

# UNDP's Work on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) in the Arab States

## OVERVIEW

The Arab States is the region which is experiencing the impact of violent extremism the most, currently on an unprecedented scale. In 2015, the region registered over 4,000 terrorist attacks and almost 13,000 terror-related deaths. Iraq accounts for most terrorism-related victims, but other countries in the region have been largely impacted.<sup>1</sup> Between January 2015 and July 2016, over two-thirds of terrorism-related deaths and almost three-quarters of terrorist attacks worldwide occurred in the region.<sup>2</sup> Violent extremist groups continue to exploit the endemic conflicts, instability and governance failures affecting the region, as well as the frustration and marginalization of youth, to recruit individuals through diverse processes of radicalization, leading to devastating levels of violence and suffering across the region.

The impact of violent attacks and terrorism have long-lasting ramifications and the devastating effect is not only setting in motion a dramatic reversal of development gains already made, but threatening to stunt prospects of development for decades to come.

## UNDP GLOBAL RESPONSE

UNDP has built its conceptual framework based on the **Secretary-General's Plan of Action**, which emphasizes the need for collective efforts, including preventing the radicalization, recruitment and mobilization of individuals from terrorist groups and/or becoming foreign fighters.<sup>3</sup> It stresses that different sectors (e.g. security, development, civil society) must coordinate and promote national ownership and the development of **national plans to prevent violent extremism**.

UNDP has responded to the call for collective action with a global framework called "**Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Development and Promotion of Tolerance and Respect for Diversity**", which proposes 11 interlinked building blocks explaining how development can help prevent violent extremism, including: promoting a rule of law and human rights-based approach; enhancing the fight against corruption; enhancing participatory decision-making and increasing civic space; providing effective socio-economic alternatives to violence for groups at risk; strengthening the capacity of local governments for service delivery and security; supporting credible internal intermediaries, to promote dialogue and re-integration of former extremists; promoting gender equality and women's empowerment; engaging youth in building social cohesion; working with faith-based organizations and religious leaders to counter the abuse of religion by violent extremists; working with the media to promote human rights and tolerance; promoting respect for human rights and diversity in schools and universities.

## UNDP REGIONAL RESPONSE ARAB STATES

The development approach to PVE calls for an integrated, and multi-dimensional approach

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<sup>1</sup> Global Terrorism Index 2016

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/the-scale-of-terrorist-attacks-around-the-world/>

<sup>3</sup> Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014)

combined with regional and country-specific analysis and initiatives. UNDP, through its Regional Hub in Amman, contextualized the UNDP global PVE approach to the Arab region and has designed a **Regional Project for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Arab States** region to support UNDP Country Offices (COs), national counterparts and civil society actors to prevent and address the drivers and consequences of violent extremism using a development approach. The three-year project will start in 2017 and is based on consultations with experts, as well as UNDP country offices.

This **Regional Project is built upon a four-pronged approach**, which includes: a) country support and initiatives; b) provision of regional resources, tools and platforms; c) evidence-based research for policy and programming purposes; and d) advocacy and communication strategies. The Project aims to promote inclusive political processes, inclusive PVE efforts, social cohesion, human-rights based rule of law and justice, and effective reintegration strategies.

In order to more effectively adapt programming, UNDP Arab States has also partnered with International Alert to develop a methodological framework along with concrete tools, during first half of 2017, **to improve measuring of impact of projects** aimed at PVE.

Further, for the African Continent, the programme **“Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa”** is being implemented together between the UNDP Bureau for Africa through the Addis Regional Center, and the Regional Bureau for Arab States, supporting country work and regional initiatives. Among Arab States, Somalia, Libya, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco are included as priority countries.

To enhance coordination at the regional level, the **Regional UN Development Group** for Arab States has introduced a working group on Prevention of Violent Extremism, which is chaired by UNDP. The group encourages the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

### **COUNTRY LEVEL INITIATIVES**

Across the Arab States, many of UNDP Country Offices have introduced programming focused on preventing violent extremism. Since 2015, UNDP Arab States have introduced PVE-specific projects/ interventions in 12 countries. These projects cover a range of priority areas, including support to national capacity and coordination, training and engagement with religious leaders, job creation with focus on youth, research and outreach, prevention in prisons, etc.

In addition to the PVE-specific projects, the country offices in the Arab States have a number of PVE-related projects. The main donor for PVE interventions is the **Government of Japan**.

In few countries, currently Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon, UNDP is providing support to the governments in the development of **national plans of action for PVE**. The UN family in these three countries has also embarked on developing an **All-of-UN approach** to support the national PVE efforts coherently.