



LESSONS LEARNED FROM DANISH AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS ON COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE) IN DEVELOPMENT CONTEXTS

EVALUATION STUDY SUMMARY 2015/03

Denmark has along with a range of other donors provided support with the aim of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). This study looks at CVE in the context of development and the theories of change that underpin support for CVE and then goes on to explore Danish and other partners experiences.

The study concludes that CVE can be included in development programming, in particular when such programming has a whole of government stabilisation perspective.

The study also highlights that poorly designed interventions may do harm e.g. by placing individuals at risk or stigmatising specific groups. The summary is based on the evaluation study "Lessons learned from Danish and other international efforts on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in development contexts" carried out by Tana Copenhagen Aps

This evaluation study collates lessons being learned from Danish efforts and those of other development actors on CVE that can inform evidence-based policy making and increase shared understanding on CVE-related programming in development contexts. The study is based on the premise that CVE concerns policies and actions designed to prevent individuals from engaging in violence associated with radical political, social cultural and religious ideologies and groups. As such, it forms part of the broader response to countering terrorism.

The study notes that, while violent extremism is clearly a global problem, it is developing countries that bear the brunt of its social and economic costs. In the countries most affected, it increases insecurity, has links to organised crime, lowers investment and increases the costs of economic activity, destroys infrastructure, and can cause significant human displacement and migration.

The foreign fighter phenomenon, whereby nationals from one country join extremist movements in another, is a significant factor fuelling conflict. With many of these individuals coming from developing countries, preventing and mitigating radicalisation and violent extremism is becoming a development priority.

The study provides an overview of current thinking on CVE and the key challenges being faced. The central feature of this is that radicalisation processes are individual and include a range of push, pull and enabling or facilitating factors. Push factors are the political, socio-economic

and cultural conditions that favour the propagation of extremist ideologies and narratives. Pull factors are the personal rewards that embarking on an extremist cause may confer. These may include financial and other material benefits and social status. Enabling factors relate to the radicalisation process and include social networks and the activities of motivators who groom potential recruits. It follows that, to be successful, CVE initiatives need to address in a holistic way the particular set of factors affecting the individual or group identified as being at risk. In non-permissive environments, this is likely to be particularly challenging.

Key findings

Context sensitivity of CVE interventions. Due to the individual and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon, there is no universal blueprint for countering radicalisation and extremism. Strategies must instead be based on an empirical understanding of why and how people join extremist organisations. There is a need to distinguish between push, pull and enabling factors as part of identification and response. The more specific and context-related this understanding is, the stronger will be the likelihood of positive effects when it is applied in CVE programming.

FIGURE 1
PREVENTION PYRAMID AND CVE INTERVENTION FOCUS

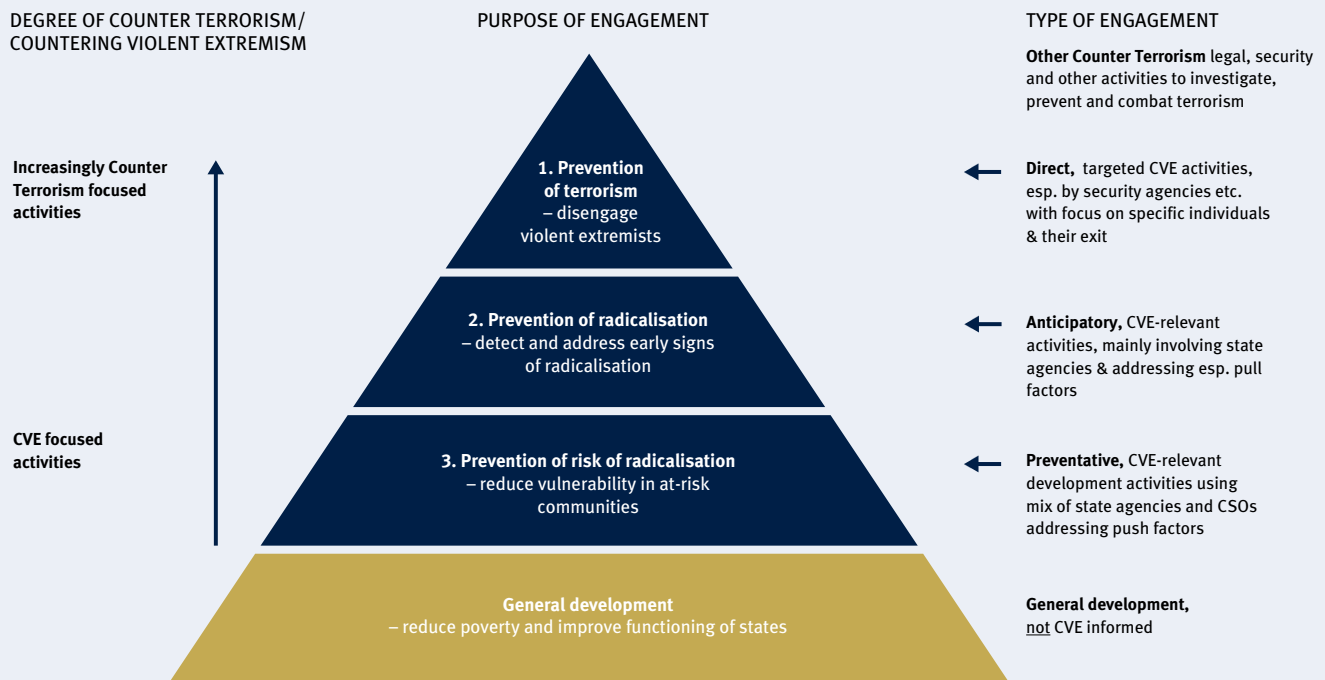


Figure 1 is Adapted from Denmark's Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (PREVENT) pilot programme in Kenya, Status Report, February 2015

Broadly speaking, development aid contributes to reducing radicalisation push factors through its focus on poverty reduction and supporting legitimate and anti-corrupt states. The results of this are likely to be unclear unless specific targeting of risk factors fuelling extremism takes place. CVE-relevant programming relates to a range of activities that are progressively more focussed on preventing or mitigating specific radicalisation risks and threats. (see figure 1)

Two kinds of CVE engagement are likely to be most suitable in development settings using development aid. The survey of CVE projects suggest that these are:

- Firstly, **preventative** activities that aim to mitigate specific push factors affecting at-risk communities by enhancing their resilience to extremist recruitment. Examples could include strengthening livelihood opportunities so that at risk groups (especially youth) are gainfully employed, enhancing youth engagement and sense of belonging within their local communities, reducing discrimination from service providers, promoting human rights compliant law enforcement etc. These could be the subject of specific CVE initiatives or included as CVE elements within broader development programmes.
- Secondly, **anticipatory** measures that involve contact with communities and individuals that are at imminent risk of moving towards an extremist organisation. The objective here will be to identify and address early signs of radicalisation or radical agency by mitigating pull factors, such as extremist narratives. Inputs could involve offering viable alternatives to the messaging coming from the recruiter; for example, through counselling and mentoring, skills training, spiritual guidance etc.

There are a variety of entry points. The experience suggests that CVE objectives can be pursued in a range of sectors and thematic areas, such as education, livelihoods, human rights, governance, social services, sports and culture, justice and rule of law. Policing, prisons and probation services are frequently highlighted as important areas for attention and the focus should be on ensuring that they are compliant with human rights.

CVE may be undertaken by governments, international organisations and civil society. The experience suggests the value of promoting dialogue between state authorities and civil society and in strengthening horizontal institutional cooperation across government. Civil society may have distinct advantages in strengthening inter-community dialogue and tolerance and reducing discrimination.

CVE will benefit from a Whole of Government approach that involves all state authorities with a CVE interest, including law enforcement, the justice sector, social services, and education. Denmark's domestic CVE/crime prevention arrangements adopt this model. It is important to clarify roles. The obvious benefit of promoting cohesion amongst state actors is that it will help to reduce the risk that one part of the state system undermines the efforts of another. But it will also strengthen synergies and mutual learning. Inter alia, the new Sustainable Development Goals draw attention to the need to strengthen national institutions to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime within an overall frame of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

Prioritise human rights. There is evidence that extremists draw upon heavy handed or discriminatory responses from law enforcement in their narratives to justify violence and recruit others. Enhancing human rights compliance within police, prison services, and other security agencies will help reduce this risk.

However, CVE remains controversial and involves higher than normal risks compared to traditional development activity. A Do No Harm approach to CVE will prioritise the human rights dimensions of initiatives so that potentially adverse effects (such as stigmatisation of certain groups) are identified and monitored. This will include the appropriate choice of partners, implementation methodologies, and communication strategies. Risks can be mitigated by a gradual step-by-step approach to projects and by drawing from local knowledge (including from trusted networks used by embassies and aid agencies). CVE initiatives should also ideally be based on a theory of change and include results frameworks with relevant indicators.

Where human rights safeguards are not in place or cannot be guaranteed, the risks for CVE interventions obviously increase. CVE programming then faces several choices, including the "do nothing" option; working through trusted civil society partners on preventative activities; and/or building the capacity of state agencies so that a more human rights based approach is taken.

Conclusions

The study's principal conclusion is that there is scope to include CVE objectives in development programming in fragile states or other locations where a threat of radicalisation and extremism exists. CVE initiatives may sit best within stabilisation programmes that make use of a mix of ODA and non-ODA funds. The study distinguishes between development anchored initiatives (using, for example, civil society as the vehicle for change) and those that require specialist knowledge and capacities normally found within security agencies. It suggests that development programmes can address radicalisation provided that they are sufficiently targeted on at-risk groups, reflect the push and pull factors involved, and draw from implementing partners with sufficient credibility and access.

However, practice is still developing here and the evidence indicates that a more rigorous approach to project planning and implementation would be beneficial. Denmark's experiences in Kenya demonstrate that there can be scope for drawing upon domestic CVE models, although these need adapting to the recipient

environment. Finally, while civil society-based initiatives can play an important role in reaching out to communities and individuals, a holistic approach that also involves government authorities is needed for sustainable results in the long-term. Development programmes can, for example, work with government counterparts to promote coherent and human rights compliant approaches to reducing radicalisation and the threat of violent extremism.

Recommendations

The study has a number of recommendations for the Danish MFA. These are:

- If Denmark decides to pursue CVE further, the most obvious vehicle for doing so would be through stabilisation programmes in fragile and conflict-affected states. It is relevant that these programmes are able to draw from both ODA and non-ODA funding, which makes them an inherently flexible tool and thus well suited to CVE interventions. In certain cases, it may be worthwhile considering whether other mainstream development interventions can be adapted to a CVE perspective.
- In order to inform decision-making in these cases, radicalisation and violent extremism risks should be assessed during preparatory context analyses, alongside other security, political and societal risks. Based on this, downstream programme design processes could consider whether development engagements require or are suitable for incorporating CVE objectives. If so, the focus should be on targeting populations that are most at risk rather than providing blanket coverage.
- In order to share risks and increase resources and reach, opportunities for joint engagements with like-minded development partners could be sought. Joint arrangements should in all cases involve sharing of information and decision-making. In order to minimise the management burden, consideration could be given to outsourcing programme implementation and (some elements of) monitoring and quality assurance.