

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Regional Service Centre for Africa Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: a Development Approach



Source: Lake Chad, Aurelia Rusek for UNDP Chad

UNDP Morocco Trains 40 Young Civil Society Representatives

On 15th July 2021, UNDP Morocco in partnership with Rabita Mohammadia des Oulémas [1], launched a 3-day training workshop as part of the programme called ‘*Lutte contre la radicalization en ligne des jeunes au Maroc*’ (Fight Against Online Radicalization of Young People in Morocco) to provide young people with capacity to analyze and highlight the risks associated with online radicalization towards violent extremism.

Mr. Mohammed Belekbir, an expert at the Rabita Mohammadia des Ulemas, stated that the training aimed at deepening the participants’ knowledge of the risks of spreading radical narratives online, and at strengthening youth skills in identifying hate speech and promoting alternative discourses.

Over three days, the participants were trained on a peer-to-peer educator approach so that they themselves can become facilitators to other young people. Mr. Belekbir highlighted that before becoming a peer educator, it is necessary to enable the participants to identify the cognitive paths relating to extremism among young people and to have the tools to be able to steer and navigate these paths. In addition, this training also aims at developing critical thinking of young people about online videos and social media content.

This training, supported by the Government of Japan, followed a preceding workshop with journalists and bloggers to strengthen capacities to use information, communication technologies and the media to prevent violent extremism, violence, and hate speech. These capacity building engagements contributed to launching a mobile awareness campaign to conduct training and awareness raising sessions on the risks of radicalization online for the benefit of parents and young people.



Source: UNDP Morocco

REGIONAL PVE PROJECT OVERVIEW

‘Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach’ is a six-year regional development project by UNDP designed to strengthen development responses to mitigate the growth of violent extremism in Africa.

The project is a joint initiative between the UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa and the Regional Hub in Amman. It articulates development responses and addresses structural, causative and perpetuating factors. The initiative focuses on 18 countries across Africa.

The project has received support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), a government agency working on behalf of the Swedish government, and by the Government of Netherlands. In the period between 2016-2018, the project also received financial support from the Government of Japan and the Government of the United Kingdom.

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Read more information about the project in [the Regional PVE Project Document](#).

[1] Rabita Mohammadia des Oulémas is a Moroccan organization which seeks to promote tolerant and open Islam.

UNDP Chad Continues to Support Island Communities

More than a decade ago, the Lake Chad Basin turned into an epicenter of violent extremism amidst acts of the Boko Haram splinters and associated armed groups. Identified underlying socio-economic and political factors that influence individuals to join radical groups are high levels of poverty, illiteracy, youth unemployment, degraded or destroyed infrastructure, poor governance and corruption. Despite the multifaceted security responses of the government of Chad and regional stakeholders, which alone will not suffice to address the phenomenon of violent extremism, a development approach, adopted by UNDP Chad, is necessary to address perpetuating grievances fueling the insurgency.

Source: UNDP Chad



UNDP Chad PVE Project has introduced local actors' trainings, awareness raising, civil-military dialogues, community sensitization activities to complement the military response to Boko Haram. Since the start of the Project's implementation in 2019, 36 at-risk island communities with over 20,000 inhabitants have been reached. The series of trainings with local authorities, local peace committees and Religious authorities on the Prevention of Violent Extremism has enabled 168 people to be equipped as focal points and lead awareness-raising activities. According to a local stakeholder and project beneficiary, *"In the beginning of the arrival of this phenomenon of Boko Haram, we had difficulties in resolving our differences. But over the past two years, we have been able to sit down, civilians and military alike, to talk about all the hardships our communities are going through. In some places youth were labeled as dangerous due to the systematic radicalization of young men and women. But the perceptions are changing and you may find young people engaging proactively in community matters. I believe that this was also possible thanks to the multiple awareness campaigns that we are carrying out in the targeted localities."*



Source: UNDP Chad

The impact of these PVE activities resulted in improved trust between civilians, security forces and justice actors, monitored by community perception surveys. Furthermore, the sensitizations initiatives, held since 2019 in different regions of Lake Chad, enabled organization of civil-military dialogues allowing the civilian populations and the members of the security services in the island communities of Kaya and Mamdi. Improved dialogue catalyzed to reconciliation efforts between two opposing communities and better planning of actions for the restoration of mutual trust and prevention of violent extremism in island environments.

Sharing of Good Practices and Lessons Learned on Youth's Roles in Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE)

The Regional PVE Project and the Regional Youth Team jointly conducted a webinar on *"Good Practices and Lessons Learned on Youth and PVE"* on 17th August 2021. The webinar was organized in the context of International Youth Day (celebrated on 12th August), and Youth focal points of the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) country offices were in attendance.

With over 50 participants the objective of the webinar was to deepen the understanding on the role of youth in PVE which contributes to more resilient communities and provide a platform for sharing and exchanging practical knowledge on opportunities for youth through education, livelihood, and public dialogues, etc.

In the webinar the presenters highlighted the importance of youth inclusion in PVE initiatives. While there is emerging recognition on the role of sports and cinema for youth, further attention of PVE practitioners should target integration of storytelling and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into PVE programming. The diverse background of speakers at the regional and local level enriched the webinar through sharing their perspectives from a country office and civil society organization level, with practical examples from Tanzania, Tunisia and Mali. There was particular interest in the experiences of youth initiatives by emerging CSOs and their challenges to establish partnerships, credibility and to apply tailored tools to respond to local demands in terms of social cohesion and peace building.

The post-webinar survey revealed participants' high interest in livelihood initiatives (64%), partnership with CSOs (56%), and political participation (48%) for further information on youth and PVE. Based on these interests, a follow up session with the Regional Youth team is under consideration with participation from different regions (Asia-pacific) to enhance the experience sharing and knowledge management.

On-going Activity Brief

The Regional PVE Programme Analyst conducted a scoping mission in Abidjan on “*Strengthening Social Cohesion through Preventing Violent Extremism, Conflict Prevention and Provision of Basic Services in Côte d’Ivoire*” between 22nd July and 11th August. The engagements with the country office on PVE- paved the way to initiation of a 2-day multi-stakeholders’ event on PVE and the formulation of a full-fledged PVE Project in Côte d’Ivoire.



The data collection phase of the second iteration of Journey to Extremism in Africa is completed and all inputs coded and compatible with analysis tools. In total, the joint team of partners and 8 country offices (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan) conducted 1,031 Control group surveys and 1,203 Primary group surveys. Descriptive and econometric analysis has commenced and is expected to be concluded by end of October.



On 23rd September, the Regional PVE Project organized a second workshop with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Regional Early Warning Centre, and its member states to identify recommendations for implementation of the Early Warning and Early Response and PVE Toolkit, developed in collaboration with the Africa Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT/CAERT). The Toolkit remains available on request and, in Q4 2021, will be translated into French and Portuguese.



Two consultants have been recruited to undertake the final evaluation of the 6-year UNDP Regional Project ‘*Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach*’.

Coastal countries of West Africa have joined forces to brainstorm the best approaches to effectively address the growing threat of violent extremism as porous cross-border areas remain a proven source of instability in the region where violent extremist groups whose actions and modus operandi transcend national borders are active. With this in mind, UNDP Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo have initiated efforts to develop an Atlantic Corridor PVE Project building upon the current project, which involves Ghana, Benin and Togo. As a first step, a regional peer review workshop was held in Lomé on July 28-29, 2021 (and virtually) as a framework for analyzing regional variations of actors, ideologies, and other causes of violent extremism in the subregion and to formulate policy recommendations and advice to national authorities on developing PVE framework.



The RSCA Governance and Peacebuilding Coordinator will present the Early Warning and Early Response and PVE Toolkit, at a training organized by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and IGAD (CEWARN) in Entebbe from 25-29 October.



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