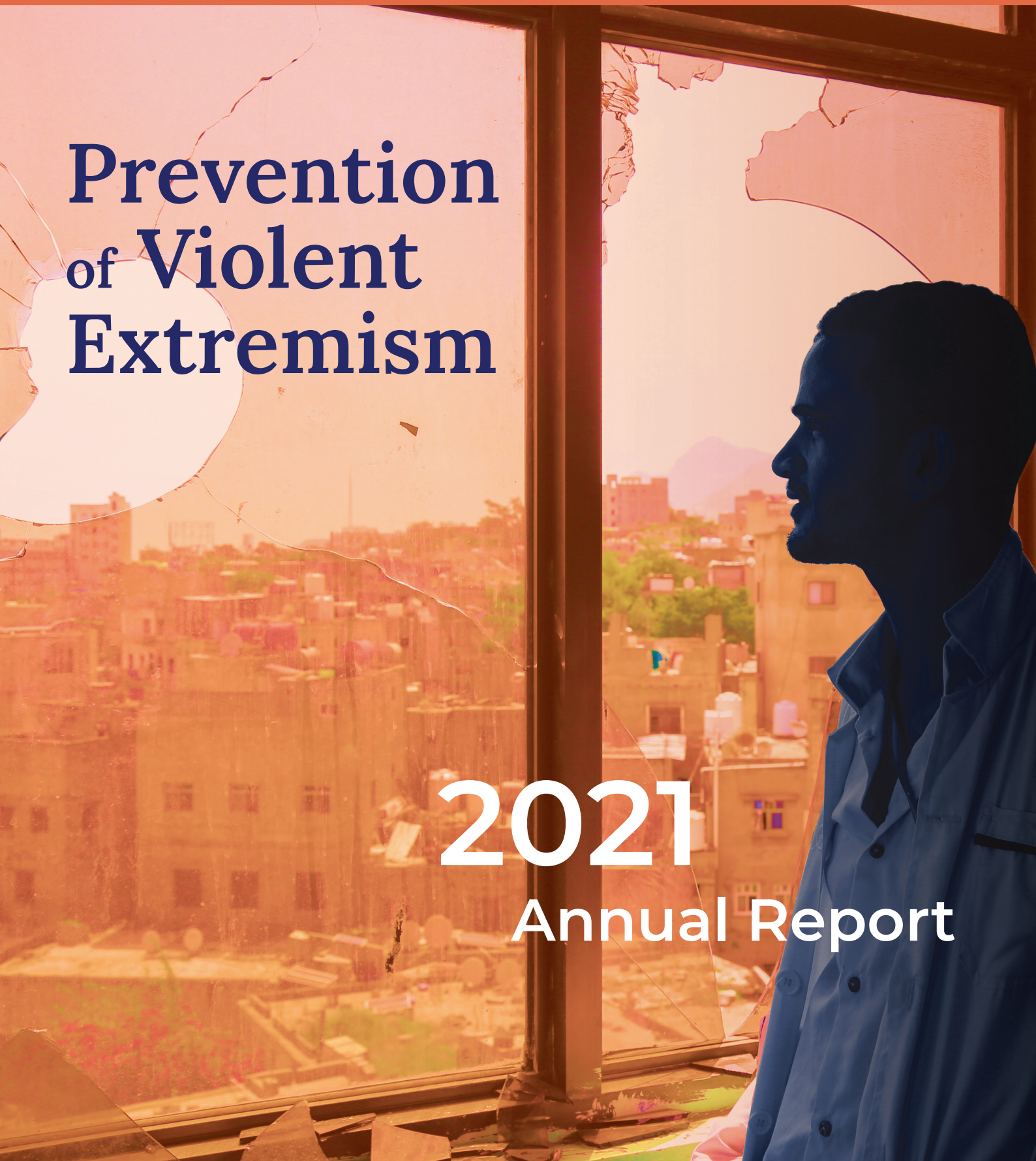




# Prevention of Violent Extremism

**2021**  
Annual Report



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Annual Report on Prevention of Violent Extremism 2021

UNDP Crisis Bureau

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Prevention  
of Violent  
Extremism

### **About the UNDP Crisis Bureau and Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE)**

The UNDP Crisis Bureau (CB) is responsible for UNDP's corporate crisis-related work and drives UNDP's vision and priorities for peacebuilding and crisis prevention, response and recovery. Together with the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS), the CB anchors the Global Policy Network (GPN), a network of global experts and practitioners providing timely development advice, delivering support to Country Offices and programme countries in a coherent manner—to connect countries to the world of knowledge, resources and networks of best practice they need to achieve development breakthroughs. UNDP's Global Programme 'Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Responsive Institutions' (CPPRI) 2020/2-2025' includes four interconnected thematic work streams, 1) Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding; 2) Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE); 3) Core Government Functions, including Local Governance; and 4) Climate Security. UNDP designs and implements risk informed, conflict sensitive and analysis-based development solutions for prevention of violent extremism at the global, regional and country levels, to meet the priorities set out in the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and through participation in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. UNDP country and regional PVE programmes are supported by Regional Bureaus and Hubs operating in Africa, Arab States, Asia Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia.

|   |           |   |           |
|---|-----------|---|-----------|
| <b>I. Emerging PVE Trends</b>                                       | <b>2</b>  | <b>VIII. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Prevention and Peacebuilding</b> | <b>30</b> |
| <b>II. UNDP's Key PVE Achievements</b>                              | <b>5</b>  | Context   | 31        |
| <b>III. Regional Highlights</b>                                     | <b>9</b>  | UNDP engagement   | 31        |
| Africa and Arab States  | 9         | Achievements  | 31        |
| Europe and Central Asia   | 10        | Lessons learned   | 34        |
| Asia Pacific  | 11        | Future engagement   | 34        |
| <b>IV. Evolution of PVE National Action Plans</b>                   | <b>12</b> | <b>IX. Religion and Faith-based Dialogue</b>  | <b>35</b> |
| Context   | 13        | Context   | 36        |
| UNDP engagement   | 13        | UNDP engagement   | 36        |
| Achievements  | 13        | Key achievements  | 36        |
| Lessons learned   | 15        | Lessons learned   | 38        |
| Future engagement   | 15        | Future engagement   | 38        |
| <b>V. Return and Reintegration</b>                                  | <b>16</b> | <b>X. Addressing Hate Speech and Online Radicalization</b>                                  | <b>40</b> |
| Context   | 17        | Context   | 41        |
| UNDP engagement   | 17        | UNDP engagement   | 41        |
| Achievements  | 18        | Achievements  | 42        |
| Lessons learned   | 20        | Lessons learned   | 44        |
| Future engagement   | 20        | Future engagement   | 44        |
| <b>VI. PVE through Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>XI. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for PVE</b>                                      | <b>46</b> |
| Context   | 22        | Context   | 47        |
| UNDP engagement   | 22        | UNDP engagement   | 47        |
| Achievements  | 22        | Achievements  | 48        |
| Lessons learned   | 25        | Lessons learned   | 51        |
| Future engagement   | 25        | Future engagement   | 51        |
| <b>VII. PVE through Youth Engagement and Empowerment</b>            | <b>26</b> | <b>XII. PVE Community of Practice</b>   | <b>52</b> |
| Context   | 27        | Context   | 53        |
| UNDP engagement   | 27        | UNDP engagement and achievements  | 53        |
| Achievements  | 27        | Lessons learned   | 54        |
| Lessons learned   | 29        | Future engagement   | 54        |
| Future engagement   | 29        |   |           |

# I. Emerging PVE Trends

**Violent extremism is a global phenomenon. It requires global solutions.** All countries are affected by it in different ways. All countries struggle, in different ways, with its drivers and root causes, including poverty, inequality, exclusion, perceptions of injustice, and lack of equal opportunities to learn, earn and contribute to the making of a better society. And all countries need to address it effectively if they are to sustain peace and progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN Secretary-General describes violent extremism as “a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition” which is “neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief”<sup>1</sup> and must be defined by Member States, consistent with international law. Although its definition is context-specific and the prerogative of UN Member States, violent extremism is commonly understood to refer to individuals and groups advocating for, engaging in, preparing or otherwise supporting violence motivated or justified by ideology in order to further social, economic and political objectives.<sup>2</sup> The **rise of radicalization and violent extremist attitudes, networks and actions** is becoming an ever more pressing threat to global stability and peace, as confirmed by the **increased number of terrorist attacks** that took place around the world in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

Extremist violence is **more prevalent in areas with weak or non-existent formal state structures**. Key drivers of violent extremism include poverty, inequality, weak social contracts between state and citizens, public frustration with ineffective state institutions, security sector conduct that is not fully aligned with human rights, and absent or

restricted civic space. In fragile contexts, these features are particularly acute, especially in border areas where the capacity and reach of state institutions is most limited. As a result of increased fragility in some regions, the number of violent extremist attacks increased in 2021, particularly in **sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel**,<sup>4</sup> where Da'esh has increased its activities following the territorial collapse of Syria and Iraq in 2019, and where increasing numbers of criminal groups have co-opted violent extremist narratives to garner support. In 2021, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 48 percent of global terrorism deaths, and numbers of attacks accelerated in the Sahel.<sup>5</sup>

Forthcoming UNDP research demonstrates that in the parts of sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel where formal state authority is weakest, some Violent Extremist Groups (VEGs) are effectively evolving from small bands to structured quasi-state competitors.<sup>6</sup> This **proto-state posture of VEGs** requires tailored responses that consider questions of identity, belonging and legitimacy and attempt to ensure the strategic engagement of community leaders, faith-based actors and local change agents. Equally, the challenge requires a commitment to development-based solutions rather than to securitized measures, which have the proven potential to increase extremist attitudes and actions among affected populations. UNDP continues to provide thought leadership and practical offerings on **human-centred, development-based peacebuilding alternatives** that can tangibly reduce the spread of violent extremism and address the current limitations of state-building approaches. However, prevention efforts remain underfunded.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Secretary-General, *United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)*.

<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, USAID's Policy For Countering Violent Extremism Through Development Assistance (Washington D.C., 2020) says that “Violent Extremism refers to advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated violence to further social, economic, political, or religious objectives.” Finland's Ministry of the Interior in its *National Action Plan For The Prevention Of Violent Radicalisation and Extremism 2019–2023* (Helsinki, 2019) says that “violent extremism refers to using, threatening with, instigating, encouraging or justifying violence based on ideological grounds.” In the Philippines' *The National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE)* (Manila, 2019), violent extremism is defined as a “belief system that drives individuals or groups to commit violent acts. [...] The aim of VE is the furtherance of causes that are ideological, religious, political, social and/or economic in nature.” Lebanon's Presidency of the Council of Ministers released a *National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism* (Beirut, 2018), saying that “The definition of “violent extremism” varies according to the approach adopted. Therefore, the Strategy will adopt a definition of ‘violent extremism; that includes the following three points: 1. The spread of individual and collective hatred that may lead to structural violence. 2. The rejection of diversity and non-acceptance of others, and the use of violence as a means of expression and influence. 3. A behavior that threatens values that ensure social stability”. Under Somalia's *National Strategy and Action Plan for Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism* (Mogadishu, 2016) “violent extremism is essentially the beliefs and actions of people who support or use ideologically motivated violence to further social, economic, or political objectives.”

<sup>3</sup> As measured by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), Global Terrorism Index, 2022 data. Available at <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, ‘Why Aren't We Winning? Dynamics of Violent Extremism in Africa: Conflict ecosystems, political ecology, and the spread of the proto-state’ (forthcoming, 2022).

In 2020–2021, insufficient commitment was made to addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism (**Pillar I: 24 percent**) and ensuring human rights and the rule of law (**Pillar IV: 3 percent**), as compared to a **73 percent** allocation in support of measures to combat terrorism (Pillars II & III).<sup>7</sup>



This indicates the need for **renewed commitment** to a more comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The failure of state-building and peacebuilding trajectories to enable and sustain lasting democratic reform in Afghanistan underlines this need.

As a result of the territorial collapse of Da'esh in March 2019, 80 countries still face the challenge of **reintegrating** more than 30,000 **former members** and so-called 'associates' of VEGs from closed camps in Syria and Iraq, without a clear policy and operational framework to support their effective **repatriation**, rehabilitation and re-socialization.<sup>8</sup> This illustrates the complex global dimension of violent extremism, which necessitates coordinated global responses. Elsewhere, **far-right extremism** is on the rise as polarization grows, and far-right extremists are

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increasingly arming and gaining combat experience as **foreign fighters** in armed conflict, including within Europe. This demonstrates the need to proactively apply les-

sons and learnings from the Global South in the Global North, while also making return and reintegration efforts a global imperative: Member States have a responsibility to repatriate their nationals and avoid statelessness.

The urgency of return and reintegration also highlights the need for investment in the dedicated **provision of mental health and psychosocial support** (MHPSS) services for returnees, given the profound impact that conflict and violence have on mental well-being and the ability to form meaningful social connections, trust and a sense of belonging, all of which underpin social cohesion. Additionally, social grievances have been identified as a key driver of radicalization, and MHPSS approaches provide the tools to meaningfully address the psychosocial dimension of actual and perceived grievances. Emerging data from 15 UNDP Country Offices demonstrate the power that **integrating MHPSS into prevention and peacebuilding** activities can have in reinforcing sustainable peace outcomes. The global health emergency's impact on mental well-being reaffirms the necessity of integrating MHPSS into peacebuilding activities.

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its third year, it continues to disproportionately impact the most vulnerable, which has deepened pre-existing drivers of extremism such as inequalities and social grievances, thus placing hard-won peacebuilding and development gains at risk. **Hate speech and polarization** remain on the rise, aggravating distrust in government responses and attesting to the erosion of social contracts between states and people across the world.<sup>9</sup> Since the onset of the pandemic, activities in the digital space have grown, leading to **increased exposure to violent extremist material online**.<sup>10</sup> Online and offline hate speech progressively undermine the tolerance, inclusion and respect for diversity that underpins social cohesion and human rights. Hate speech has preceded atrocity crimes, including genocide, all over the world, from Rwanda and Bosnia to Cambodia and Northern Ireland. So, as part of his prevention

<sup>7</sup> The four pillars of the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy are: I) addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; II) measures to prevent and combat terrorism; III) measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and strengthen the UN system in that regard; and IV) measures to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism. See UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, 'UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy'. Available at <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>. According to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact's Resource Mobilization, Monitoring and Evaluation (RMME) Working Group Projects Matrix, the following financial contributions were pledged across 2020 and 2021: a total of \$57,288,694 to Pillar I; \$7,512,170 to Pillar II; \$170,028,817 to Pillar III; and \$6,372,056 to Pillar IV.

<sup>8</sup> International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 'From Daesh to "Diaspora": Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State' (London, Department of War Studies, King's College London, 2018). Available at <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-Daesh-to-%E2%80%98Diaspora%E2%80%99-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-of-Islamic-State.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> The trends are also in line with increasing pressure on social media companies, which has led to more reporting on and action taken against hate speech in recent years, according to social media companies' reporting tools: Google's Transparency Report, the Meta Transparency Center, Twitter's Transparency Center, and TikTok's Community Guidelines Enforcement Report as of 8 Feb 2022. Available at <https://transparencyreport.google.com/>; <https://transparency.fb.com/>; <https://transparency.twitter.com/>; and <https://www.tiktok.com/transparency/en/community-guidelines-enforcement-2021-4/>.

<sup>10</sup> UNDP, 'From Pilots towards Policies: Utilizing Online Data in Prevention of Violent Extremism' (New York, UNDP, 2022). Available at <https://www.undp.org/publications/pilots-toward-policies-utilizing-online-data-preventing-violent-extremism-and-addressing-hate-speech>.

vision, the UN Secretary-General has called for action to address hate speech. To counter hate speech, a robust investment in digital peacebuilding solutions that proactively address violent extremism is required.

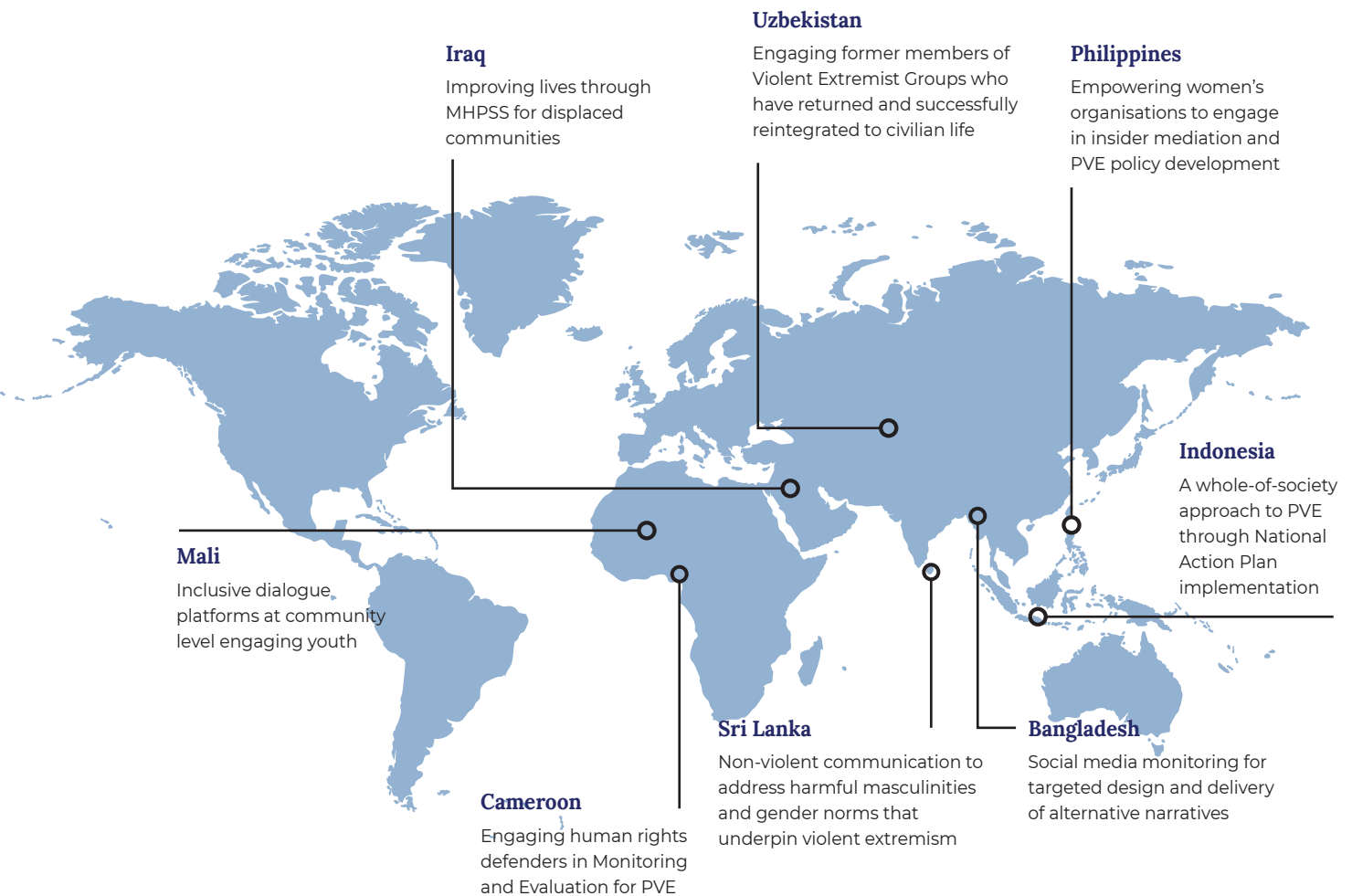
Climate change is still mostly framed in terms of socio-economic, environmental and disaster risks, but it also has significant ramifications for peace, security and stability. **Climate shocks** trigger resource constraints which can lead to increased intercommunal tensions over natural resources and to forced migration and displacement, thereby causing or increasing grievances and marginalization. It stretches institutions' response capacities to the breaking point, and if government fails to meet emerging community needs, state legitimacy can be undermined. When grievances are given fuel and government legitimacy is reduced, non-state armed groups have the opportunity to present themselves as legitimate alternative service providers, enabling recruitment and radicalization. As such, climate change has the potential to **exacerbate drivers of conflict and violent extremism**, which means that tailored responses on the nexus between climate and security challenges are needed, and attention must be paid to the linkages between political economy and ecological crises.

Social media monitoring in hotspots for violent extremism in 2021 shows anecdotal evidence that violent extremist groups are using **perceived bias in counter-terrorism policies to validate grievances**, leveraging these initiatives to suggest evidence of discrimination, proof of threat and the need to mobilize to protect a distinctive identity.<sup>11</sup> This trend highlights the need for risk-informed PVE programming that invests in human rights-compliant security structures in implementing terrorism-related policies and legislation. It also demonstrates that risk-informed PVE programming must work closely with security sector actors to increase sensitization to the impact of inadvertent pre-criminalization and state repression, which can fuel the very phenomenon they wish to address.

This annual report presents 2021 key achievements, lessons learned and areas for future engagement within UNDP's Global PVE portfolio in response to these emerging trends. We hope you enjoy reading about our results, and we invite you to be in touch for more information with Ms. Nika Saeedi (Team Leader, Prevention of Violent Extremism, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding & Responsive Institutions Team, UNDP Crisis Bureau – New York), at [nika.saeedi@undp.org](mailto:nika.saeedi@undp.org).

<sup>11</sup> Philippines' Critical Events Monitoring System revealed that the geographic areas in which the strictest security procedures were applied during the COVID-19 experienced the highest incidences of violence. Cameroon's Human Rights Observatory identified an increase in incidences of violence, in the context of state responses to violent extremism.

# II. UNDP's Key PVE Achievements



Guided by the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, UNDP brings development solutions to a space typically dominated by repressive measures. UNDP has spearheaded essential research showcasing the aggravating effects of exclusively security-driven approaches *vis-à-vis* violent extremism, as well as the role of development-related grievances, including poverty, corruption, lack of service delivery, discrimination and exclusion, in violent extremist groups'

recruitment efforts. Building on these findings, UNDP is committed to advancing Pillar I of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy through an approach that is grounded in human rights and development solutions. As such, UNDP aims to address extremist violence by addressing both push and pull factors, mitigating the deprivations and grievances underpinning the decision to join violent extremist groups and listed terrorist organizations. Consequently, by applying development solu-

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UNDP Headquarters supports and advances these efforts through thought leadership, research and evidence-based policy development. UNDP's PVE work is informed by its unique blend of development and conflict-sensitivity capacities, neutrality, expertise on gender and women's empowerment and partnerships at all levels.

tions, UNDP offers alternative positive pathways and narratives to violent extremism to the people and places affected by deprivations that drive radicalization. This essential complement to security-based measures is prioritized by the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and promotes achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As a global challenge, violent extremism defies national borders. UNDP's global portfolio on Prevention of Violent Extremism therefore encompasses continually growing programming in 42 countries, supported by regional programmes in Asia Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Arab States and Africa, which enable specific cross-border initiatives and regional knowledge development efforts including regional research, South-South learning networks and policy dialogues. UNDP Headquarters supports and advances these efforts through thought leadership, research and evidence-based policy development. UNDP's PVE work is informed by its unique blend of development and conflict-sensitivity capacities, neutrality, expertise on gender and women's empowerment and partnerships at all levels—from its leadership role in the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact as co-chair of the PVE Working Group to its working relationships with civil society organizations, faith-based actors and organizations and private sector entities. The global PVE programme ensures robust data collection and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), enabling the translation of emerging trends, lessons and learnings into knowledge tools, guidance notes and community of practice exchanges. It connects global advocacy for human-centred peacebuilding alternatives to securi-

tized approaches to violent extremism with technical, financial and partnership support for contextualized regional, national and local PVE programming.

To support UN Member States to identify and realize solutions to address violent extremism in all its forms, UNDP advocates for and implements an approach that aims to prevent and curb violent extremism by: encouraging people to leave VEGs; preventing radicalization from occurring or spreading further; and addressing radicalization's root causes.<sup>12</sup> UNDP achieves this through support to policies and programmes that promote inclusive governance, equitable access to services and economic opportunity, gender equality and human rights.<sup>13</sup> In doing so, UNDP grounds its policy and programme support efforts in cutting-edge research that aims to understand the drivers and dynamics of violent extremism and to design and measure the impact of initiatives to address them, supporting the identification of solutions that can serve all Member States affected by this universal phenomenon.

In 2021, UNDP's global PVE portfolio achieved the following key results:



**Global reach:  
PVE projects in  
42 countries.**

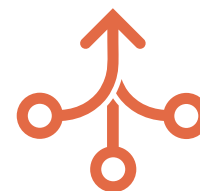
**Shaping global development agenda:**

- PVE priority areas—MHPSS, hate speech and religion—established as new UNDP strategic priorities.

**Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5):**

- Gender equality and women's empowerment prioritized in Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy:

**2021 Review includes  
300 percent more  
references to gender.**



<sup>12</sup> UNDP does this through an approach that applies development solutions, thereby promoting progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP's 'prevention approach' aims to (i) stabilize and protect hard-won development gains; (ii) mitigate risks of relapse or recurrence; and (iii) build institutional and community resilience to sustain peaceful development pathways.

<sup>13</sup> UNDP Prevention Offer (2022–2025).

<sup>14</sup> Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, Togo, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. See UNDP, Gender Inequality Index. Available at <https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>. Relevant data can be found in the 2016–2020 range for Africa Regional PVE Project countries; the 2018–2020 date range for South-east Asia countries; and the 2019–2020 for Central Asian countries. These date ranges correspond to programme implementation periods for these countries.



- Of PVE projects, 75 percent are Gender Marker 2 (meaning that gender equality and the empowerment of women is a significant objective) and 11 percent are Gender Marker 3 (meaning that gender equality is a principal objective).
- Gender inequality increased in 20 countries (as measured by Gender Inequality Index).<sup>14</sup>

**Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions (SDG 16)**

- Positive Peace—a measure of the factors that build and sustain peace—increased in 18 countries.<sup>15</sup>

**Addressing cross-border dimensions of modern conflict:**

- **Fourfold increase achieved in cross-border PVE policy instruments from 2020 to 2021.**<sup>16</sup>



**Building capacity for effective, evidence-informed efforts to prevent and address violent extremism:**

- **A 50 percent increase in the number of countries with capacities to produce data related to violent extremism.**<sup>17</sup>



**Thought leadership: Over 15 knowledge products produced, including:**

- Guidance note and policy brief on risk-informed use of online data for PVE and addressing hate speech.
- Global consultations and guidance on MHPSS in peacebuilding.
- Research on emerging dynamics of violent extremism in Africa.

<sup>15</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand and Togo. See Institute for Economics and Peace, Positive Peace Index. Available at <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/positive-peace-index/#/>. Time range as above.

<sup>16</sup> From one regional policy instrument in Lake Chad Basin in 2020 to four regional policy instruments (i.e. policies, strategies and action plans) in 2021, in Liptako-Gourma (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger); Lake Chad Basin (the Central African Republic, Chad, Niger and Nigeria); Ethiopia-Kenya; and Tajikistan-Afghanistan.

<sup>17</sup> Capacities refer to government, civil society organizations, and/or human rights defenders' ability to produce, analyse and use data relevant to drivers of violent extremism. There was an increase from 8 countries with such capacities in 2020—Cameroon, Sudan, Mali, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Benin, Ghana—to 12 countries in 2021—with additional countries being Maldives, Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia.

**Practice development:**

- **Over 29 knowledge sharing events held, including over 3,255 participants.**



**Innovation:**

- Participatory, youth-led PVE measurement efforts conducted in three countries.
- A cutting-edge initiative undertaken to measure impact of alternative narratives, including on attitudes and behaviours.
- The Peace-Building Fund and World Data Forum highlighted innovative UNDP PVE measurement initiatives.

**Engaging across sectors and siloes:** UNDP works closely with 37 UN entities on PVE across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. UNDP also partners with private sector, civil society, academic and research institutions, including Beyond Conflict, Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, Hedayah, Google, Koe Koe Tech, Oxford Internet Institute, SecDev and TikTok.

**Serving the system:**

- Co-chair of the PVE Working Group of Global Counter-Terrorism Compact.
- Member of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development; the Core and Advisory Group of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers; the Global Steering Committee for the implementation of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes; the UN Working Group on the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech; and the Inter-Agency Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.

**Learning:** UNDP has developed a vibrant PVE Community of Practice, with a dedicated online space for exchange among practitioners across all five regions. In 2021, UNDP's global learning exchanges identified best practices for addressing violent extremism (presented in text boxes throughout this document). UNDP will build on these lessons over the coming year(s). Lessons include the following insights:

- Mobilizing religious actors and faith-based organizations from diverse backgrounds is essential to promote community coexistence and social cohesion, since they are 'social influencers' who can promote positive change and act as insider mediators addressing extremist beliefs.
- Supporting robust implementation structures for PVE National Action Plans (with associated institutional work plans, coordination structures and M&E frameworks) is a practical way to enable meaningful participation by civil society (including women and youth-led organizations) in PVE efforts.
- Working with national, regional and local authorities to develop and support PVE strategies in cross-border areas is an important step towards addressing the cross-border nature of modern conflict.
- Non-violent communication (NVC) training promotes measurable improvements in community resilience to violent extremism.
- Supporting civil society organizations (including women and youth-led organizations) to produce data leads to shifts in government policy. Women and youth-led civil society organizations (CSOs) are increasingly requesting support on M&E to help them prove the relevance and impact of their work.
- Building the capacity of front-line service providers to offer mental health and psychosocial support services is essential to ensure the effectiveness of their work, as well as their own mental health and well-being.
- Religion enhances many individuals' and communities' capacity to cope with psychosocial challenges, so there is a need to strengthen links between religion and faith, MHPSS and PVE.
- Journalists are powerful actors to address hate speech and information pollution both online and offline—as are peacebuilders empowered to produce quality content.
- Tailored risk assessments and management frameworks for monitoring and analysing hate speech are essential in the risk-informed and human rights-based application of online data and AI technology.
- Sensitizing government service providers, security sector actors and communities at large about returnees' experience is crucial in order to enable safe and effective reintegration. Sensitization reduces stigma, facilitates empathetic service delivery and promotes a community welcome that enables returnees to establish a sense of belonging and an identity as an equal, respected member of society—socio-emotional needs that must be considered alongside the material requirements of returnees.

# III. Regional Highlights

## Africa and Arab States



Over the implementation period of UNDP's six-year Africa PVE Regional Project, Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach,<sup>18</sup> there have been improvements in some essential foundations of sustainable peace. Since 2016, the inception year of the programme, gender equality has improved by 1.3 percent on average in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Togo, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Positive Peace—a measure of the factors that build and sustain peace—has improved across these countries by 1.37 percent. These data indicate that efforts to build community-level resilience and an enabling national and regional policy environment have been effective, even against the backdrop of violent extremist groups' increasing presence, alongside the mutations of armed groups empowered by the territorial collapse of Da'esh and the political shifts in Afghanistan. Key achievements include:

**Evidence-based research and policies informed regional and national policies and programming:** UNDP Regional Bureau Africa (RBA) and Regional Bureau Arab States (RBAS) commissioned a number of evidence-based research and policies, including 1) a Journey to Extremism in Africa 2.0 study including policy briefs on 'The Patterns in Child Recruitment and Retention of VEGs in Africa' and on 'The Use of Drugs and Methods by Insurgents'; 2) a cross-border VE threats

assessment in the Southern Libya Borderlands; and 3) a policy paper on the nexus between Climate Security and PVE.

**Regional and sub-regional entities have been coordinated and enabled to prevent and address violent extremism:** This has involved 1) the pilot implementation of the Toolkit for Early Warning and Early Response and PVE at the regional level with the Southern African Development Community (SADC); 2) the development of the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (MNJTF-LCBC) Plan of Action on Regional Strategic Communication for PVE; and 3) support for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Centre of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism on locally-driven research on the impact of COVID-19 on PVE and on early warning, early response in the context of violent extremism warnings in the East African region.

**Criminal justice systems, human rights organizations and communities have been enabled to prevent and address violent extremism:** UNDP has undertaken efforts to build trust and confidence between law enforcement actors and communities in Kenya and Morocco and to sustain the local CSO-driven Human Rights Observatory for PVE-purposes in Cameroon.

**National PVE coordination and capacities have been developed and linked to regional strategies:** UNDP 1) supported Chad, Sudan and Tanzania in the finaliza-

<sup>18</sup> At the regional level, the project supports the capacity of the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities, including Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). At the national level, the project provides technical and financial support to 21 countries clustered into three categories: 'epicentre countries' (Libya, Mali, Nigeria and Somalia); 'spillover countries' (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger and Tunisia); and 'at-risk countries' (Benin, the Central African Republic, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, Sudan, Togo, Uganda and Tanzania).

tion of National PVE Strategies and National PVE Action Plans (NAPs) and in the implementation of their NAPs; 2) sustained and enabled the Nigeria Knowledge Hub in data-driven approaches to PVE, which produced research on conflict analysis of the Middle Belt and north-eastern Nigeria and a survey of PVE Project's livelihood training participants; 3) supported Cameroon and Mali in bottom-up approaches to National PVE Strategy development through creating national policy informed by sub-regional PVE Action Plans; and 4) supported West African countries (Benin, Ghana and Togo) in the finalization of their National PVE Strategies, including regional principles allowing for cross-border PVE activities.

**Engaged religious institutions and faith-based actors:**

In Cameroon, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Tanzania, UNDP mobilized more than 615 religious actors to build resilience to violent extremist narratives and lead dialogue initiatives engaging extremist actors.

Supported young people to participate in design and delivery of efforts to build resilience to violent extremism at local level: UNDP supported youth in the border areas of Burkina Faso and Mali to participate in the development and implementation of local PVE community action plans. Public perception surveys demonstrated improvements in confidence in state actors in several areas, as well as a reduction in numbers who perceived violence to be a legitimate means of resolving disputes. In Tunisia, UNDP supported civil society engagement in the development and implementation of policies related to PVE, including through support to enable CSOs, academic institutions and think tanks to produce data to support evidence-informed PVE policy.

**Empowered civil society organizations to support return and reintegration efforts:**

In 2021, UNDP launched a CSO Network on Inclusive Reintegration for the Lake Chad Basin sub-region. The Network is envisioned to create stronger societal alliances and enhance offline and online cooperation, beginning with primary engagements in the Lake Chad Basin region with key actors in Screening Prosecution Rehabilitation and Reintegration (SPRR), Community-based Reintegration, and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

(DDR). UNDP also created a bilingual digital collaboration space, [www.peacebyafrica.com](http://www.peacebyafrica.com), to share best practices on inclusive reintegration and advocate for the role of civil society in promoting effective reintegration.

**Promoted sustainable livelihoods for women:** UNDP supported women in the Arab States region to develop small businesses.

**Supported an Africa PVE Community of Practice (CoP):**

Leveraging the implementation plan to strengthen the Africa PVE COP, a number of virtual experience exchange and mutual learning sessions were held in 2021 on lessons learned and emerging good practices. Webinars were held on a quarterly basis to strengthen capacity on thematic areas of PVE-relevant interventions, such as: the role of youth, involving the youth teams of both regions; the human rights-based approach, involving UNDP HR and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); and inclusion and coordination on NAP development, implementation and M&E, and PVE and resource mobilization. The Africa PVE CoP also facilitated consultations on emerging areas to support PVE programming, such as on applying behavioural insights in PVE programming, with case studies from Sudan and Yemen, and on using big data to monitor hate speech linked to VE, as piloted in Tunisia through the RBAS Regional Digital Lighthouse Initiative.

<sup>19</sup> Funded by the European Union, UNDP implements the Strengthening Resilience Against Violent Extremism in Asia (STRIVE Asia) project (2020–2022) in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



## Europe and Central Asia

Despite increased challenges following the change in government in neighboring Afghanistan in August 2021, sizeable improvements took place in Positive Peace in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In collaboration with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) through the STRIVE Asia<sup>19</sup> regional programme, UNDP contributed to these positive changes through support for:

**Rehabilitation, reintegration and re-socialization:** UNDP supported CSOs and national authorities (including correctional institutions) to facilitate the effective and safe reintegration of people formerly associated with VEGs and terrorist organizations.

**A ‘whole-of-society’ approach to violent extremism:** UNDP initiated PVE Advisory Groups to enable government, civil society and local actors to work together in identifying and addressing drivers of violent extremism at local level. In total, 34 groups across the region enable these key stakeholders to work together to promote resilience to violent extremism through individual and collective actions.

**Youth empowerment:** UNDP provided socio-economic support opportunities to 824 youth, including through entrepreneurship grants and mentorship support for business ideas designed to promote inclusion.



## Asia Pacific

Some increases in incidences of terrorism have taken place in certain countries in the region: for example, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) data demonstrate deteriorations in Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, there have been significant improvements in mitigating the drivers of violent extremism, as witnessed by improved Positive Peace Index scores across all countries in the course of 2021. With the support of UNDP’s PVE regional projects,<sup>20</sup> the following results were achieved:

**Alternative narratives at scale:** Through initiatives including the #ExtremeLives series, the You, Me, We Us initiative, Instagram Live Storytelling and the United Creatives programme, UNDP supported the development of creative alternative narratives content, achieving 300,944 active engagements (likes, shares, reactions or comments).

**Evidence-based PVE policies and institutions:** In Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, UNDP supported innovative data initiatives—including social media monitoring and national violence monitoring systems—to enable civil society and government actors to work together to address the drivers and impacts of violent extremism. These efforts included innovations such as youth-led resilience surveys, highlighted as a global best practice by the UN Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund.

**Non-Violent Communication:** UNDP partnered with UN Women to support peacebuilders to develop non-violent communication skills. This training produced measurable changes in attitudes towards gender equality, tolerance and violence, captured through pre/post surveys.

<sup>20</sup> Funded by the EU, UNDP’s programme on Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Tolerance and Respect for Diversity (Phase 2) covers Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand in collaboration with UNOCT. With EU support, UNDP’s project additionally covers Maldives and Sri Lanka.

# IV. Evolution of PVE National Action Plans

## Key achievements:

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PVE National Action Plans supported in **20 countries:** a 20 percent increase compared to 2020.

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Development of cross-border PVE strategies in four geographic areas: a **300 percent increase** compared to 2020.

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Evidence-informed implementation of PVE strategies: a **50 percent increase** in number of countries with capacities to produce data related to violent extremism and its reduction.



## Context

The UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action on PVE encourages Member States to develop a National Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE NAP), to ensure adequate investment to address violent extremism and its drivers. PVE NAPs are identified as an essential complement to counter-terrorism strategies and should be developed through a consultative, multi-disciplinary, participatory process that:

- Lays the foundation for a 'whole-of-society' approach, to leverage the necessary resources to address the multiple drivers of violent extremism from across different sectors (government, civil society, academia and business), and
- Helps to address the governance grievances that drive violent extremism, by providing an opportunity for inclusive dialogue around policy priorities.<sup>21</sup>

## UNDP engagement

UNDP invests in PVE National Action Plans in order to address violent extremism and its drivers, *inter alia* by having set an organizational objective to increase the number of PVE NAPs under implementation.<sup>22</sup> In 2021, this support evolved to include a focus on PVE NAP implementation structures—not limiting engagement

to NAP development or adoption into law. To respond to the transnational dimension of violent extremism, UNDP has expanded its support to NAPs, and increasingly supports regional, cross-border and regional PVE Action Plans.<sup>23</sup>

## Achievements

In 2021, UNDP supported:

- PVE NAPs in 20 countries,<sup>24</sup> with 15 finalized or in place for implementation. Among those reporting, nine countries indicated that significant efforts were made to enable inclusive NAP development processes through participation of diverse stakeholders.<sup>25</sup>
- Four cross-border PVE strategies:<sup>26</sup> a 300 percent increase compared to 2020, which represents an important development in engaging with the regional dynamics and spillover effects of violent extremism.<sup>27</sup>
- Nine monitoring and evaluation frameworks for PVE NAPs.

To leverage NAPs to promote inclusive governance, UNDP established structures to engage and support civil society—including religious actors, women and youth—to inform the development and implementation of PVE NAPs.

<sup>21</sup> The UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action on PVE recommends inclusive NAP development processes in order to "fortify the social compact against violent extremism by promoting respect for the principle of equality before the law and equal protection under the law in all government-citizen relations, and developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, as well as ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making". United Nations Secretary-General, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General (A/70/674)*.

<sup>22</sup> UNDP, UNDP Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (New York, UNDP, 2017), 3.2.1.1.

<sup>23</sup> UNDP, UNDP Strategic Plan 2022–2025 (New York, UNDP, 2021), 3.2.1.

<sup>24</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Maldives, Mali, Niger, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Tanzania and Uzbekistan.

<sup>25</sup> This includes through consistently engaging CSOs, women peacebuilders, youth networks, human rights defenders, media, academia, community-based actors representing those affected, and concerned businesses.

<sup>26</sup> Liptako-Gourma (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger); Lake Chad Basin (the Central African Republic, Chad, Niger and Nigeria); Ethiopia-Kenya; Tajikistan-Afghanistan.

<sup>27</sup> Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Philippines, Somalia and Uzbekistan; under development in Iraq, Mali and Sudan.



## THIS WORKS FOR PVE:

### A whole-of-society approach to PVE through National Action Plan implementation.

In 2021, UNDP supported the launch of Indonesia's PVE NAP through a participatory approach that engaged 242 representatives from 29 government ministries and 33 civil society organizations, including 8 women peacebuilding organizations, 2 youth-led organizations and 5 faith-based organizations. UNDP also supported the development of a comprehensive structure to ensure that the NAP is implemented, including through:

- A regulatory framework to govern implementation (Decrees No. 5, 7 and 129 of 2021).
- A Secretariat.
- Work plans for all 29 ministries, with concrete activities to support PVE NAP implementation.
- Budgets for implementation allocated by 20 ministries.
- NAP pillar working groups (WGs) with CSO participation (10+ per WG).
- Local Action Plans in five districts.
- An M&E framework and standard tools for quarterly reporting.
- Data collection and reporting processes that engage CSO-generated data (six CSOs participated in the Presidential review of the PVE NAP), as well as statistics produced by a National Violence Monitoring System (NVMS) originally supported by UNDP, and as of 2021, budgeted by the Government of Indonesia to inform its investment into prevention. NVMS development is supported by a South-South exchange with Bangladesh's Peace Observatory.

This comprehensive structure for PVE is supported by capacity development, research and advocacy efforts.<sup>28</sup> It appears to be effective:



engaged in the PVE NAP development and implementation agreed that the structure promotes synergies among PVE actors.

Most importantly, 2021 showed a 23 percent reduction in incidences of terrorism in Indonesia. ●

<sup>28</sup> This arrangement emerged in 2021 and builds on sustained effort by UNDP since 2019. UNDP will build on these successes in 2022 through efforts to support gender mainstreaming in the NAP and to integrate PVE in education. For this purpose, UNDP has supported the establishment of a Thematic Group on Gender Mainstreaming and assisted the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection to develop strategies. To ensure that the national-level policy and institutional framework promotes change at local level, UNDP conducted a Trainer of Trainers workshop for local government officials on inclusive local governance practices (including protecting human rights, promoting public participation, and managing social conflict); produced a training manual on inclusive governance; and supported the further development of an Early Warning and Response System and methodological framework for the Tolerant City Index to measure changes in tolerance, attitudes to diversity, and resilience to violent extremism at local level. UNDP also empowered youth activists, women peacebuilders and faith-based actors to take action to promote tolerance and address hate speech. To support their efforts, UNDP conducted a hate speech survey and provided capacity development support to 1,191 people (of whom 702 were women) to design and disseminate quality social media and traditional media alternative narratives content. This resulted in the production of 924 pieces of content, including an Instagram Live Storytelling for Peace campaign that covered 27 provinces (79 percent of the country) and gained 11, 810 shares and engagements. To increase the reach of these materials, including in mosques, madrasas and religious education institutions, UNDP formed partnerships with faith-based actors and provided pro-tolerance influencers with training on how to syndicate their content in media (including religious media).



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## Lessons learned

- **M&E frameworks of PVE NAPs provide a structure for sustained CSO engagement in PVE efforts**, and support effective implementation.
- **Support to develop institutional work plans and local action plans ensures that PVE priorities translate to concrete actions for implementation** and budgeted delivery at local levels.
- **Complementing PVE NAPs with instruments at regional, cross-border and local levels** (e.g. plans, policies and strategies) is important to address the regional dynamics and spillover effects of violent extremism.

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## Future engagement

- UNDP will continue to **engage with Member States advocating for the development of PVE NAPs**, including across the global North.
- Building on support to PVE NAPs over the previous UNDP Strategic Plan period (2018–2021), UNDP will **prioritize support to the development of regional, national, sub-national and cross-border instruments**.
- UNDP will **continue to promote links between PVE NAPs, Youth, Peace & Security NAPS, and Women, Peace & Security NAPs**.
- UNDP will **invest in training for government, civil society and other key stakeholders on data collection, analysis and dissemination for PVE NAP M&E frameworks**.

# V. Return and Reintegration

## Key achievements:

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Support to return and reintegration in **17 countries:** a 13 percent increase on 2020.

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Contribution to developing a new cross-pillar UN arrangement for support to return and reintegration of persons in camps in Syria and Iraq, and initiation of implementation in **six countries.**

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Draft Toolkit for PVE Actors on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees developed.



## Context

Supporting the return and reintegration of former terrorist fighters (FTFs) and people who may be associated with violent extremist groups continues to pose a challenge.<sup>29</sup> A new element of this challenge includes support to the more than 30,000 people from 80 countries<sup>30</sup> believed to have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIL (Da'esh) and other UN designated terrorist groups. The territorial collapse of ISIL and the ongoing crises in the Lake Chad Basin, Horn of Africa and Sahel regions have placed the issue of screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of many thousands of suspected or convicted terrorists—FTFs and other returnees—high on the international agenda. Thousands of suspected ISIL fighters, together with their families, have been detained in Iraq, Syria and northern Nigeria, giving rise to acute security and humanitarian concerns for these individuals, as well as the communities into which they will reintegrate.<sup>31</sup> The UN Secretary-General has called upon Member States to act in accordance with their primary responsibility for their own nationals, recognizing the multifaceted challenges involved in repatriating people, including women and children, from territories previously controlled by ISIL. He has called for action to address gaps in law, policy and operational structures in order to support Member States in the return and reintegration of members of VEGs and listed terrorist organizations who remain stuck in Syrian and Iraqi camps.<sup>32</sup>

## UNDP engagement

**Integrated:** UNDP's support to return and reintegration prioritizes integration, conflict sensitivity, gender sensitivity, human rights and partnerships. Engaging host country authorities (including health professionals),

civil society and faith-based actors, as well as UN and international actors across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, UNDP advocates for and implements an integrated approach that:

- Addresses the material and psychosocial support needs of individual returnees, as well as the communities into which they will reintegrate. This includes efforts to sensitize communities and authorities (especially justice and security sector actors) to returnees' experiences and challenges, to address stigma and facilitate empathetic service delivery and a compassionate welcome in receiving communities. These elements are essential for returnees to (re)establish a sense of belonging in the community and an identity as an equal member of the state.
- Links the short-term challenge of reintegrating former fighters with the longer-term challenge of addressing the root causes of violent extremism. Particular emphasis is placed on giving returnees a voice as 'survivors' of VEGs, who can by sharing their story provide valuable insight into drivers, triggers and early warning signs. This, in turn, helps communities to invest in preventing radicalization and recruitment without stigmatizing those believed to be 'at risk'.
- Builds capacity of front-line service providers across government and civil society to address the needs of returnees and receiving communities.

**Risk-sensitive:** UNDP support is designed based on gender analyses, and—often in collaboration with OHCHR, such as in [Iraq](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Maldives](#), [Tajikistan](#) and [Uzbekistan](#)—incorporates a human rights assessment, to address the significant risks both to returning individuals and to host communities dealing with return and reintegration efforts. UNDP support is also based on:

<sup>29</sup> UNDP supports the return and reintegration of former members of VEGs, people who are associated with VEGs, and people who are perceived to have been associated with VEGs (for example, through living in places in which VEGs are active). UNDP's support includes assistance for the development and implementation of policies, strategies and action plans to enable the progressive establishment of conditions that enable returnees and their communities to exercise their social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights, and on that basis to enjoy peaceful, productive and dignified lives. To achieve this, UNDP may engage the approaches and processes utilized as part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and the expertise of DDR practitioners. This is because some such approaches, processes and expertise applied to support ex-combatants to acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income in the context of a formal peace agreement and cessation of hostilities may be relevant to the challenge of supporting the return and reintegration in the context of violent extremism. Finally, UNDP's approach focuses on the particular needs of women returnees and persons who may be deemed associated, as well as on partnerships with the women's organizations who have proven to be so effective in meeting the economic, social, psychological and other needs of returnees and receiving communities.

<sup>30</sup> International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, 'From Daesh to "Diaspora": Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State'.

<sup>31</sup> UNDP prioritizes support to receiving communities, as well as returnees. This is necessary for risk management purposes—to avoid generating grievances or provoking retaliation that would perpetuate cycles of violence and radicalization. It is also essential as part of UNDP's holistic and integrated approach to PVE, whereby support to returnees is embedded within broader interventions to promote progress on the SDGs.

<sup>32</sup> For example, UN efforts on return and reintegration have typically taken place in the context of formal cessation of hostilities under an amnesty negotiated as part of a peace agreement, none of which applies in the context of listed terrorist organizations. Supporting the return and reintegration of the tens of thousands of people in camps in Syria and Iraq would require the harmonized efforts of many UN agencies across the pillars of the UN system working together in joint frameworks in receiving countries, yet no agreed structure existed to support them to provide this coherent support.



## THIS WORKS FOR PVE:

### Engaging former members of VEGs who have returned and successfully reintegrated into civilian life.

UNDP Uzbekistan's successful efforts to support return and reintegration are grounded in an awareness that sensitizing communities and state authorities to returnees' experiences is as important as providing returnees themselves with dedicated services and support to meet their physical and psychological needs. When sensitization efforts can increase empathy towards returnees and reduce stigma, they influence both the way that services are provided and the quality of welcome that returnees experience—both of which help returnees to (re)establish a sense of belonging and identity as equal members of the state. Identity and belonging are often overlooked yet critically important requirements for effective return and reintegration, alongside assistance in obtaining, for example, shelter, healthcare, education and income. UNDP Uzbekistan also identified a key strategy for effective sensitization: engaging former members of VEGs who have successfully returned and reintegrated into civilian life. These former members 'prove' that returnees can live well and contribute to the peace and prosperity of the community and society as a whole. Engaging these individual former members in programmes and empowering them to tell their stories has a 'humanizing' effect and instils confidence in the return and reintegration process, as well as building understanding of the deprivation and suffering that often leads to, and accompanies, radicalization, membership and disengagement from VEGs. ●

- Individual assessments to ensure that support is tailored to the distinctive needs of each returning individual and their family members.
- Community assessments (including perception surveys) to identify risk factors (e.g. stigma, perception of threat to livelihoods, service delivery etc.).

**Delivered in partnership:** Meeting the physical, mental and psychosocial needs of returnees, families and communities requires the combined resources of actors across the UN system and beyond. To deliver comprehensive, context-specific and conflict-sensitive support, UNDP works with UN partners, government health structures and national and international CSOs with relevant capacities.

## Achievements

**Policy and knowledge development:** In 2021, UNDP joined with nine other UN entities to improve the policy framework for enabling the provision of effective support to Member States requesting assistance on return and reintegration with regard to VEGs and listed terrorist organizations. As part of this work, UNDP contributed to developing a new policy framework on Prosecution, Return and Reintegration; revising the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) on Armed Groups Designated as Terrorist Organizations; and developing a draft Toolkit for PVE Actors on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees.

UNDP also contributed to the development of the Global Framework on UN Support on Syria/Iraq Third Country National Returnees<sup>33</sup> (the Global Framework), in collaboration with 13 UN entities.<sup>34</sup> The Global Framework is a

<sup>33</sup> The expression 'Third Country National Returnee' refers to a person who is neither from Syria nor Iraq.

<sup>34</sup> UNOCT, UNICEF, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), OHCHR, UN Women, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Development Coordination Office (DCO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Investigative Team for Accountability of Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children.

Tajikistan, for example, has successfully received **19 children** from Syria and has repatriated **84 children** from Iraq since the territorial collapse of Da'esh.

first-of-its-kind initiative uniting actors across the pillars of the UN system to respond to Member State demands, as articulated in several Security Council resolutions, for a gender-responsive, age-appropriate, comprehensive and tailored approach to prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration in accordance with international law of persons whom they have reasonable grounds to believe are terrorists or family members, spouses and children of potential terrorists. The Global Framework articulates the principles and minimum conditions, governance, multi-partner trust funding arrangements and programmatic direction for the provision of UN support which is coherent across the whole of the UN, human rights-based, age-appropriate, gender-responsive and risk-informed. The Global Framework was launched by the UN Secretary-General on the margins of the General Assembly in September, and its implementation was initiated through development of joint programmes in **Kazakhstan, Tajikistan** and **Uzbekistan**<sup>35</sup> and joint assessments conducted in Iraq and Maldives. New UN joint initiatives commencing in Central Asia build on lessons learned and partnerships from existing structures, including the STRIVE project, which is implemented in five Central Asian countries. Within the scope of this renewed support, Tajikistan, for example, has successfully received 19 children from Syria and has repatriated 84 children from Iraq since the territorial collapse of Da'esh.

**Programming: UNDP supported return and reintegration efforts in 15 countries,**<sup>36</sup> including support for:

**Empowering civil society organizations, community members and faith-based actors to identify and address the challenges associated with social integration of returnees, including stigma.** For example, in **Tajikistan**, UNDP successfully promoted community acceptance of returnees by building the capacity of community influencers to advocate around and discuss

issues of return in organized public and private fora, including sensitization and advocacy campaigns. In **Indonesia**, UNDP supported more than 150 moderate Islamic scholars to produce and disseminate alternative, peaceful messages that counteract the appeal of violent extremism on digital platforms, as well as at mosques and madrasas, to support effective reintegration of approximately 600 returnees. To further enhance the reach and impact of their messages, UNDP partnered with media actors to support the syndication of alternative narratives content produced by supported Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and worked with Google Indonesia to implement the Salam Forum: an initiative that supports moderate Islamic scholars in producing and disseminating peaceful messages online.

**Providing livelihood opportunities.** In **Côte d'Ivoire**, UNDP supported the provision of livelihood opportunities for returnees. To ensure conflict sensitivity, UNDP also supported improvements to community infrastructure and extended entrepreneurial training to members of receiving communities.

**Building the capacity of front-line service providers,** including social workers, health professionals, police officers and local government officials at national and local levels, to meet the needs of returnees. This includes training and support on effective strategies to help returnees to access socio-economic opportunities, on empathetic communication skills to facilitate returnees' access to these offers, and on MHPSS services. For example, in Iraq, UNDP provided MHPSS services based on the psychological needs of returning fighters. Through psychoeducation, expert staff introduced symptoms and consequences of distress, addressed stigmatization, provided information on basic self-care strategies and explained referral pathways. In addition, the project provided individual counselling for selected beneficiaries, as well as group sessions and social, emotional and life skills training (LSE). The design of the MHPSS services emphasized healing from the traumatic experiences of the fighters and helped equip returnees with self-help tools and resources. Qualitative data collected from beneficiaries show that participants' level of suffering decreased as they progressed through the different services.

<sup>35</sup> Funded by the EU, UNDP jointly implements the EU-UN Support to States in Central Asia for Third Country Nationals Returned from Syria and Iraq – Security and Accountability Action with UNOCT, UNODC and OHCHR in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>36</sup> Note that due to sensitivities, the number of individuals supported has remained unspecified.

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## Lessons learned

- **Returning women and girls often face particularly intense difficulties, yet policies and programmes are often gender blind.** Returning women and girls face more intense anger, stigma and fear in their communities. Those who are victims of sexual violence and/or have HIV and AIDS face even more stigma and have distinct psychosocial and health needs. Returning women have acute economic needs, too: the widows of men who joined the ranks of Da'esh in Iraq or Syria have assumed the burden of heading households, which means they need to earn an income at the same time as they singlehandedly care for their children. Research shows that if the needs of these women returnees are not met, the risk of re-radicalization and re-recruitment increases.
- **Front-line CSO and social worker staff supporting returnees often face multiple risks,** including verbal threats to their lives from unhappy returnees, risk of re-recruitment through dialogue with returnees, secondary trauma, and being branded by the authorities as sympathizers of VEGs.
- **Trust needs to be strengthened to enable data sharing<sup>37</sup>** between the police, members of receiving communities and the returnees themselves. Equally, partnerships need to be strengthened based on trust and collaboration between development and humanitarian practitioners engaged in return and reintegration support processes.

- **Livelihood support is an integral part of effective return and reintegration.**
- **Patience is needed,** and long-term strategies are essential. Initially, due to trauma, many returnees cannot participate fully in reintegration programmes.
- **Addiction support should be considered.** Returnees are often more vulnerable to abusing drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism. Stigma is often higher where rates of alcoholism are high. This dynamic in turn limits returnees' ability to benefit from programmes.

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## Future engagement

- Identify and support **best practices for effective return and reintegration of women and girl returnees.**
- Identify **strategies to support risk-informed engagement of CSOs (including women peacebuilders).**
- Support **North-South learning and triangular cooperation around best practices for effective return and reintegration** of (a) people who have travelled abroad to support VEGs and subsequently return to their countries of origin, and (b) people who have joined VEGs in their home countries and voluntarily seek to disengage. Since more than 80 countries face the challenge of reintegrating former members of VEGs and persons who may be associated with them, there is vast scope for learning. UNDP will leverage its convening role to support this exchange.

<sup>37</sup> This includes personal specifiers, information from needs assessments (data on mental and physical health and material needs) and whether or not there are reasonable grounds to suspect criminal culpability.

# VI. PVE through Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

## Key achievements:

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Of UNDP PVE projects, **86 percent** have gender equality and women's empowerment as a significant or principal objective.

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The number of gender references in UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review increased by **300 percent**.

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A strategy to change harmful masculinities and gender norms was identified: non-violent communication (NVC) leads to a **22 percent decrease** in the number of participants who agree that men are better suited for politics and decision-making.



## Context

The development-related drivers and impacts of violent extremism (including poverty, discrimination and lack of access to opportunities such as employment and education) disproportionately affect women<sup>38</sup> and individuals who do not subscribe to socially accepted notions of gender identity and sexual orientation. Women are also often disproportionately affected by acts of extremism and terrorist violence.<sup>39</sup> Research shows that attitudes towards women are a more significant predictor of support for extremist violence than other commonly assumed factors, including religiosity, age, gender and level of education achieved: people who claim that violence against women is justified are three times more likely to support violent extremism. World Values Survey (2021) data finds that populations in the countries in which UNDP operates PVE programmes are 55 percent more likely to think that domestic violence is justifiable.<sup>40</sup> They are also 19 percent less likely to agree that women should have the same rights as men, including in participation in decision-making.<sup>41</sup> A UNDP–UN Women joint study<sup>42</sup> (2020) highlights how structures of patriarchy and harmful performances of masculinity are deeply embedded in the way VEGs operate, including in how they recruit, radicalize, and justify their cause. Consequently, the UN Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism calls for focused support to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

## UNDP engagement

UNDP’s PVE initiatives prioritize support to women’s organizations, helping them to meet the immediate needs of people affected by the generalized and gendered impacts and drivers of violent extremism in their communities, while promoting a long-term transformation in the unequal gender norms that underpin the drivers of violence and deprivation in all its forms. By providing direct

financial and technical support, UNDP aims to empower women to lead efforts that transform the gendered, structural conditions in which VEGs flourish.

A global mapping of UNDP PVE projects conducted in 2021 found that 75 percent of projects are Gender Marker 2 (meaning that gender equality and the empowerment of women is a significant objective), and 11 percent are Gender Marker 3 (meaning that gender equality is a principal objective). These projects are based on gender research and analysis, offering context-specific solutions to help address:

- **Specific needs of women and girls affected by violent extremism:** UNDP supports communities to provide focused support to meet the differentiated needs of women and girls affected by violent extremism, including the distinctive needs of women leaving or perceived to be associated with violent extremist groups.
- **Harmful masculinities and discriminatory gender norms:** UNDP helps influencers, authorities and at-risk individuals to change the harmful masculine attitudes and behaviours that enable VE to develop and thrive.
- **Empowerment of women and girls to lead and meaningfully participate in PVE efforts:** UNDP supports women’s agency in PVE at all levels—policy development and implementation at national and local level; regional and cross-border strategy development and delivery; global policy and knowledge development—by providing technical and financial support to women’s organizations and help to access relevant platforms.

## Achievements

**Policy and knowledge development:** Throughout 2021, UNDP advocated for PVE efforts that prioritize women’s empowerment through processes led by Member States, the UN and civil society, including the Gender

<sup>38</sup> UNDP, [Gender Inequality Index](#).

<sup>39</sup> For example, the UNDP study ‘Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Reintegration and Rehabilitation’ (New York, UNDP, 2019), conducted with the International Civil Society Action Network, shows that women leaving violent extremist groups, or who are perceived to be associated with violent extremist groups, often face greater stigma and challenges in reintegrating into their communities. Moreover, discriminatory gender norms are a key driver of violent extremism. Available at <https://www.undp.org/library/invisible-women>.

<sup>40</sup> [World Values Survey](#) data for 2021 shows that on average globally, 26 percent of national populations feel that domestic violence may be justified. In the countries in which UNDP operates PVE programmes, that figure is 40.26 percent.

<sup>41</sup> [World Values Survey](#) data for 2021 finds that globally on average, only 46.8 percent of people agree that the concept that “women have the same rights as men” is an essential characteristic of democracy. In the countries in which UNDP operates PVE programmes, the number is even lower, at 38.3 percent.

<sup>42</sup> UNDP and UN Women, ‘Conflicting Identities: The Nexus between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia’ (New York, UNDP and UN Women, 2020). Available at <https://www1.undp.org/content/tolerance-and-diversity/en/home/publications/conflicting-identities.html>.





**THIS  
WORKS  
FOR  
PVE:**

## **Non-violent communication to address harmful masculinities and gender norms that underpin violent extremism and to promote resilience.**

In Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka, UNDP partners with UN Women to teach non-violent communication (NVC) skills to local leaders and women. Data on measurable changes in attitudes towards gender equality, tolerance, and attitudes towards violence are produced through pre/post surveys of the group who received this NVC training. In addition, UNDP provides robust training to support youth creators in producing high-quality alternative content, including on gender norms. UNDP also conducts social media monitoring and shares the information with government and media partners (Institute of Mass Media) to support the development and tailoring of alternative narratives and preventive policies. ●

Working Group of the Global Compact as well as the Oslo III conference, which profiled the work of seven women pioneering new frontiers in PVE. Gender now features

**over 300  
percent  
more**

more prominently in global policy on PVE: the [2021 Review of the Global UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy](#) references gender over 300 percent more than did the 2018 Review.<sup>43</sup>

**Programming:** UNDP works to empower women's and girls' leadership and meaningful participation in PVE efforts. UNDP engaged women's organizations in the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, to ensure that women have leading roles in defining the strategic approach to PVE in the region. UNDP also supports women's active roles in advancing preventive efforts at local level, including community-based reintegration.

To promote women's economic empowerment, UNDP Sudan delivered projects in which women were the main participants across five states. This included support to improve women's economic status through developing small business initiatives (e.g. soap-making, food processing, mobile repair and electrical equipment repair), which was offered to 250 participants, of whom

78 percent were women, as well as a Village Saving and Loans initiative reaching 78 people, of whom all were women.

To ensure a gender-sensitive approach, UNDP Indonesia conducted research on women's role in promoting tolerance, as well as in perpetuating intolerance and extremism. The research identified challenges and opportunities in providing effective support to build women's resilience to violent extremism and ability to realize their potential as peacebuilders. This research was women-led: 7 of the 9-person research team were women and 92 percent of the informants providing data were women. UNDP used this research to design activities to promote women's resilience against extremism, including through engagement of women-led organizations in development, monitoring and implementation of PVE NAPs.

To help change the harmful masculinities and gender norms that underpin violent extremism, UNDP partnered with UN Women to teach non-violent communication skills to 60 local leaders and women in **Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka**. This initiative resulted in measurable changes in attitudes towards gender equality, tolerance and attitudes towards violence:

<sup>43</sup> The Seventh *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review (A/RES/75/291)* of 2021 contains 13 references to gender, compared with just 3 in the Sixth Review (A/72/840) in 2018.

UNDP partnered with UN Women to teach non-violent communication skills to **60 local leaders and women** in **Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka**.

This initiative resulted in measurable changes in attitudes towards gender equality, tolerance and attitudes towards violence.



- The number of participants who believed that men are better suited for politics and decision-making than women decreased by 22 percent.
- The number of participants who said that they can sit with a person with whom they are angry and discuss the issue increased by 17 percent.
- The number of participants who believed that violence is the only way to defeat VE decreased by 83 percent.

## THIS WORKS FOR PVE:

### Empowering women's organizations to engage in insider mediation and PVE policy development.

In the Philippines, UNDP supports women peacebuilders in forming a women's insider mediation network (Women Insider Mediators–Rapid Action and Mobilization Platform, WIM-RAMP) to identify and respond to incidences of conflict and early signs of radicalization at local level. UNDP also supports women's organizations to engage with government partners in creating and executing PVE policy, including by providing data to inform design and implementation.

UNDP supports WIM-RAMP members to develop M&E skills, so that CSOs can: 1) progressively build an evidence base for their work on prevention and credibly advocate for a shift away from a securitized approach to VE; and 2) proactively protect their voices from being marginalized in policy discussions through having data to 'make the case' for investment to address the deprivations they observe at local level.

Women's peacebuilding organizations now have a formal role in monitoring the implementation of the PVE NAP, sharing a platform with national security officials. CSO-supported data collection and analysis has succeeded in influencing service delivery. An assessment conducted by WIM-RAMP members resulted in distribution of relief and assistance to more than 1,000 families. From 2020 to 2021, there has been a 24 percent reduction in incidences of extremist violence in the country.<sup>44</sup> Group grievances (a measure of divisions between different groups in society and their differing access to services, resources and inclusion in political processes) have been reduced by 3 percent.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Data are drawn from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), from 2020 to 2021. Available at <https://acleddata.com/#/dashboard>.

<sup>45</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, "Group grievance indicator", Positive Peace Index. The indicator reduced from 4.07 to 3.93 between 2019 to 2020 (according to most recent data sets).

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## Lessons learned

- **Non-violent communication is an effective strategy to shift harmful gender norms.**
- **Engaging diverse ‘gender champions’, including youth, men and boys, is critical to address the gendered aspects of (P)VE**, to shift normative power dynamics and create an enabling environment for women’s and girl’s participation in PVE related decision-making spaces.
- **More context-specific research is needed to understand the specific attitudes and behaviours that underpin harmful gender power structures** and create opportunities to address them.

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## Future engagement

- Contribute to the **evidence base on barriers and opportunities to increasing women’s meaningful participation** in and active contribution to local PVE initiatives, including through application of behavioural science to capture and build on attitudinal change.
- Establish regional network(s) to **enable women’s organizations’ active learning exchanges and role on PVE.**
- Continue to **mainstream gender-responsive approaches throughout PVE portfolio areas**, including MHPSS, faith-based development, insider mediation, addressing hate speech and applying behavioural insights.

# VII. PVE through Youth Engagement and Empowerment

## Key achievements:

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Youth-focused PVE interventions in **15 countries.**

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Youth-led research for PVE initiated in three countries.

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Peacebuilding Fund Global Thematic Review on Local Peacebuilding highlights UNDP youth-led PVE M&E initiatives as global best practice. [World Data Forum](#) showcases UNDP PVE youth-led M&E.



## Context

The youthful profile of VEGs' posture and of many of their recruits has often created a narrow concern over youth vulnerability to violent extremism. UNDP recognizes that only a minority of young people are engaged in such violence. UNDP stresses the need for a careful and nuanced understanding of youth engagement in VEGs, taking into account coercive factors including forced recruitment. Youth are, in fact, often the victims of the violence perpetuated by extremist groups, and yet they are also subject to excessive security measures used to counter VEGs' activities. UNDP argues for a new conception of youth engagement in PVE that embraces youth aspirations for a productive life in a healthy society<sup>46</sup> and builds youth capacity to create that society, by actively engaging youth in design, delivery and advocacy for PVE policies and programmes.

## UNDP engagement

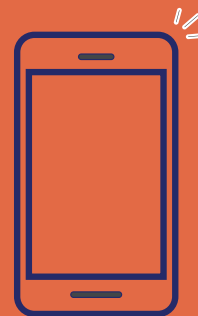
UNDP PVE programmes provide positive alternatives to meet the same needs and aspirations to which violent extremist groups tend to appeal: income, adventure, entertainment and the opportunity to contribute to the making of a better world. A key focus of these activities is to enhance young people's:

- Capacities and opportunities to shape policies, programmes, plans, strategies and legislation related to PVE.
- Access to economic opportunities.
- Digital literacy and critical thinking, to increase resilience to violent extremist narratives.
- Capacity to implement (online and offline) activities to address drivers of violent extremism.

## Achievements

In 2021, UNDP implemented youth-focused PVE interventions in 15 countries, aimed at empowering youth who may be 'at risk' of violent extremism. For example, UNDP **Tanzania** supported 400 vulnerable youth to start their own income-generating activities (e.g. soap-making); 15 young people subsequently secured

In **Maldives** and **Sri Lanka**, the United Creatives project supported **40 creative youth aged between 18 and 30** to become members of a network of influential youth leaders creating impactful positive digital content and celebrating diversity.



jobs from local authorities and 120 became Peace Ambassadors at local level. UNDP supported a cross-border project in **Burkina Faso** and **Mali** that engaged youth in the development and implementation of local PVE community action plans. The project resulted in an increase of confidence between young people, communities and authorities and improved information on the obstacles for young people in accessing services and opportunities such as microcredit. UNDP **Morocco** helped to fight online radicalization of young people, resulting in 58 percent of 124 young leaders increasing their knowledge about the prevention of violent behaviour and the promotion of tolerance. UNDP **Thailand** empowered young LGBTI people, stateless persons and ethnic minorities to produce the You, Me, We, Us online exhibition, which invites viewers to connect with people from diverse communities through stories of their everyday lives, challenges and cultural traditions. The exhibition aimed to enhance the Thai public's general understanding of issues relating to ethnic minorities and the dignity of diversity. The exhibition received more than 24,000 visitors and reached more than 514,214 people on social media. In 2022, the exhibition is being used in advocacy for a parliamentary debate on legislation to promote ethnic minority rights. In **Maldives** and **Sri Lanka**, the United Creatives project supported 40 creative youth aged between 18 and 30 to become members of a network of influential youth leaders creating impactful positive digital content and celebrating diversity. The selected influencers received a 10-week virtual training course, along with mentorship and tools to build digital impact, which included tailored masterclasses from experts in communication

<sup>46</sup> UNDP, Frontlines: Young People at the Forefront of Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism (New York, UNDP, 2019). Available at <https://www.undp.org/library/frontlines>.

and peacebuilding, civil society leaders and representatives from social media platforms. The programme helped to create an active network of influential youth leaders and the top-scoring projects received funding to help their creative ideas come alive.

Their campaigns received more than **250,000** Facebook page and video views and **70,630** post engagements.



## THIS WORKS FOR PVE:

### Inclusive dialogue platforms at community level engaging youth.

In Mali, UNDP supports inclusive community structures to facilitate dialogue and consensus building among state representatives, different communities, and different religious and age groups. These dialogue structures are supported to implement activities to build trust and address VE, including cultural and sports events, alternative narratives radio broadcasts, community capacity-building on mediation and conflict resolution, and inter-religious dialogue. These trust-building activities are part of PVE community action plans that form part of the PVE NAP, which is supported by a Permanent Secretariat and has an M&E and coordination function that connects national and community peace infrastructures. Youth leaders are engaged in monitoring and implementing PVE NAPs/strategies. The M&E function involves field missions for national authorities to meet local actors. In August 2021, 101 local actors participated, including 30 community leaders, 25 women and 22 young leaders.<sup>47</sup>



Surveys show an increase in level of trust in state actors in several areas,



and a reduction in number of those who perceive violence to be a legitimate means of resolving disputes.

Observation of everyday signs of success include more frequent interaction between different communities around social events such as weddings, cultural activities and economic activities, as well as communities' participation in weekly fairs "without major fear". ●

<sup>47</sup> Note that while these community level structures support resilience at local level, they do so against what the UNDP Country Office calls a "menacing backdrop of VE groups and the mutations of armed groups, coupled with the existence of structural underlying risk factors, such as corruption, impunity, poverty and unemployment".

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## Lessons learned

- **Data collection, analysis and communication capacities of youth peacebuilders needs to be strengthened**, so that they can participate in policy fora as subject matter experts whose views must be taken seriously.
- **Youth capacity to measure the impact of digital peacebuilding initiatives needs to be strengthened.** As a result of the pandemic, youth activism 'turned digital'. Youth activists have expressed the will to understand the impact of these initiatives, beyond simply monitoring likes, shares and comments.

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## Future engagement

- **Enhance youth capacity to address VE**, through provision of tailored and capacity development support.
- **Enhance M&E capacities of youth peacebuilders.** Support efforts to measure the impact of online youth activism and draw lessons to amplify messages and further translate narratives, including to inform policymaking and programming.

# VIII. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Prevention and Peacebuilding

## Key achievements:

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Global consultations on MHPSS in peacebuilding engaged more than **100 participants.**

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Guidance note developed on integrating MHPSS into peacebuilding.

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MHPSS integrated in prevention and peacebuilding programmes in **11 countries.**





## Context

There is a growing understanding that prolonged crisis and violent conflict have devastating consequences on the mental health and well-being of communities and individuals and negatively impact their resilience. In recent years, significant advances, though still *ad hoc*, have been made towards including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in humanitarian and development settings. Improving psychosocial well-being and access to psychosocial support in crisis-affected contexts is essential to help sustain peace and prevent future violence. The UN Secretary-General's 2020 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace emphasized the need to better integrate MHPSS into peacebuilding. UNDP has undertaken several policy, programming and partnership initiatives to support this objective and has found evidence to affirm its importance: an analysis of UNDP PVE projects that integrate MHPSS found that MHPSS integration enhances the achievement of development and peacebuilding objectives. Given this finding, UNDP aims to support the structural integration of MHPSS as part of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

## UNDP engagement

UNDP aims to support a shift in the global conception of and approach to peacebuilding by systematically considering and addressing the mental health impacts of violent conflict and its drivers. To this end, UNDP has adopted a three-pronged approach that focuses on developing policy, enhancing programming and building partnerships to further support the integration of MHPSS in prevention and peacebuilding. These efforts build on the learning of seven UNDP PVE programmes that integrated MHPSS in 2021,<sup>48</sup> as well as on the expertise of humanitarian, health and development practitioners. Efforts are aligned with the new UNDP Strategic Plan (2022–2025; 3.2.2), which for the first time prioritizes MHPSS as a key strategy to effectively build resilience to risk and uncertainty, and as an essential capacity for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

## Achievements

**Global policy and knowledge development:** UNDP developed a draft guidance note on Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support into Peacebuilding. The guidance note makes the case for a principled ap-

proach to integrating MHPSS into peacebuilding that builds on commitments common to the health, development and peacebuilding communities, such as the imperative to 'do no harm' and the need to prioritize national and local ownership. To build a learning community around integrating MHPSS in peacebuilding and to ensure an inclusive and participatory approach to developing the guidance note, UNDP conducted a mapping of UNDP PVE programmes, a survey, and global consultation engaging more than 100 experts.

**Capacity support:** To assist UNDP Country Offices in accessing relevant expertise, UNDP CPPRI/PVE initiated an ExpRes Roster on MHPSS in Prevention and Peacebuilding. UNDP also developed a partnership with Beyond Conflict—a CSO pioneering the application of brain science to enable new approaches to reducing conflict, promoting tolerance and facilitating positive social change—to support the integration of MHPSS into PVE activities in Central Asia.

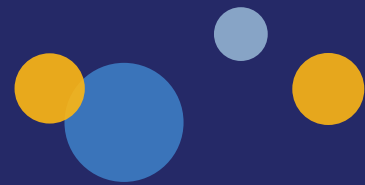
These policy, knowledge and capacity support initiatives aim to lay the foundation for efforts to promote systematic integration of MHPSS into prevention and peacebuilding in the coming years, and to further enhance the efforts of UNDPs' 11 Country Offices, which began supporting the provision of MHPSS to vulnerable populations in 2021. This included the following types of interventions:

**Building the capacity of national authorities to provide specialized services to meet the MHPSS needs of especially vulnerable populations in detention or in transition to civilian life (prisoners, parolees, returnees and former fighters).** UNDP supports the provision of specialized, one-to-one MHPSS interventions tailored to the individual needs of persons in particularly highly stressful contexts: those in prison and those in the process of transitioning from prison to civilian life or from violent extremist groups to communities. These

UNDP supported psychosocial assessments of **23 probation clients** (13 men and 10 women) and **10 families** of those in probation. This data was used as the basis for tailored psychosocial support, which was delivered to 100 probation clients (25 women and 75 men).



<sup>48</sup> The countries include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tanzania and Yemen.



## MHPSS:

### Improving lives for displaced communities.

In Iraq, UNDP provided MHPSS to **100 people** from the Yazidi community following their forced expulsion from their homes. This resulted in objective **improvements in resilience, anxiety, depression and symptoms of trauma** (as measured by scientifically validated scales). For example, one of the beneficiaries, Nawaf, a father of nine children, affirmed the positive impact on his daily life and well-being after receiving MHPSS support and business and vocational training from UNDP. ●

populations are among the most vulnerable in society and face acute MHPSS needs and risks of radicalization or engagement in violence.<sup>49</sup> To help national authorities to respond to prisoners' MHPSS needs, UNDP **Kyrgyzstan** developed a training module to improve probation officers' knowledge and skills to develop psychological portraits of probation clients; provide social, legal and psychological assistance; and increase understanding of the role of probation authorities in resocialization and reintegration. Through CSO partnerships, UNDP supported psychosocial assessments of 23 probation clients (13 men and 10 women) and 10 families of those in probation. This data was used as the basis for tailored psychosocial support, which was delivered to 100 probation clients (25 women and 75 men). The support was bolstered and sustained through follow-up training that included key topics to respond to individuals' psychosocial needs—including competencies to engage in civic processes (e.g. navigating bureaucracies to claim entitlements), overcome stigma, manage finances, seek employment and acquire business skills and knowledge. Overall, the trainings enabled the probation authorities to develop capacity on how to: i) understand and address the psychosocial needs of the vulnerable prison/parolee population; ii) develop individual rehabilitation programmes based on psychological diagnosis; and iii) provide tailored probation services. As a result of the intervention, for the first time in Kyrgyzstan, a human rights-compliant system for individual risk assessment and classification of offenders has been devel-

oped to serve as the basis for individualized prisoner rehabilitation programmes. The system is currently going through a pilot phase. Upon completion of the pilot, the system will be fully introduced into the country's prison system.

As a result of the intervention, for the first time in **Kyrgyzstan**, a human rights-compliant system for individual risk assessment and classification of offenders has been developed to serve as the basis for individualized prisoner rehabilitation programmes.



**Empowering local actors to address the mental health and psychosocial needs of communities affected by violent extremism.** UNDP empowers local actors, including women's organizations and CSOs, to meet the MHPSS needs of their communities. Often, this support is provided as part of existing interventions that are targeted to meet other needs, such as dialogue, education or livelihood support. These interventions are typically tailored towards groups vulnerable to radicalization, and they provide a vehicle for the provision of additional support that promotes psychosocial well-being, such as

<sup>49</sup> Studies ([see here, here, and here](#)) demonstrate that when prisoners are not provided with sufficient psychosocial or rehabilitation support, their risk of re-offending increases. Experience also demonstrates that where returnees are not provided with adequate support to reintegrate into communities, violence may ensue.

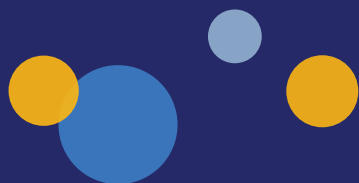
<sup>50</sup> This activity was conducted under the EU-funded joint UNDP-UNOCT STRIVE Asia project.

mentoring, peer support, and counselling delivered in a group setting. At the same time, adding MHPSS components can increase vulnerable people's capacity to engage with and benefit from other forms of training and support. In 2021, UNDP provided MHPSS services to youth in 10 countries, often adding value to existing support delivery mechanisms by providing more comprehensive forms of support. For example, in **Tanzania**, UNDP provided community-based support including mentorship, livelihood support and dialogues. Mentorship aimed to increase tolerance and reduce the risk that young people would engage in violent extremist behaviour through developing life skills, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, coping skills and confidence as well as through supporting career development. An evaluation found that the project succeeded in positively changing participants' mindsets. However, without sustained support to secure meaningful livelihood opportunities, positive mindsets remained fragile, highlighting the complementarity of mentorship and livelihood support.

**Building the capacity of front-line service providers to offer MHPSS services and to manage their own mental health and well-being.** UNDP recognizes that peacebuilders and development practitioners (including from UN agencies and international and local civil

In **Tanzania**, UNDP provided community-based support including mentorship, livelihood support and dialogues. Mentorship aimed to increase tolerance and reduce the risk that young people would engage in violent extremist behaviour through developing life skills, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, coping skills and confidence as well as through supporting career development. An evaluation found that the **project succeeded in positively changing participants' mindsets.**

CSOs), community representatives and front-line service providers serve in challenging contexts and face significant pressure. They risk compassion fatigue and burnout. To 'help the helpers' to remain resilient and sustain their own capacity to serve their communities, UNDP supports provision of MHPSS skills-building for peacebuilding organizations to use on themselves—not simply to deliver to clients. For example, in **Turkmenistan**, UNDP supported provision of 'psychological first aid' to enable front-line service workers to sustain good mental health.



## MHPSS:

### Contextualizing MHPSS interventions.

Integrating MHPSS in prevention and peacebuilding requires a context-specific approach. Complex differences and interactions between MHPSS and culture, faith, gender roles, and so on influence mental health and MHPSS support at the local level. These need to be understood in their local contexts, including relevant terminology: words with an agreed meaning in some contexts (e.g. 'depression,' 'trauma,' 'anxiety,' 'stress') may not be easily understood in other places, even when effort is made to translate them. Gender norms (in particular, norms that may deter men from expressing emotion or seeking support) can hamper access to or provision of MHPSS services. Such norms should be identified through analysis and incorporated into strategies for delivering MHPSS services, and awareness-raising campaigns should be considered in order to change perceptions on mental health issues and psychosocial support. ●

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## Lessons learned

- **Expertise and capacities on MHPSS within UNDP need to be developed.** UNDP often procures MHPSS services from external sources with relevant expertise. While partnerships with civil society organizations, businesses and national authorities are essential to ensure sustainable access to relevant services, and contextualized provision of MHPSS services become part of UNDP-supported programmes, internal capacity should be built to enable UNDP practitioners to provide such expertise directly or provide relevant oversight and support for the design and delivery of quality MHPSS-related interventions.
- **Further effort is needed to enhance impact measurement of MHPSS interventions.** A number of relevant simple tools for measuring the impact of MHPSS interventions exist, including tools used effectively by PVE and health practitioners in many contexts. However, no agreement yet exists on which are most suitable for integrating MHPSS in peacebuilding and PVE interventions, and further practitioner guidance and research is needed to identify and apply relevant measurement approaches. In addition, conducting scientifically rigorous, high-quality research to prove the impact of MHPSS on resilience will be useful to accelerate policy change.
- **Risk of further stigmatizing those with a mental illness, as well as people considered at risk of violent extremism, must be considered** throughout any intervention.
- **MHPSS should be integrated within comprehensive support packages.** MHPSS should be provided in conjunction with other elements such as livelihood support, community dialogue and alternative narratives. Evidence suggests that combining different types of initiatives to meet multiple needs of 'at-risk' persons is more effective.
- **Multi-year interventions and sustained engagements should be planned.** Experience suggests that young people, especially, take time to be willing to share their emotions and concerns, particularly in group settings, and that the long-term impact of MHPSS interventions is unknown. UNDP, as a long-term development partner, is

ideally placed to plan sustainable approaches based on stakeholder engagement, contextualization and efforts to shift the norms that deter access to MHPSS services.

- **Addiction is a key driver of violent extremism in some contexts**, so understanding effective strategies to address addiction is important.

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## Future engagement

To build on results over the coming year(s), UNDP's global PVE portfolio may invest in the following areas:

- **Increase access to MHPSS capacity and expertise:** In addition to the new ExpRes Roster (which Country Offices will be able to access in mid-2022), UNDP is engaging technical experts through partnerships with think tanks and CSOs to boost evidence and practice-based programming, as well as to strengthen the integration of different elements of MHPSS and PVE, such as gender equality, faith, climate change and online engagement. For example, UNDP engaged Beyond Conflict to begin supporting five Country Offices<sup>51</sup> in Central Asia with hands-on technical support in integrating MHPSS into their PVE activities under the STRIVE Asia Project. This process will be documented in a lessons learned report so that other Country Offices can learn from the opportunities and challenges faced in the region and take inspiration for developing and honing their own initiatives.
- **Build links between experts across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding (HDP) nexus**, to promote coherent approaches to MHPSS provision, particularly in contexts of fragility and conflict.
- **Cultivate government ownership.** While there is significant interest and engagement in MHPSS for peacebuilding among CSOs and academic institutions, government authorities are less engaged. Efforts to promote government ownership of the MHPSS agenda is critical to achieve a sustainable impact.

<sup>51</sup> Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

# IX. Religion and Faith-based Dialogue

## Key achievements:

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Supported religious actors, women of faith and faith-based organizations in **23 countries**.

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Supported major global convening fora on faith and development.

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Partnered with Google to enhance the reach and impact of religious actors' alternative narratives.



## Context

In contexts affected by violent extremism, religion matters. World Values Survey (WVS) data shows that religion plays a more critical role in contexts affected by violent extremism than it does in other places. For example, 2021 WVS data suggests that, on average, 92 percent of people in the countries in which UNDP operates PVE programmes consider religion to be 'important' or 'very important'. This is 25 percent higher than the global average. In countries in which UNDP operates PVE programmes, 45 percent of people attend religious services more than once per week—43 percent higher than the global average. The percentage who say they are religious is 73.25 percent, 19 percent higher than the global average. In these countries, 66 percent of the population pray at least once a day, 37.5 percent higher than the global average.

Religious leaders and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are highly valued and present in people's lives as sources of information, trust and influence over thought and action. So, engaging with them is critical to delivering relevant programming in contexts affected by violent extremism, and is proven to increase the impact of PVE programming.<sup>52</sup> In addition, research shows that cultural identity and connectedness are key resilience factors.<sup>53</sup> Cultural identity and connectedness include: familiarity with one's own cultural heritage, practices, beliefs, traditions, values and norms, including religious knowledge; the feeling of being anchored in one's own cultural beliefs and practices; the sense that one's culture is accepted by the wider community; and the ability to share one's cultural identity with others. Many violent extremist groups define themselves and their

objectives in relation to religion, often using distorted interpretations of faith to justify their call to action.

## UNDP engagement

UNDP advocates for engaging faith-based actors as powerful allies in PVE efforts, through its active involvement in relevant policy fora such as the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development. At country level, UNDP builds religious actors' capacity to tackle violent extremism and intolerance, including through establishing community-level platforms to promote social cohesion, tolerance, dialogue, non-violence and non-violent communication; working with the educational sector and the media; and enhancing religious actors' role as insider mediators. UNDP also builds religious actors' capacity to support detection of and response to early signs of radicalization and creates opportunities for religious actors to work with government, civil society, academic, private sector and other institutions to co-design and deliver strategies to address violent extremism.

## Achievements

**Policy:** In 2021, UNDP supported the UN's engagement with religious actors and advocated for partnership with FBOs and religious actors in global fora, through events organized in collaboration with the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), the Sultanate of Oman, Religions for Peace, the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (OSAPG).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> A randomized control trial study in Nigeria found that engaging religious leaders to spread messages of forgiveness for former Boko Haram fighters increased individuals' willingness to accept former Boko Haram combatants into their communities. The study demonstrates that messages from religious leaders increased people's support for reintegration processes, willingness to interact with FTFs in social, political and economic life, and perceptions of widespread community support for reintegration. Innovations for Poverty Action, 'Improving Community Acceptance of Returnees from Boko Haram in Nigeria: What Role Do Trusted Authorities Play?' (Washington D.C., IPA, 2018). Available at <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/improving-community-acceptance-returnees-boko-haram-nigeria-what-role-do-trusted-authorities>.

<sup>53</sup> Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism Measure (BRAVE-14; J2D). Available at <https://brave.resilienceresearch.org/>.

<sup>54</sup> 'Setting the Norm: Promoting Grassroots Efforts for Sustainable Peace and Development', co-hosted by UNDP, KAICIID and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers; 'The Day of Tolerance Celebration' hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and Religions for Peace, in collaboration with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers; and 'Faith and Diplomacy: Strategic Reflections on Religiously Inspired Global Efforts Towards Building Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies', organized by UNAOC and Religions for Peace; and 'High-level Development Dialogues Event', co-hosted with UNDP and OSAPG.

## At country level, UNDP:



Supported religious actors, women of faith and faith-based organizations in **23 countries**<sup>55</sup> to develop innovative ways to contribute towards building tolerance, respect for diversity, and social cohesion.



Built capacity of religious and/or government institutions in **11 countries**<sup>56</sup> to tackle violent extremism and intolerance.



Supported faith-based actors in **seven countries**<sup>57</sup> to better understand and tackle extremist messaging, misinformation and hate speech.



Created opportunities for religious leaders, women and youth of faith in **14 countries**<sup>58</sup> to create spaces for social cohesion, dialogue and non-violence at the community level.

**Support to enable religious actors, women of faith and faith-based organizations to promote tolerance, respect for diversity, and social cohesion in communities:** For example, in **Indonesia**, UNDP supported more than 150 moderate Islamic scholars to build their capacity to produce and disseminate alternative and peaceful messages that counteract the appeal of violent extremism on digital platforms, as well at mosques and madrasas. To further enhance the reach and impact of their offline and online action against hate speech, UNDP partnered with media actors to support the syndication of alternative narratives content produced by supported FBOs, and partnered with Google Indonesia and the Wahid Foundation to implement the Salam Forum, which is an initiative to support moderate Islamic scholars in producing and disseminating peaceful messages online.

**Support government-affiliated religious institutions to promote tolerance and increase resilience to violent**

**extremism:** For example, in **Somalia**, UNDP supported both federal and state-level religious affairs ministries in establishing a countrywide network of like-minded religious leaders working to reduce the spread of violent extremist content and to promote the peaceful and tolerant message of Islam. The capacity of these religious leaders to encourage peace and address cases of extremism through dialogue was enhanced through training on Islamic principles of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Members of the network were encouraged to analyse extremist propaganda and develop and disseminate religious counter-narratives. Emphasis was placed on supporting the victims of VEG attacks. In commemoration of the 14 October 2017 bombing, 734 traditional chairs were embroidered with the victims' names and congregational prayers were offered across Mogadishu. The commemoration was accompanied by a digital communications campaign led by the federal Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs. Under

<sup>55</sup> Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Morocco, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Tanzania and Uzbekistan.

<sup>56</sup> Bangladesh, Cameroon, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Tanzania.

<sup>57</sup> Bangladesh, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

<sup>58</sup> Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chad, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Tanzania.

the slogan #NamesNotNumbers, the Ministry advocated for coordinated support for victims of violent extremism in Somalia, including through *zakat*.

**Support religious leaders to collaborate with women, youth and government institutions to address violent extremism:** For example, in **Kenya**, UNDP trained 75 religious leaders and teachers (of whom 55 were women) and 135 government officers (of whom 60 were women) in cooperation with the National Counterterrorism Centre in order to strengthen partnership with communities to reduce the risk of recruitment and radicalization. UNDP supported the Government of **Pakistan** to include ‘mainstream’ subjects like English, Science and Mathematics in the curriculum of religious seminaries, so as to ensure that the more than 3.2 million students studying in 32,000 religious seminaries across

Pakistan are better prepared to gain employment upon completion of study. UNDP also supported the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and the Department of Religious Affairs to provide 223 students in selected religious seminaries with livelihood skills development opportunities, and organized inter-youth dialogues between young people from seminaries and those studying in mainstream educational institutions. The economic component of the project helped to expand opportunities for economic integration for seminary students, who often have very limited career options because of the narrow curriculum they study. Meanwhile, the social pillar helped to increase seminary students’ understanding of alternative points of view about religion, politics and social issues through direct interaction with their counterparts in universities.

## Lessons learned


- **Religious actors are sources of authority and social influencers** who can promote shifts in attitudes towards various grievances and beliefs about ‘otherness’ that underpin violent extremism. They can also correct distorted interpretations of faith used by VEGs to radicalize. And they hold the trust and authority within communities to effectively engage people in dialogue and debate about violent extremist views, offering and advocating for moderate religious viewpoints as credible alternatives. Religious actors are therefore essential partners for effective prevention. They are critically important participants in inclusive and whole-of-society approaches to PVE and they must be meaningfully engaged in PVE policy and action.
- **The nexus between religion, MHPSS and PVE needs to be strengthened.** Religion enhances many individuals’ and communities’ capacity to cope with psychosocial challenges; for many people, religion and spirituality provide a sense of hope and purpose which can positively contribute to resilience. Places of worship are often sought out by people seeking immediate help in moments of crisis and during inner struggle, making religious actors first responders on mental well-being. However, MHPSS practitioners remain somewhat hesitant to integrate faith perspectives into MHPSS practice due to concerns surrounding ineffective or harmful coping mechanisms.<sup>59</sup>

## Future engagement

- **Support the sharing and inclusion of faith-based perspectives and actors in MHPSS in prevention and peacebuilding efforts.** Religion and faith-sensitive prevention interventions start with recognizing that religious practices, such as praying, can be an element of psychosocial support which should be complemented, rather than replaced, by other forms of MHPSS. A religion-sensitive approach puts people and communities affected by conflict and disaster—and their rights, needs and dignity—at the centre of MHPSS responses, since it helps adapt assistance to people’s specific social and cultural contexts, of which religion is an integral part.
- **Create common principles for engaging religious leaders and faith-based organizations in PVE efforts.** Such principles could serve as a tool and guide for UNDP Country Offices in navigating common risks, challenges and opportunities when working with faith-based actors and organizations on PVE.

<sup>59</sup> UNDP, ‘Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Into Peacebuilding’, Guidance Note (New York, UNDP, 2022). Available at <https://www.undp.org/publications/integrating-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-peacebuilding>.





**THIS  
WORKS  
FOR  
PVE:**

**Engaging religious leaders to challenge extremist narratives.**

In Somalia, UNDP has supported the Ministry of Religious Affairs in establishing a countrywide network of like-minded religious leaders to reduce the spread of violent extremist content and promote the peaceful and tolerant message of Islam. This network of religious leaders and madrasa teachers acted during the COVID-19 pandemic to share health-related information on prevention and response measures, which was combined with religious guidance for the community. In responding to COVID-19, religious leaders have been encouraged to incorporate messages of peace, solidarity, human sympathy and support in a time of global crisis, and to specifically counter misinformation spread by al-Shabaab that the virus is being spread by government officials and foreigners. ●

# X. Addressing Hate Speech and Online Radicalization

## Key achievements:

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Action to address hate speech

supported by **40 UNDP Country Offices**

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Policy brief and guidance note on the risk-informed use of online data for PVE and addressing hate speech.

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Six Country Offices use Google Ads, leading to **56,000 engagements** with positive alternative narratives and content to raise awareness on the issue of hate speech and/or information pollution.



## Context

Over the past 75 years, from Rwanda and Bosnia to Cambodia, hate speech has preceded atrocity crimes, including genocide. Hate speech undermines the tolerance, inclusion and respect for diversity that underpin social cohesion and human rights.

The UN's [Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) defines hate speech as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.” At the Strategy's launch in 2019, calling attention to an exponential growth in hate speech, including through digital technology, the UN Secretary-General called for action to address its root causes, in line with the prevention vision. Since then, addressing hate speech has become an even more pressing issue, with the onset of [COVID-19-related hate speech](#) and the spread of misinformation and disinformation online. Hate speech is also prevalent in traditional media, at community meetings and political rallies, in places of worship, and elsewhere. For their own political or financial gain, actors use disinformation to manipulate and exploit the heightened vulnerabilities created by COVID-19 as well as by pre-existing social tensions and divisions, further encouraging the spread of hate speech.

## UNDP engagement

As hate and extremism increase in parallel with the exponential growth of social media, UNDP's PVE portfolio has grown to address hate speech online and offline. The link between hate speech (especially online) and radicalization, which can lead to acts of violent extremism by a minority of those exposed to such negative content, poses significant concerns and affects all countries around the globe equally. To address this emerging concern, UNDP supports the development of global policy frameworks, as well as knowledge tools on how to implement them. These efforts draw on and aim to support concrete steps taken to address hate speech in more than 40 countries and focus on:



Increasing understanding of hate speech and its impact on societies through monitoring efforts.



Identifying, through monitoring of online content, the **underlying grievances that lead to hate speech.**



Designing, identifying and scaling up programmes to prioritize **addressing the drivers and root causes of hate speech**



Offering **alternative and positive narratives** to counter hate speech.

UNDP's approach is grounded in:

**Expression:** Freedom of expression and access to information are fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed by other customary international legal instruments, and therefore binding on all governments. They form the essential foundation of a peaceful and prosperous society. International law sets specific limits on free speech in the case of incitement to violence based on national, racial or religious differences. UNDP supports efforts to address hate speech that preserve expression and information rights, by providing effective alternatives to restricting expression, and thus avoiding the costs to society inherent in the loss of space for open exchange of ideas, information, debate and discussion on which peace and progress depend. In practice, this means that UNDP aims to address hate speech through 'more

speech', by empowering the marginalized people who are frequently the subjects of hate speech to speak for themselves, and by supporting peace activists, including youth and women-led organizations, in communicating alternative narratives that celebrate shared values, the benefits of diversity and the dignity of all people in diverse societies.

**Education:** UNDP supports digital literacy efforts that equip young people in particular with skills to identify hate speech and respond to it effectively, such as by flagging it for removal.

**Evidence:** UNDP's efforts to address hate speech are grounded in evidence about the grievances it exploits, the groups to which it is targeted, and the audience(s) it attracts. UNDP uses this information (from online and offline research) to frame targeted alternative narratives and digital literacy efforts. UNDP applies insights from research to support the design and implementation of effective initiatives to address identified root causes and impacts of hate speech, for example through public campaigns to address misinformation and initiatives to address the grievances exploited by violent extremist content.

**Ethics:** Hate speech may be monitored through digital technologies and online data, including through the use of artificial intelligence (AI). These innovative approaches present an important opportunity to understand and address the development drivers of grievances that lead

to hate speech. Relying on AI tools, however, also creates a risk that large volumes of data may be used in a way that undermines rights to privacy and security. UNDP invests in understanding the opportunities and risks associated with these new technologies and in developing ethical frameworks and capacities to use them (and the data derived from them) in a way that is aligned with human rights.

**Engagement:** UNDP uses its convening role to bring together key actors whose engagement is necessary to address hate speech. This includes media, civil society (including youth-led CSOs), students, parliamentarians, faith-based actors, creative professionals and technology companies.

## Achievements

**Policy and knowledge development:** To improve knowledge on the opportunities and challenges associated with new technologies and recommend practical solutions for responsible use of online data and AI, UNDP produced a policy brief entitled 'From Pilots Towards Policies: Utilizing Online Data for Preventing Violent Extremism and Addressing Hate Speech' and a guidance note on the risk-informed utilization of online data for PVE and addressing hate speech, through engagement with PVE practitioners and learning drawn from pilot projects in seven countries<sup>60</sup>. UNDP also pro-



### THIS WORKS FOR PVE:

#### Social media monitoring to support targeted design and delivery of PVE policy and programming, including alternative narratives.

UNDP Bangladesh supports social media monitoring to identify grievances exploited by violent extremists. This is then used to inform: 1) development of targeted youth-led alternative narratives and other peace-building initiatives—as a result of targeted design and distribution, digital alternative narratives recorded a significant increase in reach and engagement; 2) policy development and implementation to address grievances that feature in VE content, including allocation of resources by government entities and investment across the HDP nexus by UN and development partners, to protect and promote rights of refugees, among other things; 3) media reporting.

In Bangladesh, there has been an 8 percent improvement in the Positive Peace Index score.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sudan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, and Thailand

<sup>61</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, Positive Peace Index, 2018–2020 data.

duced a research paper and issue brief on the drivers and impact of hate speech and the role of parliaments in combating hate speech and developed a diagnostic tool and resource hub for online community engagement for PVE.

**Capacity support:** To support Country Office capacity to develop innovative digital strategies to address hate speech, UNDP trained 65 staff to facilitate online dialogues that promote social cohesion and tolerance, address the drivers of hate speech through inter-cultural, inter-faith and inter-religious dialogues empowering youth, women and religious leaders, among others, and promote alternative positive narratives. The masterclasses taught participants about online community engagement methodologies and tools as well as group processes and relationship building. A final evaluation showed that most participants found the masterclasses either very good or excellent in building capacities to support effective online engagement. UNDP also supported 10 Country Offices to use Google Ads to increase the reach of alternative narratives content and to raise awareness on the issue of hate speech and/or information pollution. In 2021, across 6 Country Offices, the Google Ads campaign resulted in more than 56,000 engagements, with close to 50 percent of those engagements on average being from women.

**Country level engagements:** Initiatives to address hate speech were undertaken by 40 UNDP Country Offices in 2021, including efforts in the following areas:

**Use of online data and AI for monitoring and analysis of VE narratives, including hate speech, to feed into early warning and early action systems and evidence-based alternative narratives:** In [Sudan](#), through the Digital X funding mechanism, UNDP partnered with Koe Koe Tech<sup>62</sup> to bring in expertise on web-based AI platforms to monitor and analyse trends in social media around hate speech and/or risk factors and early warning signs for extremism. The pilot project flagged 80,000 Facebook posts and comments. The AI model pre-screens content at scale, increasing the monitoring capacity of CSOs and UNDP, as well as providing existing UNDP crisis-tracking tools with live analytical capabilities. While it is still under development, the tool has demonstrated its ability to enrich contextual analysis and act as a solid basis for conflict analysis and study of emerging trends in social sentiment. Its data can inform UNDP's policy and programming responses to hate speech and to critical events such as elections. In [Paki-](#)

[stan](#), data mining was used to analyse the source and content of top Twitter trends targeting women during specific events such as the annual Women's March and the murder of a social media influencer in the country. This information was used to inform a targeted alternative messaging campaign to counter hypermasculine hate speech against women.

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In Sri Lanka, UNDP, working closely with the Resident Coordinator's Office, has partnered with Hashtag Generation to support the monitoring of dangerous speech online in the country. Monitoring over **1,100 pages** and **100 online fora** led to greater understanding of the ways in which VE groups use hate speech to enhance divisive narratives that foster an 'us vs. them' mentality. Through the development of a **Crisis Risk Dashboard** for media monitoring and early warning, the data collected can inform assessments and risk management for programming and policy.



**Promotion of alternative narratives, through inclusive approaches that engage women, youth and religious actors—including giving a voice to victims of hate speech:** UNDP recognizes that effective strategies to address hate speech must consider the gender, ethnic, age-related and religious dimensions of hate speech. Therefore, UNDP engages diverse stakeholders in addressing hate speech, including government, CSOs, youth and religious actors. For example, in Somalia, UNDP identified emerging hate speech and misinformation spread by VE groups about COVID-19 on social media and, in response, engaged networks of religious leaders in an innovative awareness-raising campaign called 'Clerics vs. COVID' to provide accurate information to local communities, combining critical health information with religious guidance. The intervention influenced one VEG's position on COVID-19, changing its narrative from talking about a disease brought by and for infidels to one offering healthcare advice and support in areas controlled by the group. In [Bangladesh](#), [Indonesia](#) and the [Philippines](#), the third [#ExtremeLives](#) video series shared stories of those affected by violent extremism. A new season developed in [Maldives](#) and [Sri Lanka](#)

<sup>62</sup> Koe Koe Tech is a Myanmar-led organization building IT-based solutions to incitement of violence, hate speech and fake news.

filmed the stories of those who have triumphed over drivers of violent extremism and have become agents of positive change in their communities and countries. ExtremeLives videos have achieved 194,504 active engagements (likes, shares, reactions or comments). UNDP's Bangkok Regional Hub also created new partnerships (with civil society, private sector and academic institutions) to improve and measure the impact of ExtremeLives, including on attitudes and behaviour. Lessons learned from this new initiative (piloted with season 4 content released in 2022) will be shared through UNDP's global practitioner network and beyond.

**Support to strengthen digital literacy and engagement with new and traditional media:** UNDP supported digital civic education to enhance media literacy, critical thinking and knowledge about rights and responsibilities online. These efforts involved supporting work to empower civil society, including online influencers and youth, to engage with new and traditional media for countering hate speech narratives. For example, in **Morocco**, UNDP used a peer-to-peer education approach to train 40 young people on how to think critically about online videos and social media content.

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## Lessons learned

- **Capacities need to be built for monitoring and analysis as well as for linking online data with offline activities.** Hate speech monitoring and sentiment analysis has been a key tool for understanding grievances driving hate speech as well as instigators and outlets of hate speech. UNDP has supported the evolution from manual to automated monitoring by increasing in-house capabilities and facilitating academic and private partnerships. However, limited capacity to build multidisciplinary big-data-driven research teams continues to pose challenges. Hence, there is a need not only to adapt in-house solutions to scale up and save costs, but also to continue to build partners' capabilities in monitoring and analysis. Moreover, since hate speech occurs in both online and offline spaces, online data analysis needs to be applied to inform offline activities, and investment is needed in understanding offline hate speech trends, patterns and intervention areas.
- **There is a need for tailored risk assessment and risk management strategies, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and an evidence base to effectively measure the impact of interventions aimed at addressing hate speech.** UNDP needs to invest in developing more tailored risk assessment and management strategies, as well as M&E frameworks tailored to new technologies like AI. Specifically, human rights risks potentially associated with social media monitoring and use of online data and AI need to be considered and addressed; these risks include perceptions that surveillance is taking place, potential algorithmic biases of AI, and activity design based on limited data sets. In identifying grievances motivating hate speech and

devising strategies to address hate speech, care must be taken to engage women, marginalized communities (especially rural communities with limited access to internet) and other populations most impacted by hate speech. For this purpose, research (involving both online and offline data collection) is critical.

- **Actors across the whole of society must be engaged to address hate speech based on risk assessments.** This includes conducting due diligence to ensure, for example, that social media monitoring efforts (including data collection methods, as well as decisions about how and with whom to share data) and partnerships with private actors (including social media companies and government actors such as parliamentarians and security sector personnel) are guided by ethical considerations grounded in the rights to privacy, data security and freedom of speech.

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## Future engagement

To build on results over the coming year(s), UNDP's global PVE portfolio will invest in the following areas:

- **Measurement:** Building on the Google Ads support initiative, and learning from the ExtremeLives measurement pilot strategy, UNDP will continue to support measurement efforts to improve the impact and reach of alternative narratives. Due diligence frameworks are needed to ensure that partnerships with private sector and government actors are guided by ethical considerations grounded in the rights to privacy, data security and freedom of speech. A conflict-sensitive, human rights-based 'do no harm' approach is critical to prevent the misuse of information from hate speech monitoring shared with government actors.

- **Online-offline support:** Research involving both online and offline data collection is critical to build the evidence base for effectively tailoring and measuring the impact of interventions aimed at addressing hate speech. What is observed and done in the online space should not be removed from offline realities and interventions. UNDP can work with and develop the capacity of civil society partners to address these linkages.
- **Risk management:** Building on the experience of numerous Country Offices, UNDP will continue to support the creation of tailored risk assessment and management frameworks for monitoring and analysing hate speech.
- **Media:** Building on positive experience in several countries, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan and Tanzania, UNDP will engage journalists to address hate speech, including misogynistic narratives and information pollution, and to promote inclusive and cohesive societies.
- **Protection:** Building on experience supporting MHPSS for peacebuilding, UNDP will work to ensure the protection of communities targeted by hate speech, as well as of those collecting and sharing hate speech monitoring data, including by ensuring their physical and mental well-being. Offering MHPSS in the online space can help support victims of hate speech. It can also guide people vulnerable to radicalization and struggling with trauma from actual or perceived grievances towards alternative redress and relief.

# XI. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for PVE

## Key achievements:

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A **50 percent** increase in the number of countries with capacities to produce data related to violent extremism.<sup>63</sup>

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World Data Forum highlights UNDP PVE M&E innovations.

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Peacebuilding Support Office highlights UNDP PVE M&E innovations as global best practice.

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Global UNDP-PVE reporting framework developed; capacity assessment conducted; and proven practices identified.





## Context

The need to enhance monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) of PVE initiatives is well recognized. For example:

- Member States have requested UN entities to assess impact and to “significantly increase availability of quality disaggregated data”, including through civil society partnerships and increased internal M&E capacity.<sup>64</sup>
- Human rights and civil society partners have demanded urgent investment in M&E, to address the implications of a lack of a “scientific basis” for PVE, including an accurate understanding of local needs.<sup>65</sup>
- The UN Secretary-General has highlighted the need for M&E of PVE National Action Plans “to ensur[e] that policies are having the desired impact”,<sup>66</sup> and his 2020 Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace committed to “sufficiently resource and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems” by 2025.<sup>67</sup>
- UNDP’s new Prevention Offer and Strategic Plan (2022–2025) prioritizes investments in strengthening data quality, usage and availability to enable better decision-making.

A focus on M&E aims to ensure that PVE investments are:

- **Targeted** to the specific populations and places most affected by the ‘push and pull’ factors of VE.
- **Nationally owned**, and based on feedback received from communities and institutions about the challenges and opportunities to increase resilience to violent extremism in the places in which they live, work and transact.
- **Able to demonstrate measurable change** in individual lives, institutions and societies. UNDP can then help to build the evidence base on ‘what works’ to effectively prevent violent extremism.

<sup>63</sup> Capacities refer to government, civil society organizations, and/or human rights defenders’ ability to produce, analyse and use data relevant to drivers of violent extremism. There was an increase from 8 countries with such capacities in 2020—Cameroon, Sudan, Mali, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Benin, Ghana—to 12 countries in 2021—with additional countries being Maldives, Malaysia, Philippines, and Indonesia.

<sup>64</sup> See: paragraph 83 of Resolution 72/284; paragraph 10 of Resolution 75/291; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development SDG 17.18: “By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.”

<sup>65</sup> See UN Special Rapporteur, ‘Human rights impact of policies and practices aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism’ (A/HRC/43/46); UN Secretary-General, United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, para 44(g); Recommendation 6, ‘Public Statement by Civil Society: Voices and perspectives of civil society on the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and counterterrorism responses’ (New York, UN Women, 2020). Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gendered-dimensions-of-violent-extremism-and-counterterrorism-responses-Civil-society-statement-en.pdf>.

<sup>66</sup> UN Secretary-General, United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, para 44(g).

<sup>67</sup> “Between 2020 and 2025, a key goal will be to sufficiently resource and strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to improve the design of peacebuilding approaches and learning across the United Nations system”. UN Secretary-General, Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (2020). Available at [https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/sg\\_report\\_on\\_peacebuilding\\_and\\_sustaining\\_peace.a.74.976-s.2020.773.200904.e\\_4.pdf](https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/sg_report_on_peacebuilding_and_sustaining_peace.a.74.976-s.2020.773.200904.e_4.pdf). This will also support achievement of the UN Secretary-General’s ‘Data Strategy for Action by Everyone, Everywhere’. Available at <https://www.un.org/en/content/datastrategy/index.shtml>.

## UNDP engagement

Investments in data are often time-bound, project-based and externally driven, and leave little sustainable impact on communities’ and institutions’ ability to understand and address the challenges they face. In line with UNDP’s development solutions approach, UNDP is pioneering a principled approach to data-driven PVE that builds national capacities for evidence-informed PVE policy, while also empowering CSOs (including women and youth-led organizations and human rights defenders) to produce data that enable them to play a greater role in policymaking processes and shape laws and policies, budgets and programmes that meet their needs.

UNDP’s development solutions-based approach to M&E for PVE is grounded in core development principles:

**Nationally owned and sustainable:** To be able to identify and address the drivers of VE, countries tend to require support to develop their own systems and processes for producing, collecting, analysing and using accurate data. These capacities are essential in developing, implementing and revising evidence-informed PVE National Action Plans. Mindful of the need to avoid a situation where a focus on data results in the production of numerous studies, reports and dashboards with limited application or lack of sustained use, UNDP invests in building national capacities to measure drivers, incidences and dynamics of violent extremism.

**Participation and inclusion:** CSOs, including women and youth-led NGOs and human rights defenders, have information necessary for effective PVE, since they are aware of needs in their communities and the challenges and opportunities inherent in meeting those needs. If given a voice in designing, monitoring and evaluating PVE initiatives, they can help shape effective, risk-

informed, conflict-sensitive approaches that put their needs at the centre.

**Adequately resourced:** UN(DP)'s experience in other areas (e.g. gender and human rights) shows that changing the culture to apply robust measurement requires dedicated resources. Otherwise, tools and frameworks developed are not applied, data are not collected to inform ongoing and new initiatives, and available data are not used to inform action.

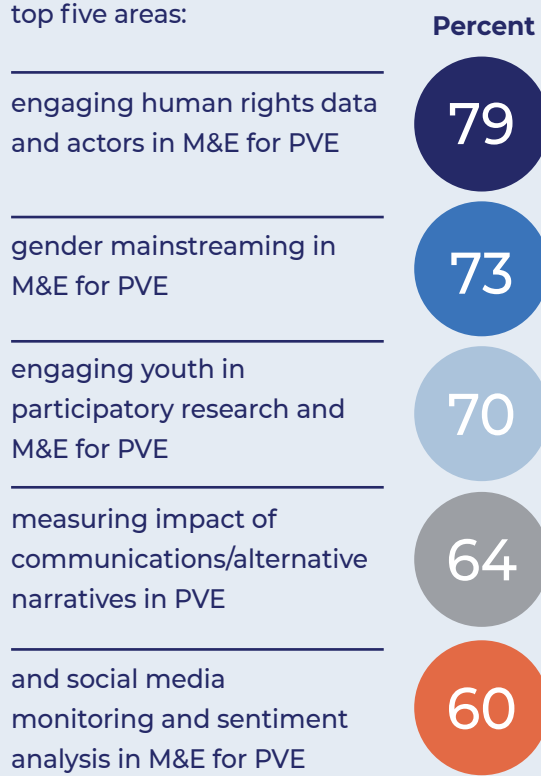
## Achievements

**Policy and knowledge development:** UNDP's approach to M&E for PVE was highlighted by:

- **The 2021 World Data Forum**, which publicized UNDP's efforts to empower youth to address VE through data and to enable a whole-of-society approach to PVE through open-source data.
- **The Peacebuilding Support Office**, which commended UNDP's approach to M&E for PVE as a more effective alternative to unsustainable project-based measurement initiatives, including in the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund Thematic Review on Local Peacebuilding 2021 (forthcoming), which highlighted UNDP's youth-led research.
- **Oslo III Conference**. At the Conference, government, civil society and academic representatives, supported by UNDP's PVE global portfolio, presented examples of sustainable, inclusive approaches to M&E in national PVE policies. As a result of this event, a South-South Cooperation exchange took place between Bangladesh's Peace Observatory and Indonesia's National Violence Monitoring System.

**Capacity support:** To lay the foundation for robust, budgeted support to enhance M&E capacity (in line with Member States' requests and the UN Secretary-General's objective), UNDP conducted a global capacity assessment.

This assessment found that the majority (85 percent) of PVE project staff have solid capacities on M&E basics, and now wish to build their skills in the following top five areas:



In response, UNDP set up youth-led surveys to measure resilience in six countries; trained women and youth-led CSOs in two countries on M&E for PVE; and established a first-of-its-kind initiative to measure the impact of alternative narratives in six countries, including through a knowledge exchange on the role of social media monitoring and sentiment analysis in M&E of PVE, and a practitioner session on youth engagement in M&E of PVE.

**Country-level engagements:** In 2021, as a result of UNDP's support, 12 countries gained capacities to produce data related to violent extremism.<sup>68</sup> This represents a 50 percent increase compared to 2020.<sup>69</sup> A number of them achieved this through innovative approaches:

<sup>68</sup> Bangladesh (civil society/academic); Cameroon (human rights defenders); Indonesia (government/civil society); Jordan (academia/CSO/government); Lebanon (government); Maldives (academia); Mali (civil society organizations); the Philippines (government/civil society); Sudan (government); Tunisia (civil society organizations); Benin, Togo, Ghana (status undetermined);

<sup>69</sup> Bangladesh (civil society/academic); Cameroon (human rights defenders); Lebanon (government); Mali (civil society organizations); Sudan (government); Tunisia (civil society organizations); Benin, Togo, Ghana (status undetermined).



## Engaging human rights defenders in M&E for PVE:

In Cameroon, UNDP has trained volunteers on how to document and report rights violations in order to form a Human Rights Observatory. UNDP has also supported the establishment of a platform for state actors to consider and respond to cases. As a result:



- **543 cases of human rights violations** (including gender-based violence) committed by security forces in the context of the State's response to violent extremism were recorded.
- **60 gender-based violence cases** were referred to relevant authorities.
- **Disciplinary action** was taken against 2 security personnel, who were removed from the locale.
- **13 cases** were prosecuted in court.
- **1 conviction** was reached in court.

Although the number of cases that resulted in formal accountability actions is small, observers have noted the start of a cultural shift, whereby security actors are “beginning to think twice” about their actions, given that there is no longer a context of impunity. One of the monitoring supervisors, David, says: “The monitoring of human rights violations sheds lights on abuses that are no longer solely the work of Boko Haram, but also of State security forces. It helps to raise awareness on the scope of the powers of the military and community leaders.” According to Father Pascal Djeumegued, a priest in the Maroua-Mokolo diocese and a member of the monitoring group: “We have obtained good results in the villages: communities often reach out to us to tell us about their problems with extremists. They recognize the work we do for the security of our villages.”

There has been a 17 percent reduction in incidences of extremist violence over the past year,<sup>72</sup> a reduction in the impact of terrorism,<sup>73</sup> and an increase in Cameroon's overall level of Positive Peace. ●

“The monitoring of human rights violations sheds lights on abuses that are no longer solely the work of Boko Haram, but also of State security forces. It helps to raise awareness on the scope of the powers of the military and community leaders.”

M&E for evidence-informed PVE and coherent action across the whole of society: In **Indonesia** in 2021, a National Violence Monitoring system that had previously been technically and financially supported by UNDP became an official, government-funded institution. This formerly project-supported mechanism is now operated by a national university and receives national budget resources—a critical step towards sustainability and effective, evidence-based implementation of the PVE NAP by 29 Ministries and 33 CSOs. In 2021, there was a 23 percent reduction in incidences of extremist violence in Indonesia<sup>70</sup> and a 3 percent improvement in the country's Positive Peace Index score.<sup>71</sup>

M&E for evidence-informed PVE and women's empowerment: In the **Philippines** in 2021, UNDP's empowerment approach to MEL gave women peacebuilders a place at the table with national security leaders, enabling their voices and experiences to shape national policy on PVE. UNDP provided technical support to enable the government to develop an M&E framework for the PVE NAP and trained government officials and women peacebuilders on M&E skills. UNDP then supported the development of a platform for actors across government, CSOs and academia to share data and analysis and use it to drive evidence-informed implementation of the PVE NAP. This effort resulted in chang-

<sup>70</sup> ACLED, 2021–2022 data.

<sup>71</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, Positive Peace Index, 2012–2020 data.

es in service delivery to bring resources to identified vulnerable populations. For example, to respond to recommendations from research conducted by women's CSOs, the government of the Philippines distributed relief and assistance to more than 1,000 vulnerable families. 'Group grievances' (a measure of divisions between different groups in society and their differing access to services, resources and inclusion in political processes) have reduced by 3 percent in Philippines over the past year.<sup>74</sup> Overall, there has been a 24 percent reduction in incidences of extremist violence.<sup>75</sup>

M&E for evidence-informed PVE and youth empowerment: In **Thailand**, UNDP supported youth CSOs to undertake research to measure resilience to violent extremism. This youth-generated research forms part of the data compiled by the UNDP-supported Knowledge Management Platform to facilitated evidence-informed PVE efforts in the country.

M&E for evidence-informed PVE and accountable governance: In **Tunisia**, UNDP supported CSOs and academic institutions to produce data to support implementation of the country's national PVE strategy. In **Malaysia**, UNDP provided training to CSOs to produce data to facilitate evidence-based design and implementation of the national PVE strategy.

**M&E for coherent action across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus:** In 2021, UNDP continued to support the national open-source data institutions it helped to establish—the Bangladesh Peace Observatory (BPO) and Cox's Bazaar Analysis and Research Unit (CARU)—to produce data that actors from across government, civil society, academia, media, the UN and the wider international community are using to understand and address vulnerable communities' diverse needs (including the specific risks faced by migrant and refugee communities). Crucially, the rich, high-quality and accessible data produced by these systems are being used to support united action across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. The system and skills built with UNDP support through the Partnerships for a Tolerant and Inclusive Bangladesh (PTIB) project were used to strengthen the capacity of other UN entities, including the UN Department of Safety and Security in

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## Crucially, the rich, high-quality and accessible data produced by these systems are being used to support united action across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

**Bangladesh**, to implement risk-informed and evidence-based responses to VE in 2021. Bangladesh's experience was highlighted at the World Data Forum 2021 and informed the development of UNDP's new guidance note and policy brief on risk-informed utilization of online data and AI for PVE.

### **M&E to improve the measurable impact of alternative narratives, including on attitudes and behaviour.**

Around the world each year, hundreds of millions of dollars are expended on 'alternative narratives' content—often, with limited or no information on their impact. To address this gap, UNDP developed an innovative initiative to measure the impact of creative alternative narratives content on attitudes and behaviour that underpin positive change. This project uses data and insights emerging from behavioural science, traditional offline surveys, 'gamified' online surveys, focus group discussions, digital ecosystem mapping and click-through rates. The data gathered are intended to identify whether alternative narratives content is reaching 'at-risk' populations, and whether it is positively affecting their behaviour.

The approach was developed to measure the success of the digital storytelling-based video series ExtremeLives, which features inspiring stories of hope from people who turned away from extremism. The M&E approach aims to measure the impact the video series has on its audience's attitudes and behaviour to underpin their resilience to violent extremism—including social connectedness, locus of control and 'speaking up' behaviour. This first-of-its-kind initiative enhances the measurable impact of ExtremeLives content and demonstrates how other initiatives and institutions creating alternative narratives content can also measure results.

<sup>72</sup> ACLED, 2021–2022 data.

<sup>73</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, Global Terrorism Index, 2020–2021 data.

<sup>74</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, "Group grievance indicator", Positive Peace Index. The indicator reduced from 4.07 to 3.93 between 2019 and 2021 (based on most recent data sets).

<sup>75</sup> ACLED, 2021–2022 data.

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## Lessons learned

In 2021, UNDP developed a PVE global reporting framework and PVE Global Crisis Risk Dashboard. As a result of this, UNDP has identified **key promising practices**, in which substantive UNDP engagements are associated with measurable, macro-level change in the drivers, incidences and dynamics of violent extremism. These positive outliers are highlighted throughout this document: 1) Engaging human rights defenders to document and report abuses committed by state security forces; 2) Empowering women's organizations to engage in insider mediation and PVE policy development, monitoring and implementation; 3) Comprehensive implementation framework for PVE NAP, to support inclusive implementation by government, CSOs, women's organizations and faith-based actors from national to local level; 4) Social media monitoring to support targeted design and delivery of alternative narratives, and to design/deliver policy and programming by government, UN and development partners to address identified grievances typically exploited by violent extremist actors; 5) Inclusive dialogue platforms at community level (engaging community and religious leaders, women, youth and elected leaders); 6) Non-violent communication to address

harmful masculinities and gender norms that underpin violent extremism and promote resilience.

In 11 Country Offices, PVE projects with 10 percent or more budget allocated to M&E demonstrate the strongest results,<sup>76</sup> suggesting the **value of resourcing M&E functions**.

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## Future engagement

There is growing demand for **support that can enable whole-of-society PVE NAP implementation**, through M&E frameworks jointly designed and implemented by diverse actors. This practice is associated with positive improvements in drivers and incidences of violent extremism. To build on this success, a **regional training** engaging government, civil society and academia actors will take place in South-east Asia in 2022. Building on efforts to develop a cross-portfolio M&E framework in 2021 and on a Country Office M&E capacity assessment, UNDP **will invest in country support to improve M&E skills** through training and support in other regions.

<sup>76</sup> Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan and Tunisia.

# XII. PVE Community of Practice

## Key achievements:

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Over **1,255 participants** engaged in **29 PVE knowledge sharing sessions.**

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Oslo III conference engaged over **2,000 participants** and identified lessons for the future of PVE.

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New platforms for UNDP PVE Community of Practice established and valued: overall relevance **rated 4.8/5.**



## Context

UNDP aims to support innovative and effective programming by sharing knowledge within its Global PVE Global Practitioner Network. COVID-19 restrictions continued to create demand for digital learning and knowledge exchange among UNDP Country Offices, Member States, civil society organizations and academia.


## UNDP engagement and achievements

**Thought leadership events:** In 2021, UNDP organized key events to share learning with partners, including the Oslo III global conference 'Tides of Change, Emerging Trends in Violent Extremism and the Future of Prevention', held in partnership with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which aimed to understand how the violent extremism landscape has evolved since the onset of COVID-19 and distil lessons for future research, policy and programming. A dedicated conference website at [www.oslo3.org](http://www.oslo3.org) constituted a virtual hub to draw people in to view the latest associated research, beyond the live streaming of the sessions. The conference received over 13,000 visits and 35,000 page views within just 1 month,

from 2,700 unique users, and more than 2,000 people registered for Oslo III events. UNDP also hosted special sessions at the Stockholm forum, on 'Climate Security and Violent Extremism' as well as 'the Role of Parliaments in Addressing Hate Speech'.

**Knowledge sharing:** In 2021, UNDP continued to support Country Offices to implement innovative programming aligned with global best practice by convening global expertise on PVE. In total, UNDP conducted 29 knowledge sharing events, with over 1,255 participants. This included eight UNDP Crisis Bureau-organized PVE Practitioner sessions on: MHPSS in PVE programming; PVE M&E innovations; and protecting and promoting human rights through PVE.

**Community of Practice:** UNDP developed a global PVE database for all projects and activities, serving as a knowledge repository across the PVE Community of Practice (CoP). To increase members' capacity to learn and share with each other, and with partners, UNDP developed a [PVE dashboard](#) on the SparkBlue platform. This platform enables partner organizations and external stakeholders to access UNDP learning, participate in events, contribute to consultations and benefit from UNDP PVE resources.



## LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE OF PVE:

### Key messages from Oslo III conference

#### Need to continue to prioritize PVE:

- COVID-19 increased known drivers of VE and reduced the resilience of young people and communities.

#### PVE is a public good:

- The SDGs will not be achieved unless we address VE.
- PVE facilitates the achievement of all development goals.

#### Success demands long-term, inclusive, locally contextualized approaches:

- Hard-won development gains can quickly retreat if we do not continue to invest in PVE.
- We need to continue to listen and invest in communities: local ownership is key.

#### Future engagements must focus more on:

- Addressing grievances underlying hatred, intolerance, violence and conflict.
- Exploring new and innovative approaches to discourage recruitment.
- Addressing impunity for gender-based violence and shifting misogynistic social norms.
- Driving forward the whole-of-society approach. ●

**Research:** UNDP established a new [research portal for UNDP publications on PVE](#), which includes over 100 publications. More than 15 publications developed by UNDP were released in 2021, including through partnerships with Nudge Lebanon, B4Development and Swansea University (Wales). These include publications on

[Misogyny: The Extremist Gateway?; Toward New Policies for the Climate Change and Violent Extremism Nexus in Africa; Applying Behavioural Science to Support the Prevention of Violent Extremism: Experiences and Lessons Learned; and UNDP Regional Stabilization Facility for the Lake Chad Basin \(LCB\) Region.](#)

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## Lessons learned

- **UNDP's PVE knowledge sharing tools enjoy a solid level of engagement and user satisfaction.** According to a survey disseminated in late 2021, the overall relevance of the CoP for PVE work was rated at 4.8/5. UNDP's PVE CoP platforms have 298 registered members and an average of 145 site visits per week, and more than one third of members actively engage (by commenting, posting and replying) approximately 5.7 times per week.
- **CoP learning priorities for the future are women, peace and security; climate security; and hate speech** (as identified through member surveys).

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## Future engagement

- To increase external visibility, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement, in 2022 UNDP will **launch a new PVE website**, to provide a space for practitioners from across the UN, CSOs, Member States, the private sector and the public to connect and learn with UNDP's

PVE global portfolio practitioners. The website will use trends analysis to present PVE as a global phenomenon and highlight action areas for development-based solutions to address violent extremism.

- **Research products** to be published in 2022 include: 'From Pilots towards Policies: Utilizing Online Data in Prevention of Violent Extremism' (policy brief); 'From Policies to Practice: Risk-Informed Utilization of Online Data for Preventing Violent Extremism' (guidance note); 'Integrating MHPSS into Peacebuilding' (guidance note); 'Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Prevention of Violent Extremism: Experiences from the field' (compiled case studies); 'Enhancing efforts to prevent violent extremism by leveraging behavioural insight' (findings report); and 'Why Aren't We Winning? Dynamics of Violent Extremism in Africa: Conflict ecosystems, political ecology, and the spread of the proto-state' (research paper, policy brief and practice note).
- UNDP will also support **North-South learning** (triangular cooperation) around best practices for development-based PVE.





Prevention  
of Violent  
Extremism