

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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



Photo: Lake Chad, Aurelia Rusek for UNDP Chad

### **A Human Rights Observatory in Northern Cameroon sheds light on violations taking place within the context of state and military responses to violent extremism.**

**In 2020, UNDP's regional PVE initiative in Cameroon launched a pilot project to monitor human rights violations and abuses taking place in the country's Far North region. The objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics emerging around the government's campaign against armed groups such as Boko Haram, and to inform policy, design PVE interventions, and improve civil-military dialogue to ensure that Human Rights are ensured when tackling violent extremism.**

In Cameroon's Far North region – and in particular in the administrative divisions of Mayo-Tsanaga, Mayo-Sava, and Logone-et-Chari, along the Nigerian border – violent attacks by armed militant factions of Boko Haram have been raging since 2014. Military forces and other state security actors have been deployed in response, but their presence all too often exacerbates tensions and subjects local populations to human rights violations and abuses. With the support of UNDP's Regional and Country offices as well as technical advice from Human Security Collective, four local civil society actors – Commission Diocésaine Justice et Paix Maroua-Mokolo (CDJP), Réseau de protection des droits de l'Homme, de l'environnement et de la promotion de la culture de la paix (REPDHEP), Réseau des Organisations de la Santé et des Droits de l'Homme (ROSADH), and Afrique Espoir (AFES) – collaborated on the design and implementation of an Observatory, a six month pilot project that monitored the type, frequency, and context of violations taking place.

Monitoring took place across three sites, with locally based focal points in each site reporting HR violations to a supervisor. All members of the Observatory received training on human rights, and the monitoring system followed specially designed guidelines and protocols. A steering committee comprising members of the implementing organizations then analysed and transformed the raw data into monthly reports. The results of the pilot phase registered more than 170 human rights violations taking place in the context of state response to violent extremism, suggesting that these constitute a significant factor of radicalisation among the populations in affected areas. The types of violations documented include but are not limited to: violent assault and torture, gender-based violence and sexual abuse, confiscation of goods and extortion, and arbitrary detentions.

### **REGIONAL PVE PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Preventing and Responding To Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach, UNDP's six-year regional development project is designed to strengthen the development responses to mitigate the growth of violent extremism in Africa.

The Project is a joint initiative between UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa and Regional Hub in Amman. It articulates development response and addresses structural, causative or perpetuating factors. The initiative focus on eighteen countries across Africa.

The project has received support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), 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.

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

In this quarterly newsletter, for the period October - December 2020, you will get an update of recent activities and upcoming events in the Regional Programme Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism Project in Africa.



In the next phase of the project, the Observatory aims to further develop its referral and response mechanism in order to highlight these issues at the policy level, using this data to inform dialogues with security forces and government representatives and strive towards adequate and timely responses that will guarantee human rights. The necessity for this kind of monitoring activity is underlined by David, one of the Observatory's local supervisors:

*"The monitoring of human rights violations sheds light on abuses that are no longer solely the work of Boko Haram only but also of defence and security forces. It helps to understand the need for communities to understand the scope of the powers of security forces and community leaders."*

## Paying Tribute To The Victims of 14 October Attack in Mogadishu

On the third anniversary of the 14 October 2017 attack in Mogadishu, the Joint PCVE Project supported the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) PCVE coordination unit in organizing a commemoration to mark the 2017 attack. The theme for 2020 commemoration was "Names Not Numbers". Events and symbolic reminders of the attack were organized across Mogadishu to mark the anniversary. To recognize each victim of the attack, 734 gambar chairs with the victim's names embroidered and prayer rugs were procured. This event was covered by media organizations, such as the [Somalia National Television](#), and by [MoERA's twitter account](#). These chairs will be left at community locations across the city, such as mosques, to continue to raise awareness around victims of violent extremism.

The main outcome of the commemoration was the commitment expressed by Somali religious leaders, relayed by Sheikh Bashir, to the facilitation of a dialogue between the Government of Somalia and al-Shabaab. In addition, Prime Minister Roble, of the Federal Government of Somalia acknowledged the role of religious leaders in the fight against terrorism and in their efforts to inform the general public through awareness-raising campaign to tackle misinformation amidst Covid-19 pandemic.



## Regional Workshop To Prevent Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad Basin

From 19th to 22nd October, The Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in collaboration with UNDP organised an inception workshop to provide the foundation for an inclusive regional communication strategy to prevent violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin. This initiative was in recognition of the need to reinforce transparent information and communication to prevent and replace the violent extremist ideology propagated by the Boko Haram and armed groups with constructive alternative narratives capable of restoring trust and confidence in a secured future.

Specific objectives of the workshop included; (1) To consult technical experts and representatives from the affected areas on MNJTF's military Influence Operations that are meant to discourage sympathy and support for terrorists and deter Boko Haram and ISWAP from radicalizing and recruiting innocent people, particularly across Troop Contributing Countries and the Lake Chad Basin in general. (2) To design a common regional approach to information and communication activities in order to prevent violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin. (3) To suggest methodologies and channels of communication appropriate with messages and target audiences.

UNDP's Resident Representative in Chad, Lisa Singh, spoke on behalf of UNDP and highlighted the fact that military operations are not the only sustainable solution to violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin.

At the end of workshop, the facilitator and technical experts reviewed the recommendations and proceeded to draft the regional approach to Strategic Communications to Prevent Violent Extremism and subject this Strategy to a whole-of-government validation process before implementation. The 5-day workshop attracted representatives of the Government of Chad, European Union, African Union and Ambassadors of MNJTF Troop Contributing Countries; Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. Other participants included representatives from the Centre for Coordination and Liaison and Civil Society Organizations.

Following the inception workshop, 2 community consultation workshops were held in Diffa and Maiduguri on 12th and 14th December, respectively, to further contribute to the Regional Strategic Communication Strategy in the Lake Chad Basin by identifying interventions from the affected communities. In total, the workshops were attended by over 60 (14 women, 46 men) participants comprising of religious leaders, traditional leaders, women, and youth representatives from the affected communities. The 'closed-door' consultations, without military presence, on communication, transparency and collaboration around military contributed to a concrete Civil-Military Strategic Action Plan.

Lead by the UNDP's consultant, the formulation of the Civil-Military Strategic Action Plan with 5 local experts from the Lake Chad Basin is currently under review by MNJTF and LCBC. Upon its validation, it is envisaged to implement a one-year work plan by the MNJTF-LCBC Civil-Military Cell in 2021.





## On-going Activity Brief

UNDP Regional PVE and Inclusive Growth teams have engaged with UNDP colleagues in Tanzania and key stakeholders, including private and public sector, civil society, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to develop a project concept to apply an innovative, integrated approach in the Tanga region that creates knowledge and skills, boosts economic productivity, value-addition and connects young man and women to employment prospects and micro-enterprise creation as a means to address the economic drivers of violent extremism in districts identified as at-risk by the Regional Government, namely Tanga city, Lushoto and Kilindi, in a more sustainable and structured fashion.

In November 2020, two technical guidance notes on [“Monitoring National Action Plans”](#) and [“Measuring Protective Factors Against Violent Extremism”](#) were disseminated to a broader audience of PVE-practitioners, partners and donors to support the implementation of PVE interventions and strategies. The two papers provided lessons learned and good practices for the UN, development actors and members states to consider during the design of National Action Plans (NAPs), particularly PVE M&E framework. The dissemination, carried out through 2 online workshops, was attended by more than 120 participants from the UN, regional and international organizations and members states, governments.

On 19th November 2020, the UNDP Regional PVE Team convened a meeting with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) aiming to strengthen partnerships with RECs in the PVE domain through the UNDP Regional PVE Project. The introductory meeting hosted participants from UNDP, ECOWAS, IGAD and COMESA who exchanged overviews of PVE interventions of each RECs to identify potential areas of collaboration in PVE. One of the proposed recommendations, building on the common interest for continued discussion on early warning and response, included peer-to-peer learning to exchange experiences and knowledge on selected topics, such as Early Warning/Early Response for PVE.

On 15th December 2020, the Regional PVE Project, supported by the African Union Commission (AUC) and African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT/CAERT), conducted a virtual validation meeting on the practitioner’s Toolkit on Early Warning & Early Response and PVE. The toolkit was finalized in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the West African Network of Peace-builders (WANEP) and the Governments of Kenya and Burkina Faso. The development process was designed to include existing informal experiences with early identification of signs of radicalization from civil society organizations, UNDP’s expertise in support to governance mechanisms and formalization of Infrastructures for Peace in the conflict prevention domain and REC-experiences in including VE-indicators in regional EWER-mechanisms. The validation of the toolkit is expected to be conducted in a series due to the partners involved at difference levels: community, national and regional.. The Toolkit is available on request, and prioritized roll-out for 2021 is planned in the National EWER Centres of Burkina Faso and Kenya, ECOWARN and WANEP.



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