Frontlines

Young people at the forefront of preventing
and responding to violent extremism

UNDP

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UNDP Global Report
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Acknowledgements

Foreword

Frontlines Highlights Youth's Central Role to Prevent Violent Extremism

The youthful profile of many recruits into violent extremist groups have put a *de facto* spotlight on youth, with a growing and somewhat narrow concern over their radicalization.

It is high time that we recognize that only a minority of young men and women are engaged in such violence. Moreover, youth are often the victims of violence perpetrated by extremist groups. They are also often the subject of excessive security measures.

In response to the increasing - yet still inadequate - attention to youth in policy discussions on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), UNDP has carried out this comprehensive and multi-country research, entitled Frontlines. The report analyzes and synthesizes the perceptions and aspirations of youth in order to better understand their role in PVE. The report fills a knowledge-gap in terms of systemic information on how youth engagement in PVE should look like and what approaches may work best.

It is our hope that *Frontlines*, which includes illustrative examples and policy and programming recommendations, will be an invaluable tool for national and local governments, UN agencies, development partners, academic institutions, civil society and youth organizations, movements and networks.

This study also serves as part of a United Nations (UN) System-wide approach to PVE. Frontlines contributes to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security, the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2016) and the UN Youth Strategy ("Youth 2030", 2018).

If the object of policy and programming is ultimately to design and support effective approaches to prevent violent extremism while upholding human rights standards, then it is vital that we better understand and nurture youth-led action on the ground. I believe that this report achieves this goal. Thus, the report aims to support a paradigm shift in thinking about youth's role in PVE in order to find more effective approaches.

The evidence collected clearly highlights that engaging with young people in a tokenistic way to prevent violent extremism will never suffice as an effective preventive approach.

Young people have a central role to play in PVE. They should be valued, promoted and supported as allies and partners for change. In all regions of the world, often with little support, and in challenging environments, young people have already taken up bold and effective action, using the full spectrum of PVE approaches. This ranges from online and offline advocacy campaigns to promoting the disengagement and reintegration of former fighters, to supporting education initiatives, to generating new insights and data analysis.

Such inspiring grassroots actions can bring fruitful results in other parts of the world. It is our hope that this report will serve a catalyst for a new generation of forward-looking actions that truly promote and support youth empowerment for sustainable development and peace.

UNDP and our partners also have an opportunity to unite more closely together, align actions and goals, and pursue a powerful youth-inclusive approach to prevention. In this respect, UNDP looks forward to both strengthening existing; and building new partnerships in this crucial area.

The standout message from *Frontlines* is that youth must take a front and centre role to prevent and respond to violent extremism.

Achim Steiner,
UNDP Administrator

Foreword

Terrorism and violent extremism, which have now reached unprecedented levels, divide communities, exacerbate conflicts, fuel hate and jeopardize our collective efforts to promote and protect human rights. In other words, these phenomena hamper sustainable development and peace, sometimes for generations.

This excellent report by UNDP, *Frontlines*, addresses assumptions about the role of youth in the context of violent extremism, maps concrete examples of initiatives led by youth movements, platforms and organizations to prevent the phenomenon, synthesizes focus group discussions which fed into the development of *The Missing Peace*[2], and articulates a much-needed call to action. It also offers a useful contribution to the implementation of "Youth 2030", the first-ever United Nations Youth Strategy[3], launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in September 2018.

Even though young people are joining violent extremist groups more than any other age demographic, evidence shows that the vast majority of youth neither fall prey to the tactics of terrorists, nor are participating in violence. On the contrary, young people are our biggest hope and, rather than downplaying their overwhelmingly positive role, we should build on their aspirations and prodigious efforts to build resilience and social cohesion.

This convincing report invites us all to identify, promote and partner with youth-led initiatives and to prioritize powerful preventive approaches over ineffective -or even harmful- remedial measures.

Violent extremism is a grave and complex multi-dimensional threat, which should be addressed through principled, human-rights based and coordinated responses, and more importantly, with young people at the heart.

**Jayathma Wickramanayake,
United Nations Secretary-General's
Envoy on Youth**

Acronyms and abbreviations

AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
CVE	Countering violent extremism
C/PVE	Countering and preventing violent extremism
CSO	Civil society organization
FGD	Focus group discussion
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
IS	Islamic State
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGC	UNDP Oslo Governance Centre
PVE	Preventing violent extremism/prevention of violent extremism
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOY Peacebuilders	United Network of Young Peacebuilders
UNSCR 2250	United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015)
Youth-GPS	UNDP Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace
UNV	United Nations Volunteers Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	Violent extremism
WASL	Women's Alliance for Security and Leadership
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Table of contents

01

Introduction

With more than 1.8 billion young people in the world and about 408 million living in settings affected by armed conflict or organized violence, supporting young people by believing and investing in them can help societies to transform themselves, and sustain peace.

Achim Steiner,
UNDP Administrator
(April 2018)

Background

Youth-focused prevention of violent extremism (PVE) is a relatively new field. Even though young people are at the forefront of developing and implementing PVE initiatives, and many actors have sought to engage them in PVE initiatives, there is still too little systematic information on what youth participation in PVE currently looks like, what its challenges are, and which approaches hold the most promise.[4] *Frontlines* is a global report that aims to fill this gap. Its goal is to encourage approaches and practices that recognize and support young people's positive role in responding to and preventing violent extremism.

Drawing on the latest evidence from available research as well as newly collected primary data, this report seeks to identify current challenges and opportunities for youth-focused PVE policy and programming. It not only showcases the way in which young people have creatively and organically responded to the challenges that violent extremism poses in their communities and societies, but also presents evidence on why development actors should redouble efforts to promote genuinely inclusive and participatory PVE approaches.

The UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 recognises that no one should be left behind, and that young people are "critical agents of change". UNDP has also committed to include young people in its Signature Solution on strengthening effective, inclusive and accountable governance, with a focus on building institutions and mechanisms that peacefully resolve conflict and advance social cohesion. The Strategic Plan also gives UNDP an opportunity to 'do business differently', including by tapping into young people's energy and further institutionalizing youth participation.

This report is aimed for a broad audience – governments, development actors, practitioners and researchers, many of whom have recognized that traditional approaches to PVE that stigmatize rather than empower young people have so far had counterproductive effects.

The findings contained here are also aimed to promote improved UNDP's country- and regional-level PVE programming, including in the context of UNDP's Youth Global Programme and UNDP's Global Programme on Development Solutions for the Prevention of Violent Extremism. This could only be achieved by fostering youth substantive participation at the policy and programming level, in line with the United Nations Secretary-General Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

Young people at the forefront of addressing and preventing violent extremism

The past decades have seen a sharp rise in fatalities associated with violent extremist groups. In 2016, more countries recorded deaths from violent extremism than at any other time than in the past 17 years; 20,000 deaths were caused by terrorist attacks worldwide.[5] The activities of violent extremist groups have not only led to a significant loss of life, but in regions such as Africa, they have also dramatically set back development gains.[6] These damages have had a severe impact on young people, who typically constitute the majority of the population of countries most affected by violent extremism. This is especially true for the 408 million[7] young people living in settings affected by conflict or organized violence where the damages caused by violent extremist groups have become a grim fact of daily life.

While certain groups such as Boko Haram, so-called Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda have received most attention, manifestations of violent extremism are not confined to any one region or ideology – they range from Maoists in India and right-wing neo-Nazi groups in Europe, to Buddhist, Jewish extremists and Islamic violent extremists.[8] Even if not all members or recruits to extremist groups are young,[9] the average age of members of many extremist groups and their recruits tends to fall within the 'youth' age group.[10] For instance, the typical IS recruit is 26 years old, and the average foreign fighter from France is 27 years old.[11] As a result, concerns over violent extremism have centred on the phenomenon of youth radicalization and recruitment.

While this is a worrying trend, the majority of young people do not and will not support violent extremist groups.[12] Only an extremely small segment of the world's youth population will become members of extremist groups.[13] In what the Youth, Peace and Security progress study has called a 'policy panic', a focus on a minority of individuals has come to frame the way many governments and international actors see and engage young people in the context of peace and security.[14]

The large disproportion between young people who reject violent extremism and those who join extremist groups is crucial to bear in mind because the impacts of violent extremism and counter-productive measures to address the phenomenon have both become severe challenges that currently reverberate widely across youth populations.[15] Young people in many of the countries most affected by violent extremism[16] are often caught between the violence of armed groups and the kinetic security responses meant to respond to them.[17] Counter-productive measures have been adopted in many places that have increased the stigma and public mistrust of young people, especially of those from marginalized or minority communities. In addition, many young people have also been harmed from hard-edged state responses to counter violent extremism (CVE), including surveillance, arrest, injury or death.[18]

Not only are young people commonly the victims of violence and targets for recruitment,[19] but they are also affected by additional impacts of the phenomenon, such as displacement and loss of livelihoods, psychological strain and trauma, and the spread of intolerance and intimidation in schools and spaces of interaction and recreation.

For many of the more than 1.8 billion young people worldwide,[20] these dynamics are being played out against a backdrop of serious and complex development challenges marked by interlinking forms of exclusion, political and social disempowerment, as well as high levels of unemployment and relative deprivation.[21] Indeed, it is now becoming more evident that many of the most common drivers of extremism (from the micro to the macro level) have their roots in the development prospects of specific groups of young people. In addition to the specific effects of inadequate education and lack of meaningful development opportunities and other drivers, repeated research has confirmed the primary role of poor governance, human rights violations[22] and conflict dynamics as the most significant structural drivers of violent extremism across contexts.[23] Indeed, 99 per cent of all terror-related deaths over the last 17 years have been in countries that are either in conflict or have high levels of political repression.[24] As a result, for a few young people growing up with these challenges – whether under coercion, circumstantial pressure, the desire to remedy injustice, or the inability to find satisfying development pathways – violent extremist groups seem to offer alternative forms of protection and empowerment.

It is remarkable, therefore, that given these pressures and challenges, the majority of young people have not only rejected violence and violent extremism, but have also been actively working to reduce their influence in their own contexts. Engaged as activists, students, researchers, community organizers, leaders, civil servants, entrepreneurs and politicians, young people worldwide are attempting to find ways to prevent the rise and influence of violence and violent extremism by taking direct action, promoting development and fostering peace.[25]

Compared to the actions of a relatively small number of young violent extremists, the positive contributions of many more young people to the peace and development of their societies have remained largely invisible and untapped. In difficult environments and with often very limited resources, young peacebuilders are showing abundant creativity, resourcefulness and resilience in responding to manifestations of violent extremism at all levels. They have been active in their homes, neighbourhoods and streets, in high schools and universities, in playgrounds and community centres, online, and even in some cases, in local and national decision-making tables. Demonstrating their resilience and capacity for innovative practice, their actions have spanned from sports, art and street theatre initiatives, to online campaigns and capacity development support with global reach.

Young people should therefore be understood to be at the forefront of PVE. They are the ones who are experiencing first-hand the influence and effect of violent extremism in their societies. They are already the objects, whether implicit or explicit, of policies and programmes aimed at responding to violent extremism, many of which are ineffective or exacerbate their sense of exclusion and marginalization. They are also at on the frontlines, implementing highly local and context-sensitive responses to the phenomenon. The question is, then, not so much why youth meaningful participation should be a priority, but rather, how to build on young people's insights and resilience to promote effective PVE approaches that 'do no harm' and that actively promote their empowerment and specific development priorities.

A focus on youth resilience by a small but growing number of development actors has been described as a paradigm shift in a field otherwise dominated by narrow approaches premised on the view that young people are exposed to potential risks of being radicalized into violent extremism.[26] Indeed, if the object of policy and programming initiatives is ultimately to find effective methods to prevent and preempt the influence of violent extremism, then it is important to understand and cultivate the development factors that promote youth resilience and activism as pathways to sustainable prevention. By focusing not only on deficits, but also on positive assets, resilience approaches have helped to promote cost-effective initiatives in fields such as disaster response, public health and child psychology.[27] These approaches seem to hold similar promise with respect to the prevention of violent extremism.[28]

Some donors and governments have now started to invest more resources in a whole-of-society approach, where all actors, including governments, civil society, teachers, faith leaders, families, social service workers and neighbours,[29] must work together to address the drivers and influence of extremism in their communities.[30] A growing number of these actors have now come to see young people, who are at the nexus of the phenomenon, as indispensable partners in this approach.

Despite the modest progress made in implementing genuine, preventative approaches, reductive links purported youth propensity towards violence and extremism continues to shape policy priorities. Compared to traditional security and hard-edged responses to violent extremism, preventative initiatives, projects and programmes still receive a small fraction of funding, of which youth-inclusive initiatives represent an even smaller fraction.[31] Thus, with regard to institutional responses to violent extremism, young people are still regularly treated with suspicion and fear, infrequently consulted or listened to, and narrowly approached as problems rather than genuine stakeholders.

Given the centrality of the governance and conflict drivers of violent extremism,[32] it is a significant challenge for PVE that young people are persistently excluded from meaningful participation in programmes, decision-making and peacebuilding at all levels. It is also a serious challenge for PVE that many of them feel that when they are engaged in it, it is too often cursory and relegated to the implementation of projects, campaigns and priorities decided on elsewhere and by others, without them.

It is therefore imperative to discover and promote context-sensitive PVE approaches that respect, protect and promote young people's rights, foster youth resilience, and systematically integrate meaningful participation as the fundamental building-block of youth-focused PVE. Only in this way can PVE genuinely and effectively serve as a tool for promoting sustainable development and peace.

An approach building on recent normative and policy frameworks

The notion that effective PVE strategies require young people's meaningful participation has been boosted by growing recognition on the international stage. This report builds on a series of recently adopted normative and policy frameworks that represent a larger shift within the United Nations system to better integrate all three United Nations pillars through a focus on youth empowerment and development.

In 2014, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution condemning violent extremism and called on Member States to support efforts to adopt longer-term solutions to address the underlying causes of radicalization and violent extremism, including by empowering youth.[33]

On 9 December 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a landmark resolution on the role of young women and men in promoting peace and security (UNSCR 2250). For the first time, the Security Council recognized young people's role as positive agents of change. The Resolution specifically notes that "the rise of radicalization to violence and violent extremism, especially among youth, threatens stability and development, and can often derail peacebuilding efforts and foment conflict". It calls on Member States to address the conditions leading to a rise of violent extremism and to see young people "as positive role models" in countering violent extremism. It urges Member States "to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism".[34] A follow-up resolution, UNSCR 2419, was unanimously adopted by the Security Council in 2018, calling for the full implementation of UNSCR 2250.

In January 2016, responding to the global concern over violent extremism, former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon presented his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Echoing the inclusive approach proposed by UNSCR 2250, his Plan of Action strongly emphasized the need to support and empower young people, enhancing their participation as partners and peacebuilders in PVE. Both UNSCR 2250 and the Plan of Action have clear links to the broader vision for development outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which endorses a strong role for young people as peacebuilders by specifically naming them as "critical agents of change", and in Sustainable Development Goal 16, in particular, which calls on Member States to promote "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels" for peaceful and inclusive societies. Young people are also key to the 2030 Agenda's commitment to "leave no one behind".

The year 2018 was marked by the launch of the United Nations Youth Strategy ("Youth 2030")[35] and the publication of the UNSCR 2250-mandated independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security,[36] the first comprehensive report to bring evidence on the role of youth in building peace. With regard to violent extremism, the Study finds that, although "some approaches to the prevention of violent extremism do acknowledge the importance of the empowerment of youth, policy orientations continue to taint the youth population as a whole, exacerbating their marginalization."[37] It recommends a "comprehensive violence prevention approach with young people at its centre" and argues that "systematically addressing the violence of exclusion is the best means to prevent violence, including violent extremism, thus building and sustaining peace across the full peace and conflict continuum".[38]

This report is titled *Frontlines* in recognition that young people are already at the heart of the phenomenon, whether as targets for recruitment, victims of violence, exclusion and repression, or as peacebuilders and activists at the forefront of efforts to prevent violent extremism. It argues that appropriate and effective responses require policymakers and practitioners – whether younger or older – to be clear-eyed and responsive to the positive role that young people can play and are already playing in PVE. In addition, it identifies sensitivities of, and risks and challenges for, young people in this space. Ultimately, this report aims to show that there is room to move from beneficiary-based models of PVE engagement to more pro-active, risk-informed and resilience-based partnership models, with young people at the centre. To enable this important shift, priorities should be to re-shape the narrative around young people's relation to violent extremism, make significant investments in youth empowerment as part of the PVE agenda, and work with young people as partners.

Methodology

Systematic data and evidence on youth-inclusive/youth-focused PVE programming and the positive role of young people in PVE are still rare. To help fill these gaps, this global *Frontlines* report brings together a number of primary sources:

➡ A new and comprehensive source of evidence, a global survey of practitioners and stakeholders designed by UNDP, on Youth and Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE), completed by 184 participants from across the PVE/Peace and Security sector. The survey, which was conducted online, between January and February 2018, specifically involved experts and stakeholders working on C/PVE and/or youth (both young people and adults). Targeted individuals and organizations that are actively involved in C/PVE agenda received the survey and were then encouraged to share it with additional relevant actors and partners, such as the inter-agency working group Global coalition on Youth, Peace and Security. A wide range of responses was received from representatives of the multilateral system, regional organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and youth-led and co-led organizations, as well as individual experts and researchers. This en-abled the collection of new data on the perceptions and actions by partners who are part of a larger ecosystem around the C/PVE and youth, peace and security agendas. Mindful of sensitivities, the identities of the survey respondents were kept anonymous. Ninety-two per cent of the survey respondents stated that increasing youth participation in PVE should be either "a priority" or "a significant priority" in their context; and 84 per cent indicated that, in their contexts, their organization engaged in "C/PVE-relevant work (initiatives, projects, etc.)". Yet, results reveal that 35 per cent of the survey respondents were aged 15–29, and 26 per cent were aged 30–35, and around 39 per cent were over 35 years old. When discussing the survey results below, the terms 'youth' and 'non-youth' were chosen as shorthand for two different groups captured by the survey. 'Youth actors' refer to survey respondents who indicated that their organizations were youth-led or co-led (those with young people in key decision-making roles). Non-youth or "adult" actors represented those respondents that were not youth-led or co-led, and whose relationship to youth ranged from those engaging them as partners, to those who did not report engaging with them. Table 1 shows the full profiles of respondents falling into these categories.

TABLE 1.

The profiles of the survey respondents*

Type of organization	No. of respondents	Percentage of total (%)
Primarily adult organization – with youth beneficiaries/targets	67	36.41
Primarily adult organization – with youth as collaborators/partners	47	25.54
Youth-led organization	47	25.54
Co-led organization – youth in key decision-making roles	13	7.07
Organization that does not generally work with youth	2	1.09
Not applicable (i.e. I work primarily in an individual capacity)	8	4.35

*See Annex III for more information on the survey and on respondent profiles.

➡ **Three original field case studies produced by local researchers on the positive role of youth in PVE in Yemen, Pakistan and Kosovo.** These case studies incorporated desk research, focus group discussions (FGDs) involving young people, and local stakeholder interviews. Between April and August of 2017, UNDP conducted small FGDs on PVE with a total of 140 young people, over half of whom were young women, and 48 key stakeholder interviews with civil society activists (youth and adult, government and civil society officials). Thirty-nine young people from 15 different municipalities participated in five FGDs in Kosovo; 35 young people from Lahore, Islamabad and Quetta participated in four FGDs in Islamabad, Pakistan; and 66 young people participated in four FGDs in governorates of Lahij, Abyan and Aden, Yemen. These FGDs were deliberately kept small and targeted.

➡ Exchanges with practitioners affiliated with the United Nations and civil society in a broad range of countries and regions, and a solid literature review in order to collect data on promising practices and identify opportunities to promote and support young people's positive role in PVE, including, *inter alia*, in the context of related frameworks such as the Youth, Peace and Security agenda; Agenda 2030; the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and the development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) on PVE.

Structure

The untapped potential of young people in PVE

explores concrete examples of positive contributions young people are making to PVE—locally, nationally and globally.

Mapping actions and perceptions related to Youth & PVE

uses the results of the global survey to look at macro-level trends in support of youth and PVE implementation, the current gaps and emerging opportunities for promoting a youth empowerment approach to PVE.

Case studies – Youth and PVE in context
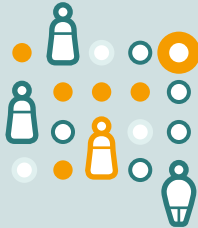
presents the results of three UNDP case studies, articulated around FGDs conducted with young people in Yemen, Pakistan and Kosovo*. Together, they offer context-specific overviews on how violent extremism and PVE have intersected with young people's lives, actions and development priorities.

Key lessons for a youth empowerment approach to PVE

provides a synthesis of broad-based lessons for supporting empowering and participatory approaches to youth involvement with PVE.

Working definitions

Youth – This report relies on a flexible definition of youth (here also interchangeable with "young people") in line with UNDP's corporate strategy. While UNDP primarily focuses on young women and men aged 15–24, it also extends this group to include ages 25–30 (or even to age 35 in accordance with national definitions). In many countries, the transition to adulthood and autonomy extends past age 24, up to age 30, when a person still needs opportunity for capacity development, either because of competitive employment environments, or to succeed in a leadership position or a political career. Many countries have defined youth ages differently in their national youth policy.

Youth empowerment – Youth empowerment refers to an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and in their societies.

Youth actors – There is no universally agreed terminology in categorizing organizations. When discussing the survey results, the terms 'youth' and 'non-youth' were chosen as shorthand for two different types of actors captured by the survey. Youth actors refer to survey respondents that indicated that their organizations were youth-led or co-led (those with young people in key decision-making roles).

Non-youth actors – Non-youth actors are respondents who belong primarily to adult-led organizations.

Violent extremism – There is no single international agreement on the definition of violent extremism. Here, violent extremism refers to beliefs and actions of people or groups who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals, including terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and sectarian violence.

Preventing violent extremism – As with violent extremism, there is also no agreed definition of PVE. For the purpose of this report, however, PVE signifies the range of approaches to prevent and reduce the influence of violent extremism, and the operation of violent extremist groups using alternatives typically relying on development solutions and peacebuilding methods (in contradistinction to security-based approaches *stricto sensu*). Therefore, PVE approaches also seek to address social, political, and economic root causes of the phenomenon and aim at

long-term solutions. Some approaches have made a distinction between 'PVE-specific' and 'PVE-relevant' initiatives. Accordingly, 'PVE-specific' activities are designed to prevent violent extremism in a targeted way, including by disrupting specific recruitment and radicalization dynamics and reintegration initiatives. 'PVE-relevant' initiatives pursue objectives that address the structural drivers of violent extremism. The working definition of prevention of violent extremism here in this report encompasses both types of initiatives.[39]

Countering violent extremism – Like PVE, Countering violent extremism (CVE) typically refers to actions aimed at addressing the drivers of violent extremism through a 'softer' approach, and as either a complement or alternative to counter-terrorism and security measures. Yet, it has often been viewed as being more closely linked with counter-terrorism and security approaches than the PVE discourse. However, in practice, there is typically a large overlap between many of the initiatives projects labelled PVE and those labelled CVE.

Countering/preventing violent extremism (C/PVE) – To capture the widest possible range of youth-inclusive initiatives aimed at preventing and responding violent extremism (and due to the lack of agreement on terminology), the UNDP global survey deliberately used the formulation "C/PVE" for its questions and responses. In the context of youth-focused policies and programmes to address violent extremism, there was sufficient overlap in the types of concrete activities and initiatives under both categories in this area to warrant the conjoined "C/PVE" formulation. Except for the titles used in the infographics drawn from the survey, the term "PVE" is used throughout the report as shorthand for both.

Radicalization – This typically refers to the adoption of beliefs that fundamental social, economic or political change is necessary. Accordingly, the term 'radical' can include individuals advocating for positive transformation, justice and peace using non-violent means. However, in many discussions on violent extremism, the term more often refers to the process by which an individual comes to adopt the belief that violence is justified in the process of bringing about change. Many have argued that the concept of 'radicalization' is potentially a source of confusion, or that the conflation of violent and non-violent radical movements is purposefully used to discredit beliefs seeking non-violent means to transform the status quo.

For this reason, the fuller phrases 'radicalization into violent extremism' or 'radicalization leading to violence' are used to specify the type of radicalization referred to in this publication.

Resilience – Resilience typically refers to the capacity to overcome adverse and negative circumstances. It was originally borrowed from the field of engineering, where it refers to the ability of materials to resist bending or breaking under pressure.[40] In the context of violent extremism,[41] it refers to the capacity, on the basis of a number of individual and social factors, to resist or reject the appeal of violent extremism groups. The concept of resilience has recently gained traction among researchers, practitioners and policymakers working at the intersection of youth and violent extremism.

Terrorism – Terrorism refers to an action or set of actions aimed to achieve a social or political goal by engendering and exploiting fear. Terrorism and violent extremism are not interchangeable. Violent extremism can encompass many forms of violence, while terrorism refers more narrowly to a specific tactic.[42]

Peacebuilding – Peacebuilding refers to a range of initiatives aimed to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

02

Frontlines

We will not be successful unless we can harness the idealism, creativity and energy of young people and others who feel disenfranchised. Young people, who constitute the majority of the population of an increasing number of countries today, must be viewed as an asset and must be empowered to make a constructive contribution to the political and economic development of their societies and nations. They represent an untapped resource.

**United Nations Secretary-General
Plan of Action to Prevent Violent
Extremism (2016)**

2.1 The untapped potential of young people in preventing violent extremism

This section showcases examples of positive contributions young people are making to the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) worldwide, through a broad range of youth-led PVE initiatives, from small-scale and highly local action to the transnational work of networked young peacebuilders. Many young people, typically working with little support and sometimes in extremely challenging environments, have taken up action using a full spectrum of approaches to addressing the root causes of violent extremism in their contexts, from carrying out online/offline advocacy campaigns, to promoting the disengagement and reintegration of former fighters.[43]

The global survey undertaken by UNDP clearly indicates that there is a growing community of practitioners that is promoting substantive forms of youth participation in PVE. However, this momentum has not yet been translated into significant policy influence at the national level, nor systematic support for youth participation on the ground. Understanding young people's resilience and positive contributions to PVE is a first step toward shifting priorities toward empowering approaches. It is important to begin by recognizing that young people, their organizations and networks bring particular strengths and values to peacebuilding and PVE efforts, and that these represent existing assets development actors should nurture and support.

The United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders) and Search for Common Ground recently conducted a global mapping of 399 youth peacebuilding organizations as an input to the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. The mapping found that most youth-led organizations work at the community level and are built on volunteerism. They tend to emphasize less hierarchical models of organizing, trust and value-based work. Typically operating on small budgets,[44] they use flat, networked structures to operate with agility, multiply their impact and empower their peers. Prizing inclusivity, their organizations typically have a gender balance and tend to engage a broad cross-section of different key groups in their initiatives, including families, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, security services, ex-combatants, and national and international decision-makers.[45]

The sections below show that young people have managed to leverage their skills, talents and strengths to be at the forefront of local, national and international PVE efforts. These include:

On-the-ground knowledge and reach – In close contact with their peer communities, young people can be better attuned to the shifting dynamics of marginalization and vulnerability among their peers and the broader community. In many instances, they can also have access to hard-to-reach youth groups taking action in places where other actors cannot.[46]

Engagement in crisis – It is young people who are often at the forefront of activism in addressing the challenges of their communities and the root causes of extremism. They show the positive forms of resilience that can help support communities during times of crisis and accelerate development.

Creativity, know-how and mobilization – Young people, typically working with limited support, have been particularly creative in addressing the challenges of their communities and involving their peers using innovative forms of mobilization, communication and advocacy, including through new media.[47] One of the strengths and common actions of youth peacebuilding organizations is that they promote various forms of knowledge-sharing and skills-building among their peers.

Inclusivity and influence – Without romanticizing young people, youth-led organizations often use open organizational models built on volunteerism, trust, shared values and a common activist spirit. They tend to be more gender-balanced and work with more diverse groups that are often not fully engaged by other actors. These organizations can have more influence and credibility with other young people since they can offer direct avenues for action and horizontal forms of engagement, compared to more authoritarian forms of rapport.[48]

Defining youth and wider community priorities – Youth organizations can also play a role in collecting, defining and amplifying the views of a diversity of young people as well as their wider community, including in priority-setting and decision-making, and can play an important advocacy role in reaching out to, and working with, marginalized groups in their societies. They can also act as bridge-builders between broader youth groups and official institutions.

These drivers of violent extremism are complex, context-specific and vary among individuals, communities, geographies and typologies of extremism [49] Yet, a number of studies are showing that young people's marginalization, low socio-economic opportunities, conflict and poor governance are acting as drivers across most VE contexts by creating conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism.[50] Yet, the following examples demonstrate the range of ways in which young people have been actively been engaging in responding to them.[51]

Table 2 outlines some of the common drivers— push and pull factors—that have been identified for youth radicalisation and recruitment into violent extremism.

The sections that follow showcase examples of actions that young people have taken in response to common challenges posed by violent extremism worldwide. They highlight the diversity of ways in which young people have taken it upon themselves to respond to violent extremism in their communities and societies. Each section, which is organized around a specific PVE challenge, also incorporates insights and perspectives on these issues from young people who participated in UNDP's research in Yemen, Kosovo and Pakistan, as well as respondents from youth organisations who participated in the global survey.

> **"A youth-led, community-led and grassroots approach ensures the kind of sustainable impact that will bring about stable societies."**
>
> **Survey respondent,**
> **youth-led organization,**
> **Eastern Africa**

TABLE 2.

Common youth-related drivers of violent extremism

Common push factors	Common pull factors
Alienation, marginalization and the search for identity	Ideologies answering grievances and offering new forms of identity
Negative family dynamics and intolerance	Camaraderie and friendship
Low socio-economic opportunities, relative deprivation and inequalities	Material incentives and services
Lack of equitable, quality education	Appeals to empowerment and adventure
Socio-political marginalization	Active recruitment networks and charismatic leaders
Poor governance, repression and corruption	Ability to redress injustice and/or revenge
Perceptions of injustice	Personal and/or group protection
Conflict and geopolitics	
Negative security sector interactions	

Note: Push factors typically refer to the "negative social, cultural and political features of one's environment" that "push" individuals into situations of vulnerability and generally relate to what are commonly called root causes, which include conflict, political and economic exclusion, corruption, poor governance and other legitimate grievances. Pull factors, in contrast, are the "positive characteristics" or benefits that extremist groups can offer. These might include answers to push factors, such as a sense of belonging and camaraderie for young people feeling alienated or material incentives for those in situations of hardship.

Reducing the appeal and influence of violent extremist messaging

Extremist groups have been particularly adept at creating and disseminating messages and narratives that aim to generate support for their cause and gain new recruits. Participants across UNDP's FGDs explained that the narratives propagated by extremist groups using online and offline approaches capitalized on pre-existing grievances of young people and their communities. Many of these narratives have purported to offer explanations and solutions for many young people's sense of exclusion, disempowerment and social isolation by providing a captivating vision of empowerment and community through commitment to a bigger cause. They have also made the case for acting violently against the corruption of existing socio-political orders.

Many of these narratives foster hatred by exploiting existing local or international conflict dynamics in order to construct other narratives that represent fundamental threats to one's religion, ethnic group, clan or nation, as has been the case with white supremacists, or the so-called Islamic State (IS). In Yemen, the conflict against the Houthi-Saleh alliance was framed predominantly along political and religious lines, where they noted that, in their local areas, this dynamic of 'othering' has intensified since the 2015 conflict. Many young people engaged in UNDP's FGDs repeatedly emphasized that, in many places, they observed the influence of intolerance and hatred promoted by violent extremist narratives, including in schools and homes as well as in their communities.

Offline and online campaigns

Young leaders and youth organizations have invested their efforts in awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns to promote the values of peace and diversity in their communities. Accordingly, they have crafted and disseminated alternative messages and narratives, both on- and offline. These narratives are focused on the drawbacks of joining extremist groups, the specific values of peace, and/or on an alternative unifying identity. Below are two concrete examples of creative youth PVE advocacy campaigns, one using an innovative, low-tech approach to spread a message of peace on the streets, and the other, leveraging new technologies online to promote critical debate and thinking.

Street advocacy campaign in Pakistan – The Peace Rickshaws campaign was conceived by a youth activist in Pakistan and was implemented in Karachi. It sought to creatively counter the messages of extremist groups by placing messages of peace on a popular mode of transportation, rickshaws. The project's founder explained that right-wing organizations often paid rick-

shaw drivers to use their vehicles to spread their messages on the streets; this project sought to use the same medium, transforming the message to one of peace and tolerance.

Peer-to-peer advocacy against extremism in the Netherlands – Dare to be Grey is an online peer-to-peer platform founded by a group of students from Utrecht University in the Netherlands. The platform aims to combat what it calls 'polarization', i.e. the type of binary thinking typically promoted by extremist groups in public debates. The platforms facilitate the sharing of personal stories that demonstrate the lived complexity of challenges such as the current refugee crisis in Europe. The organization aims to counteract the problem that "[t]he 'grey' middle ground with its different prints of views is being drowned out by the extreme voices of today". The organization has extended its online action through the use of offline education through workshops, lectures and campaigns with other entities, schools and municipalities. The platform has won a number of awards for its work, including Facebook's Global Digital Challenge.

Addressing young people's social marginalization and their need for belonging

In many areas, investments have been lacking in youth participation and empowerment. In contexts affected by conflict, young people in particular can find it difficult to find safe spaces for interaction, recreation and participation. The civic, economic and political marginalization of many young people in their communities has heightened their sense of alienation and has made it difficult for many to play pro-active roles in improving their communities and forge positive identities. In this context, many young people in UNDP's FGDs reported a growing influence of violent extremism in their communities.

In Yemen, for instance, participants reported that, as a result of the conflict, there were few available safe spaces and recreational activities to avoid what they termed "negative spaces" where extremist influencers and recruiters operated. Growing drug abuse was cited as a collateral effect of these dynamics. In Pakistan, where the influence of extremism was reportedly felt in schools and in the home, the case studies found that only 7 per cent of youth had access to sports facilities and that most did not have access to libraries; this problem is compounded for women who are, in certain parts of the country, discouraged from frequenting non-segregated public spaces.[52] Participants frequently mentioned that the promotion of spaces and support for civic participation and recreation could enable them to forge a renewed and more attractive sense of belonging.

Young people's civic engagement, volunteerism and peacebuilding activities can be important avenues for strengthening social inclusion and cohesion, and thus community resilience.[53] Studies suggest that civic engagement of young people has been linked not only to strengthening of civil society, but also to providing "youth with meaningful, healthy ideologies and social engagement and […] to promoting positive development among youth, to combating issues of youth radicalization".[54] Yet, across UNDP's FGDs, participants stated that, in their current milieu, there were often insufficient opportunities and resources to develop an alternative sense of belonging and identity, and to promote their activism. Participants not only felt a lack of a sense of belonging and identity, or connection to and status within their broader community, but they also linked this to a lack of their own agency as young people and spaces where they could exercise this agency.

Reclaiming youth spaces, promoting peace and civic engagement

Young people have been finding ways to reclaim spaces for interaction, creativity and participation from the influence of extremism. These are spaces where they interact, mobilize and develop their leadership skills. The spaces were cited by participants as important for enabling them to influence each other, change stereotypes and enhance resilience. They are also places where alternative, pluralistic identities can be forged. In Yemen, a young FGD participant described a sports initiative he founded to combat radicalization:

Promoting dialogue and peacebuilding in marginalized communities in Yemen – The Abyan Youth Foundation is community-based organization that promotes Yemen's development and seeks to change perceptions of its young people. The Foundation participated in several awareness campaigns against youth recruitment in militias in Abyan and has currently a dedicated project for strengthening the skills of young people in dialogue and conflict resolution, including through workshops with mosque leaders on mediation. The organization also works on peacebuilding, employment and substance abuse. Recently, it has established a youth council for peace, which aims to spread the concept of peace, in coordination with a women's association and other partners in Yemen. A notable success story cited by the organization was the work carried out to establish a theatre troop with disaffected youth who were known to be among the most marginalized groups in their community. Expanding their educational efforts through traditional media, the group has spread peacebuilding messages across the district that were broadcast by Aden Radio, which promotes discussions on youth development issues, such as the rise in drug abuse.

"I started noticing that day-to-day activities were decreasing, and my friends seemed to find negative alternatives…I then thought about organizing a play every month in my area…to give a chance to other youth to participate and for the families to be entertained. During the preparations, a group from AQAP showed up and threatened us to stop, arguing that it was not acceptable for both males and females to perform the same activity in the same place."

FGD participant, Yemen

Young Iraqis reclaiming Baghdad against extremism and violence – The Festival of Peace is a grassroots carnival organized every year, drawing on the energy and creativity of 200 young volunteers working for over three months. It aims at storing the title of 'City of Peace' to Baghdad through the values of civility, responsibility and sharing, and by providing opportunities for interaction between young people and civil society associations. Now in its seventh year, the festival aims to transform the city and its young peoples' self-perception, and "build up a civil society believing in peaceful coexistence". Each year, the festival focuses on responding to a current challenge, such as raising money for internally displaced Iraqis. As one of the festival's organizers explained in relation to the sectarian fighting in the city and in response to recurrent IS attacks, "[T]he aim of this festival is to change the negative image of Baghdad" and to provide "opportunities for partnership between young people and community institutions and to build a civil society based on peaceful coexistence."

Tackling the influence and drivers of violent extremism in the economic sphere

Unemployment is frequently cited as a push factor toward violent extremism. Even if evidence for a direct causal relation between unemployment, radicalization and violence has not been clearly established,[55] unemployment was a commonly mentioned the challenge within UNDP's focus group discussions. The reasons that these young people believed unemployment acted as a driver were complex and highly context-dependent. As some participants explained, young people were pushed to join armed groups because their families could not afford basic necessities, such as food and vital non-food items, as noted in Yemen. Further, extremist groups were offering jobs as well as a larger web of social support, such as acting as advocates on behalf of young people by resolving disputes or arranging marriages.

In Pakistan, FGD participants suggested that it was not absolute levels of poverty that mattered, but rather a general sense of inequality and of young people's dashed expectations.[56] For example, participants mentioned that young people often felt that they could not move up in society or at their place of work despite their credentials, or that success in Pakistani society was reserved only for individuals who have connections or belong to a particular socio-economic class, ethnic or sectarian group. And in Kosovo, participants noted that unemployment was a form of social isolation that further exacerbated young people's vulnerability.

Across the FGDs, young people generally agreed that their peers tended to associate grievances over unemployment with larger failures of state governance. Participants noted that, in some cases, perceived and actual failures by the state to offer inclusive opportunities led some disaffected and unemployed young people to see joining groups who engage in violence, especially against the state, as a legitimate means to bring about change. A young woman from Pakistan put it succinctly, "We don't have good education. It is a fact – we don't have jobs. When we don't have that, anyone can come in and exploit that. Our state is not providing for the people; that is our fault."

Employment and entrepreneurship initiatives to support resilience and address root causes

While these types of initiatives are less frequently implemented by youth organizations in the context of PVE (as shown by the youth and PVE survey), there are good examples of youth-led and owned efforts at expanding the opportunities for young people through the following youth-led employment and entrepreneurship initiatives:

Kosovo's youth councils taking action to expand young people's economic opportunities – With low economic opportunities cited as one of the drivers that had led to the rise of foreign fighters to Syria, Kosovo's Central and Local Youth Councils have teamed up with UNDP and UN Volunteers (UNV) partners to run a youth employment project in five municipalities in Kosovo. The Councils view their work as directly related to wider efforts to address local root causes of violent extremism. In each of the municipalities, up to 20 young people are selected and receive skills and employment training in a sector of their choice, typically one in which the municipality has a comparative advantage. Following the training, the Councils provide seed funding to the group to jointly start up initiatives. Although, relatively small-scale, the project has had success in generating income for participants, which in turn has garnered interest of young people for the second round of training.

Preventing sectarian takeovers of small businesses in Pakistan – The Peace through Prosperity initiative in Pakistan focuses on creating entrepreneurship opportunities for young men in Karachi. The organization's founder explained that his team had identified "entrepreneurs of circumstance…that guy who gets up in the morning, and if he does nothing, his two kids who will sleep hungry. So he sells your newspaper or cleans your windscreen with a rag, or sells you fruit…. [those professions with] low barriers to entry." The organization spends up to eight months with an individual entrepreneur trying to impart skills to manage and promote their businesses. Stall owners and similar types of entrepreneurs struggling financially can be forced to sell their businesses to a violent sectarian group for capital and then be forced to act on the groups' behalf. These actions aim to prevent take-overs of businesses by sectarian groups.

Reducing the effect of drivers in the formal and informal spaces of learning and education

The spaces of education – formal or informal, public or private, secular or religious – are important sites that can promote resilience and vulnerability to violent extremism. In some cases, gaps in education policies and curricula to promote resilience through critical thinking and skills are the key challenges. In other cases, educational institutions and policies may reinforce divisions around identity or actively promote intolerance, which is conducive to violent extremist ideologies. In Pakistan, participants called for revising the public and private school curriculum to promote values of peace and inclusiveness, starting with children at younger ages. Recent reports on student-led terrorist cells in mainstream, higher educational institutes such as the University of Karachi also prompted participants to identify extremist networks on some university campuses as a serious concern.[57]

In Kosovo, by contrast, new forms of Islamic religiosity have raised tensions with Kosovo's traditionally secular society. Kosovo's legislation guarantees religious freedom, and religion is taught in madrassas and seminaries, yet participants in the FGDs explained that policies such as mandatory dress codes against overt displays of religion were, in some cases, increasing the sense of marginalization among some young people. At a more basic level, some FGD participants felt that low quality education was leaving many young people and communities vulnerable to extremism. This was the case in Yemen, where participants explained that illiteracy and low levels of formal and religious education enabled extremist groups to persuade many to adopt what they called "false religious dogma" and exclusivist ideologies.

"You cannot teach good or bad to everyone; what you can do is teach empathy. You can tell young people that they have to think about everyone as a human being first."

FGD participant, Pakistan

Education can play a decisive role in fostering the resilience of young people in the face of extremism by enabling them to develop critical thinking skills and find pathways to meaningful lives, including by giving them the necessary skills to find decent employment. Indeed, FGD participants all underlined the importance of encouraging critical thinking among young people and promoting frank dialogue on issues related to violent extremism and its causes, both inside and outside schools.

Some worried that the narrow focus of curricula on technical skills and vocational training was part of the problem and believed that the fostering of critical thinking, which involves the assessment and understanding of the legitimacy of multiple points of view and the rejection of simplistic truths, was key to resilience to violent extremism.[58] Here, all educational institutions, including religious institutions, can have a role to play in resilience-building for promoting respect for diversity and a rejection of extremist ideologies.[59]

Promoting critical thinking and dialogue, through formal and informal education

Young people have been active in creating educational spaces that foster critical thinking and participation, which has helped reduce the hold of extremist groups and intolerance narratives, and in some cases, have teamed up with religious institutions to this end.

Many of these activities have involved lectures, workshops and dialogues on PVE with the aim of fostering critical thinking skills and an appreciation of pluralism. With regard to education aimed at addressing violent extremism, researchers have found that non-prescriptive approaches have allowed "individuals to develop independent thinking or research and leadership skills in order to question and challenge themselves and others about the knowledge they received from sources such as the internet and radical groups".[60] Many FGD participants specifically mentioned the need to promote curricular reforms and better training of education sector professionals.

Using extracurricular initiatives to prevent violent extremism in Pakistan – The Pakistan Youth Alliance has been implementing informal education and recreation projects aimed at reducing the influence of extremism in local communities. The projects begin with local needs assessments and are then tailored to the needs of specific contexts. As the founder of the Pakistan Youth Alliance explains:

Similarly, projects organized by the FACES Pakistan initiative engaged interfaith communities by bringing young people from different ethnic backgrounds together to put on short plays. Street theatre has become an increasingly popular form of extracurricular activity, and the FACES activities have integrated counter-narratives. This initiative first started as an informal education campaign at the college and university level, and has now been successfully expanded to a number of local communities.

Global youth-led guide on preventing violent extremism through education – #YouthWagingPeace is a youth-led guide to PVE through education supported by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP). Developed and written by young people, who drove the scope, perspective and structure of the publication, this comprehensive guide offers a textured look at the multiple connections between education and PVE. Comprising 150 youth contributors from 58 countries, the guide offers perspectives on violent extremism from the lived experiences of young people across different religions, regions, races, and socio-economic backgrounds. It contains action items for teachers, school administrators, local community leaders, and policymakers in the education sector. The guide calls for: increased opportunities for young people to practise emotional competencies such as empathy, kindness and mindfulness in experiential settings, which adds greater scope and depth to interventions designed to create a PVE culture; and recognition of the importance of taking action now.[61]

Addressing the needs of vulnerable youth and the re-integration challenge of former members

The activities presented thus far have showcased the way young people have been active in addressing the drivers of violent extremism and their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of these initiatives. A specific set of prevention approaches are being implemented to address the needs of young people who have been identified as vulnerable to radicalization or former members belonging to extremist groups. These individuals experiencing marginalization, stigma and trauma often require targeted support to address the unique set of challenges they face. In the case of former members and combatants, programmes are needed to address their psycho-social needs for reintegration. Here, too, the resilience-based model has been important. Several studies have shown, indeed, that rehabilitated former fighters can have comparably higher levels of civic engagement and positive community service than their peers, even long after disengagement.

Reaching out to vulnerable/marginalized individuals and the reintegration of former fighters

Young people have been playing important roles in providing support for vulnerable peers as well as leading disengagement and reintegration efforts.

Youth-led initiative engaging at-risk individuals while addressing local challenges in the Sahel region – Responding to the national political divide in Libya, the Peaceful Change Initiative in Libya has focused on creating partnerships with local communities that work on increasing trust in local governance while addressing communities' social peace and local development needs as a way to prevent a rise in recruitment into armed or violent extremist groups. In the Sahel region, the initiative has involved young people to try and reduce the large numbers of drownings on Sahel's coast while creating alternative forms of engagement for at-risk individuals. With partners, the initiative established the youth-run Sea Rescue Center, which provides training, mentoring and employment opportunities to the region's young people and has now saved the lives of over 100 people. A founding member of the Sea Rescue Center is an ex-militia member who has been actively involved in the Center's outreach efforts to the community and has produced a short documentary aimed at highlighting the higher purpose behind the Center's work through his own personal story. As a result, the Sahel municipality has officially accredited the Sea Rescue Centre to which it contributes funding and has begun referring at-risk individuals to join.

Disengagement and reintegration for former Somali young combatants – The Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre, Somalia is an independent, non-profit, non-political NGO focused on human rights, gender justice, the protection of civilians, CVE, peace building and social entrepreneurship for peace in Somalia. Co-led by a young person, this internationally recognized organization engages in several initiatives to address the needs of the most vulnerable members of Somalia's communities. Its Drop the Gun, Pick Up the Pen initiative aims at the disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration of young women and men who had been co-opted into clan-based militias by warlords. Over 3,500 individuals have participated in the Centre's programme. The Centre has also productively collaborated with the Ministry of Security on a newly launched National Action Plan for CVE and on disengagement programmes.

Responding to the need for protection from human rights violations and security sector abuses

Many governments have responded to the threat of violent extremism through hard-edge security responses. Yet, injustices inflicted by police or military forces have also served as catalysts in driving individuals or communities to support violent extremism. There is now a large body of evidence that negative interactions with security forces can have blowback effects in increasing support for extremism at the community level; abuses and negative incidents with the security sector have proven to be 'tipping points' into recruitment at the micro level.[62] Indeed, some researchers have cited human rights violations as "the most reliable predictor of terrorism identified so far".[63]

FGD participants almost unanimously emphasized the importance of ensuring young people's safety from all forms of violence, including violence associated with the phenomenon of violent extremism, especially through appropriate law enforcement tools, access to justice and the promotion of human rights. In Yemen, young people believed that security forces were often unqualified and frequently abused their power with impunity.

"A lot of youth at the moment don't have faith in the rule of law and they don't think that they can live under the rule of law. They don't think about going to a police station, court or any institution."

**Young peacebuilder,
Southern Yemen**

A stark picture of this abuse was painted by a key informant, who mentioned that young people in Aden city were regularly being rounded up and sometimes forcibly disappeared as part of efforts to crack down on extremists. Some FGD participants from Yemen mentioned knowing young people who joined extremist groups specifically to secure protection for their families. They explained how the sense of insecurity was more acutely felt by marginalized groups who could not count on protection available to those under the umbrella of specific tribes.

In particular, the young women in the FGDs in Yemen felt more acutely aware of the way in which the general lawlessness and the proliferation of weapons were impacting their safety, reporting that they often felt both isolated and excluded in their communities.

Ensuring safety and promoting trust and respect for human rights to reduce grievances – Young people have been particularly proactive in trying to address the drivers of extremism associated with human rights abuses and their insecurity, especially in conflict zones. They have also sought to reduce mistrust of the security sector through community policing and alternative engagement approaches. The following examples demonstrate two types of approaches to security and human rights in two different contexts.

Young people promoting respect for human rights across Yemen – Mwatana is a Sana'a-based human rights organization working throughout 18 of Yemen's governorates. The organization documents human rights violations in Yemen through research/investigation, legal support and advocacy at the national and international levels. Mwatana's total staff of 60 is mostly all young and are divided equally among young men and women. It specifically engages young people as partners in its activities, offering alternative forms of participation that serve as alternatives to violence and conflict, and to a context where older actors hold power. An important reason the organization cites for working with young people is that they are particularly energetic and independent-minded. Mwatana also extends its reach by working with a network of around 90 volunteers aged 20–30. Its staff often starts with little experience, but by working within the organization, they build skills that help them find work later. With help from its young people, Mwatana was able to help secure the release of individuals who had been unjustly detained.

Tunisian youth preventing extremism and fostering trust – Youth Against Terrorism is an organization in Tunisia that seeks to reduce the influence of violence, extremist radicalization and terrorism in Tunisian society. It has been active in building a wide range of partnerships with both other civil society organizations and with the Government. It has adopted a notably flexible advocacy approach to engage the Government in formal fora as well as backchannel discussions with willing officials in informal places such as cafes and squares. They have worked with the Ministry of Youth as well as with a broad range of government partners including representatives of political parties and the Ministries of Education and the Interior. It has also staged demonstrations and awareness campaigns to respond to the influence of violent extremism. Through their efforts these young people have been able to revise curricula manuals to expand their focus on the peaceful tenets of Islam and on critical thinking. They have also addressed community trust with security forces by helping improve Tunisia's community policing projects through more rigorous training.[64]

Responding to young people's exclusion from decision-making and peacebuilding

Poor governance, conflict and the socio-political marginalization of young people are some of the most significant drivers of violent extremism across contexts: 99 per cent of all terror-related deaths over the last 17 years have been in countries that are either in conflict or have high levels of political repression.[65] What is more, failures of responsive and inclusive governance can intersect with other push factors, such as the lack of opportunities and education, which in turn can interpreted as grievances against the state and the existing social contract.[66]

As a civil society activist in Yemen observes, the common disempowerment of youth has been a reason for some to seek alternative paths to power through violent groups: "The Houthis are visibly young, and many young people see that they are holding important positions in the country. By joining an extremist group, you get more opportunity in terms of money and attention." Indeed, a Search for Common Ground consultation with 118 young people across geographical contexts, which was also paired with a poll of 300 additional global participants, found that "corruption and injustice" were the most frequently mentioned drivers by young people.[67] However, as the global survey results show (below), efforts to support young people's political participation, peacebuilding and inclusion in policy processes have so far been comparably lower PVE priorities in many contexts.

Institutionalizing the voices of youth and priorities in governance and sustaining peace to address the drivers of violent extremism – FGD participants noted that the drivers of extremism were ultimately connected to the disempowerment and exclusion of young people in their society, and especially in conflict- and post-conflict-affected settings, their exclusion from peacebuilding and peace processes. They therefore saw young people's systematic and meaningful participation in decision-making as a necessary component in promoting responsive, accountable institutions, restoring the trust between young people and governments, ending conflicts and sustaining peace.

Specifically, they believed that their participation, in addition to promoting greater investments in youth empowerment and development, could help address the governance drivers of extremism, such as human rights abuses, corruption, inequality and poor service delivery.

With respect to national efforts to prevent violent extremism, an important way to ensure that the voice of youth and youth priorities are institutionalized is to promote their participation in designing, implementing and reviewing NAPs and national strategies on PVE. Most of UNDP's global survey respondents viewed these frameworks as the most important legislative tools for responding to violent extremism in their contexts. The "Key Lessons" section below discusses promising entry-points for increasing youth participation in peacebuilding, governance and decision-making at all levels.

"Youth in 2011 were the 'darlings' of the [political] effort, but now there is a lot of frustration that young people don't have a seat of the table. Young people had formed a strong coalition in the 2011 dialogues, but this has not carried on in the peace talks."

United Nations official, Yemen

Youth-led campaign in the Arab States region to promote young people's role as peacebuilders through more inclusive platforms and policies. Shughel Shabab is a youth-led advocacy campaign to enhance young people's role as peacebuilders supported by UNDP and UNESCO in the Arab States region. Young people leading the campaign come from different countries across the region – Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Oman. These young peacebuilders, who are all currently implementing community-based or national initiatives, founded the initiative to advocate youth-inclusive and participatory policies and peace processes. The campaign also aims to change negative perceptions of youth in the media, government and society. Shughel Shabab has already been featured in BBC Arabic, and its social media presence has grown to over 12,000 followers.

"The war will end, and we have to prepare young people as well for the coming phase. We have to ask: are they prepared to build Yemen? You have to prepare the ground for politics."

Young peacebuilder, Yemen

2.2 Mapping actions and perceptions related to Youth & PVE

This section maps the global trends in support to youth participation in PVE as revealed by the global survey. It explores perceptions on PVE and maps initiatives implemented by youth and non-youth actors engaged in PVE. Indeed, the majority of actors reported actively implementing PVE initiatives globally, and most of respondents were engaging young people in their work. **Table 3** features a summary of key survey findings.

This section is organized around six findings on the (sometimes different) perceptions of youth and non-youth actors on current PVE approaches, their challenges and opportunities. Many of the most interesting insights arise from the different responses given by youth and non-youth actors to the same survey questions. The gaps between these two responses, rather than representing something to lament, help locate areas where better collaboration between young people and development actors is possible. The next two sections, "Key Lessons" and "Recommendations" help chart a path for how to scale this collaboration.

TABLE 3.

Summary of Key Survey Findings

Finding 1	Interest	→	There is common ground for increasing collaboration between young people and other actors working on PVE. Youth and non-youth actors indicate broad interest in the agenda. Governments require more awareness raising.
Finding 2	Approaches	→	Most young people are being engaged as beneficiaries, although a substantial number are also engaged as implementers. Only one in five respondents, however, indicates that young people are already engaged as partners in priority setting.
		→	Most respondents cite their status as "most at-risk" of radicalization or recruitment as the primary reason for their involvement them in PVE, but for youth actors, increased project impact and the principle of inclusivity are as just as important, if not more so.
Finding 3	Targeting	→	Most actors implementing youth and PVE initiatives appear to have a dual focus, engaging both "at-risk" youth and youth organizations/networks.
		→	Initiatives focusing on gender and young women have been less common, and there are significant gaps between the groups of young people who are engaged and those who respondents believed should be engaged. Demonstrating their strategic role, youth actors report working with these key groups at higher rates that non-youth actors.
Finding 4	Initiatives	→	Although a variety of youth and PVE projects are being implemented, PVE advocacy initiatives appear to be the most common.
		→	Projects promoting youth inclusion in decision-making and policies addressing the governance and conflict drivers of violent extremism have been less frequent than other type of initiatives.
Finding 5	Impact	→	Perceptions of the cumulative impact of current approaches to youth and PVE are divided, although mostly positive. More reliable data and measurement tools are needed.
Finding 6	Challenges	→	Lack of consultation in PVE initiatives and a lack of funding for youth initiatives are the top challenges for young people reported by PVE.
		→	The potential sensitivities and risks around PVE, and the need for coordination on the agenda were commonly cited challenges by youth and non-youth actors.
		→	Similarly, the need for more capacity development on PVE for young people was one of the most common challenges reported by all actors.

Finding 1 – There is broad interest in and common ground for increasing collaboration between young people and other actors on PVE, but governments require more awareness raising on the importance of youth participation. Non-youth actors might be underestimating the extent to which PVE is a priority for young people in their contexts, and vice versa.

Mistrust between youth groups and institutional actors, especially on the issue of violent extremism, has been commonly cited as a challenge for promoting greater collaboration on the agenda. Yet, the survey shows that there is greater mutual interest in collaboration than is frequently assumed. Survey respondents indicated that youth-inclusive PVE was a priority across a wide range of actors: 52 per cent considered it a youth priority; 49 per cent considered it a United Nations priority; and 48 per cent considered it a civil society priority. A significant, although lower number of respondents considered youth-inclusive PVE as a government priority (46 per cent) and a donor priority (44 per cent).

Yet, there were important differences of perspective. When disaggregated by type of actor, more youth actors reported that youth-inclusive PVE programming was a priority for young people (72 per cent) than did non-youth actors (41 per cent). Indeed, youth actors perceived the youth-inclusive PVE agenda as primarily a priority for young people and civil society, whereas non-youth actors perceived it largely as a donor and United Nations priority.

FIGURE 1.

Is youth-inclusive P/CVE programming a priority? (%) – all 184
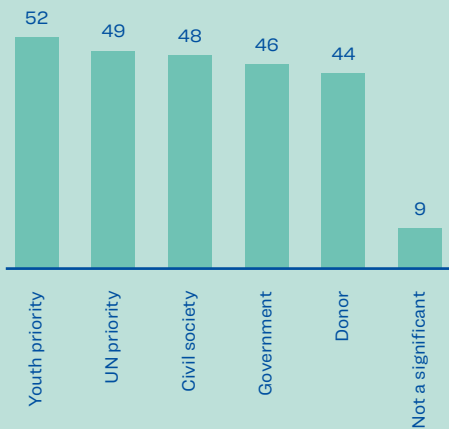
FIGURE 2.

Is youth-inclusive C/PVE programming a priority for different actors in your context? (%)

Youth-led/co-led (60)   Non-youth (124)
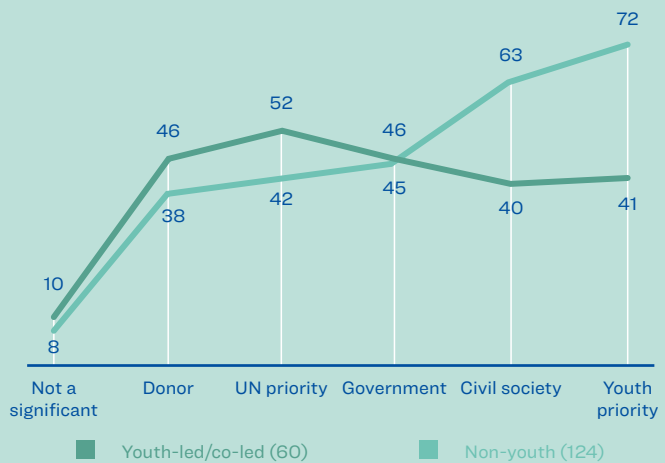
These patterns were also apparent when respondents were asked who in their context is responding to violent extremism as a priority. While most youth actors stated that it was primarily a youth and civil society priority (around 65 per cent of respondents), non-youth actors saw it mainly as a government and United Nations priority; only 37 per cent of non-youth actors reported that it was a youth priority in their context.[68]

It should not be surprising that many young people feel the need to respond to the influence of violent extremism in their contexts. As seen above, it is young people, at the nexus of the phenomenon, who often bear the brunt of both the activities of extremist groups and counter-terrorism responses. As the sections above have demonstrated, they have also been at the forefront of grassroots responses to the phenomenon; it makes sense that preventing

FIGURE 3.

If you believe that youth engagement should be a C/PVE priority, which actors do you believe need to be better sensitized on the issue in your context? (%) – 184 responses

78%	64%	54%	54%	53%	45%	41%	1%
Government and office-holders	Young people	Donors	Civil society	Public opinion	NGO/CSOs	UN and/or multi-lateral agencies	I do not believe it should be a priority
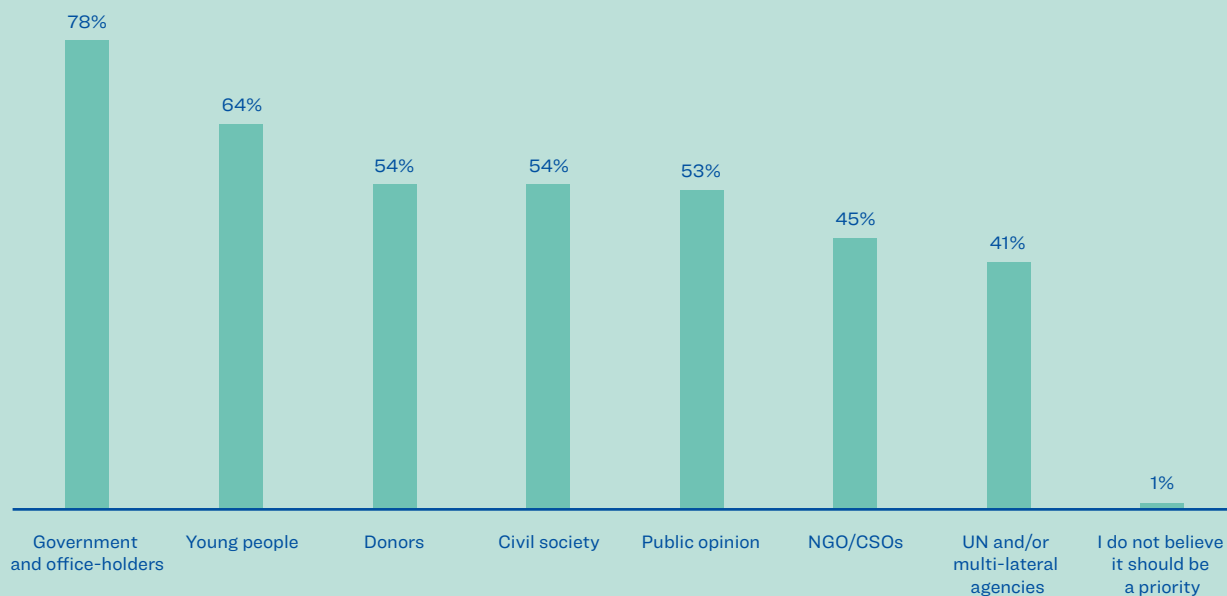
the influence of extremism and reducing the harm of counter-productive responses through youth-inclusive responses should be priorities for them. Significantly, a majority of respondents believed that it was primarily governments that needed to be more aware of the importance of youth inclusion in PVE.

These findings suggest a potentially significant, although unrecognized shared interests in PVE among young people and other actors that has yet to be fully tapped. While this divergence in perception may be negative, it does suggest a strong opportunity for young people and other partners to work more closely together on the PVE agenda. Indeed governments, United Nations entities and donors may find receptive partners in young people, and vice versa.

However, as seen below, this is long-term work that requires addressing the mistrust between young people and other actors in many places, overcoming young people's marginalization, and responding to the challenges that their organizations, networks and movements are facing. It also requires translating the agenda so that it speaks to the needs of the local contexts and complements rather than overshadows broader youth priorities.

Youth involvement in supporting Kosovo's efforts at engaging young people at risk of recruitment – Kosovo's Referral Mechanism was established by UNDP in cooperation with the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It brings together municipal representatives, religious leaders, psychologists and representatives from social welfare services and from the education sector. In addition, it provides support to individuals who have been identified as at risk of being radicalized or becoming radicalized. The Mechanism's approach is based on a tailor-made support package, which mainly consist of employment assistance, religious education, social welfare support, family counselling, or psychological support. The Mechanism works with these individuals to address their concerns and steer them away from the path towards radicalization. To boost youth involvement, in the summer of 2017, the municipality organized a consultation with young people to raise their awareness about the Mechanism and to gather their inputs and ideas.

Finding 2 – Most young people are being targeted as programme beneficiaries in C/PVE initiatives, although a substantial number are also participating as programme implementers. Few initiatives are engaging young as collaborators in priority-setting. Most respondents cite their status as "most at-risk" for recruitment as the primary reason for involving them in PVE, but for youth actors, increased project impact and the principle of inclusivity are as just as important, if not more so.

Young people's meaningful participation in programming and policy is a crucial if still untapped resource for PVE. To date, there has been little evidence collected about prevailing approaches to youth participation. A key goal of the survey is to explore the ways in which young people were being engaged across contexts and the most frequent reasons given for prioritizing their engagement.

In response to questions about the primary ways that young people have been involved in PVE in their contexts, 79 per cent of respondents indicated being involved as beneficiaries, or recipients of services in their contexts; 42 per cent of respondents indicated that they had been involved in some capacity as project implementers.

These are significant trends. They demonstrate that, indeed, many actors have already prioritized youth involvement in their PVE projects; only 15 per cent indicated that they had not seen youth involved in their contexts. While most young people are still being solely engaged as programme beneficiaries, many organisations appear to have started to deepen forms of collaboration with groups of young people. The findings below on thematic trends suggest that most of this collaboration has involved engaging young people in PVE advocacy campaigns, online and offline.

Nevertheless, only about one-fifth of survey respondents reported that young people were engaged as partners in setting programme and policy priorities in their contexts. As seen below, youth survey respondents and FGD participants both indicated that forms of engagement needed to be deepened. As one NGO survey respondent working on the issue internationally explains.

With respect to the rationale for engaging youth in PVE, many actors are framing the issue in terms of youth risk rather than resilience. In fact, a strong majority of non-youth actors believe that one of the most important reasons to involve youth in PVE is that they are the group that is "most at risk" of being involved in the response to violent extremism. Although youth actors also acknowledged young people's vulnerability to extremism as an important rationale for their participation, a great proportion of them indicated that "inclusive programming" was the most important reason for involving them, followed by "increased impact".

FIGURE 4.

How have young people primarily been involved in C/PVE initiatives in your context? (%) – 175
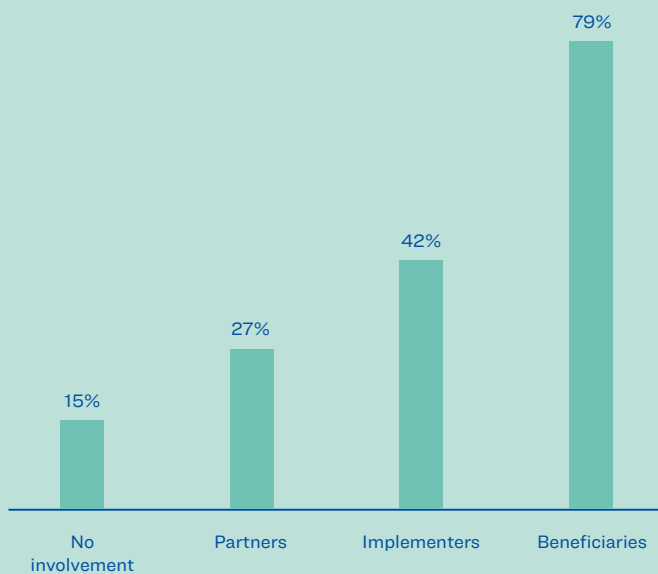
FIGURE 5.

What are the most important reasons for involving youth? (%)
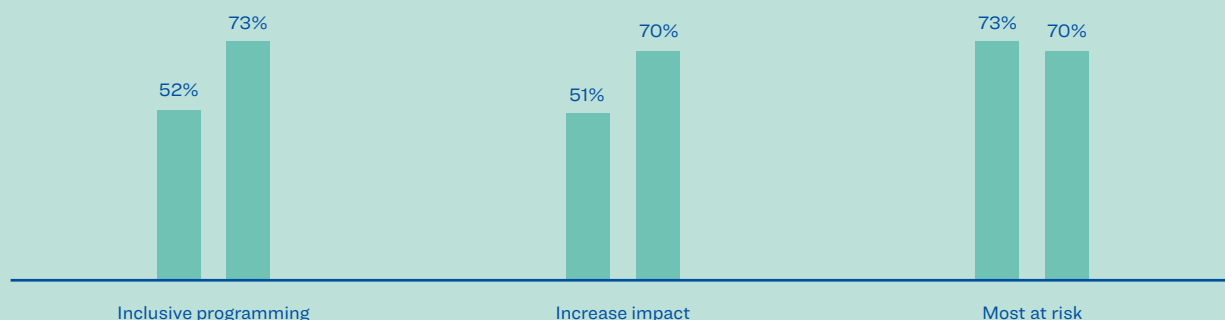
These differences in rationale matter. As indicated by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground mapping of youth organizations, young people tend to approach engagement and collaboration in development on the basis of mutual trust and shared values. If indeed there is common ground for collaboration, as the finding above indicates, it is important that collaboration not be approached predominantly through the prism of the potential risks and problems young people might represent. As discussed below, narrow approaches to youth participation based on perceptions of young people as "troublemakers" can do harm by stigmatizing young people, and can lead to a preference for reactive rather than forward-looking policies and programmers.[69] As one NGO survey respondent working on the issue internationally explains:

The shift from focusing on youth as a vulnerable group to youth as partners is happening, but two are still conflated. We need to move beyond to follow the lead on youth in terms of their priorities, what they see happening in their communities and among their peers, and their ideas for solutions.

The example below implemented with young people from the Lake Chad region showcases the partnership-based model of collaboration.

Multiplying impact through support to youth organizations and networks in the Lake Chad Basin – In November 2016, Search for Common Ground organized a Regional Youth Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in Nigeria, bringing together youth from across the Lake Chad Basin region (Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria) to create collaborative action plans on how to counter violent extremism within their own countries. Following the Summit, the youth networks in each of the countries received seed grants to implement their action plans. The networks were provided with mentoring, technical support and capacity building on project management, financial administration and reporting. Their projects included organizing awareness campaigns, advocacy meetings with community leaders, step-down training for youth (part of the disengagement process of young combatants), football for peace events, radio programmes and school peace clubs.

"When we engage youth in the implementation and the conception of initiatives and activities…they are more engaged and the impact is higher."

Survey respondent, Youth-led organization, Tunisia

Finding 3 – Most actors implementing youth and PVE initiatives appear to have a dual focus – engaging both "at-risk" youth and youth organizations/ networks. Initiatives focusing on gender and young women have been less common, and there are significant gaps between groups of young people engaged and those respondents believed should be engaged. Demonstrating their strategic role, youth actors report working with these key groups at higher rates than non-youth actors.

In line with the trends discussed above showing that actors have mainly engaged young people as either beneficiaries or implementers, Figure 6 shows that, although respondents have engaged a wide spectrum of youth groups through their PVE initiatives, there is a dual focus on "at-risk" youth and youth organizations.

Forty-four per cent of respondents indicated engaging "at-risk" youth in their programming. It is likely that many of the groups whose engagement was reported in PVE initiatives above, such as youth in poverty and not in education, employment or training (NEET), represent more specific groups of youth who are being engaged under the "at-risk" category. There is an additional finding that most non-youth respondents are approaching youth engagement on the basis of their vulnerability to and risk of radicalization and recruitment.

The survey finds a substantial variation by region in targeting, showing differences in engagement along urban/rural, educational and socio-economic lines. For instance, for respondents working in Africa, young people in poverty and in rural areas were most commonly engaged (60 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively), whereas respondents working in Asia most frequently report working with university students (59 per cent). This is suggestive, although not conclusive evidence that respondents are already designing the targeting PVE programmes in a context-sensitive manner and on the basis of local patterns of recruitment and drivers. Although the sample size is too small to make generalizations here, it is expected that further disaggregation by sub-region would reveal further variation.

FIGURE 6.

If your organization engages youth in C/PVE-relevant programming, which groups have predominantly been the focus of your initiatives in your context? (%) – 160
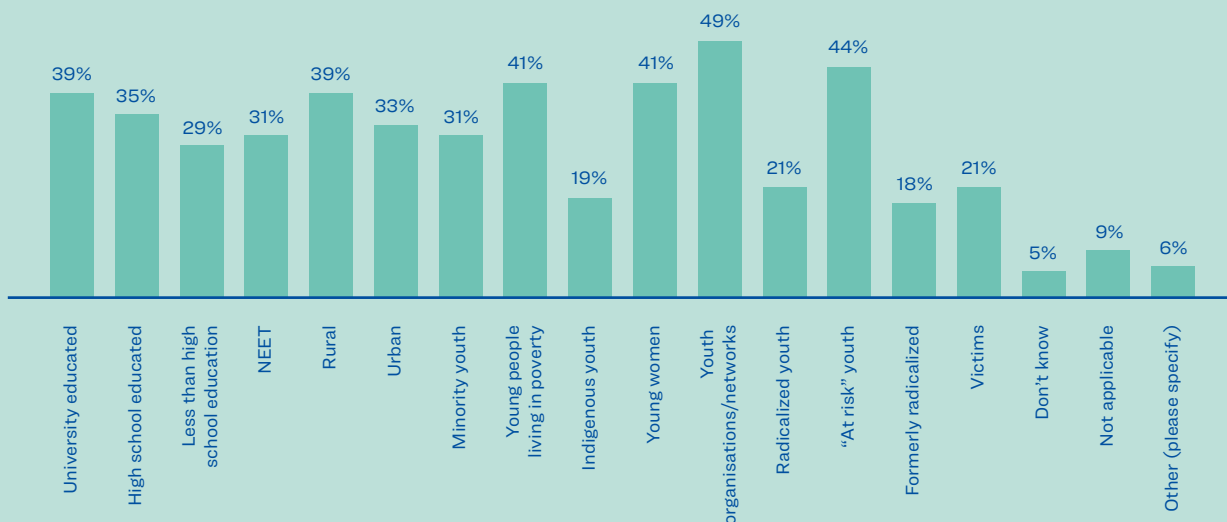
Working with marginalized young people in communities affected by violent extremism in Kenya. UNDP has been working with young people from communities in Kenya that are either located in 'epicentres' or 'spillover' areas of violent extremism. These PVE efforts involved community awareness campaigns with 1,726 young people from 30 different affected communities who were either victims of violence or were identified as at-risk for recruitment. The project also engaged 2,300 students from 27 universities and colleges to develop positive messaging, counter-narratives and data collection on violent extremism.

Creating spaces for youth expression, dialogue and resilience in Sudan – UNDP Sudan's Partnering Against Violent Extremism project recently launched the Youth Breathing Spaces initiative for PVE with the aim of promoting youth agency and social cohesion. The initiative focuses on establishing local spaces of dialogue where young people can safely express their thoughts, design activities, and engage their peers in PVE. These collaborative spaces are also aimed at promoting interactions and strengthening relations among young people and other community members, creating mutual understanding and beginning dialogue to help address the local drivers of extremism. The 'breathing spaces' were launched in the Karmakol Festival in December 2017, using art, music and innovation as springboards for engaging young people on difficult issues related to the conflict and violent extremism, and for helping build resilience. One of the workshops introduced participants to songs from conflict-affected areas in Sudan, enabling them to learn the stories behind them, and encouraged them to creatively remix and perform their own unique, modern versions.

Forty-nine per cent of respondents across the board reported focusing on youth organizations; similar patterns emerged when this figure was disaggregated by youth actors and non-youth actor respondents. There is a promising trend to build on whereby almost half of actors are already engaging with youth organizations and networks. This trend is reflected in the findings above where 42 per cent of respondents report that young people were involved as project implementers and that around 43 per cent reported working on capacity development for youth organizations. Yet, as noted above, there are indications that this involvement still needs to be deepened and anchored in sustainable partnerships, aimed at addressing the structural drivers of PVE and at promoting an enabling environment for youth empowerment. These will require addressing the barriers and gaps expressed by young people with respect to their attempts to engage in PVE (discussed further below).

Indeed, the survey suggests that there are still gaps between young people involved in respondents' PVE initiatives and those that they believe should be involved. This gap can be observed in Figure 7, which compares responses by respondents to the question regarding which young people were the focus of their initiatives compared to those that they indicated should be involved in PVE. The largest gaps between "should be involved" and "reported involvement" are found in relation to young women, young people in poverty, young people with less than high school education, as well as formerly radicalized and radicalized young people. When asked about the top challenges for youth-focused PVE projects, over a third of respondents reported that "the right young people are still not being engaged" in programming (see the discussion of challenges below). While the total number of respondents varied for each question, the divergences still reveal potential gaps in targeting that warrant further study.

Gender-inclusive approaches to youth and PVE might not be common, however. Figure 8 shows that only 22 per cent of respondents indicate that there were stand-alone initiatives focused on young women in their contexts, and about 50 per cent that gender was mainstreamed in PVE initiatives. These data echo other studies that found that the challenges of young women were overlooked in the field of PVE.[70] This indicates that there could be significant gaps in programmes aimed to address the gender-specific drivers of violent extremism, such as negative forms of masculinity, the disempowerment of women, as well as the alternative roles that young women can find in supporting violent extremist groups. Yet, in the context of this report, this may indicate a substantial under-investment in the role and importance of young women as activists and peacebuilders in PVE.

"…too often girls and young women are left out or their role in C/PVE is narrowly defined."

Survey respondent, national development agency, Southeast Asia

As the examples throughout this report demonstrate, young people's ability to mobilize and engage a wide constituency of their peers, including those who may be out of reach for other actors, is a key asset that they bring to PVE. As Figure 9 shows, when the data on the demographics of youth participation are disaggregated by actor type, youth actors work with key groups in higher proportions. Demonstrating their strategic role, youth actors report working with many of these and other key youth groups more frequently than do non-youth actors. This engagement extends to peer youth organizations and networks, young women, and youth who are educated, rural, from minority groups and high-school educated university educated, rural, minority youth and high-school educated. The example below illustrates how young women activists specifically have been a factor in peer outreach by building youth networks to increase PVE participation among their peers and to reduce the influence of extremism in local communities.

Young women accelerating PVE in Pakistan and Afghanistan – The Youth Peace Network, established by the CSO Aware girls, is engaged in women's empowerment, gender equality and PVE. With over 23 active groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the network creates open spaces for dialogue, revitalizes indigenous culture destroyed by militants, and promotes non-violence and pluralism in the community. Using its network, the organization sends teams to villages, towns and schools to identify individuals at risk of recruitment by militant groups and to dissuade them from a life of violence. The teams implement conflict resolution and non-violence training with an individualized peer-to-peer approach to change these individuals' minds. The teams also run campaigns in schools, universities and madrassas to discuss the negative impacts of militant groups, and to promote the values of peace and non-violence. A total of 219 young people have been reached through the organizations' activities.

FIGURE 7.

Young people who should be involved vs. who are involved in PVE programmes

Reported involvement (160) Should be all (175)
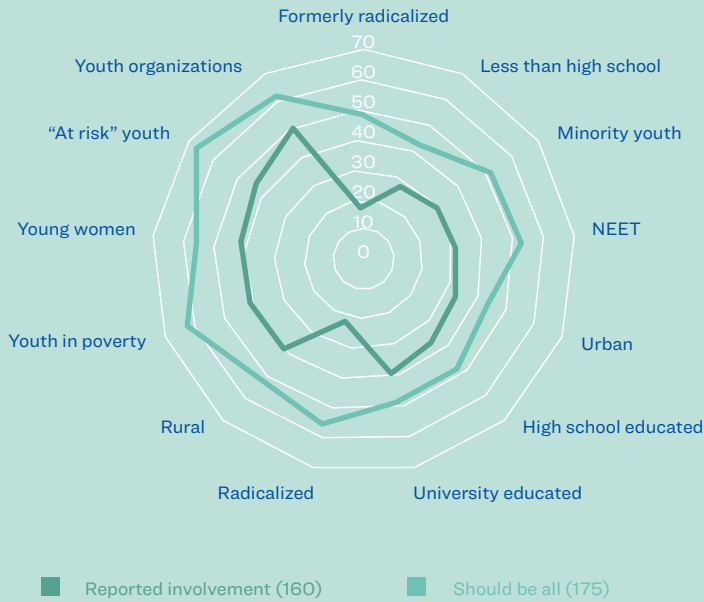
FIGURE 8.

In your context, is gender typically a component of youth and C/PVE-relevant initiatives? (%) all respondents – 175

51% Gender is generally mainstreamed in youth and PVE initiatives in my context

35% Gender is an occasional consideration for youth and PVE initiatives in my context

22% There are typically stand-alone PVE initiatives focused on young women
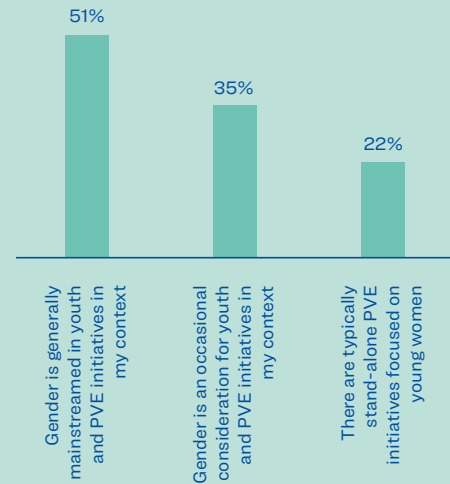
FIGURE 9.

Young people who should be involved vs. reported involved in programmes – by actor (%)

Non-youth (110)

Youth-led/co-led (50)

Should be all (175)
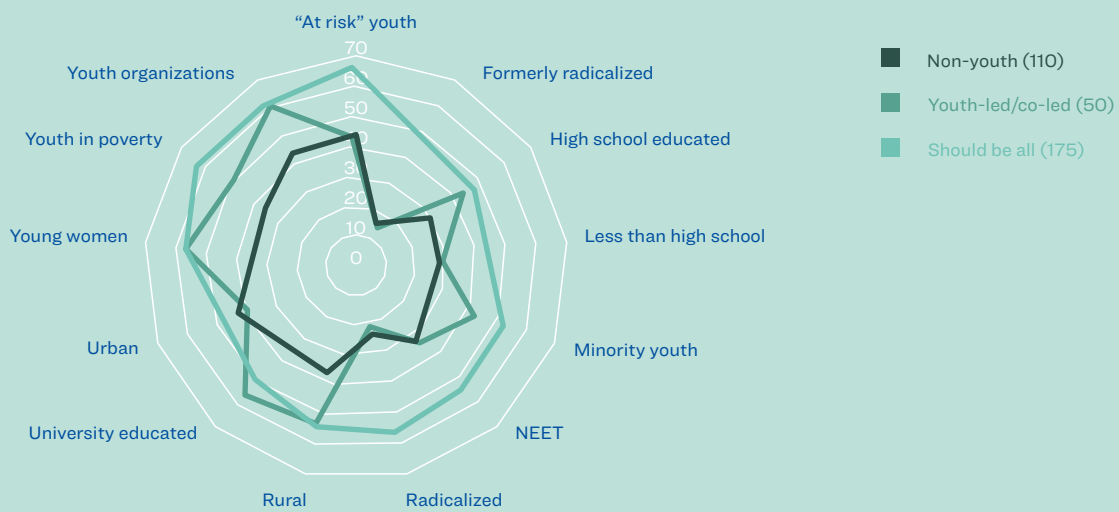
Finding 4 – Youth-focused advocacy initiatives have been the most common types of youth-focused PVE initiatives, while youth-focused projects addressing the governance and conflict dimensions of violent extremism are less frequent. Online and offline advocacy campaigns are the most common types of PVE initiatives reported, followed by broader civic engagement initiatives. Projects focused on addressing structural drivers, such as educational reform, political exclusion, human rights work and policy change, are being reported at comparatively lower levels.

To capture trends concerning the types of youth and PVE projects being implemented, the survey asked participants both about the projects they were implementing and the projects that they thought that others were implementing in their contexts (see Figure 10; Annex I describes the goals and methods of common youth-focused PVE initiatives). Clear patterns emerge regarding types of PVE projects being implemented with young people on the ground.

The results indicate that across contexts, young people are primarily involved in online and of-fline advocacy initiatives. The findings above echo a recent review of PVE-related project funding in Asia by Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, conducted by the Australian Government. The review found that donors and policymakers favour investments in countering narratives through social media and outreach.[71] Civic engagement in general was also among the most common implemented and perceived type of initiative, although the disparity here between reported and perceived percentages of initiatives was significant (39 per cent vs. 45 per cent). Indeed, it is likely that many

FIGURE 10.

Reported and perceived initiatives and approaches by type – all actors (%) – 163
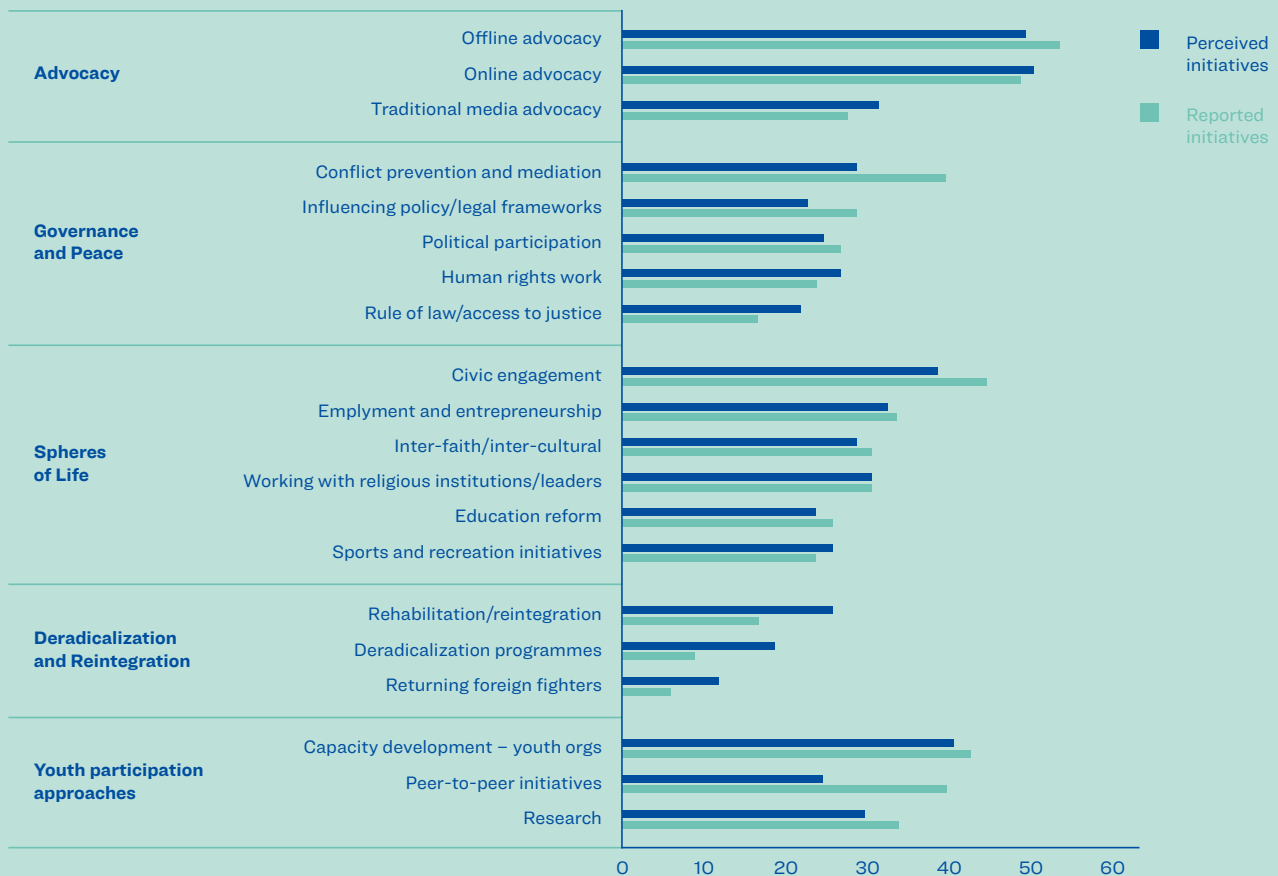
advocacy campaigns are also understood by respondents to be forms of civic engagement. Like the Dutch "Dare to be Grey" initiative, the example below shows the ways in which actors have been using online and offline initiatives to engage young people in advocacy for PVE.

Young Bangladeshi activists compete to promote digital literacy online – UNDP, in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, is engaged in promoting young people's digital literacy to improve their capacity to spot "fake news," become more digitally aware online, and enable them to be more resistant to divisive, exclusionary and violent rhetoric. Although few Bangladeshis interact with extremist content online, there are concerns that these numbers will rise as millions of Bangladeshis gain access to the Internet each year. As a preventative measure framed by Bangladesh's ongoing commitment to the implementation of SDG 16, the initiative is harnessing the creativity of young people by engaging them in hackathons to produce digital platforms promoting tolerant or inclusive visions of Bangladesh. The initiative is now building a network of activists and entrepreneurs to sustain action – both online and offline – and is expanding to regions outside of the capital.

Capacity development for youth organizations has also been one of the most common forms of youth and PVE involvement, reported by 41 per cent of respondents. This finding is an especially encouraging sign that many PVE practitioners working with youth are already recognizing the importance of collaborating with and supporting youth organizations in responding to violent extremism. However, the data do not necessarily indicate what the *focus* of this capacity development has been. One possibility, given the trend towards advocacy approaches and the reliance of some actors on young people as project implementers, is that youth organizations and networks are being trained in and involved as implementers for PVE advocacy and awareness raising. As seen above, young people's skills at communication, especially through social media and other online platforms, make them natural counterparts for this type of work. Peer-to-peer initiatives have recently gained more visibility as forms of outreach and advocacy, yet they still might not be common across contexts (25 per cent of actors reported perceiving them as being implemented in their contexts vs. 40 per cent who reported implementing them). Young people's role in research and data collection can be important entry-points for their engagement in PVE (as

discussed in the next session), and almost one in three respondents reported engaging or perceiving young people as researchers.

As argued above, there are important links between the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and the PVE agenda. The fact that 40 per cent of survey respondents reported implementing conflict prevention/mediation initiatives is an important trend that reflects the recognition among survey respondents of the links between the two agendas. Young people can play important roles in fostering social cohesion, increasing inter-cultural and religious tolerance, and mediating conflicts. Many actors report that efforts are being made in involving religious leaders and institutions in prevention initiatives.

Indeed, a key lesson, discussed at length below, is the advantage of adopting peacebuilding approaches in PVE projects, both for improving project outcomes and in addressing the conflict drivers of VE in many contexts. However, as the Youth, Peace and Security progress study makes clear, across contexts, young people have not been systematically involved in peacebuilding efforts, nor, as the Yemen and Kosovo case studies show, are they engaged in more formal peace processes.

Similarly, the survey finds a significant disparity in the number of survey respondents indicating that they have been implementing conflict prevention and mediation initiatives, versus their perception of others implementing similar projects in their contexts. In fact, only 29 per cent of respondents actually report seeing these types of initiatives in their context, which possibly indicates that youth participation in conflict prevention and mediation as a pathway to PVE is not yet common.

The survey also indicates a significant gap with respect to projects focused on governance and decision-making, with a comparatively much smaller number of reported initiatives being implemented to address the structural and institutional drivers of violent extremism. As mentioned above, the institutionalization of youth participation in decision-making and the promotion of an enabling environment for youth empowerment represented a cross-cutting priority for FGD participants. The survey shows that there are fewer projects focused on tackling the root causes of violent extremism by addressing structural issues, such as the promotion of human rights and rule of law, political participation and policy change than other types of initiatives.

FIGURE 11.

Perceived initiatives – advocacy, governance and peace (%) – all actors – 163
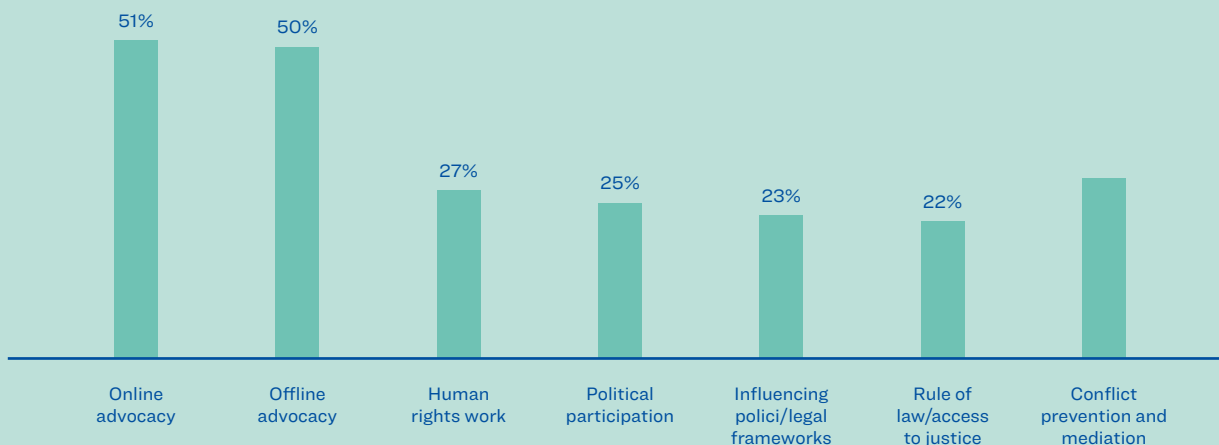
The same is true for educational reform initiatives. This may indicate significant oversight in current PVE practice and the need to invest more in prioritizing youth participation, not only in advocacy and civic engagement initiatives, but also in addressing these structural drivers associated with youth political marginalization and exclusion for decision-making. The lack of good governance is one of the most commonly identified drivers of violent extremism across contexts, whether in relation to political exclusion, corruption, poor service delivery or a failure to respect basic rights, including access to justice.[72]

As argued below, more systematic youth participation is needed to ensure that decisions, policies and actions taken at all levels to respond to violent extremism adequately reflect the priorities and needs of young people. This is true for the adoption and development of NAPs on PVE, which survey participants cite as the most important instruments for responding to violent extremism. It is also true for interlinked policy frameworks, such as the SDGs. Entry-points for increasing youth meaningful participation in these areas is taken up in the "Key Lessons" section below.

Many policy discussions on youth and violent extremism have focused on the role that unemployment and poverty play as drivers in youth radicalization and recruitment. As yet, there is no clear evidence for a straightforward connection between unemployment and poverty as drivers of extremism, nor of the efficacy of employment initiatives in reducing youth violence or recruit-

ment (as discussed below). Nevertheless, the survey shows that around 1 in 3 respondents reported entrepreneurship PVE initiatives were being implemented in their context, the fifth most common perceived type of initiative overall.

The least common initiatives were disarmament, disengagement and reintegration ones, which include rehabilitation, foreign fighters and de-radicalization projects. Yet, respondents believed that there were more implemented than actually reported. Since many of these projects can be extremely sensitive and require a great deal of care and expertise to implement, it is possible that fewer actors have the requisite capacities and reach for their implementation. This shows a potential area where further research is needed. The following example highlights efforts to meet the holistic needs of both young people at risk of recruitment and former violent extremists for rehabilitation and re-integration.

Rehabilitation and reintegration through peace and entrepreneurship skills development in Cameroon – The Creative Skills for Peace project focuses on promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of over 300 violent young people and young violent extremist offenders between the ages of 13 to 35 in eight prisons and correctional facilities across Cameroon. Run by the Local Youth Corner in Cameroon and supported by the GHR Foundation and other partners, the project provides peace building and leadership training as well as vocational and entrepreneurial skills as an alternative to violence and healing psycho-social trauma so as to

ensure effective rehabilitation and reintegration after release. The project addresses participants' holistic needs through sports and talent competitions, focused social cohesion, the establishment of libraries, civic education and leadership training, with the aim of preventing youth radicalization and recidivism of violent and violent extremist offenders. The project's entrepreneurial component includes the branding and marketing of products produced in prison and a saving scheme for inmates where the proceeds are shared with participants of the project through a savings account to assist them in starting up their own businesses upon release. It also provides C/PVE training and capacity building for prison staff and administrators. Finally, it ensures gender-sensitivity in selecting its participants and focuses on young people who can become peer trainers after completing the project.

Another potentially significant finding related to these issues concerns comparative strengths of youth actors. As seen in Figure 12, while youth and non-youth actors report implementing roughly similar types of initiatives, youth actors report engaging in many of them more often than do non-youth actors (advocacy, civic engagement, capacity building for youth organizations, peer-to-peer initiatives, human rights religious leaders, and inter-faith/intercultural work). Non-youth actors, by contrast, reported more initiatives in the areas of education reform, and employment and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Finally, the survey also suggests that there could be significant regional variation in types of programming. The small sample size of respondents from different regions made it difficult to generalize, indicating that more research is needed to verify these trends. Respondents from the Middle East reported implementing more online advocacy, education and civic engagement initiatives than those in Asia and Africa. They also reported significantly lower levels of human rights work. Respondents from Africa reported comparably higher levels of work with religious institutions and leaders, and those from Asia reported implementing more employment and entrepreneurship PVE initiatives.

Preventing extremism, promoting tolerance and civic engagement in schools in Morocco – In collaboration with Rabita Mohammadia des Oulémas (Mohammadia League of Scholars) and the Ministry of Education, UNDP Morocco is now launching a project aimed at establishing a network of socio-educational coordinators in charge of promoting youth civic engagement and the participation of young people in 3,000 secondary and tertiary schools across the country in the next four years. The aim of the project is to enhance youth participation by promoting tolerance and active citizenship within schools, and strengthening resilience to extremism.

FIGURE 12.
Types of initiatives = (%)

Youth-led/co-led (53)
Reported total inititives (163)

Finding 5 – Perceptions of the cumulative impact of current approaches to youth and PVE are divided, although mostly positive. More reliable data and measurement tools are needed. Approximately 45 per cent of respondents reported having observed a positive cumulative impact of youth-relevant PVE efforts; 1 in 4 reported that it was too early to tell; and 1 in 5 reported a marginal impact to date. Most respondents indicated using informal conversations and participant feedback in making their judgments.

It has often been cited that it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the overall cumulative impact of PVE programming in a given context. These assessments, however, are critical to refine and promote youth-inclusive approaches, and to bring more attention and funding to the PVE agenda. Yet, measuring prevention is notoriously difficult, since it seeks to capture precisely the outcomes that were averted and by definition did not occur.[73] In order to have an approximate perception of the impact, however, the survey asked respondents about the sources they relied on to arrive at this conclusion. With regard to the assessment of overall impact, many practitioners were divided: around 45 per cent of respondents reported a positive impact (some positive or significant positive) and about 51 per cent reported either a marginal impact or indicated that it was too early to tell. Adult respondents were more likely to state that it was too early to tell than practitioners from youth-led/co-led organizations, who were more likely to report positive impacts. On the whole, however, the results do suggest some cautious optimism regarding the impact of programming trends.

Despite the sensitivity and risks associated with PVE, relatively few respondents reported that youth and PVE programmes were cumulatively having negative impacts in their contexts. This is especially true when one considers that "political sensitivities and risk around the issue" were mentioned as the main challenges by youth and adult practitioners. This could suggest that most practitioners have been implementing projects in ways that minimize risks. Alternatively, for some respondents, since they are still primarily rely on anecdotal evidence or participant feedback to gauge impact, they might not have fully captured the total impacts of their programmes, whether positive and negative.

Most survey respondents indicated that they used informal conversations (57 per cent) and participant feedback (51 per cent) as ways to gauge cumulative impact. Fewer actors relied on more rigorous forms of tracking measurement: 15 per cent of respondents reported finding evidence of impact on the basis of indicator trends; 23 per cent reported doing so on the basis of peer-reviewed research; and 33 per cent reported doing so on the basis on formal reviews within their organizations.

Overall, these findings suggest that while current youth-inclusive approaches are showing promise and are seen to have a mostly positive impact, more efforts need to be made to concretely capture the successes and drawbacks of current approaches. With respect to measurement tools, the findings confirm the need for increasing investments in gauging impact and adding greater rigour to project assessments, especially through greater integration of youth-sensitive, monitoring and evaluation PVE tools. As seen in the challenges section that follows, this was an important area where youth organizations and networks sought greater capacity-building and support.

FIGURE 13.

Cumulative impact of P/CVE programmes in one's context? – all (%) – 163

31	25	20	14	6	1
Some positive impact	Too early to tell	Marginal impact	Significant positive impact	No impact	Negative impact
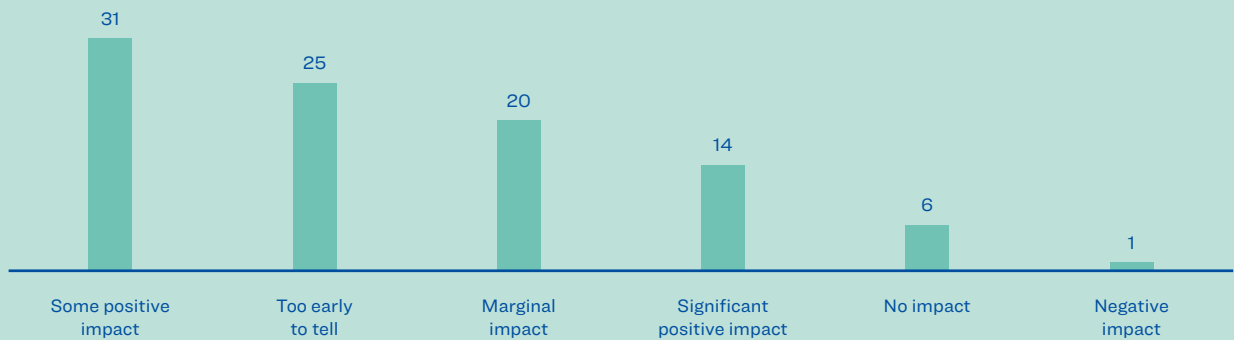
FIGURE 14.

Reported cumulative impact by source type (by no. of respondents) – 163

Indicator trends (25 respondents) — Peer-to-peer research (38 respondents) — Fromal organizational review (53 respondents) — Participant feedback (83 respondents) — Informal conversations (93 respondents)

■ Significant impact   ■ Some positive   ■ Marginal   ■ Too erly   ■ No impact   □ Negative
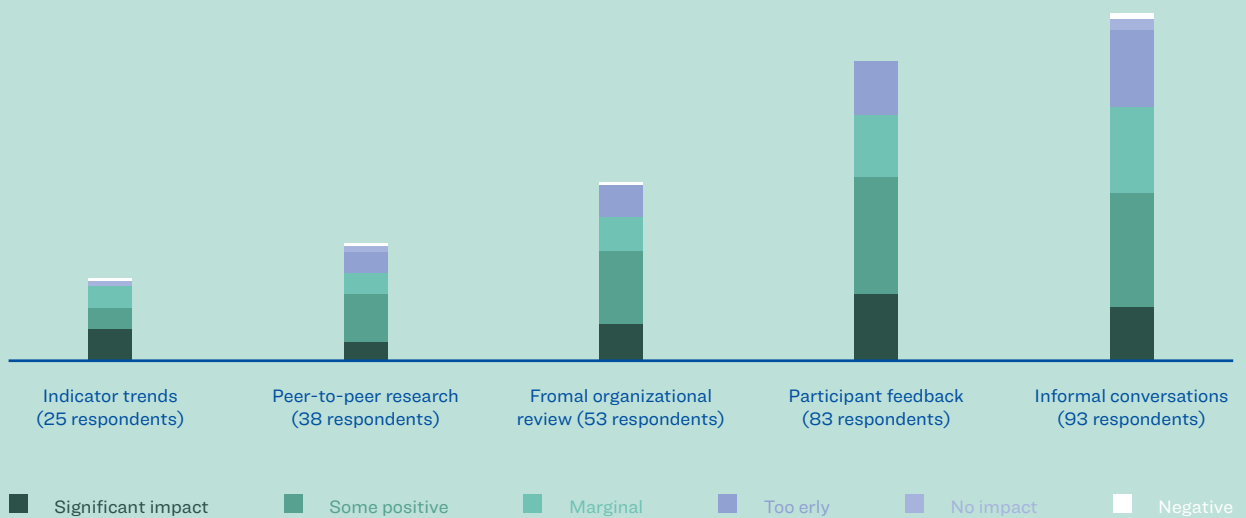
Finding 6 – Lack of consultation and lack of funding for youth initiatives are the top challenges for youth and PVE, as reported by youth actors; and short-term approaches are the top challenge cited by non-youth actors. Political sensitivities and risk, and the need for coordination on the agenda and more capacity development on the issue are also significant challenges.

Promoting youth-inclusive PVE approaches requires understanding the distinct challenges that different actors, youth and non-youth, face in their work. Figure 15 shows that youth and non-youth actors share the view that key challenges are: lack of funding for youth initiatives and of youth consultation; the need for better coordination and political sensitivities. Yet, the survey also shows that there are key differences when the data are disaggregated by actor. Indeed, youth and non-youth actors typically operate from different social, financial and institutional positions. Both the shared and distinct

challenges are important to understand as the basis for improving youth PVE partnerships and the quality of participation.

Figures 16 and 17 clearly present the ten most frequently cited challenges faced by youth actors, which are divided here into structural barriers and operational challenges. Among the most frequently cited top structural challenges for implementing youth-focused initiatives were the lack of youth consultation (56 per cent) and lack of coordination (54 per cent). With regard to operational challenges, 83 per cent of

FIGURE 1**5.**

What are the top challenges for implementing youth-focused C/PVE initiatives? (%)

Legend:
- Youth led/co-led (52)
- Non-youth (108)

Categories:
- Lack of funding for youth organisations
- Youth are typically not consulted
- Lack of coordination among actors
- Political sensitivities
- Youth organisations need more capacity
- Mistrust between youth and other actors
- Need for better M&E tools to mesure progress
- Lack of incl. processes and platforms
- Inadequate policy and legal frameworks
- Not targeting right group of young people
- Short-term approaches
- Non-youth actors need more capacity
- More incentives for youth
- Lack of political will
- Narrow approach to root causes
- Effective approaches unclear
- Issue is not a priority for youth
- Issue is not a priority

FIGURE 16.

Most frequently cited operational challenges for youth participation in PVE programmes (%) – youth actors – 52 respondents

83	52	52	44	44
Lack of funding for youth C/PVE initiatives	Political sensitivities and risk	More capacity for youth organisations is needed	Need for better M&E tools and frameworks	Existing mistrust between youth and other actors
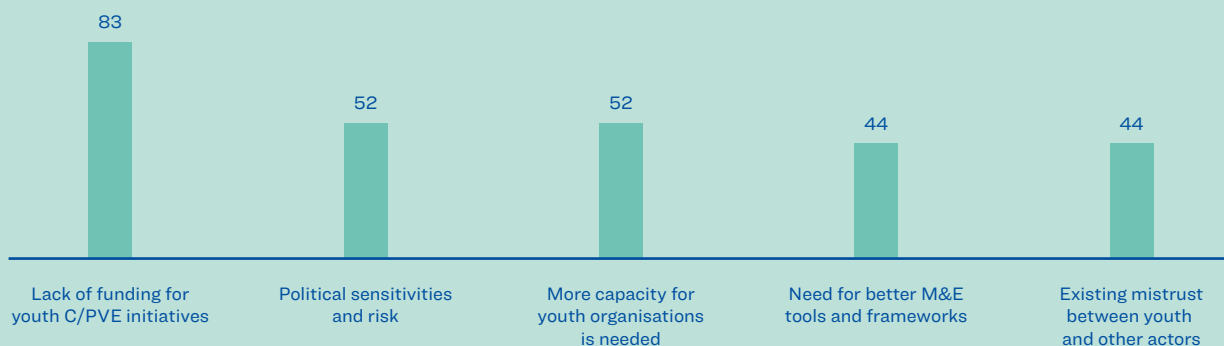
FIGURE 17.

Most frequently cited structural challenges for youth participation in PVE programmes (%) – youth actors – 52 respondents

56	54	42	42	39
Young people are not consulted	Lack of coordination among actors	Inadequate C/PVE policy and legislative frameworks	Lack of inclusive processes and platforms	Need to target the right groups of young people
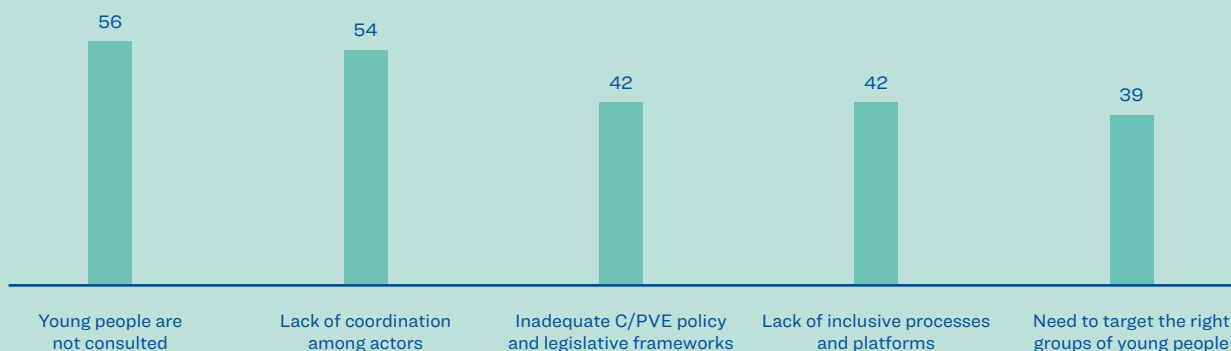
youth actors reported a lack of funding for youth initiatives, followed by political sensitivities and risk (52 per cent) and the need for more capacity development in PVE (52 per cent).

These figures clearly show that youth actors acknowledge the need for increasing the use of youth consultations and expanding coordination and partnerships with non-youth actors. As noted above, the majority of youth peacebuilding organizations operate on relatively small budgets and their ability to significantly scale up and extend their reach and impact depends on the type of resources and support they have access to. Indeed, the biggest gap between perceptions of challenges relates to

the issue of funding: 82 per cent of youth actors cited funding as a challenge compared to 51 per cent of non-youth actors. These results echo those found in the mapping of youth-led peacebuilding organizations conducted by UNOY Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground, which also cites funding as a top challenge, followed by "creating and expanding relations, partnerships and exposure to regional and international platforms".[74]

By contrast, the challenge most frequently cited by non-youth actors is that "short-term approaches" are still favoured on C/PVE. This could indicate several possibilities: that many non-youth actors perceive that projects are

being implemented on short-term time frames (perhaps due to account institutional or donor demands), or that they believe that genuinely preventative approaches, rather than merely reactive ones (whether through tokenistic youth participation or security approaches), are still not being adopted in their contexts. For example, as one survey respondent belonging to an NGO in the Caribbean explains:

"Interventions need to be long-term with consolidated effort to address the fundamental needs. Poverty is a critical factor that pushes victims in to spaces where they access resources including belonging. Short-term funding arrangements do not work and will not work in addressing this."

Survey data support both hypotheses. In both cases, however, these differences in the perception of challenges between youth actors and non-youth actors would be interconnected – two-sides of the same coin: non-youth actors' perception that short-term approaches were favoured might offer an explanationas to why young people's participation in PVE has so far been cursory in many cases, and as to why there are still gaps in support to youth organizations and the promotion of an enabling environment for their participation.

2.3 Focus on field case studies – Youth & PVE in context (Yemen, Pakistan and Kosovo)

This section looks specifically at three case studies conducted by UNDP, in Yemen, Pakistan and Kosovo. Each case study presents a context-specific exploration of the intersection between youth priorities, actions and the phenomenon of violent extremism. They show the ways in which PVE cannot be disconnected for broader youth priorities, the concrete development challenges they face and calls for participation and empowerment.

Between April and August 2017, 140 young people participated in focus group discussions for these case studies, providing on-the-ground perspectives on their priorities and the challenges of responding to violent extremism in their communities and societies. They were complemented by 48 key stakeholder interviews and desk research. Together, these case studies offer more rounded views on the ways in which PVE is linked with the holistic needs of young people. The full case studies developed in 2017-2018, can be found on www.youth4peace.info.

Yemen

Young people and the conflict-violent extremism nexus

Youth and violent extremism in context

In Yemen, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 constitute 21 per cent of its population, and 60 per cent of the total population are below the age of 24.[75] Yemen is now facing an unprecedented political, humanitarian, and development crisis, which ignited when an ongoing political transition that began in 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring led to a civil war with Houthi militants from the north-western region capturing territory and then Sana'a.

A year into the war, 80 per cent of Yemenis were in need of humanitarian assistance. Gains made in greater youth participation and in their voices being heard during or after the 2011 Arab Spring have largely been reversed. During the Arab Spring in 2011, it was young Yemenis who were at the forefront of demanding for change and more opportunities, and had a voice in the National Dialogues on the political transition that followed. Case study participants explained that now young people's political and peacebuilding role has diminished, and there has been a rise in negative stereotypes around young people as liabilities.

In Yemen, the growing influence of violent extremism has been part of broader conflict dynamics and its effect has been to compound what was felt to be a general marginalization of young people. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and to a lesser extent, the Islamic State (IS), have used the instability of the conflict at several points in time to hold territory, secure funds and extend their influence and operations.[76]

AQAP has been using an outreach programme to provide basic services such as water and electricity, justice and law enforcement, and by repairing schools, building roads, funding hospitals, dispensing aid and solving land disputes.[77] More recently, the so-called Islamic State (IS) began operations in places that experienced sectarian-tinged violence and lacked proper security, including in the Aden-Abyan region.

Although a small number of young people have joined extremist groups, the case study found that, during the crisis, it is mainly young people, with often little support, who have been at the forefront, providing basic needs and medical assistance to those affected by the conflict. Despite the insecurity, some young people from Lahj, Abyan and Aden have continued their activism, working to address the challenges faced by their communities and the influence of extremism, such as organizing to clean streets, and engaging in peacebuilding and employment projects, and documenting human rights abuses.

Since the conflict has enabled the rise of violent extremism, youth meaningful participation was seen by participants to be an important part to ensuring its resolution, especially by reconnecting young people to informal and formal peace processes, and decision-making, and by investing in safe spaces and meaningful alternatives. Promoting the visibility of young people and further support to youth in decision-making was seen as a way to capitalize on their ongoing action and combat stereotypes.

Youth priorities

→ Reconnecting young people to informal and formal peace processes and decision-making.

→ Better partnering of non-youth actors with young people and support their PVE initiatives.

→ Establishing safety, rule of law and ensuring accountable security forces.

→ Investing in safe spaces for recreation, culture and interaction, such as sports/art/theatre.

→ Tailored youth employment and entrepreneurship initiatives.

→ Involve young people and other trusted social actors in PVE advocacy.

Youth participation challenges

→ There is a risk of confrontation with armed groups or authorities.

→ There is a lack of physical infrastructure and precarity of financing for initiatives.

→ There is low overall support for youth initiatives from communities.

→ Most donors have preferred to work with older, more established civil society organizations.

→ Capacity-building is needed since many young people with skills have left the country.

→ Many young people are suspicious of peacebuilding projects because many are short-lived; they do not see the added value and are not sure that they will be taken seriously afterwards.

"[W]hen young people join armed groups, people pay attention to them – more than those young people engaged in peace initiatives. Some young people hate the words 'activist', 'peace' (especially peace negotiations) and 'initiative' because they think they just have to volunteer, work for free, won't be recognized. and maybe they will have to pay from their own pockets."

Young peacebuilder

"Youth in 2011 were the 'darlings' of [the political] effort, but now there is a lot of frustration that young people don't have a seat at the table. Young people had formed a strong coalition in the 2011 dialogues, but this has not carried on in the peace talks."

United Nations official in Yemen

"The war will end, and we have to prepare young people as well for the coming phase. We have to ask: are they prepared to build Yemen? You have to prepare the ground for politics."

Young peacebuilder

Case study:

Pakistan

Negotiating intolerance, diversity and national identity

Youth and violent extremism in context

Together with Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria, Pakistan is consistently ranked as one of the countries most affected by violent extremism, with official statistics indicating more than 15,908 fatalities since 2000 in militant attacks.[78] The influence of violent extremist ideologies remains a challenge for Pakistan; in the past few years, there has been observed an uptick in the level of ethnic and sectarian violence.[79]

Islamist violence has targeted civilians, minority groups, as well as the state. Ethnic violence, which has been evident in the Province of Balochistan and Karachi, where it has been tied to political parties.

It is estimated that currently about 67 per cent of Pakistan's population is under the age of 30. In 2010, the average age for Pakistanis was a mere 21.6 years. There are 50 million youth in the 15–29 year age bracket; by 2030, it is estimated that this number will rise to 85 million.[80]

In this context, there have been concerns over the vulnerability of young people to radicalization and as potential recruits for these militant groups. Data from 900 biographies of deceased militants belonging to an extremist organization demonstrate that the mean age for recruits to join the group was under 17 years old. Evidence further suggests that most individuals are recruited while young, some even at 12 years old.[81]

Youth activists have perceived that they were operating in a space where there is competition between an enabling environment for youth activism focused on diversity, tolerance and participation, and one focused on exclusivist identities.

Schools, whether public, private or religious, have become a contested space, where too often the primary and secondary curriculum is centred around exclusivist narratives, a challenge that has also entered the home. At the university level, where recruiters have been active, participants explained that they have also seen the rise of extremism.

Researchers in Pakistan have highlighted the role of "poverty, poor governance, political instability, poor quality of education and absence of the link between education and social mobility."[82] This is a problem that affects even those from relatively affluent background. Young people in Pakistan are becoming increasingly recognized as a political force, yet are still politically excluded. As a UNDP electoral specialist notes, "Efforts to prepare youth to be [the country's] next leaders are missing. [There are few] formal procedures within the party system for the capacity building of youth."

In addition, it is clear that there are already large numbers of young Pakistani activists thinking critically and acting to help prevent violent extremism in the country, especially centred around reducing sectarian tensions. Their actions have ranged from citizen journalism to the promotion of positive extra-curricular activities such as sports to workshops in universities and social media campaigns. They have also involved creative initiatives such as rickshaw counter-narrative campaigns and street theatre.

Youth priorities

→ Educational curricula reform to integrate respect for diversity

→ Decent jobs and fair opportunities

→ Starting awareness at earlier stages with children and parents

→ Spaces for extra-curricular activities and civic engagement

→ Support and safety for bottom-up, youth-led initiatives

→ Increased partnerships as part of a holistic approach

→ Promotion of a greater youth voice in politics and in PVE priorities.

Youth participation challenges

→ Safety risks and fear of being seen as anti-Islamic

→ Lack of support for existing grassroots initiatives and partnerships

→ Bridging of the social distance between different youth groups – elite, urban and less educated

→ Exclusion from influence in decision-making – e.g. the current National Action Plan (NAP) does not prioritize youth.

"Hate exists even among affluent communities. The cause is the same: a ceiling on social mobility."

NGO founder/activist

"We don't have good education. It is a fact that we don't have jobs. When we don't have that, anyone can come in and exploit that. Our state is not providing for the people: that is our fault."

FGD participant

"We do not have the capacity to engage in socio-economic programmes. But when extremists come, they provide a holistic approach: they have social services and an ideology."

FGD participant

Kosovo

Putting violent extremism in the context of youth priorities

Youth and violent extremism in context

The role of violent extremism in Kosovo has gained local and international visibility mainly as a result of foreign fighters going to Iraq and Syria, currently estimated at 335 individuals of whom 69.2 per cent are young.[83] Kosovo is considered to have one of the highest ratios of per capita foreign fighters from Europe. While the overall figures of foreign fighters may at first be striking, this high proportion of foreign fighters is partly explained by the fact that Kosovo has one of the youngest populations in the continent. It also has relatively few fighters per capita with respect to its Muslim population.[84]

Currently, approximately 37 per cent of foreign fighters have returned[85] and therefore concern over the influence of violent extremism among Kosovan youth and the visibility of young Kosovan foreign fighters has dominated public discussion and research on the issue.[86]

In Kosovo, violent extremism has emerged in a society that is negotiating new forms of religiosity among some of its population and broader development challenges (e.g. narrowing opportunities and marginalization of its young people). Young people identified these as key drivers. Kosovo has one of the youngest populations of Europe, with 63 per cent of the population under 35 years old[87] and with 15- to 30-year-olds making up almost a third of the total population (27.5 per cent).[88] A recent UNDP study found that radicalization is not confined to any one geographic area in Kosovo, but that per capita, a higher number of recruits have come from the southeast, near the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. And many have cited the catalytic role played by a prominent network of recruiters belonging to religious extremist organizations.[89]

To date, Kosovo has not suffered any attacks from violent extremist groups. Although the young participants in this research expressed concern over radicalization and extremism among peers, they contextualized it as a smaller part of a broader set of development issues. These issues related to opportunity and empowerment on which three of the focus groups wanted to focus their attention.

Overall, participants explained that violent extremism was one part of a broader set of peacebuilding concerns for young Kosovans. They felt that while it was a serious concern, public alarm over violent extremism, spurred by the media, was leading some religious Kosovans to feel stigmatized and could overshadow larger youth priorities in Kosovo.

Political exclusion and perceptions of corruption have weakened youth civic engagement and political participation. A 2016 United States Agency for International Development (USAID) survey found that, while 60 per cent of respondents believed it was important for young people to be politically involved in Kosovo through participation in political parties, only 73 per cent of respondents noted that they had ever belonged to a political entity or youth organization.[90] The need to empower large segments of the youth population, especially marginalized youth, emerged as an important response to the challenges of violent extremism. Curricular

reform and greater awareness of diversity were also cited as critical.

Many young people in Kosovo have been visible as activists and peacebuilders, and felt that their work contributed to PVE, proposing forward-looking, youth-oriented responses addressing the drivers that have increased the vulnerability of small number of their peers.

Youth priorities

→ Realizing that violent extremism should not override broader youth priorities on development and peace

→ Addressing the sensationalization of the phenomenon by the media

→ Increasing trust between police forces and young people

→ Establishing more spaces for colla-boration and to support youth initiatives

→ Enhancing participation in decision-making by reforming youth councils

→ Improving the quality of education and embedding topics of diversity and risks of violent extremism

→ Providing opportunities for young Kosovans to expand their horizons through exchange programmes

→ Matching education to market demands to address youth unemployment

→ Investing in the re-integration of returning foreign fighters.

Youth participation challenges

→ Concerns over being perceived as Islamphobic by engaging in PVE initiatives

→ Frequent-flyers participating in programming

→ Rural and marginalized youth are not yet well-engaged in programming

→ Tokenistic youth participation in other actors' activities without investments in youth activism.

"The goal of terrorism is to lead one to live in fear, and the media are playing this game and creating panic."

FGD participant

"We [the Local Youth Action Council] had PVE in our strategy before the central institutions did. We included it because we saw violent extremism as a threat, because we saw youth that was very conservative, very On media and youth agency body took us seriously. Maybe they thought 'they're young and don't know much'"

Valdrin Halimi, Youth representative in the Referral Mechanism in Gjilan/Gnjilane and former Head of the Local Youth Action Council

2.4 Key lessons for enhancing a youth empowerment approach to PVE

This section discusses six key lessons emerging from current or recent efforts at implementing PVE policy and programming with a youth lens, outlining the basis for a youth empowerment approach to PVE.

Key lessons

1 Risks and political sensitivities of PVE should be navigated carefully, in particular with respect to youth.

2 Moving from a beneficiary to a partnership model when engaging youth in PVE can increase impact and ownership and can help reduce harmful impacts.

3 Broadening and deepening the meaningful participation of young women and the most marginalized youth are needed.

4 Narrative and messaging campaigns targeting youth have shown limitations.

5 Designing and implementing comprehensive initiatives, projects and programmes, linking PVE to the Youth, Peace and Security agenda are critical to strengthening youth agency.

6 One of the most fundamental but under-invested areas of work is ensuring young people's systematic participation in decision-making and governance.

Lesson 1: Risks and political sensitivities of PVE should be navigated carefully, in particular with regard to youth.

All development and peacebuilding initiatives carry risks. This is especially so when this work is being carried out with vulnerable or marginalized groups. The nature of PVE work, however, carries an additional set of risks, which the emerging literature in the field and our FGDs suggests can be especially high for young people. As seen above, the majority of survey respondents cited "risks and political sensitivities" as one of the key challenges for youth meaningful participation in the prevention of violent extremism.

Significant risks can extend to the personal safety of the youth participants in projects. The cases of Yemen and Pakistan, in particular, showed how young people engaging in PVE advocacy, or even just promoting alternatives, can be directly threatened. Risks can also come from state institutions. In some cases, the C/PVE discourse has been used as a way of cracking down on political opposition, civil liberties and human rights. Young people who engage in PVE can therefore come under increased surveillance and risk arrest, injury, and in some cases, death. Counter-productive state measures with young people trying to respond to violent extremism can therefore further undermine trust, as well as create fear and resentment.

"…every organization that works on religious extremism is at high risk due to possible repercussions."

Representative from the Advocacy and Resource Training Centre, Kosovo

The stigmatization of beneficiaries of PVE policy and programming is also a common challenge. As a recent UNDP guide on PVE monitoring and evaluation explains with respect to targeting:

A narrow focus can carry the risk of stigmatization for programme participants and miss those potentially on the cusp of vulnerability. It can unwittingly raise the profile of the initiative, and risks provoking a hostile response from VE organizations and/or the wider community…Taking a broader approach, rather than 'capturing' those on the fringes of risk, is also complicated and can miss focus on those who actually need the intervention or support.[91]

Noting some of these risks, one survey respondents belonging to a youth-led organization from North Africa explains that PVE initiatives tend to be seen as negative by youth and that peacebuilding is a term youth prefer, which is much more positive.

Because PVE projects have been frequently designed to address specific communities or young people within them, some of these initiatives have risked associating otherwise peaceful individuals or groups with violent extremism, promoting negative stereotypes and compounding young people's overall marginalization. Even well-intentioned approaches to youth engagement that are either patronizing or that have an overly narrow focus on the vulnerability of "at-risk" youth, who are possibly already at the receiving end of hard-edged security responses, can have a stigmatizing effect. As a result, they can deepen suspicions and mistrust, and can siphon already limited resources away from more productive asset-based, empowering approaches to youth and PVE. Care also needs to be taken that programmes do not create frustration if they are closed to others who might not fit the participation criteria, and that they do not simply reproduce patterns of privilege within communities and between young people.

In less dramatic circumstances, young people and youth organizations who participate in government- sponsored PVE initiatives might fear the perception of co-optation and the loss of credibility and local support.[92] It is not that such partnerships are not important, but rather, that partnerships and joint objectives should be selected after careful consideration of the possible risks. By leaving implementation in the hands of national or local partners, including youth partners, institutional actors such as the United Nations can shift the risks to them, and care is needed here as well.[93]

Finally, PVE work can also carry additional risks for the development actors. Many development actors have chosen to work explicitly on PVE and label their projects as such. However, other actors, working in sensitive contexts, have sought to address the drivers by purposefully not labelling their projects as PVE. Nevertheless, an

"I don't want to get involved. Any youngster like me shouldn't get involved…. It's best to stay quiet and stick to yourself."

FGD participant, Pakistan

explicit or implicit focus on PVE can sometimes lead to an unintentional skewing of project priorities to meet a growing donor or government demand for action for PVE, at the expense of local needs. Some of the key informants for our case studies feared that this was already occurring in their own contexts. In this vein, a young survey respondent working in Eastern Europe and Balkans explained, "youth want to see C/PVE programming as part of larger development programming. There's a fear that C/PVE programming could securitize youth empowerment."

There are significant tensions and challenges relating to youth meaningful participation in PVE. These challenges extend to questions of whom to engage, when, how, and under what circumstances. The way in which projects are framed is also important. There are no easy solutions to many of these dilemmas, yet regardless of the specific approach taken, initiatives need to be highly attuned to the programmatic risks for PVE initiatives in contexts in which they operate. A key lesson here is that beyond focusing on PVE dynamics and drivers, policymakers and practitioners must also look at current patterns of youth marginalization and community tensions, which might be affected as unintended consequences of the initiative.

Lesson 2: Moving from a beneficiary to a partnership model when engaging youth in PVE can increase impact and ownership, and stave off harm.

The fundamental weakness in PVE responses is that young people are generally still insufficiently consulted, engaged and supported to participate in PVE policy and programming. Although most practitioners have relied on a 'dual track' of youth participation, by working with youth organizations, movements and networks and at-risk youth, the survey finds that most young people are engaged as beneficiaries of projects designed without them, and the majority of survey participants cited the presence of significant barriers for genuine partnership with young people on PVE.

Stakeholder engagement and consultations has been recognized as a fundamental principle of good practice in PVE policy formulation and programming and are thus increasingly necessary to capture local dynamics of violent extremism and to ensure that interventions do harm, as well as to ensure local ownership around responses.[94] This is a view shared by young people: 70 per cent of youth actor respondents believed that one of the top reasons for including young people in PVE programming (compared to 51 per cent of non-youth actors) was that youth involvement has a greater effect. Different approaches to youth participation will be suitable depending on the context, but in order to move from a beneficiary-based model to a partnership-based model there is a need to: increase youth consultations and participation, especially with marginalized youth; invest in more sustainable participatory programming and policy approaches geared toward all young people; and to concretely support youth organizations, movements and networks in peacebuilding and PVE work.

Annex II presents different modes of youth participation – from consultation to youth-led initiatives – and outlines their specific benefits and their trade-offs.

The importance of systematically and meaningfully consulting with young people in PVE

There is evidence that stakeholder consultations are being under-utilized with respect to PVE policy and programming.[95] The global survey indicates that this is an especially problematic trend with regard to youth. Fifty-six per cent of youth actors cited the lack of youth consultation as a fundamental challenge to youth participation in PVE. This is a serious gap to address; PVE policies and programmes that do not carefully and deliberately engage young people in their formulation can end up being ineffective or doing harm.[96] PVE programmes are being implemented in many societies where young people, especially those from minority groups, are already marginalized. When young people are only approached as targets or beneficiaries of programming, these programmes can further stigmatize them and the groups to which they belong, and compound the exclusions they experience both locally and nationally.

Decisions over violent extremism can exacerbate young people's marginalization by sidelining their own development priorities and agency. In West Africa, for instance, UNDP colleagues interviewed as key informants for this research described how, due to concerns with violent extremist traffic across its borders, authorities in one state shut down all commerce coming across the border, even although this was the main source of livelihood for many of the young people in the community. This response to violent extremism, which was ostensibly implemented to protect the community and its young people, was made without consultation and only resulted in heightened frustration and resentment toward the government. While the border closure might have been necessary, had the government consulted with the population, especially the community's young people, there could have been local buy-in on the decision, and alternatives to the lost livelihoods could have been considered.

"While the majority of projects are oriented on skills development and foster inter-ethnic cooperation through sportive, cultural and other activities, there is no platform so far that would continuously enable young people to share their needs, concerns and proposals in a constructive way."

Kosovo Youth Assembly (2017).

Building youth resilience should be premised on youth participation, especially since they live under the influence of violent extremism in their communities. Although it has now become clearer across the PVE field that context matters with respect to drivers, this attention has yet to be balanced with equally sophisticated youth stakeholder mappings, context and conflict analyses premised on youth participation. [97] As one researcher studying resilience observes:

If we really want to identify and support resilience in communities under threat, we cannot do so from a distance. We need to listen to and observe its residents and learn about its history, culture, social structure, values, needs, resources, and daily experiences, in order to determine precisely what resilience means for them. Any workable approach to resilience depends on this granularity.[98]

This is even more important when approaching young people's role in PVE. As one respondent from a youth-led organization from Western Africa explains: "The root cause of conflicts need to be understood before attempting to address them. Most programmes targeted at combating extremism are carried out superficially, without engaging the stakeholders in the issue." Systematizing consultations with young people to ensure that they can voice their concerns and priorities should be a priority for PVE policy process and projects.

A rider to this lesson, however, is that participation needs to be connected to a sense of efficacy and the ability to influence outcomes, rather than a tick-the-box exercise. For example, a 2013 USAID review of projects in Kenya found that those that included participation components in addition to economic interventions had a greater impact. The participation components included actions such as town hall-style meetings, public debates and inter-faith dialogues. But the quality of the participatory components mattered. Even though participants were able to engage with authorities, there was a felt disconnect between dialogue and action among youth participants. The review suggested that in such cases, "more emphasis needs to be placed on working with authorities to be more responsive to youth priorities and open improved channels of communication and dialogue".[99]

In addition to consultations, there are various ways that young people can participate in research and data collection in order to shape PVE priorities. Some of these steps include investing in youth-led research on specific PVE issues, and involving young people in context assessments, youth-led research, youth-led FGDs and perception surveys with affected communities. Their inputs are key to understanding the drivers of violent extremism and the native sources of resilience among communities, as well as the role that young people are playing and can play as peacebuilders in their contexts.

There is still a need to enhance youth participation throughout PVE project cycles

The motivation and enthusiasm that many young people can bring to development programming and PVE can only be harnessed and sustained if there is a high degree of trust and confidence that their participation will have an influence. This sense of ownership has been shown to be critical for the success of violence reduction programmes more generally.[100] The principle of meaningful participation cuts across all other key areas identified as promising practices in this report.

Peacebuilding initiatives any require high levels of trust. Due to the often politicized, risky and sensitive nature of the issues around PVE, high levels of trust are vital for safe and productive engagement. The survey found that 44 per cent of youth actors responded that mistrust between young people and other actors represented one of the most significant challenges to youth meaningful youth participation in the prevention of violent extremism.

Individuals and communities must believe that their participation is being treated seriously and may have a meaningful influence. They must also understand that the process is open and transparent. It is important for development actors, policymakers and other practitioners not to begin with the assumption that young people are de facto interested in participating in their initiatives. This trust-building has found to be especially important when working with young people, especially those who might already be experiencing levels of marginalization or vulnerability.[101] The FGDs, for example, revealed that young people are sometimes sceptical about the value-added of peacebuilding skills initiatives that are not linked to the possibility of exercising these skills in a meaningful way. Many were also sceptical that the initiatives might not lead to further opportunities for participants or felt that were designed as short-term ('one-off') engagements with little follow-up.

"Trust young people. In a field reserved for 'experts', a group of young people decided to come together and delivered a thorough, research-based document for their fellow youth as well as policymakers and educators. My Director trusted two 25-year-olds who went out and mobilized their colleagues from across the world…Guidance is good, but remember, the more you become the 'experienced expert', the more you become disempowering."

Survey respondent, United Nations

Youth participation throughout the project cycle, from designing and implementing, to monitoring initiatives, if open and transparent (even if budgets are limited), is an important way that actors can boost interest and promote more empowering approaches in the course of their initiatives and ways of managing expectations when budgets are limited. It also critical to ensure that deliberate outreach strategies are used so that the profiles of young people engaged in programmes do not replicate existing patterns of division and exclusion within youth populations. As one respondent belonging to a youth-led organization in the Middle East explains, many young people "feel disengaged and talked down to in many of the programs that exist here… engaging youth directly and empowering them as decision-makers prior to the drafting of programming makes them feel more invested in projects and leads to better buy-in overall."

Including young people in PVE project cycles can catalyse the promotion of greater youth participation in governance and decision-making (discussed below), especially when these projects have a direct bearing on the design, review and implementation of NAPS and sub-national plans of action on PVE.
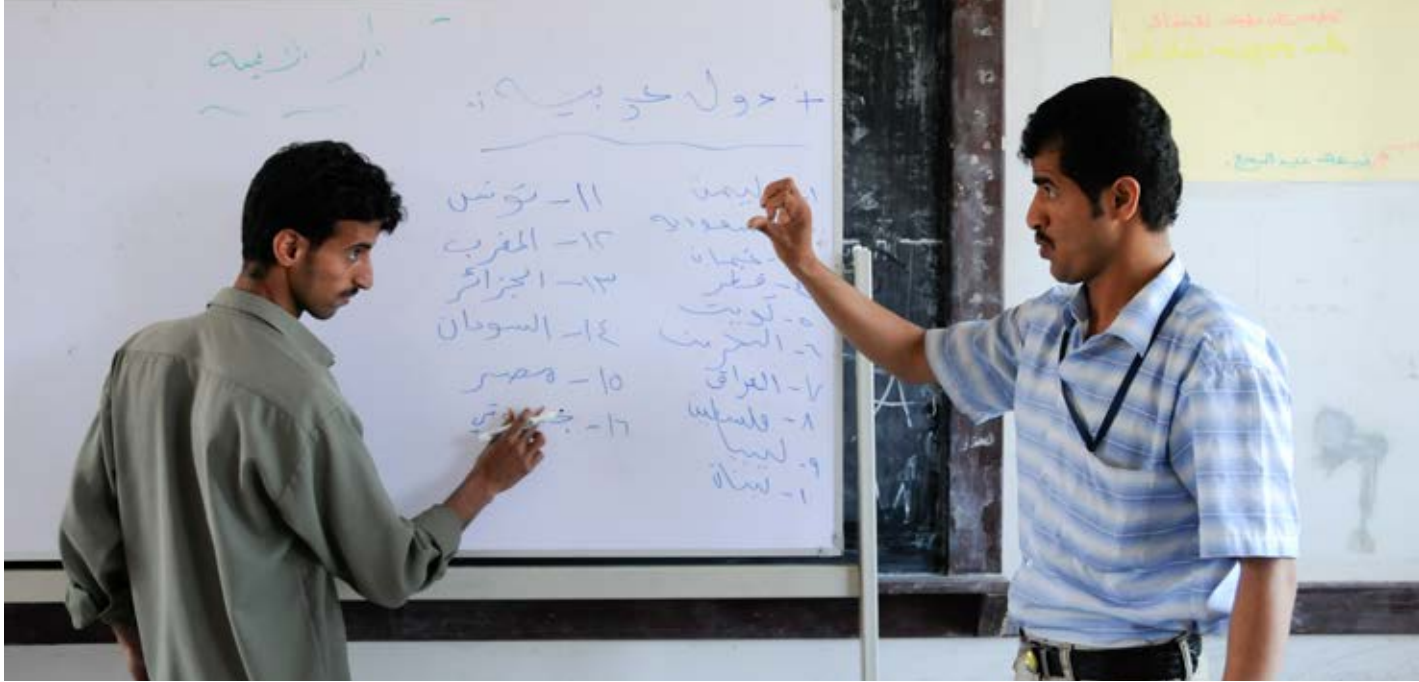
Opportunities for working with youth organizations, movements and networks remain untapped

Youth organizations, movements and networks, when engaged as partners, can be accelerators and multipliers in PVE. They can reach more diverse and hard-to-reach groups; in some contexts, they can have greater influence and credibility among their peers than do adults. In addition, they often have communication and mobilization skills, and can define and expand youth and community priorities while working in places that other actors might not be able to reach. Moreover, they can manifest positive forms of resilience under difficult circumstances, often being on the ground where other actors might not be found. And as shown above, there is evidence that they are engaging priority youth groups that other actors might not necessarily be engaging to the same degree.

Partnerships with youth organizations, networks and movements should seek to address both the structural and operational barriers to their meaningful participation. It is essential to ensure that youth actors are part of multi-stakeholder efforts to coordinate around the agenda, that they have access to funding opportunities, and can benefit from capacity development, including the type of monitoring and evaluation tools that will allow them to refine and promote their initiatives.

Strengthening coordination among actors around the agenda is an important way to disseminate best practices, build capacity for youth organizations and ensure that flexible funding modalities accessible to youth organization are established. One example is the Search for Common Ground initiative in the Lake Chad Basin, where youth organizations were provided with seed funding to implement PVE initiatives in their contexts, together with training and technical support in project management, financial administration and reporting to ensure project success. Inclusive PVE processes and platforms and decision-making on PVE are also needed to ensure that young people can influence policies, share knowledge and ensure that their priorities are integrated into institutional action.

"…as pressures on community-based organizations increase and the issues faced by our society become more complex, the idea of cross-organization partnerships can hold much promise. Through partnerships we can contribute our part and reap the benefits of others' efforts. We can accelerate learning and distribute skills and knowledge. Also, we can add depth and breadth to our community impact".

Young peacebuilder, Mogadishu, Somalia
Source: UNOY Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground, Mapping a Sector

Lesson 3: It is necessary to broaden and deepen the meaningful participation of young women and the most marginalized youth.

Young people are not a homogenous group. A crucial step in improving youth participation in PVE requires understanding the character of this diversity. Yet, engagement with key groups of marginalized youth and young women has been a challenge: one in three youth actor survey respondents cited that "the right young people were still not being engaged" in PVE as a top challenge for promoting the positive role of youth in PVE. Similarly, even though 66 per cent of respondents noted that it was important to work with 'at-risk' youth, only 44 per cent were engaged in programmes. This suggests that policymakers and practitioners need to more pro-actively reach out to broader groups of young people in their PVE efforts.

Young women in particular have an important role to play in PVE, although they are frequently overlooked. As the data above suggest, they are still not being engaged at the levels that respondents believed they should be. Gender mainstreaming in programming has not always been consistent, and there are few stand-alone youth and PVE initiatives with a gender focus. It is important for programming and policies that are youth-inclusive to also be gender-sensitive, and the diversity of young women's perspectives should shape priorities. This is key to ensuring that youth-inclusive PVE policies and initiatives focus on how gender norms, culture and institutions can act as barriers to the inclusion of

young women and perpetuate harmful forms of gender identity for men and women that contribute to violence and violent extremism.

Meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding and in development, especially for marginalized groups, is one of the most powerful long-term approaches to PVE. Research reveals that existing patterns and perceptions of marginalization and inequality can be reinforced within youth populations if programmes do not engage with a diversity of youth groups, especially those that typically experience exclusion.[102] Outreach to young people can be difficult, especially to those who are most marginalized and at-risk. Consequently, PVE policies and programmes must include carefully constructed strategies to address the needs of those who do not belong to easy-to-reach groups, such as urban and elite youth. As shown above, more youth actors reported involving a broader range of groups than did non-youth actors. This indicates that youth organizations, networks and movements can act as bridge-builders by reaching out as peers to groups of young people that non-youth actors may not be able to reach.

However, as FGD participants mentioned in Pakistan, youth actors can sometimes have difficulty working across socio-economic, ethnic and religious divides.[103] As one survey respondent working for an international NGO

"From our experience, we understood that it is easier to tackle a sensitive topic like C/PVE with at-risk youth without mentioning the word violence to avoid seeming accusatory. It is best to teach them core values around peaceful cohabitation such as respect, tolerance, equity, etc. Further, each group has its own reasons for radicalizing; handling all cases without a specific approach to the core causes of their radicalization may disrupt the results. Thus, an interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach is very important."

Survey respondent, youth-led organization, Cameroon

explained, there is a "need to move beyond the 'usual characters' within the global youth movement and engage more hard-to-reach youth". This suggests that more investments are needed in capacity development, tools and sustainable approaches for both youth and non-youth actors working across divides, especially with marginalized young people.

Expanding and deepening the meaningful participation of with youth groups also requires thinking about both the full age spectrum of young people and their diverse social roles. For instance, it means considering approaches to working with adolescents and ensuring that initiatives are tailored to meet their evolving capabilities and needs. As one United Nations practitioner explains, "C/PVE programming should integrate a life-course approach, meaning that prevention should start much earlier in life."

Even as young people are frequently visible and active as students and members of NGOs, CSOs or CBOs, they may also be active in government as politicians and in public administration as well as members of political parties; they may make up a substantial share of security services; they may be members of officially sponsored bodies, such as youth councils (as in Kosovo's municipal referral mechanism); they may be members of professional organizations and religious institutions; and they may be significant actors in the private sector. In Nigeria, for instance, young politicians belonging to the Young Parliamentarians Forum have been able to act as mediators in conflict involving young people.[104]

Young people's roles qua youth in many of these additional sectors are rarely captured in research and peacebuilding work, yet they represent a significant, if overlooked youth group that can be more actively engaged in multi-stakeholder PVE approaches.

Lesson 4: Narrative and messaging campaigns targeting youth have shown limitations.

The survey shows that the most common initiatives have involved youth-focused advocacy and awareness raising as a response to violent extremism. The role of youth in advocacy has proven to be a good entry-point into work on PVE initiatives and, in many instances, can offer less risky ways of promoting youth ownership of projects. In fact, the survey indicated that, across the board, the most common types of initiatives were online and offline advocacy.

These advocacy efforts have frequently focused on promoting different forms of counter-/alternative messaging and narratives with the aim of dissuading young people from being lured by the appeals of violent extremist ideologies across a variety of media, such as social and traditional media as well as face-to-face.[105] Literature on counter-narratives and messaging have underlined the importance of working with credible messengers, tailoring messaging to specific audiences, and avoiding stigmatizing communities.[106] Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence that counter-narrative campaigns as implemented by the international community have either been ineffective or can have adverse effects, suggesting that grassroots and local campaigns led by young people might have a better chance at succeeding.[107]

"Our people don't know what social media is but they know who visited them and helped them out."

Survey respondent, local youth-led organization, Eastern Africa

While online advocacy campaigns are the most common types of initiatives that respondents reported being implemented in their contexts, the survey shows that most respondents have been favouring offline advocacy engagement (or combining online engagement with offline engagement, as the examples above show). Indeed, this is a significant and promising trend, considering that the evidence shows the importance of face-to-face and sustained dialogues with for vulnerable individuals, including with leaders, peers, parents, professionals and communities.

Virtual platforms have not necessarily played a large role in radicalization. A recent mapping of the available literature on social media and radicalization by UNESCO found very little evidence that exposure to violent extremism in social media messaging is an independent factor driving

> **"What is needed is not to simply to go on social media and confront extremist groups, but to offer young people viable alternatives."**
>
> **Civil society activist, Yemen**

radicalization, although cross-regional and rigorous systematic studies of the impacts of social media on support for violent extremism are still lacking. Also, the mapping did not find clear links between any one social media platform such as Facebook and Twitter, and outcomes of violent radicalization. Research in Southeast Asia has shown that social media has had some enabling effect, but self-radicalization online has been rare.[108] What is more, although Internet penetration is growing, it is not universal, which highlights the importance of considering advocacy work through traditional media, as in Yemen's Abyan Youth Foundation's use of radio to broadcast throughout the region.

The evidence suggests that campaigns targeting young people are not likely to be effective unless anchored within broader institutional approaches that promote meaningful participation. The impact of campaigns limited to online messaging, one-off events or occasional workshops may not have lasting effects without consistent follow-up. Pairing online campaigns with offline engagement can have more lasting impact, but attention must also be given to addressing the underlying drivers of violent extremism.[109] Counter-narratives might seek to deflate the propaganda of extremist groups or promote more positive values, but when extremist messaging capitalizes on real grievances, these alternative messages can ring hollow. What is key for long-term prevention strategies to address violent extremism is not only advocacy, narrative and messaging campaigns, but also the promotion of genuine, attractive and viable alternatives for young people.

When advocacy approaches are selected, it is important to ensure that advocacy is not only directed toward discouraging young people from extremism, but also toward the broader community and decision-makers on the importance of positively engaging with youth. Indeed, the global survey results show that the majority of respondents believed that governments needed to be more aware of the importance of youth meaningful role in PVE. Key Lesson 6 discusses potential avenues for enhanced collaboration between young people and decision-makers.

Lesson 5: Designing and implementing comprehensive initiatives, projects and programmes, linking the PVE Agenda to the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda one are critical to strengthen youth agency.

Although employment and livelihoods programmes are intrinsically important, there is little evidence to support the assumption that they significantly reduce support for political violence and violent extremism. Material conditions and considerations do play a role in recruitment and support, yet, on the whole, the evidence shows that this is rarely the sole or decisive factor in recruitment.[110] Rather, the drivers of extremism often tend to be connected to issues of status, meaning and empowerment. This suggests that there is promise in employment and livelihood initiatives designed in ways that can holistically address young people's needs.

Available evidence on the impact of PVE projects and programmes shows that multi-sectoral PVE initiatives, especially those aimed at promoting young people's independence and agency, have been more successful at meeting project objectives. For instance, a Mercy Corps study showed that education initiatives combined with youth-led community action projects have a better chance at promoting stability and reduce violence. These civic engagement activities when combined with formal education increase young people's sense of being able to effect change through non-violent means. As the authors note:

[school] plays a critical role in creating an environment where youth are engaged in learning, and feel less isolated and excluded. However, this by itself does not address young people's frustrations about being unable to realize their future aspirations and ability to make a positive difference in their communities.[111]

In places such as the West Bank and Yemen, surveys have found that young people who are more civically engaged and politically aware might feel grievances more strongly associated with push factors, such as conflict, poor governance or security sector abuses, and can interpret them as injustices.[112] This indicates that the connection between political participation and civic engagement, and decreased support of violence is not necessarily straightforward. Rather than

suggesting that these types of initiatives should not be invested in, these findings underline the need to establish a connection between participation and efficacy, and also to more deliberately incorporate peacebuilding approaches into existing ones.

A crucial lesson that emerges from available evidence PVE policy and programming is the benefits of adopting a more comprehensive youth, peace and security approach. Enhancing the role of young people as peacebuilders can be an important strategy for both micro- and macro-level PVE efforts. A baseline report for a youth leadership project in Somalia found that even if young people were more likely than other groups to engage in violence, those who were civically involved were less likely to endorse political violence.

In a similarly counter-intuitive finding, the Mercy Corps research found that youth who felt that they had more economic opportunities were at greater risk of engaging in and supporting political violence. This prompted Mercy Corps to adopt and integrate peacebuilding approaches into its programme, as well as more 'hands-on' practical experience into the civic education component.[113]

Sports and recreation initiatives are frequently implemented in the context of PVE based on the theory that they can create positive socialization experiences; there is no firm evidence to date that these initiatives alone play a role in "shaping 'alternative pathways' and identifications for vulnerable youth".[114] However, there is evidence that these initiatives, when paired with training in conflict resolution, inter-faith encounters and other peacebuilding components, can act as positive socialization experiences that enhance both in-group bonding and increased appreciation of diversity across lines of difference.[115]

Education initiatives, whether on education policy, curricular reform, teacher training and formal/informal work with students, are a key area for promoting critical thinking, global citizenship and respect for diversity for PVE. As the case study in Pakistan in particular shows, schools are important sites where young people debate on violent extremism and where

they have perceived important opportunities for promoting critical thinking and the values of peace. Therefore, these types of initiatives represent a genuinely preventative and long-term approach to PVE across contexts. As a UNESCO guide for policymakers on violent extremism and education explains:

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.[116]

Yet, as the survey indicates, educational approaches to PVE might still not be common; this is an important gap to be addressed.

UNSCR 2250 calls on Member States to promote young people's role in peacebuilding and addressing the conflict-related drivers of violent extremism.[117] Many youth-inclusive PVE initiatives are extensions and adaptations of peacebuilding and development projects, and indeed, for many of the survey respondents, peacebuilding work was perceived as having a direct bearing on PVE. This was the case in Yemen, where

the conflict has been the central driver of violent extremism. FGD participants considered young people important actors in helping bring peace and stability to Yemen and called for participation in future iterations of the formal peace process and in TRAC-II initiatives.[118] They noted that it was especially critical for young people's activism to feel that they had a say and impact on the future settlement of their conflict.

Therefore, it is important to see youth participation in PVE through a Youth, Peace and Security lens to ensure that young people are supported to play a role as peacebuilders in their communities through funding, capacity development and partnerships. The Youth, Peace and Security agenda encompasses a broad range of youth priorities in participation, safety, development and empowerment. Therefore, it is equally important that these other priorities are not sidelined and that the agenda is not limited to responding to violent extremism.

"We don't employ a holistic approach. United Nations and World Bank, and everyone does their own work. The Federal Government does its own work; the provincial government does its own work. Until we do everything together, it won't work. Even if it doesn't cause more damage, it doesn't help."

Young peacebuilder, Pakistan

Lesson 6: One of the most fundamental but under-invested areas of work is ensuring young people's systematic participation in decision-making and governance.

Youth participation in decision-making is one of the most powerful tools in long-term and sustainable PVE efforts. Engaging with governments and finding ways to ensure that young people have a voice in decision-making and policy on PVE, when possible, can be an important avenue to ensure that responses to violent extremism take into account youth priorities and are calibrated to their and their community's needs. As a 2013 USAID study notes:

Controlling for other variables, the more a political system restricts civil liberties, the more is it unresponsive to citizens' demands, and the more it constricts opportunities for open, broad-based political participation, the more vulnerable to violent extremism it seems to be. Exclusionary regimes that violate civil liberties easily can feed the belief that violence represents the only viable option for bringing about genuine political change.[119]

Indeed, both the global survey and the FGDs identified youth participation in decision-making and engagement with governments as a key priority.

The report has showcased the way in which many young people have taken direct action in response to the influence of violent extremism in their context. Fundamentally, however, international, national and local policy priorities and investments are the result of governance processes. Yet, the majority of young people still do not have adequate representation nor access to the institutions where decisions that will affect them are made.[120] As seen above, the global survey shows that there have not been many PVE initiatives aimed at boosting young people's engagement through political participation and working with them to shape policy and legal frameworks. Less than a quarter of respondents reported that youth-focused policy change initiatives were being implemented in their contexts.

This represents a significant policy and programming gap that must be addressed. There is need, therefore, to consider ways of fostering and establishing sustainable mechanisms at all levels to institutionalize youth representation and voice in shaping local, national and international PVE-relevant priorities. It is important to ensure not only that there are strong and representative mechanisms for youth participation, but also that state officials have the incentives, skills and capacities to effectively engage with them.

"Listening to the voices of young people not only provides a deeper understanding of what motivates them, but also what they envisioned for themselves, their fears, concerns, hope and dreams. Enabling young people to be central to policy is vital to ensure their participation and engagement."

Survey respondent, youth-led organization, Eastern Africa

Promoting dialogue between young people and governments

Opening up avenues for greater institutional participation in PVE will require working with governments and decision-makers. The majority of survey respondents (78 per cent) indicated that governments still need to be more aware of the importance of youth participation in PVE. Youth-government partnerships for PVE can take a variety of forms and can be used to promote stronger collaboration on issues such as sustainable development, education, social cohesion and employment.[121] Government actors should consider how young people's voices can be better institutionalized in decision-making for PVE and also for its own sake. A range of existing policy frameworks can provide important entry-points for crystalizing advocacy efforts and sparking dialogue on the institutionalization of the voice of youth in decision-making.

The practical entry-points for advocacy, partnership and action to institutionalize the voice of youth on issues related to PVE will vary by context. Concretely, different channels can be used to ensure that young people have platforms to interface with governments on these issues. These include youth mechanisms and councils, youth parliaments, advisory boards, funding mechanisms such as grants to youth organizations, and reserved spots for youth representatives within municipal bodies, public ad-

ministration (as in Kosovo's Referral Mechanism) and schools.[122] The challenge, however, is to institutionalize youth participation and to move beyond ad hoc involvement of handpicked individuals. This was a particular challenge noted by one survey respondent from eastern Africa, who explained that many young people are "left behind by government officials…they select only urban youths, sons of politicians and business moguls". Therefore, it is critical that increased collaboration is premised on more inclusive, consistent and representative participation of a broad swath of youth groups while specifically ensuring that the voices of the most marginalized and vulnerable are heard.

Political institutions are not monolithic. Due to the political economy of governments, which include differentiated and overlapping ministry mandates, decentralized authority (especially at the sub-national and local level) and the role of personalities, there are various possible champions and entry-points for trust-based collaboration between young people and governments for PVE. Young politicians and young people in public administration might be engaged as government advocates for opening spaces for young people's participation in these issues. Working with governance institutions at the local level can be important pathways for institutionalizing the voice of youth. As one survey respondent working for the United Nations internationally notes:

There is a need to find new, unexpected, entry points and connections…for example, what is the role of youth as decision-makers in local governments (e.g. municipalities)? They can anchor youth perspectives on PVE in local decision-making rather than letting them hinge on the continued flow of projects and internationally led initiatives that depend on continued funding.

Actors navigating political sensitivities and constraints might find it entry-points with willing institutional counterparts at different levels to be more pragmatic. For instance, in some cases it might be easier to work at the municipality level and to organize regular local consultations with young people with political leaders on community issues. This can help address some of the more context-specific drivers affecting communities. In the FGDs, young people explained that youth-friendly spaces, such as local youth centres and recreation facilities, were in some cases neglected or in others, under pressure from extremist influence. Working

together to address local issues such as these can in some cases represent constructive ways for young people and governments to address context-specific drivers. In other cases, however, working at the local level might present its own set of challenges, for example, where local norms and institutions make it very difficult to promote youth inclusion. Here, actors may find it useful to shift their advocacy to promote youth inclusion in PVE to the national or regional levels.

Regardless of the avenues and the strategies adopted, the goal of youth participation in decision-making should not only be to incorporate young people into existing institutions and practices, but rather, to also transform the way institutions operate in order to ensure that they are more open and responsive to young people's needs, i.e. that they systematically listen, engage and take into account their priorities. This kind of transformation is ultimately needed to address the forms of exclusion and marginalization of young people that limit their development prospects and help fuel extremism.

FIGURE 18.

Which, if any, do you believe are the most important policies and/or legislative tools for responding to violent extremism in your context? (184) (%)
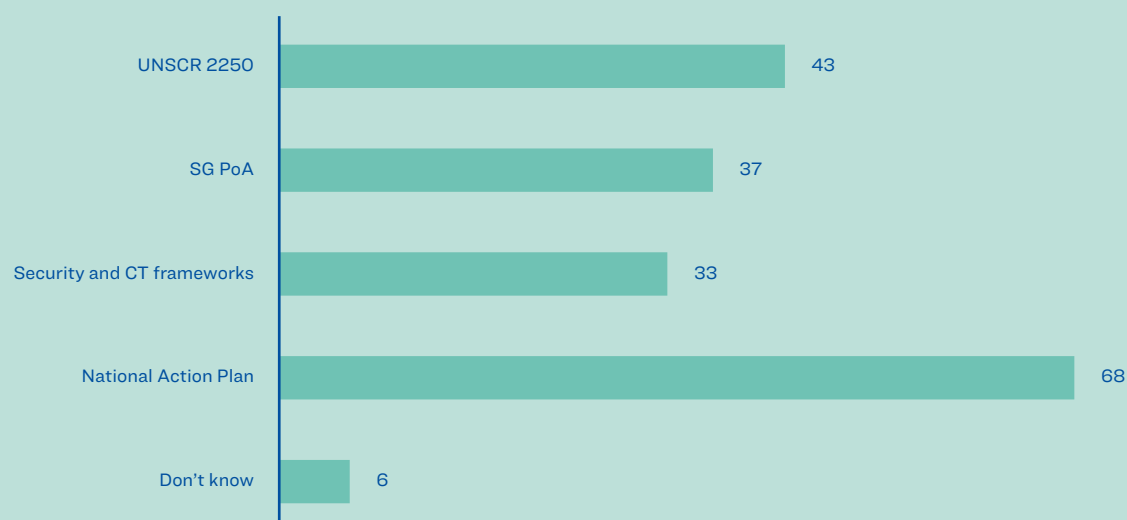
TABLE 4.

National PVE Action Plans – number of references per theme

Country	Gender	Women	Youth & Adolescents	Civil Society	Media
Finland	0	0	24	0	10
Burkina Faso	0	5	15	28	20
France	0	3	25	4	14
Denmark	0	2	60	13	24
Norway	0	0	25	11	6
Kenya	2	0	11	14	15
Switzerland	9	24	20	14	9
Somalia	1	13	14	18	4
Morocco	0	3	24	2	1

Source: Fransen (2017: 9).

Youth participation in national (and local) action plans and strategies on PVE

One of the most obvious entry-points for promoting youth participation in policy and decision-making in PVE is through NAPs and national strategies on PVE. The development of these plans and strategies, and the design and roll-out of policies at the sub-national and local levels provide key opportunities to consult and institutionalize youth participation and priorities. In fact, most survey respondents (68 per cent) identified NAPs on PVE as the most important tools for responding to PVE in their contexts.

NAPs and national strategies on PVE guide institutional PVE priorities, investments and actions. And these in turn will also shape the way in which governments engage young people on the issue. Indeed, there is evidence that it is especially important to ensure that young people's priorities are integrated into NAPs. A recent review by the Women's Alliance for Security and Leadership (WASL) of nine NAPs showed that "Youth and Adolescents" were one of the most commonly referenced themes across countries and that many of these NAPs were taking narrow sectoral approaches to the issue (see Table 4).

Many of the NAPs on PVE that mention youth are focused on education and employment, and call for more research for understanding the drivers of youth into violent extremism.

With respect to education initiatives, for example, the examined NAPs focus mainly on promoting tolerance through interactions with different religions or cultures, and developing critical thinking and media literacy skills.

The WASL analysis suggests that many NAPs are still taking a narrow, sectoral approach with respect to youth: "NAPs do not propose a comprehensive approach to address the lack of employment opportunities for youth beyond vocational skills training and increasing the range of civil service activities."[123] While education and employment are indeed priority areas for PVE, NAPs that cordon off youth and PVE issues into a few discrete sectors and that do not engage young people in formulation and implementation might not be able to meet the full challenges posed by the full range of drivers and might contribute to further marginalization of young people. Indeed, few of the NAPs studied mention young people's role as potential implementers of the policy. However, there are promising examples of youth-inclusive NAPs that call for expanding the range of young people's contribution: the NAPs of Denmark, Finland and Norway's seek to involve young people in national dialogues and debates and Switzerland's NAP seeks voter participation and reform of the justice system for youth, addressing young people's holistic needs in addition to provisions on employment and education.

A key priority going forward should therefore be to ensure that national policies on PVE not only identify young people (or at-risk young people) as targets, but also have pro-active ways of consulting and engaging them in their full diversity. They should seek to promote integrated, multi-sectoral approaches based on youth empowerment and partnerships with young people. This requires, ideally, listening to, consulting and involving young people in the design, implementation and monitoring of these policy frameworks. Indeed, for NAPs to genuinely reflect the needs and priorities of young people, they must promote and foster ownership across a wide range of youth groups and organizations, including young women's organizations and civil society at large.

In addition to ensuring that youth responses meet their holistic needs, including the most vulnerable among them, it is also important from a youth perspective that NAPs more comprehensively address other thematic areas, especially concerning women, gender and civil society. As the WASL report notes:

None of the NAPs address the gendered dimensions of "youth and adolescence" even though the experiences of young men and women are quite different vis-à-vis exposure and recruitment into extremist movements, and their involvement in PVE and initiative that foster positive alternatives.[124]

PVE engagement through the Youth, Peace and Security agenda

Given that the root causes of violent extremism are ultimately linked to the long-term development prospects of societies and their young people, institutionalizing the voice of youth and participation should be anchored in young people's overall social and political inclusion at all levels. Promoting youth participation in peace and security (through UNSCR 2250) can be an important and potentially less sensitive entry-point for institutionalizing the voice of youth. In many contexts, launching, implementing and mainstreaming UNSCR 2250 can serve as an important catalyst for engaging young people in broader policy-oriented conversations on youth priorities in PVE on the basis of a positive approach to their role in peacebuilding.

As reflected in the survey, throughout the FGDs and in the literature, trust deficits that may exist between governments and young people can sometimes make it difficult to engage exclusively on PVE. Entering a space that is already highly securitized can also bring young activists and youth organizations, movements and networks under increased surveillance and puts pressure on civic space. Moreover, there are concerns that the PVE agenda can be manipulated to crack down on human rights and freedoms, civil society, minority groups or legitimate political opposition. Actors seeking to promote the role of young people in PVE need to be attentive to both the opportunities and the risks; yet, government actors might be unaware or unsure of how to engage them constructively on this issue. Government strategies and advocacy campaigns can help promote constructive collaboration in this regard, including, in some cases, by basing the discussion on agendas that might carry less sensitivities, such as the SDGs or UNSCR 2250.

Indeed, UNSCR 2250 was cited as the second most important tool in responding to violent extremism in contexts by survey respondents. Nevertheless, greater localization of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and more discussion on its links with PVE are required. Indeed, 58 per cent of respondents at the international level considered UNSCR 2250 the most important framework for addressing PVE, followed by NAPs, at 52 per cent. By contrast, 30 per cent of respondents working at the sub-national level cited UNSCR 2250 as one of the most important tools for responding to violent extremism, while 89 per cent cited NAPs. For advocates of UNSCR 2250 and its approach to the proactive role that young people can play in peacebuilding, this suggests that greater efforts might be needed to leverage the resolution, not only at the national level, but also at the local level, where many youth organizations tend to work.

PVE through the 2030 Agenda and 'leaving no one behind'

In addition to these policy frameworks, youth participation in decision-making on development in the context of the 2030 Agenda can serve as an important entry-point for defining and institutionalizing youth priorities, especially for those who might be most marginalized (or in the language of the 2030 Agenda, those most likely to be 'left behind'). This can be an additional way to avoid some of the political sensitivities and risks associated with more overt forms of participation in PVE. As one United Nations colleague working in the Middle East explains:

Indeed, the SDGs represent many entry-points for discussing and addressing the root causes of violent extremism through a neutral and empowering agenda. Dialogues on SDG 4 on education might serve as entry-points for promoting young people's participation in decisions on curricular reform and promoting tolerance. Indeed, many actors are already finding such entry points for SDG 16, which calls for the promotion for "just, peaceful and inclusive societies", and its relevant targets.

The recommendations that follow outline a strategy for actors to come together and build on these lessons and the findings of this report to promote a more youth-inclusive and empowering PVE agenda.

Based on ten years of experience working with youth, the best approach is to use a neutral agenda to gather youth and other stakeholders. Since 2015, I have been using entrepreneurship, SDGs and Design Thinking as neutral agendas to gather youth around ideas and projects.

03

Moving forward

Policy and programming recommendations

The prevention response to violent extremism, like the issue itself, is complex and requires an interrelated and multi-pronged action, premised above all on youth empowerment as a pathway to PVE. The recommendations below are built on the findings from each of the sections above, and together outline the elements of a youth empowerment strategy in the context of PVE.

Adopting a youth empowerment approach to PVE

Systematizing youth participation and voice in policy, programmes and decision-making

Effective and empowering PVE

Young people can act as agents of change in PVE and their holistic needs are addressed

Promoting interlinked agendas ☑	Supporting research and data with, on and by youth ☑	Engaging in advocacy on positive role and priorities of young people ☑	Fostering outreach and engagement of marginalized youth ☑	Supporting young women's empowerment and gender-sensitive approaches ☑
Encouraging youth-inclusive governance processes, NAPs and policy frameworks ☑	Protecting civic space and enabling environment ☑	Promoting mechanisms and platforms for youth participation ☑	Investing in youth empowerment initiatives ☑	Supporting partnerships with youth organizations, movements and networks ☑

Engage in advocacy and awareness-raising on the positive role and needs of young people for PVE to secure political commitment and support.

→ Invest in advocacy to promote the role of young people as positive agents of change and key partners for PVE.

→ Raise awareness among governments and other institutional actors on the negative impacts of youth marginalization and exclusion from policy- and decision-making, and on the counter-productive effects of 'hard-edged' security approaches that compound these dynamics.

→ Make peacebuilding and participation touchstones for discussion on youth and PVE.

Systematize youth participation in PVE policy and programming, using a human rights-based, 'no harm' approach.

→ Ensure that youth are not treated as a homogeneous group by ensuring the prioritization of the needs and participation of the full diversity of young people across gender, socio-economic, ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds. Work towards a deeper understanding of how gender is a structural challenge in youth initiatives on PVE.

→ Conduct stakeholder analyses and invest in sustainable engagement strategies to reach and foster trust among all youth groups, including the most marginalized and vulnerable.

→ Ensure that young people systematically have meaningful opportunities to shape decisions on and implementation of PVE policies and programmes in their contexts, whether at the local, national or regional level, including by investing in platforms and processes that allow them to do so.

→ Integrate youth participation throughout PVE project and programme cycles, from design and implementation to review.

→ Conduct conflict, risk and context assessments for youth and PVE policies to ensure that they do not exacerbate youth marginalization or existing conflicts, and that they do not put young people at risk.

→ Design PVE policies and programmes that avoid stigmatizing or patronizing young people and address the issues of mistrust, risk and political sensitivities through considered decisions over labelling, partnerships and the thematic focus of initiatives.

→ Systematize and expand small- and large-scale consultations with youth groups on PVE policies and programmes, especially with intended beneficiaries or others who may be affected by them.

→ Support the implementation of PVE policies and programmes that promote youth empowerment and agency, and that address the structural drivers of violent extremism, including by expanding civic space and strengthening human rights, gender equality, accountability and inclusive governance.

Ensure the adoption of youth-inclusive and youth-focused NAPs on PVE and other national policy frameworks, addressing young people's holistic needs and establishing coordination mechanisms at the national level on youth and PVE.

→ Advocate for the adoption of NAPs and national strategies on PVE that have youth empowerment and participation as key pillars.

→ Ensure that NAPs and other policy frameworks adopt resilience-based approaches to youth and PVE, recognizing and supporting young people's positive roles in PVE.

→ Support NAPs and other policy and legislative frameworks at the national and local level that address the holistic needs of young people, avoiding narrow sectoral approaches that exclusively focus on issues such as employment, livelihoods and entrepreneurship.

→ Open institutional channels, avenues and platforms for sustainable and systematic youth representation and participation in the drafting, implementation and review of NAPs and other policy frameworks.

→ Establish mechanisms at the national level for effective and inclusive inter-ministerial coordination on youth empowerment in the context of PVE.

Establish and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships for PVE, with youth at the forefront, ensuring coordination and coherence among relevant actors.

→ Place youth organizations and actors at the centre as key collaborators in multi-stakeholder partnerships and whole of society approaches to address violent extremism at all levels, including by working with other civil society organizations, women's networks, religious leaders and institutions, the private sector, schools, multilateral actors and governments.

→ Engage young people on the basis of the principles of openness and inclusivity, and their experience and expertise, rather than as a tokenistic exercise. Support the capacity development of institutional actors and governments to respond to young people's needs and to better partner with them on the agenda.

→ Ensure that institutional actors coordinate action at all levels on the Youth and PVE agenda by fostering an enabling environment for youth empowerment, promoting youth participation in PVE, and supporting youth organizations and networks.

→ Expand youth participation across all spheres of society by engaging additional groups of young people, including young politicians, parliamentarians, journalists, teachers, students, young professionals, philanthropists, among others.

→ Consider context- and risk-sensitive partnership approaches for PVE by addressing root causes, including by using related agendas that promote youth empowerment, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, as entry-points.

→ Ensure that with the rising interest in PVE, broader youth priorities and needs are not sidelined by a narrow concern with youth and violent extremism, and that youth empowerment is not instrumentalized for PVE, avoiding mission creep in youth development projects.

Significantly invest in integrated, multi-sectoral approaches to youth empowerment.

→ Support a range of initiatives that address the holistic needs of young people in their communities and societies, including through initiatives aimed to promote their civic and political participation, economic empowerment, wellbeing and education.

→ Include learning institutions as a focus for targeted youth programming and invest in education to promote respect for human rights, diversity and global citizenship in schools and universities. This would include developing educational policies and teacher training and working with students.

→ Continue supporting youth and PVE advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns (online/offline) aimed at PVE among young people, and also expand the focus to address the social, political and conflict drivers of extremism, including youth marginalization and exclusion.

→ Do not ignore the power of traditional media (radio, print and television) when crafting advocacy strategies, especially in contexts where the digital divide remains, including among youth.

Support the action of youth organizations, movements and networks for PVE and peacebuilding.

→ Build on the innovative and creative work of young peacebuilders and activists on the ground by supporting youth organizations, movements and networks in their local, national and international efforts for PVE.

→ Continue to support and strengthen the capacities of youth organizations, movements and networks for PVE in their contexts.

→ Listen and respond to youth organizations' capacity needs in a given context on the basis of their current work, interest and comparative advantage.

→ Consider engaging young peacebuilders at all levels in addressing the conflict drivers of violent extremism by promoting their role in early warning initiatives, mediation and dialogue, peace processes and building infrastructures for peace. The early warning systems should include gender-based violence prevalence as an indicator of potential violent outbursts.[125]

→ Ensure that capacity development for youth organizations include not only thematic but also operational skills, such as project management, finance and reporting, in order to facilitate partnerships.

→ Advocate internally and externally for greater investment in long-term approaches to support youth participation and empowerment in PVE and peacebuilding, including by creating dedicated funding streams for youth partnerships.

→ Encourage the use of flexible and accessible funding for youth organizations, movements and networks for PVE and peacebuilding, including through the establishment of seed funding/small grant mechanisms.

Promote young women's empowerment and gender-sensitive youth and PVE approaches.

→ Address the gender gap in PVE approaches by funding and supporting more projects aimed at empowering young women and mainstreaming gender-sensitivity across existing PVE programming.

→ Mainstream gender in the analysis of PVE drivers across contexts, such as the marginalization of women, gender-based violence and negative masculinities.

→ Forge and enhance meaningful partnerships with young female activists, organizations and peacebuilding networks in all areas of PVE work.

Support civic space and an enabling environment for all young people for PVE, especially through interlinkages with other relevant global agendas.

→ Foster enabling legislative and policy environments for youth participation in development processes and PVE by prioritizing civic space and protecting the human rights of young people.

→ Leverage synergies between the Youth, Peace and Security agenda (UNSCR 2250), the Women Peace and Security agenda and PVE in order to promote and invest in young people's role as peacebuilders and agents of peace as a pathway to PVE.

→ Capitalize on interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs and PVE, especially by implementing SDG 16, to address the governance and conflict drivers of violent extremism.

Encourage and enable context-specific, disaggregated and youth-led data collection, analysis and research on PVE.

→ Invest in context-specific research to understand the drivers of violent extremism and their impacts on young people, as well as young people's contribution to PVE.

→ Utilize innovative participatory approaches to engage young people in research, data collection and validation on the influence of violent extremism and youth priorities in their contexts, including youth-led research laboratories.

→ Support the capacity development of institutional actors to generate and use data co-created with and collected by young people on PVE.

→ Support the development and the systematic adoption of youth-focused PVE M&E approaches and indicators to better track policy and project impacts, both negative and positive.

→ Advocate for collecting age- and gender-disaggregated data on all issues related to youth and PVE.

Conclusion

This report traced an arc that began by demonstrating how young people have already been at the heart of responses to violent extremism; it ends with concrete recommendations for implementing a youth empowerment approach to PVE. Engaging with young people as liabilities or through tokenistic gestures will not suffice as genuine preventive approach.

The fundamental message of this report from practitioners is that effective and long-term prevention approaches require the active support of, and investment in, young people's holistic development priorities, their initiatives and their participation in decision-making. To this end, all actors must redouble efforts to promote and support the positive role of young people, building on their insights, capacities and achievements. UNDP stands ready to work hand-in-in hand with partners to make youth meaningful participation and, ultimately the prevention of violent extremism a reality.

1   References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

2   Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, released in 2018 and available here: www.youth4peace.info/ProgresStudy

3   https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf

4   For instance, a recent meta-analysis by the RESOLVE Network examining over 3,000 English-language publications concluded that general programmatic PVE interventions draw on a relatively small evidence base on what works. See Douglass and Rondeaux (2017).

5   Institute for Economics and Peace (2017: 1–5).

6   UNDP (2017b: 4–9).

7   Simpson (2018).

8   Myanmar, for instance, has seen a rise lately of violence from Buddhist nationalist groups. See Finley and Templer (2017: 79).

9   See UNDP (2015).

10   See Working Definitions.

11   See Nordas and Davenport Science (2013: 1–5); and Perliger and Milton (2016).

12   Researchers have found, for example, that since violence is 'contagious', even those children who are not directly affected by it are likely to deal with its effects. The impact of indirect exposure to violence can lead to similar post-traumatic distress as that that of direct exposure. See Pat-Horenczyk et al. (2007: 66–72).

13   Estimated youth population (aged 15–24) vs. estimated total number of violent extremist fighters: Nigeria (37 million young people vs. 15,000 Boko Haram fighters), Somalia (2.1 million young people vs. 9,000 Al-Shabab fighters); Pakistan (43 million young people vs. 25,000 Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) fighters); Yemen (5.9 million young people vs. 4,000 AQAP fighters); Kosovo (326,000 young people vs. 335 foreign fighters). Estimates are based on CIA World Factbook data (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook) and the following sources: Boko Haram estimates by Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/01/boko-haram-glance); Al-Shabab in Somalia estimates by the Council on Foreign Relations (www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab); TTP estimates according to BBC (www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27133865); AQAP estimates by the US State Department (www.state.gov/documents/organization/272488.pdf); and the Kosovo Police estimates the reported number of young people aged 18–29 at 213 (UNDP Kosovo case study).

14   See Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security 6/23. There is also evidence that states with high youth populations will tend to be more repressive than other states; and Nordas and Davenport (2013: 1-5).

15   In fact, the countries that have been most affected by attacks from violent extremists also have high youth populations, who are often caught between the violence and encroachment of extremist groups and negative state responses.

16   The top ten countries impacted by terrorism not currently experiencing major conflict (10,000 or more deaths) and the percentage of under 24 populations, based on the Global Terrorism Index 2017: Nigeria, 62 per cent; Pakistan, 52 per cent; Yemen, 61 per cent; Somalia, 62 per cent; India, 45 per cent; Turkey, 40 per cent; Libya, 42.9 per cent; Egypt, 51 per cent; Philippines, 52 per cent; and Cameroon, 61 per cent. Sources: 2017 Global Terrorism Index; CIA World Factbook and Uppsala Conflict Database (http://ucdp.uu.se).

17   See Nordas and Davenport (2013). The study argues that governments with high numbers of young people, taking pre-emptive action, tend to be more repressive than other states.

18   Simpson (2018) and CIVICUS (2017). The impact of violent extremism on youth populations is rarely quantified or disaggregated in existing data sets on conflict and violence, nor is the impact of this violence on their long-term development prospects a frequent object of study. However, the impacts of terrorism from violent extremist groups tends to affect fragile countries disproportionately, with small and less diversified economies experiencing larger and longer lasting effects. Institute for Economics and Peace (2017: 82).

19   "Over the last year, GCERF has commissioned more than 8,500 baseline surveys of people in at-risk communities in Bangladesh, Mali and Nigeria. In all three countries, more than 90 per cent of individuals surveyed were aware of the threat of violent extremism and more than 50 per cent had already experienced it personally. Its impact was reported to include death, displacement, sexual violence, loss of livelihoods, family breakdown, trauma and mental stress." Institute for Economics and Peace (2017: 95). Moreover, since 2009, in northern Nigeria, the conflict with Boko Haram has killed over 17,000 people, displaced 2.2 million people, and cost an estimated 4.5 per cent of Nigeria's GDP. See Mercy Corps (2016b: 5).

20   There are 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24. However, in many contexts, the official definitions of youth include individuals up to the ages of 30 and 35, making the number of young people based on national definitions, significantly higher. See UNFPA (2014).

21   UNDP. Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS, 2016–2020).

22   Institute for Economics and Peace (2017: 63-64).

23   UNDP (2016b); Shonveld (2017: 95).

24   Institute for Economics and Peace (2017: 3, 34 and 62); Meierrecks and Greis (2013); Piazza (2006).

25   Indeed, studies of young people in conflict and post-conflict settings have yielded significant evidence of the presence of youth resilience, i.e. the ability to adapt in pro-social ways under adverse conditions. Endogenous forms of youth resilience can manifest in a range of responses from indifference and rejection to activism. And resilience factors, the assets (structural, social and personal) that help individuals and communities cope with, adapt to and ultimately resist the influence of violent extremism, can also vary. At the community level, it can involve the joint ability to tackle problems and the presence of safe spaces for young people to socialize. Finally, at the institutional level, the ability to adapt to adverse conditions can include flexibility and trustworthiness. See Justino (2018); Bellows and Miguel (2009: 1144-1157); Bauer et al. (2011); Berman (2011: 496-528); and Justino and Stojetz (2016).

26   Weine et al. (2013: 328–329) and Hayes (2017).

27   Ibid.

28   For instance, the well-known Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism (STRIVE) Global programme funded by the European Union (EU) has been explicitly built on this concept. See European Commission (2015).

29   Rosand (2016a).

30   SALTO-Youth Cultural Diversity Resource Centre (2016).

31   The Asia Foundation (2017); Rosand (2016b).

32   Dalacoura (2006).

33   SC/2178, 24 September 2014, www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/docs/2015/SCR per cent202178_2014_EN.pdf

34   S/RES/2250, 9 December 2015, www.youth4peace.info/UNSCR2250/Introduction

35   Youth 2030 – United Nations Strategy on Youth, www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-un

36   Simpson (2018).

37   Ibid, 7/23.

38   Ibid, 8/23.

39   See UNDP (2017b).

40   Weine et al. (2013: 328–329).

41   UNESCO (2017: 20).

42   Ibid, 20.

43   Youth initiatives tend to operate on relatively small budgets, which are often based on small donations. The overall level of acceptance of youth PVE and peacebuilding initiatives in different communities seems to vary. It is difficult to generalize, and this report found evidence that communities are suspicious or skeptical of youth initiatives, as was reportedly the case in UNDP's research in parts of Yemen and found to be the case in Cameroon. There is also evidence that they can be very supportive, as in Chad and Nigeria. See Ekpon (2017).

44   The range and scale of their operations can vary depending on funding. Almost one-half operate with budgets under US$5,000 per year and about one-tenth tend to operate with budgets over US$100,000 per year. Also, 97 per cent of them rely on volunteers, which include both staff and members. See United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground (2017).

45   Ibid, 21.

46   Ibid, 8.

47   While no studies have been identified that look at the benefits of using peer-to-peer work in the area of PVE, studies have shown that peer-to-peer learning is beneficial for both the student 'teaching' and the one 'learning'. See Goldschmid and Goldschmid (1976: 9–33); and Briggs (2013).

48   UNOY Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground (2017: 8).

49   Based on an analysis of over 5,000 socio-economic datasets, the Institute for Economics and Peace found that for non-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, ongoing armed conflict and state repression are significantly correlated with violent extremist acts, while in OECD member countries, the pathway to violent extremism is highly correlated with lower levels of social cohesion and low opportunities. Indeed, these dynamics not only have an outsized impact on the lives of many young people, but also have a strong bearing on patterns of influence, recruitment and support of violent extremist groups among young people. See Institute for Economics and Peace (2017: 63–64).

50   UNDP (2016b).

51   "It is increasingly recognized that the notion of simple linear relationships between potential causes (such as unemployment) and effects (such as involvement in violence) succumbs to a reality of tipping points, feedback loops, path dependencies and other complexities. In addition, pairs of variables do not interact in isolation, but instead interrelate in equally elaborate manners with a potentially infinite range of additional factors, including many of the other structural drivers, individual incentives and enabling factors list." Khalil and Zeuthen (2016).

52   UNDP Pakistan (2018).

53   Johns, Grossman and McDonald (2014: 57–70).

54   Benard (2005: 140–141).

55   Cramer, Goodhand and Morris (2016); Cramer (2010); Interpeace (2016); Fair et al. (2016).

56   In fact, in Pakistan, there is evidence that poor Pakistanis are generally more likely to have unfavourable views about violent extremist groups than those of middle-class citizens. See UNDP (2017a:5). A similar dynamic was found by UNDP's research on violent extremism in Sudan. See UNDP (2017c).

57   Yusuf (2016).

58   UNESCO (2017:32).

59   UNDP research in Africa specifically suggests that the quality of religious education can help boost resilience. See UNDP (2017: 49).

60   Pratchett et al. (2010: 25).

61   UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP, 2017).

62   In a study on former Irish Republican Army (IRA) members, interviewees cited having "instigated their violent activism after a critical incident that had precipitated a period of reflection in the potential new recruit." Fergusson, Burgess and Hollywood (2008:133).

63   Allan et al., cited in Shonveld (2018: 95).

64   Data from Search for Common Ground – Working Together to Address Violent Extremism

65   Institute for Economics and Peace (2017: 3, 34 and 62).

66   In Tunisia, for example, according to Fahmi and Meddeb (2015), a rise in violent extremism and in the number of foreign fighters has been associated with: grievances against the state for failing to include them socially and economically; renewed perceptions of corruption after the revolution; and complaints about the lack of public services.

67   Search for Common Ground (2016).

68   One possible reason for this specific divergence might be that non-youth participants, who tended to belong to larger institutional actors, interpreted "responding to violent extremism" as including counter-terrorism and hard-edged methods, and took into consideration the distinction between counter-terrorism and C/PVE when answering the question. Youth actors, by contrast, might have interpreted this question as related to C/PVE. However, the following question, which is perhaps clearer about youth-inclusive PVE programming, and C/PVE programming specifically, still shows a divergence in views.

69   See Mythen (2012).

70   Fransen (2017: 8-9); and Saltman, and Smith (2015).

71   See The Asia Foundation (2017).

72   UNDP (2016).

73   UNDP (2018).

74   United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground (2017: 45-46).

75   CIA. Yemen – World Factbook 2017. Yemen's 2006–2015 Youth Strategy officially defined young people as those aged 15–24. See Youth Policy Labs, Yemen Factsheet: www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/yemen.

76   US State Department (2017).

77   Maktary and Smith (2017).

78   Institute for Economics and Peace (2017:26).

79	Mirhamdi et al. (2015:1).
80	Siddiqa (2010).
81	Fair (2014: 259–290).
82	UNDP (2017: 6). See also Peace Direct (2017: 21): The recent Human Rights Watch Report on the police and judiciary in Pakistan notes that "Pakistan's police are widely regarded as among the most abusive, corrupt and unaccountable institutions of the state", and that "[t]he corruption and abuse endemic to the Pakistani law enforcement system are often described as 'thana culture' after the Urdu word for police station…Meanwhile, corruption, politicization and inefficiency have led to critical failings in the judicial system, weakening its ability to apply the rule of law, and allowing violent extremist groups to flourish."
83	No Kosovan undertook this travel in 2016. The Kosovo Police identified a total of 335 individuals who had travelled to the theatres of conflict of Syria and/or Iraq. This number includes 27 children, as determined by the Kosovo Police. It also includes nine individuals aged 14–18 whom the Kosovo Police does not qualify as children, who have travelled with their parents. It should also be noted, however, that the term 'foreign fighter' here is used to reflect the term widely used in the literature, but with the acknowledgment that not all those who travelled to the conflict theatre in Syria and Iraq engaged in fighting there (Xharra and Gojani, 2017).
84	Florida (2016).
85	Shtuni (2016).
86	RTK Live (2017); Knudsen (2017); Jakupi and Kelmendi (2017).
87	Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2017b: 30).
88	In Kosovo's youth strategy, 2013–2017, young people are defined as between 15 and 24, who make up approximately 19 per cent of its population. However, since this case study examines the dynamics that affect the upper and lower ranges of those undergoing transitions into adulthood, the range explored goes beyond the official definition.
89	Xharra and Gojani (2017: 21).
90	IFES (2016:6–7).
91	Romaniuk (2015: 17).
92	Ibid, 20.
93	UNDP (2018).
94	Berman et al. (2013: 512–17); Lakhani (2012); Mythen (2012).
95	Romaniuk (2015:12–17).
96	See Sommers (2015). The importance of carefully consulting and engaging the right youth stakeholders is the recurring lesson of an internal review of 15 UNDP youth peacebuilding projects in Africa, Arab States, Central Europe and Southeast Asia on civic and political engagement, employment, stabilization, and livelihoods and reintegration.
97	Kallis, Zeiger and Öztürk (2018:28–29).
98	Weine et al. (2013: 330).
99	USAID (2013a:7).
100	Berman et al. (2013:512–17). See also Scott Atran's address to the United Nations Security Council: http://blogs.plos.org/neuroanthropology/2015/04/25/scott-atran-on-youth-violent-extremism-and-promoting-peace
101	Pratchett et al. (2010:23).
102	Sommers (2015).
103	See also Micinski (2016).
104	Kemper (2018).
105	Rosand, (2016b: 20–21).
106	Ibid.
107	Hemmingsen and Ingrid (2017: 1).
108	Finley and Templer (2017: 78).
109	See Rosand (2016b; 20–21).
110	Kurtz, Tesfaye and Wolfe (2018); Justino (2009: 315–333); Krueger and Maleckova (2002:119–144).

111	Mercy Corps study showed that education initiatives combined with youth-led community action projects. See Mercy Corps (2016a).
112	Robinson (2017: 28).
113	Mercy Corps. (2013).
114	Johns et al. (2014: 60–61). This was based on an in-depth study of a 12-month, inter-faith sports and mentoring programme in Australia with approximately 60 young men aged 15–25.
115	Ibid.
116	See UNESCO (2017).
117	UNDP (2017b: 90).
118	"When most people think of diplomacy, they think of official contact between government represent-atives, also known as Track I diplomacy. Track II diplomacy, on the other hand, involves almost entirely unofficial contacts. These unofficial contacts can include dialogues and exchanges between influential non-governmental actors from different countries, designed to build trust and increase communica-tion." See www.sfcg.org/track-ii
119	See Shonveld (2018: 95).
120	Kemper (2018).
121	Search for Common Ground (2016:13).
122	Ibid.
123	Ibid, 8–9.
124	Ibid.
125	The physical security of women is one of the most important factors for predicting the peacefulness of societies. (Hudson, et al. 2009, in Saferworld, 2013).

Annexes

Thematic entry-points for youth-focused preventing violent extremism (PVE) initiatives, projects and programmes

Entry-points for PVE initiatives, projects and programmes	Common objectives	Description and example(s)
Preventing violent extremism (PVE) online/offline advocacy and awareness-raising	*Raise awareness among audiences against the appeals of violent extremism groups.*	This includes counter-narratives, alternative narratives and messages of peace and tolerance. Advocacy can take many forms, including online and traditional media messaging campaigns and leadership training, or workshops and dialogues with young people.
Sports and recreation	*Offer alternative spaces and opportunities for socialization and identity formation, bonding and bridging capital and resilience.*	This includes a variety of sports and arts activities, sometimes with added components to promote the values of fairness, diversity and peace.
Peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation	*Enable young people to act as peacebuilders to reduce the root causes of conflict and intolerance.*	Skills training should be promoted in conflict resolution and mediation; inter-ethnic and inter-cultural respect must be promoted; and dialogues and promoting platforms must be established.
Political participation	*Increase young people's role and influence in decision-making to reduce youth marginalization and mistrust, and promote a sense of ownership and agency.*	Dialogues with political representatives work with youth wings of political parties and promoting young people's role in formal political processes at the local and national levels.
Gender	*Promote gender sensitivity of initiatives, empower young women and girls in PVE, and transform the gender dynamics that drive violent extremism.*	Projects aim at supporting the empowerment of young women in their communities in a diversity of roles, integrating their PVE priorities in decision-making, and addressing violence against women and gender stereotypes. This may include their civic and political participation, and their roles as insider mediators.
Access to justice, human rights and security sector reform	*Ensure that young people are protected from abuses, feel safe, and have the ability to address grievances in order to reduce mistrust and reduce the incidence of 'tipping points" for decisions on recruitment at the micro level?*	Interactions between young people and institutions, can be improved by including the security sector through security sector reform, community policing and the monitoring of human rights violations.
Education system and policy	*Reduce the influence of violent extremism throughout the educational system and build young people's resilience.*	Actions in the education sphere aim to reduce practices and ideas that are conducive to violent extremism through teacher training, curricula reform and national education policies. These efforts target public, private and religious educational institutions.

Entry-points for PVE initiatives, projects and programmes	Common objectives	Description and example(s)
Youth-inclusive national PVE policies and frameworks	*Ensure that national PVE priorities and actions are youth-sensitive and promote empowering approaches in addressing PVE.*	NAPS and national strategies on PVE act as frameworks that guide state and stakeholder action. Initiatives in this space include youth-consultations and instituting youth representation to monitor and advise on PVE policy implementation.
Civic engagement and volunteerism	*Promote young people's positive contributions to their communities, reduce youth stereotypes and marginalization, and build young people's activism, skills and resilience.*	These activities can overlap with other types of initiatives and typically aim to involve young people in improving their communities, gaining leadership skills, and in some contexts, are provided with humanitarian assistance and basic services.
Demobilization, de-radicalization and reintegration (DDR)	*Ensure that members of former extremist groups have pathways for successful re-integration* *.*	These programmes can involve a number of activities such as skills training, mentoring and/or psycho-social support for formers. They also involve components across thematic initiatives to support socio-political rehabilitation, sometimes implemented in communities or prisons.
Employment and entrepreneurship	*Expand young people's opportunities and reduce material and social drivers of violent extremism, which include reaching adult status, and strengthening partnerships with private sector.*	Employment initiatives range from providing emergency livelihoods to improving employability and connecting young people to decent jobs. Entrepreneurship initiatives can also vary from supporting local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to social entrepreneurship.
Research	*Improve understanding of the global, regional or local dynamics of youth and violent extremism to improve policy and programming, and build individual skills and efficacy.*	These youth-focused research initiatives may also involve youth-led researchers to capture the trends and dynamics in their milieu, benefitting both practitioners and young individuals.
Peer-to-peer initiatives	*Enable young people to directly work with peer groups in reducing violent extremism.*	Many advocacy campaigns have taken the form of peer-to-peer initiatives, where young people work laterally as credible partners within their age group and engage others directly in the various spaces where they live, socialize, study and play in order to multiply the reach of initiatives.
Capacity building and support for youth organizations	*Enhance the ability of youth-led organizations to implement projects and engage in partnerships for PVE, including through inter-generational dialogue and mentoring.*	These initiatives can involve leadership training, sharing of technical knowledge, such as peacebuilding tools or grant-writing, and expanding/supporting partnerships and networks.
Working with religious institutions and leaders	*Involve religious leaders and institutions in raising awareness among young people to prevent violent extremism.*	Religious leaders and institutions sometimes act as important figures and collaborate with young people to reduce or prevent extremism in their communities.

ANNEX II.

Approaches to youth participation throughout the project cycle

	Consultative participation	**Collaborative participation**	**Youth-led participation**
Description	→ Recognizes that young people can and should be listened to, and that they have a valuable perspective → Initiated by staff → Led and managed by staff → Maintains control in the hands of staff	→ Recognizes that young people can and should influence or challenges processes and outcomes → Initiated by staff → Involves a partnership with young people → The staff-controlled initiative, but shared control over outcomes	→ Recognizes that young people can and should be in control and have agency → Initiated by young people → Young people identify issues and organize their own activities → Staff serve as facilitators → Young people control the process
Who has the power?	→ Staff have most of the power	→ Staff shares some power with young people	→ Young people have most of the power
Potential benefits	→ Predictable – the staff maintain control over process → Low threshold for participation – does not require special skills from youth beyond forming opinions and expressing themselves. Only staff will require special training on consulting young people → Efficient – can consult many youth at once	→ Relatively predictable – staff have control over which projects are initiated while youth have influence over outcomes → Young people are more hands-on and involved, increasing buy-in and ownership → There is more potential for sustained engagement	→ Transformational – young people's power deficiency is redressed and they are in power → Potential for high levels of creativity, innovation and thinking out-of-the-box → Young people have full buy-in and ownership over activities → Only the staff will require special training on facilitating and supporting engagement
Potential costs	→ Lower chance of buy-in or ownership from youth, since investment is low → Does not build the capacity of young people involved – participation is passive → Does not necessarily encourage sustained engagement → Low exposure to risk (such as retaliatory action against young people if others disagree with the outcomes)	→ Both young people and staff will need training to have adequate skills → Higher threshold for participation – young people need some level of skills and capacity → Less efficient as fewer youth can be engaged at one time → Medium exposure to risk – young people share in responsibility for outcomes	→ High threshold for involvement – young people need to have skills, capacity and confidence → Only a few youth with the skills, capacity and time will be able to participate at this level → High exposure to risk – young people have full responsibility and can be held fully accountable for the outcomes

Source: adapted from Lansdown and O'Kane (2014b)

Sample checklist on youth engagement in PVE initiatives:

→   Has the initiative been designed and created in collaboration with young people throughout the process?

→   Has the initiative mapped the different possible youth groups and other stakeholders to engage? What youth groups are engaged and how have they been selected?

→   Has the initiative carefully assessed the potential risks of youth involvement? Is programming building on existing youth initiatives and structures of engagement?

→   Is the programming addressing the needs and priorities voiced by young women and marginalized and at-risk youth?

→   Is the initiative promoting collaboration between young people and other stakeholders working on the issue?

→   Is the initiative establishing lines of support – political buy-in, capacities and funding – for young peacebuilders?

→   Is the initiative addressing PVE in the context of wider priorities of youth groups? Are there processes in place at different levels to allow for the expression of these views?

→   Is the initiative addressing the enabling and disabling factors for youth participation in decision-making on PVE – policies, frameworks and processes?

UNDP global survey on youth and C/PVE – Analytics

Total survey respondents: 207 (completion rate 70 per cent)

Total respondents answering one or more substantive questions on youth and PVE: 184

Average number of responses in the questionnaire

All respondent groups:	164
Non-youth:	112.5
Youth-led/co-led:	53

Highest/lowest number of responses in the questionnaire

All respondent groups:	184/117
Non-youth:	124/77
Youth-led/co-led:	60/40

Type of organization	No.	Percentage of the total (%)
Primarily adult organization – with youth beneficiaries/targets	67	36.41
Primarily an adult organization – with youth as collaborators/partners	47	25.54
Youth-led organization	47	25.54
Co-led organization – youth in key decision-making roles	13	7.07
Organization does not generally work with youth	2	1.09
Not applicable (i.e. I work primarily in an individual capacity)	8	4.35

Age	No.	Percentage of the total (%)
15–24 years old	19	10.38
25–29 years old	46	25.14
30–35 years old	47	25.68
over 35	71	38.80

Primary level of focus	No.	Percentage of the total (%)
Local level (sub-national or community)	39	21.20
National level	61	33.15
Regional level (cross-national)	30	16.30
International level	52	28.26
Other	2	1.09

Geographic area of focus	No.	Percentage of the total (%)
Asia – South, Southeast and Pacific	28	15
Asia – Central and East	8	4
Africa – South-central	9	5
Africa – East	19	10
Africa – West	29	16
Middle East and North Africa	20	11
Latin America and the Caribbean	8	4
Eastern and Western Europe	12	7
North America	7	4
Respondents operating internationally	44	24

Type of organization	No.	Percentage of the total (%)
United Nations	64	34.78
Multilateral (non-United Nations)	6	3.26
Bilateral cooperation agency	3	1.63
National government	6	3.26
International/regional NGO	48	26.09
National – NGO/CSO	30	16.30
Local/sub-national NGO/CSO	10	5.43
Academic/think tank	5	2.72
Private sector	2	1.09
I work primarily in an individual capacity	10	5.43
Other	7	3.80

Survey limitations

Out of a total of 184 respondents, around 64 per cent, or 117 individuals, completed the survey (62 per cent of non-youth actor respondents and 67 per cent of youth actor respondents). Due to this variation, the charts and graphs showing the survey results also list the total number of respondents for each question, and when relevant, disaggregate this figure by youth/non-youth actors.

Due to the sampling technique used and the sample size, the data have limitations of representativeness and generalizability, and therefore the results are interpreted with this in mind. However, the findings were complemented by quantitative data from other sources and qualitative findings from FGDs and interviews with key PVE practitioners working globally.

Another recognized limitation of the data is that difference there were twice as many non-youth actors than youth actor respondents. This posed a challenge to the ability to compare responses between the two groups. However, striking differences in trends within the youth actor category compared to the non-youth category, while not definitive, were taken as suggestive of important possible differences in perspectives and actions between the two groups. More sophisticated statistical analyses would be needed to ensure more conclusive comparisons and generalizability. At the very least, these differences show the possible merit of investing in more comprehensive and statistically rigorous research on these differences and the comparative advantages and differences of perceptions and actions within both groups.

Youth4Peace – Global Platform on Youth, Peace and Security

Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security – "The Missing Peace"

Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding

UNDP - Improving the Impact of Preventing Violent Extremism Programming: A Toolkit for Design, Monitoring and Evaluation

UNDP – Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace, "Youth-GPS" (2016-2020)

UNESCO - #YouthWagingPeace: Youth-led Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education

UNESCO – Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy Makers

Search for Common Ground – Transforming Violent Extremism: a Peacebuilder's Guide

Search for Common Ground – Working Together to Address Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Youth-Government Partnerships

Search for Common Ground – Youth-led Research

UNOY and Search for Common Ground – Mapping a Sector: Bridging the Evidence Gap on Youth-Driven Peacebuilding. http://unoy.org/en/mapping-a-sector/

UNOY and Search for Common Ground – Translating Youth, Peace and Security Policy into Practice: Guide to Kick-Starting UNSCR 2250 Locally and Nationally

UNOY – The Learning Curve: A Guide to Evaluation for Youth Organizations

YouthCAN – Guidance for International Youth Engagement in PVE and CVE

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