

à propos

The KOFF
Peacebuilding
Magazine



Preventing Violent Extremism

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In the last few years, the concept of preventing violent extremism has been at the heart of discourses of governments, international organizations and non-state actors. The brutal attacks perpetrated throughout the world in recent years underline more than ever the need for a more convincing response to this phenomenon than the primarily repressive and military measures implemented as part of the 'Global War on Terror'.

Is preventing violent extremism (PVE) a genuine paradigm shift or rather a semantic one? What needs to be taken into account to facilitate the implementation of this approach? What are its consequences for the roles assigned to young people and women in particular? Lastly, what measures and activities have already been implemented by Swiss governmental and non-governmental organizations? This issue of *à propos*, the last for 2016, provides some answers to these questions.

Marie Seidel, editor

focus

Preventing violent extremism: A new paradigm or evolving approach?



Workers clearing debris at the Village Restaurant after a double suicide attack by extremist group Al Shabaab in Mogadishu, Somalia. September 2013. AU-UN IST photo / Stuart Price

In the wake of the 9/11 attack, members of the international community responded in a heavy handed and militarized way to terrorism and adopted a counter terrorism (CT) approach. Yet, terrorist attacks and fatalities have dramatically increased and more powerful terrorist groups have been created. With the emergence of the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) approach, a greater emphasis is now given to so-called “soft” alternatives. However, the question remains whether it is a change in content or just a semantic shift.

Multinational organizations and donor countries have been engaged in various counter terrorism (CT) initiatives particularly since the 9/11 terrorist attack as part of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). This simplistic approach viewed terrorism as a form of criminal and subversive activity that targeted the West and its values. However, CT practices increasingly showed a proclivity for grave violations of human rights and international law. Some countries have also manipulated CT measures to silence political opposition and

criticism. The acts committed by US security personnel in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the widespread practice of illegal detentions and renditions, decades of arrest without charge in Guantanamo are all manifestations of the failures of this approach. Terrorist attacks and fatalities have dramatically increased, more powerful terrorist groups have been created, the landmass controlled by terrorist groups has expanded, the number of foreign fighters crossing borders to join terrorist groups has surged, and terrorist attacks have reached new heights of cruelty and depravity in the last few years.

As a result of the growing perception that these approaches have been inefficient and counterproductive, policy makers and security advisors have sought alternatives. In a nutshell, this arguably explains the emergence of preventing violent extremism (PVE). In the last few years, PVE has been at the top of discourses of governments, multinational organizations and non-state actors.

PVE is intended to address structural causes and aggravating factors that create grievances and thereby violent extremism. It seeks to identify vulnerable individuals and groups, and early signs of radicalization and mitigate the risks through engagement, education and counter-narratives. The approach assigns greater emphasis to community engagement, the role of civil society organizations, partnerships between state and non-state actors and the call for context specific responses. The growing consensus that 'ideology cannot be defeated by guns but by better ideas' is a promising initiative and these 'soft' approaches are a relatively new development in the CT sphere.

At the same time it has to be acknowledged that much of the approaches are predominantly borrowed from different fields such as community policing, governance, risk management, social work, and peacebuilding. In this regard, PVE is not so much a paradigm shift in the fight against terrorism, but much more an adaptive response to evolving security threats and challenges of violent extremism that seeks to transcend the limitations of the traditional 'securitized' CT response.

PVE faces also a multiplicity of challenges. Some of the terms associated (mostly taken-for-granted without clear and agreed definitions) with PVE in policy discourses and practice such as extremism and radicalization are often contentious. The unfortunate prevalence of active 'Islamic' terrorist groups has made interpretations and use of terms very difficult and often associated with Islam or Muslims. There are also no clear indicators to determine whether someone is radicalized or even to determine vulnerability. The lack of clear definitions of PVE itself has complicated its implementation in practice. What is not defined and has no clear indicators cannot be measured or evaluated.

Another critical problem centers on the lack of consensus regarding what constitutes radicalism or extremism and the possibility that attempting to define it could encroach on the very basic notion of freedom of expression. This makes agreement on a set of clear and measurable standards with regard to what is extreme or radical problematic. Extremism is a relative concept which is best articulated (even if simplistically) in the cliché that 'someone's freedom fighter is a terrorist for others'.

Lastly, PVE is considered as a 'whole of government' response involving many sectors of a government demanding cooperation and coordination to address the structural causes of terrorism. Bringing together such a diversified set of actors together is a daunting job. For

obvious political, economic and cultural differences, the same is even truer for cross-border cooperation that PVE demands given the fact that terrorism is a transnational phenomenon.

It could be argued that there is nothing inherently wrong with the intentions of PVE whether it is merely changing terminology to make it more inclusive and mitigate misperceptions. The role of PVE, in spite of all the challenges, would contribute to remedying the negative perceptions that the CT has caused, if and only if it is implemented properly. At a higher level of expectation, PVE can also play a significant role in preventing terrorism through soft measures if it is designed in a context specific manner, ensures real ownership among actors and ultimately if governments (both donors and recipients) are committed to the core values. Otherwise, it will only amount to a semantic shift instead of a change in content.

This article is a slightly modified version of an article by Tuemay Aregawi Desta, published in the Horn of Africa Bulletin (January-February 2016).

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- [Read the full article](#)
- [Horn of Africa Bulletin](#)
- [Life & Peace Institute](#)

reports

Lessons learnt on countering violent extremism



Youth of both clans take time for acquaintance in Somalia, 2015. Interpeace

Countering violent extremism (CVE) is a key priority for the international community. Traditional methods have sought to respond to these phenomena through a security framework, often leading to a military response to “counter” the threat posed by armed groups. However, this costly approach has yet to demonstrate its effectiveness, as it often increases rather than diffuses tension. From its experience working in 23 conflict zones worldwide, Interpeace has found that CVE strategies need to pay more attention to two key elements:

First, international actors need to understand violence from a local perspective. From 2005-2011 the international community responded to Somali piracy through increasing security upon vessels at great cost. Interpeace, realizing that the pirates held a monopoly of information and as such had presented themselves as freedom fighters combating Western imperialism, erected mobile audiovisual units and presented footage from other communities explaining how piracy contravened Somali and Muslim values. Following these screenings, local communities took action against the pirates themselves. Understanding local perspectives on violence is key to designing the right strategy and avoiding reinforcing the violent groups’ narrative.

Second, there needs to be a focus upon local resilience capacities. Interpeace’s experience shows that even in the most difficult situations, people develop coping capacities and strategies for peace. Take Libya: given the circumstances faced by Libyans it is perhaps surprising how much of the country remains relatively peaceful. Through documenting stable communities Interpeace’s ‘Peace mapping’ research has identified common factors of resilience. Communities which had strong leadership, community cohesion, positive and inclusive identity construction, and were willing to learn from other communities were more likely to remain peaceful. The international response should seek to build upon these strengths if it wishes to expand these islands of stability.

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reports

Targeting youth at risk: a synthesis of experience

An interview with Marc Probst, Director of the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD)

swisspeace: Can you briefly describe SAD's work?

Marc Probst: Since 1991, SAD has been promoting development opportunities for children and young adults in 19 countries, including Switzerland. SAD uses sport and play to sustainably transform the lives of disadvantaged and marginalized young people, enabling them to become engaged, healthy, educated and employed citizens.

How do you identify and efficiently target groups at risk?

Our long term experience in various countries allows us to affirm that it is crucial to work in a participatory way with, and through local partners at the grassroots level. Local partners are the most likely to notice behavioral and attitude changes in young persons or groups that might suggest a move toward extremism. This approach enables us to benefit from our partners' understanding of local context and provide personal contacts to those groups most in need.

What are the risk indicators of radicalization?

We can say with some degree of confidence that a persistently high unemployment rate creates an opportunity for extremism to flourish. We know as well that a culture of blame and shame can push some individuals toward violence. However, radicalization processes are very complex and difficult to anticipate and predict, and reliable statistical data on this issue are still missing. Poverty and unemployment often can provide fertile soil for the radicalization of young people, but there are also violent extremists raised in families blessed with wealth and privilege.

It is crucial to look not only at macro-level indicators such as demography, crime rate, or unemployment, but also to examine micro-level indicators. What are the perceptions of young people? How do their perspectives, values, and norms shape their behavior? Often, it is their frustration, hopelessness, and lack of prospects that lead them to violent extremism.

How can vocational skills development (VSD) programs prevent young people from violent extremism?

I strongly believe that VSD programs must be customized, participatory, creative, and based on a close collaboration with local partners. VSD programs should also be part of a broader approach that takes personal and social development into consideration as well. They should include a better understanding of positive psychology that focuses on young people's assets rather than on weaknesses and deviant behaviors. Finally, they should be rigorously monitored and evaluated in order to increase our knowledge and build on our success.

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links

- [Swiss Academy for Development](#)

reports

Women as a tool for preventing violent extremism?



Participants at the Women's Consultative Forum on Countering Violent Extremism in Mogadishu, Somalia.
AMISOM Photo/Omar Abdisalan

In 2015, the United Nations celebrated the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Despite significant progress, civil society also raised concerns about women's rights being used as a tool in many international political strategies.

One example is the discourse surrounding the prevention of violent extremism. Resolution 2242, which calls for integration of the gender perspective in the prevention of violent extremism, was adopted in the course of the 2015 celebrations.

In this resolution, women are depicted as vigilant mothers and neighborhood experts who can detect persons undergoing radicalization at an early stage, be it their own children or those of their neighbors. They are expected to assume an important role in prevention strategies through early recognition of dangers in their environment, and provide information about radicalization of persons.

This may sound like an appealing solution. But doesn't this sort of integration of the gender perspective in the prevention of violent extremism lead to women being reduced to these roles and feeling under pressure to monitor their environment? Doesn't it reinforce stereotypes that are being fought against?

Comprehensive security from a gender perspective would mean one thing in particular: Upgrading districts, jobs for young women and men, community work, and good local healthcare services. Only then can women realize their vital function in society. Without investment in the social infrastructure, the role assigned to women in the policy of preventing violent extremism is nothing but token equality, a smokescreen, and even use of certain women as tools at the expense of real equality.

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[links](#)

- [Gender & Peacebuilding at swisspeace](#)
- [swisspeace, cfd, PWAG, Women for Peace. Women Peace Security – reloaded. Alternative civil society report on the Swiss National Action Plan 1325 from a gender perspective. June 2016](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 2242](#)

reports

Preventing violent

extremism with interfaith understanding



"Let us celebrate diversity." Colorful street campaigns for interfaith tolerance in the major city of Bandung, West Java. Jakatarub/Mission 21

Most Indonesians have some kind of religious faith. Despite the statutory guarantee of religious freedom, politicians and radical groups exploit religion in their own struggles for power. Radical Islamist groups propagate an exclusive understanding of religion and the use of violence to enforce the creation of an Islamic state in Indonesia with Islamic law at the cost of other religions and worldviews. Islamic minorities (Ahmadiyya and Shiites) are persecuted and displaced, long-standing churches are forced to close, and atheists are imprisoned. Evangelical groups seeking to convert Muslims also exacerbate the mistrust between religious communities. Radical groups target young people via social media and by infiltrating the staff at high schools and universities in order to find recruits. And they succeed – after all, many young people are looking for a stable sense of identity.

The interfaith peacebuilding program set up by Mission 21 involves Muslim and Christian partners and is working toward targeted measures to prevent religious extremism: Interfaith youth camps are helping young people to build trust and make friendships that span their different religions. This has given rise to sustainable interfaith networks that see hundreds of young adults making a stand for tolerance and the peaceful coexistence of religions. As “peer educators” they are able, in turn, to arrange new interfaith meetings, reaching the wider public with imaginative campaigns on the streets and the Internet. The rise in tolerance is palpable in major cities like Bandung and Banjarmasin where there is a strong Muslim influence. Interfaith training sessions for teaching staff will also be enhanced in future due to increasing radicalization at schools and universities.

A closer look at Indonesia is worthwhile for learning more about how violent extremism among young adults can be prevented.

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links

- [Mission 21](#)
- [Project description \(in German\)](#)
- [Example of an Internet campaign for interfaith tolerance](#)

reports

An innovative approach to preventing violent extremism



In Mali too, GCERF is funding local communities and grassroots initiatives. UN Photo (fair use policy)

The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) was established in 2014 as an initiative of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). The primary objective of GCERF is to strengthen community resilience by providing small grants to community-level,

grassroots initiatives that address the local drivers of violent extremism. This is crucial for three primary reasons:

First, local communities have innovative ideas about how to prevent and counter recruitment and radicalization to violent extremist agendas. Second, while these communities may have the insight and inspiration, they often lack the funding to launch their innovative solutions and the capacity to sustain them. Third, engaging communities and building their resilience is an important component of wider national and international efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism.

As a result of its apolitical, independent, and neutral funding structure, GCERF is able to access the most-at-risk communities, thereby complementing the bilateral efforts of donors.

In 2016 GCERF is funding local communities and grassroots initiatives in Bangladesh, Mali, and Nigeria. Specifically, the Fund is supporting 60 initiatives that involve 52 implementing community-based organizations. Over the next three years, these GCERF funded initiatives will directly engage more than half a million beneficiaries and mobilize more than 47,000 community-level change agents. Ultimately, it is expected that more than 1,5 million people vulnerable to radicalization to violent extremism will benefit from GCERF grants. Building on this success, GCERF is now beginning to partner with Kenya, Kosovo and Myanmar to support similar initiatives next year.

Preventing violent extremism will allow us to achieve more peaceful and inclusive societies and bolster economic growth. To do so the international community must continue to allocate resources to strengthen global and regional efforts, support national strategies, explore innovative ways to engage private sector, and build capacity at the community level to prevent radicalization to violent extremism.

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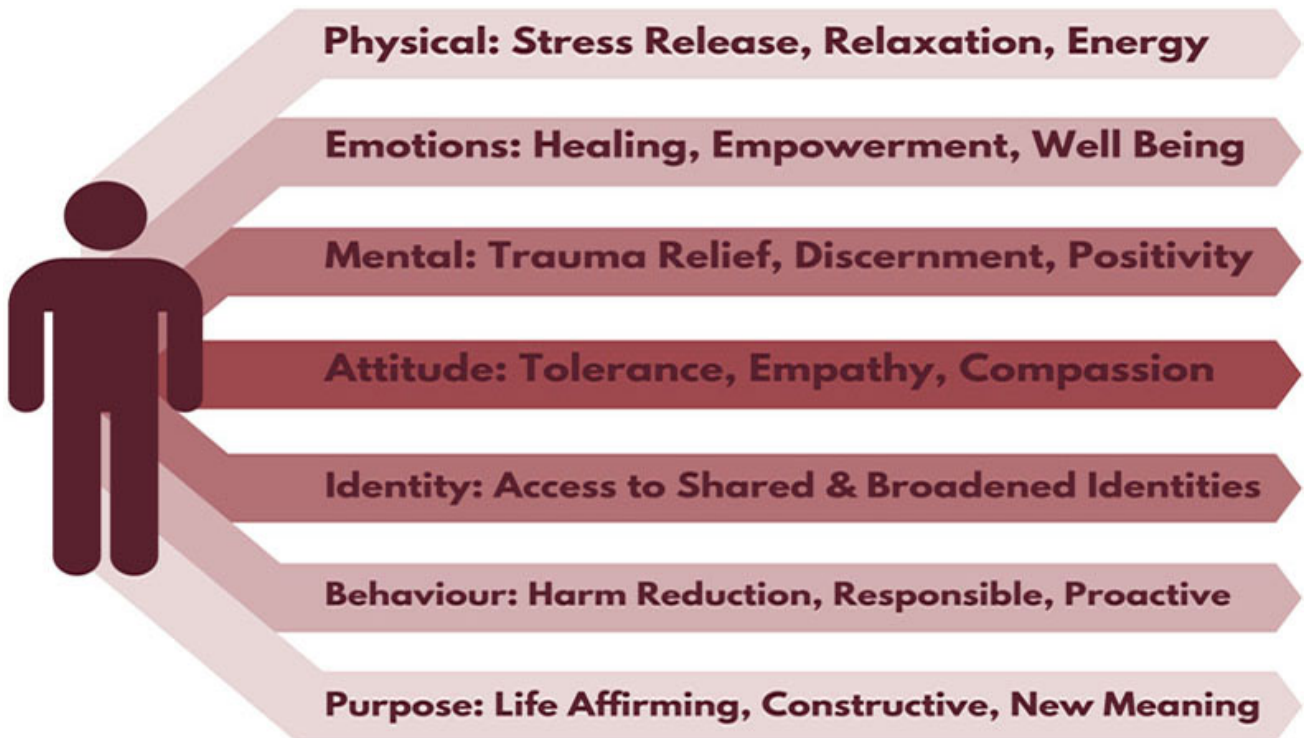
links

- [Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund](#)
- [Global Counter Terrorism Forum](#)

reports

Looking beyond violent

extremism



Using a holistic approach to personal transformation is crucial to preventing violent extremism. IAHV

The challenge to prevent and counter violent extremism and reintegrate ex-combatants in society is enhanced by the fact that these individuals exhibit a diversity of social backgrounds, undergo different processes of radicalization and are influenced by various combinations of motivations. Ideology, economic and social conditions, cultural diversity and dissolution, loss of identity, need to belong and life purpose are all such examples.

The psychosocial factors underlying such destructive life choices —including anger, frustration, depression, pain, greed and intolerance—are either internalized, leading to addictions, depression and suicidal tendencies, or externalized, leading to aggression, violence and wars. Failure to address these powerful driving forces erodes the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts.

A new paradigm shift is required to understand and deal with violent extremism, which is fundamentally human. No peace can become sustainable as long as it is not internalized and socially supported by the people. The focus thus needs to be on strengthening a fertile psychosocial foundation for sustainable peace. Using a holistic approach to personal transformation to address the physical up to deeply existential layers, transcending the strictly cognitive layer, is vital in this process.

Recognizing that both external environmental and internal psychological factors are crucial in the prevention and transformation of violence and extremism, the International Association for Human Values addresses different types of change in its peacebuilding programs, including physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and interpersonal outcomes. The aim is to transform the attitudes and behaviors of youth and young adults from at-risk to high performing, responsible, confident and empowered citizens.

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reports

Switzerland's Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism

During the last twenty years, the international community has worked to combat violent extremism primarily using anti-terrorism measures focusing on security. However, it is increasingly agreed that these measures have not been sufficient to prevent the spread of violent extremism. Consequently, in December 2015 the United Nations Secretary-General published a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, as part of the UN's more general prevention activities.

The Member States were also invited to develop national action plans to prevent violent extremism with a special focus on political dialog and conflict prevention, resolution and transformation; strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law; engaging communities; empowering youth; gender equality and empowering women; education, skills development and employment facilitation; and strategic communications, the Internet and social media.

To emphasize the priority it gives to this topic, Switzerland has developed a Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism, enabling it to support its partners with their efforts in this area. Switzerland's approach aims to address the direct and structural causes of violent extremism, whether political, social or economic, through a long-term

commitment in conflict-affected, fragile and transitional contexts.

Switzerland is committed to fostering the development of inclusive societies by cultivating the fundamental values of human rights, peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity and the principles of the rule of law. Through its efforts in conflict resolution and transformation, inclusive dialog, political involvement in pluralistic democratic environments, the fight against impunity, the protection of human rights and the rule of law, but also the improvement of training and employment and the reduction of socio-economic inequality, particularly for young people and women, Switzerland is building citizens' trust in their institutions, creating prospects and thus helping to eliminate the socio-political factors that can result in violent extremism.

A sense of political, social or economic exclusion is often a factor that drives certain individuals or groups towards violence and violent extremism. Switzerland is therefore committed to facilitating spaces for political dialog that include all stakeholders – governments, civil society and armed groups – so that legitimate grievances can be aired peacefully.

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[links](#)

- [Switzerland's Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism](#)
- [UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism](#)

reports

Violent extremism – A challenge for the SDC's programs

By focusing on reducing the root causes of conflict and strengthening governmental and societal resistance to crises as well as human rights, the SDC enables societies to build peaceful and non-violent conflict-resolving mechanisms. Its programs are thus per se playing a part in tackling the underlying causes of social and political conflicts and removing the breeding ground for violent extremism.

Violent extremism involves crimes of violence, and combating it is predominantly a task for the police, military and intelligence agencies. The SDC is not involved in the fight against terrorism. As regards international cooperation, this is about preventing violent extremism (PVE). Its work includes conflict transformation and the long-term prevention of violence

and radicalization. In operational work, it is important to distinguish between PVE and anti-terrorism for conflict sensitivity and security reasons. This also applies to communication.

With its current and future Dispatch on International Cooperation 2017-2020, Switzerland has an important tool on hand to face up to the root causes of radicalization and extremist violence by means of the long-term development programs in governance, creating prospects for basic and professional education, generating income, achieving gender equality and strengthening human rights. The respective guidelines can be found in the Peace & Statebuilding Strategy and the SDC's Human Rights Policy as well as the Swiss Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism.

Violent extremism is a symptom of poor governance, corruption, the perception of personally experienced injustice, ostracism and lack of trust in the state. The SDC promotes genuine, improved participation in political, economic and social processes and its programs aim to address individuals more effectively also through psychosocial support.

SDC

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links

- [SDC's Peacebuilding & Statebuilding Strategy](#)
- [SDC's Human Rights Policy](#)
- [Swiss Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism](#)

in depth

Exploratory study on jihadist radicalization in Switzerland

This exploratory study attempts to explain the phenomenon of young people's tendency to be drawn into jihadist radicalization in Switzerland, at an individual as well as a social level.

It demonstrates how debates about marginalization and discriminatory social structures play a significant role in people being drawn toward violent Islamist positions. Salafism attracts young people with promises of identity and appreciation, appealing to their sense of justice and offering an alternative belief system and worldview.

The report includes a case study of a repatriate from Syria and an Internet study that identifies a recruiting pattern that uses heroic narratives. It also addresses the role of public institutions and Muslim organizations in Switzerland. The study ends with a range of

prevention and intervention recommendations that are taken, among other things, from the experiences of prevention programs in other European countries.

links

- [Zurich University of Applied Sciences. Backgrounds to jihadist radicalization in Switzerland – an exploratory study with recommendations for prevention and intervention. September 2015](#)

in depth

The role of women in preventing violent extremism

This chapter, which forms a part of the full report on “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325”, focuses on the influence of violent extremism on the lives of women and girls. It illustrates to what extent women are affected by violent extremism, and not just how they can counter it but also in which contexts they support it themselves.

Women – who are brought into contact with extreme violence in a broader sense, whether as family members or acquaintances of alleged terrorists or simply because of their origins – are far from being a homogeneous group of victims or perpetrators. Such an assumption distorts their image and situation in real life. The issue is understanding under what circumstances women move in extremist circles, why it is important to them to do so, or what constraints they are under.

The report ultimately emphasizes the need for UN Women to critically review the strategies for preventing violent extremism. The risk with resolutions agreed at an international level is that they stereotype and exploit women as vigilant mothers at the expense of women’s rights and gender equality.

links

- [UN Women. Countering violent extremism while respecting the rights and autonomy of women and their communities. 2015](#)
- [Full report](#)

in depth

Relationships prevent radicalization: A case study from Kenya

This report discusses the findings from a qualitative field study that identifies the factors that render Muslim communities in Kenya, and in particular young Muslims, vulnerable to violent extremism. As part of the study, 14 interviews were carried out and six focus groups set up with over 60 participants in six different districts of Nairobi and Mombasa.

The hypothesis being tested asserts that resilience to violent extremism can be linked to three kinds of relationships: between and within communities, between generations, and between citizens and the state.

The report uses the results of the study to make some recommendations as to how to strengthen the different kinds of relationships in order to prevent people from falling into violent extremism. It emphasizes that particular attention should be paid to strengthening relationships between citizens and the state and involving individuals in the communities.

links

- [International Alert, Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance \(KMYA\). We don't trust anyone – Strengthening relationships as the key to reducing violent extremism in Kenya. September 2016](#)

news

swisspeace / KOFF



The light footprint approach – swisspeace’s answer to violent conflict

Director of swisspeace Laurent Goetschel demonstrates in a video how swisspeace is supporting civil society in war-torn countries like Afghanistan and Syria in order to rebuild trust between conflicting parties and to promote peace. The “light footprint” approach adopted by swisspeace is non-invasive, meaning the local conflicting parties are supposed to find solutions themselves, since it is they who have to continue cultivating relationships after the violence has ended. The role of swisspeace lies primarily in bringing together hostile groups and providing a platform for negotiations, while giving the needs and interests of the conflicting parties center stage.

links

- [The Light Footprint approach to peacekeeping. Laurent Goetschel. TEDx Basel](#)

Fragility, Conflict & Statebuilding Course

Fragile states are of major concern to actors spanning from local citizens to global policy makers. Not only are they particularly prone to violent conflict, they are also held responsible for a range of public bads transcending national borders. While ‘fragility’ is pervasive in donor and aid organizations’ thinking, the concept remains unclear and fuels the debate on how the international community should best respond.

Participants in the Fragility, Conflict & Statebuilding course will draw lessons from links between concepts of violent conflict, fragility, state- and peacebuilding, and understand

the foundations of states and the construction of social and political legitimacy. They will learn about international policy responses to fragile and conflict-affected contexts and reflect on current methodologies proposed by international actors for working successfully in fragile contexts.

This course is designed for professionals working on issues pertaining to fragility, conflict and statebuilding as well as practitioners and academics interested in 'seeing the bigger picture' by combining practical experiences with conceptual insights. Registration closes on December 31, 2016.

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- [Further information](#)
- [Registration](#)

Open letter to the incoming Secretary-General of the United Nations

Members of the Mediation Support Network (MSN) have drafted a joint open letter to the incoming Secretary-General of the UN. The open letter asks the Secretary-General to take a leading role in preventing, alleviating and resolving violent conflicts.

The signatory non-governmental organizations specifically request 1) that the Secretary-General plays an active role in the prevention of conflicts; 2) that he proactively uses his good offices to mediate conflicts; 3) that he continues and strengthens cooperation with civil society and finally 4) that he clearly declares that mediators can operate free from undue political constraints.

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- [The open letter](#)

KOFF member organizations

Implementation of Agenda 2030: What role will civil society assume?

The United Nations' Agenda 2030 unites the various dimensions of sustainability (environment, social issues, economy) in an integrated strategic framework for the first time. It combines the developmental goals of the Millennium Declaration with the environmental goals from the Rio sustainability process and supplements these with social and peace policy objectives. Its universality and networking present a major opportunity – as well as the biggest challenge.

Switzerland has signed the Agenda 2030 and is obliged to implement it. KOFF, Alliance Sud, the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions and the Environmental Alliance organized a conference on October 18, 2016 to discuss and initiate Swiss civil society's role in the implementation of Agenda 2030. The aim was to strengthen communication and achieve closer cooperation between various civil society organizations. The event showed how important new thematic networking is for our planet's sustainable development. The first concrete ideas for cooperation were discussed. A follow-up meeting is planned for the near future.

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Image. Power. People: Roles

Violence against women begins in the mind. Gender stereotypes determine how women are treated. They are jointly responsible for everyday sexism and for structural, physical, and psychological violence. They influence how we behave and how we perceive our environment, although we are not always conscious of the fact. They inform how people are depicted and what shapes the public sphere as well as influence our relationships.

However, gender roles are not natural conditions but rather politically and socially ascribed characteristics and behavioral norms. People experience violence when they do not fulfill gender norms. This affects women in particular, who tend to have to take a subordinate, dependent, and passive role.

The "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" campaign is inviting us to rethink our own ideas about gender roles with this year's focus topic entitled "Image. Power.

People: Roles”. Human rights and women’s organizations, specialist units, women’s shelters, self-defense societies, and victim support centers will be joining together to go public between November 25 and December 10, 2016.

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- [Further information \(in German\)](#)
- [Event program](#)

Youth and peace, resolution 2250 of the Security Council

Brought about by youth movements to strengthen peacebuilding by and for youth, but also to repel violent extremism – of which young people are too often the victims and the instrument – the Security Council unanimously adopted on December 9, 2015 a binding resolution meant to strengthen youth participation in peacebuilding and in peace processes.

The resolution is based on strengthening youth participation in peace issues, on their protection, including through prevention measures and social cohesion, and by establishing new and inclusive partnerships for peace going much further than peace and youth related issues.

APRED raises awareness and knowledge about the resolution, among other means by proposing a detailed analysis of its contents. The institute is also involved in monitoring the resolution and available for more detailed information.

[APRED](#)

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[links](#)

- [The text of resolution 2250](#)
- [United Network of Young Peace Builders. A tool-kit for the use by youth of resolution 2250](#)
- [United Nations. Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Youth](#)
- [APRED: Youth and Peace - detailed analysis of the resolution](#)

International partner organizations

Conciliation Resources

In its third Accord Insight, entitled “Making Peace with the Past – Transforming broken relationships”, Conciliation Resources examines the importance of transforming relationships in peace processes. The publication reflects on the practical approaches and challenges to addressing the legacies of violent conflict, including various activities intended to promote reconciliation, support justice and deal with the past. In addition to expert opinion and analysis, the publication includes four case studies from the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, Colombia, Mindanao (Philippines) and Northern Ireland. They are sequential, guiding readers through different stages of a peace process. These case studies all stress the importance of building new relationships in peace processes: horizontally, between conflict parties and groups in society; and vertically, between citizens and state institutions. The publication explores whether different phases and circumstances of a peace process imply different types of reconciliation methods.

links

- [Conciliation Resources. Making Peace with the Past: transforming broken relationships. Accord Insight. August 2016](#)

Berghof Foundation

In some countries, more civilians are being killed by armed gangs and criminal organizations than in traditional combat. Still, these pockets of armed social violence – “undeclared wars” marked, among other things, by criminal, gang and/or urban violence as well as extremist violence – have long received much less attention than politically motivated forms of armed conflicts. As their effects — social-political destabilization, in some cases coinciding with high numbers of victims — are becoming more pressing, national and international actors have begun addressing the phenomenon. In “Undeclared Wars”, Bernardo Arévalo de León and Ana Glenda Tager argue that the inclusive and participatory methodologies offered by peacebuilding provide an operational strategy that would allow the international community to engage successfully with issues of armed social violence. Five sets of respondents then explore the actors, factors and dynamics of violence in different settings and discuss what peacebuilding and other initiatives have achieved, and where they have fallen short.

links

Peace Nobel Prize 2016

The Nobel Peace Prize 2016 was awarded to the Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos "for his resolute efforts to bring the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end". President Santos initiated the negotiations that culminated in the peace accord between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas. The Norwegian Nobel Committee emphasized the importance of the fact that President Santos is now inviting all parties to participate in a broad-based national dialogue aimed at advancing the peace process. Even those who opposed the peace accord have welcomed such a dialogue.

links

- [Listen to Laurent Goetschel's interview on that topic \(in Swiss German\)](#)

calendar

Upcoming events

November 1, 2016

Basel, Switzerland

[Daring peace – Colombia after 50 years of civil war](#)

This is the last in a series of events organized by the Swiss Programme for the Promotion of Peace in Colombia "Semillas de Esperanza". During this roundtable meeting, Luz E. Romero and Ricardo Esquivia, two representatives of Colombian organizations, will talk about the challenges facing their country following the signature of the peace accords and the referendum "no" vote. The meeting will be conducted in Spanish with simultaneous interpretation in German.

[Further information](#)

[Contact](#)

November 3, 2016

Bern, Switzerland

[Roundtable on art and peacebuilding](#)

KOFF and artasfoundation are organizing a roundtable on art and peacebuilding, with the participation of Meret Schleger, Vesna Matovic (International Alert) and Dagmar Reichert (artasfoundation).

[Further information](#)

November 7-11, 2016

Geneva, Switzerland

[Geneva Peace Week](#)

For the third year running the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is organizing the Geneva Peace Week. Fifty-two events on peacebuilding will be taking place throughout the week in Geneva.

[Program](#)

November 24, 2016

Bern, Switzerland

[Roundtable on the ATT and Swiss arms export practice](#)

In cooperation with Amnesty International Switzerland, KOFF is organizing a roundtable on the Arms Trade treaty and Swiss arms export practice.

[Further information](#)

November 25 - December 10, 2016

throughout Switzerland

[16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#)

This year the series of events organized by cfd looks at gender stereotypes and their repercussions in our relationships, at work, at school and in our private lives. Flashmobs, talks, films and exhibitions will be organized throughout Switzerland. On December 1, KOFF is holding a roundtable on the situation of women in Israel and Palestine, with the participation of Rafah Anabtawi, representing the NGO Kayan Feminist Organization.

[Program](#)

Until November 30, 2016

Cambridge, USA

[Vacancy for an Executive Director at CDA - Collaborative Learning Projects](#)

CDA – Collaborative Learning Projects is currently seeking a new Executive Director. The closing date for applications is November 30, 2016.

[Further information](#)

Until November 30, 2016

Basel, Switzerland

[Register for the swisspeace training on Theories of Change in Fragile Contexts](#)

Despite the widespread emergence of theories of change in strategy and project documents, they are rarely used to their full potential. The swisspeace training on Theories of Change in Fragile Contexts focuses on how 'good' theories of change can be created that will help practitioners gain an in-depth understanding of their programs and their impacts. The training will take place from February 1-3, 2017.

[Further information](#)

[Registration until November 30, 2016](#)

Until November 30, 2016

Basel, Switzerland

[Register for the swisspeace course on National Dialogue & Peace Mediation](#)

The National Dialogue and Peace Mediation course offered by swisspeace and the Berghof Foundation provides insights in how to understand, design and support national dialogue processes, training in dialogue and mediation skills and reflection on lessons that can be drawn from previous cases.

[Further information](#)

[Registration until November 30, 2016](#)

Until December 31, 2016

Basel, Switzerland

[Register for the swisspeace course on Fragility, Conflict & Statebuilding](#)

Fragile states have become an issue of major concern for the international community. But what exactly is state fragility? The swisspeace course on Fragility, Conflict and Statebuilding focuses on the conceptual, policy and implementation challenges of statebuilding in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The course will take place on March 13-17, 2017.

[Further information](#)

[Registration until December 31, 2016](#)

January 27-28, 2017

Basel, Switzerland

[CAS Thematic Block: Dealing with the Past](#)

The thematic block "Dealing with the Past" will take place on January 27-28, 2017, as part of swisspeace's CAS in Civilian Peacebuilding Essentials 2016/2017.

[Further information](#)

February 24-25, 2017

Basel, Switzerland

[CAS Thematic Block: Peace Mediation](#)

The thematic block “Peace Mediation” will take place on February 24-25, 2017, as part of swisspeace’s CAS in Civilian Peacebuilding Essentials 2016/2017.

[Further information](#)

Until February 28, 2017

Basel, Switzerland

[Register for the swisspeace course on Conflict Prevention](#)

The swisspeace course on Conflict Prevention and Early Warning explores and critically discusses theoretical reflections on the understanding of conflict prevention, the current implementation efforts as well as possible avenues to enhance conflict prevention and early warning. It will take place on May 3-5, 2017.

[Further information](#)

[Registration until February 28, 2017](#)

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KOFF

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Centre pour la promotion de la paix
Centre for Peacebuilding

KOFF is a dialogue and exchange network facilitated by swisspeace. It is jointly supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the following Swiss NGOs which are members of the platform:

Alliance Sud	IAMANEH Schweiz	Solidar Switzerland
APRED	ICP	SOS Children's Villages
artasfoundation	Interpeace	Stiftung für Integrale
Baha'i	Lucerne Initiative for Peace and Security (LIPS)	Friedensförderung
Brücke · Le pont	medico international schweiz	Swiss Academy for Development
Caritas Switzerland	MIR Switzerland	Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund
Caux – Initiatives of Change Foundation	mission 21	Swiss Peace Council
cfd	miva – transporte l'aide	Swiss Red Cross
DCAF	Peace Brigades International Schweiz	Swiss Refugee Council
Eirene Suisse	Peace Watch Switzerland	SWISSAID
Fondation Hironnelle	PeaceWomen Across the Globe	Terre des Femmes Switzerland
Geneva Call	Pestalozzi Children's Foundation	terre des hommes schweiz
Grains of Peace	Quaker United Nations Office	Verein Palmyrah
Green Cross Switzerland	Schweizerischer Katholischer Frauenbund	Women for Peace Switzerland
Group for a Switzerland without an Army	Society for Threatened Peoples Switzerland	World Vision Switzerland
HEKS		
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation		