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Educational, Scientific and
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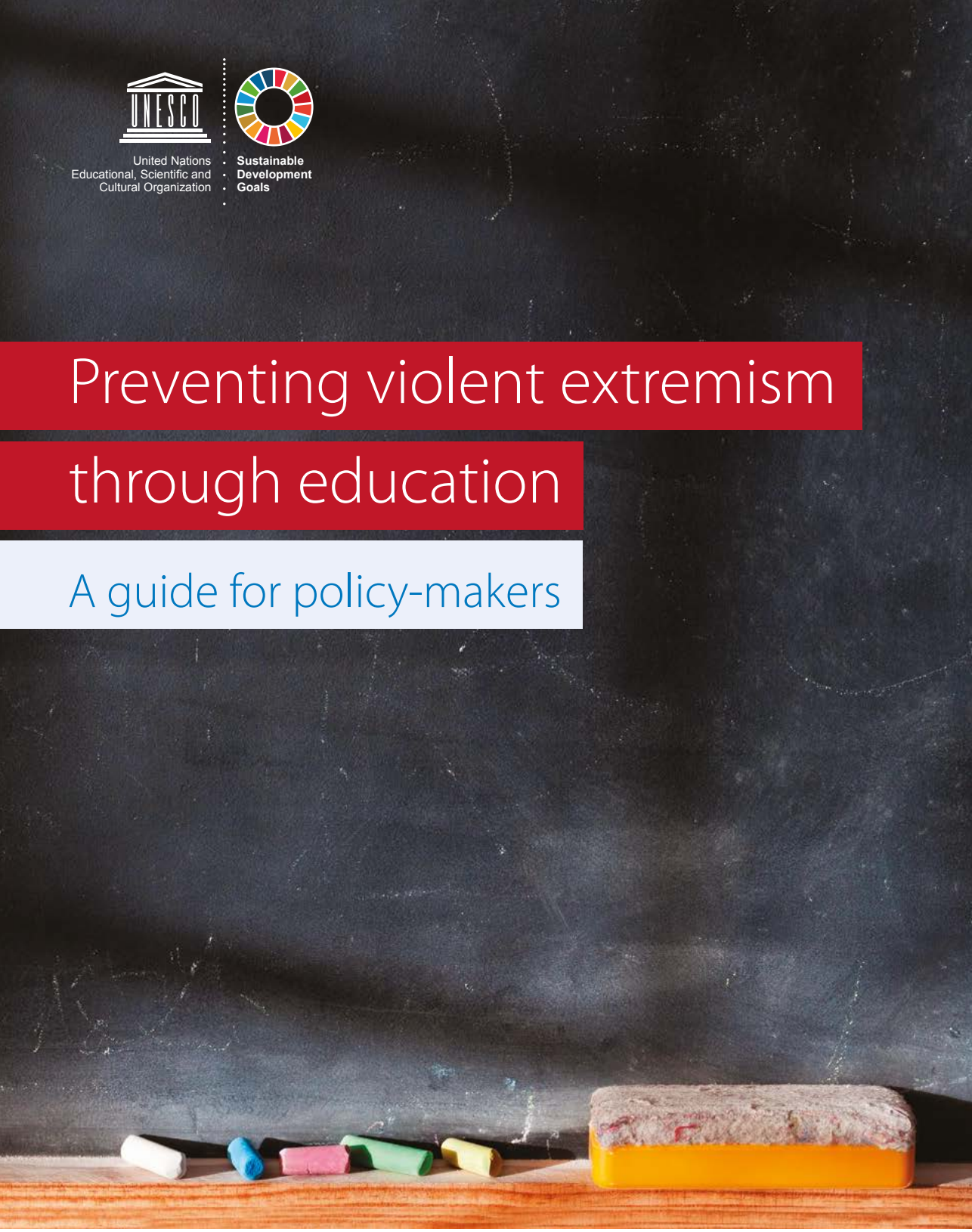
# Preventing violent extremism through education

## A guide for policy-makers



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# Preventing violent extremism through education

## A guide for policy-makers

# Foreword

Over the past years, the number of reported attacks perpetrated by violent extremist groups has risen. As we witness tragedies on all continents, we understand that violent extremism knows no boundaries and affects every society. Young people are, however, most at risk. They are the main targets of recruitment strategies and fall victim to extremist violence. This phenomenon alerts us to the risk of losing a generation of youth to despair and disengagement.

In the face of such threats, there is no single solution. Security responses are important, but not sufficient, and will not tackle the many underlying conditions that breed violent extremism and drive youth to join violent extremist groups. We need soft power, such as education. In particular, we need relevant, inclusive and equitable quality education.

This is the *sine qua non* to effective action and requires countries to simultaneously implement short, medium and long-term responses. To assist countries in their efforts, UNESCO has developed this publication *Preventing violent extremism through education: A guide for policy-makers*. The Guide also responds to the decision of UNESCO's Executive Board at its 197th session (197 EX/Dec46) through which Member States acknowledged the importance of preventing violent extremism through education and requested that UNESCO assist them in this endeavour.

Together with the *Teachers' Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism* produced by UNESCO, this Guide offers technical guidance for education professionals (policy-makers, teachers and various education stakeholders) on how to address the concrete challenges posed by violent extremism within each society. The Guide particularly aims to help policy-makers within ministries of education to prioritize, plan and implement effective preventive actions.

As we seek for sustainable responses, we cannot overemphasize the fact that "one size does not fit all". Educational strategies to support prevention efforts will vary a great deal according to context – e.g. conflict situation, demographics, citizenship model, private/public education. However, the common denominator of prevention

efforts should be that they address the drivers of violent extremism and build learners' resilience to hateful narratives and propaganda that legitimize the use of violence.

It is our collective hope that the Guide will provide Member States with the necessary tools to develop education systems, which contribute to the creation of peaceful societies and greater social cohesion through the provision of relevant and equitable education of good quality.

Qian Tang, Ph. D.
Assistant Director-General for Education

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# 1. Introduction

# 1. Introduction

***The context*** – Violent extremism has become a serious threat facing societies across the world. It affects the security, well-being and dignity of many individuals living in both developed and developing countries, as well as their peaceful and sustainable ways of life. It also poses grave challenges to human rights. To date, the challenges presented by violent extremism have been evaluated primarily through military and security lenses. From 2001 to 2017, the United States government alone will have spent approximately US$1.78 trillion to fight terrorism. The European Union's spending is estimated to have increased from €5.7 million in 2002 to €93.5 million in 2009. Governments are increasingly aware that allocating funds to reinforce security measures is insufficient to protect everyone from terrorist attacks perpetrated by violent extremist individuals. Efforts to prevent violent extremism must be considered within a holistic framework.

***Global strategy*** – In this context, the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy[1] (30 June - 1 July 2016) provided the opportunity to reemphasize, among other objectives, the importance of prevention efforts and welcomed the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (released in December 2015). On this occasion the UN General Assembly recommended that countries consider the implementation of its relevant recommendations, as applicable to national contexts, with the support of the United Nations.

In the Plan, the UN Secretary-General calls for a comprehensive approach to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups. Among its action priorities is the necessity to support "*Education, skills development and employment facilitation*" as a means to foster respect for human diversity and prepare young people to enter the workplace. The recommendation also addresses the need to invest in programmes that promote global citizenship and provide comprehensive primary through tertiary education, including technical and vocational education.

Similarly, UNESCO's Executive Board, at its 197th session, adopted a decision on

"*UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism*", which recognizes the catalytic role of education in fostering youth resilience[2]. The Decision furthermore established that this work should be linked to UNESCO's wider commitment to promoting education for global citizenship, education for human rights and other initiatives led by the Organization in the fields of culture and communication for the prevention of violent extremism.

## Relevant UN and UNESCO documents, resolutions and decisions on the prevention of violent extremism

- UN General Assembly Resolution 60/288, United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, A/RES/60/288 (8 September 2006)[3]
- UN Security Council Resolution 2178, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, S/RES/2178 (24 September 2014)[4]
- UNESCO Executive Board 197 EX/Decision 46, UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism (7 October 2015)[5]
- UN Security Council Resolution 2250, on Youth, Peace and Security, S/RES/2250 (9 December 2015)[6]
- Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/674 (January 2016)[7]
- UN General Assembly Resolution 70/291, The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review, A/RES/70/291 (1 July 2016)[8]
- UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/15 on Human Rights and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism[9]

***UNESCO's response*** – In reference to the strategies endorsed by the United Nations and UNESCO's Executive Board, UNESCO's Education Sector is seeking to build the capacities of key education stakeholders, namely education policy-makers, teachers, school staff and actors working in non-formal educational settings. This is being done through the development of guidance materials for their use:

- In the first half of 2016, the Sector released *A Teacher's Guide on the*

*Prevention of Violent Extremism*. The Guide was translated into four UN languages, i.e. Arabic, English, French and Russian.

- This present Guide targets education policy-makers, school staff and educators at large. It offers practical advice on what can be done within the education system, in schools and in all learning environments to support effective prevention measures.

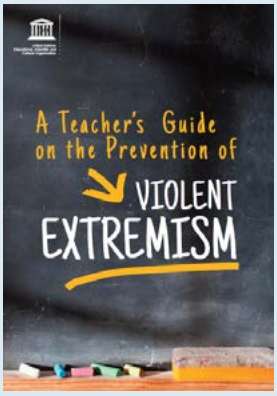
UNESCO's efforts in this field contribute to the realization of the global education agenda – Education 2030 – and in particular to the implementation of Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on Education.

At the organizational level, joint activities and intersectoral cooperation between the Education, Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Culture Sectors are being developed from Headquarters and by its Field Offices:

- **Education as a tool to prevent violent extremism** – UNESCO seeks to assist countries to deliver education programmes that build young people's resilience to violent extremist messaging and foster a positive sense of identity and belonging. This work is being undertaken within the framework of Global Citizenship Education.
- **Media and online coalitions for the prevention of violent extremism** – By leveraging the internet's global reach and its diverse network of partners, UNESCO is mobilizing stakeholders – particularly youth, policy-makers, researchers and media actors – to take effective actions, both online and offline, to prevent and respond to violent extremism and radicalization on the internet. This notably includes assisting in the development of alternative discourses to extremist content online, combating online hate speech and building the capacity of stakeholders to develop innovative responses, all while promoting the protection of freedom of expression, privacy and other fundamental freedoms.
- **Youth participation and empowerment** – The UNESCO Youth team focuses on creating an enabling environment for the empowerment and democratic participation of youth, in order to ensure that young women and men have the opportunities to become active global citizens. Its cross-

sectoral response to the Security Council's Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security puts young women and men at the very heart of addressing the root causes of violent extremism. Linking Education, Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Information, and Culture ensures that young people are provided with the multifaceted training, skills and support required to engage as active citizens and lead the global movement towards the creation of a peaceful world.

- **Celebrating cultural diversity** – UNESCO is engaging youth in the protection of all forms of heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity to foster more fair, inclusive and peaceful societies, through the #Unite4Heritage campaign and Educational Programmes on Heritage and Creativity. These initiatives facilitate the engagement of youth in the protection, promotion and transmission of all forms of heritage and their active participation in cultural life.




***A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism*** is a concise and practical reference guide for teachers and educators at the upper primary/lower secondary level, on how to manage classroom discussions about controversial issues with a view to preventing violent extremism.

The Guide contains factual information that debunks myths and misunderstandings surrounding the issues and presents positive messages, such as those at the heart of global citizenship. It also includes practical tips and recommendations on how to engage learners in meaningful conversations and debates as well as prepare and manage classroom discussions on the subject. Finally, it provides examples of materials and key references that can help teachers feel more confident in tackling the issue.

The Guide is available at:
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002446/244676e.pdf

***Beneficiaries*** – Actors and stakeholders working in education are the main intended beneficiaries of this Guide, namely policy-makers, planners, curriculum developers, teacher trainers, school heads, teachers, counsellors and school management boards. Though focused on the formal education system, the overall principles and directions contained in this Guide can be relevant for educators working in youth associations, community centres, sports clubs, etc. NGOs and civil society actors working with young people will also find the Guide useful, as it provides suggestions on how to collaborate with young people – whether in or out of school – in efforts to prevent violent extremism. Stakeholders working in development agencies can also find inspiration in the Guide for developing partnerships and delivering capacity-building programmes and projects on the prevention of violent extremism.

***Structure of the Guide*** – The Guide contains five Sections. After the Introduction (Section 1), Section 2 explains a few key terms and outlines the role of education in preventing violent extremism. Section 3 identifies five main action areas for policy-making in education (formal and non-formal). The measures described in this Section can be implemented in various ways, depending on the context. Section 4 provides an overview of the main modalities of implementation. Finally, Section 5 provides answers to frequently asked questions that were gleaned from the various consultations that helped shape this Guide. This Section aims to provide insight into the very real challenges that can arise when one sets out to develop and implement measures to prevent violent extremism through education.

***How to use it*** – Given the complexity of the phenomenon of violent extremism, the views and recommendations contained in this Guide should be seen as a synthesis of current thinking and good practices according to education professionals. The Guide is not intended to be prescriptive. It recommends actions that can be implemented as and when appropriate, after they have been duly contextualized to ensure that they address the specific challenges posed by violent extremism within each society.

This pragmatic approach stems from the acknowledgement that, despite the growing body of research on radicalization processes that lead to violence, the

phenomenon of violent extremism remains difficult to comprehend. According to researchers[10], generalizations cannot be easily extrapolated from individual cases, nor are they desirable, since they can cause the stigmatization of populations, which in turn fuels tensions and conflict. With such gaps in our understanding of this rising phenomenon, it is important to underline that there is no single pathway to violent extremism, nor is there a single response.

# 2. Understanding violent extremism

# 2. Understanding violent extremism

## 2.1. Terminological complexities

The terminology surrounding violent extremism is complex and still largely debated. This is due to a variety of reasons, chief among them the fact that many terms used in this field do not have universally accepted definitions. As underlined in the UN Secretary-General's (UNSG) Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, definitions of "terrorism" and "violent extremism" are not straightforward. Defining these terms is the prerogative of Member States, even if such definitions must be consistent with country obligations under international law, and in particular human rights law.

In this context, the United Nations General Assembly decided to take a "practical approach" to the matter, which consists in not seeking to provide a definition of these terms. Instead, it adopted – by consensus – the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which provides a common strategic and operational approach to counter-terrorism. Similarly, the UNSG's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism intends to pursue a "practical approach" to preventing violent extremism, without seeking to address questions of definition[11].

Another reason why discussions on terminology are complex in international contexts is because of the challenges linked to translation. Undeniably, when translated, these terms can take on new, or nuanced, meanings that increase the potential for cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Furthermore, professionals working on the prevention of violent extremism from different sectors of society and contexts may also be using similar words to designate different realities, which introduces another layer of sophistication to discussions on violent extremism.

Because there is no consensus on definitions, it is recommended these notions be discussed and defined at a national level, as a precondition to any planning effort, in order to fully understand the multiple implications of each term.

In order, nonetheless, to provide policy-makers with some insight into the subject, and this despite the above terminological challenges, the following Section reviews key terms that are commonly used in the field.

***Extremism*** – Literally, "extremism" means the "belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable"[12] . "Extremism" thus refers to attitudes or behaviours that are deemed outside the norm. This basic dictionary understanding highlights the inherently subjective nature of the term, which can take on different meanings depending on who defines the norm and decides what is acceptable or not accordingly.

***Violent extremism*** – There is no internationally agreed-upon definition of violent extremism[13]. The most common understanding of the term – which is applied in this Guide – is that it refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals[14]. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and sectarian violence. Typically, "violent extremism" also identifies an enemy, or enemies, who are the object of hatred and violence. The conceptual core of violent extremism is that it is an ideologically motivated resort to the use of violence, commonly based on conspiracy theories.

***Terrorism*** – "Terrorism" refers to a particular strategy adopted to achieve a political goal, which is singularly the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear. In a landmark UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/64/297), countries strongly and unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, "*committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security*"[15]. This Guide does not cover the broad range of activities that could be included in the understanding of terrorism. It is limited rather to addressing the ideologically motivated use of violence. The terms "violent extremism" and "terrorism" are often mistakenly used interchangeably. While terrorism is a form of violent extremism, and terrorism is also often motivated ideologically, the conceptual underpinning of terrorism that distinguishes it from violent extremism is the creation of fear or terror as a means to an end.

***Radicalization*** – As with the term "extremism", the term "radicalization" is highly debated when used in the context of violent extremism. The concern is that the use of the term may serve to justify limitations to the freedom of speech. Indeed, "radical"

can be defined in varying ways depending on circumstance. In certain contexts, it can simply mean "wanting to cause political change". In the context of efforts to prevent violent extremism, "radicalization" is commonly used to describe the processes by which a person adopts extreme views or practices to the point of legitimizing the use of violence.[16] The key notion here is the process of embracing violence. If one wishes to point to the process by which one becomes a violent extremist, the expression "radicalization leading to violence" will be more appropriate than "violent extremism", which focuses on the ideologically motivated resort to violence.

***Resilience*** – Resilience generally refers to an individual's capacity to overcome challenges that have a negative impact on their emotional and physical well-being. In the context of violent extremism, "resilience" refers to the ability to resist – or not adhere to – views and opinions that portray the world in exclusive truths, which legitimize hatred and the use of violence. In education, this implies developing students' capacity to think critically, to learn by inquiry (inquiry-based learning) and to verify facts so that they do not fall prey to the simplistic and one-dimensional views of the world propagated by violent extremist groups. Building resilience among students and youth is one of the key measures that can be implemented by the education sector to prevent the spread of violent extremism.

## 2.2. Drivers and pathways

***Drivers*** – The roots of violent extremism and the causes of radicalization that lead to violence are diverse and multi-layered. There is no single sign that indicates with any degree of certainty that a person is at risk. Conventionally, the drivers of violent extremism are differentiated in two categories: the "push" and "pull" factors. Push factors refer to the conditions that are conducive to violent extremism. They are the broader processes that can "push" individuals towards violent extremist groups. Pull factors are understood as individual motivations that attract potential recruits and the rationales that may be used to legitimize violence.[17]

These factors are itemized below to help policy-makers understand the personal journeys of radicalization that can lead an individual to commit a violent act. The listing does not imply that each factor, taken in isolation, is a necessary "signal" of radicalization leading to violent extremism. For example, while poverty

can contribute in certain instances to push individuals to join violent extremist movements, it should not be considered a necessary, or the sole, cause[18].

The intention behind establishing this indicative list of factors is to convey the message that a combination of push and pull factors can help to explain how individual motivations, personal encounters and choices, within a given context that is conducive to violent extremism, can be causes for concern.

Understanding these nuances is critical to avoid making generalizations that can cause the stigmatization of populations, which in turn generates grievances and collective feelings of resentment that further fuel violent extremist narratives.

## Drivers of violent extremism

| Pull factors (individual motivations) | Push factors (conditions that are conducive) |
|---|---|
| • Individual backgrounds (existential and spiritual search for identity and purpose, utopian world vision, boredom, adolescent crisis, sense of mission and heroism, a promise of adventure and power, attraction of violence, etc.)<br>• Identification with collective grievances and narratives of victimization that provoke powerful emotional reactions, which can be manipulated by charismatic leaders<br>• Distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences (the attraction of simple world views that divide the world into "us versus them", etc.)<br>• Attraction of charismatic leadership and social communities and networks (i.e. charismatic recruiter providing access to power and money, a sense of belonging to a powerful group/ community, etc.). | • Lack of socioeconomic opportunities (poverty, unemployment, corruption, etc.)<br>• Marginalization, injustices and discrimination (including experience of exclusion and injustice, stigmatization, humiliation )<br>• Poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law (lack of experience in/exposure to processes of dialogue and debate, a culture of impunity for unlawful behaviour, violations of international human rights law committed in the name of state security, lack of means to make voices heard or vent frustration,etc.)<br>• Prolonged and unresolved conflicts<br>• Radicalization processes in prisons leading to the legitimization of violence<br>• Etc. |

***Pathways*** – There is no formula or prescription of push and pull factors that produce a violent extremist, nor do these factors remain static throughout the different stages of a person's life. A person's vulnerability to violent extremism can change over time and vary depending on circumstances. Accordingly, there is no standard pathway of radicalization leading to violence. It is therefore not only difficult but futile to also try to determine a fixed set of "standard profiles" of violent extremists.

Scholars studying armed conflict[19] refer to the "greed versus grievance" theory, to explain the two most common personal motivations for participating in violent conflict. "Greed" refers to the notion that fighters are guided by a cost-benefit analysis. Applied to violent extremism, it would mean that individuals join violent extremist groups for the rewards they can provide (e.g. money, power, control over populations and territory). "Grievance" refers to the argument that individuals take to arms over issues of identify (e.g. ethnicity, religion, social class) rather than to improve their economic status.

The common denominator in both cases is that violence is viewed as an acceptable means to obtain remuneration, retribution, compensation and/or reparation.

## 2.3. Role of education

***What can be achieved?*** – Education cannot prevent an individual from committing a violent act in the name of a violent extremist ideology but the provision of relevant education of good quality can help create the conditions that make it difficult for violent extremist ideologies and acts to proliferate. More specifically, education policies can ensure that places of learning do not become a breeding ground for violent extremism. They can also ensure that educational contents and teaching/learning approaches develop learners' resilience to violent extremism. The role of education is, therefore, not to intercept violent extremists or identify individuals who may potentially become violent extremists, but to create the conditions that build the defences, within learners, against violent extremism and strengthen their commitment to non-violence and peace.

## Education in the UNSG's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674)

"Education, skills development and employment" constitute one of the seven action areas identified in the UNSG's Plan of Action.

"As part of the struggle against poverty and social marginalization, we need to ensure that every child receives a quality education which equips him or her for life, as stipulated under the right to education. Education should include teaching respect for human rights and diversity, fostering critical thinking, promoting media and digital literacy, and developing the behavioural and socioemotional skills that can contribute to peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

1 - Invest in education, in particular early childhood education, from ages 3 to 8, to ensure that all children have access to inclusive, high quality education, taking into account diverse social and cultural settings;

2 - Implement education programmes that promote "global citizenship", soft skills, critical thinking and digital literacy, and explore means of introducing civic education into school curricula, textbooks and teaching materials. Build the capacity of teachers and educators to support this agenda;

3 - Provide comprehensive primary through tertiary education, including technical and vocational education, and mentoring for all vulnerable people, including the displaced, by leveraging online and mobile technology;"

Reference: The United Nations Secretary-General's Report – Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, (December 2015), A/70/674; para 54

***Effectiveness*** – Education alone can have only a limited impact on the prevention of violent extremism if it reinforces exclusionary world views and tolerates violence in any form. For effective impact, education policies and practices must, directly and indirectly, address the specific drivers of violent extremism. Business as usual will not do, nor will one-off solutions. A mix of short, medium and long-term educational measures is needed.

Chief among these measures is the implementation of inclusive and equitable education policies and practices that see individual differences not as problems

to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning[20]. At a pedagogical level, this means prioritizing not only cognitive skills, but also learners' socio-emotional and behavioural skills in view of fostering respect for diversity and responsible engagement.

While there can be intense discussion about the specific role of education in the prevention of violent extremism, it is UNESCO's view that choosing to do nothing until the debate is resolved is not an option. The growing threat of radicalization leading to violence indicates that education systems can do more to promote greater social cohesion through the provision of relevant and equitable education of good quality.

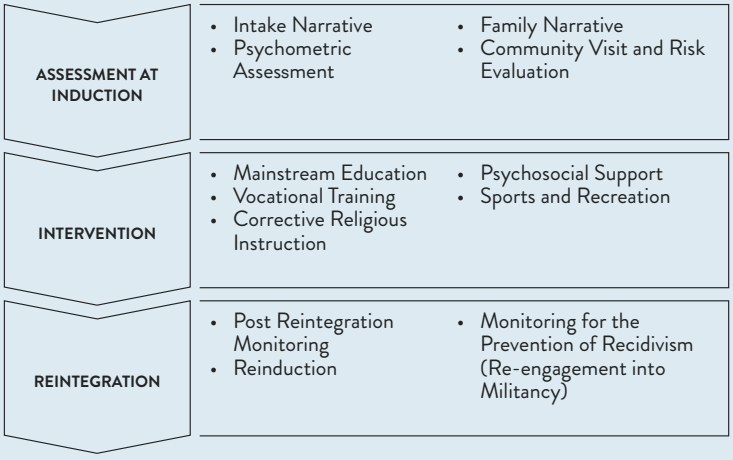
When schools do not provide students with relevant learning – including the tools and opportunities to determine their future and learn about sensitive issues related to local and global conflicts and tensions – students are most likely to seek answers from less reliable sources of information, which may be manipulated by violent extremist recruiters.

Lastly, education has an important role to play in disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. In its Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCF) recommends that rehabilitation efforts and programmes include cognitive skills programmes and basic education courses, as well as vocational training.[21]

## Sabaoon Project, Pakistan

The Sabaoon Project, initiated by the Pakistan Army and run by the Social Welfare Academics and Training organization (SWAaT) since 2009, has been implemented to de-radicalize and rehabilitate former militant youth who were involved in violent extremist activities and apprehended by the army in Swat and surrounding areas in Pakistan. Based on an individualized approach and intervention, the project follows a three-step model:

**FIGURE 1:** *Sabaoon's deradicalisation and rehabilitation model*




Source: Peracha, F., Khan, R.R., Ayub, A. and Aijaz, K. 2015. Pakistan: Lessons from Deradicalising Young Taliban Fighters, p.50 in How to Prevent: Extremism and Policy Options published by Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (formerly Tony Blair Faith Foundation)

At the time of induction (step 1), the youth beneficiaries (adolescents younger than 18) are subject to extensive assessment aimed at determining their emotional and neuropsychological state as well as their educational level, taking into account their former schooling record. On this basis, the youth benefit from adapted learning modules that aim at developing and improving critical thinking and psychosocial skills. These can also be combined with vocational training courses.

*To find out more about Sabaoon Project:*
*http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/sites/default/files/How%20to%20Prevent_Global%20Perspectives%20Vol%202_0.pdf*

# 3. Action areas

Key dimensions of effective responses to prevent violent extremism
INCLUSION
RESILIENCE
PARTNERSHIP
PROCEDURES
SAFETY & WELL-BEING

# 3. Action areas

Just as the pathway to violent extremism is a complex and individual journey, there is no single set of solutions for the prevention of violent extremism through education. Educational responses will vary according to context, i.e. conflict situation, demographics, citizenship model, arrangement between private/public providers, etc.

Depending on each country's capacities, needs and requirements, the action areas presented below can be pursued individually or as part of an integrated prevention plan.

## 3.1. Policies for inclusion and diversity

***The principles*** – One of the pull factors of violent extremism is the sense of belonging felt by those joining a violent extremist group. For these individuals, membership is perceived as a means to overcome feelings of exclusion or injustice. It also appears to create a social environment that seemingly values the individual and endows its members with a special mission. Schools can contribute to the attraction of violent extremist groups when they do not fulfil their promise to include children in society and provide them with a sense of belonging to a learning community.

With this understanding, education systems need to implement and enforce inclusive educational policies that allow all girls and boys to feel safe, empowered and confident that they are equal members of the learning community. Inclusion in this context implies committing to a continuous search to find better ways of responding to learners' diversity[22] and ensuring that learners experience their diversity in a positive way. Every learner matters and matters equally. Grounded in the principle of respect, inclusive policies are about learning to live with, and from, diversity and difference on a daily basis in the educational context.

Even in countries and contexts with seemingly non-diverse populations in terms of social and cultural background, the principles of inclusion and respect for diversity

are vitally important, as they help students develop more open and tolerant world views, which in turn enable them to live more harmoniously with others beyond their national borders. Inclusive educational policies also help raise awareness of the less obvious expressions of diversity within a society, which are valuable sources of creativity and innovation.

Therefore, inclusion and respect for diversity are principles that are at the core of an education policy that is seeking to undermine violent extremism.

***Key tasks*** – The principles of inclusion and respect for diversity should first and foremost be reflected in the curriculum and in textbooks and other reference materials. Students from minority groups can feel marginalized if their communities or group identities, including cultural references, are misrepresented or not represented at all in learning and school materials. Divisive stereotypes and stigmatizing representations of individuals from specific groups (whether in the majority or the minority) can indeed offend or diminish students if such stereotypes are not challenged and ultimately removed from learning and teaching materials. Hate speech[23] poses the most serious threat to learners and learning environments. It should be unequivocally condemned and removed from all learning and teaching materials (including online resources).

Teachers and curriculum developers should be made aware of the possible impact of omissions and/or misleading examples on learners' perceptions of others (within their society and beyond their borders) and given appropriate guidance to foster understanding of, and respect for, diversity. This can come about through collaborations with cultural institutions such as museums and cultural centres, which provide alternative opportunities for youth to learn about their own and other cultures. Such collaborations can also help recognize and understand different interpretations of historical events, especially when they are the cause for deep-seated disputes and resentments among groups and communities.

An ongoing general curriculum reform or revision can be an ideal opportunity to remove damaging representations and promote the values that foster a sense of belonging to a common human heritage. In some countries, a specific unit within the Ministry of Education, in consultation with experts from other ministries in charge of cultural, youth and social affairs, examines existing and new textbooks in

the light of national policies on the recognition of minority groups. The contents of textbooks can also be updated through the complementary use of more recent online or other media materials, in order to broaden the learners' understanding of the values of cultural diversity and all forms of heritage. This can be achieved by highlighting the interwoven and dynamic character of culture resulting from the continuous exchanges between individuals, communities and societies over time.

### Educational programmes on heritage and creativity

UNESCO organizes the World Heritage Youth Forums to promote intercultural dialogue and cooperation as well as to deepen young people's understanding of cultural diversity. It also leads the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative, which involves young people and their organizations in the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage. This initiative aims to enhance youth skills in heritage conservation and to foster mutual understanding.

Additionally, UNESCO has developed creative online tools. The World Heritage in Young Hands Kit familiarizes youth with World Heritage sites, their history, and their own and others' cultures; and the Diversity Kit for Youth raises awareness of the importance of cultural diversity and the creative potential in promoting critical thinking, self-expression and dialogue.

More information available on: http://whc.unesco.org/en/wheducation/ and http://en.unesco.org/creativity/capacity-building/youth/diversity-kit-for-youth

***The challenge*** – In countries where non-state actors are key providers of education, the promotion of inclusion and respect for diversity through the curriculum and pedagogic practices is a daunting task, notably in the case of non-state regulated schools that run parallel to the state system. Unregulated schools can channel children into a separate value system, which may not promote civic values and may prevent learners from developing a broad perspective on the world and the society to which they belong. In some circumstances, such systems have demonstrably failed to prepare students sufficiently for the world of work and technology, thereby contributing to their marginalization, which in turn can aggravate their social grievances[24].

The risks of exacerbating social divisions through the multiplication of school systems could be reduced by putting into place effective mechanisms for policy dialogue. Setting minimum academic and other standards for all forms of educational institutions in a country, and monitoring and enforcing their application (via exams, school inspection, etc.) can also be helpful.

## 3.2. Pedagogies that strengthen resilience and constructive engagement

***Why resilience?*** – Individuals can be attracted to violent extremist groups for personal reasons, when the benefits of joining a group – both in kind and in status – seem to fulfil specific needs and provide simple solutions to complex dilemmas. To counter these trends and strengthen learners' resilience to violent extremist narratives, educators need to pay particular attention to the personal challenges of learners as they struggle with issues of well-being, identity and meaning and are tempted to turn to charismatic leaders for answers. This implies motivating, supporting and equipping teachers with appropriate skills and tools to understand their own biases and subsequently build the defences to violent extremist narratives at the level of individual students. It can also be helpful to connect teachers with other concerned professionals in the community – from the justice, social and child protection sectors – in view of providing learners with relevant and timely assistance on the full range of issues that they may be struggling with.

Considering that learners in contemporary society have access to a multitude of learning resources, notably on the internet, there is a limit to what schools as institutions can do to shield them from pull factors. The most effective defences are therefore those that foster learners' self-confidence and capacities to make responsible and healthy choices.

***How?*** – Resilience to violent extremism involves resistance to simplistic, one-dimensional truths and messages that condone or even exalt hatred and the use of violence as a means to resolve problems. Research shows that certain cognitive, social and emotional skills can help learners resist such narrow perspectives[25]. The ability to think critically and understand that there are a multiplicity of viewpoints constitutes one such skill. It enables students to see things from more than one

perspective and to seek evidence for perspectives imposed by others. It also emphasizes objective learning, thereby reducing the risk of acting upon immediate emotions or limited information and falling prey to conspiracy theories.

In order to develop these skills, learners need to be given opportunities or platforms to discuss, in an appropriate manner, sensitive and "burning bridge" issues that divide communities, weigh on children and encourage simplistic views of the world and others. By creating safe spaces for constructive dialogue, where learners experience non-conflictual discussions on controversial topics, education systems help learners develop a personal understanding of complex issues and question their own assumptions and those of others. Learners can also sharpen their ability to dialogue respectfully, anticipate responses, manage their emotions and challenge prejudice.

Finally, if these discussions are well prepared and managed, learners can understand the flaws in, and manipulations of, less reliable sources of information which feed into conspiracy theories. Such discussions can also develop learners' capacities to counter violent extremist narratives. These skills are particularly valuable for students living in conflict and post-conflict societies. In these discussions, the subject of the debate is less important than the way it is debated and the social dynamics experienced by students in the process.

In contexts where violent extremist groups claim to operate in the name of religious or otherwise identified communities, it is important for schools to provide learners with accurate and relevant knowledge and with skills that encourage and facilitate intercultural dialogue. This includes teaching about cultural diversity within learners' societies and giving facts about different religions and non-religious worldviews. In doing so, great care must be taken not to make sweeping generalizations about religious and non-religious world views and their communities, which can offend their members and imply that violent extremism is caused by these communities or that their members are all potential violent extremists. Nurturing socio-emotional skills such as empathy, compassion and mindfulness [26] are therefore particularly important in this context.

In the same vein, teaching media and information literacy (MIL) is not just an option but a responsibility in order to ward off violent extremist messaging that

increasingly uses sophisticated mechanisms of persuasion, both online and through one-on-one personal mentoring. Schools cannot stop massive communication efforts directed at learners coming from charismatic violent extremist leaders, but they can help learners engage responsibly with media and information systems as well as develop the analytical skills that allow them to critically evaluate information and media content coming from various information sources.

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) supports learners by encouraging them to scrutinize data, information and media content (written and video) that they receive and by providing them with the skills to create their own content using Information and Communication Technologies for human rights, tolerance and a culture of peace.

## Summary of Media and Information Literacy components, subject matters and competencies

| MIL component | MIL subject matters | MIL competency<br>Media and information literate person is able to: |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Recognizing the demand for, being able to search for, being able to access and retrieve information and media content | 1.1. Definition and articulation of a need for information | 1. Determine and articulate the nature, role and scope of the information and media (content) through a variety of resources. |
| | 1.2. Search and location of information and media content | 2. Search and locate information and media content. |
| | 1.3. Access to information, media content and media and information providers | 3. Access needed information and media content effectively, efficiently and ethically as well as media and information providers. |
| | 1.4. Retrieval and holding/storage/ retention of information and media content | 4. Retrieve and temporally hold information and media content using a variety of methods and tools. |

| MIL component | MIL subject matters | MIL competency<br>Media and information literate person is able to: |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Understanding, assessment and evaluation of information and media | 2.1. Understanding of information and media | 5. Understand necessity of media and information providers in society. |
| | 2.2 Assessment of information and media content, and media and information providers | 6. Assess, analyse, compare, articulate and apply initial criteria for assessment of the information retrieved and its sources, as well as evaluate media and information providers in society. |
| | 2.3. Evaluation of information and media content, and media and information providers | 7. Evaluate and authenticate information and media content gathered and its sources and media and information providers in society. |
| | 2.4. Organization of information and media content | 8. Synthesize and organize information and media content gathered. |
| 3. Creation, utilization and monitoring of information and media content | 3.1. Creation of knowledge and creative expression | 9. Create and produce new information, media content or knowledge for a specific purpose in an innovative, ethical and creative manner. |
| | 3.2. Communication of information, media content and knowledge in ethical and effective manner | 10. Communicate information, media content and knowledge in an ethical, legal and effective manner using appropriate channels and tools. |
| | 3.3. Participating in societal-public activities as active citizen | 11. Engage with media and information providers for self-expression, intercultural dialogue and democratic participation through various means in ethical, effective and efficient manner. |
| | 3.4. Monitoring influence of information, media content, knowledge production and use as well as media and information providers | 12. Monitor the impact of created and distributed information, media content and knowledge as well as use existing media and other information providers. |

Source: UNESCO Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: Country Readiness and Competencies. Table 6, page 59. UNESCO, 2013. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002246/224655e.pdf#page=52 . Accessed on 20 February 2017

Resilience is more than passive resistance to violent extremism. It necessarily includes a sense of personal responsibility and an engagement. In this respect, citizenship education, considered as an integral part of an education system, provides a means to overcome youth disengagement. If designed for this purpose, citizenship education can encourage and motivate learners to contribute constructively to society and support social change through non-violent ways in their local environment.

In this regard, the concept of global citizenship is particularly relevant to foster learners' resilience to exclusionary worldviews that pit one group against another. Through global citizenship education, students learn about the interdependency and interconnectedness of the world and its different population groups. They learn to value and respect diversity and differences and develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours that allow them to contribute to, and thrive in, diverse societies. Most of all, global citizenship education calls for active solidarity and empathy among human beings, both within and beyond national boundaries, as well as for responsible action using non-violent means to trigger change.

## 3.3. Safe and supportive school environments

***Schools as places of socialization*** – For the 563 million children and adolescents in secondary education[27], school is one of the most important social settings outside their families. It is the place where they learn how to view and interact with other members of their society, contend with how their society treats them, and interrelate with peers.

For these learners and those who will access education in the years to follow, it is critical that schools are safe and supportive learning environments. Unfortunately, for many children they can be the first social milieu where they are the targets of intentional and aggressive behaviour, and/or where they acquire patterns of behaviour that can overpower their cognitive understanding that the indiscriminate use of violence[28] is wrong. Under these conditions, schools become places where learners develop or reinforce feelings of exclusion and intolerance instead of experiencing their society's embracing ethos.

In the prevention of violent extremism through education, nothing is more important than making the school environment itself violence-free and empowering to ensure that all learners, girls and boys alike, experience and learn first-hand how to live together in peace.

***Zero tolerance to violence*** – Numerous factors shape violence in schools and the way education personnel deal with it: a student's home life, the external environment of the school, a society's cultural understanding of violence, socioeconomic factors, gender dynamics, etc. There can be disparities between cultures, societies and their legal systems in defining what constitutes a violent act or environment. It is nonetheless generally understood that violence occurs in social, physical and psychological forms and includes acts such as corporal and psychological punishment, bullying, sexual and gender-based violence, violent initiation ceremonies practiced in higher education institutions, etc. It can also be perpetrated by teachers and other school staff members and/or by student peers[29].

What is deplorable regarding these forms of violence in a context of learning, beyond their devastating impact on the victims, is the overall ethos that spreads throughout an institution when violence is accepted as a normal means of solving problems, including by the students who are not involved. To eliminate this silent yet damaging belief, the school should adopt a clear "zero tolerance to violence" policy. Although this policy may not immediately put an end to violence, it is effective in sending out a clear counter-message that the institution and all its members are united in the commitment to not tolerate any form of violence. This explicit policy message can help neutralize the implicit and covert message that violence is acceptable, which is conveyed by the school when it tolerates violence. This is one of the purposes of adopting Codes of conduct for teachers and students in order to set the norm and "outlaw" violent behaviours at school.

Building an ethos of care in a school context implies handling cases of violence in school as opportunities to demonstrate that the school personnel is committed to non-violence and the respect of human dignity. Consequently, when there is an occurrence of violence, disciplinary measures should be educative and not purely punitive. Learners need to understand their misbehaviour and the impact of their actions[30]. In these circumstances, it is also vital that students engage in dialogue to

understand the causes and processes of escalation of the conflict that led to the use of violence. It is equally important that learners participate in finding a fair resolution. Other effective strategies include the use of well-structured and supervised peer mediation to resolve cases of violence in secondary schools. The development of conflict resolution skills among learners (of all ages), teachers, school staff, and parents through the inclusion of peace and conflict resolution education in the formal curricula and well targeted outreach programmes can also be effective.

### Kenya's national initiatives to address radicalization of youth in educational institutions

To tackle the issue of violent extremism and radicalization in schools, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kenya launched a new national strategy targeting youth in 2014, entitled *Initiatives to Address Radicalization of the Youth in Educational Institutions in the Republic of Kenya*. The Strategy adopted measures that service the students' interests and well-being. For example, it includes efforts to create child-friendly school environments and encourages students to participate in "talent academies" to pursue an area of their own interest. This serves to channel their energies and passion for learning and research in a constructive way.

The Strategy also includes the discontinuation of ranking schools based on academic performance. This was to lessen the overemphasis on examinations and to reduce student pressure, incorporating other indicators of student achievement, such as abilities in sport and artistic talent. The purpose is to reduce the stress of students' lives at home and in school that may be vented through escape tactics, including joining outlawed groups. The Strategy also employs other effective means to prevent violent extremism, including the integration of PVE-E in curricula and school programmes; adopting a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach; encouraging student participation through student governance processes and peer-to-peer education; and the involvement of media as a stakeholder.

***Supportive environment*** – Students who are vulnerable because they are at risk of being discriminated against or marginalized need attention and support. They may be children from cultural minority groups, who have moved from other regions or countries, who lack skills in the language used as the means of instruction in school, or who have physical or mental characteristics that make them different from the majority. Carefully designed integration services should

be provided for them. Simple activities like participating in clubs, debating societies, sports and other extracurricular activities can nurture the feeling of being valued and recognized by peers and the community, which are key factors of social integration.

The services provided for these groups of students should aim to ensure their integration into the school environment, but this integration must be understood as inclusion based on respect for diversity. Integration efforts undertaken at the expense of the students' distinctive backgrounds can be counter-productive. Furthermore, tact is required to avoid stigmatizing those in need of integration services. As soon as they acquire the basic skills for integration, they should graduate from the services and be assimilated into mainstream school life.

Schools, and learning environments in general, need to be supportive, not just of students with particular needs, but also of the broader student population. Indeed, research has shown that students who experience a sense of happiness and well-being at school are more likely to excel academically[31].

### KiVa International – against school bullying

The KivaKoulu ("Nice School") programme is a research-based anti-bullying programme that was developed in the University of Turku, Finland, with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture (http://www.kivaprogram.net). In Finland, 90 per cent of all comprehensive schools in the country are registered KiVa schools implementing the programme. In addition to the programme's positive effects on the school climate, improvements in academic motivation and achievement have been reported. KiVa has been seen to reduce anxiety and depression and has a positive impact on students' perception of their peers. A remarkable 98 per cent of victims involved in discussions with the schools' KiVa teams felt that their situation improved. Finally, Finnish data from more than 1,000 schools that began implementing KiVa in the fall of 2009 showed that after the first year of implementation, both victimization and bullying were reduced significantly. The KiVa programme won the European Crime Prevention Award in 2009.

To find out more about Finland's approach to PVE:
http://www.finlandun.org/public/default.aspx?contentid=341895&nodeid=35880&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI

## 3.4. Targeted measures for learners at risk

***Challenges in identifying learners at risk*** – Although at times necessary, identifying students who are vulnerable to, or at risk of, radicalization leading to violence, is a delicate undertaking for schools and their staff. Existing indicators and signs of individual vulnerability are hotly debated among education professionals because they are subject to many variables, including those related to context. Indeed, applying these indicators can lead to either misreporting or over-reporting cases, with grave consequences for learners, families and schools. Misreporting is a very real risk since the so-called signs can also be passing expressions of personal strains or the signs of failed personal ambitions that have nothing to with radicalization processes leading to violence.

If indicators are applied improperly or in haste, stigmatization or false accusations may occur. This could, in turn, fuel both discrimination by offenders and the victims' feeling of injustice, both of which could be used to justify acts of violent extremism.

The challenges in applying indicators and signs to individual cases are so great that some experts argue that schools should concentrate on pedagogical prevention and refrain from trying to identify potential violent extremists.

However, given the rise in occurrences of violent extremist acts, there is a sense that education personnel and families affected by the phenomena are seeking assistance on how to handle difficult cases. In the face of such demands, refusing to provide any guidance is not an option.

In response to the concerns and questions that may be raised by teachers, educators and education personnel at large, on how to apply indicators in a way that does not detract from the overall objective of education and undermine the rights of individual learners, the following practices can be recommended:

- The principle behind any set of indicators should dictate that they be indicative and not prescriptive, and be designed to allow professionals to identify learners at risk in view of primarily providing them with appropriate support at an early stage, which protects them from recruitment by violent extremist groups and helps them reject violence.

The use of such indicators should be subject to peer reviews - involving education staff and the concerned family - to ensure that there is a diversity of views on a learner's behaviour before a decision is taken.

- An appropriate use of such indicators requires a good understanding among concerned stakeholders, including community members, of who is vulnerable and at risk. This includes an accurate appreciation of the psychosocial dynamics at play in this context. On the basis of this shared understanding, assistance and support can be provided to the individual at risk, while minimizing risks of causing harm or damage to the innocent. This includes making every effort to address the social and personal challenges individuals are facing and paying particular attention to their individual rights and responsibilities. The above precautions are relevant for prevention efforts, as well as for disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration activities.

Indicators and signs of radicalization leading to violence include specific behaviours or attitudes that, combined in an individual, could indicate the person is on a path to violence. These signs can be, for example, vehement references to injustice or grievances, manifestations of being psychologically manipulated , a sudden quest for identity or group belonging, the expression of polarized views, a rupture with family members and friends, an identification with a group or an ideology requiring a change in clothing and daily habits, the demonstration of attitudes that justify the use of harmful means to achieve an end, etc.)

***Referral process*** – In order to avoid errors in referral processes and incidences of abuse of authority, it is recommended that referral mechanisms and protocols are developed in consultation with community leaders, teachers, responsible school staff, learners and designated professionals from the justice, health and child protection sectors, working as contact points within, and outside, of schools. These mechanisms must clearly define the respective roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders, notably as concerns the decision-making processes. They should also state the applicable ethical and legal frameworks and explain the procedures for bringing complaints of violations before the appropriate bodies.

In order to mitigate risks of over and mis-reporting, agreed referral mechanisms should also provide indications on how and when to involve and link up with the families, communities, concerned professionals (e.g. social and health workers) and relevant public authorities. This includes specifying the role of law enforcement officers entering the school premises in order to build trust between communities and the school and ensure that these remain safe and inclusive spaces of learning.

Finally, the agreed-upon referral process must be communicated to the students and their parents as well as to the concerned community leaders and partners, in a genuine effort to build trust between the school and communities.

## School referral mechanism and protocol for the prevention of the radicalization of youth, France

Prévenir la radicalisation des jeunes

QU'EST-CE QUE LA RADICALISATION ?

The French Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research issued a booklet for directors of educational institutions and educational staff that explains the referral mechanism that is currently in place in France to report cases of radicalization leading to violence and support youth at risk.

It provides background information on the process of radicalization and its warning signs, instructions to report cases, contact details of relevant public services for personnel seeking guidance and information on the legal frameworks that govern the referral system.

To find out more: Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche. 2015. Prévenir la radicalisation des jeunes http://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Prevention_radicalisation/20/2/prevention_livret_567202.pdf Accessed on 2 November 2016.

Once the mechanism and protocols are in place, teachers, educators, school staff and community leaders should be trained on how to follow the referral protocols

and make judicious judgements on the basis of the suggested indicators and signs. The designation of a focal point in the local community, who is responsible for the prevention of violent extremism and equipped with relevant competencies to handle the matter, can be helpful to advise and support school staff during the trainings. The development of written reference and guidance materials for all those involved in the referral process is important to facilitate coordination and information exchange between stakeholders.

Unprepared attempts to identify students at risk should be avoided. When schools lose the trust of their students, they lose their power of influence and any hope of undertaking effective prevention efforts. In the worst cases, they can even unintentionally contribute to the breeding of violent extremist mind-sets and create hostile school climates.

***A gender perspective*** **–** Violent extremism is indisputably a gendered phenomenon[32]. Indeed, while it is being increasingly reported that women play an active role in violent extremist organizations and attacks as assailants and supporters, men are still more often the perpetrators of violent extremist acts and therefore the targets of recruitment campaigns[33]. Given the prevailing specificities of women's and men's experience, all prevention efforts should integrate a gender perspective when dealing with learners at risk. This can include addressing the gendered dimensions of the drivers of violent extremism.

Furthermore, as women and girls are severely affected by extremist violence, women's needs, and rights should be promoted through prevention efforts, as well as their leadership in such initiatives. This includes ensuring that, in the school context, women, notably young women, are given the opportunity to make their voices heard on the school climate. The assumption is that if empowered and given the right support, young women can play a mitigating role regarding the spread of violent extremism and radicalization leading to violence among their peers.

Equally important are gender-specific disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration options for women and men, which can help at-risk individuals to heal from the violence (notably gender-based violence), should they themselves have been victims of violent extremism while members of such groups.

## 3.5. Stakeholder cooperation

Effective work towards the prevention of violent extremism is rarely possible without mutual understanding, cooperation and trust between education institutions and the different sectors of the community that play an educational role. Below is a succinct presentation of actors who play a key educational role in prevention efforts. The list below is not exhaustive. There are many other professional categories that could be added to this inventory, i.e. performing artists, the business community, the medical community, etc. The actors below are those that have shown early engagement in prevention efforts.

Many of these actors are already undertaking innovative prevention work through non-formal education channels, at municipal or community levels. Their daily contributions to social cohesion are often undervalued, however, and deserve to be better known and taken into account when designing national educational prevention strategies and activities.

Through the following presentations, we intend to provide pointers on possible areas of collaboration and issues to consider when engaging with these key stakeholders.

***Families*** – Needless to say, parents and the immediate family are the most important socialization agents for children. Typically, knowledge of a student's family and background helps teachers and the school understand his or her behaviour in the school environment. In the case of violent extremism, research has shown that the family-related antecedents of members of violent extremist movements do not provide a common ground for explanation. The family can, however, play an important role in safeguarding learners at risk. This requires developing parents' understanding of radicalization processes that lead to violence and equipping them with the skills to play a proactive role in shaping positive attitudes toward non-violence.

Indeed, mothers and fathers can exert a particularly constructive influence if they know how to communicate with children in meaningful ways, without moralizing. When mothers are informed, supported and empowered, they are well-positioned to identify potential vulnerabilities.[34] Fathers and other male family members have a notable responsibility to value and demonstrate non-violent models of masculinity.

When collaborating with families, schools should avoid making generalizations that

stigmatize households or try to establish simplistic correlations between household types (e.g. couple family, lone-parent family, etc.) and violent extremism.

***Young people*** – Young people in general are among the first affected and concerned by violent extremism. They are often the victims and perpetrators of violent extremist acts. This makes them equally essential partners in the fight against violent extremism. Viewing them as contributors of solutions, rather than as a problem, is necessary to harness their potential to become a transformative force, notably in the school context. If treated as equals and responsible partners, with clear rights and responsibilities, they can contribute substantially to the design and implementation of relevant programmes and policies. Their potential to create narratives rooted in the values of cultural diversity and mutual understanding that counter the empty promises and propaganda of violent extremist groups through media and ICTs should be used to the fullest.

### Cafétalks: youth-led initiative in peacebuilding and countering violent extremism, Tunisia

**Young peacebuilders, such as the National Tunisian Youth Initiative Against Terrorism, are actively involved in promoting peace and countering extremism. As part of his work to engage youth in peacebuilding initiatives, Aslem leads "Cafétalk Ambassadors", a youth-led project that brings together young women and men in coffeeshops to participate in open discussions on topics that concern them. One talk focused on art as a weapon against violent extremism. One of the main drivers of extremism is a lack of opportunity to participate in cultural activities that promote and reflect a nation's rich history and civilization. These talks are essential in raising awareness and shaping people's sense of belonging to a community and society.**

To find out more: http://cafetalks.org/

One important point to note: "youth" and "students" are often viewed as separate groups, the stakeholders of each camp acting in parallel, with little interaction and cooperation between them. Yet the two groups largely overlap in most countries. The measures that apply to students are largely applicable to the youth population and the issues that concern youth also concern the student populations. There should be closer cooperation of education stakeholders with youth actors, beyond the walled education system.

***Religious communities and non-religious world views organizations –*** Open dialogue between members of religious communities, non-religious worldviews organizations and other representatives of society is critical to build a climate of trust and mutual respect within society and set the example for peaceful dialogue. Intra-community dialogue is equally important to understand and appreciate the diversity of opinions and experiences within communities. Dialoguing with those who might have different opinions, values and beliefs from one's own, both within and outside one's community, can empower learners to overcome prejudice and distinguish facts from stereotypes[35].

Pursuing this objective may require prior training for religious leaders and educators on how to facilitate such dialogue and support learners at risk who are seeking psychological and social support. Because young people at risk may turn to religious leaders for counselling, these trainings need also to inform leaders of existing referral processes and relevant support services. Leaders may also require guidance on their rights and responsibilities towards young people according to existing legislation.

## Preventing violent radicalization, Indonesia

With respect to combating radicalization leading to violence, the study, *Preventing Violent Radicalization and Terrorism – The Case of Indonesia*, states that '*A central element of the Indonesia model involves working through networks of individuals who have religious credibility and are well-established and greatly respected within the various groups that have far-reaching impact on society.*' The report states that the large and popular national religious organizations (e.g. Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama and the LibForAll Foundation) have made … *'efforts to counteract violent extremism, involving focusing on schools and universities, especially religious schools.*' For example, the courses offered at Muhammadiyah Islamic schools and universities have become…*'more pluralistic… to include subjects such as world religions, where all religions are studied.*' As a result, the students have *'more candid and open discussions'* among themselves not only on religion but also on world affairs and current events.

Source: Ranstorp, M. 2009. Preventing Violent Radicalization and Terrorism – The Case of Indonesia, p.6, Stockholm, Swedish National Defence College.

***Law enforcement agencies*** – Cooperation between school and police can be beneficial for prevention efforts if joint actions are regulated in accordance with national education strategies, and if the respective roles and responsibilities of each partner are well-defined and understood by the police, education personnel, learners and families.

Mistrust between learners and law enforcement agencies, will negatively impact communication between schools and police. This may prove to be problematic, notably if police action is needed urgently.

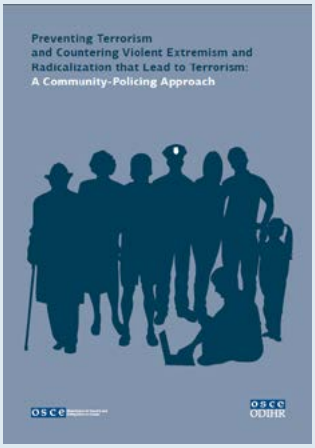
### Unity Jam initiative by ConnectJustice, UK

**The Unity Jam project brings young people aged 16 to 25 together with police for 48 hours to solve problems in their community. Launched by ConnectJustice, it is a creative exercise based on design theory: learning new things, improving skills, bouncing ideas off one another to co-create with their peers. But rather than just talking, they develop the seeds for an ongoing solution in which the key outcome is for young people to create products/services to engage with police more effectively. This project is being implemented in three cities in the United Kingdom.**

More information: http://connectjustice.org/activities.php .

Building trust between schools and the police is critical to ensure successful outcomes of prevention efforts. It can be nurtured through various activities. Police officers can provide advice or guidance on violent extremism and crime preventive measures in general. They can also intervene as educators on general safety issues. Young people can also be invited to visit training sessions of police officers, offering their points of view on certain sensitive issues such as "stop-and-search", which tends to affect young people disproportionately. Such one-off interventions allow students and police officers to interact and dialogue peacefully as well as break down mutual assumptions, fear and possible mistrust.

## Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach, by OSCE




This guidebook provides guidance on the central issues that can have an impact on the success or failure of police efforts to harness a community-policing approach to preventing terrorism and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. It is intended for policy-makers and senior police professionals, but can serve community leaders and educators seeking to work more closely with law enforcement officers.

It explains notably the basic principles and characteristics of community policing approaches in view of minimizing risks.

Full publication available on http://www.osce.org/atu/111438.
Published by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 2014.

***Former violent extremists*** – If they are available, former violent extremists who want to help can be credible and very effective resources for preventive education and disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration activities. In a number of countries, they are invited into schools to tell their personal stories about how they joined and left violent extremist groups and to warn of the dangers and disappointments in joining such groups. Some have set up websites and conduct their own training[36]. Elsewhere, there are written testimonials and films from former violent extremist youth that can be used in teaching. As always, it is important that violent extremists from different movements be invited so that violent extremism is not continually cast as coming from one particular group or population.

### My Former Life – The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace

My Former Life is a multimedia educational resource that is aimed at young people aged 14 to19. It is based on a documentary film that shares the personal stories of four former extremists, or "Formers".

The educational film explores these people's reasons for deciding to become involved in violent conflict, the consequences of their decisions and why they left their respective groups. Finally it shows how their lives have progressed since they moved on from violence. The film accompanies a series of workshops that facilitate conversations about a challenging subject matter.

The aim of this resource is to take young people through a journey of learning and understanding about the causes, effects and legacies of violent extremism.

To find out more:
http://foundation4peace.org/projects/my-former-life/

***Digital Media*** – Virtually every violent and non-violent extremist group has its own website and, in many instances, maintains multiple sites in different languages with different messages tailored to specific audiences. Both learners and young people outside the school environment remain vulnerable to their propaganda and hate. Yet, most often, schools disregard the issue. The links between violent extremism and the media are too often viewed as a matter to be dealt with by internet providers and other media stakeholders. This has to change. More proactive measures are needed to guard students, and young people in general, against expressions of violent extremism disseminated through media, especially digital media. This includes raising awareness in the school environment about media or digital citizenship, or how to use internet and other digital media in a constructive way, including how to discern their harmful and negative messages and also how to create new platforms and networks for dialogue and mutual understanding. The concept of media literacy or digital citizenship can be integrated in the curriculum and serve as a common platform to mobilize educators, across the board, to develop the related skills. The engagement of civil society, as well as online communities and internet intermediaries (e.g. search engines, internet

service providers, online social networks, etc.) is useful to make the digital source of information safer. Bloggers and other actors of social media can also be mobilized to work with students to implement digital citizenship education[37].

## Digital citizenship education

The concept of digital citizenship recognizes that children benefit from active and responsible participation in the digital world. For effective participation, children must hold competencies that empower them to fully explore the opportunities that ICT offers and be resilient to the accompanying risks. UNESCO Bangkok's recent study defines digital citizenship as "being able to find, access, use and create information effectively; engage with other users and with content in an active, critical, sensitive and ethical manner; and navigate the online and ICT environment safely and responsibly, being aware of one's own rights". This encompasses three dimensions:

1. Digital literacy: Cognitive, creative and critical abilities to create and engage with content.
2. Digital resilience: Ability to manage online risks.
3. Digital rights and responsibilities: Ability to recognize one's right to equitable access to ICT and right to privacy, while upholding responsibility to respect the rights of others.

Reference: A Policy Review: Building Digital Citizenship in Asia and the Pacific through Safe, Effective and Responsible Use of ICT. UNESCO Bangkok, 2016. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002468/246813e.pdf

***Teachers*** – Last but not least, teachers play a central role in the prevention of violent extremism – not as agents of surveillance but as educators. In direct contact with young people, they can be role models, change agents and mediators, nurturing dialogue and modelling mutual respect. They can also be the first to identify signs of radicalization leading to violence and mitigate them through the exploration of controversial issues. Finally, teachers can serve as a bridge between school, families and the broader community to ensure that all concerned stakeholders are working towards a common goal to support and assist learners at risk.

To allow teachers to play a constructive role as peace brokers, they need to be consulted, motivated and equipped with appropriate teaching and learning tools. This includes developing their ability to foster among learners a range of cognitive and non-cognitive skills – such as critical thinking, multiperspectivity, understandings of complexity, moral courage and responsible online behaviour – through pre- and in-service training. Teachers also need to be encouraged to be respectful of, and attentive to, the personal challenges of learners as they struggle with issues of identity and meaning. This dimension should not be overlooked if teachers are to provide learners with the appropriate and timely guidance that can help undermine processes of radicalization.

Finally, teachers should be given the appropriate psychological and social support to face and overcome the impact of attacks and threats of violent extremist groups that impede their capacity to play a constructive role in prevention.

Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that teachers can be instigators of violent extremism by imparting messages of hate and intolerance that negatively influence learners and the school climate. In such cases, existing procedures and sanctions against hate speech should be applied and enforced.

# 4. Modalities of implementation

# 4. Modalities of implementation

***One size does not fit all*** – Depending on each country's capacities (institutional, financial and human), its political commitment to prevention efforts and its vulnerability to violent extremism, different types of prevention activities can be implemented. This Guide assumes that each country or education system is at a different stage of preparedness in this regard. Consequently implementation agendas will vary among countries. It is important to underline that there is no single approach to the prevention of violent extremism through education.

The scope and nature of violent extremism and their respective push and pull factors are not the same everywhere and at all times; neither are the strengths and weaknesses of national education systems when it comes to responding to the challenges of violent extremism.

Conducting an objective assessment of the situation in a country helps avoid the risk of building on wrong assumptions, which can undermine the effectiveness of future policies and programmes.

## Conducting a situational analysis

Prevention policies should be based on sound situational analysis.

Here below are examples of questions to be answered before developing policies:

- What are the current manifestations and prevalence of violent extremism in the country?
- Who are the most at risk groups?
- What are the most vulnerable geographical areas in the country?
- What are the local, regional and international drivers of local manifestations of violent extremism?
- What are the expressed needs for education on the prevention of violent extremism according to all stakeholder groups, including those most at risk and former members of violent extremist groups?
- Who and which organizations are already undertaking work in this field? Are there any lessons learned on their impact?

**These questions and others along the same lines will help the education sector judge the relevance of the issue to the country context. Situational analyses need to be conducted with the involvement of both professional researchers and 'voices' of populations or groups considered 'at risk' as well as concerned communities. Mobilizing a large variety of viewpoints and a broad base of (national and international) information for this exercise reduces the risk of overlooking relevant knowledge about the factors contributing potentially to violent extremism and their possible remedies.**

For more information see the lines of questioning developed by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF): http://www.gcerf.org/

This Section contains a selection of common country implementation approaches. They are listed as examples to inspire, or to be replicated, adapted or re-engineered, as appropriate. It is not expected that all will be implemented. They constitute a menu or a catalogue of approaches, which can be combined or individually developed to address the needs of each country.

***Guiding principles*** – When implementing any of these activities it is important to bear in mind the following core principles, which can help ensure that interventions are effectively undermining the conditions conducive to violent extremism.

Activities should:

- Be human-rights based (i.e. uphold the human rights of all learners, notably the right to education)
- Contribute to broader learning outcomes that improve the quality and relevance of education in accordance with SDG 4 or the Education Agenda 2030[38]
- Be developed and expanded on the basis of evidence-informed assessments and evaluation findings
- Be bold enough to address the learners' real grievances (systemic and psychosocial)
- Be participatory (involve young people, parents and families, community leaders, social and health workers, law enforcement agencies, municipal authorities, etc.) at every stage, from design to evaluation

### "PVE specific" and "PVE related" activities

Prevention efforts commonly distinguish between two types of policies or activities to prevent and counter violent extremism. As noted in the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) working draft document *Guidance on the difference between "PVE Specific" and "PVE Related" Programmes and Projects* (2016), one is specific, and the other is related to the purpose. "PVE specific" activities are designed to prevent violent extremism in a direct and targeted way, for example by presenting and discussing testimonials from former violent extremist youth in schools located in a geographic region particularly vulnerable to violent extremism. The "PVE related" activities pursue objectives that are useful to prevent violent extremism among the student population but are designed to achieve general educational objectives. Addressing violent extremism issues, through "regular" inter-cultural or global citizenship education would be an example of "PVE related" activity.

## 4.1. Sector-wide approaches

Some countries have chosen to engage in sector-wide initiatives to set national priorities and secure institutional commitment to prevention efforts. These approaches include the development of national prevention of violent extremism plans or strategies that include education components (e.g. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Denmark, Finland, France). Less commonly, certain countries develop distinct policies and strategies to prevent violent extremism through education (e.g. France, Morocco, UK). In both cases, it is useful to align such plans with existing education policies that contribute to the achievement of SDG 4 or the Education Agenda 2030. They should also support intersectoral policies on the prevention of violent extremism, which include measures that concern employment, social protection, etc.

Sector-wide approaches can also consist of establishing central coordination units for the prevention of violent extremism within the ministry of education or culture (e.g. Sweden). These arrangements can be helpful to ensure that prevention measures are benefiting from the know-how of all education stakeholders and supporting ongoing efforts to increase the relevance of education. A corollary is to create a network of Focal Points for the prevention of violent extremism

throughout the education system (e.g. France) and within other relevant ministries.

Examples of activities:

- Development of multisectoral national plans for the prevention of violent extremism and policy reviews
- Establishment of central coordination units for the prevention of violent extremism within ministries of education
- Creation of a Focal Point system at the school and district levels, and/or throughout government to ensure the coordination of education-related interventions.
- Development of monitoring and evaluation metrics to measure progress in prevention and support

## 4.2. Curriculum-based approaches

Curriculum documents play a key role in shaping learners' understanding of themselves and the world around them. Curricular approaches to the prevention of violent extremism should focus on ensuring that the intended and taught curricula are inclusive and develop the following key learner attributes that are at the heart of Global Citizenship Education: (i) informed and critically literate; (ii) socially connected and respectful of diversity; (iii) ethically responsible and engaged[39].

These skills can be developed through traditional subjects (e.g. civics education, history, literature, physical education and sports, social studies, etc.) or through cross-curricular projects and assignments. The latter encourage learners to work across disciplines and create opportunities to take part in "learning by doing".

The overall relevance of curricula can also be enhanced by ensuring that content is linked to current issues of concern to learners, whether personal, local, regional or global[40]. The process of curricular development and implementation will also be enriched if practitioners are actively engaged. If the views of each stakeholder group are sought and recognized during the curriculum development process, there is a greater chance that the curriculum itself will be effectively taught and viewed as

inclusive, and that it will meet the needs of the diverse range of students it seeks to serve. School principals and teachers should be regarded as particularly important stakeholders. Their participation significantly increases their commitment to the realization of the curriculum in schools and classrooms[41].

Examples of activities:

- Introduction of dedicated content through stand-alone subjects (focusing for example on well-being, school life, world religions, global citizenship, etc.)
- Cross-curricular approaches promoting interdisciplinary studies and project-based learning
- Mainstreaming content and topics throughout the curriculum, notably in key carrier subjects such as history, civics and citizenship education; philosophy; social studies

## 4.3. Teacher training and support

The successful implementation of prevention efforts through education systems depends on the capacities of educators, teachers and the school staff. They are interfacing directly with the students and their families, and are therefore on the front lines of prevention. Considering that violent extremism is related to complex issues – possibly linked to socioeconomic, cultural, religious, or ethnic tensions and conflicts – not all teachers feel confident to address the matter head-on. Teachers can also themselves be condoning divisive stereotypes and ill-prepared to question their assumptions. If teachers do not feel emotionally or professionally ready to do so, they should not engage in conversations on violent extremism and subjects that generate tensions. The success of prevention efforts hinges upon teachers' capacity to understand and manage their own biases. It is therefore paramount that teachers and educators at large be made aware of the messages that they convey (intentionally or unintentionally) in the classroom. This can be done through targeted and adapted capacity-building activities, including peer-to-peer exchanges, with school staff and educators operating out of the formal education system. Topics to be explored include: drivers of violent extremism; pathways to radicalization leading to violent extremism; the role of education and teachers in

particular in prevention; teachers' individual attitudes about violence; discussing contentious issues in the classroom; policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious worldviews through intercultural education; conflict resolution and mediation; inclusive teaching approaches, etc.

When a school cannot afford to deploy a competent staff member to conduct teacher training, it is more advisable for several schools to share one proficient teacher trainer than to assign the task to an inexperienced person lacking the necessary skills to handle the subject.

Furthermore, it can be helpful to involve in the training a focal, or resource, person who is a widely-accepted member of the community with a good understanding of local radicalization processes leading to violence. Volunteers can add to the pool of human resources. Of course, careful assessments should be made of their qualifications, in terms of both their personal profile and their competencies for the task.

Examples of activities:

- Pre- and in-service training on violent extremism, its causes, drivers and manifestations; pedagogical approaches to prevention; teachers' role in prevention
- Psychosocial support for teachers impacted by violent extremism

### Essentials of Dialogue by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change

**This resource gives students the tools to build inclusive societies that welcome diversity. Essentials of Dialogue is part of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (formerly Tony Blair Faith Foundation) "Generation Global" education programme and is offered for use in classrooms all over the world. It is free of charge and can be used to help anyone who wants to give young people the essential elements to dialogue constructively. Each chapter includes theory and practical activities to help teachers explore, develop and practise the skills of dialogue in their classrooms.**

Download in English, Arabic or Urdu at http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/projects/supporting-next-generation/supporting-next-generation-essentials-dialogue-0
Download for ipad/iphone at https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/id1125961970

## 4.4. Whole-school approaches and interventions

The UNESCO International Bureau of Education defines a whole-school approach as activities that "involve[s] addressing the needs of learners, staff and the wider community, not only within the curriculum, but across the whole-school and learning environment. It implies collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these"[42].

School-based approaches are particularly effective to reach out to learners and provide holistic responses to concerns of rising violent extremism. Schools, as microcosms of society, can provide opportunities for students to apply critical thinking and civic education lessons in real-life settings. They also provide a framework to experience volunteer opportunities or to initiate community service projects that can be transformational. The development of skills that build learners' resilience to violent extremism are generally more effective if the learning comes from direct experience[43].

School-based approaches cover a wide range of activities that involve the school's policies, the quality of the curriculum and teaching, its leadership and management, its culture (which encompasses the school ethos, norms and rituals), its pupil activities and its collaboration with the wider community.[44]

Examples of activities:

- School assemblies addressing the issue of violent extremism; open discussions on contentious issues
- Development of anti-bullying policies and codes of conduct through participatory processes involving students, teachers, school personnel and families
- Student welfare and well-being services (including guidance and counselling services)
- Youth-driven projects that support intercultural dialogue and inclusive school climates

- Invitation of guest speakers to discuss issues with students and parents: law enforcement officers, former violent extremists, media/internet professionals, etc.

## 4.5. Non-formal education and community-based approaches

Because radicalization processes leading to violent extremism take place primarily at the local level, prevention efforts are notably effective if implemented through community-based approaches and non-formal education activities. Indeed, the positive impact of these approaches in fostering tolerance and youth engagement is repeatedly underlined by educators, practitioners, parents and young people alike. By nurturing positive relationships among youths or communities that may otherwise be in conflict (in or out of schools), they promote self-reflection, critical thinking, leadership and resilience not only for young people but also for their families and communities. In addition, they are excellent opportunities to develop and disseminate alternative messages to those spread by violent extremist groups that are based on intolerance and sectarian worldviews.

In order to be effective, such programming needs to be deliberate, sustainable and resonant among local audiences[45]. Community stakeholders, including schools and school personnel, also need to engage more proactively in developing and utilizing creative teaching approaches that echo (or reinforce) inclusive policies promoted through education systems.

Finally, to ensure that community-based activities lead to sustainable change, it is important to integrate relevant monitoring and evaluation activities in programmes that measure perceptions and, as much as possible, behaviour change. This can be done through simple polls, surveys, focus groups or town hall meetings[46].

Examples of activities:

- Arts and sports education programmes
- Community information and exchange town hall meetings
- E-learning platforms
- Support to youth groups

- Youth drop-in centres providing guidance and counselling
- Family awareness programmes
- Non-formal education programmes for mothers
- Workplace-based training and awareness-raising on diversity management

### #Unite4Heritage campaign

Launched in March 2015, the #Unite4Heritage campaign has reached millions of people in its efforts to raise awareness of the need to safeguard and celebrate cultural heritage and diversity, and provide an alternative narrative to the violent propaganda of extremists.

In a context where irreplaceable cultural heritage sites and cultural expressions are increasingly under attack, it is critical to raise awareness among peoples and communities, in particular youth, about the importance of strengthening knowledge of world cultures, and to develop new narratives by youth in response to the propagation of messages of hatred and the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage. Digital technologies and the internet, which have a direct impact on the way cultural diversity is expressed and perceived, as well as on how young people learn and express themselves, represent an opportunity to respond to the challenge of radicalization through culture.

As part of the #Unite4Heritage campaign, UNESCO has developed a partnership with arts institutions and youth organizations in order to involve youth in awareness-raising campaigns for the protection of our shared cultural heritage.

More information: http://www.unite4heritage.org/

## 4.6. Intersectoral partnerships

It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that partnerships are the cornerstone of effective prevention efforts targeting violent extremism. Schools and education systems generally cannot address and mitigate alone the full range of drivers of violent extremism, nor can they effectively support learners at risk and their families without collaborating with other sectors of society, including justice, health and social protection services.

Communities affected by the threat of violent extremism, through their activities and in collaboration with concerned professionals in and out of schools, play a vital role in prevention as they build community cohesion and resilience to violent extremism.

Example of activities:

- Regular coordination meetings at municipal level involving community leaders from all religious and non-religious groups, and all concerned stakeholders (social and health workers, law enforcement agents, business communities, etc.)
- Development of referral procedures with and for community leaders and educators
- Public information and education campaigns and cultural events demonstrating the common resolve of all communities composing society to halt hate speech and violent extremism.

# 5. Frequently asked questions

# 5. Frequently asked questions

### Q1. How can schools provide a safe and open platform for dialogue and discussion on issues related to violent extremism that are considered politically sensitive by the community or the country?

**A.** Students need a safe place to address issues related to violent extremism, including those that are considered "taboo". The more sensitive the issues, the more students need opportunities to address them in safe environments. To prevent discussions on sensitive issues from escalating into political debates, issues must be clearly framed, from the outset, with a specific learning objective. For example, if there is a conflict between particular ethnic groups present in the community, it may be appropriate to approach the subject through a discussion on "inter-cultural dialogue" and "learning to live together". Students' understanding of a concept can be accelerated by using specific local examples. The entry point should be the specific learning objective, not the sensitive topic, the latter being framed within the former. This can help prevent the discussion from becoming a political debate and keep it focused on the learning process.

### Q2. Should schools address issues related to violent extremism without any reference to the political systems that are perceived by students to be responsible for violent extremism?

**A.** An effective pedagogy to prevent violent extremism will be comprehensive, allowing students to review all related topics and issues, including the broader political and institutional systems, if they are deemed relevant and useful for deepening students' understanding of the subject. The purpose of such a broad review is to encourage students to develop their critical thinking skills, in order to understand the complexity of political and institutional phenomena and their intricate dynamics. Avoiding mention of a political system that is perceived, either justly or unjustly, to be responsible for violent extremism is not an option. Passivity or avoidance can only generate mistrust of educational establishments and undermine their credibility among

students. The discussion, however, should take place within a clear pedagogical framework, without which the classroom discussion risks turning into a political debate. When treating sensitive issues in a school setting, it is essential to stay focused on the relevant learning objectives (e.g. developing evidence-informed arguments, critical thinking, self-reflection, etc.) and drawing a clear distinction propaganda and evidence.

### Q3. Global citizenship education is considered a useful educational approach to address violent extremism. But is it relevant when there is no common understanding of citizenship?

**A.** For UNESCO and the UN, global citizenship education does not entail promoting a supranational legal status. It is an educational ethos. Understood thus, the concept does not conflict with national forms of identity or citizenship or the lack thereof. Global citizenship education is an approach that can be integrated into existing subjects such as civics education or history even if there is no clear understanding of citizenship. Global citizenship education can be introduced by integrating fundamental principles that are common to all cultures and help to establish the awareness that all individuals share a common humanity. These principles include, for example, respect for diversity, inclusion and solidarity for humanity. If the local context is such that it is not considered appropriate to refer to "global citizenship", these above principles can be framed differently, and introduced under different headings such as "education for a culture of peace" or "learning to live together". The strength and effectiveness of global citizenship education to undermine violent extremism is not derived from the label, but from the principles it promotes.

### Q4. Should religious education be part of strategies to prevent violent extremism through education?

**A.** Some violent extremists claim to perpetrate violent acts in the name of a religion, thereby distorting the tenets of these same religions. This engenders the misconception that violent extremism is a religious issue. If teaching about religions and religious beliefs is deemed necessary, one of its purposes should be to remove these misconceptions[47]. Through these programmes, students should learn about and appreciate the values of different religions. Meanwhile,

"religious education", or "education focused on the teachings of one particular religion" should be approached prudently in accordance with national legal frameworks and established policies. Religious teachings that promote overt hostility towards other religions or communities or condone hate speech are problematic and should be condemned. Ensuring religious education that develops an open and broader view of the world, and which includes an accurate understanding of non-religious world views, is important and may require putting in place additional pedagogical guidance and teacher training.

### Q5. In the absence of a clear definition of violent extremism, how can the curriculum introduce the subject?

**A.** It is true that violent extremism and other related concepts do not have internationally agreed-upon definitions. Some could therefore argue that these notions are too subjective to be addressed in schools. This situation, however, is not unique to violent extremism. "Global citizenship" does not have a globally agreed-upon definition either, but this does not prevent a country from introducing it in the curriculum. While the terms may be hard to define, there are conceptual elements that are commonly found in many approaches and understandings of these notions. It can be helpful to start with these basic elements by guiding students through their review from the perspective of their local context. This will enable them to reach an understanding that respects the conceptual core but has contextual relevance. Importantly, students should also be made to understand that there are different views on violent extremism and other related concepts: diversity is part of the reality that surrounds the concepts. The absence of definitions can be an opportunity to learn that there are different world views and opinions, and they need to be respected. This diversity should not be a source of violent conflict.

### Q6. Is it necessary to engage in the prevention of violent extremism through education in a country where there is no apparent threat of violent extremism?

**A.** Some of the measures recommended to prevent violent extremism can be adopted easily by countries where no imminent threat of violent extremism exists. Introducing inclusive educational policies that nurture respect for

diversity and support safe and empowering learning environments, along with innovative pedagogies that promote resilience and critical thinking, is useful to promote social cohesion, improve the general quality and relevance of education and enhance learners' well-being. These measures are not only helpful for undermining violent extremism. Some specific actions, such as establishing referral systems to support students at risk, may be more relevant to countries experiencing measurable threats of violent extremism. Yet considering that its recruiters often operate virtually on the internet, beyond national borders, all learners are potentially exposed to violent extremist narratives. It is thus useful to raise the overall awareness of the concerned education stakeholders regardless of the level of perceived threat, while the adoption of specific measures and the extent to which the government will invest in their implementation will vary; it should depend on the magnitude of the risks, to be determined according to reliable statistics, qualitative research and trends.

### Q7. Can formal education systems really prevent violent extremism? What should be their ultimate objective?

**A.** When an individual searches on the internet for a violent extremist group with the intent to join it, the idea of prevention no longer applies. From that point on, the individual is already on the path to violent extremism and intervention measures are needed. Sceptical views on formal education's role in preventing violent extremism often result from the unrealistic expectation that formal education can interrupt the radicalization process leading to violence that is set to unfold. There are preventive elements in early intervention measures, but this is not the role that education in the formal sector is expected to play. The preventive role of education can ensure that places of learning do not become a breeding ground of violent extremism, but on the contrary that they build the defences of peace and respect in the minds of learners. Education cannot serve to detect potential violent extremists, but it can equip learners with the skills to challenge ideologies, myths, conspiracy theories and exclusionary worldviews often at the base of violent extremism. Education is thus a mid- and long-term prevention strategy, and it is one of the most effective for impacting large segments of the population.

### Q8. What needs to be done to reinforce multisectoral partnerships between the education sector and other communities and partners outside of it?

**A.** Schools or the education sector alone cannot undertake the full range of preventive measures that are needed. Multisectoral partnerships are critical. But this is an area where challenges are more frequent than opportunities. One fundamental hindrance is the presumed role of the education sector. Traditionally, the sector is concerned with learning outcomes that relate to knowledge, information and skills. Students' acquisition of values, attitudes and behavioural patterns that will allow them to become responsible members of society is emphasised in early childhood education, but gradually phased out in the higher levels of schooling. Students' socialization process has not been part of the education sector's perceived mandate. This contributes to the view that the education sector does not need to reach out to other community and society actors who play critical roles in students' overall socialization. While a major shift in perspective is needed within the education sector itself, advocacy efforts can be made at the individual school level to include socialization as an equally vital and critical mandate of educational institutions.

# ENDNOTES

1 The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288), adopted by the UN General assembly on 8 September 2006, is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. For more information visit: https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy

2 UNESCO's role in promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism; 197 EX/ Decision 46 of October 2015.

3 Section I on measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism requests Member States "to promote dialogue, tolerance and understanding among civilizations, cultures, peoples and religions", "promote a culture of peace, justice and human development, ethnic, national and religious tolerance and respect for all religions, religious values, beliefs or cultures by establishing and encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programmes involving all sectors of society" and encourages UNESCO to play a key role in this regard (Section I, paras. 2-3).

4 Recognizes that "countering violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, including preventing radicalization, is an essential element of addressing the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, and calls upon Member States to enhance efforts to counter this kind of violent extremism (para. 15), and underscores the role education can play in countering terrorist narratives (para. 19).

5 See in particular paras. 15-17 encouraging Member States to support global citizenship education, including peace and human rights education, to help prevent violent extremism; and encouraging the Director-General to enhance UNESCO's leading role to promote and implement education as an essential tool to prevent violent extremism, and enhance the organization's capacity to provide assistance to Member States in this regard.

6 Calls on Member States to "consider institutional mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue that involve youth and discourage their participation in acts of violence, terrorism" (para. 13).

7 Recommends that Member States develop national plans of action on prevention of violent extremism following a participatory process involving ministries of education, educational leaders and stakeholders, NGOs, youth, and the media (para. 44); take appropriate measures against all forms of intolerance as exhibited in particular in curricula, textbooks and teaching methods (para. 50(j)); implement education programmes that promote global citizenship, soft skills, critical thinking and digital literacy, and explore means of introducing civic education into school curricula, textbooks and teaching materials, and build the capacity of teachers and educators (para 54(b)).

8 Recognizes the importance of prevention of violent extremism through education as and when conducive to terrorism, recommends that Member States consider the implementation of recommendations of the UNSG Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and develop national and regional plans of action in this regard (para. 40).

9 Calls upon Member States and local entities involved in supporting the prevention and countering of violent extremism efforts to continue to facilitate the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including through human rights education and training, as well as due process and the rule of law (para 4). It also reaffirms the important role that education, including human rights education and training, can play in preventing and countering violent extremism, and in this regard encourages States to cooperate in efforts to achieve the goals and targets under the Education For All movement and work to achieve the aims of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/137 of 19 December 2011 (para 7).

10 O. Frazer and C. Nünlist, 2015, The Concept of Countering Violent Extremism, *CSS Analyses in Security Policy,* No. 183. http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse183-EN.pdf Accessed 17 October 2016.

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Education Sector

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# Preventing violent extremism through education

## A guide for policy-makers

This publication offers technical guidance for education professionals (policy-makers, teachers and various education stakeholders) on how to address the concrete challenges posed by violent extremism. The Guide particularly aims to help policy-makers within ministries of education to prioritize, plan and implement effective preventive education-related actions, contributing to national prevention efforts.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Sustainable Development Goals