are increasingly influenced by religious leaders and male authority figures who say it is a mother's responsibility to send her sons for jihad. The group also discussed the ways in which patriarchy constrains women's behavior in Asia. They concluded that the relationship between patriarchy and extremism in Asia needs more attention.[50] Opinions varied on the relationship between women's empowerment, gender equality, and CVE – namely whether these were in fact complementary or contradictory priorities. Participants agreed there needs to be more research on how women have become involved in violent extremism in Asia. While promoting gender equality may help progress towards desired CVE outcomes, the causal relationship requires more research.

Youth are particularly vulnerable for recruitment and radicalization by violent extremists – though what drives them in Asia is different to the West. The search for identity is an especially important factor drawing young people into violent extremism. The 2015 Global Terrorism Index, in its study of individuals who left their homes to join al-Qaeda, also revealed that identity seeking was one of the main motivating factors for individuals' participation.[51] Youth engagement is thus seen as key to preventing radicalization. The UN Secretary-General stressed the importance of youth integration and recommended

46. United Nations General Assembly 2015.
47. GCTF 2014.
48. See Schlaffer and Kropiunigg 2016.
49. Women may be involved in violent extremism for reasons that range from family and kinship ties, to strategic considerations, to cultural norms that facilitate their active participation. See the literature review by RUSI 2015.
50. There has been more research done on masculinity and violent extremism, as is clear from literature reviews cited in this report. The widely read Global Terrorism Index assesses the correlates of terrorism but does not include a variable specifically on gender equality, although some variables appear to capture aspects of gender equality (for example, its "acceptance of the rights of others" variable). IEP 2015.
51. IEP 2015.

that member states involve young women and men into decision-making process at all levels to address their specific needs.[52] Regional consultations echo this recommendation: the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)'s roundtable for North African youth agreed that youth empowerment at all levels is key to CVE.[53]

The breakout group similarly pointed to youth alienation as a major problem in Asia; there is little space for them to participate and to be heard. Discussions highlighted how extremist groups exploit structural factors such as poverty and human rights violations that are a source of grievance. Under these conditions, extremist groups provide a narrative and pathway for young people. Participants emphasized that young people in Asia are likely motivated by a different set of drivers than their counterparts in the West, and that research on local context should be encouraged. Programming on education should also be expanded, especially education on Islam, to encourage critical thinking among young people. Participants felt that online counter-narratives alone will not be enough.

Radicalization in detention and treatment of violent extremist prisoners are essential to CVE – and in Asia these issues will need to be addressed alongside other urgent problems such as prison reform and overcrowding. The UN Secretary-General emphasized that inhumane prison conditions, ill treatment of inmates, lack of security, gang activity, drug use, corrupt officers, and overcrowding are conducive to radicalization in prisons.[54] The GCTF pointed to the need for prison management to provide safe conditions in prison to prevent other inmates from seeking security with radicalized prisoners.[55] A key debate is whether radicalized prisoners should be segregated or integrated with the general prison population. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) suggests that placing radicalized prisoners or those at risk of radicalization in isolation would ultimately have a negative impact.[56] A study on prisons and terrorism in Europe and Asia suggested that it would not be a good idea to put ideologues and "hangers-on" together.[57]There are also mixed opinions of deradicalization (changing minds) as opposed to focusing on detachment (discouraging violence and linkages with violent groups).

The breakout group pointed out varying practices in the treatment of violent extremist prisoners across Asia but also some shared challenges. There was an interesting debate about government-led deradicalization programs, whether such programs should be voluntary, and whether civil society is in fact better suited to delivering support for rehabilitation, especially on a long-term basis. Other issues discussed were problems of prison overcrowding and lengthy pre-trial detention. Participants highlighted these challenges in a range of countries, including in Bangladesh and Indonesia, and noted the strong link between mistreatment in prison and radicalization. The group also discussed the need for programs to support foreign fighters returning home to Asia from the Islamic State.

6.2 PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

Social media counter-narratives have gained in popularity and profile in recent years – and in Asia will need to be calibrated to rapidly changing patterns of internet access and mobile phone coverage. The vast amount of violent extremist materials online has spawned donor investment in counter-narratives, as an alternative to blocking or removing extremist content. Counter-narratives are not restricted to social media and the internet, however. Regardless of the medium, counter-narratives need to be geared to a clearly identified audience, and should use messages crafted by analyzing violent extremist materials and be delivered by carefully selected (and protected) messengers.[58] Hedayah's study points out that persuasive counter-narratives should engage people at an individual level, both online and offline.[59] The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) underscores that counter-narrative campaigns need to be supported by productive and sustained partnerships between government, civil society, and industry.[60] There is strong potential for private-public partnership in this programming area, as seen in the Institute for Strategic Dialogue's partnership with

52. United Nations General Assembly 2015; see Saltman and Kirt for youth reactions to the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action.
53. OSCE 2016.
54. United Nations General Assembly 2015.
55. GCTF 2016.
56. ICRC 2016.
57. Neumann 2010.
58. Abbas 2016; and Zeiger 2016b.
59. Zeiger 2016b.
60. Radicalization Awareness Network 2015.

Jigsaw (formerly Google Ideas), which has generated some initial results on the impact of online counter-narratives.[61]

The breakout group noted that social media approaches for CVE need to be grounded in a solid understanding of how technology use is changing through mobile phone ownership and internet coverage in Asia. This has been especially important in Myanmar in recent years. The legal context is also important. Participants from Bangladesh noted there are restrictive laws in place on media and how violent extremism is discussed online. Participants also debated the significance of online radicalization and recruitment as opposed to face-to-face interaction. In countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, violent extremism is not new, and research can elucidate how recruitment patterns may be changing. In terms of effective counter-narrative campaigns, participants discussed how humor and positive messages should be used, rather than negative messages seeking to discredit violent extremists' arguments directly. Counter-narrative campaigns also require different staffing than traditional development programming. One participant suggested a creative, a communicator, and a data person are all essential.

Inter-faith dialogue is a classic peacebuilding tool which may also be helpful for CVE – provided it is not used as a substitute for meaningful policy changes by Asian governments. The potential for inter-faith dialogue to overcome religious extremism, ignorance, and intolerance was noted as early as 2003 in the European Union's Statement on Inter-Faith Dialogue and Social Cohesion, to take just one example.[62] The UN Secretary-General noted that religious leaders can promote peaceful values.[63] Religious leaders are important due to their credibility within the communities and their ability to address the complex factors and local grievances fueling violent extremism, especially psycho-social factors.[64] There is debate about the role of government in inter-faith dialogue. One study suggested inter-faith initiatives should be independent from states to preserve their legitimacy;[65] governments however can support them from behind.[66] Intra-faith dialogue is increasingly recognized as essential to the success of inter-faith dialogue, as it can include those with more extreme views in the conversation and help counter hostile discourse within a faith community.[67] It is often challenging to evaluate the effectiveness of inter-faith dialogue. Programs should nonetheless should make explicit their assumptions in a theory of change, to ensure these are documented.[68]

The breakout group echoed these debates. It placed a strong emphasis on the potential for intra-faith and inter-faith dialogues to be effective in Asia because they harness the organic leadership of religious figures. Participants noted that during the war in Sri Lanka, there was often more space for discussion amongst religious leaders at the community level than in more formal, higher level political forums, although ultimately a negotiated solution to the conflict failed. Most felt that the state should not be involved in these activities however; often Asian governments just promote inter-faith dialogue as a hollow solution to more deep-seated problems. For example, participants discussed how attacks on religious minorities in Bangladesh are often motivated by a desire to seize land; these are not solutions that inter-faith dialogue will solve. Participants felt intra-faith dialogue is particularly suited to addressing the effects of Sunni-Shia tensions in the Middle East on Asia and encouraging proponents of different kinds of Sunni thought to engage with each other.

Community policing can help engage communities in CVE – but in Asia wider reform of a heavy-handed or corrupt security sector is also necessary to address the drivers of violent extremism. There is more published research on CVE and community policing in Western contexts than in Asia. The OSCE published a lengthy report showing how community policing counters violent extremism by enhancing understanding and interaction between police and communities, and helping police gain awareness of community issues and grievances.[69] The UN Secretary-General and the GCTF similarly have promoted community policing for localized CVE efforts.[70] Community policing has limitations even in Western contexts such as the UK, the US, and Australia, where cultural and linguistic differences in multicultural societies make it harder for officers to

61. Silverman et al. 2016.
62. Council of the European Union 2003.
63. United Nations General Assembly 2015.
64. Nozell 2014.
65. Dialogue Society 2009.
66. Nozell 2014.
67. Stein 2014.
68. United States Institute of Peace 2004.
69. OSCE 2014.
70. United Nations General Assembly 2015; and GCTF 2013b.

engage communities.[71] Traditional intelligence-led policing and community-oriented policing need to be clearly separated, as the former would destroy trust between police and communities.[72] In developing countries, community policing programs are already burdened with a large number of donor objectives, many of which have not been achieved.[73]

The breakout group generally felt community policing was less relevant for countering violent extremism in Asia than other programming areas. The breakout group discussed different conceptions of community policing and CVE, and how these were often mutually antagonistic. Participants also noted how failures of policing – including abuses – are in fact a driver of violent extremism in Asia rather than a solution to it. In general, the political and security context will dictate whether and when community policing is a viable way of addressing violent extremism. Programming should be developed in consultation with the community, and the police should enhance rather than replace non-state responses to violent extremism, which are likely better placed to address local drivers. In particular, multi-stakeholder forums which are often a flagship feature of community policing programs may be a useful way of exchanging information openly.

Radicalization in schools is a problem in Asia – and in response CVE efforts need to focus on teaching critical thinking as much as on changing curricula. Islamic schools (often called madaris) in Asia have long been scrutinized as breeding grounds for violent extremism. There is extensive debate about the "madrassa myth" and how levels of education predict propensity for radicalization.[74] Similarly, CVE literature has assessed the significance of violent messages carried through textbooks as part of school curricula.[75] The GCTF's good practices suggested curricula should include problem-solving, civic responsibility, and human values to foster tolerance and to effectively develop critical thinking skills beneficial in challenging extremist ideology.[76] This aligns with the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action that stressed the need to implement education programs that promote global citizenship in textbooks.[77] An experts meeting urged effective partnership between the education sector and communities to strengthen social harmony and increase resilience to violent extremism.[78]

The breakout group emphasized the diversity of educational institutions in Asia, from secular to religious schools, at all levels. Participants from South Asia drew attention to the lack of regulation of *madaris*, which do not follow government curricula. When curricula are non-inclusive and promote prejudice, it can be challenging to find ways of changing them. In Asia, government education ministries may not be allies for CVE if they prioritize promoting exclusionary historical narratives. Participants agreed that teaching critical thinking and emotional intelligence are as important for building resilience against extremism as changing the curriculum.

State failure to provide impartial justice and security institutions is another driver of violent extremism – CVE efforts need to complement more comprehensive reform efforts to be effective. The UN Secretary-General emphasized that poor governance and repressive policies that violate human rights and fail to uphold the rule of law give violent extremists opportunities to exploit local grievances to gain support.[79] Other research has found that feelings of exclusion, powerlessness, and humiliation derived from experiences with unfair justice systems could lead individuals to join extremist groups.[80] This does not, however, mean that violent extremism only occurs in states with fragile legal institutions and poor governance. The Global Center's stock take of national efforts to implement CVE criminal justice practices reviewed legislation, laws, and policy in 23 countries. This showed that effective criminal justice does not solely depend on technical issues such as officials' expertise and strong legal infrastructure; the state's ability to ensure effective management, accountability, and respect for human rights is essential too.[81] The Global Center has also suggested CVE programming include civil society to help strengthen the relationship between communities and law enforcement officials, and better identify communities' needs and concerns.[82]

71. Sumpter 2016.
72. GCTF 2013b; and OSCE 2014.
73. Denney 2015.
74. RUSI 2015. For views from a survey conducted in eight countries on whether religious schools contribute to violent extremism, see Green and Proctor 2016.
75. Ghosh et al. 2016.
76. Ibid.
77. United Nations General Assembly 2015.
78. Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation and Hedayah 2013.
79. United Nations General Assembly 2015.
80. RUSI 2015.
81. Schwartz 2015.
82. Global Center on Cooperative Security 2015.

Participants in the break out group at the workshop discussed the challenges donors have faced in supporting the rule of law in Asia. Effective interventions in the justice and security sectors need to be driven by a strong understanding of their political economy. The agenda for reform should be led by civil society. In cases where systemic reform is too challenging, it could be helpful to pursue discrete reforms or leverage informal systems to improve the quality of justice. Legal aid can also be a tool for CVE when individuals are incarcerated pre-trial and may be at risk of radicalization. Discussions emphasized that successful rule-of-law programming in Asia involves working politically, not just technically.

Research synthesis would help donors identify where their research funding would be most wisely invested, and where there is already knowledge that could be tapped for program design.

Programming to counter violent extremism and support peace overlap considerably – and should be closely aligned so they are not in tension with each other. Because CVE is often criticized as security-centric, the USIP proposed that peacebuilding approaches could provide CVE a non-securitized space for building the capacity of civil society to respond to violent extremism.[83] Peacebuilding excels at generating nuanced understanding of local drivers of conflict and violence and local responses; peacebuilding approaches have been used across diverse sectors.[84] Community-based peacebuilding efforts have helped enhance the role of women in supporting peace and addressing structures conducive to violence.[85] Others have pointed to the challenges violent extremism poses to peacebuilding – for example, violent extremist groups increasingly target peacebuilders and obstruct peacebuilding attempts in fragile states.[86] It may also be difficult to engage violent extremists in formal peace negotiations; labelling certain actors as violent extremists makes it harder to reach out to them.[87]

The breakout group included participants with deep knowledge of peace processes in Asia, who underscored that successful peace processes hinge on knowing whom to talk to, what to say to different stakeholders, and how to say it. It is crucial to talk concretely about grievances; often these are ill-defined and, if not addressed, may be exploited by more extreme actors or flare up again later. The group also reflected on the detrimental effect of military action against violent extremist groups on peace processes, specifically in the Philippines. If the political and security dynamics are not properly understood, CVE responses could do a lot of harm to the search for negotiated solutions. The slippage between terrorism and violent extremism is especially problematic from this standpoint. Participants noted that at least in Southeast Asia, it is not so difficult to talk to salafi jihadists, as often they have other identities too – for example, as ethno-nationalists – and they can be engaged through those instead.

83. Holmer 2013.
84. Search for Common Ground 2014.
85. Holmer 2013 and Peters 2015.
86. Altpeter 2015.
87. For a study looking at this issue with terrorist groups, see Cronin 2010.

7. Filling the knowledge gaps

To maximize the impact of development assistance, several steps should be taken to increase knowledge regarding the nature of violent extremism in Asia and the most effective responses.

Country-level synthesis of existing research. Asia's various forms of violence – from communal riots to insurgencies to terrorism – have been extensively studied. While more robust in some countries than in others, there is a body of research, both published and unpublished, that can be incorporated into global debates on the relative importance of different drivers and mechanisms that lead to participation or support for violent extremism. For programming, however, synthesis by country may be more useful as most development assistance for CVE will likely be delivered through bilateral and multilateral aid programs within single countries. To inform country programs for CVE, research synthesis could map:

- Forms of violent extremism studied: Are researchers studying some kinds of violent extremism more than others? Are they assessing the linkages between them? For example, what does research on terrorism look like compared to research on hate crimes?
- Geographical scope: Are some portions of the country neglected by researchers? What about border regions and spillover into neighboring countries? Highly insecure areas should be a priority for research, so what strategies could researchers use to gather information safely?
- Drivers assessed: How well does the body of research at the country level map onto the global research agenda for CVE? Are new, theoretically interesting research questions being asked? Conversely, does country-level research point to drivers that the global research agenda should be paying more attention to?
- Methods used: Are all researchers using similar methods? What surveys have already been done? Is anyone tracking incidents of violent extremism to generate understanding of patterns? Is biographical data on perpetrators being systematically collected by someone? Are the most recent social media analytical tools being leveraged?

Syntheses like these could be rapidly done through a workshop or a desk-based review by someone trusted by researchers working in the country, bearing in mind that much of the most useful research may not have been publicly released. Research synthesis would help donors identify where their research funding would be most wisely invested, and where there is already knowledge that could be tapped for program design.

Extracting lessons from past programming in Asia. The pros and cons of CVE-relevant versus CVE-specific approaches, coordinating CVE programs with other kinds of development and bilateral assistance, and measuring results are hard to parse in the abstract. The workshop shed light on a few experiences of incorporating CVE into traditional development programming, but also made it clear that more thought needs to be given to the advantages and risks of mainstreaming CVE within aid portfolios.

Donors should take a hard look at their past programming in Asia, such as the projects shown in Section 2. A lessons learned exercise could focus on specific programming areas of interest to donors for CVE (for example, education and prisons) and capture what worked within specific projects, but also assess *ways of working* that were most effective. In other words, donors and their implementing partners need to know not just how technical programming areas should be designed, monitored, and evaluated for the purposes of CVE, but what strategies their staff and implementing partners need to use to roll out projects in ways that are flexible and sensitive to context but still achieve desired results. Such an exercise could focus on a range of projects:

- Some framed explicitly as CVE, and others that may have inadvertently achieved CVE results.

- Some working on push factors (CVE-relevant), and others addressing pull factors (CVE-specific).
- Some implemented in partnership with government, and others delivered through civil society.
- Some overseen by aid agency staff, and some managed by other branches of bilateral aid.

An assessment of projects that vary in these ways and were implemented in two or three countries in Asia will help donors fine tune the role for development assistance in CVE. It would illuminate how CVE programming guidance needs to be adjusted for the institutional, political, and security environments in the region, based on prior experience.

Deeper understanding of the links between perceptions and incidents of violent extremism. The workshop showed that CVE in Asia will likely aim to influence public opinion as much as it will seek to prevent specific individuals from turning to violence, given high levels of support expressed for the Islamic State in countries like Malaysia.[88] However, much of the current policy debate about ideas and violent behavior looks at individual radicalization.[89] As recruitment patterns have changed due to social media and the internet over the past decade, it is more important than ever to understand the relationship between perpetrators and potential supporters or recruits in the broader population. Donors should invest in understanding how norms, values, and perceptions within societies in Asia shape and are shaped by violent extremism.

Incidents of extremist violence, like most political violence, aim to communicate something to someone beyond the immediate victims.[90] For example, terrorist attacks may affect public opinion regarding legitimate uses of violence.[91] Understanding this dynamic can both shed light on the purpose of the perpetrators, but it can also help donors be more strategic in how they try to influence public opinion through CVE. This is especially important due to the popularity of counter-narratives. Donors should ensure they are using the best ways of measuring attitudinal change and the effectiveness of different communication strategies. One useful step forward would be to develop guidance on how to use traditional tools like surveys or newer approaches such as social media analytics to measure perceptions of violent extremism and the impact of CVE.

88. In a poll conducted in 2015, 11 percent of Malaysian Muslims had a favorable view of the Islamic State, and 18 percent considered suicide bombing justifiable. Chin 2015.
89. Cognitive and behavioral radicalization specifically.
90. Kalyvas 2006. He argues that in civil wars and insurgencies, actors seeking to control territory use violence to ensure the population collaborates. Similarly, elites might use violence against a minority to harden ethnic lines ahead of an election (Wilkinson 2004). Terrorism is about advertising a cause as widely as possible (Crenshaw 1981).
91. For research on this topic in Pakistan, see Fair et al. 2016.

8. Conclusion – towards effective responses

CVE has become a global priority in the past few years, and Asia is no exception. But donors are only just beginning to disburse more funding in Asia. Despite a proliferation of policy and programming advice, aid agencies are still deciding how to incorporate CVE into development assistance. Aid budgets are finite, and money spent on CVE is money that is not spent on other pressing needs. This report has stressed that CVE should be calibrated to the drivers – also known as push and pull factors – of violent extremism, which vary widely across Asia, including within individual countries. Because violent extremism is a fuzzy concept, CVE objectives – in country strategies and individual projects – need to be clearly defined, with systems in place to measure results. These objectives should be complementary to broader aid priorities, without co-opting development issues that are important in their own right, such as service delivery or women's empowerment.

Investments in CVE should also reflect the severity of the problem in different Asian countries. For example, Malaysia and Indonesia have seen hundreds of their citizens leave to fight for the Islamic State, while ideological and tactical inspiration from the Middle East has breathed new life into violent extremist groups in Bangladesh and the Philippines. The workshop highlighted that the problems donors will address through CVE are not always new, but some countries are coping better than others. Aid agencies should consider the capacity, resources and political will of Asian governments, civil society, and communities to respond, and provide assistance accordingly. To move forward, donors should:

1. Conduct a preliminary violent extremism analysis and take stock of all potentially relevant programming – official development assistance and other bilateral aid – in priority countries.

- Focus on identifying existing programming that aligns with drivers of violent extremism, where there are gaps, and whether monitoring systems are tracking CVE results.
- Assess compatibility of CVE with objectives of wider development programs – institutional reform of the security sector, judiciary etc – to determine programming areas where it may be possible to incorporate CVE and where it may not be advisable.
- Allocate new research and programming funding according to this analysis.

2. Develop an evidence base iteratively through learning by doing. As a first step, fund trusted implementing partners to support a handful of small, community-based CVE projects.

- Fund several pilots, with flexible project designs so that partners can adjust along the way, in different programming areas that align with the drivers of violent extremism.
- Ensure theories of change are grounded in violent extremism analysis, and orient monitoring towards learning rather than evaluation.
- Begin establishing relationships with partners who can facilitate projects at community level, if these partnerships are not in place for pilots.

3. Support a community of practice among partners implementing community-based CVE in Asia.

- Focus regional networking around specific CVE programming areas or challenges, for example by convening practitioners working on CVE in the context of prison reform, on developing skills in different methods of results monitoring.

4. Share CVE experiences in Asia with international networks to ensure that different approaches used in Asia are reflected in global responses to violent extremism.

- Emphasize the role of civil society organizations in driving CVE in Asia, in order to build government and regional bodies' trust in their capacity to lead the response to violent extremism from the grassroots.

High expectations have been placed on aid agencies to counter violent extremism, but the workshop showed there is enthusiasm, experience, and opportunity to move forward in Asia.

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