

Conflict Prevention, Mitigation and Counter Violent Extremism

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Outline

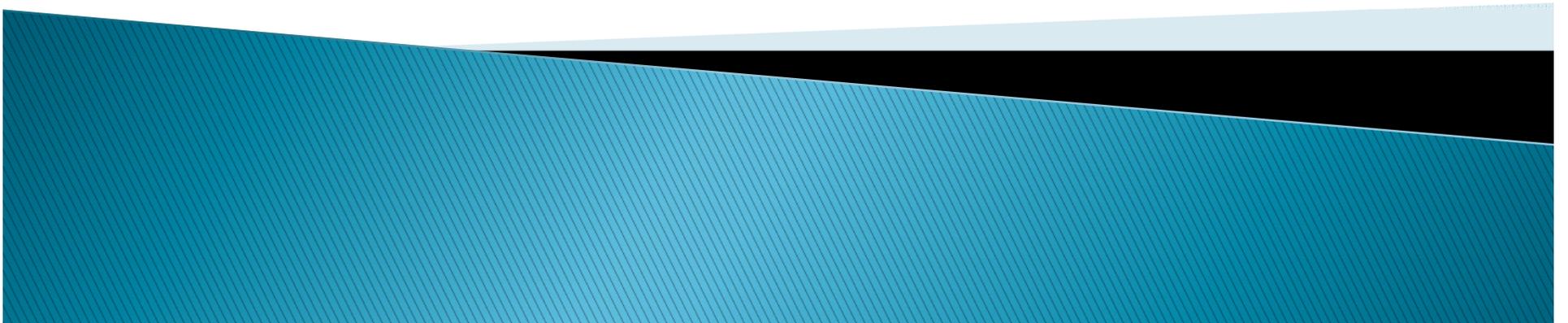
- ▶ Synopsis
- ▶ Conflict Prevention & Mitigation
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Synopsis

- ▶ According to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) the world has been less peaceful since 2007
- ▶ Nigeria has since 2009 been bedevilled by the Boko Haram conflict, fuelled by violent religious extremism.
- ▶ Diplomacy and development play critical roles in preventing, mitigating, and responding to threats such as instability within countries, inter-state and great-power conflict, and the spread of violent extremism¹

Conflict Prevention and Mitigation



Overview

- ▶ The Cambridge dictionary defined *conflict* as “an active disagreement between people of opposing opinions or principles” conflicts could lead to fighting between the opposing parties, these could be individuals, groups or countries.
- ▶ *Conflict prevention* refers to strategies used in the pre-violent phase, at the front-end of the curve of conflict.
- ▶ The World today is enveloped with a lot of violent conflicts leading to widespread displacement of communities and its inhabitants.



Causes of Conflicts

- ▶ Poverty and hunger
- ▶ Injustice amongst people
- ▶ Violent religious and other socio-cultural ideologies
- ▶ Battle for supremacy
- ▶ Politics/power struggle
- ▶ Bad governance and unemployment
- ▶ Drugs abuse
- ▶ Land occupation etc



High level points to note from 17 sustainable development goals (SDG's) that will end/prevent Conflicts

- ▶ Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere
- ▶ Zero hunger, achieve food security, improved nutrition and promote sustainable Agriculture
- ▶ Good health and well-being for all at all ages
- ▶ Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- ▶ Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



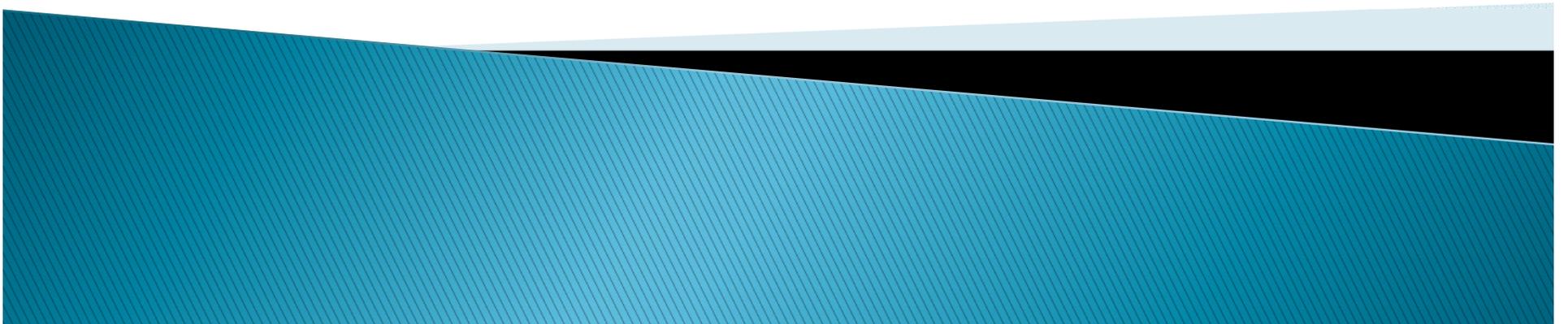
Activities from East and South African Countries that has prevented/Mitigated Conflicts– 1

- ▶ Strengthen the capacity of African organizations to understand, manage, and respond to actual and potential sources of conflict.
- ▶ Provide long- and short-term technical assistance in conflict-related areas such as conflict vulnerability assessments, conflict-sensitive programming, and conflict monitoring and reporting.
- ▶ Train stakeholders on conflict management and mitigation
- ▶ Provide direct grants and grant management support for nongovernmental implementing partners.
- ▶ Provide institutional capacity building and other direct support for government and nongovernmental partners¹

Sample activities from East and South African Countries that has prevented/Mitigated Conflicts– 2

- ▶ Building the conflict management capacity of key national institutions so that they can mediate conflict around contested issues and resolve specific disputes without the need for external mediation
- ▶ Supporting the development of national and local conflict early warning and response systems to address recurring violence, and ensure peace during moments of high stress, such as elections¹
- ▶ Establishing and convening formal and informal opportunities for dialogue to address specific conflicts, and build consensus around constitutional or governance reforms¹

Counter Violent Extremism(CVE)



Overview

- ▶ USAID defines *Violent Extremism* as “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives”
- ▶ Counter violent extremism (CVE) is a growing and evolving realm of policy and practice that faces several significant challenges in implementation, stemming in part from its origins in the security and defense arena¹
- ▶ Long versed in the challenges of conflict prevention, the peacebuilding community and its related methods and practices can help develop a more expansive understanding of violent extremism and its causes and a more localized, inclusive, and sustainable approach to countering it¹

In Nigeria's Context...Impact

- ▶ The Boko Haram crisis has led to the death of over 30,000 Nigerians, displacement of over 2.5 million people from their homes, loss of means of livelihoods, over 50,000 abductions and other social problems.
- ▶ And Boko Haram is not the only violent extremist sect



What causes Violent Extremism?

- ▶ Majority of researchers have stressed that violent extremism is fueled by many complex factors, including psychological, socio-economic, political and ideological elements. Any effective solutions to counter such actions must address these multiple dimensions. Religious figures and activists are able to address many of these aspects, particularly psychological factors and effects, countering destructive narratives through education, and political advocacy – all realms in which many religious players are already involved¹...But more needs to be done...

The Islamic View...

- ▶ Islamic teachings seek to unify people in order to engender harmony, cooperation, collective achievement and prosperity. Violent extremism, on the other hand, fractures individuals, families and communities, preventing people from reaching their full potential as social and spiritual beings. Despite these facts, prominence of violence in the public discourse surrounding Islam is unmatched. Violent extremism marks the name and reputation of Islam globally, spreading gross distortions of the Qur'an and example of the Prophet Muhammad. ***Islam stands for peace, harmony and the elimination of all forms of violence, including violent extremism and violence committed in the name of religion.***

Violent Extremism contradicts the Qur'an, the Prophet's Example and the Islamic Law

- ▶ Because violent extremists often try to justify their actions by using religious rhetoric, several factors must be taken into account to understand violence committed in the name of Islam:
 1. A holistic analysis of the Qur'anic verses;
 2. the Prophet's example (sunnah);
 3. The historical context of the verses and their interpretation;
 4. Limitations on military jihad;
 5. the principle of active forbearance (Fada'il al-Sabr); and
 6. The principles of Islamic law (maqasid al-Shari'ah).

Roles of Religious Leaders

- ▶ Suggested best roles for the peacebuilding community in CVE are to support a nonsecuritized space for and build the capacity of civil society and to help reform the security bodies charged with counterterrorism and CVE¹
- ▶ Recognizing the role of religious leaders in preventing violent extremism and promoting the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, the United Nations Secretary General enshrined in its Plan of Action on PVE had stated the importance for faith and community leaders to mentor “vulnerable followers so as to enable them to reject violent ideologies” and promote “tolerance, understanding and reconciliation between communities”²
- ▶ The Plan of Action on PVE also places emphasis on the spread of radicalization and violent extremism in prisons. A number of those who succumb to recruitment by terrorists are radicalized and recruited in prison. Therefore, safeguards need to be put in place to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies to other prisoners, and religious leaders from all faiths must be involved in these efforts²

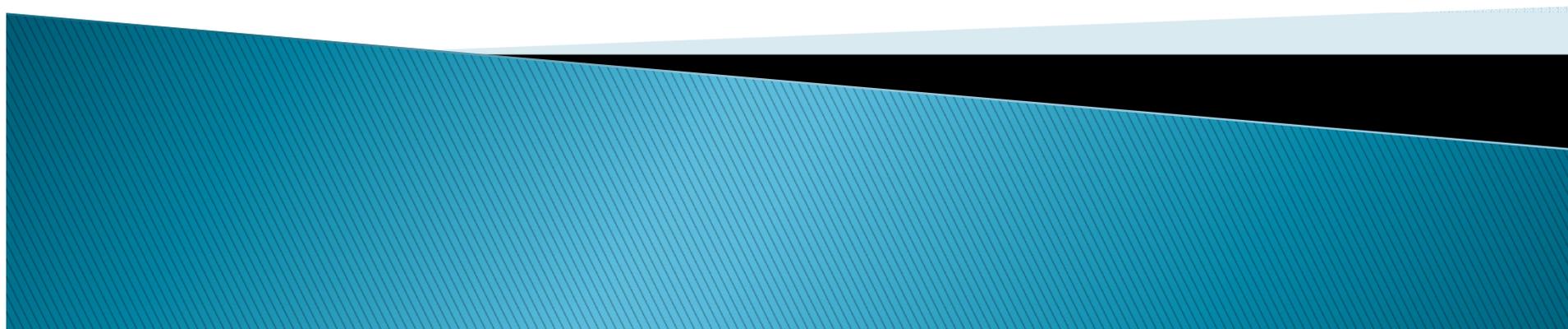
Roles of Women

- ▶ Women can be powerful agents of change, and can even play a crucial role both in detecting early signs of radicalization and intervening before individuals become violent. The traditional roles ascribed to women in many societies, such as wife, mother, and nurturer, empower them in some instances to challenge extremist narratives and shape the home, education, and social environments to make extremism and violence a less desirable option. Moreover, as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 notes, women are disproportionately affected by violence during conflict, and have in many places played important roles in efforts to prevent and mitigate conflict and violence, and rebuild the resilience of affected communities.

Roles of Women– Contd

- ▶ Morocco and Bangladesh can be seen as successful examples because of their direct and indirect emphasis on women empowerment to fight terrorism and its perceived factors that drive recruitment and radicalization to violence. Country and culturally specific programs have identified women as critical components in counterterrorism strategies. Both countries have had marked success in curbing terrorism as shown by the decrease in the number of ideologically motivated attacks. Bangladesh has experienced no significant ideologically motivated attacks for non-political purposes since 2005, and on average Morocco has had less than one terrorist attack per year and none since 2011.

Recommendations



Recommendation

- ▶ Don't rely on military solutions to violent extremism.
- ▶ Recognize that civil society and religious actors are on the frontlines, embedded in these communities, and have an important role to play in preventing radicalization and violent extremism at early stages.
- ▶ Engage religious actors from the beginning in identifying the problems and their solutions, rather than engaging them in solutions already devised by others in a way that can make them feel they're being used rather than consulted.
- ▶ Recognize that religious actors have a particular role to play in providing psycho-social support to those vulnerable to recruitment.
- ▶ Support religious actors as viable political advocates in addressing the political dynamics that contribute to violent extremism, and even as potential intermediaries with extremists.

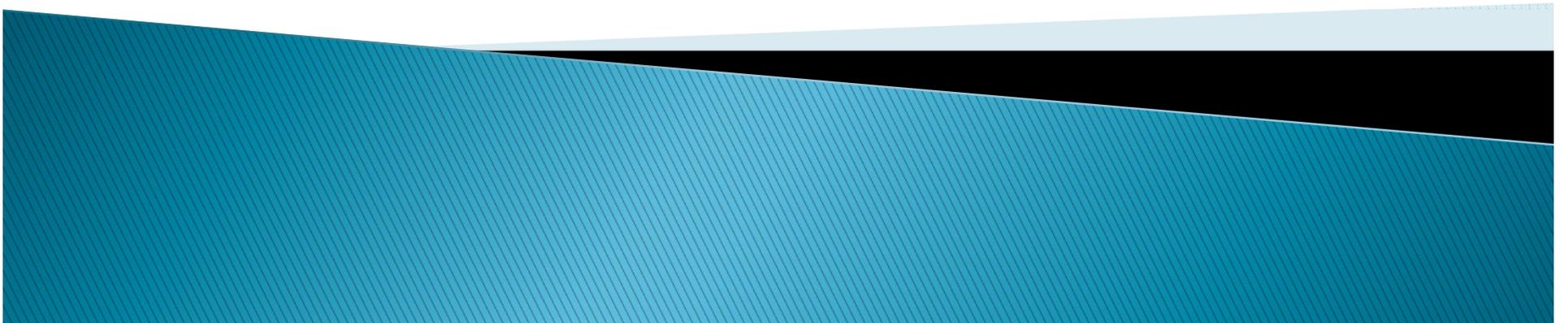
Recommendations– Contd

- ▶ **Understand that religious actors can use education in many ways to counter violent extremism by promoting peace and tolerance through corrective interpretations of dogma, through both formal and informal religious curricula, and through preaching. Recognize that religious actors can most effectively present counter–narratives within their own specific faith tradition, sect or group.**
- ▶ **Have a nuanced understanding of religious actors, thinking beyond traditional categories (such as male clerics) to consider those who influence religious narratives or institutions. Engage women and youth religious actors, and be sensitive in how to engage religious–political actors, recognizing that they require another kind of engagement.**
- ▶ **Convene smaller organizations and foster collaboration and alliances between civil society and faith–based groups within countries and transnationally.**
- ▶ **Help religious actors seeking to support coexistence and peace to access appropriate secular, state and humanitarian resources to respond to community needs. Work to combat violent extremism should be integrated with good economic development.**
- ▶ **Offer skills– and knowledge training to religious actors, helping them to understand work on countering violent extremism and to put it in culturally and religiously relevant frames.**

Recommendations– Contd

- ▶ **Help religious actors leverage various vehicles for education, using mass media to amplify voices and counter–narratives, and to encourage critical thinking.**
- ▶ **Support both intra– and interfaith efforts.** Intra–faith may need to precede interfaith work to be effective, and is a more appropriate means for engaging extremist actors who may won't get involved in interfaith work.
- ▶ **Respect the complexity within each religious community in any context, and recognize that any strategy to combat violent extremism must be rooted in a nuanced understanding of the unique drivers of that conflict.**

Notable Quotes



From The Quran

- ▶ Q2 (Al- Baqarah) 256– “There is no compulsion in religion, guidance has been made manifest from misguidance”
- ▶ Q5(Al- Maidah) 32– “If any one slew(kill) a person it would be as if he kills the whole people or nation and if any one saves a life, it would be as if he saved a whole nation or whole mankind.”



From other Leaders

Mr. Matthew Hodes – “Each follower of particular faith, it is their challenge to promote their beliefs, and at the same time don’t lose their own sense of stands.” “The greatest challenge is faced when religion is not practiced for its best purpose.”

Mr. Edward J.Flynn – “It’s important to have great interpretation on religious roles, and fight for under privileged people including youth.”

“We should work with governments; promote dialogue to identify ways for women and youth leaders’ voices to be heard.”

Ms. Azza Karam – “We need to break down glass ceiling effects, and increase women’s appearances in leadership roles.”

“Normalization of violence in our culture, requires society as whole to stand against it. ”

“Women of faith have critical role to play in mediation and reconciliation”

Reverend Chloe Breyer – “Religious community of any kind serves not only to their primary communities, but also have a wider world-wide impact.”

Reverend Victor H. Kazanjian Jr. –“Younger peers, the leaders of the peace-making grassroots organizations against violence, need to be supported because their messages are not being heard.”