

Al-Hayat Center for Civil Society Development
Activity Brief

Roundtable on Working Solutions for P/CVE – Bringing Together Donors and Grassroots Actors



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Introduction

Violent extremism is a growing concern in Jordan, with the number of foreign trained fighters leaving the country to join groups in Syria and Iraq ranging between 2,000 and 4,500 individuals (the highest per capita in the region)⁽¹⁾.

While the Government of Jordan is preparing its National Strategy to Prevent and Counter Violent Organization, community based and civil society organizations have been engaging on the grassroots-level aiming to tackle this problem for the last couple of years. With the support of international donors, this work has aimed at preventing the growth of violent extremism in the country. Additionally, there are a number of international organizations and international agencies working in similar areas aiming to tackle the root causes of extremism in Jordanian society. Networking between CBOs and donors is, however, limited. Often the international community is not fully aware of the impact and extent of work on the ground, and only a few international organizations work with grassroots communities.

Paying heed to this gap and the impact it has had on lack of coordination and streamlining of implementation efforts, Al Hayat Center convened a roundtable session on November 14th, 2016. The session brought together donors and grassroots actors (from community based organizations across Jordan) to assess the situation on the ground and gaps in need and implementation. In total, 37 representatives of 25 different entities, including donors, international agencies and organizations, and local community-based organizations⁽²⁾, attended the session and provided feedback on the nature of their work and where they see the future of P/CVE work in the country going. As of the date of this roundtable no consultation had yet been made by the P/CVE National strategy working group with civil society.

The objectives of the roundtable were to: Map work currently being done in P/CVE; Map gaps in current implementation and donor-implementer relations; and find solutions for how to bridge these gaps and streamline P/CVE implementation in Jordan.

(1) <http://www.albawaba.com/news/4000-jordanians-are-fighting-syria-870906>

(2) Names will be included at the end of this report.

I. Mapping the Work Currently Undertaken in Jordan by local and international actors in P/CVE.

CBOs, international agencies, and donors are all conducting work on preventing and countering violent extremism at different levels. Part of the purpose of the roundtable was to map out current work being done in the field by different actors.

CBOs	International Agencies and Organizations	Donors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth and poverty; - Training of imams and wa'edat; - Youth and education; - Human rights; - Youth and democratic participation; - Volunteerism; - Dialogue; - Online love speech; - Gender equality; - Citizenship; - Enhancing private sector participation in development; - Grants for youth in development projects; - Tolerance/acceptance training; - Women's participation in democracy and PVE; - Production of articles and media clips; - Participatory theatre; - Debate; - Research; - Connecting government and civil society; - Training of students in P/CVE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support to government programs; - Youth empowerment; - Social cohesion through sports; - Research; - Technical assistance to government; - Civic and nonviolent education; - Strengthening the culture of tolerance; - Fighting organized crime; - Building the capacity of national institutes and security authorities; - Fighting extremist ideology in prisons and rehabilitation centers; - Building the capacity of trainers to deal with released returnees; - Empowering communities; - Developing youth skills and capacities; - Cross-sectoral programming; - Psycho-social support; - Community-based interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counter messaging <p>Donors are seeking to understand what is being done and what needs funding</p>

II. Problems Identified During the Session

Aside from mapping work currently being done by a variety of actors, the session aimed to allow CBOs to open up to international actors and donors about what the issues face on the ground and in implementation are. As such, the information gathered during this session will be divided not by category of actors (CBO, internationals, donors) but rather, by category of the problem itself.

1. CBO Lack of Capacity

The CBOs participating in the roundtable repeatedly emphasised that they lack the capacity to undertake large-scale or long-term projects. Capacity building is required on a number of fronts, from proposal writing to budgeting, financial capacity to long-term planning, ability to conduct research to implementation reach and provide monitoring and evaluation to the actions. It was suggested that a local “middle-man” of sorts would be of use, partnering between CBOs and donors to build their capacities and supervise their work, taking ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the project. This form of partnership would ensure to donors that projects are being implemented according to a high standard, and would benefit local CBOs by building their capacities in various different areas and providing them with implementation and networking experience according to international standards.

2. Terminology and Methodology

Although seemingly a tired trope, the need for definitions was raised numerous times during the discussion session. One participant raised the issue that talk of definitions makes it appear as though actors are lecturing their beneficiaries and colleagues, rather than being clear on the subject-matter. As such, it is necessary to agree on the use of particular terminology and definitions before diving into research and implementation. This needs to be coupled with a shared methodology to ensure consistency and sustainability of work being done under different umbrellas by different actors. That P/CVE actors have been gradually moving away from the language of P/CVE is telling. Current definitions do not fully take into account the broad scope and cross-sectoral nature of preventing violent extremism.

3. Youth

Youth are without a doubt one of the key areas that need to be addressed in P/CVE. The session showed that the approach to youth needs to be cross-sectoral, addressing all areas that affect youth life. Again and again, the fact that youth feel as though they have neither dignity nor a voice was raised. Additionally, there is a large gap between the abilities of youth and their opportunities. Many skilled artists, entrepreneurs, and athletes both outside Amman and in the capital lack the support and means to achieve their future goals, further contributing to disillusionment and a sense of helplessness. The CBOs raised the issue that most organizations and programmes directed at supporting youth are located in Amman and have neither the means nor access to connect with youth in the governorates and rural areas. This ensures that youth in rural Jordan continue to feel neglected, valueless, and forgotten. However, it was also emphasized that programmes should not only target poor and rural youth, but the urban and educated as well who are suffering from the same sentiments. Youth need to be included in decision-making, their voices and opinions need to be heard, and they need to be provided with safe spaces.

4. Lack of Coordination

Integration, comprehensiveness, and collaboration between all sectors is key. One participant suggested holding monthly or quarterly coordination meetings between donors and implementers to follow-up on projects and stay connected. Additionally, it was mentioned that not only is stronger donor-implementer coordination needed, but that more coordination is needed between donors themselves and among implementers. This is necessary to maximize the benefits and impact on beneficiaries of projects. The donors themselves pointed out that they have been struggling to identify themselves within the sphere of P/CVE for fear of delegitimizing efforts, and that the need to streamline implementation and coordinate donor engagement is imperative for the success of programmes in P/CVE.

5. Sustainability

Preventing and countering violent extremism cannot only be the “flavor of the day”, another buzzword in development politics and the drive for funding. Long-term projects on a range of all-encompassing issues are necessary, addressing not only youth but also democracy, citizenship, and political empowerment. In these initiatives, all different sectors of social

involvement and development need to be linked, and research is of great importance as it should inform the basis on which projects are developed. On this level, it is necessary to include Jordanian researchers from local universities who, as researchers, have greater access to the field and have gained the confidence of their communities. Long-term sustainability is something that has come up again and again among CBOs and grassroots level implementers. Preventing violent extremism is not a 10-month plan or project, it is multi-years (possibly even multi-decade) and requires support on all levels of human life.

6. Government Programming on P/CVE

People have very little confidence in government-implemented projects which have, to date, been more focused on security (whereas CBOs look at prevention). Additionally, it is perceived that the government itself is preventing CBOs from engaging in effective work and has repeatedly set up barriers to the implementation of community-based P/CVE projects. Furthermore, government has undertaken changes (such as to the educational curriculum) without engaging in consultation with civil society and community based actors, citizens, or teachers, resulting in a top-down process that is perceived as an imposition.

7. Education and Religion

This point was one of the most often mentioned and discussed during the session. It was pointed out that there is a gap between educational institutes and mosques, as well as a lack of respect and confidence in both imams and teachers, who were both community leaders in the past. Restoring this confidence, the CBOs believe, is key. During the session, there was a lively debate between the CBO representatives as to whether or not religious leaders were influential in countering or preventing violent extremism. While some argued that imams and wa'edat remain influential in their communities, with more than half the population seeking their guidance, others argued the opposite. Some participants felt that the influence of religious leaders is on the decline and that they are not actually key actors in the battle against violent extremism. It was mentioned, additionally, that more than 3,000 imams are running illegal mosques across the country. However, in Ma'an in particular, it was emphasized that most religious teaching is received neither in mosques nor in schools, but in publications from Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries that are circulated through the communities. Coupled with the

loss of authority of sheikh's from clans, lack of confidence in government, disconnect with schools, unregistered imams, and educational curricula that is not relevant to P/CVE, there are a lot of areas for improvement and work on the levels of education and religion.

8. Additional Points

A few remarks were made that do not fit neatly into the points mentioned above. Civil society organizations generally work on a wide spectrum of issues, meaning that they cannot specialize in one area or another. Additionally, the same people tend to join all activities that a particular CSO or CBO implements, meaning that the projects affect the same people repeatedly but do not necessarily reach all sections of society. Finally, the role of mothers and role models in society and in project implementation was emphasized.

III. Key recommendation and working solution.

It was clear from the roundtable session that there are areas of concern for all parties involved, donors and implementers, where coordination and improvement is needed. Some key recommendations to come out of the session are:

1. Coordination is key. Quarterly meetings to update actors (both donors and implementers) on what is being done is necessary.
2. More detailed mapping is necessary. If possible, interactive mapping of what is being done in the areas identified as needing work to identify areas where more attention needs to be given.
3. CBOs are in great need of capacity building. This does not only need to be limited to capacity building exercises, but can be improved through the measure suggested above, with a "middle-man" providing capacity building, guidance and assistance to CBOs in implementation, thus simultaneously boosting their experience and their abilities to interact with donors.
4. Sustainability is of great concern. PVE is long-term work and projects need to be coordinated (point 1) and funded for long-term impact.
5. Youth, mothers, religious and community leaders, and education are important. These are the areas that need long-term, expansive focus to tackle extremism at the grassroots and build bottom-up resilience to extremism.