# #YOUTH WAGING PEACE

## YOUTH LED GUIDE ON PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH EDUCATION.

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# FOREWORD

**I**t is an honour to write the foreword for this youth-led guide on prevention of violent extremism through education.** I believe in today's world the young people are more well-equipped than ever to tackle the systemic challenges that we as a global community are facing. And, this guide promises to be a part of the many efforts spearheaded by young people to take charge of the world and hopefully succeed in creating a more peaceful and sustainable future for generations to come.

In recent years, one of the challenges, among a plethora of others, the world has been facing is the rise of intolerance, hate, and extremism (especially violent extremism). According to Woollaston (2017), since the start of 2017, there have been 535 attacks, with 3,635 fatalities around the world[1] – and, this is just until June 2017.

These attacks cut across religions, race, politics and other social or economic demographics. From the civil war in my home country Yemen, ISIS and civil war in Syria, Iraq and the Levant, United Kingdom, the rise of White Supremacy in the United States, the outcry of the Palestinians, Boko Haram in Nigeria, the persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar. Close your eyes and point anywhere on the map and there are high chances that that country is facing violent extremism in one form or the other.

Young people have been, and continue to be both the perpetrators and the victims of violent extremism. The May 2017 Manchester attack was perpetrated by a 22-year-old, as was the Dhaka, Bangladesh attack in 2016. Young people are spearheading the war in my country. I am sure the same is true in Syria, South Sudan and other conflict struck parts of the world. But then, this inspiring guide was fully developed by young people. What could be a better or more thunderous statement other than a youth-led guide on prevention of violent extremism through education? What additional affirmation, than 2,000+ global youth pulling their efforts together to provide timely solutions and guidance

to reverse this encroaching challenge?

This is a testimony to what we can achieve when we collaborate beyond borders, beyond socio-political barriers. It is also a testimony to what inspired and empowered young people can achieve. The young have spoken, louder than before and it is high time we bring them into the center of all the processes of policymaking and implementation, recognize them as partners and not mere beneficiaries.

I, therefore, urge all the stakeholders out there, from governments, seasoned experts and policymakers, educators, parents, media and young people alike, to implement the recommendations and many other action-centric ideas put forth in this powerful document. Just as UNESCO MGIEP and the Government of Australia believed in, and entrusted the young people that developed this guide with this immense responsibility, I urge all stakeholders out there to do the same and empower more young men and women in our pursuit of sustainable peace and development.

Enjoy reading this lucid guide and most importantly, I hope that you will be inspired to put into action some of its suggestions, ideas, and recommendations ∎

**Ms. Tawakkol Karman**
*Nobel Peace Laureate, 2011*

[1]http://www.wired.co.uk/article/terrorism-map-global

# NOTE FROM A FORMER VIOLENT EXTREMIST

**F**rom my earliest memories, everyone told me how "gifted" I was. Teachers expected straight A's, and I delivered with little effort and even less engagement with the curriculum. By the time I reached high school, I was convinced—as many teenagers are—that school had nothing to offer, so I dropped out after sophomore year.

I became a white power skinhead because it was the most effective means of lashing out. My parents fought constantly. My schools were mundane to the point of nausea. I wasn't an anti-Semitic racist looking for a home; I was a hurt, angry, unchallenged teenager looking for the most dramatic means of pissing people off.

Once I discovered the shock value of the swastika, I ran with it. Ganging-up with a bunch of like-minded misfits, we formed a skinhead crew that leveraged the Holocaust as a means to pick a fight with society. No regard for the millions who were murdered. Not a thought for the millions left to suffer memories of horror and lost loved ones. Only a desperate need for an outlet. Rage was channeled into hate, which we then cultivated and disseminated.

As our drunken assaults and vandalism caught the attention of police and media, it also caught the attention of bitter old-guard racists, who we had emboldened to slither from their holes and bask in our brashness. Even as we laughed at their cowardice, we took heed of their words, which told us of a Jewish conspiracy to destroy the white race. The writings of contemporary neo-Nazis were added to copies of Mein Kampf stolen from the public library, and we began what was at the time seen as a process of enlightenment—a discovery of hidden knowledge.

Everything we had been taught in school, everything on TV and in newspapers, was "Jewish propaganda." Any information which didn't affirm our assumed ideology of hate and supremacy was cast off as patently false. The "Jew Media" was seen as a single single-minded entity whose sole purpose was to bring about the downfall of our people.

For seven years I refused interaction with anyone but other racist white people. Our skinhead crew grew and seethed till the violence of our protégés brought us to subconsciously reconsider what sort of monsters we had created, and what sort of monsters we had become. But it was sheer exhaustion that caused the initial and ultimately triumphant fissures in the walls of hatred I had so diligently constructed and so ruthlessly guarded.

Ignorance isn't bliss; in fact, it takes a hell of a lot of work. Life teems with a staggering amount of data that indicate that diversity is a strength. Denying and deflecting such data during each waking moment is a Herculean task akin to trying to sweep the sand off of a beach with a whisk-broom. Unconditional smiles freely given to me by people I had convinced myself to hate, and undeniable evidence of their contributions to culture, science, and simple quality-of-life uncovered the sputtering embers of my humanity, encouraging a flame that lit the way from hate to love. Once I took a peek outside the blinders, I had voluntarily narrowed my perspective with, the truth that we are all human beings in need of compassion and wonderfully capable of giving it resolved in scintillating glory.

A self-serving desire to shed the burden of hate and the lies it demanded, coupled with the stark reality that violent death or prison would take me from my daughter if I didn't change course, moved me to take that first step. It wasn't till a year or so later when I watched my little girl playing with other children who happened to have varying degrees of higher melanin content than we did that I realized how truly wrong I was. They were all children. Not black children, or white children, but the sons and daughters of mothers and fathers.

Discovering the beautifully obvious was a rebirth. A desire to experience wonderful human diversity replaced irrational hatred. I began taking liberal arts classes at a local tech college, where an English professor introduced me to writing and new perspectives as I took in the wisdom

of the black women in my critique group. In 2007, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee encouraged my idea of writing a memoir. That memoir came to be known as My Life After Hate and initiated the most powerful and meaningful experiences in my life.

In October of 2012, Pardeep Kaleka reached out to me. His father Satwant Singh Kaleka was the last person murdered on August 5th, 2012, as he fought off the gunman with a butter knife, being shot five times before he fell. His bravery bought time for the police to arrive, saving the lives of the many children and elderly who hid elsewhere in the gurdwara. Pardeep asked me how someone could do something so horrible. I answered, "practice." The shooter had practiced hate and violence for over a decade, which poisoned everything in his life and drove him to such misery that only homicide followed by suicide made sense. I shared with Pardeep how guilty I felt that I was selling books and getting booked for speaking engagements because of what happened to his community. He told me that he wanted to never stop talking about his father and the other victims. Every time we told the story of August 5th, 2012, we inspire others to heal through kindness and compassion and empower everyone who hears to divert people from the path of violence as I had been diverted when I left hate groups in 1994.

In the aftermath of the shooting, Pardeep and his brother Amardeep, along with other survivors launched the concept of Serve 2 Unite. Today, Pardeep and I organise Serve 2 Unite Student Leadership Chapters to inspire students to become leaders by creating artistic service-learning projects that build inclusive, compassionate, nonviolent school communities. Interfaith leaders, community members, higher education partners, and public school administrators praise Serve 2 Unite for its community impact through student-led, grassroots efforts within schools. Student and teachers self-select research topics including personal identity and the power of the media, gender equality, segregation / racial tension / civil rights, counteracting verbal and physical abuse of women and human trafficking in society, eliminating cyber-bullying, etc. Through the research of these topics, students are empowered to develop identities as leaders and agents of social change. In addition to their service learning projects (for which they receive graduation credit), students are guided to develop personal, social, and behavioural skills that help them behave in a manner that honors themselves, their peers, community, and society. They develop a commitment to community service, resulting in pride in

their own unique abilities, school, and their neighborhoods, lighting a fire in them to aspire to attend college and pursue successful careers.

It is with immense honor that I submit this humble note to Youth Waging Peace. Young people are our greatest hope to overcome the many challenges that face our great human family ■

**Mr. Arno Michaelis**

# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**T**here is no denying that incidences of violent extremism are on the rise across the world. These incidences are not isolated in any one region or country but spill across many countries. This rising trend is worrisome as it puts fear in the minds of the general population and begins a vicious cycle of suspicion, mistrust and exclusion among communities along the lines of religion, race, colour, gender, nationality and socio-economic status among many others.

In response to this rising trend in violent extremism, the Secretary General of the United Nations initiated his Plan of Action on Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism, unanimously supported by the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The responsibility of designing and implementing a programme on using education to prevent violent extremism was assigned to UNESCO. The General Conference of UNESCO passed a resolution Decision 197 EX/46 in 2015 requesting the secretariat to support member states using the soft power of education as a tool to prevent violent extremism.

In September 2016, the education sector from the UNESCO headquarters and the UNESCO category 1 research Institute, the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) organised the first International Conference on Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education: Taking Action, in New Delhi, India. The usual plethora of reports and guides produced by experts on the subject, roundtables and expert panels were organised.

But something different also happened. UNESCO MGIEP brought 50 youth from across the world rigorously selected through six week online discussion on the subject to participate in a first of its kind, "Talking Across Generations on Education (TAGe)" event. This event organised as a plenary session—not a side or lunch event—brought together these youth in a non-hierarchical "flat" dialogue with about 12 senior policymakers on the challenges and opportunities the youth see in preventing violent extremism through education.

The conference culminated with the presentation of a "Youth Action Plan" containing three clear tangible action points. One action point was the development of a youth-led guide on Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education. This Guide is the result of that call to action.

The Institute circulated a global call to youth who were willing to take up the challenge of producing the Guide. After a rigorous search based on a well-defined set of criteria, two coordinating lead authors were identified. These authors were then tasked to find the remaining authors who they saw fit to contribute to the Guide and this team then reached out to the wider group of youth to solicit their experiences and guidance in producing the Guide. The youth have done their part. They have reached out to more than 2,000 young people from more than 50 countries, collated their ideas and experiences and finally featured more than 150 unique voices into this document.

At the end, I am pleased to say that after nine months of hard work and dedication, the youth have delivered a product I believe we can all be proud of. I am in particular delighted to see how the authors have reached out to their respective youth communities and brought their voices to this guide. The guide provides actual action items for teachers, school administrators, local community leaders, religious leaders and policymakers in the education sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Australian High Commission in New Delhi in believing in this project and facilitating the financial support for the production of this youth-led guide. I would also like to thank the Montreal based Center for Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, which is an important and integral partner of the UNESCO MGIEP in its work on prevention of violent extremism through education ∎

**Anantha Kumar Duraiappah**
*Director*
*UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development*

**There is no shortage of information available about the rise of violent extremism,** the recruitment of young people into extremist and terrorist organizations, or the efforts of communities, countries, and governments to counter and prevent such activities. There are guides for teachers, guides for policy makers, and stories from youth experts. There are websites, articles, and a catalogue of academic and practitioner conferences each year.

We have developed this guide not because resources on preventing violent extremism (PVE) don't exist but because we believe that harnessing the voices of young people to deliver new insights and plans for action will strengthen our prevention efforts.

In efforts to reach multiple stakeholders and ensure universal applicability, recommendations regarding PVE often promote the false notion that the answers to the threats we face are simple: Encourage tolerance. Teach critical thinking. Develop empathy.

These are excellent goals. But if they are to be achieved, they must be presented in the context of reality.

How do you encourage understanding and respect among people on the losing end of entrenched structural racism and exclusion?

How do you foster a sense of community and belonging in young people who do not identify personally or emotionally with the community into which they were born?

How do you respond to the critical thinker who correctly identifies geopolitical injustices that punish people based on nothing more than the location of their birth and the reality of their socio-economic status?

How do you encourage empathy and compassion when science tells us white people care less about black people[1], rich people care less about poor people[2], and we all care less about groups too large for us to forge

a personal connection[3]?

We don't have the answers to all these questions. But we do understand that unless we contextualize our efforts to prevent violent extremism in an honest assessment of the structural inequalities that persist in our world, we will nullify our effect by destroying the trust of those we seek to reach.

Young people understand that the deck is stacked for or against them depending on where they live, what family they were born into, and the color of their skin; depending on which government rules their country, which country occupies their territory, how much oil they have, how much money they lack, and how interesting their plight might be to western media.

Compassion, critical thinking, and empathy are difficult competencies to develop, even in a perfect world. Our more daunting challenge is to develop them in world that is brutally unjust.

This guide is driven by the need not to add to the library of information on violent extremism but to underscore a message often missed: to reach young people effectively, we must respect their ability to grasp the reality of injustice, intolerance, and inequity.

When we encourage critical thinking we must be prepared for, and even welcome, the ability of young people to correctly identify and challenge injustice. When we promote empathy and compassion, we must be prepared to discuss the global and local realities young people will point to as instances when they, as individuals, as a community, or as a country, race, or religion, have been treated with indifference and intolerance.

If we are to reach young people effectively, all activities to prevent violent extremism, build peace, and create a stronger, safer world must be rooted in a candid conversation about the instability and violence with which we currently live. How can our educational institutions safely create spaces for these debates to take place? How can teachers and mentors respond when students ask questions that have no single answer? How do we teach ourselves to see the potential building blocks of conflict or peace in everything from a textbook to an arts program?

[1]Kemick (2010); McElwee & McDaniel (2017); Pew Research Centre (2016); Restructure (2010).
[2]Savchuk (2014); Thompson (2011).
[3]Resnick (2017).
[4]For our purposes we define young people as between the ages of 15 and 35.

To answer these questions, we have curated responses from young people[4] around the world. Their experiences and insights determined the structure and content of this guide. While we received a diversity of voices and perspectives, advocating for different and sometimes contradictory actions, we found that three key messages emerged from our analysis of all Youth Contributor submissions. For each key message, we have identified a corresponding framework to guide policy support to empower stakeholders.

*1.* **Peace, empathy, and compassion cannot be taught.** These are skills that are only fully realized through experiential learning and lived experience.
 Policy Action: Provide opportunities for exchange and interaction and create conducive environments in which young people can develop and practice these skills.

*2.* **Start now.** Stakeholders can take immediate and important actions, even small actions, to support a culture that prevents violent extremism. No one needs to wait for permission or a comprehensive set of instructions.
Policy Action: Provide resources such as technical support, financing, guidance, and networks to empower actors.

*3.* **This is a long, slow process.** Preventing violent extremism requires the development of a resilient culture. It is the work of expanding opportunity. All stakeholders can play critical roles in making this culture a reality.
Policy Action: Provide a broad scope of support for simultaneous interventions, big and small, at all levels and for long periods of time.

Within these broad themes, we received inspirational stories of young people driving change in their communities and painful reflections on the failures of schools and societies. We heard from young teachers who felt unprepared by their own education and experience to support their students and from students who felt alienated and isolated by the cruelty of their teachers. We hope you will be inspired, challenged, and even discomforted by their stories; and we hope that their insights will lead the change in how we achieve prevention of violent extremism through education ∎

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# SUMMARY OF ACTION GUIDELINES FOR CHANGE AGENTS

## TEACHERS

| Objectives | Actions |
|---|---|
| School inclusion for marginalized or disadvantaged youth | Prepare self-contained (i.e. no textbooks needed) activities and material that students can take back to their communities to share with peers who do not attend school. |
| | Empower young people to be a part of outreach initiatives to non-students. Encourage students to see themselves as ambassadors who can connect to their non-student peers, share with them, and learn from them. Pay particular attention to supporting students in discovering what they may be able to learn from non-student peers to foster respect and equality in the outreach. |
| Discuss controversial and difficult issues | Provide students with safe spaces (online or offline) to construct their own definitions and examples of "extremism" and "moderation." This encourages student participation in a shared social project and empowers them to direct the conversation on difficult issues. Have students construct their definitions in small groups and share with the class. After discussions, ask students to reflect on any changes they may want to make in their definitions. Remember that the goal is not to arrive at a correct definition and students should not be expected to agree on a right answer. The purpose of the exercise is for students to see, and develop comfort with, the imprecision in these words. Other words for the exercise could be crime, theft, poverty, violence, justice, inequality, nationalism, patriotism, supremacy, tolerance, empathy, sympathy, etc. |

Provide students with safe spaces (online or offline) to construct their own definitions and examples of "extremism" and "moderation." This encourages student participation in a shared social project and empowers them to direct the conversation on difficult issues. Have students construct their definitions in small groups and share with the class. After discussions, ask students to reflect on any changes they may want to make in their definitions. Remember that the goal is not to arrive at a correct definition and students should not be expected to agree on a right answer. The purpose of the exercise is for students to see, and develop comfort with, the imprecision in these words. Other words for the exercise could be crime, theft, poverty, violence, justice, inequality, nationalism, patriotism, supremacy, tolerance, empathy, sympathy, etc.

**Discuss controversial and difficult issues**

Provide examples of violence that might be justified, for instance when personal safety or the safety of a loved one is at risk. Then begin to change the situation slightly and ask students to consider when violence becomes unacceptable in their minds. Discuss the process they move through to make these conclusions and address differences on what each students believes without asking them to reach consensus.

Have students analyze historical cases in which violent and nonviolent means were used to achieve outcomes. Speaking openly about the advantages of violence can lead to a more nuanced conversation about the risks of violence and the benefits of nonviolence resistance. After students have had the chance to share their own ideas and beliefs, use resources such as Erica Chenoweth's TED Talk to underscore some of the historical conclusions we can draw about violent and nonviolent social change. Another resource is the game "War of Mine."

| | |
|---|---|
| Discuss controversial and difficult issues | Use the Erica Chenoweth TED Talk referenced above to provide students with an example of someone who changed their mind about a topic that was important to them. Based on Chenoweth's talk, what changed her mind? Chart the process that Chenoweth took: participation in a workshop with people who held different beliefs; a series of encounters in which she maintained her position; the invitation of a colleague who disagreed to work collaboratively to discover which position the evidence would support; and two years of active research. Ask students to consider what ideas or beliefs they hold that would require such a long, involved process before they would relinquish them. Ask them to share any experience they have had changing their minds about something. What process did they go through to come around to a new way of thinking? What do they think would be the most effective way to get other people change their thinking? |
| | Ask your students to respond to the question "Am I a bully or am I bullied?" Allow them to explain why they don't fit into either category if they would like. Ask them to reflect on why they feel the way they do about how they experience (or don't experience) bullying. Allow students to share what they've written if they want. |
| Develop understanding of structural barriers and injustice | Introduce students to a cast of imaginary characters who have been born into a variety of circumstance, from a sick child born into poverty to a child born with no legs to a healthy child born to wealthy parents, etc. Tell students that they will be assigned one of these identities and their participation in the rest of the class activities will be determined by which identity they are assigned. Before they know which circumstance they receive, however, they need to design a framework that will determine who participates in the activities. Will accommodations be made for the inclusion of poor people? Will wealthier people be expected to subsidize the participation of others? Will activities be accessible to those with handicaps or illnesses? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Develop understanding of structural barriers and injustice | As a class or in small groups, focus on a structural injustice or barrier, such as poverty, gender discrimination, racism, etc. Ask students to imagine the things they do over the course of a typical day or week. How would these be impacted if they faced this structural barrier? When would they notice it and what would be different about their lives? Have students write and share aloud the first-person narrative of their experience living with this structural barrier. Afterwards, discuss what it felt like to imagine themselves in such a situation. |
| Understand language barriers | Begin a class speaking a foreign language if you know one. Don't provide any explanation or make special attempts to help students understand what you are saying. Just speak for 5 - 10 minutes as though it is a normal lesson, perhaps asking students a few questions and expecting their answers. After a few minutes, return to your usual language. Ask them what it felt like when you spoke a language they didn't recognize without showing any effort to help them understand. Then ask them what groups might feel this way in the course of their normal day. Tourists? Immigrants? Refugees? Ask them to consider how else language barriers might interfere with a person's daily life (recognizing junk mail, buying food at a supermarket, reading a map, reading street signs or store signs, etc.). What resources would different groups have to draw on in these situations? |
| | Find out which languages your students speak at home. If a student is interested, allow them the chance to teach their language to others in the class. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Understand language barriers | Find out if the parents of all students can understand the language of instruction. If not, work with the family and the school administration to make sure parents can read information sent home by the school, have an understanding of topics and themes covered, and review any informational material that might impact the student's experience at school (such as permission forms for field trips, invitations for the parents to join activities, etc.). |
| Promote inclusion and understanding in the classroom and school | Understand your own biases and prejudices. For this, identify student groups in your class based on race, religion, and other characteristics. Map out what you know, think, and feel about each group. Reflect on where your knowledge and feelings come from. Is there any prejudice in them? Consider the following questions: how can I model a perspective that encourages inclusion? How does my method of communicating and acting encourage integration and respect for difference? Are there any ways that my culture and history have influenced the way I think and behave, to the detriment of certain groups? |
| | When you start discussing a new topic in class, bring in 5-6 opinions on that topic from very different people. Ask your students to read them and decide which ones are more common in their community and why. Ask them to identify which ones are less accepted and why that is the case. Discuss with them what the implications of having each perspective might be. What informs each belief and what challenges it? |
| | Divide your class into two or more groups. Identify a relevant issue to discuss. Ask your students to represent and defend the side they disagree with. Afterwards, ask them to reflect on their experience. How did they try to dismantle a position they hold? How did they look for weaknesses in their own beliefs? Are there any aspects of the other side of the issue that they feel some agreement with? |

Take students on field trips to different places or worship, multicultural centers, communities, or other areas where they can interact firsthand with groups to which they do not belong. By including different perspectives in the formal curriculum, teachers demonstrate to students the intellectual significance of understanding diversity.

Narrate a story that might seem familiar to your students. Describe a young person who gets up, interacts with her parents, visits her friends. In the end, share that the protagonist belongs to a group you believe your students may have antagonistic feelings. Ask your students how they feel about the story. Was anything surprising? If so, what surprised them? What actions that the protagonist takes (for example, being affectionate with friends and family, taking care of a sibling or parent) they feel are incompatible with the group to which the protagonist belongs, and what is the root of that sense of incompatibility?

Promote inclusion and understanding in the classroom and school

Ask students to write down answers to the following questions and then discuss them in pairs. What makes me think the way I do? How sure am I of what I believe in? How different or similar are my ideas to those of other people? Why do we have different or similar perspectives? Then ask the listener and writer to switch places -- have the listener repeat what writer has said. Does the writer feel her emotions and opinions are accurately reflected by the listener? What sounds different from what she intended when she hears her answers expressed by someone else rather than spoken and written herself?

Identify different role models from other cultures and countries. Devote some time each month to discuss those people and how they changed or are changing their communities.

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| **Use textbooks responsibly** | Consider developing a textbook with your students and their families. This collaborative project can be more representative of your classroom and community and may supplement some of the parts of the textbook you use in class. | |
| | Review your textbooks before each lesson. Consider if the material in the textbook is representative of what you want to teach. What voices are left out? Find ways to supplement textbooks with other material and remind students that they can be critical in their assessment of their textbooks. | |
| | Provide samples of old, outdated textbooks to highlight the evolution of knowledge and understanding. By reflecting on old texts that seem outdated or inaccurate, students are more likely to apply that critical lens to current texts as well. | |
| | Before you choose a textbook, consider who wrote or sponsored this book? Is there an explicit or implicit agenda in it? Is it fair? Is it up to date? | |
| **Promote student-centered learning** | When you introduce a new topic, draw out what students already know or believe about it. This activity will help to engage students in critical reflection and will show to them that their knowledge and contribution are respected. | |
| | Create surveys to circulate among students on a regular basis to learn more about their successes and struggles. This will impress upon them your interest in their individual experience in the classroom, beyond test scores and grades | |

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| | Each class or week identify students who you can delegate some tasks to (handing out assignments, doing some classroom chores, and others). |
| Promote student-centered learning | Encourage peer to peer learning. Divide students in small groups in which everyone can participate and share. Academically stronger students can mentor students who struggle. Foster a sense of teamwork and reward students for building these relationships -- both the mentor and the mentee. Break topics down into smaller sections and have small groups study different parts of the lesson carefully. Then invite the groups to deliver "lectures" on what they have learned to the rest of the class. |
| Support ethical classroom and assessment metrics | Clearly communicate learning outcomes and assessment criteria to your students. Ensure that the assessment material is aligned with the outcomes of the learning. |
| Understand violent extremism | Review the push and pull factor table on page 91-92. Identify the factors that you think are most likely to impact your students. Make a list of these factors and share them with your class. Ask them to discuss how these factors impact their lives and what they think the consequences might be. You do not need to present these ideas as push and pull factors related to violent extremism; instead, see how your students imagine these issues might manifest, if unaddressed, in their community. |
| | Ask students to define the terms "extremist" and "radical." Then pass out a list of people who waged movements: terrorist leaders, freedom fighters, civil rights advocates, etc. Ask students to decide who was an extremist or who was radical. Then ask them to consider why these people were radical. What drove their radicalization? Can the same ideas and experiences drive someone to be a radical advocate for justice and a radical advocate for revenge, religion, or terror? |

# TEACHERS

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| Provide resources to families and close relatives to address warning signs in young people | Maintain consistent communication with parents related to the content of school activities (not only to grades). Ensure parents have access to the themes, events, and projects in which their children are spending time. This will allow parents to connect with young people about what is happening at school and will help parents and teachers compare any warning signs or concerns. |
| Nurture active citizenship | Support students in researching a cause or organization that resonates with them. Ask them to prepare a list of actions that they can take to advocate for the cause or support the organization. Have students prepare their research for the class, advocating for their classmates to try one or two of the action points they have identified. |

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| Nurture active citizenship | Have the class work as a group to identify a problem they see in the school community and propose a way to solve it. Ask them to prepare small presentations to discuss the topics with the broader community. |
| | Invite guest speakers to speak to students about what their role is in the wider community. They can be family members, religious and community leaders, or experts in different fields. |
| | Provide extra credit or grade weighting or other formalized incentives for students to volunteer. |
| Accommodate religious needs and develop religious literacy | Identify, together with the students, the different groups that the school/class might not be able to accommodate. Even if no one in the class feels their needs are not accommodated, ask students to think of what group might feel unwelcome or disrespected if they joined the class. How would students respond to those feelings? What kind of accommodation would be possible? How would they feel if asked to make accommodations for another student? Then flip the scenario: imagine they are attending a school in which the student's religion is the minority faith. What aspects of religious practice would the student want to be accommodated? If that were not possible, what steps could the school community take to show that they respect and honor the student? |
| | Invite religious scholars and leaders to speak to the class. Ask students to share about their own religion if they would like (this is not a task that should be a requirement). Ask students to interview their parents about their religious beliefs and history, and then to share what was new or surprising that they learned from these conversations. |

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| Accommodate religious needs and develop religious literacy | Take students to different places of worship. Try to enlist the support of a religious leader who can run through the traditional prayer or worship ceremonies with the class. |
| | Include parents in a discussion of how different faiths are honored and respected. Invite parents to share what they feel is most important for their child to have when at school regarding religious freedom. Invite parents to discuss in front of the class and with their children how they practice their faith. This can be helpful even if everyone shares the same faith, as many families will have different ways of practicing a shared religion.. |
| Include families and guardians in learning | Give students assignments that require interaction with their families, such as interviewing someone in their household. Ask students to find out from a parent, guardian, or caregiver what they remember learning about a subject that you are covering. Have students discuss what difference they discover in how information and teaching styles may have changed over time. Ask them to reflect on how that may change the experience of the student. |
| | Design activities that use a common goal to build partnerships between your students, their families, and school staff. Invite parents and the wider community to school cultural festivals and sporting programs. If you are working with students on identifying causes they support, involve families in strategies for how young people can rally communities to make a difference. |
| | Include students in conversations you have with parents. Have student-teacher-parent conferences to share information about the child in school and to learn what may be similar or different about the child at home. If the child is old enough, ask her to prepare the agenda for the meeting and to lead the discussion. |

| Use art to nurture empathy and compassion | Ask students to partner with a classmate and share an emotional experience with each other. When they have each shared a story, have partners separate and work on projects independently. Each student will create a visual representation of the emotion they heard from their partner. When the artwork is shared with the full group, ask other students to guess what emotion is being depicted. Consider how different people view emotions and ask students to discuss why this might be the case and how this can complicate the process of expressing and understanding the emotions of others. |
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| | Ask students to imagine another person who lives in the same country or community but in some way is different from them. Ask them to write a first-person narrative about that other person: what is the background of that person? What kind of problems does she or he have? Why? What kind of emotions does this person experience? How is this person different from the student? |
| | Ask your students to imagine that they have a brother or a sister living in a different part of the world - someone they have never met and don't know much about. Ask them to write letters or emails to that person. What do they want to know about their brother or sister? Based on that, what might their brother or sister want to know about them? What do they think would be most important to share? What about their lives is most reflective of who they are? |
| | Encourage your students to create small art clubs to express themselves. This can be anything from creative writing, painting, sculpture, art from recycled material, drama club. Discuss one theme for each semester and invite students to work within that theme. For example, ask members of each club to present their ideas about peace or related issues in the artistic format of their choice. Have an open day when they can showcase their art to each other and other community members. Exhibit their art in school. |

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| Use art to nurture empathy and compassion | Ask students to keep a journal in which they record their emotions at that moment. Dedicate 3 - 5 minutes each day or a few times per week to writing in the journals. You can provide prompts or allow for free writes. At certain points, ask the class to review their journal entries and consider how they feel about their emotions now that some time has passed |
| Use art to nurture empathy and compassion | Provide students with classes or class units on journalism. Invite media experts and journalist to work with students or to deliver guest lectures. Have students produce a media project of their own: a magazine, newspaper, TV or radio channel, news blog, or YouTube channel that allows students to conduct research, investigate, and express their opinions and perspectives. |
| Teach journalism | Teachers whose subjects are not related to journalism can still promote media literacy and journalism skills in the course of their classes. Below we provide some specific examples, but the general ideas can be used for most subjects, even those not listed.<br><br>History: Invite students to imagine they live in another era and must report on the events and people of that time; imagine they belong to a different group or community, and ask them to imagine how that group identity might influence the way they research, analyze, and present their ideas.<br><br>Science: Ask students to report on a scientific event or discovery as though they are presenting the information to a group of people who may be offended by the new information, for example, Galileo's theory that the Earth was not the center of the universe. Ask them to consider how they would cover such an event, what concerns they might have about how the community responds to what they say, and what they feel the role of a journalist or the media is when handling a controversial subject. |

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| Teach journalism | Literature: Have students write an investigative profile of a character from a novel. Encourage them to find examples in the text where the dominating perspective of the character is challenged or problematized by information offered by other characters. How does a journalist decide which sources to trust? |
| Design digital literacy and media and information literacy training | Identify articles from different sources on one topic. Ask students to discuss questions such as: What is the author's position and opinion in the article? Who is the author? What are the assumptions she or he may have? Why does she or he have these assumptions? What implications may they have on the representation of the information in this article? Are there any limitations or contradictions to this position? How can this article be interpreted by different people in different contexts? |

# FAMILIES AND GUARDIANS

| Objectives | Actions |
|---|---|
| | Develop a relationship with your child's teacher. Keep in touch with the school and look for ways to participate in your child's life outside of your home. |
| Provide resources to families and close relatives to address warning signs in young people | Pay attention to the content of your child's school experience, not only his academic performance. If you have concerns about his behavior, reach out to teachers to find out if they see the same signs at school. Talk to your child about friends, hobbies, and interests; ask questions about what he likes or dislikes in school. This will create continuity between his school and home life and can strengthen an overall sense of community security. |

| Objectives | Actions |
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| Provide resources to families and close relatives to address warning signs in young people | Show interest in your child's experiences both at school and outside. Pay attention to sudden behavioral changes that might concern you. Whether they are related to radicalization or not, these signs can indicate that your child could benefit from additional support from you and other adults. |
| | Young people need structure and role models. Show your child consistent nonviolent and understanding behavior in your interactions with others. |
| | Validate your child's feelings and be willing to share your own fears and vulnerabilities. Show your child that these feelings are important and make your home a safe place to discuss them. Cultivate an open relationship with your children in which they feel free and safe talking with you about anything, especially emotional states. |

# RELIGIOUS LEADERS

| Objectives | Actions |
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| Enhance religious literacy in the community | Learn about what aspects of your faith are most likely to be used by those recruiting extremists. |
| | Discuss common misconceptions with the congregation. |

Enhance religious literacy in the community

Teach and guide students to appreciate the universal values upheld by different religions - show them where Christianity agrees with Islam, where Islam agrees with Hinduism, where Buddhism agrees with Islam, etc.

Discuss contradictions and historical relevance.

Encourage young people to ask questions about their religion and their religious texts without feeling that they are disrespecting the belief.

Ensure that teachers of relevant subjects get sufficient exposure to interfaith dialogues and engagement with the aim of reducing their own prejudices against other faiths.

Ensure that school libraries are stocked with sufficient literature and other learning resources (for teachers and students) that present alternative interpretations and narratives of those religious texts and concepts that are misused or abused by recruiting extremists.

Facilitate linkages between relevant teachers and various youth-led faith-based community activists and role-models who are involved in intrafaith and interfaith peacebuilding activities and in building resilience against violent extremism

# SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

| Objectives | Actions |
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| School inclusion for marginalized or disadvantaged youth | Include open activities in the school schedule for all young people in the community, for example after school programs or open day events (a sporting event, a science fair, a cultural festival, etc.) to which non-students are invited. |
| | Make school facilities, such as gyms and auditoriums, open to non-students. This will promote interaction between students and non-students, and reduce the sense of "othering" among those who are unable to participate in the full school program. |
| | Allocate time and resources for teachers to develop activities for the full youth community (students and non-students) |
| | Encourage youth to be outreach ambassadors for young people who do not participate in the regular school day: share take-home material with them if they are interested. Invite them to participate in open school activities and to make use of school facilities, so the school becomes a community center that supports all young people, not only those with the means to attend the regular academic program. |
| Understand language barriers | Learn which languages are spoken by students at home and integrate these into the school. As a starting point, this can be as simple as having a welcome banner in the school with greetings in all student languages. |
| Promote inclusion and understanding in the classroom and school | Invite mindfulness, empathy and compassion experts to school and to work with teachers. |

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| | Have a wall at school where each month you showcase what students can learn about a particular issue from different people and nations across the world. For example, the theme of environmental protection can invite discussion of what students can learn from indigenous people or countries with different environmental policies. If you talk about human rights, you can showcase what the different human rights issues are relevant for different countries and compare countries that prioritize collective rights over individual rights. |
| Promote inclusion and understanding in the classroom and school | Have all students and teacher agree to a Code or a Golden Rule for the school community. An example could be "this school is a place where everyone's body and feelings are safe." Ask teachers to write the Golden Rule on a large piece of paper and have everyone in the class sign it. If possible, hang all these signed documents together to illustrate the community focus on securing a safe place for all people. |
| | Map out the diverse population you have at your school - students' ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Meet with parents and the students to discuss how their experiences can be shared with the school community (if they would like). Identify teachers they can work with on designing and implementing school-based projects that reflect their culture, religion, or language and that will develop other students' and parents' familiarity with the diversity of the school community. |
| Use textbooks responsibly | Before you choose a textbook, consider who wrote or sponsored this book? Is there an explicit or implicit agenda in it? Is it fair? Is it up to date? |

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| Promote student-centered learning | Create surveys to circulate among students on a regular basis to learn more about their successes and struggles. This will impress upon them your interest in their individual experience in the classroom, beyond test scores and grades. |
| | Set aside a specific day in a week for a high school student to take charge of the classroom and the school. Provide training on pedagogy, administration, and leadership in education for those students who are interested and willing to get engaged. Support students in feeling that they are integral parts of the school community and that their contributions are valuable and vital. |
| | Support teachers in designing creative, out of classroom experiences for students. Activities can include field trips into the community and visits to speak with experts and local leaders. |
| Provide resources to families and close relatives to address warning signs in young people | Provide a system for teachers and parents to maintain contact, such as a website where teachers can share what themes and topics they are covering in class. This will allow parents to have a link to their child's classroom without demanding too much of the teacher's time. |
| | Train and prepare teachers to respond to warning signs related to radicalization and extremism with concern for and attention to the health of the individual. Encourage them to see that these young people are in need of support. Teachers should not be trained to approach their students as threats or react to them from a place of fear. |
| Nurture active citizenship | Invite guest speakers to speak to students about what their role is in the wider community. They can be family members, religious and community leaders, or experts in different fields. |

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| | Provide extra credit or grade weighting or other formalized incentives for students to volunteer. |
| Nurture active citizenship | Identify issues or problems regarding the school that students might be able to help solve. Seek out their input and proposals. Ask teachers to devote time to getting feedback from their students. Make sure that the issues you ask teachers to raise are issues that student feedback can indeed influence. Even if the ideas or recommendations are not implemented, share the decision-making process with teachers and students and let them see how their feedback factored into the choices and solutions. |
| Use sports to build community and reduce isolation between groups and individuals | Set up sports tournaments between different schools and educational institutions with diverse populations. Invite non-student youth to participate. Mix the teams so students from different localities, schools, and backgrounds can play in one team. Invite families, community, religious leaders, and other stakeholders to participate in the tournaments and support them. Focus on the topics of dialogue, conflict resolution, team building. |
| | Open school sports facilities to communities. Encourage weekend sports practices that would bring together students and their families. |
| | Identify sports that are played by members of your community or people in other countries that do not require financial resources. Learn the rules with your school and try to play some of such games, discussing with students and teachers the roots and the importance of that sport for a particular community. Invite members of the community to such events. |

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| Accommodate religious needs and develop religious literacy | Facilitate open dialogue on the limitations of the administration on accommodating different religious groups. Ask teachers to participate in this dialogue and to imagine the needs of all students in their classes. Are there students whose needs the school can't meet? If so, how can the school community still acknowledge and respect those needs? |
| | Take students to different places of worship. Try to enlist the support of a religious leader who can run through the traditional prayer or worship ceremonies with the class. |
| | Include parents in a discussion of how different faiths are honored and respected. Invite parents to share what they feel is most important for their child to have when at school concerning religious freedom. Invite parents to discuss in front of the class and with their children how they practice their faith. This can be helpful even if everyone shares the same faith, as many families will have different ways of practicing a shared religion. |
| | Ensure the school recognizes different religious holidays, especially for holidays that are not awarded days off. Ask someone from the religious community to share with the school what the holiday is, why it exists, and how it is observed. If you have students of a particular faith, you can invite them to do this as well, but be sensitive to the fact that some students would prefer not to join in. While you want them to feel their faith is respected, you also don't want to encourage people to see them as a mouthpiece for their religion rather than a complete person. |

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| Use art to nurture empathy and compassion | Encourage your students to create small art clubs to express themselves. This can be anything from creative writing, painting, sculpture, art from recycled material, drama club. Discuss one theme for each semester and invite students to work within that theme. For example, ask members of each club to present their ideas about peace or related issues in the artistic format of their choice. Have an open day when they can showcase their art to each other and other community members. Exhibit their art in school. |
| | Invite art leaders of your community to support your students as mentors or to give workshops to develop creative skills. |
| Design digital literacy and media and information literacy training | Ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to support students in achieving digital literacy. Provide appropriate training, including introducing teachers to the technologies and website that will be most popular with their students. |

# POLICY MAKERS

We have included actions for a variety of policymakers from education ministers who can influence teacher training programs to school boards who can encourage local action and community programming.

| Objectives | Actions |
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| School inclusion for marginalized or disadvantaged youth | Provide financial and technical support for schools to do community outreach and to operate programs that include non-student youth. |

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| Discuss controversial and difficult issues | Design material and in-service training for teachers to aid them in introducing controversial and challenging topics to their class. |
| Understand language barriers | Reach out to communities to determine what their language needs are. If some people in the community speak a minority language, see if someone from that group is available to support town hall meetings in translation. Encourage young people from a minority language group to consider a political internship in which they translate material for other members of their language groups. |
| | Ensure that communities have learning resources and assessment instruments available in their native languages. |
| Promote inclusion and understanding in the classroom and school | Provide teachers and school administration with in-service training on working with diverse communities. Such training should cover topics of culturally-relevant and sensitive pedagogy, communication with students and parents, and representation in class and schools. Establish on and offline forums where they can communicate with teachers and staff from other schools to share their best practices and ideas. |

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| Promote inclusion and understanding in the classroom and school | Design a mentoring program for teachers to help them develop projects for their diverse classrooms and help students from stigmatized communities integrate successfully. |
| Use textbooks responsibly | Develop and select textbooks in consultation with marginalized communities. |
| | Give more power to schools and teachers to design their own teaching and learning material reflective of their local circumstances. Provide technical and financial support to them. |
| | Require all textbooks to be transparent about the stakeholders who participated in creating them, and reflective of the fact that understanding and perspective in the textbook will not be timeless: as societies change and learn, textbooks must be adjusted and revisited to reflect how we have advanced. |
| Promote student-centered learning | Organize forums for teachers and school administrators from different schools and localities to get together on and offline to share their concerns to receive help and guidance and to exchange best practices that they can implement. Support the use of online communities for teachers to connect with one another and share ideas and resources |
| Help teachers use the Guide | Socialize the guide with a small group of administrators and teachers.<br><br>1. Provide incentives for schools to send staff and teachers to participate in workshops to learn about the guide, its recommendations, and how they can use it effectively.<br><br>2. Focus the workshops on the same outcome that teachers would expect from the students |

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| | in the classroom – provide the diversity or the geopolitical context to broaden teachers' worldview.

3. Share a few images of flags of different countries with teacher participants. Include the stories behind the flags - some from origin myths, some symbolic representations of key ideas, some literal depictions of objects. Ask each teacher to create a flag for his classroom, with an explanation for every color and element. Share with the full group. Discuss afterward what everyone learned about the classrooms and the perspectives of the other teachers, and consider how this exercise could be used with students. |
| Help teachers use the Guide | |
| Support ethical classroom and assessment metrics | Align assessment instruments with learning objectives and material that students and teachers have access to. Consult teachers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds who can test assessment instruments to identify how students will relate to them. |
| Provide resources to families and close relatives to address warning signs in young people | Operate a safe, anonymous helpline for families and close relatives, as well as concerned school professionals and teachers. This helpline should have three key features.

1. Encourage action: Callers should receive advice on how to respond and should be oriented towards external resources that might be relevant for the identified situation. Encourage callers to take small, immediate action, such as speaking with the young person directly and seeking out opportunities to broaden the young person's social interactions. This will empower the caller and provide them with the non-threatening action they can take to promote the health and safety of the person for whom they have concerns.

2. Invest time in interactions with callers. Don't focus exclusively on the warning signs, but also learn about the interests and personality |

in the classroom – provide the diversity or the geopolitical context to broaden teachers' worldview.

3. Share a few images of flags of different countries with teacher participants. Include the stories behind the flags - some from origin myths, some symbolic representations of key ideas, some literal depictions of objects. Ask each teacher to create a flag for his classroom, with an explanation for every color and element. Share with the full group. Discuss afterward what everyone learned about the classrooms and the perspectives of the other teachers, and consider how this exercise could be used with students.

Provide resources to families and close relatives to address warning signs in young people

Engage families and guardians in development of necessary resources to empower them to initiate difficult conversations. These resources need to be directly relevant to their contexts, shaping the dialogue around their role in preventing violent extremism, and developing community connections to support one another in the prevention of extremism. These tools might include critical literacy, diversity, and methods of activism (to prevent the frustration towards injustice that often fuels extremism in young people from being diverted to violence), as well as basic guides to discuss push and pull factors and look for any worrying signs.

Create and disseminate material on how the attitudes, behavior, and actions of families and guardians can contribute to a young person's estrangement, isolation, and violent thoughts and actions. Include small exercises that families can do, such as mindfulness and reflection exercises, which might help maintain a calmer and emotionally safe environment in a young person's home.

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| Nurture active citizenship | Host a youth-only town hall. Work with schools to provide teachers an outline of how a town hall works so that students can prepare questions in advance. |
| | Give young people the opportunity to share community research they have done, problems they have identified, and solutions they propose at town hall events. Ensure that local politicians also attend. |
| | Recognize the achievements of young people who are implementing their own projects and initiatives. Provide grants, awards or technical assistance for youth-led initiatives. |
| Use sports to build community and reduce isolation between groups and individuals | Set up sports tournaments between different schools and educational institutions with diverse populations. Invite non-student youth to participate. Mix the teams so students from different localities, schools, and backgrounds can play in one team. Invite families, community, and religious leaders, and other stakeholders to participate in the tournaments and support them. Focus on the topics of dialogue, conflict resolution, team building. |
| Accommodate religious needs and develop religious literacy | Encourage religious exchange between young people. Have young religious leaders drive interfaith dialogue, share about different religious holidays, and answer questions that other youth might have. Designate a shared prayer or reflection space where different faiths can worship. Encourage young people to use this space to show each other what their prayer rituals look like. |

| Include families and guardians in learning | Encourage a whole society approach by providing funding for schools and teachers to implement projects that include families and communities in their classroom projects. |
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| Use art to nurture empathy and compassion | Designate a free public space in which student art can be displayed. Provide themes related to issues the community is facing and sponsor contests to represent those issues through art. Advertize exhibits to the broader community and invite student artists to speak about their work on a panel at the opening. |
| | Consider how you can partner with schools and communities to create an initiative like the SOM Collective's Proyecto Ja'ab (see page 207-210). |
| Enhance religious literacy in the community` | Provide opportunities for religious and community leaders to engage with the academic community to develop robust strategies grounded in research on more effective community engagement |
| | Encourage interfaith communication between young people by devoting public space to supporting these interactions. Provide opportunities for young people to teach each other about the different traditions, practices, and tenets of their religion. |
| | Support people from different religions in publicly celebrating their holidays, festivals, traditions; encourage opportunities for non-practicing people to learn about these events. |
| | Ensure that school administrators get sufficiently exposed to the importance interfaith dialogues and engagement with the aim of reducing their own prejudices against other faiths and becoming more confident in initiating discussions and activities on religious peacebuilding. |

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| Understand Violent Extremism | Engage stakeholders in regular dialogue to address different factors that lead young people to the path of violent extremism. Include stakeholders from all sectors of the community; not just experts who specialize in the field of prevention and countering of violent extremism. |
| | Include the most marginalized segments of the society in your conversations to understand their vulnerabilities and needs. Travel to their neighborhoods and villages to meet with them in their own context and to make them more comfortable and honest with you in their conversations. |
| Design digital literacy and media and information literacy training | Invest in localized digital literacy programs for teachers and youth. Consult with researchers, NGOs, civil society, and young people to determine what local needs should be the focus of the programs. |
| Ensure online safety | Ensure companies and national legal bodies have a documentation system for censorship. This information should be available to the public. |
| | IConsult with human rights groups, NGOs, civil society, and activists to explore alternatives to censorship. |

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# INTRODUCTION

## *What is PVE?*

**T**he concept of prevention of violent extremism often falls to one of two extremes: it is seen as the niche work of a small group of experts or it is identified as a vague effort to "instruct" young people in understanding, empathy, and open-mindedness. In fact, effective PVE programs have been implemented by a variety of actors, from young people to governments, using everything from conventional resources such as textbooks to experimental interventions such as sports and arts programs. Before we delve into the voices of some of the young people involved in PVE, let's take a minute to explore why this concept can be so challenging to define.

Some of the common misconceptions about prevention efforts stem from the conflation of initiatives to prevent violent extremism with strategies to counter violent extremism (CVE). CVE is the terminology largely preferred by governments to describe any anti-terrorist strategy, from funding grassroots initiatives to implementing national security measures. Unlike PVE, CVE is primarily a responsive strategy. The CVE measures that institutions or governments undertake respond to specific threats, violent actors or organizations, and known quantities. Conversely, PVE is concerned with changing the course of events to prevent the violent actor from emerging in the first place.

The difference between these terms is similar to the difference between preventative and reactive health care. Imagine CVE as the suite of medications, surgeries, and interventions available if you are diagnosed with an illness, and PVE as the general advice you might receive from a doctor to watch your diet and exercise to maintain good health. The scope of CVE in a particular community or country is typically a response designed to combat an identified threat, just as a medical prescription is intended to combat a specific ailment.

In contrast, PVE is the ongoing work to change the course of an individual's actions before that individual becomes radicalized or engages in violence. PVE initiatives share a common characteristic and challenge: they are intended to eliminate something before it occurs. This means the object of PVE work is often difficult to identify and the success of such work is nearly impossible to measure.

Confusing PVE with CVE encourages the misconception that all work aimed at eliminating or reducing violent extremism is highly specific -- a niche field concerned with specialized activities such as deradicalization of extremists, border security, vetting processes, and other targeted strategies.

This is perhaps one of the most damaging misconceptions for the growth and promotion of sustainable PVE. For PVE efforts to be successful, they should be embedded in every aspect of our society. If this sounds like an overstatement, consider the following examples of PVE that you will find referenced in this guide.

**Prevention of Violent Extremism is:**

- *Young people from different clans playing a football game.*
- *A community project to produce collective literature.*
- *A textbook that seeks to represent both sides of a conflict.*
- *The availability of national exams in a variety of languages.*

These examples may not be the activities you first imagine when you hear the phrase "prevention of violent extremism." As you read more about each program in the course of this guide, we hope you will see that they represent some of the most creative and responsive PVE strategies. Each harnesses a common experience or tool -- a football game, a textbook -- to achieve a more important objective: to encourage respect and understanding, validate identity, or explore differences and

similarities between groups. PVE must be everywhere at once to be as effective as possible.

Quantifying this effectiveness is another unique challenge to PVE work. Prevention of violent extremism is a campaign for justice, equality, respect, and recognition whose successes are nearly impossible to measure. We will never know if a dance party in Myanmar with Buddhist and Muslim youths provided the foundational experience that prevented someone from engaging in religiously-motivated violence. We can't measure how many young people have decided not to join ISIS because they found validation of their identity in a classroom, in the eyes of a teacher, or in the form of support from their peers.

What we can assume is that there is no silver bullet -- that the work of PVE is the incremental work of engaging, supporting, and encouraging individuals so that they are better equipped to interact with their world in positive ways. This means that every seized opportunity to embed PVE principles in society nudges us all towards justice, equality, respect, and recognition. The work of PVE is not to force-feed a narrative of peace, empathy, and kindness but rather to provide as many opportunities as possible for these qualities to emerge organically through experiential learning.

With this in mind, we have focused this guide on prevention efforts that can be implemented through education. For this purpose, our definition of education encompasses the institutions, individuals, and experiences that shape or challenge a person's worldview, personality traits, and values. The reality of an individual education will include lessons from casual sports games, peer-to-peer learning, traditions handed down from families, community-based ethics, and opinions shared through online social networks, blogs, and chat messages. These experiences inform our sense of who we are, who we can be, and what place we occupy in our community and world.

Of course, just because these interactions hold the potential to contribute to an individual's education doesn't mean they always do. And just because something educates doesn't mean it is always positive. Through the voices of young people who have experienced different forms and consequences of education, this guide aims to highlight opportunities for informal, non-formal or unconventional learning, and underscore the risk of mismanaged or ill-intended education interventions. It aims to encourage all people with interest in justice, equality, and compassion to assume a small part in realizing those ambitious objectives ∎

## *How is this Guide Different?*

**T**his guide represents an effort to add greater effectiveness, inclusive participation, and diversity of perspective to the PVE recommendations and resources currently available.

**E F F E C T I V E N E S S**

While there are programs, initiatives, and individuals who have responded with creativity and local insight to implement PVE activities, these actions are often reduced to simplistic platitudes by the time they reach the broader public. This diminishes their impact by ignoring the complexity of context.

Consider the work of SOM Collective on page 207-210, a project that supports communities plagued by violence in creating collective works of literature. The purpose of the program is to provide recognition to groups often excluded from mainstream literature, to forge bonds between different members of the community, and to validate the expression and identity of participants. The initiative is inspired by the belief that recognition is a basic human right and a key to preventing violence.

The project works towards broad objectives: promoting a sense of belonging, inclusivity, and empowerment. But if we focus only on instructing to others to achieve similar outcomes, we will provide very little support in guiding people towards action. Conversely, if we ask that everyone replicate this specific project, we will ignore the critical influence of local context on an initiative's success or failure.

In this guide, we have done our best to find a balance: to share both the specific stories and initiatives from young people, in their voices and

from their contexts, and to highlight the broad themes and objectives that often link them to one another. Finally, we try to distill what we have learned from listening to young people into a series of calls for action. Not all these calls will be relevant to each reader, but we hope that each reader will find at least a few recommendations that can be adapted and implemented in her local context.

We have curated an array of youth voices -- sometimes contradictory, sometimes surprising, each one peeling back the complexity and context of young people's educational experiences to illuminate the universal elements that do link different struggles and solutions. We hope that readers will find relevance in some of these youth voices, that certain stories will apply to your specific context. But we also hope that you will read stories from young people that may contradict or challenge the examples that are most similar to your perspective. Effective prevention of violent extremism requires the ability to acknowledge and explore tensions between different beliefs.

### INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Conversations about the prevention of violent extremism happen predominantly in circles of experts. It's a topic with less mainstream visibility than related issues such as social justice, global citizenship, or peacebuilding. People who do not see themselves as directly involved in PVE are less likely to contribute to the discussion.

In contrast, conversations about the effects of violent extremism attract opinions and screeds from everyone with a pulse and pen. Why is the prevention of a phenomenon with devastating effects on everyone considered the purview of only a small subset of experts?

To improve our global PVE efforts, we must expand our understanding of who the stakeholders are and mainstream the activities that will

reduce extremism. We must embed prevention of violent extremism in formal, informal, and non-formal education programs. Our definition of education should include all the institutions, individuals, and experiences that shape and challenge a person's worldview; and we should include in our discourse anyone who might be a part of a young person's education -- from teachers and administrators to coaches, parents, bloggers, reporters, pop culture icons, and more.

## DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVE

The final overarching priority of this guide has been not only to include the voices of young people but to allow those voices to drive the scope, perspective, and structure of this publication. Towards that end, the guide's sections emerged from reviewing over 2000+ submissions from 58 countries. Each submission we received influenced the development of the guide. One hundred and fifty Youth Contributors from 58 countries appear in the final publication. You will find stories from people as young as 15. We received reflections from young teachers as well as students, and we have shared voices from different religions, regions, races, and socio-economic backgrounds. To provide readers with authentic youth voices, we have chosen not to edit the content we received from these Youth Contributors.

Some of these contributions may provoke discomfort or disagreement -- they certainly did in our editorial discussions. But this variety of perspective is necessary to incorporate prevention activities into the broad scope of education programs and initiatives that reach young people each day. We hope you will take the time to seek out not only the voices of young people whose experiences and recommendations reflect your thinking, but also those voices that challenge the assumptions and beliefs you hold ∎

# Understanding Violent Extremism

To understand the various approaches to preventing violent extremism, we will start with a look at its various manifestations. This chapter will provide an overview of different types of extremism, how they are often portrayed, and what fundamental traits link them to each other. We then consider popular misconceptions about violent extremism, the push and pull factors that cause young people to join such groups and strategies for recruitment.

# RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

**R**eligious extremism occurs when religious individuals reject people who hold either different beliefs or different interpretations of the same religious belief. In doing so, the extremist group holds that their religious belief system, and adherents of it, are superior to all other groups. Violent extremism occurs when extremists believe they are justified in using violence to ensure the safety of their group and to promote their religious agenda or belief system.

### ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

We all have an image, story, or news report that comes to mind when we hear the phrase "terrorism" or "violent extremism." In many cases, that image we hold in our minds is the image of a Muslim man. Of course, this is a stereotype that demonizes an entire people and overlooks the nuance and complexity inherent in any situation of violence. Islam does not condone the terror that is frequently portrayed by the media.

*"In recent years, terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaida, and Boko Haram have shaped our image of violent extremism and the debate about how to address this threat. Their message of intolerance – religious, cultural, social – has had drastic consequences for many regions of the world. Holding territory and using social media for real-time communication of their atrocious crimes, they seek to challenge our shared values of peace, justice, and human dignity."*
- Kayode Alabi, 28, Nigeria

But a combination of xenophobia and media influence have exploited the actions of terrorists who claim Islam to influence the perception of Islam, particularly in Western countries. We thus will begin our discussion of violent extremism by providing some context, research, and insight regarding popular media's favorite extremist poster boy: the Islamist extremist.

The rise of Islamist terrorist organizations has driven the increase in terror-related deaths in recent years. Boko Haram's expansion into Niger, Cameroon, and Chad increased the number of people killed by 157 percent (Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 2016). ISIS and its affiliates increased their scale and scope, carrying out terrorist activities in at least 28 countries in 2015 which more than doubled as compared to 13 countries in 2014 (IEP, 2016). OECD countries alone saw a 650 percent increase in deaths related to terrorism in 2014, and more than half of the deaths were in the connection to ISIS (IEP, 2016).

In 2015 alone, 74 percent of all terror-related deaths were caused by four Islamist terror groups: ISIS, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and al-Qa'ida (IEP, 2016). These violent extremist organizations are driven by a totalitarian interpretation of Islam and set as their core long-term objective the establishment of the global Islamic State shaped by Sharia law[5]. Sharia law is viewed by these individuals as the superior form of a government rule that will help achieve justice and freedom for Muslim people. Their intermediate goals include driving out non-Muslim troops from Muslim territories and overthrowing "enemy" regimes considered as the corruptors of a "true Islam."

Islamist extremist attacks include acts of terrorism, human rights abuses, the advancement of oppressive models of Sharia-centered

[5]Sharia Law is religious law observed by some followers of Islam. Sharia is not a legal system, but a set of fundamental principles a person abides by. These principles are based on the central religious text of Islam - the  Quran and were systematized during the lifetime of the Islamic prophet Muhammad (570 CE- 632 CE).

governance, and hate and bigotry towards non-Muslim and Muslim populations. It is important to note that although these terror groups claim they are motivatad by a desire to improve the conditions of life for Muslims, the demographic most vulnerable to Islamic extremism continues to be Muslims (IEP, 2016): in 2015, 72 percent of all terror-related deaths occurred in the majority-Muslim countries of Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria .

### BUDDHIST EXTREMISM

Much like Islam, Buddhism invokes a host of popular stereotypes and assumptions that mostly ignore the complexities of the religion. By contrast, though, Buddhists are often thought to be a faultlessly peace-loving and gentle people.

In truth, Buddhism is as vulnerable to manipulation by extremists as any other religion. Currently, Buddhist extremists, incited by a group of Buddhist monks, pose a threat to stability in southern Asia. Notable examples of violent extremism instigated by Buddhists include attacks in Myanmar against Muslims and in Sri Lanka against Muslims, Hindus, and Christians. To a lesser degree, such extremist attacks and rhetoric are also present in Thailand ■

[6]We recognize that these countries are also home to non-Muslims, and use geography only as a proxy, as it is difficult to estimate the percentage of any one religion killed in these attacks (Alexander & Moore, 2015)

*Myanmar*

**I**n **Rakhine State, Myanmar, extremist and ultra-nationalist Buddhists monks** have stoked hatred and fear among Myanmar citizens against a Muslim-minority group called the Rohingya. Rohingya Muslims are perceived by people across the country to be ethnically Bengali and non-indigenous to the area. Furthermore, the Citizenship Law of 1982 that categorizes three groups of citizens (the citizenship, associate citizenship, and naturalized citizenship) does not offer Rohingyas citizenship rights, such as freedom of movement and full access to education (Wallace, 2016a, 2016b). This distinction has exacerbated social and economic marginalization and violence against the Rohingya. In 2012, 120,000 Rohingyas were internally displaced to internment camps where nearly 100,000 of them remain today (International Rescue Committee (IRC), 2017a, 2017b). Journalists, NGOs, and human rights commissions have struggled to gain unfettered access to sensitive areas. In August of 2017, a small Rohingya insurgent group attacked police and army posts (Lone & Naing, 2017), prompting a brutal military crackdown against the Rohingya that the UN Human Rights chief has described as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" (United Nations (UN), 2017). As of October 16, 2017, the United Nations reported that 573,000 Rohingya refugees have fled into Bangladesh (Sullivan, 2017).

The violence towards the Rohingya people underscores the extreme actions the non-Rohingya Myanmar population will take to defend against a perceived threat to their national identity. Such actions to protect a group identity at the expense of the rights, recognition, and lives of another group have also led to violence in Sri Lanka ∎

# CASE STUDY:

## *Sri Lanka*

**T**he end of the civil war in Sri Lanka in 2009 did not bring the **expected peace** and harmony for the diverse communities of the country. Sinhala Buddhists, backed by the autocratic government, claim that the country was destroyed by the British colonizers and identified Muslims and Christians as outsiders who destabilize the country. In recent years Buddhist violent extremists have killed or injured Muslim people and destroyed their homes. In 2011, led by a monk, a Buddhist extremist mob demolished a 300-year-old Muslim shrine. Christian churches were attacked, burned down, vandalized and Christians were intimidated and physically attacked. In 2012 Buddhist monks formed a Buddhist extremist group - the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), or Buddhist Power Force (Wimalasurendre, 2012). For their activities to spread extremism and hatred against Muslims, they were compared to the Taliban by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka (Bandara, 2013) and described as an "ethno-religious fascist movement from the dark underside of Sinhala society" by a prominent diplomat Dayan Jayatilleka (BBC News, 2013). In 2015 Sri Lanka elected a new president, Maithripala Sirisena, who implied that "everybody knows" that the administration of his predecessor, Mahinda Rajapaksa, gave rise to the BBS, or at least was strongly supportive of the organization (Haviland, 2015). Mangala Samaraweera, a Buddhist politician and the Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2015, alleged that the BBS is funded by the Ministry of Defence (Bandara, 2013). The new Minister for Buddhist Affairs (as per 2015), Karu Jayasuriya, blamed the rise of the BBS on the broken rule of law but promised that they would be reined in. This new government still includes a strongly Buddhist nationalist party that "seems timid about taking on" the BBS (Haviland, 2015) ∎

## CHRISTIAN EXTREMISM

Christian terrorism and violent extremist organizations have risen to prominence in many countries around the world. Since 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) of Joseph Kony has terrorized communities across Uganda, South Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A guerilla movement against the government of Uganda, the LRA committed numerous acts of violence against humanity (including sex slavery, child soldiers, rape, and others) in the name of God. Kony proclaimed himself the messenger of God and the Holy Spirit, and his army follows the Ten Commandments as their constitution and recites the Bible before committing acts of terror. The LRA believe that their Christian affiliation validates their extreme level of violence towards other groups and individuals whether they are Christian or not. More recently, in 2013 and 2014, anti-balaka forces, comprised of Christians in the Central African Republic, waged violent attacks on country's minority Muslim population to "eliminate" them from the country (Human Rights Watch, 2014). According to Human Rights Watch (2014), they "cut the throats of Muslim civilians, publicly lynching, mutilating, and setting their bodies on fire.

## JEWISH EXTREMISM

In Israel, Jewish extremist groups are often comprised of ultra-Orthodox adherents who wish to prevent any form of interaction between Jews and non-Jews on an ethnic or religious basis. Groups, such as Lehava, wish to prevent intermarriage between Jewish people and Arabs (Sanchez, 2016) while some individuals want to remove Muslims from Israel and feel that there is no legitimacy for their presence in the state (Booth, 2016). Such sentiments are often expressed violently. In 2015, an 18-month-old Palestinian boy was killed in a "price tag" arson attack by Jewish extremists ('Price Tag' Attacks and Jewish Extremism, 2015). For the extremists, these attacks are retribution for acts they believe they have wrongfully incurred from Palestinians or the Israeli government.

## HINDU EXTREMISM

In India, violent Hindu extremists attack religious minorities based on a belief that Indians must be only Hindus and act based on Hindu practices. In 2015, four Muslim men in India were suspected of killing or stealing cows, and were killed as political leaders and other Hindu groups pushed to protect cows and ban beef consumption. That same year, churches were also attacked in various parts of the country (Human Rights Watch, 2016). In June 2017, the stabbing death of a 16-year-old, accused of consuming beef on a train, led to the #NotInMyName protest across at least 10 Indian cities. Many marched against what some call "Hindu terrorism" and "Hindutva," referring to Hindu nationalism (Aljazeera, 2016) ∎

# ETHNO-NATIONALIST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**E**thno-nationalist violent extremism involves the dehumanization of individuals who are of a different ethnic or national group. This form of extremism often emerges in response to an ethnic or religious group's perception of oppression at the hands of a more powerful actor, such as the state or a colonial power or an authoritarian state.

In such cases, adherents are often driven by a desire for self-determined and political autonomy from the actors they identify as their oppressors, evident in the Rwandan Genocide.

The Rwandan genocide occurred almost as a rebellion to power that was imposed on the Hutus (perhaps to defend an ethno-national identity). Conversely, the Cambodian genocide was orchestrated to impose a specific ethno-nationalism identity. From 1975 to 1979, Pol Pot's fight to obtain power and maintain his Democratic Republic of Kampuchea led to the mass genocide of 1.7 million ethnic and religious minorities, such as Vietnamese, Chinese, Thai Cham Muslims, and Cambodian Buddhists (Yale University, n/d). Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge mobilized youth militants to inflict terror (Amendola, 2005), a common resource for many extremist leaders ∎

## CASE STUDY:

*The Rwandan
Genocide (1994)*

After World War I Rwanda came under the mandate of Belgium. Although the vast majority of the population was Hutus, the Belgians favored the Tutsis and concentrated power in their hands: the Tutsis overlooked the land reform which left the Hutus without any land as their traditional territories were privatized. Education, health, and other social reforms were effected to benefit the Tutsis. The Hutus were left on the margins of the society and used as forced labor. During their anti-colonial struggle against the Belgians, the Hutus forced 300,000 Tutsis to flee the country (1959) and forced the Tutsi monarch into exile (by 1961). The Tutsis became an even smaller minority, and ethnically-motivated violence against them continued. In 1990 the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) that consisted mostly of Tutsi refugees living in Uganda invaded Rwanda. The incident led to an agreement by which a transitional government to include RPF was to be established. Hutu extremists were angered by the agreement and resorted to the slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Over three months 800,000 people were murdered. While local officials and government-controlled radio stations were calling on people to kill their neighbors, the RPF gained control of most of the country forcing more than 2 million people (mostly Hutus) to flee, exacerbating an already devastating humanitarian crisis. Upon the victory of the RPF, a coalition government was established with a Hutu as a president and a Tutsi - a vice-president and defense minister. Its new constitution adopted in 2003 does not reference ethnicity, and the Rwandan Genocide remains one of the most notable cases of ethno-nationalist violent extremism in recent history ■

# FAR RIGHT
# VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**F**ar-right violent extremist groups often describe themselves as "race-realists" (e.g. American Renaissance), "alt-right" (e.g. Identity Evropa), or "identitarians" (e.g. Richard Spencer and his National Policy Institute).

In the United States, Islamist extremism receives more attention than far-right extremism, despite the fact that far-right extremist "plots and attacks outnumber Islamist incidents by almost 2 to 1" (Neiwert et al., 2017). From 2008 to 2016 these incidents were often deadly: nearly a third of incidents involved fatalities (Neiwert, 2017). In Canada, estimates suggest that across the country there are more than 100 active far-right groups, the result of a 30 percent increase in one year (Montpetit, 2017; Perry & Scrivens, 2015). These groups target minorities such as Muslims, Jews, immigrants, LGBTQ, feminists, and have been accused of dozens of crimes including murder, attempted murder, and assault.

## RACE-BASED VIOLENT EXTREMISM

One manifestation of far-right extremism is race-based violent extremism. Race-based extremism stems from the belief that one group is inherently superior to all others. Progress towards equality and social justice often inflames race-based extremism, as adherents fear the loss of cultural, economic, and political dominance to which they believe themselves inherently deserving. The examples below identify instances in which white people have perpetrated violence against others because they are non-white.

*1999, Illinois and Indiana, USA:* Benjamin Smith shot and wounded nine Orthodox Jews, killed a black man and a Korean graduate student, and fired on a group of Asian-Americans over the course of a single day (Scharnberg & Long, 1999). When police approached him, he committed suicide (Smith, 1999).

*2008 - 2011*, *Russia*: members of the so-called Militant Organization of Russian Nationalists targeted, murdered, or brutally assaulted people hailing from Central Asian countries. In one instance, they cut the head of a victim with a machete and sent a photo of it to different media outlets (Kara-Murza, 2013; Nemtsova, 2013).

*2011*, *Mississippi, USA*: a group of white men targeted and assaulted African-American men. One of their victims was James Craig Anderson who was first beaten and then run over by a truck. He died of his injuries (Braxton, 2011; Sperling, 2011).

*2015*, *Colombia*: Two 20-year-old men of African descent were gunned down by men who shouted: "We must finish off the Blacks" (Aidi, 2015). In the months before the attack, fourteen other Afro-Colombian youth was murdered.

*2017*, *France*: Four white police officers raped a young black man with a truncheon and claimed it was an accident (Bulman, 2017).
2017, Virginia, USA: A neo-Nazi rally at the University of Virginia, staged in protest of the intended removal of a statue honoring Confederate General Robert E. Lee, turned deadly when a white nationalist drove his car into a crowd of peaceful counter-protesters, killing one woman (Hart & Danner, 2017).

The white people you read about above commit such crimes because they believe racial differences are paramount beyond all other aspects of identity. Among these groups, segregation, marginalization, violence, and murder are regarded as a justifiable means to protect these racial differences ■

# LEFT WING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**A**lthough **left-wing violent extremism is a less common phenomenon,** deadly groups have perpetrated violence in the name of anarchy, Marxist-Leninist ideology, and anti-imperialism. Prominent examples include the Weather Underground, an organization founded in 1969 at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor. The group claimed several motivating factors including black power, anti-Vietnam War sentiment, and the desire to overthrow the US government. They carried out bombings and arson attacks.

In Colombia, the guerrilla movement the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia -- People's Army (also known as FARC) was a Marxist-Leninist peasant force that used kidnappings and ransom to fund their political movement. They also engaged in illegal mining, extortion, and illegal drug sales. Women and youth constituted a high percentage of the group, and recruits were often kidnapping victims forced to join their ranks. In 2016, they signed a peace accord (Casey, 2016) and in 2017 they surrendered all weapons to the UN and registered as a legal political party (Fuller, 2017) ∎

# STATE & STATE-SPONSORED VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**M**ost of the examples described so far present violent extremist acts undertaken by armed non-state actors. However, some states also utilize tactics of fear and terror or fund and legally sanction the actions of extremist groups.

In the first instance, the state may see the use of force and coercion as their legitimate right to influence the population and protect existent power structures from political dissidents, activists, or protestors. In Nazi Germany, for example, so-called "enemies of the state" were banned, intimidated, imprisoned, and executed. In the Soviet Union during the 1930s, the government directed three trials known as the Moscow Trials or the "show trials" where Stalin disposed of individuals who opposed him, and their families and friends in efforts to terrorize people into obedience (Linder, n/d).

In another instance, states radicalize young people to commit brutal acts against those viewed as a political threat, such as: the Red Guards during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s who were instructed to protect and promote the values of the Maoist government domestically and abroad by destroying items and imprisoning individuals that represented the Four Olds – old customs, culture, habits, and ideas (Ebrey, n/d).

Beyond riling youth support, there is also state-sponsored extremism and terrorism that is not carried out by the state but which the state supports through the provision of resources, training, safe haven, physical basing, or diplomatic and legal support to non-state violent extremist actors.

*"The justification, "sponsoring" or equipping violent extremist groups by some powerful international countries depending on their interest and policy towards the target region or country breaks the bridge of all-inclusive preventive measures aimed to see the world as a peaceful place for humans."*
Odame Benjamin, 30, Ghana

*"I disagree with the current approach to solving the problem with war, particularly regarding the steps that [some] countries have taken in stopping violence in the region. Violent extremism has caused displacement, deaths, and insecurity across the globe, and yet little is done to address it non violently."*
- Okello Pasqualino, 30, Uganda

State-sponsored violent extremism continues to manifest in many regions of the world today. As we hope this guide will be used widely by policymakers, teachers, youth, and other actors across the world, regardless of their political and geopolitical interests, we will not name states that actively sponsor terrorism today ■

# MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**A**s we consider the nuances in the various types of violent extremism, it is also important to address the common misconceptions we have that obstruct us from further understanding the what, who, and why in violent extremism.

Table 1: *Misconceptions about Violent Extremism*

| Misconception | Counter arguement |
|---|---|
| "Terrorism and violent extremism is the same thing." | Terrorism is just one manifestation of violent extremism that is driven by the creation of fear and terror through targeting and killing of civilians as a means to an end. Violent extremism includes other forms of ideologically- and religiously-motivated violence. |
| Extremists are vastly comprised of Muslims. | Acts of terror and violence can be conducted by person of any religion (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Hindu) and a person who does not adhere to any tradition (e.g., ethno-nationalist violent extremism and race-based violent extremism) |

| Misconception | Counter arguement |
|---|---|
| Teaching empathy, critical thinking, and understanding are best practices for PVE. | Developing these skills is critical to PVE -- but instructing young people in how to feel or behave is an ineffective way to achieve these objectives. Alternately, offering opportunities to develop empathy, critical thinking, and understanding over a period and through practice is a crucial part of PVE. |
| Violent extremism is the issue to be tackled by experts in the field. | Effective prevention of violent extremism can be only achieved when all sectors and individuals of society are working towards justice for all. |
| Only poor people become violent extremists. | People from all socioeconomic classes can become violent extremists, not only those who live in poverty.<br><br>The pathways that lead people towards extremism converge due to a lack of education, oppression, boredom, and many more factors (see Push and Pull factors on page 91-92). |
| Extremists are illiterate and undereducated. | Consider these profiles of extremists:<br><br>Ayman Mohammed Rabie al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qa'ida, was raised in an upper-class family, his father was a professor at Cairo University, and he graduated from Cairo University in 1974 and received his Master's degree in surgery in 1978 (BBC News, 2015).<br><br>Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, an al-Qa'ida operative who was responsible for the kidnapping of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl in 2002, was educated at private schools in England and the London School of Economics (Scotsman, 2002).<br><br>Theodore Kaczynski, the so-called Unabomber who executed a series of terrorist attacks between 1978 and 1995, received his undergraduate degree from Harvard and his Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Michigan (Chase, 2000). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Hard power should be used to P/CVE. | While a focus on hard power – coercive and aggressive measures that include military and security – holds merit in responding to immediate concerns related to violent extremism, hard power is limiting in its degree of effectiveness long-term, as addressing extremism and terrorism as simply a security issue has been ineffective in the last decade. Hard power is better suited for responses rather than prevention.<br><br>Additionally, the excessive use of hard power can fuel grievances and increase recruitment into violent extremist groups. For example, the US counter-terrorism approach that involved targeted drone strikes, special forces raids, and training of small units of local forces have created "more dangerous, more committed extremists" (Sedney, 2015). |
| Women are never perpetrators of violent extremism. | Women have participated in all forms of violent extremist, from proponents of far-right extremism to members of religious terror organizations. ISIS seeks women recruits to commit violent extremist attacks or mother the next generation. In some contexts where searching a female body is considered inappropriate, female extremists are more advantageous than their male counterparts because they go through a relatively less security search. Women can also appear to be pregnant when they hide devices; attacks by women may draw more media attention; and women extremists can be used to shame men into joining an extremist group (Noor & Hussein, 2010). Women can also act as key recruiters to violent extremist groups (Jakupi & Kelmendi, 2017).<br><br>Some women join violent extremist groups voluntarily, but others are abducted or forced to follow husbands who join first. |

By demystifying these misconceptions around the actions, profile, and background of violent extremists, we are then able to more clearly consider the circumstances that lead an individual towards violent extremism ■

# The Appeal Of Extremism

# THE APPEAL
# OF EXTREMISM

**W**hat compels someone to join any of the groups or movements we've discussed? While some motives may be more apparent than others, violent extremism relies on a combination of political, economic, social, and ideological premises to recruit followers, which often arise as a result of injustices or marginalization. In light of the various factors, it is clear that a single profile for all violent extremists and extremist groups does not exist.

A violent extremist can be anyone, ranging from a child with no formal education, indoctrinated at an early age and used to conduct acts of terror (i.e., children suicide bombers, child soldiers) to a savant with a doctorate, such as Unabomber Ted Kaczynski or ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In every case, certain aspects of society push an individual towards adopting violent extremist ideologies and certain aspects of a violent extremist group pull an individual towards it.

*"Somehow I think we are still not aware of the fact that young people are easy targets, especially those who are feeling oppressed, discriminated or marginalized."*
Ajla Mulali, 26, Bosnia and Herzegovina

*"Violent extremism and the agents that support it prey upon the vulnerabilities of youths. They fill gaps that can occur in anyone's lives and try to fill those gaps with purpose. They target youths who are easily impressionable and misguide them towards their part."*
Yusuf Farhan, 29, Tanzania

Let us consider how violent extremist groups manage to attract young people not only to join their ranks passively but to become proactive advocates of their ideology and weapons in killing others in the name of that ideology ∎

# CONFLICT ZONES

"Seychelles is a leader in the fight against piracy which is a form of terrorism. Young people are mostly used as pirates here. In the Indian Ocean region, there have been spells of this kind of terrorism."
- Youth Contributor, 33, Seychelles

In some countries, torn by internal war or conflict, violent extremist groups may seem to be the only answer to gain 'employment' and provide for themselves and their families, as the following cases discussing Somalia and Sierra Leone show.

*"The youth in Somalia have been presented with limited alternatives beyond being exploited by warring parties. As a result, they have participated in extreme violence activities as a livelihood option. With the limited educational opportunities as a result of the over two and half decades war that deprived the communities of appropriate human capital, there was a need to avail youth with alternatives."*
- Kinyiri Salim, 33, Uganda

*"From the Sierra Leone experience, a lot of young people perpetrated violence during the civil war because there was no political tolerance and most of them were unemployed. Hence they became ready-made materials for recruitment by armed groups."*
- Abdul Karim Koroma, 35, Sierra Leone

In conflict zones, whole communities are caught between warring parties. In such instances, it is not only economic marginalization and lack of opportunities to earn a living that force young people to support violent extremist groups, but structural instability and fear/danger, e.g., in cases such as Nigeria, young people are surrounded by violent groups and are forced to join their ranks.

*"While speaking to some youth at an Internally displaced camp, I came to understand that this terrorist gives them huge offers just to join them and often time if they disagree they will be killed if they don't escape."*
Omoyele Isaac Success, 26, Nigeria

In the case study below, a group of Rohingya from Myanmar discuss the rise of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, a small insurgent group that has emerged in Rakhine State in response to decades of government-sanctioned oppression ▪

*The Rohingya of Myanmar and Human Rights Abuses*

**T**his is a contribution from a group of Rohingya youth who are now living in Yangon. They have come together to create a forum for investigative journalism to promoting peace and human rights.

Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army[7]. It is a group of people which does not represent the whole community. They have tried to recruit people from the community using religion. But everything they do is against Islam. We think of them more like gangsters. Most of their members are uneducated people. Some use and sell drugs and are violent people who do not have jobs. They use religion as an excuse for their deeds. They even rob local Rohingya people at night and kill religious leaders (imams) who go against them or inform government authorities about them. However, the government has not taken strong action against them. ARSA's real purpose may be to secure foreign funding from rich people who sympathize with the Rohingya cause.

In October 2016, ARSA uploaded a video showing their faces, and the government could have arrested them. But no action was taken against them. We could not understand why. The local people could not raise their voice because the government did not offer them security due to the misconception that they are illegal immigrants. ARSA threatened villagers to cooperate with them or else they would kill them. So people were left with no option but to support. Whenever we speak with our families in Northern Rakhine State, they express to us their fear of both ARSA and the government.

> ARSA threatened villagers to cooperate with them or else they would kill them. So people were left with no option but to support.

[7]Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, or ARSA, is an insurgent group active in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar. Its leadership includes Rohingya immigrants in Saudi Arabia. ARSA's goal is to create a democratic Muslim state of Rohingya. The government of Myanmar suspects ARSA's connections to foreign Islamists. It was denied by ARSA who claim they act against the oppressive regime of Myanmar and in support of the rights of the Rohingya people, and are not connected with terrorist organizations. On August 26, 2017, Myanmar declared them a terrorist group (Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2017).

We have been having some conversations since before this violence began [in August 2017] because we heard about the rebel groups organizing people and planning to attack government posts. We told them it is not a good idea to fight the army.

If you fight, the army will destroy you and burn villages like in other areas. In our community, when people took up arms and rebelled 20-30 years ago, the army torched the whole village.

Now we saw the outcome of the violence. Most villages in Northern Rakhine State were destroyed, disappeared completely from the map as a result. Many people lost their property, houses, and loved ones and have had to escape to Bangladesh and become refugees.

Now, most people realize that what ARSA did is not good. They were only a few people, but we have lost everything. Of course, we cannot accept them. ARSA has been a curse to the people. Now we are trying to explain to people that even if you want revenge, you need to think about the consequences. Violence is not the solution to any problem.

Our people already have the experience of rejecting violent extremists in previous times – during my childhood I experienced people handing over extremists to the authorities. So this time I was surprised to see ARSA getting support from the people. This happened because the military increased their repressive operations in Rakhine State since 2012 and did human rights violations, restricted people's freedom of movement and tried to register them as illegal immigrants. This led people to be more easily convinced by the extremists.

Also, most Rohingya people who took up arms were doing it for self-defense, but the military calls them terrorists. After the August 25th attacks, people tried to defend their homes and families against the

military when they came to burn them. But the military killed them and called them terrorists even though they were civilians.

Now I have been trying to explain the situation of Myanmar politics to some people. At this time it is a democratic transition in Myanmar. We have a civilian government, but they are not completely in charge because the military controls three key ministries. So we have two governments: one civilian who cannot control the security affairs, and military government who controls three key ministries.

Burmese people have also been the victims of dictatorship and have been suffering – not only the Rohingya community but other minorities. In Myanmar, it is a transition period, and the military still has significant power in running the country, so at this time it is not the right time to ask for rights immediately. We needed to wait and see the political situation become more favorable for us. Although ASSK is the leader of the government, she has limited power regarding security and minority issues and border affairs.

We have no other option but to support ASSK. We know as the whole world knows that she cannot control the military. But we feel she should speak out with some words of sympathy. For Rohingya people, she was the most admirable person for us in the country, more than anyone else. But if ASSK speaks out to sympathize with the Rohingya and Muslims, the extremist nationalists will use this message as a political liability to attack her. So we understand why she cannot speak up. But she shouldn't justify the attack on Rohingya.
*(Anonymous group of Rohingya youth who have left Rakhine State)*

The reflections from this Rohingya group highlight some factors that may push a whole community to support a violent extremist group, even unwillingly. Lack of government protection ensures ongoing instability for the Rohingya and leaves them with few practical options to counter the insurgents. The authorities have overlooked and even perpetrated abuse of their basic human rights. This creates fertile ground for the rise of a violent extremist organization. The Rohingya people have no authority to whom they can appeal for help. In circumstances where a government or military body condones or promotes violence, a violent extremist group may seem a lesser evil, as its members are at least of the same religious and ethnic group.

The Rohingya also face deeply entrenched antipathy from people across Myanmar, who largely believe that Rohingya insurgents are entirely responsible for the violence in Rakhine. In response to the most recent violence, Myanmar citizens took to Facebook to promote troubling misconceptions about the Rohingya, who are commonly referred to as "Bengali terrorists," and to attack the international community for interference:

*"We have a right to defend our land and borders from extreme terrorists who started the atrocities. They started the attack on our police outposts in Rakhine State. Do the US and the rest of the world expect us to let these barbarians do what they like and get away with it all. They started the killings, and they get the sympathy of a lot of countries who just want to condemn us without finding out the real truth and the ' on the ground' situation. People who point fingers without discrimination should be aware that their time will come too. We as a sovereign nation have the right and duty to defend our sovereignty and land and citizens from foreign terrorists. The problem is in our yard, not yours. Please try to see two sides of every problem."*
- Aung Kyaw, Myanmar

Rohingya groups have little hope of finding protection or acceptance from either the police and military forces or the majority of Myanmar citizens. The case exemplifies the extreme degree to which a country's political and social attitudes can push people towards violent extremism. The conflict risks inciting further sympathy and support among international violent extremist networks for the strengthening of ARSA, which will further jeopardize the lives of peaceful and persecuted Rohingya as well as Myanmar citizens ∎

**E**conomic marginalization can manifest as a form of violence and push young people towards violent extremism. A critical concern pointed out by our Youth Contributors is that destitution and limited economic opportunities can lead to vulnerabilities easily exploited by violent extremist groups. Such vulnerabilities include not the need to provide for themselves and their families but also the humiliation of being poor.

*"The current political discourse ignores a very poignant fact: that disenfranchised sectors of society, particularly religious minorities, suffer from socio-economic strains that create vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities, then, are exploited by violent groups."*
Gabriel Marchi Da Silva, 28, Brazil

*"Economic and social backwardness is the main cause of violent extremism, and the main cause is a feeling of humiliation and exploitation which leads to revenge."*
Shantanu Nagar, 27, India

Economic marginalization is often compounded by lack of formal education, which can further limit not only economic but also social and political opportunities for advancement and engagement.

*"I have grown up in a bad environment that made me hopeless many times, and we have a bad education system. We need to change it as soon as possible otherwise we cannot stop the hatred."*
Youth Contributor, 26, Palestine

*"It is easy to quickly radicalize youth in Northern Nigeria because of the illiteracy level in that region. If de-radicalization is to be effective people must be given access to education. Wole Soyinka, a Nigerian poet, and Nobel Laureate, also confirms this in one of our interactions. He says that "Boko Haram wouldn't have been able to recruit youth if people were properly educated."*
Youth Contributor, 28, Nigeria

Carolyne Njihia, 31, from Kenya identifies hopelessness as a driver for young people whose socio-economic status has limited their opportunities and inured their sense of self-worth:

*"Young people engage in violent extremism because they have nothing to live for and nothing to lose. This hopelessness leads to violence as a way to be heard and displaying their frustration with the status quo."*

Violence here is a form of communication: a platform from which marginalized youth can express their frustration with social and economic injustice and challenge systems that have oppressed them.

As Sylvester Mwang'ana, 35, from Malawi explains, young people without the financial means to get an education are vulnerable to abuse by powerful actors, including influential politicians. *"Most youths in Malawi are not educated due to high poverty levels. Most Malawian politicians take advantage of this and use these out of school youths to engage in political violence in their pursuit of political agenda."* ∎

# POLITICAL & GEOPOLITICAL INJUSTICE

**P**overty and education are two of the most widely-discussed factors in violent extremism recruitment. But if economic disadvantage and lack of education were the only drivers of extremism we would see much larger numbers of young people from impoverished communities successfully recruited to these groups. Not only are financial and educational barriers not always a recipe for extremism, but economic stability and advanced schooling are not always effective guards against it.

*"I disagree that poverty and lack of education is the 'major' driving force of violent extremism. Bangladesh has been a hotbed of violent extremism recently, and my observation suggests, most of the youth who became extremists are not from a modest financial background, rather part of the upper class with strong academic and professional background. I also think that there is some aspect of poor mental health infrastructure in developing countries is responsible as well. The youths who engage in extremism often get misguided when they were in shock like a breakup, death of family and become vulnerable to brainwashing."*
Sadek Md Sadman, 27, Bangladesh

Sadek brings up an important issue to remember: it is not only poor and uneducated young people who are recruited by violent extremist groups. Well-educated and economically comfortable are also at risk. The World Bank analyzed the demographic composition of ISIS members and recruits, and their findings (Burke, 2016; in line with those established by Abadie, 2006; Busher, 2011; and Krueger & Maleckova, 2003) showed that 69 percent of these individuals had at least a secondary education. A large proportion of them even went to tertiary-level institutions. If economic marginalization and level of education aren't adequate predictors of vulnerability to extremism, what indicators should we consider to determine if someone is at risk of radicalization? In some circumstances, political instability, corruption, and elite immunity drive young people to join violent extremist groups.

*"If citizens are oppressed with poor governance systems, it makes them think about violence as a solution. Bad governments to some extent have contributed to people taking radical decisions"*
Kasirye Elly, 32, Uganda

*"We are experiencing effects of violent extremism in Uganda since February 2016. This came as a result of vote rigging by the current regime. It has affected the whole economy of Uganda in all sectors since democracy, and free and fair elections were not exercised."*
Youth Contributor , 27, Uganda

The examples of Uganda above shows how lack of fair and free elections, weak governance, and lack of democracy that affect society's development and progress may act as a driver to violent extremist groups for young people.

*"In Malawi for example, hard work among youth seldom pays as there is rampant corruption which is very discouraging.  Success for youth does not have to be luck or luck that one is born into a certain family."*
Narko Saukila Zambezi, 33, Malawi

*"Youth are angry at the injustice and no equal opportunities caused by their corrupt governments, trivial media and fake policies. Anger, if not properly controlled, leads to exclusion and atrocity. Militant groups are good at targeting and recruiting angry and disappointed youths. Resorting to violence or joining militant groups is one way of showing disapproval or rebellion and reacting to injustice, unfortunately."*
Mohammed Qasserras, 32, Morocco

Corruption and elite immunity add another dimension to understanding how unfair and unjust domestic political and social systems may push young people to resort to violent extremist acts. Weak - or "fake" - policies added to this mixture exacerbate anger towards authorities. And as an example from Tunis shows, young people often do not see government authorities reaching out to include their voices and concerns or build rapport and trust.

*"Current governments are not encouraging youth participation in the public and political life, and that's what leads to the lack of trust between the citizens and the government, and this lack of hope will lead our youth to join the extremist groups."*
Youth Contributor, 29, Tunis

Injustice in the local context by local or global political actors is another push factor. The prospect of amending injustice done to them or their people by outside powers and groups pulls young people to violent extremist groups that offer opportunities for revenge. Below, our Youth Contributors reflect on a major cause of injustice for young people: outside interference into local affairs, be it through the legacy of colonialism or present-day geopolitical activities.

*"The main thing for us is understanding how leaving open wounds in history is very dangerous. How injustice from the past creates resentment and gets passed on through generations, instilling in people a sense of having been wronged. This can justify even the most hideous acts. We must be better at looking back, acknowledging oppression in the past."*
Jenny Gustafsson, 35, Sweden

The colonial legacy described by Jenny does not only leave psychological trauma of the injustice and abuse imposed on certain groups. It also perpetuates racism and maintains systems that were forcibly imposed on the ruins of traditional institutions. These systems reinforce global inequalities and may act as a barrier to progress and development. The ongoing effects of the colonial legacy can stoke a desire for revenge among those whose opportunities continue to be impacted by these systems.

*"Promoting peace while using weapons is a sad contradiction. Some nations having the right to impose their point of view to other nations is not fair. Latin America has suffered terrible dictatorships because of this."*
Paula Melisa Trad Malmod, 26, Argentina

*"The 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi was a targeted attack against the western interests in the region. Kenyan casualties were collateral damage and not necessarily the major goal of the attackers. In recent times, Al-Shabaab declared war to the western interests and also to other allies of Amisom including Kenya."*
Muliru Yoni Awiti, 30, Kenya

The strategic location and resource wealth of certain countries attract attention of more powerful states that interfere by manipulating political figures and domestic policies and laws. This creates resentment and anger among local people who suffer policies implemented at their expense and to the benefit of a stronger state, as Paula and Muliru discuss ■

**L**et's take a look at economically prosperous and politically stable societies with quality education available to virtually all. Consider white people who commit violent extremist acts against people of another color, religion, or culture in their own countries. What drives them to such violence?

*"It's a problem of close-down to other cultures, not opening to the world, a matter also of the type of education, contextualized to our today's society."*
Ludwick Ier Ndokang Esone, 30, Cameroon

*"Nowadays, there are lots of misconception that make people give excuses to violence, and they are raising each day, especially against minorities or people belonging to a different race or religion. People now fear "the Other," so they act violently to protect themselves just because the other person is different and may do harm, just for a possibility that is not based on facts."*
Youth Contributor, 29, Algeria

Many right-wing extremists are motivated by a sense that they are losing social and political powers to which they believe they have an intrinsic right. These sentiments can be stoked by political parties or other powerful actors to divide communities that might otherwise find common ground. Political rhetoric in the US has been used to inflame

racial hostility, for example, the suggestion that affirmative action or immigration are responsible for a loss of economic opportunities for white people. In practice, this divides people who share socio-economic disadvantages along racial lines instead of uniting them against economic injustice.

Extremism can also be encouraged from birth[8] (Bergen, 2001; Burnett, 2012). From early childhood, some young people are surrounded by messages in schools and in the media that teach them that people who are different from them are inferior. They are taught hate, fear, suspicion, and bias from an early age. Their beliefs about white supremacy are subtly corroborated by mass media, by the historical systems of racism that persist today, and by the traditions and prejudices passed down from generation to generation. These attitudes can evolve from racism to extremism when individuals begin to perceive society's slow movement towards justice and equality as a threat to their way of life, their existence, and their identity.

What about young people who move across the world to join a violent extremism organization? How has a group such as ISIS convinced followers to take such drastic action? These young people come from all sorts of backgrounds and countries. To understand how radicalization can be appealing to such a range of individuals, we need to imagine a complex combination of personal, social, economic, and political factors -- each cocktail unique to each recruit -- required to lure someone voluntarily to a war-torn country to join a group reviled by mainstream media. We need to also imagine how this complex and unique cocktail involves every aspect of our society: how we act, what we say, how we treat others, and how all these may impact them and gradually push to go to extremes – to choose a path of violence and destruction.

"The current political discourse ignores a very poignant fact: that disenfranchised sectors of society, particularly religious minorities, suffer from socio-economic strains that create vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities, then, are exploited by violent groups."
- Gabriel Marchi Da Silva, 28, Brazil

[8]Derek Black is one such example. The son of white supremacist Don Black, who created the white nationalist website Stormfront, and the godson of former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke, Derek followed his father's footsteps until he started questioning the ideology he grew up with (Saslow, 2016).

An important factor in such a cocktail is the struggled to find an individual and collective identity in the world that is becoming more interconnected, messy, and complex. As our Youth Contributors discuss, young people may seek purpose in violent extremist groups that promise they can deliver a sense of belonging and identity.

*"One of the reasons why young people join extremist movements is the fact that they are often socially excluded. "*
Sandra Oborska, 27, Australia

*"In a globalized world, where the identity of people is increasingly blurred by the crowd, the identity call created by radical groups occupies the vacuum generated by social exclusion and lack of community feeling."*
Youth Contributor, 35, Honduras

Intensified migration across borders and refugee crises in recent years have brought diverse peoples into contact in ways governments have not been able to adequately prepare for. Potential tensions inevitably emerge when culturally different groups engage with one another, and these tensions have been escalated in some cases by the speed with which people move across borders.

*"Violent radicalization happens mostly as a result of lack of social inclusion and social justice towards certain communities. As there are a lot of changes within the societies, there is often a lack of sense of belonging among the people and identity crises."*
Matej Manevski, 28

*"Isolation is the most dangerous weapon against young people. Youth needs to feel a sense of belonging to a diverse community, which could also be constructed exclusively online."*
Youth Contributor, 27, Italy/Palestine

The following perspective on policies aimed at the integration of immigrants and refugees in the European Union shows that even well-meaning intentions do not always work ■

## CASE STUDY:

*Integration Policies in Europe*

I n Europe, where a clear failure of the integration policies of other nationalities and/or ethnicity of first or second generation can be widely seen. The way these policies have been conducted is the very reason why now we need to "prevent violent extremism." Young people at second generation immigrants suffer from a discontinuity between their culture, as taught in their homes, by their parents, and what they see on the outside in the capitalist societies. There is a very fragile link that has been broken, and now is being used by violent extremists, with no clear educational process as to maintain a preventive violent extremism process.

*"If we look at British policies and those of other countries, the way the police chooses to intervene in the streets by harassing 'look-alikes' of Arabs and Black people, has lead to countless organizations who now feel a need to coach these people that get stopped on the streets on how to react when police asks for documentation out of nowhere. It leads to further gaps and discontinuity between the state, the NGO's and the very people I'm talking about, as well as further gaps between immigrants and the citizens of the country that receives them, who learn how to live in fear and 'hate the other.'*
Youth Contributor, 31, Romania

Such policies, although well-meaning, did not contribute to the proper integration of young people coming from culturally and religiously different groups. Instead, they further alienated these youth populations from society, weakened links with their home environment, and made them question their identities. The reasons for such failure, as our Youth Contributor explains, lied in the perceived threat posed by people of color to traditionally white societies and lack of interaction, work, and trust between the government, civil society, and different segments of the population.

Myriad factors contribute to an individual's vulnerability to violent extremism. To identify these factors , we need to consider the unique social, political, economic, and psychological dynamics that shape the experience of each young person. The table below summarizes such factors. The push factors described here can estrange young people from their society and community and make them willing agents in the hands of violent extremism. The pull factors show what such extremist groups allegedly offer to young people to counterbalance the failures of some societies ∎

## Table 2: *Push and Pull Factors*

| Push factors | Pull factors |
| --- | --- |
| Threat to or loss of individual and collective identity; we frequently refer to this as "othering" in this guide. | Sense of identity and belonging provided by extremist group. |
| Social and economic marginalization and fragmentation (this is another form of "othering") | The offer of peace, economic gain, and security when the government is unable to provide any of them |
| Failure of government to provide basic services (health, education, welfare) | |
| Institutionalized discrimination and racism | Appeal of a network or environment that provides safe space and acceptance |
| Society-level discrimination and violence perpetrated by teachers, peers, parents, and others (bullying, hate speech, etc.) | |

| Push factors | Pull factors |
| --- | --- |
| Failure to achieve change among organized civil or political groups. | Prospect of empowerment, heroism, and leadership. |
| Geopolitical injustice (inequality, loss of life, land, or opportunity due to war or conflict, instability caused by foreign intervention) | Opportunity for revenge. |
| Repression and violation of human rights by the government. | |
| Corruption and elite impunity. | |
| Boredom; seeking excitement in life. | Lure of glory, fame, and an adventure. |
| Personal tragedy. | Personal relationships and an appeal of a particular leader. |

# RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

**E**xtremist groups rely on a variety of strategies and recruitment schemes to encourage young people to join their cause. Right-wing extremist groups in the United States have used education systems and universities to find a podium to disseminate their message. As Milo Yiannopoulos told CNN in February 2017, he speaks on college campuses because he believes this is where "bad ideas like ... progressive social justice, feminists, Black Lives Matter..." are formed (Lieberman, 2017). Similarly, white nationalist Richard Spencer focuses his efforts on campus events because he believes "[t]hese types of events are tremendous opportunities for us to communicate our message. They are ways for us to reach millions of people who would otherwise never have heard our ideas" (Kestenbaum, 2017). The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the US recorded 159 incidents of flier distribution from white supremacist groups in the 2016-2017 academic year (ADL, 2017). This occurred across 110 American college campuses in 34 states.

Extremists also use violent acts themselves in their messaging and recruitment strategy. Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik, a member of the Knights of Templar of Europe, terrorized Oslo in July 2011 when he detonated a bomb and shot 69 people at a summer camp. Breivik later claimed that he wanted to attract media attention to publicize his anti-Islamic and anti-multicultural sentiments, and his extreme distaste for "mass immigration," the "cultural Marxists," and the "feminism of European culture." The publicity regarding his court trials and the manifesto he posted online prior to his acts helped him further broadcast his views.

In some cases, in areas torn by conflicts and wars, other means may be used by violent extremist groups to "recruit" young people and even children. As Muliru describes in the case study below, violent extremist organizations may coerce young people to join by abducting or smuggling them. These children and young people may then be drugged and indoctrinated so that they will commit violent extremist attacks (Bloom & Horgan, 2015). This has been the case for recruiters from ISIS, Boko Haram, the Lord's Resistance Army, and the Taliban ∎

## CASE STUDY:

*Recruitment of Youth in Conflict Zones*

> *Most of the youth in schools are either lured, abducted, or smuggled into terrorist organizations. The Lord's Resistance Army is estimated to have captured over 100,000 children from 1987 to 2012 and displaced over 2.5 million people, according to a United Nations report (International Justice Resource Centre, 2016). There are different data sources pay tribute to the process of joining with indications that some of the Chibok girls from Nigeria (Tolbert, 2015) were abducted and were served to be wives to the terrorists. Some of the children are also sold by unknowing parents to extremist organizations in the pretext that the buyers would provide these youths who are supposed to be in school; with the Quranic teachings in better learning institutions, like in the case of Mali (Obaji, 2016)."*

Muliru Yoni Awiti, 30, Kenya

Violent extremist group Boko Haram attracts young people by offering financial and educational opportunities or pressuring them to join through the example of what happens to communities that go against their will. Young people are promised resources to establish their businesses (Ifijeh, 2016). Women and girls can be attracted by chance to acquire some basic education and knowledge of the Quran (Cogan, 2016). Some young people saw what atrocities Boko Haram committed against neighboring communities and joined in an effort to protect their own from the same fate (Cogan, 2016).

Recruitment from social media and the Internet continues to be a prominent method for extremist groups. ISIS has developed a sophisticated social media strategy to attract and recruit young people to join their ranks, advertising itself on social media websites such as Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook and other apps frequented by young people as a "five-star jihad". Its members write blogs and post videos to update their followers on a glorified life in the caliphate. They also identify vulnerable individuals on the Internet, connect with them emotionally by providing support and understanding, and in the process of regular communication, groom them for radicalization ∎

# KEY
# LEARNINGS

- Violent extremism has increased in recent years

- There are many misconceptions that influence the way we see PVE

- Attraction to violent extremism can be explained by a combination of push and pull factors, though there is no precise cocktail to explain why someone joins an extremist group

- Prevention of violent extremism should involve all stakeholders, including teachers, policy-makers, coaches, artists, journalists, and all other actors that shape our societies

- Strategies to prevent violent extremism should make use of all venues that provide youth with learning opportunities: formal educational institutions, extra-curricular activities, media, playground, internet, and others

## UNDERSTAND PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

Violent extremist groups rely on a combination of push and pull factors to encourage the participation of young people. Understanding these factors and identifying which are relevant to your community can help establish a culture that reduces the vulnerability of members to the messages of violent extremists.

**Policy makers:**

■ Map out what specific factors cause radicalization and violent extremism in your context. Identify the ways violent extremist groups reach out to young people. Tailor policies and practices to address these push and pull factors.

■ Engage stakeholders in regular dialogue to address different factors that lead young people to the path of violent extremism. Include stakeholders from all sectors of the community; not just experts who specialize in the field of prevention and countering of violent extremism.

■ Include the most marginalized segments of the society in your conversations to understand their vulnerabilities and needs. Travel to their neighborhoods and villages to meet with them in their context and to make them more comfortable and honest with you in their conversations.

**Teachers:**

■ Review the push and pull factor table on page 91-92. Identify the factors that you think are most likely to impact your students. Make a list of these factors and share them with your class. Ask them to discuss how these factors impact their lives and what they think the consequences might be. You do not need to present these ideas as push and pull factors related to violent extremism; instead, see how

your students imagine these issues might manifest, if unaddressed, in their community.

■ Ask students to define the terms "extremist" and "radical." Then pass out a list of people who waged movements: terrorist leaders, freedom fighters, civil rights advocates, etc. Ask students to decide who was an extremist or who was radical. Then ask them to consider why these people were radical. What drove their radicalization? Can the same ideas and experiences drive someone to be a radical advocate for justice and a radical advocate for revenge, religion, or terror?

**Families and Guardians:**

■ Model nonviolence and understanding behavior in your interactions with others so that your child can learn by your example.

■ Validate your child's feelings and be willing to share your fears and vulnerabilities. Show your child that these feelings are important and make your home a safe place to discuss them. Cultivate an open relationship with your children in which they feel free and safe talking with you about anything, especially emotional states.

■ Develop a relationship with your child's teacher. Keep in touch with the school and look for ways to participate in your child's life outside of your home.

# Formal
# Education

# FORMAL
# EDUCATION

**B**efore we explore the role of education in preventing violence, **let's look at** what "education" typically refers to. There is an implicit assumption that high-quality education (as opposed to rote learning or memorization) will strengthen character, open minds, develop resilience, and build empathy. Education teaches you to question what you are told. Education allows you to form your own conclusions. In other words, education is often used synonymously with critical thinking.

The development of critical skills can play a central role in dismantling extremist tendencies. But like any other asset to PVE efforts, critical thinking is not a solution to extremism, nor is it a guarantee that those who develop these skills will reject a path to violence.

This chapter will discuss the limits of critical thinking, while also considering how it can be embedded in formal education as a way of preventing violent extremism. Drawing from the voices of our Youth Contributors, we will then outline five pillars of formal education: teachers, textbooks, pedagogy, schools, and language ∎

"We must be comfortable with not knowing and living with paradoxes. This means we must have a willingness to listen and learn—even from the most unlikely sources. Once we "know" something we tend to want to hear only from people like us— people who filter the world through the same eyes we do. And when we do, we miss a lot. We become judgmental and evaluative rather than inquisitive."

- Ravi Kaushal, 26, India

The virtues of teaching critical thinking have been much extolled in recent years, not least for the promise it holds of preventing radicalization[9]. However, within discussions about the importance of critical thinking in preventing violent extremism, there is often an assumption that a critical thinker cannot possibly become an extremist thinker. Conventional wisdom suggests that radicalization happens because people are swept up by persuasive narratives and clever media propaganda. With a little critical skill-building, potential extremists would be less easily radicalized and less vulnerable to dangerous and empty rhetoric.

But this is not always the case. Extremist regimes are often borne of significant intellects, and employ seductive ideologies or theologies that display excellent critical thinking. To engage with this issue, we will address two questions:

[9]For example - ET 2020 Working Groups. (2016). Strengthening Media Literacy and Critical Thinking to Prevent Violent Radicalisation: Key Messages from the PLA, The Hague, 20-22 April 2016. Brussels: European Commission.

1.  Why do critical thinkers sometimes find themselves on the side of violent extremists?

2.  How can critical thinking be augmented in a way that will be more likely to prevent radicalization from occurring?

There are several ways to explain the uncomfortable bedfellows of critical thinking and extremism. The first explanation is straightforward: being highly educated and being a good critical thinker are not synonymous. A New York Times article about why so many terrorists are engineers suggests that engineering may help shape a binary view of the world (Berreby, 2010). Extremist narratives play into this view, where the ambiguities of life are absent, and right and wrong fall into sharp relief. Highly educated people are often trained out of questioning by their education system.

This is not a failure of critical thinking. But it is a failure to correctly identify what critical thinking is (and what it isn't). When we conflate instruction or academic success with critical thinking, we fail to measure the full intellectual development of students, particularly as relates to the ability of students to wrestle with real-world issues and complexities.

Even when critical thinking is the goal, it is sometimes approached as a stand-alone subject. This allows schools and teachers to address the ideals of critical thinking without actually raising controversial topics where critical scrutiny is most needed. Many educators will not touch certain subject areas for fear of the discussion that follows.

Likewise, many students will be reluctant to participate in difficult discussions for fear of the consequences they face if they holdcontradictory views. For example, Muhammad Al-Hussaini, senior fellow in Islamic Studies at the Westminster Institute, suggests that there is often hesitation to engage with the theology of Islamist extremists. He points out that extremism is often grounded in historical Islamic theology, which one needs to engage with critically. Several scholars have made this a foundational part of their academic work[10]. But many teachers also find this a very uncomfortable thing to do. What happens to young people who are denied a space to engage in controversial, difficult discussions?

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[10]Examples of scholars who have critiqued the theology of extremist groups include Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, Muhammad Al-Ghazali, and Rachid al-Ghanouchy, to name a few.

"Imagine a young kid facing color/caste/religion-based discrimination which she/he is not able to report to parents or teachers, and suddenly someone tells them your color/caste/religion is the true and supreme one, others are your enemies and quote them some distorted version of religious texts. Imagine another situation where a young kid is facing gender-based discrimination and harassments from people close to her/him, and she/he has no one to discuss it, and they end up finding an answer in violence and drugs. These are a few of the various situations youth today faces in daily life without any answers, mostly due to lack of a proper platform to discuss them openly."

- Manazir Sharique Hassan, 29, India

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It is impossible for young people to practice working through intellectual challenges if they are unable to discuss controversial topics. Any educational forum that hopes to deal with extreme ideas will have to confront the real and concrete issues of that context and will have to invite and support students in doing the same.

Many educators treat critical thinking as though it is a discrete subject in itself - it is not (Didau, 2017). It is a procedural skill that engages with a subject and therefore cannot be taught as an abstraction. With particular regard to PVE, it is essential that controversial and difficult topics are spoken about in classroom discussions and debates.

Questions like 'what constitutes extremist thinking?' - As the recent book "Talking about Terrorism" (Jamieson & Flint, 2017) suggests - should form the basis of classroom discussions. Rather than impose answers about difficult issues on young people, we should begin by asking them questions and drawing out their own ability to think issues through. Young people need opportunities to be a part of a shared social project, which is only likely to happen if they become part of discussions that allow them to construct their own notions of "extremism" and "moderation."

This is not to suggest that a teacher must allow or validate anything that is said under any circumstance, merely that it is important that students are able to discern truth for themselves. Engaging in dialogue about controversial topics encourages young people to reach their own conclusions about the ideas, biases, and assumptions they passively absorb from friends, family, and society. This provides the skill set they will need to distinguish what messages they receive and what conclusions they believe.

Unfortunately, some countries have PVE initiatives that limit the opportunities for open and candid discussion. For example, in Britain, the Prevent policy instructs teachers to alert authorities about students with extreme ideas (Espinoza, 2016). This means that schools are not safe spaces to discuss controversial ideas, for fear that young people may be "channeled." Ideas that should be discussed and debated are rarely spoken of and thus retain their power for adherents. Consider the following reflections from our Youth Contributors:

*"The most glaring concerns of the Prevent strategy are the targeting of the whole Muslim community as potential terrorists... It aims, for example, to strengthen the 'capacity' of Muslims to resist violent extremism and to build 'resilience.' Whatever that means is open to differing understandings. At one level, the euphemistic and vague terminology serves the purpose of getting the strategy past the Muslim community with little protest."*
Youth Contributor, 28, Liberia

*"Personally I hold reservation with the discourse around some government's attempt in controlling radicalization. By pinning down certain groups to be risky and blamable based on their identities, it sends out a delusive message that terrorism is governable. In fact, to me, it could breed further separations, marginalization, and discrimination, which could generate further grievance and violence."*
Sun Qin, 26, China

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[11] Think here of the Baader Meinhof group, which was populated by left-wing humanities and law graduates. Critical thinking led them to Marxist conclusions about society.

*I believe that school should not be considered as hotbeds for radical ideas where potential radicals should be identified while they are still young, and targeted as in the case of several European countries, as this might further damage social cohesion and instigate racial, social and cultural divisions"*
Agnese Macaluso, 29, Italy

## Many grievances held by extremists are real

Our Youth Contributor from Liberia, Suin Qin, another Youth contributor and Agnese draw out the issue with government-wide measures to prevent violent extremism, in particular, the danger that some of these measures increase isolation and stoke injustice by targeting communities perceived to be "at risk." Such approaches may be counterproductive, as they succeed in othering marginal communities and isolating them, rather than helping these communities integrate and encouraging majority populations to exercise respect and avoid prejudicial assumptions.

**VIOLENT EXTREMISM: A JUST RESPONSE TO STRUCTURAL OPPRESSION?**

Perhaps an even more complex problem than how to raise controversial topics is how to address the fact that there is enough truth in some extremist narratives to make them credible and relevant to engaged [11]critical thinkers. Many grievances held by extremists are real, including structural poverty and injustice, racial abuse, and state-sanctioned marginalization. Finding legitimate fault with the prejudicial actions of others provides a concrete outlet for painful emotions and aligns with many extremist narratives that justify violence. A rational and educated person can make a valid argument in some circumstances that violence is the best vehicle for change and for overcoming structural barriers. The following case studies help to clarify some instances of this.

*"In our Ugandan context where there is a lot of youth unemployment, many especially Muslim youth having limited opportunities for education, work, and meaningful social ties, are easily influenced or coerced into acts of violent extremism at the promise of a better life, better financial muscle."*
Immaculate Gwokyalya, 30, Uganda

*"Violent extremism is not the cause but the consequence of other social problems, such as poverty, social stratification, lack of education and literacy about religion, and inaccessibility of the means for social mobility."*
Anastassiya Reshetnyak, 24, Kazakhstan

*"Extremism in Kenya is related to high youth unemployment rates. Kenya has a youthful population with more than 65% of population below the age of 29 and unemployment rates at 40% (Kenya Population Bureau). Therefore extremist groups have a ready audience when they promise better lives. One way to solve the problem is providing opportunities for the youth. That will solve the problem at its root. Focusing on eliminating extremist groups only*

*make the problem worse. This has been the case in coastal Kenya that has been experiencing a rise in extremism. Heavy-handed approach by authorities has not helped."*
Japheth Omari, 33, Kenya


In all of the above case studies, structural problems provide fertile ground for extremists. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, education and employment are not guarantors against extremism. But the provision of such opportunities can make extremist narratives less attractive to young people and remove many of the factors that push them towards extremist groups.

### "EDUCATION IS PART OF THE PROBLEM."

Many who populate the upper echelons of terrorist organizations have not experienced structural poverty or denial of education and employment opportunities. They have come from comfortable homes in safe countries (London 7/7/ bombers for example, or the two doctors' failed bomb attempt on Glasgow Airport). Neither critical thinking nor the removal of structural barriers are guarantors for preventing radicalization. Consider these opinions on the issue from Pakistan.

*"The current discourse over-emphasizes the role of poverty and unemployment in promoting violent extremism...This is not to deny that socio-economic factors enhance vulnerability and make young people more susceptible to extremist propaganda. There is enough evidence to show that an increasing number of educated middle-class males are joining militancy. Education is often promoted as a panacea for all social ills. Based on my personal experience, I believe education is a part of the problem. Certain types of education can make people more vulnerable to extremist propaganda and violence."*
Rafiullah Kakar, 28, Pakistan

*"The popular discourse concerning extremism in developing countries that primarily focuses on lack of economic opportunities for youth is misleading in some parts. Radicalization process has happened in elite educational institutions where youth from well-to-do families go for education. Therefore, there should be a reconsideration of narrative that links extremism directly to poverty."*
FNU Roohullah, 27, Pakistan

Neither money nor education ensures protection against violent extremism; and critical thinking -- although an important skill -- is, by itself, an insufficient barrier to radicalization. Prevention of violent extremism requires a comprehensive and society-wide commitment What does this mean for the goals of formal education that prioritizes the prevention of violent extremism? It means that we must focus on the individual actions and influences of each aspect of formal education to understand how they support or discourage a journey towards violence and extremism.

With that, we will take a closer look at five pillars of formal education: teachers, pedagogy, textbooks, schools, and language ■

# KEY
# LEARNINGS

- Education is often considered a path to peace as it helps young people acquire critical thinking skills to prevent radicalization and engagement with violent extremist ideologies and groups

- Being educated, however, is not enough - many extremists are highly educated people

- Having critical thinking skills is only a small part of building resilience to violent extremist ideologies

- Critical thinking isn't a subject and cannot be taught as an abstraction - it should be practiced in discussion of difficult and controversial topics relevant to local contexts

- Schools must allow for controversial discussions if they are to build resilience in students, give them safe space to understand issues and discuss important issues and make them a part of a social project

- Some grievances of violent extremists are real - they may include such structural barriers such as poverty, injustice, and inequality - and critical thinking alone or high level of education won't address them

- Neither removal of these structural barriers nor teaching students the skill of critical thinking are, by themselves, enough to prevent violent extremism

# TEACHERS & YOUTH: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1.  When talking about the faults of others, do we speak of them in general terms (such as "those Asians," "the Catholics," Whites, women, etc.)? And when we talk about faults of our own community, do we qualify in more specific terms those who are at fault (such as "bad Protestants," "ignorant…," "insincere…," etc.)

2.  When people from another religious or ethnic community do something wrong, do we conclude that it must be religiously motivated extremism? When people in our own community do the same thing, do we reach the same conclusion? Are we more likely to consider a complex mixtures of "push" and "pull" factors when explaining the actions of people who belong to our group?

3.  Where our ethnic or religious community is a minority, do we feel that our right to self-determination and freedom of expression to influence others with our faith or culture is being undermined and challenged by the majority? In places where we are the majority community, do we believe that minorities should have a right to self-determination and expression? and should have the right to share their faiths and cultures with others?

4.  How do we judge the history of atrocities done to us by others? Do we always describe these as "genocides," "holocausts," "ethnic cleansings" and "massacres"? How do we judge the atrocities done in the past by our communities towards others? Are these described as being "politically pragmatic," "defensive" and "unavoidable evils"?

5.  When we hear good or positive reflections about the group to which we belong, are we more likely to assume the speaker is objective and rational than we would if we were being criticized? When we are criticized, are we more likely to assume the speaker is biased or bigoted?

6.  When we see problems faced by another community, do we conclude that the cause of their problems is their failure to accept and follow our values and ideals? If we see problems faced by our own community, do we conclude that the reason is that our people do not accept and follow our ideals and values?

7.  Do we see our social problems as being the result of the negative influences of others on us? Do we often see the good in other societies as being a result of our positive influence on them? Do we give credit to the positive influence others have had on us? Do we take the blame for the negative influence we might have had on others?

8.  Do you see natural disasters that hit other communities as a sign of God's anger and punishment? Do you see natural disasters that affect your community in the same light?

# TEACHERS

It is crucial, therefore, that teachers are aware of how their thinking and actions have been shaped, and ask themselves - how can I model a perspective that encourages inclusion? How does my method of communicating and acting encourage integration and respect for difference? Are there any ways that my culture and history have influenced the way I think and behave, to the detriment of certain groups?

**T**eachers have an enormous impact on the growth and development of their students. They can be role models, confidantes, motivators, and sources of emotional support. They lead by example, set expectations of what a young person can accomplish, and influence the way students see themselves and the world.

Teachers model behavior that influences how their students think and act. Like all people, teachers are shaped by culture, tradition, experience, and education. In certain circumstances, this baggage can be damaging. It is crucial, therefore, that teachers are aware of how their thinking and actions have been shaped, and ask themselves - how can I model a perspective that encourages inclusion? How does my method of communicating and acting encourage integration and respect for difference? Are there any ways that my culture and history have influenced the way I think and behave, to the detriment of certain groups?

Consider the following examples of teachers whose interactions with students were defined by prejudice and xenophobia.

*"When I was attending in grade 5, one of my teachers always said to us (Islamic children), "Go your country, and study there, not here, you are rubbish". At that time, I strongly believed that we are not Myanmar people because we don't worship the Buddha."*
Hnin Nandi Htun, 25, Myanmar

*"I attended at one of the top ten schools in Yangon. Teachers discriminated me from the rich students, so I didn't have equal opportunities like the others do. Teachers didn't receive me warmly for I didn't attend the extra tuition."*
Aye Thandar, 20, Myanmar

*"I have had teachers who made jokes about the immigrant children's names. One boy from Afghanistan, his name was "Arkan." In Norwegian, the same word means "paper." The teacher would make jokes about this student's name when they were passing out papers."*
Louise, 25, Norway

*"I have heard teachers talk about the one Traveller family in our school community in awful ways. One of the children is finding it difficult to settle, and I think it is in part due to the way his teacher treats him and how she talks to the rest of the class about his behavior. They have been told they are lucky because they are 'intelligent' and 'got an education,' implying that he is not and did not. They are told to accept his many 'differences' but in fact, there are not even so many, and I believe they should not be highlighted in this negative way. The other children in the family settled well into their classes, and I think it's down to the treatment they received from their teachers. "*
Youth Contributor, 30, Ireland

*"I have often had problems with teachers who didn't behave appropriately. They acted differently with me because I wear the hijab."*
Oumaima, 16, Canada

These Youth Contributors highlight the potential of teacher conduct to compound student isolation rather than combat it. This involves propagating common prejudices and division among ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups that isolate and marginalize young people and further their sense of "othering."

## PEACE OR JUSTICE?

Many teachers would be horrified by the experience of Youth Contributors who were marginalized or shamed in their classrooms. But even teachers who have shown great personal reflection and worked hard to create an atmosphere of peace for their students must consider what the value, definition, and purpose of peace are in each context and to each student. In certain political, social, and religious contexts, peace promotes acceptance and deference over justice and assertiveness. For example, in pre-civil rights America, "living peacefully" was a byword for accepting structural injustice without complaint or protest.

Peace, however, is not merely the absence of conflict. In religious etymology, it emerges from words like salam (Arabic) or shalom (Hebrew) - which means wholeness or completeness. Peace is predicated on ideas of justice and equality, and therefore cannot be sought in their absence. Peace is an emergent property of a society that strives for respect, equal opportunity, and diversity, not an attitude of acceptance that can be imposed upon a suffering population. The quote below from Myanmar brings out this point.

*"I think teachers have a positive attitude toward peace, tranquility but not for equality and justice. [In Myanmar] Teachers are mostly Buddhists, so they follow the teaching of Buddha, and that means they all want to live peacefully. However, there has been discrimination up to the wealth, race, and religion."*
Aye Thandar, 20, Myanmar

Aye Thandar points out here that many teachers idealize peace not only over but at the expense of justice and equality. The experience of peace will only be the experience of fairness and ethical integrity if we insist that it is. It is therefore incumbent on educators not just to promote peace, but also to acknowledge injustice and the role of addressing injustice in creating peace that is truly sustainable.

One way to encourage a critical look at the relationship between peace and justice is to explore both peaceful and violent campaigns that claimed noble goals such as people power, freedom, and equality. There is historical evidence to demonstrate that violence has worked to topple abusive regimes, including the fight for independence from France in Algeria (1945-1962) (Hitchens, 2006), the revolutions against the absolute monarchy in Russia (1905, 1917) (Verner, 1990), and a violent upheaval against monarchy in France (1789-1799) (Fehér, 1990). Violence also informed aspects of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa (Dixon, 2013; South African History Online, 2017) and was condoned by some civil rights leaders in the US (Hevesi, 1989; Stout, 1996). It may be controversial to discuss with students examples of violent acts carried out on the back of lofty and even humanitarian goals. But these conversations will more fully engage the critical potential of students and support a more nuanced understanding of both violent and nonviolent actors.

Teachers can acknowledge that violence has at times achieved its aim while also pointing out that violent revolutions overwhelmingly fail. A study of two hundred years of civil resistance and rebellion found non-violent protest to be the most effective way of securing change. In Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan's (2012) historical study of both violent and nonviolent protests, it became apparent that successful change was delivered far more effectively through nonviolence. It is also important to consider the legacy that violent change creates, such as the Russian revolution that paved the way for an even more abusive regime to assume power. There is tension within this type of discussion, as different actors will define justice differently. To help students engage with this challenge, consider the definitions exercise in the Action Guide and the

recommendations section at the end of this chapter, in which students propose their own definitions of contentious terms.

The instinct towards violence is a human reality. If young people are denied the chance to consider how this instinct has manifested throughout history, how it has or has not been effective, and what real alternatives are, they will have fewer resources on which to draw when they feel this violent instinct in themselves. As part of a classroom exercise, teachers can help students explore where they draw their own lines regarding violence. See recommendations at the end of the chapter for details on this.

## CULTIVATING RESPECT IN THE CLASSROOM

The idea that all human lives are worthy of respect can be challenging in certain circumstances. How worthy of respect are those who commit atrocities and show no regard for the lives of others? What about leaders whose oppressive policies condemn their people to suffer? And the most everyday classroom scenario: what about those who have views that seem to be wrong or even abhorrent - about sexuality, gender, or religion? Feeling empathy for these people will often be difficult, and may be exacerbated by the views of teachers, as the example below illustrates.

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"Many times at my Ethics and religion course my teacher denigrated Islam by quoting a passage from Quran, and when I tried to explain and give context to the information, he asked me to leave the classroom."
- Maroua, 20, Canada

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In Maroua's example, there is a tacit refusal by the teacher to engage in the task of understanding and humanizing those who have different perspectives. Our Youth Contributors stressed the importance of engaging with other people to understand their experiences, a clear indication that young people are ready for these conversations and debates in their classrooms:

*"We need to put ourselves in other people's shoes to understand the reason they do what they do."*
Gbati Peace Afua, 31, Ghana

*"Othering people is not the answer. We need to listen to what they say and analyze it."*
Tirmizy Abdullah, 27, Phillippines

Listening to other people, despite our discomfort and at times aversion to what they say diminishes exclusion and marginalization and prevents "othering." Listening does not require agreement, but it does encourage respect and recognition between groups.

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## "By learning about what other countries and cultures deal with, I learned to understand them and their reactions."
## - Youth Contributor, 19, Canada

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Teachers can encourage this recognition by facilitating discussion in the classroom, but they can also find more overt and active ways to develop a student's ability to empathize and relate. An example from a Youth Contributor in the US identifies field trips and perspective shifts as critical to delivering lessons that reflect the universality of human worth.
"One of my high school social studies teachers taught us about a variety of religions in a very respectful manner, from a religious studies point of view. We visited services at various places of worship after studying and comparing their beliefs. That same teacher taught some classes in which we focused on what was happening all around the world in a particular year in history in a very open, non-Eurocentric way." (Zeri Ort, USA)
Leading field trips and modeling a global focus helps develop open-mindedness and global awareness in students, especially in a homogeneous class. Teachers can encourage young people to learn about different religion, cultures, or groups by demonstrating that they value diversity.

Teachers can also support students in sharing their differing perspectives with one another. There are many ways of facilitating dialogue, including several examples included in the Key Actions at the end of this chapter ∎

I WISH MY TEACHER..

- Was more understanding of circumstances leading to not doing my homework.

- Gave me equal chance to speak out my idea.

- Was not biased towards us based on his/her ideas of an excellent student.

- Was kinder and more emotionally intelligent.

- Understood the fact that their actions can have life-changing consequences. I understand at the end of the day, it's just a job, but it can be done better.

- Wanted to know the essence of the different religions.

- Was more and more knowledgeable about the subject and give many examples in her explanation. I wish her to be aware of related stories regarding the subject though there is no description in the text.

- Gave me equal chance to speak out my idea.

- Was more strict.

- Had not taught the lessons on homosexuality and STDs at the same time so that the other students in my class would not have equated one with the other. I wish we hadn't all referred to LGBTQ people as "they" (or more commonly "faggots") throughout the discussion. I think it would have been better to wait until the students were older and more mature to include homosexuality in the curriculum. I wish it hadn't had to be a part of the health and sex-ed curriculum because it is simply a part of life. Acted the same way with me as they did with my peers.

- Could see beyond my Hijab and that he understands that words do have an impact.

- Was still alive to inspire many more generations.

- Had taken my viewpoint when I shared it in class rather than punishing me.

- Was trained on modern education style.

- Was open-minded and not afraid to explore controversial issues.

- Encouraged me to be kind to people, to seize opportunities to do good for others, not just encouraged me to be successful and great for my self and money.

- Would let children be children, not pour hard work and stressful tests on them.

- Focused less on grades, more on personal development. Had been unbiased.

- Had acted as a coach, not just a teacher; a coach who helps me to overcome my fear in my early stage and able to identify my natural strength that will lead me to live my full potential rather than developing me as another educated person from a structured process of theoretical subjects. Took the time to listen to me and help me come out of my shell in a more caring way instead of some boot camp way. Unaware of how sensitive I can be.

- Were open-minded and had the mission to educate the young generations, not only about the knowledge but also regarding moral, ethics, tolerance and peace builders. They should understand how to react nicely with the students.

# KEY
# LEARNINGS

■ Teachers are shaped by their cultures, religions, education, and experiences - these factors influence how they relate to the world and, more importantly, to their students.

■ Teachers are incredibly influential in the way they model daily responses and what they include and omit from class discussion - this may show that a young person belongs to the community or doesn't.

■ Teachers, even through small acts and words that show to a student that she or he is not welcomed or lacks something can create or exacerbate marginalization and division in the society.

■ Focusing only on peace can mean teachers overlook injustice and inequality.

■ Teachers are sometimes unwilling to bring controversial perspectives into their classroom if they conflict with their and the society's beliefs. Not giving space to diverse perspectives doesn't give voice to those individuals who hold them thus isolating them further.

■ When young people are not given opportunities to listen to conflicting views, they don't have the opportunity to practice empathy and compassion towards those people.  It's only through active engagement that empathy can be experienced and that groups can practice respect for one another.

■ Teachers need the support of school administrators if they are to promote dynamic student engagement and inclusion of diverse voices. School administrators must support teachers by allowing them to raise controversial issues and by allowing flexibility in how they structure lessons.

# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

**TEACHERS**

1) Become aware of the way you have been shaped: what prejudices have you learned from family, friends, society, experience? Make a list of these prejudices. Consider sharing these and discussing with your students.

2) Do your prejudices ever have an implicit impact on the way you teach and what you say or do might be harmful and destructive?

3) What would peace look like in your community? What would justice look like? What difference do you see between the two?

4) How would you encourage your community to work towards either of these objectives?

5) Initiate there local or national initiatives that you can embrace (or initiate) that will challenge tribalism or stereotype?

6) How can you engage your students (and even their parents) in such initiatives?

7) Are there any students in my classroom who can be trained to help me and vulnerable students who may need additional support?

8) How can I reach out to families of poor children and establish a trustworthy relationship with them to understand their limitations and help each other in educating their child?

9) What kind of other support can I provide to young people from impoverished or otherwise marginalized backgrounds?

10) What positive resources can I use to showcase to my students how a problem can be resolved in a peaceful and nonviolent manner?

**POLICYMAKERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS**

1) Does the pre-service teacher training equip teachers with skills and knowledge to manage complex classroom environments?

2) Do we provide relevant and regular in-service training opportunities for teachers?

3) What support exists for teachers to address problems they encounter in the classroom? What kind of support can we provide for teachers, parents, and students in difficult circumstances, even though our funds are limited?

# PEDAGOGY

**T**he lasting legacy of education is often not so much the knowledge that one learns, but rather the way that knowledge was acquired. Many approaches to teaching will emphasize the authority of the teacher or the textbook over the active engagement of the student[12]. Other approaches give students more responsibility for their own learning and encourage students to ask questions and actively participate.

Pedagogies driven by student participation aim to develop individuals who can think and learn for themselves. They suit classroom dynamics where student voices are welcome, and the teacher is comfortable being questioned or challenged by students. When this comfort is lacking, teachers are more likely to insist on hierarchies that influence the style of instruction. The examples below are testimonies from students who have been shaped by authoritarian teaching styles.

*"They don't announce officially that you can't question to the teacher, but students should understand that rule automatically. What happens when you question to the teacher or point out the teacher's mistake, they will scold the students by practicing the rule that teachers are always right."*

Aye Thandar, 20, Myanmar

*"[We are ] not being allowed to question or talk back."*

Anthony, 15, Canada

*"Although I'm a Nepalese citizen, I've done my schooling (classes 1-10), my graduation and post-graduation in India. So it's fair to say I am a product of the Indian school system. I spent ten years as a boarding student in a Catholic school. To question your teachers (your superiors) was a sin. I'm not saying my school days were terrible, they were the best days of my life, but we were taught early on, to be submissive. Even as an adult, I find it difficult to disagree with*

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[12] Paolo Freire called this the 'banking method' of teaching.

*my boss, my senior, etc. This has seriously hampered my critical reasoning."*
Swastik, 28, Nepal

When power dynamics such as these dominate a classroom, students are disempowered and their participation devalued. Swastik from Nepal draws out the fact that having an environment that is closed to questioning restricts critical thought.  If a young person grows up believing that authorities are never to be questioned, she is less likely to challenge the perspective of an 'expert' – even if said expert holds questionable or dangerous views. This weakens resilience against extreme ideologies. Conversely, a classroom culture that values student opinions and encourages questioning is far less likely to leave rhetoric unquestioned and untested.

The question this raises for teachers is not so much 'am I teaching in the right way?' Pedagogies come in and out of style, and what is 'right' is influenced by opinion and context. A teacher can consider the following question: what am I implicitly teaching students through the way I instruct? What impact might my style of instruction have on them in the future?

"Our syllabus is designed in such a manner that people who have interest in subjects like history, geography is not given the tools necessary to do something good in the future. In a way, the South Asian mentality is - if you're not a doctor or an engineer, you're not that great. So kids who wanted to study literature, and humanities (subjects that teach compassion, etc.) were/are not encouraged. I wish my school had the strength to try new things. Everything new isn't bad. Yes we're an old school, and we have our values, but those things are chaining us down."
-Swastik, 28, Nepal

Authoritarian teaching models teach through rote learning. Rote learning is often used to build foundational knowledge in a discipline and can be essential in this regard. It is also a manageable way of delivering content to large classes, and being readily testable against clear assessment standards. It is the chosen method of teaching across most of the world, in large part because small budgets necessitate large classes.

Whether for pragmatism or by necessity, rote learning is also often bound up with cultural and societal expectations. Teachers are the authority figures, and may see questioning as a threat to their authority - they are likely to shut down anything which threatens the cultural identity bound up with being a teacher[13]. As Youth Contributor Anam Zakaria (29, Pakistan) states, "Rote learning system hinders students' critical thinking skills and prevents them from accessing alternative and diverse narratives."

The goal of rote learning itself is also problematic, as it suggests that education is about knowing the right answer. This has a lasting impact on the social and emotional development of students and the skills they acquire in relating to other people. A Youth Contributor Adekanmbi Gbeminiyi (age 30, Nigeria) explains:

*"A lot of young people are brought up with polarities and educational extremism that instill a mindset of going against everyone who doesn't share the same perspective. The educational systems we have in place in different parts of the world create dichotomies rather than fostering a sense of togetherness. These educational structures need to be rewired and then realigned."*

Many teachers forego rote learning in favor of a student-centered approach to learning. These approaches prioritize a student's ability to think, discern, and communicate effectively for their own good, as well as for the greater good. Such an approach is successful when teachers relinquish some of their control and allow students the opportunity to learn through asking questions and engaging in dialogue.

In certain contexts, this requires a profound cultural shift, particularly if there are cultural barriers to talking about controversial issues or challenging hierarchical structures. Changing the culture of a classroom can feel like an uphill struggle, as new approaches make fresh demands on both students and teachers. Online resources are available for teachers who would like to move towards a student-centered approach to learning, available in the Resource section[14].

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[13]The cultural identity and expectations of teachers are relative to different countries and cultures

[14]Organizations like Generation.Global exists to provide training, resources, and facilitation for exactly this type of teaching.

"From my work and experience here in Pakistan, I have seen that violence is being taught in the schools, teachers sell a narration which young people follow, and the curriculum is full of hate towards other religions and sect. To me, if we work hard on changing the curriculum and train the teacher, it can prevent violence and extremism in Pakistan and the region as well."

- Imran Khan, 30, Pakistan

*From Passive
Learner to
Critical Thinker*

*I was born and raised in a society where a majority of the people consciously or unconsciously hold violent and orthodox fundamentalist ideologies, including support for the Taliban. The administration of the President Zia ul Haq's developed policies to Islamize the country and create Mujahids for the Afghan War. Since I was a child, I could see the effects of the policies.*

*They established thousands of religious seminaries. The display of arms (Kalashnikovs, pistols and other weapons) in the city and at homes was commonplace. Religious, political parties became the dominant force in the areas. The conservative ideas of Deobandi Islam dominated national and local politics, media, and curriculum. In my school, we were taught that India and Afghanistan and Non-Muslims in general never wanted Pakistan to develop and become a nuclear power because Pakistan was the only ideologically Muslim country. There were many lessons saying that Islam was a complete code of life and unless it is implemented in spirit and letter, the problems of the country could not be resolved. When I was just a child, the imam of my village persuaded me to go to Madrassa. My mother agreed, but my father refused to say that I was too young to stay at the Madrassa.*

*When I was in class 5 in 1995, the Taliban occupied Afghanistan. The Imams of the mosque in villages and cities praised the Taliban for their exemplary justice system and the peace they had established in Afghanistan. They would also discuss Taliban's radio programs on Islam and benefits of the Sharia Law. We listened to Taliban's radio channel at home which often played heroic songs of the Taliban and talked about their achievements in Afghanistan.*

*One of our teachers sold Zarb-e Momin, a weekly Islamic newspaper. The newspaper published Jihad stories from around the world. My brother bought that newspaper, and I used to read it too. Almost everybody in my village and school glorified the heroic and virtuous regime of the Taliban. They told that Afghan society had not had moral and ethical values until*

*the Taliban introduced the genuine Sharia Law with strict punishments for criminals. It was discussed that people in Afghanistan left their shops open to going for prayer, but nobody dared to steal. The imams in mosques and religious, political leaders encouraged people to go to Afghanistan for Jihad. Lots of Madrassa students went to Afghanistan to help the Taliban. When the dead bodies of some of those who joined the Taliban were brought back, they were given the tribute of martyrs by the Ulema, and their funerals were attended by thousands of people.*

*Religious leaders and their followers speculated that they would also bring in the same system to Pakistan right after they got stability in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Taliban from local Madrassas would come and attack local fairs, musical shows and game stalls which they saw as sinful activities not allowed by the Sharia. At that time, since I was too young, I did not understand that the Taliban were not only taking law in their hand but also were systematically destroying local cultures and the tolerant atmosphere in the city we had enjoyed for ages.*

*I was a college student at the time of the 9/11 attack. Soon after the attack, the speculations broke out in the city that 9/11 was a US conspiracy that aimed to justify The Crusade against the Muslim World. When the USA attacked Afghanistan, religious parties started organizing protests and public gatherings. Every Friday, the imams of all major mosques in the city would ask people to come and join them in protests against the attack on the Taliban. They would urge the people that it was the Islamic duty of each Muslim to protest the invasion of "pagans" and participate in Jihad through financial and physical contributions. Many people went to Afghanistan to fight side by side with the Taliban, and many others donated money and clothes for the Taliban.*

*Protests were organized all over the country by the alliance of religious parties known as Matehida Majlas Amal (MMA). I participated in such rallies in my city and went to Quetta with my friends to attend one of the biggest protests where leaders of different religious parties gave fiery speeches and urged Muslims to show unity against West's invasion of the Muslim World. In addition to rallies, the literature on jihad flooded the city. Once a friend gave me a magazine that glorified Osama Bin Laden as the greatest Mujahid to protect the Muslim World from the infidels of the West.*

*Religious parties began to gain more popularity because of their activism and media coverage. In General Elections of 2002, MMA emerged as the 3rd largest political force in the country. It formed provincial governments in the North Frontier West Province (NWFP) now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Province of Balochistan. Both seats of provincial and national assembly of our constituency were won by a religious party Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI). The subsequent year when the elections for local bodies took place in the province, JUI won all contesting seats in*

*the district and formed a local government. The popularity of the secular nationalist parties declined considerably.*

*Like the majority of the citizens, I also believed in most of the above propositions. I also had friends and classmates who endorsed sectarian violence, glorified the Taliban regime and believed that non-Muslims were incorrigible rivals of Muslims and could be tackled through violent Jihad alone. As I came from a low socio-economic background, I studied in public schools where history and social science subjects did not call for rational thinking and critical inquiry. Instead, they indoctrinated you with certain worldviews and ideals.*

*It all changed for me when I completed my college studies. I joined a private school in the city as a teacher. In the evening, I volunteered as a youth peer leader and counselor at the Youth Friendly Centre engaging youths in positive activities such as sports and health awareness sessions. This proved to be a very productive experience because along with learning and sports activities, I also interacted with youth from other provinces as I attended a Youth Summit in Islamabad and an International Youth Jam in Karachi. Interacting with better-educated youth from other areas inspired me to continue my education.*

*Soon I started a Community Development course at the Institute for Development Studies. I found it a completely different type of learning and experience. Unlike my previous education in which I was always a passive learner, this course was participatory: we had discussions, played role plays, gave presentations. We were encouraged to ask questions. Most importantly, everything I had learned in the past was challenged in discussions on different topics on development, education, state, history, and rights. For the first time, I heard that school was not a remedy to our problems but a part of the problem. Schooling system was just like a factory to manufacture individuals who are deprived of critical thinking but ready to do clerical jobs. Also, I came to know that the history I had read was not a true history. It was a distorted history that hid local histories. Last but not the least, we were taught that globalization and multinational corporations neo-colonized people, destroyed their local economies and cultures.*

*This proved extremely energizing and beneficial. I started asking questions and tried to analyze everything before making my mind. I started writing a diary and read a lot of books. I came to know about books of Gandhi and Freire.*

*For the practice-based phased, I interviewed popular imams and teachers in my city and did a brief literature review. It was a very hard job to interview imams and scholars because most of them denied participating. They would ask what my aim was and who I worked for. The imam of the biggest Jamia mosque told me that I was not eligible for such research. He*

*said this research should only be undertaken by a religious scholar. At one madrassa, I heard a Taliban saying "what the hell is this clean-shaven guy doing at our madrassa?"*

*When I completed the research, and during my presentation to IDSP faculty and guests, one of the religious scholars argued that my research was aimed at targeting Islam and my research was part of President's Musharraf's plan of enlightened moderation which is seeking change in the curriculum. There was another man who argued that my research was highly informative and he had heard the same points from famous religious scholars. However, given the heated debate, my presentation was called off. IDSP later published my research in its magazine Aksul Amal.*

*This five months' engagement was probably the most exciting experience of my life. I felt empowered and developed a sense of self-worth and self-confidence.*

*I was lucky to have come across the Institute for Development Studies and Practices where I was provided with an opportunity to unlearn what I had learned and relearn by reasoning; analyzing every phenomenon critically, and raising questions and exploring alternatives. I developed self-confidence to pursue further education. I decided to do a Master of Arts degree in International Relations at the University of Peshawar. I was bold to ask questions and present my viewpoint. I also took part in seminars as presenter and student discussant. I completed the degree and became a development professional afterward.*

*After that, I could work with international NGOs. Finally, I join IDSP-Pakistan where I had an opportunity to transmit my knowledge and experience to youths who were raised in the similar backgrounds as mine. Some of those learners are now professionals in different fields where they are playing very positive roles because of their social and political consciousness, and they still support IDSP in its courses and community projects whenever they are asked. To conclude, it is important to support learning spaces like that of IDSP and the likes where youths can be engaged in the process of consciousness-raising against violent extremism* ■

Faiz Ullah, 32, Pakistan

it was not one singular experience, book or idea that changed his outlook, but the gradual accumulation of experience

The experience of Faiz is an indictment of a system that closes down thinking and student participation and forces ideology and orthodoxy without question. Such schooling provides rich ground for radicalization. His introduction to a diverse, participatory learning environment provided ample opportunities to challenge prejudices, and eventually influenced a change in his ideology.

Perhaps the most critical element of Faiz's account is that it was not one singular experience, book or idea that changed his outlook, but the gradual accumulation of experience. Faiz met new friends and colleagues, conducted his own independent research, and participated in a student-centered learning environment. These elements worked in concert and over time to expand his understanding of the world.

In the context of PVE, dramatic change can only come gradually and requires a full environment of support. Towards this end, we should remember that initiatives such as student-centered learning and open dialogue might not always feel effective. But over time, they create a culture that supports reflection, intellectual flexibility, and the capacity for ideological change ∎

# MINDFULNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

Mindfulness training provides structured exercises designed to help students calm and reflect on their emotions. These activities can create an environment where empathy and compassion are more likely to take root (Stell & Farsides, 2016). Bresciani Ludvik (2017) suggests that mindfulness can help young people regulate the fluctuation of emotions that may prevent logical and analytical thinking.

Evidence shows that cultivating an awareness of the physical experience of emotions and the thoughts and beliefs that accompany those emotions can "rewire a reactive brain" so that we can "consciously choose a kind and wise response" (Bresciani Ludvik, 2017).  If students can cultivate an awareness of where their attentions is placed, and if they have skills to redirect that attention, they can improve their learning outcomes and amend their reactions to show more kindness to others (Bresciani Ludvik, 2017).

We believe that the role of mindfulness programs is to foster an environment conducive to the development of skills such as compassion and empathy. Formal education and pedagogical style can build this environment. We encourage educators to complement such training with experiential learning and opportunities for the organic practice of these critical skills, as they must be lived outside of a lesson plan if they are to be realized fully. We provide relevant recommendations in Chapter 4 ∎

# KEY
# LEARNINGS

■ The impact education has on young people is not only shaped by the knowledge it transmits (content), but by how this knowledge is acquired (pedagogy)

■ In many places, students are treated as passive recipients of knowledge and aren't engaged in learning through questioning, analyzing, and reflecting on information - this is called rote learning and is justified for building the foundational knowledge young people need to succeed in the society.

■ Rote learning discourages thinking and independent learning and disempowers young people showing to them that their voice doesn't matter. Rote learning thus weakens their resilience to violent extremist ideologies and grooming as they can't question dangerous or untested views.

■ Student-centered learning, on the other hand, is a dialogue-centered learning that prepares young people to think for themselves, explore, analyze information, and reflect on it

■ As such, student-centered learning is better positioned to build resilience against manipulation

# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

**POLICY-MAKERS:**

1) How does pre- and in-service teacher training prepare teachers to actively engage young people in doing research, analyzing, thinking for themselves, reflecting, having dialogues and debates?

2) How does the available material (textbooks and other educational resources available to schools) help do the same?

**TEACHERS:**

1) What is the philosophy behind my teaching style?

2) What am I communicating to my student in my expectations?

3) How are these expectations likely to play out in life after school with the way they learn about and interact with the world around them?

4) What kind of adults do I hope my students will become? How are my instructional strategies going to contribute to the formation of those future adults?

5) If I could change one thing about my lessons, what would it be? How can I make this into a goal?

6) Take a look at the rich resources on offer, most of which are freely available online. How can they make it easier for me to do my job well? Can I find other colleagues who will help me in this pursuit?

# TEXTBOOKS

> ❝ *When I was in the state school, I felt unfair about learning only one side of the history in Myanmar. There are so many background histories of ethnic people in Myanmar which should be published in the text book in for the indigenous people and ethnic people of Myanmar."*
> Myo Chit Ko, 25, Myanmar

Textbooks were once seen as a neutral means through which to share knowledge. For educators to hold such an optimistic perspective today would be naive. The use or abuse of textbooks in classrooms depends on the teachers and the textbook in question. Is the textbook used for each class, without consideration of the content of each chapter? Or does the teacher first review the material for bias or prejudice? Is the textbook treated as an ultimate authority, or is the content open to question?

Textbooks often lend themselves to a rote-learning curriculum that does not encourage participation. If they are dominated by a prejudiced worldview, textbooks can be more damaging to a young person's school experience than poor pedagogy. Worldviews from textbooks can be biased, prejudiced, and damaging to social cohesion[15]. As Youth Contributor Nour relates:

*"I was often told that it wasn't my place to argue the writings of my textbooks - that they are just teaching tools that relate specific information about certain topics, more so than others."*
Nour, 21, Canada

The opposite scenario may also be true, however, where ingrained prejudices and hatred may be challenged and broken down by a well-chosen textbook. Indeed, good textbooks may be a corrective measure for a weak knowledge base. Both the danger and opportunity with textbooks lies in the fact that they are scalable, and may be made

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[15] The documentary 'The White Man's Burden' takes a critical look at how value-laden education systems are from a neo-colonial perspective, and the damage they can do.

available to students throughout a nation, which makes the stakes particularly high.

When evaluating textbooks, teachers must consider both what their narratives include and what they leave out. Textbooks are often dominated by the perspective of the historical victor, promoting narratives that glorify the victor's actions and ignore or minimize the contributions and influences of defeated or less powerful groups. A Youth Contributor who studied abroad in the US recalls her shock at encountering bias with which American history was recounted:

*"In American exchange year, the history books were saying how America has never lost a war, and always starts war for just and noble reasons - and that the human losses on the other side was a necessary part of peace for the world, while human losses on the US side were brutal missteps by the other part."*
Louise, 25, Norway

This reframing of history tacitly instructs students to assume the moral correctness of the victor going forward by justifying past interventions. In Britain, for example, only one in five people see colonialism as something to regret (Owen, 2016). By failing to acknowledge unjust violence perpetrated against other groups, students are fed both the narrative of their own country's exceptionalism and the justified devaluing of the other.

Youth Contributor Hamza Siddiq reflects on how textbooks can shape and conflate national and religious identity:

*"Our textbooks systematically present a distorted portrayal of historical events and facts to reinforce a particular ideology and exclusionary national identity. A critical review of our textbooks reveal a few particularities that potentially fuel intolerant attitudes. For instance, history textbooks reinforce Islam as the primary force behind the creation of Pakistan, leaving little ideological space for religious minorities in a new homeland. Ayesha Jalal, an eminent South Asian historian, while acknowledging the religion factor, stresses equitable political representation as the leading motivation underlying Jinnah's movement. This perspective has been completely missing from our textbooks. Similarly, political economist Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi laments how the 1965 war with India is blatantly presented as a big victory in textbooks whereas Pakistan lost terribly. Moreover, Pakistani textbooks glorify military jihad, with little or no mention of jihad al-Akbar [16]. When violent conflict is given the cloak of religion, violence in the name of religion is perceived as a moral duty."*
Hamza Siddiq, 28, Pakistan

[16] Jihad al-Akbar refers to an internal struggle against evil or sin.

The distortions promoted by Hamza's textbooks promote a one-sided understanding of national and global identity that encourages a sense of moral righteousness. These misrepresentations of history, politics, and theology contribute to an extremist understanding of the world, most obviously in the message that violence in the name of religion becomes a "moral duty."

"During elementary school many of the history schoolbooks were misleading, still are. The government tried to hide the fact the country's 1965 massacre - which saw 1.5 million people being killed- was plotted by the communists and accused many who opposed the government as communists. The real truth until today has not been told bluntly to the young generation because some influential figures from the past are still in the government."

- Kiki, 34, Indonesia

The textbook bias that reinforces the superiority of majority groups simultaneously alienate, humiliates, and devalues ignored or misrepresented minority groups. ■

Textbooks work in the currency of history, geography, ideas, and identities. They have particular purchase when they are seen as an ultimate authority on these topics. Textbooks are often unconsciously used to prescribe a view of history, culture, state, and religion, and therefore may effectively create racial divisions, scapegoating, self-loathing, entitlement or prejudice. In the case study above, the indigenous student was "othered" and isolated from her peers. Though the effects were certainly less personal and painful, the textbook also cemented a narrow and prejudicial view of the world for her classmates, ingraining in them a sense of superiority that would impact their own emotional and intellectual development.

For policymakers and practitioners using textbooks, it is worth asking - who wrote or sponsored this book? Is there an explicit or implicit agenda in it? Is it fair? Is it up to date? Does it promote a perspective conducive to achieving a just society?

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"Myanmar Textbooks (especially history textbooks) are full of misinformation. Essentially the textbooks serve as propaganda tools for the military junta. For instance, Thailand and the Colonial British are always described as villains in the textbooks instead of giving unbiased information to the readers."
- Ye Khaung Oo, 25, Myanmar

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Through the use of these textbooks, narratives that lend themselves to division and an oversimplification of history can at once calcify division, frustrate critical thinking, and alienate certain groups. Youth Contributor Chipiliro Ray Kalonde from Malawi explains the need to empower the individual to evaluate her influences:

*"We need to impart critical thinking skills in our youth to allow them to speak up, think critically, challenge texts and assumptions, and critically debate important issues. This would enable them to evaluate and argue against the interpretations of religion, history, politics, and identity that are the bread and butter of terrorist recruitment narratives."*
Chipiliro Ray Kalonde, 32, Malawi

It can be tricky to navigate these issues, particularly as certain historical events have long echoed through history, and will elicit strong feelings. For example, WWII may justifiably bring out certain

sentiments for those of Jewish descent, much as colonial history provokes anger and resentment in countries where suffering has rarely received global acknowledgment. The fact that these issues are emotional does not mean they can't be responsibly represented in textbooks. It does mean, though, that textbooks should acknowledge the impossibility of achieving perfect objectivity and accuracy. They should acknowledge that contemporary culture determines much of how we view academic subjects. As our culture changes, our perspectives on a given text will as well. Teachers can underscore this message by providing samples of old, outdated textbooks to highlight the evolution of knowledge and understanding. By reflecting on old texts that seem outdated or inaccurate, students are more likely to apply that critical lens to current texts as well ∎

*An Interview with
Chintan Girish Modi,
India*

Chintan is an educator, researcher, and teacher trainer from India. He is the founder of Friendships Across Borders: Aao Dosti Karein, an India-Pakistan peacebuilding initiative that focuses on engaging children, youth, and teachers. Chintan was a contributing author to Textbooks for Sustainable Development: A Guide to Embedding an initiative of UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development. He discusses the project in the below interview.

### *How do you hope the Guidebook will influence and impact textbook authors?*

Our attempt with this guidebook is to make available a resource that textbook writers can use freely to shape their own thinking and practice. They play a tremendous role in the education that young people get in the schools they go to because the books they create determine, to a large extent, what is taught and learned in many parts of the world. Textbook writers are experts in their own disciplines, but that may not necessarily equip them to orient the content and approach of their textbook units towards peace, sustainable development, social justice and global citizenship. This gap is where the guidebook hopes to come in; not to talk down but to engage, and offer insights, tools, and perspectives that can help enlist textbook writers as collaborators in the process of transforming education and making it relevant and meaningful for young people and their communities. We hope that private publishers, as well as government agencies that facilitate textbook production, would make good use of this guidebook.

### *Why is it important to incorporate ideas about peace, social justice, global citizenship and sustainable development into traditional classroom subjects?*

Classroom learning can be beneficial to young people in the long run only if it is connected to their experiences outside the classroom. Social justice and sustainable development are real challenges, and the need for peace and global citizenship is being felt by individuals, groups, and countries. These are not pretty ideas but ways of seeing, thinking and living that need to become central to how classroom subjects are taught; else, we would be

doing a disservice to young people, leaving them unprepared for the world outside the classroom. Of what use is the knowledge that they cannot seek refuge in when they need to find solutions? One is not saying that traditional classroom subjects are meaningless. One is only pointing for the need to reorient them in the light of contemporary concerns, which do not have to be imposed from outside but are present within the subjects themselves.

*What has inspired your understanding of the importance of how textbooks present information to young people?*

Having worked as a school teacher and teacher trainer, apart from editing and reviewing textbooks for publishers, I have come across a variety of textbooks. Some are written with a great deal of imagination, designed to get young people to think critically, put themselves in the shoes of another person, or share their views on historical events and current events. Others are written in a boring style that fails to excite the reader, does not build on their background knowledge and life experiences, and is geared towards examinations rather than learning. I think we ought to pay more attention to the verbal and visual content of textbooks, especially in contexts where textbooks might be the only resource that teachers and students use to learn. If written creatively and sensitively, they can make cross-disciplinary connections, inspire young people, and create in them a love for learning.

*What have you seen in textbooks (or in textbook authors) that gives you hope?*

My favorite example of this is a Class 12 Indian History textbook published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training in New Delhi, under the visionary leadership of Prof. Krishna Kumar. The textbook contains a chapter titled 'Understanding Partition: Politics, Memories, Experiences,' which was written primarily by Prof. Anil Sethi. What is most outstanding about this chapter is that it deals with one of the most contentious events in the history of South Asia in a way that veers away from rendering a narrow nationalistic account but takes into consideration Pakistani as well as Indian views on the Partition of 1947, which separated the British Indian Empire into two nation states that are still locked up in conflict. This textbook not only incorporates oral histories to humanize the event into the tragedy that it was, as opposed to a statistical inventory of how many were killed or raped or displaced, but it also offers a comparative reading of the Partition and the Holocaust, and draws upon feminist historical research to examine the gendered nature of the violence that was unleashed. It goes on to list a copious set of literary and cinematic resources that teachers can use to get students to engage with the subject creatively and profoundly.

*If you could sit down with a young person who you knew to be interested in committing violence, what message would you want to share?*

I would want to listen to them first and understand their motivation to commit violence. I think this listening is important because young people

are often not given the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences. In fact, being shut off makes them vulnerable, and they tend to warm up more towards people who encourage them to share what is in their minds and hearts. After hearing them out, I would support them in thinking about the range of non-violent approaches available to them so that they can consider alternatives to violence ■

As Chintan discusses his professional experience, textbooks are only relevant when they are connected to the experience young people have outside the classroom. Textbooks tend not to build on the background knowledge or lived experiences of students, which makes it difficult to excite and engage the learner. But Chintan identifies the occasional example of a textbook that includes differing perspectives to broaden the worldview of readers. This can function as a small but important asset in undermining ethno-nationalism. Preventing violent extremism requires a multitude of interventions that increase the opportunities young people have to challenge national or religious conventions that promote intolerance. Even something as simple as one balanced approach to a tense and volatile conflict, such as the treatment of the India-Pakistan conflict in Chintan's example, allows students to see that there are different ways of understanding a situation often presented as inherently one-sided.

Textbooks vary considerably in their quality. To a great extent, the issues of misrepresentation, bias, prejudice, and oversimplification depend on the textbook and context and must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Textbooks must be scrutinized for the messages they are conveying ■

# KEY
# LEARNINGS

■ Textbooks can have value-laden material that transmits a certain set of perspectives and beliefs. These can be the perspectives of bias, prejudice, and hostility, or, in some cases, can challenge such negative and misleading information

■ Textbooks more than often are found to reinforce rote learning as they discourage student participation and tend to pass down knowledge required to be consumed by a young person

■ When textbooks are designed for a classroom focused on rote learning, it frustrates critical thinking development and active engagement from students and, as a result, creates an unhealthy environment where young people have no opportunity to develop critical skills to build resilience

■ As regards to ethnic, religious, or cultural minorities, textbooks tend to 'other' them through stereotypical and harmful representation thus denigrating their cultures, diminishing them as individuals, and depicting them to the dominant society in a damaging light that leads to racism and discrimination

■ When textbook narratives don't present accurate information, they can contribute to the division between diverse groups

# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

**POLICY MAKERS:**

1) What are the standards for developing and reviewing textbooks? Are they reflective of such values as justice, equality, and peace? Do they stress the importance of critical inquiry, discussions, student engagement, and students' lived experiences and background knowledge?

2) Do we offer incentives to schools or local ministries of education to design textbooks that are relevant and sensitive to their contexts?

3) Do we engage minorities who are often marginalized and overlooked into consultations on textbooks to determine their perspectives on the representation of their cultures, religions, and histories?

**TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS:**

1) To what end was this textbook written?

2) Is it up to date, balanced, and well researched?

3) Does the textbook represent all groups equally and without bias?

4) Do the textbooks trouble and challenge overly simplistic thinking and stereotypes?

5) Does it open up curiosity and questioning, or close it down?

6) How can textbooks be used in a way that will shape curious, questioning, and engaged minds?

7) What alternatives are on offer if the textbooks available are found wanting?

"I know a story of a boy belonging to scheduled caste (untouchables) whose family and forefathers were into the manual scavenging work. The school administration gave him a different colour sweater to wear so that other students and teachers can recognise him and keep a distance from him (practice untouchability). Untouchability is an unconstitutional value which is still practiced in India and is against the values like justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity."
- Mridul Upadhyay, 26, India

Interactions with teachers and peers affect students' academic and social performance. Building a positive school environment is the responsibility of everyone in the community. In a school environment defined by prejudice, stereotyping, and bullying, students become alienated and excluded and may be denied the same intellectual and academic experiences of the peers.  As Youth Contributor Alexander Kyokwijuka shares:

*"While I was in primary school in a place far away from home, I was often mistreated or rather finger pointed at for being the Mukiga that I was. On the pretext of the prejudice that Bakiga are strong, I was often given hard assignments compared to my colleagues owing to the fact that we used to do manual work."*
Alexander Kyokwijuka, age 28, Uganda

This dehumanizing treatment has profound ramifications for a young person's emotional well-being. It can also change the education students receive, hampering both their academic growth and their ability to have shared experiences with their peers.

"It was during my high school when I experienced this. So I was with Chinese or Japanese-like eyes (mongoloid's eyes) while genetically I am Javanese. The inappropriate way that I experienced is that the teachers (two) called me by the name of a famous Japanese porn star. My naughty friend started to call me by that name when we were in grade 10 and followed by the two teachers until I graduated. Although I didn't have a class taught by one of the two teachers, he used to look for me by asking my friends "Where is the class of the *porn star name*?". The another one even call me to do an English presentation by that porn star name. I was angry at that time, but I couldn't do anything. They are teachers, but they didn't know their moral and ethical responsibilities that should be taught to the students. It is hurtful, and I get silently angry whenever I remember it because it's an inappropriate way to educate young generations."

- Mazida, 22, Indonesia

Racism and discrimination are formative messages that school environments can promote and perpetuate. In the experiences shared by Youth Contributors, we can see how deeply isolating and psychologically damaging this kind of school culture can be. Racist behavior in a formal school setting exacerbates push factors such as isolation, othering, and perceived injustice, making victims of bullying more vulnerable to violent extremists who offer acceptance, protection, and a sense of belonging. It's also important to consider the impact this behavior has on the bullying students. When teachers or school administrators participate in and condone racism, they teach other students to internalize and expect privilege and unearned opportunity. A harmful school environment works both to ostracize minority groups and to delude majority groups about their inherent entitlements and protections ∎

# ANTI-BULLYING EFFORTS

> **❝** *Bullying at school by teachers and classmates was on the basis of low family income, representing me as a shy student at the university."*
> (Marina, 31, Russia)

Students can be bullied for their religion, especially if that religion has some distinct dress and appearance code, their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, interests, views, appearance, and virtually anything else. Bullies attack their victims physically, use verbal threats, spread rumors, create an environment to exclude and marginalize a person. Bullying occurs when there is a power imbalance, and one party intentionally degrades another. It can happen in and out of school, and on the internet. It can be individual bullying or mobbing (bullying by a group) and perpetrated by anyone from a peer, a teacher, a parent, or another actor present in a young person's life.

It's difficult to present accurate statistics of how many people have been bullied as many of them refuse to reveal or discuss such information for the fear that no one will believe them or want to help. Nevertheless, there are some approximations of how many people have to go through such experience. Two-thirds of young people express that bullying is a widespread problem in their communities (UNICEF, 2016). The same UNICEF survey discovered that in Sierra Leone, 72 percent of young people had experienced bullying, 70 percent in Uganda, and 69 - in Nigeria. Teachers globally are responsible for 23 percent of bullying (Sedghi, 2013).

There are more precise statistics for religious bullying in the Western world. In 2014, the Sikh Coalition's study across California, Massachusetts, Indiana, and Washington found that turbaned Sikh students experienced bullying at more than double the national rate. In 2015, the California branch of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR, 2016) found that 55 percent of the students had experienced some form of bullying based on their religious identity. In 2016, the Hindu American Foundation found that 1 in 3 of the students had been bullied for their religious identity (Campus Safety Magazine, 2016).

In 2016 the World Sikh Organization of Canada found that 27 percent of students have been bullied for their Sikh identity. Imam Sikander Hashmi of the Canadian Council of Imams spoke for the Muslim population across Canada by acknowledging that Muslim students are "taunted and bullied at school by classmates and sometimes even teachers" (Canadian Council of Muslim Women, 2016). The CAIR report noted that 27 percent of girls who wear the hijab experienced discrimination from teachers and administrators (Gazzar, 2015).

Regardless of the cause, bullying poses psychological, emotional, and physical effects such as depression, social anxiety, and an increased chance of suffering self-injury or injury to others (Nansel et al., 2004; Pan & Spittal, 2013), which correspond to factors that push an individual towards adopting violent extremist ideology. These factors include an individual's feeling of threat to themselves and their collective identity (Seul, 1999) and the experience of social marginalization from mainstream society (Euer et al., 2014).

Let's look at the case of Angel who was bullied in school, who helped him and who didn't, and how such experience influenced his future choices ▪

*"Just ignore him, he will go away."*

*W*hen I was in 7th grade, I was bullied by a student who I met in my physical education class. He would hit me, steal from me, spit on me, and tried to stick my head in a toilet. I didn't reciprocate violence because I felt powerless. I was very short for my age, and my bully was very tall and broad. I tried once to shove him away, and that made him angrier and was even more physically aggressive because of it.

When I told my teacher, he said, "Just ignore him, he'll go away." This message gave me the mentality that adults did not care and would not help me.

It was only until my father discovered that my money was being stolen that he pushed school administration to take action. Even though administration refused to see him, he patiently waited until he caught the vice principal between meetings. My father demanded to see a school administrator until the issue was resolved. The student was then expelled for bullying and for verbally attacking an administrator.

My father helped me realize how important a support network is, but also the importance of voicing concerns. You can be surrounded by care and support, but if you don't speak up, then no one will know how to help you.

Through a very supportive supervisor, I learned that being firm will bullies does not always solve the problem. Bullies often gain these aggressive characteristics from negative situations at home. I learned from him that it is important to show bullies compassion for them to learn about what kinds of consequences their actions are creating. This inspired me to work with troubled students to transform them into leaders.

The troubled students I worked with came from the San Diego City Heights area. They joined a program called Reality Changers, which works to get students off dangerous streets and into tutoring sessions. Many students in this program graduate high school and attend a college.

it is important to show bullies compassion for them to learn about what kinds of consequences their actions are creating

*I learned that a person's actions are often influenced by many different factors. Everyone should be treated with compassion and good intentions. It may be difficult to make an impact, and it will require patience, but everyone should be given compassion and support.*

*The Reality Changers Program (https://realitychangers.org/ ) is my best example of these successful interventions. I was a volunteer with them for a year. I also supervised the YMCA's Summerbridge San Diego program which did more indirect interventions with them.*

Angel Rocha, USA

Angel's case demonstrates the importance of a support system. His father's insistence persuaded reluctant school administrators to address the issue. The situation could just as easily be reversed: young people who are bullied and marginalized by their peers may need the intervention of a teacher or administrator if they do not have parents who advocate for them.

In Angel's experience, his teacher's disinterest indicated that adults didn't care. This behavior can damage a young person's sense of self-worth and lead them to seek justice on their terms, as Youth Contributor Blessing Ajimoti points out:

*"A bullied or cheated student who does not get justice from his teacher or school administrator is going to grow up believing that there is no justice in courts of law, but that he can settle misunderstandings on his terms."*
Blessing Ajimoti, 27, Nigeria

Young people who learn that they must settle the dispute "on their own terms" are likely to turn to violence and perpetuate the cycle of abuse. Even one voice in support of a bullied student can provide validation and recognition of their struggle that reduces the likelihood of violent retribution.

In the case study below, a teacher's observation of a bullied student inspires her to create a program in which students see themselves as agents of action -- whether for peace or conflict -- in their community. By incorporating these activities into a formal school program, the anti-bullying lessons can form part of the network of formal education. We give an example of one such activity in the following Case Study:

## CASE STUDY:

*Anti-Bullying Lessons*

"*In 2011, I got to teach a feisty group of kids to dance. Besides being a beautiful exercise in handling pocket-sized powerhouses of energy, it was also a time when I reconnected with a best friend from school – in as much regularity as we did when we were at the school itself. These kids were probably 9 or 10 at the most. Somewhere behind them all was a slip of a girl. She was silent, thick glasses framing her tiny face, with a head full of oily hair that clung to her scalp. She smiled broadly all the time, her little teeth like okra seeds. I didn't hear her voice, even if I strained myself. I noticed that the other kids didn't talk much to her – she tried sometimes, but they'd mostly ignore her. But she would try her best, learning all her dance steps and performing them with gusto. She never drew attention to herself – being a wallflower of sorts.*

*I must confess I was arrogant too. I didn't even look at her sometimes, focusing on the ones I thought had potential and had the most buoyant energy. I didn't pay attention when she missed a step, and instead buried myself with the woes of convincing a more boisterous child to tone it down. One day, one of the more boisterous boys pushed her down for his amusement. In seconds, her eyes brimmed with tears. I helped her up and took her aside to the stairs, while a teacher took the boy aside to gently give him an idea or two about behaving. This little girl didn't say much. I asked her if she was alright, and if the kids often did that to her. She looked at me, her eyes big, and nodded. I didn't know what to say. She went back to class, and I had a lump in my throat.*

*Here she was, this little girl with a soft temperament, thick glasses, and oily hair. Here she was, this little girl that simply wasn't accepted or given the friendship she had every right to have. It took me back to my days as a quiet high-schooler, bullied into silence because I didn't check the boxes of what was acceptable.*

*A few nights after the dance classes ended, I was mulling over the harsh reality of bullying at the school level, the hostility among adults, and the overall global cultures of conflict built on differences that we seem to*

*encourage through constant repackaging of old messages of borrowed hatred. Today's bully breaks two people: himself, and the bullied. He may never change, and become worse. The bullied may become a bully himself, or, may turn docile.*

*Teaching these children made me realize that generations of students before me, along with me, and now, after me, have grown up without learning the most important values of life: of empathy, of choosing peace and compassion over hatred and violence, of choosing equality, tolerance and respect for one's identity as they are instead of pushing constant agendas of ideals and non-conformism attracting mistreatment. What if we taught non-violent communication while teaching rules of grammar, syntax, and semantics? What if we taught history with the right telling, and with the agenda to prevent a repetition of history's egregious failings? What if we taught geography against the landscape of actual equality – where we learned lessons from the earth's diversity and imbibed it as positive lessons for peace?*

*That led me to pilot my first attempt at using dialogue and storytelling to help break these walls that prop violence and bullying. I sat in a classroom with 20 teenagers. This class, I was told, had a pair of students bound in "relationship" comprising a long history of bullying. One of the boys in the class had bullied a rather quiet girl, and it had been going on for close to six years. We sat down to address themes like empathy, diversity, respect, privilege, and entitlement through hands-on games and activities. Towards the end, I invited them to share their stories, if anyone felt comfortable. The girl who was bullied often got up to tell her story. She was from a broken home and was afraid she would never see her father again, as her parents were inching closer to their divorce. She began to cry, and I turned around to see the boy who bullied her. To my surprise, I saw him sobbing, wiping his tears furiously with the sleeve of his shirt. He got up, walked up to her, gave her a tight hug and apologized to her. He then told his own story: he was going through the same thing, except that his father's violence had made him resolve that he would put up his boundaries before anyone would harm him. He thought that bullying others would make him feel powerful again and a bit better about his loss of control and power. Today, they are the best of friends, and they teach classes on empathy and peace* ■

Kirthi Jayakumar, 29, The Red Elephant Foundation, India/Global

Kirthi adopts an approach that does not try to teach empathy or mindfulness but rather uses story sharing to validate the experience of each student. This exercise can build the confidence and emotional imagination that supports the reconciliation of the two students. Story sharing allows each young person an opportunity to imagine what life is like for someone else, even someone with whom they may have an adversarial relationship ▪

# RELIGION IN SCHOOL

**R**eligious schools such as madrasas are sometimes conflated with training grounds for young extremists. Opponents of these schools suggest they fail to deliver a comprehensive education and increase a young person's risk of radicalization (Mallet, 2015). Critics researching Muslim children in Western countries argue that faith-based schools deny children access to civic education, limiting their ability to participate in the democratic system, and may lead students to reject the societal norms and values. They further postulate that these schools may promote exceptionalism, which can lead to the acceptance of violent extremist ideologies (Jackson, 2004; Maxwell, Waddington, McDonough, Cormier, & Schwimmer, 2012).

But others argue that just the opposite is true: religious schools can arm young people against violent extremist groups by laying a strong foundational understanding of their religion (Aiyar, 2015). This provides a defense against narratives that misinterpret or distort religious teachings to recruit new members.

Youth Contributor Anam Zakaria calls into question how much time and energy this debate -- and these schools -- should divert from non-religious schools that serve the majority of students.

*"Local and international focus has been on curbing madrassa education to prevent extremism. In-depth research reveals that a tiny percentage of children attend madrassas. I believe that more focus should be on public and low-cost private schools where the masses study. Textbooks that propagate jihad and teachers, who have also studied from the same textbooks and have hardline opinions, are creating generations of intolerant citizens. Extremism is no longer a rural phenomenon, limited to the illiterate. Increasingly it is penetrating the urbanized, educated circles. School curriculum and teacher attitudes must be brought into the larger discourse on violent extremism."*
Anam Zakaria, 29, Pakistan

This is an important consideration for policymakers to bear in mind. The environments in which policy interventions are likely to reach the greatest number of young people may not be religious-based schools.

Furthermore, some evidence suggests that public schools in Western countries are not sensitized or responsive to the needs of young Muslim students (Tiflati, 2016). These students are more likely to feel isolated and ostracized in public schools than in Islamic institutions. Therefore teachers, administrators, and policymakers can have the broadest and most impactful effect in building resilience to extremism by making public and secular schools more welcoming, inclusive environments for Muslim students.

This section will focus primarily on how non-religious schools can provide safe environments for diverse groups of students and how to address issues of isolation and intolerance ∎

# RELIGIOUS LITERACY

"During lunch, I often heard daycare workers saying: «Oh! Poor her, she must be so hot. If I could, I would remove that piece of tissue [hijab] that will kill her.»"
- Nour, 21, Canada

In the case of religious minorities, microaggressions such as the quote from Youth Contributor Nour are anything but rare. Religious literacy can build a safer school environment by informing students about different religious traditions and worldviews. It can help foster the empathy and understanding to support positive school experiences for students of every faith.

Religious literacy is an attempt to help students to become more understanding of different religious and cultural worldviews. This is the first step towards dialogue, community building between groups, and elimination of bullying and other forms of abuse. The case study below showcases what influence religious literacy in the formal curriculum may have on students.

"When I was studying in Jamia Millia Islamia (a central Muslim university) for my graduation, I wanted to explore more than the classroom study. Getting an environment of a university was the most important experience. Rather than being forced to learn a set of objective metrics, I could volunteer, attend a new seminar or camp every month, meet a new set of people, and find new fields to break into. These experiences proved eye openers for me. Before Jamia, it's not like

I had a negative perspective towards different religions, but had no significant perspective towards different religions. I learned about social development, peace, justice, interfaith and intercultural dialogue. All of this helped to grow up as a responsible, compassionate and authentic human being."

- Mridul Upadhyay, age 26, India

# RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

**R**eligion is a difficult subject to navigate in education institutions. A person's religious identity is often a combination of public or visible action (such as prayer, service attendance, and certain clothing choices) and private emotions, attitudes, and beliefs. Determining how much a school schedule should accommodate a religious practice or what school protocols should be altered according to student beliefs is a challenge for any school.

As a result, some schools end up limiting possibilities for students to exercise their religious practices and expression. Some examples of religious accommodation include the availability of and access to prayer rooms, permission to dress according to religious code, display of religious symbols, and provision of religious dietary practices. When students are denied opportunities to exercise their religious rights or are shamed and stigmatized for doing so in their school, their educational institution becomes an antagonist, belittling their worth, their value, and a core part of their identity ∎

# CASE STUDY:

*Religious Accommodation in Schools*

> *Recent news articles and media coverage have highlighted the controversy around the compatibility of Islam and the West, insinuating that Islamic principles are inconsistent with the beliefs and values systems of the West (also referred to as the Global North). This has given rise to a societal movement towards censored liberalism, which would incite the transferal of religion (including religious symbols and prayers) to private spheres.*
>
> *The opportunity for individuals to practice their faith in public has come under fire, with public religious institutions such as synagogues and masjids being attacked in the United States. This has escalated to demonstrations against religious accommodation in public schools, such as the recent controversy in the Peel District School Board, Canada, where demonstrators protested the availability of prayer space for Muslim students to practice jummah, the Friday prayer (McGillivray, 2017). In fact, the justification for the pushback from lobbying groups stemmed from the belief that religious accommodations in schools would lead to students gaining "unsolicited exposure to religion" (McGillivray, 2017), which would be contrary to the intent of a secular public education system.*
>
> *What these individuals do not realize, however, is the extent to which the existing Western society is predicated upon Christianity; the early origins of the United States and Canada stemmed from the belief in the creation of a Christian nation. In fact, the colonial origin of Canada was rooted in the subjugation and forceful re-education of Indigenous people, fueled by the belief that Indigenous ways and religions were 'savage' and inferior to those of the white, Christian settlers. Though the turn of the century brought with it an emphasis on secularism and the separation of church and state (the latter of which includes public educational institutions), this shift in societal priorities did not retroactively remove the influence that religion has exerted upon the sociopolitical and socioeconomic ways of life within the West. Caveats such as the American Pledge of Allegiance explicitly mention the 'nation of God', and printed American money bears the words 'In God We Trust' prominently on the face of the bill. These religiously-*

*laden statements, in a society that is striving for complete secularism and reduced wanton exposure to religion, should not be explicitly featured in the very symbols that represent the American society.*

*Critics can claim that these are simply placeholders for the beliefs of another time, the beliefs on which the country was founded, and therefore hold no significant sway. That sentiment can be challenged, however, through a critical analysis of seemingly mundane aspects of Western society: take, for example, the makeup of the work week within Western societies. The working week consists of five days, Monday to Friday (inclusive), with Saturday and Sunday allocated as non-working days. Though this constitution of the week seems arbitrary, the basis of the weekend including Sunday as a non-working day was to allow individuals to allocate Sunday as a day of worship, as per the tradition of maintaining the Sabbath in Christianity. This seemingly-insignificant reality is different in regions of the world where Christianity is not the predominant religion: in the Middle East and North Africa, where Islam is the dominant religion, the weekend includes Fridays, the traditional day of prayer in Islam, and Saturdays. Sunday is a working day in the Middle East and North Africa Region. To insinuate that allowing for religious accommodation in public institutions (through the allocation of prayer space) by justifying societal norms as not being "unsolicited exposure to religion" is deeply flawed. This double standard can push individuals within this system of cognitive dissonance towards violent extremism as a manifestation of frustration with the system, one that simultaneously denounces one religion while wholly and welcomingly integrating another into the fabric of that society.*

Aniqah Zowmi, 22, Canada

Failing to accommodate religious practice is a way of othering minority faiths. As Aniqah points out, societies may be predicated on one particular belief system, to the exclusion of others. In a multicultural and secular state, this can have the effect of frustrating certain groups, and leave the impression that they are not valued. Administrations and institutions should be wary of this, and provide reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodation does not mean accommodation of all requests. Rather, it means ensuring that groups are heard, acknowledged and not stigmatized, their needs addressed in ways that are both sensitive and sensible ∎

I WISH MY SCHOOL..
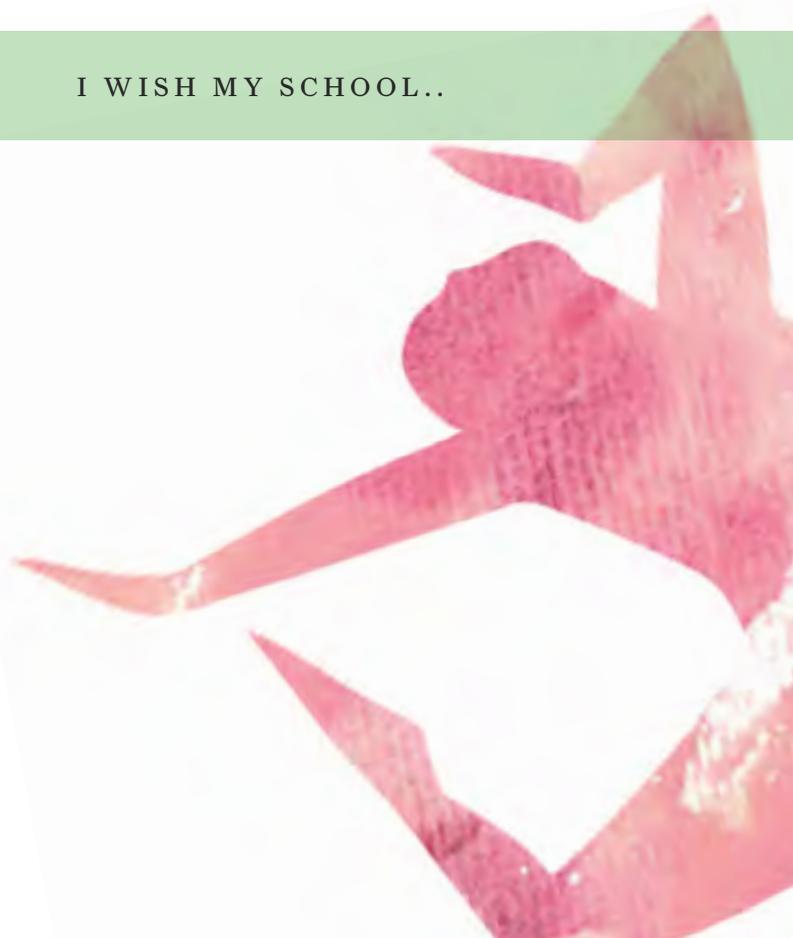
- Was more flexible.

- Was more pupil-centered.

- Was inclusive.

- Had anti-bullying policy.

- Had the strength to try new things. Everything new isn't bad. Yes we're an old school, and we have our values, but those things are chaining us down.

- Was open and transparent.

- Had more learning tools and equipment when we study and research.

- Was a more fun experience.

- Promoted individual differences and the love of all.

- Had not taken feminism to such an extreme. The boys were afraid to speak up in case they voiced an opinion that differed from the girls'. Girls were always the first to be called on when they raised their hands and boys were called on when no one knew the answer. It was just as damaging to the boys' self-esteem as patriarchal oppression was to that of girls in previous generations.

- Did more activities that encourage interculturality and tolerance.

- Would modify their curriculum to include Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

- Hired teachers that were society influencers, so they looked at their jobs as educationists and visionaries, rather than just being the staff of a school.

- Had a more accommodative environment that embraced other children from all the parts of the country.
Would be independent of the government control and is self-sufficient.

- Was more aware of bullying.

- Taught the importance of values more than looks, money, and status.

- Allowed a more creative approach to a project.

- Taught us REAL teamwork and trust.

- Taught more about the environment and real changes WE can make.

- Was more inclusive.

- Would have more focus on my interpersonal skills, group work, and activity based learning focused on individual creativity, leadership qualities which would have helped me to learn more effectively.

- Had less homework.

- Made us feel more connected with each other and contribute more to society. That they encouraged us to take actions and be responsible.

- Was supporting the student's activity to learn about tolerance, giving to the others who need and willing to improve the education quality.

# KEY
# LEARNINGS

■ School environment affects young people's social and academic performance. School environment is created by teachers, school administrators, peers, and virtually everyone who works at school

■ In a positive and safe space where students are made to feel needed, accepted, and valued, they can more easily succeed and develop the skills necessary to withstand radicalization and grooming. In contrast, when young people are shown they and their cultures are unwelcome and unworthy, they isolate from the mainstream and seek acceptance in alternative spaces with potentially violent groups

■ It is everyone's responsibility to build safe environments free from bullying or any other sort of abuse and exclusion tactics

■ Religious literacy is one such approach that can help young people and school staff to fight ignorance about religions and develop better understanding and empathy towards people of different faiths through dialogues

■ Religious accommodation (e.g., availability of prayer rooms, non-discrimination towards religious clothing) shows to those of faith that their identities are respected and accepted. In case such provisions are not ensured, young people may feel unvalued and develop hostile relationships with the institution, their teachers, and peers

■ Where religious accommodation is not possible, open discussion and invitation of minority groups' ideas can show that they are respected and valued

■ While for some communities and even states religion may not seem as important, it is an essential dimension of some other people's lives that helps them make sense of the world around them and build resilience

■ Bullying is a widespread issue and happens in every school. It can be in any form of physical and verbal abuse to isolation of an individual

- Bullying doesn't only come from peers; teachers and parents can also be bullies

- Young people can be bullied for numerous reasons ranging from their religion, race, and sexual orientation to their appearance, interests, and views

- Bullying can lead to the development of serious mental health problems that result in depression, academic underachievement, social alienation, suicide, and more

- A strong support system can prevent bullying and provide necessary support if bullying takes place

- Educational institutions are responsible for identifying bullying instances and providing support to the bullied and the bully

- All members of the school community are responsible for creating a safe environment where bullying does not emerge

# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

**POLICY MAKERS:**

1) What sort of curriculum can be most efficient in incorporating religious literacy in our context? Who should develop it? Who should teach it?

2) Are our schools equipped with essential resources to provide for students of different faiths?

3) Do we have training for teachers and school administrators on religious literacy and accommodation in pre- and in-service programs?

4) Do we include religious families in the development of education policies to make them more sensitive thus accommodating to diverse religions?

**TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS:**

1) Think about your students. What kind of vulnerabilities do they have that can make them victims of bullying? What kind of vulnerabilities can they have that can make them a bully?

2) Think about your behavior and words. Is there anything that can be identified as bullying in how you act and what you say?

3) What are the resources available at the school and community level that can help you if bullying occurs?

4) What kind of lessons plans and other activities can you design to discuss and prevent bullying from happening?

5) What knowledge do I have about the students in my class and their religions?

6) What knowledge do I need to have to make them more welcome and comfortable at school?

7) Do I have any bias against any religion or religious group? Where does this bias come from? How can I work with myself to unlearn my bias?

8) Should I/How can I include families and religious figures in my lessons to help young people learn about diverse religions in our context from best sources?

# LANGUAGE

"The education is at the expense of our cultural heritage. We learn a foreign language at the expense of our own. Their knowledge at the expense of ours. Their wisdom."
- Indigenous person

Language is a vital medium for expression and a part of a community's common identity. It links people to their past and shapes the narratives and histories that are shared from generation to generation. Given the significance of language in cultural and collective identity, removing a language from formal contexts -- anything from textbooks to street signs -- alienates the group of speakers from their society.

In the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang in northwestern China, there has been a significant change in how the local language of the Uyghur majority in the region is used in schools. In the 1980s, education was bilingual in the province. As fears of Uyghur opposition grew within the Chinese government, so did concern with the use of Uyghur language. In September 2017, Mandarin instruction became mandatory for all grade levels to "resolutely correct the flawed method of providing Uyghur language training to Chinese language teachers" and "prohibit the use of Uyghur language, writing, signs, and pictures in the educational system and on campuses" (Radio Free Asia, 2017). This discriminatory and assimilationist implementation of Mandarin instruction and textbooks further marginalizes the 8 million Uyghurs in the region (BBC News, 2016), with an aim to overshadow the culture and language of one of the oldest Turkic languages in the world.

Actions to limit or restrict the use of language isolate minority groups and imply they are an unwelcome and unvalued part of society. This can stoke resentments and promote social fractures that lead to conflict and violence ∎

# RECOGNITION
# THROUGH LANGUAGE

**R**estriction on the use of languages in school instruction can directly impact students and their understanding of self:

*"Only Myanmar language of Burman ethnic majority is official; others are not recognized official language to include in school exams. [...] I wish my government recognize to add other ethnic languages in exams, school or university level."*
Brun Sign, 25, Myanmar

In countries with linguistic diversity, or where migration has resulted in lots of speakers of English as a second language, it is particularly important to pay attention to the languages that are formally valued by schools and governments. Excluding the language of a native or indigenous people relegates them to second-class citizens, exacerbating a sense of not only their inherent otherness but also their state-sanctioned inferiority.

Languages are also flexible. They evolve and adapt according to the way they are used. But when the evolution of a language or the emergence of a dialect is considered a bastardization for a "correct" form, it can serve to increase isolation and othering.

*"When I was grading ISTEP[17] tests , I noticed several questions that were worded in a very confusing way, such that any student that had not grown up with standard English could easily interpret the question as asking for something entirely different. And in fact, about a third of*

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[17]Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus ( referred to as ISTEP) is an annual No Child Left Behind test designed to measure students' mastery of basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics).

*the responses were addressing this entirely different question, but we were told to mark it wrong. There was also at least one case I recall in which the response made grammatical sense according to most African American dialects but not as much in standard English. When I tried to make that argument to my supervisor, she said, "Well, this is American, and they should learn to speak English!" She later apologized, but when I tried to suggest to her supervisor that they put a policy in place to account for dialectal differences, they simply sidestepped the issue."*
Zeri Ort, USA

Youth Contributor Zeri Ort is pointing to a less obvious but deeply damaging manifestation of racism in which the perceived superiority of white people is disguised as a concern with the ability to speak "correct" English. In fact, African American dialect is a language in its right, with its own rules and grammatical structures (Pinker, 1994). The differences in speech reflect a difference in the language spoken, not a failure to master English. But the test administrator failed to realize that any English but her own could be correct. This belies an ingrained sense of white superiority that, whether conscious or not, manifested in punishing African American test takers ■

# NAMING THE 'OTHER'

**T**he use of language and terminology used to describe groups can also marginalize individuals. This is illustrated by Aniqah in Canada, where despite being a context known to welcome diverse languages, the specific description of groups has been detrimental.

# CASE STUDY:

## *"Othering" of Minorities through Language*

> *This issue regarding language is also evident in the way that Muslims are spoken about in relations to their existence within Western societies. It is common to refer to Muslims as "Muslims in Canada," which insinuates that Muslims belong to an ethnic or religious diaspora that is inherently distinct from the larger Canadian identity. This is problematic, and the specific language used enforces the 'othering' of individuals of Islamic faith, thereby marginalizing these individuals. This 'othering' can not only lead to frustration within individuals who identify as both Muslim and Canadian, as they feel ostracized by their nation, but also leads to the viewing of Muslim individuals as non-Canadian despite their identities. This can manifest in frustration of Canadian-Muslims against Canadian society as a result of marginalization, and Canadians against Muslims (as a whole) for encroaching on what is perceived as autonomous Canadian land and society and can result in violent extremism in either group against the other. The language used to describe ethnic and religious groups must be critically examined as, if it is not intentionally analyzed, can foster the frustration that leads to extremism. Instead of terms such as "Muslims in Canada," words such as "Muslims of Canada," thereby inherently implying inclusion within the term. As a result, language and media should be viewed as a reflection of societal discourse and, should the definition of violent extremism be expanded to highlight the systems-level factors that lead to extremism, can be understood as unconventional forms of violent extremism. Understanding this as a manifestation of extremism ensures that discussions around intentional language and the importance of implied meanings of words (including the power a word can have in marginalizing and excluding ethnic and religious groups from societal discourse) provides a route through which violent extremism can be eradicated at the root of the problem.*

Aniqah, Canada

The descriptor "Muslims in Canada" negates the experiences of people who society sees as outsiders even in their own home country. Groups such as Black Canadians have been in Canada since the 17th Century, and the Sikh, Chinese, and Eastern European Muslim populations that first arrived in late 19th Century continue to face assumptions that they are "others" in a country their family has known for generations. An alternate descriptor such as "Canadian Muslims" would suggest a different understanding of the Canadian identity and encourage recognition that Muslims are members of the Canadian society ∎

# KEY LEARNINGS

■ Language shapes identities, transmits knowledge and value systems, facilitates communication between individuals and groups, and connects us to our past

■ Exclusion of language of a linguistic group from the curriculum shows them that they are unvalued and not recognized. This can lead to alienation, isolation, and exacerbation of the sense of "otherness"

■ Insensitive use of language about a stigmatized group can further isolate and "other" that person or group
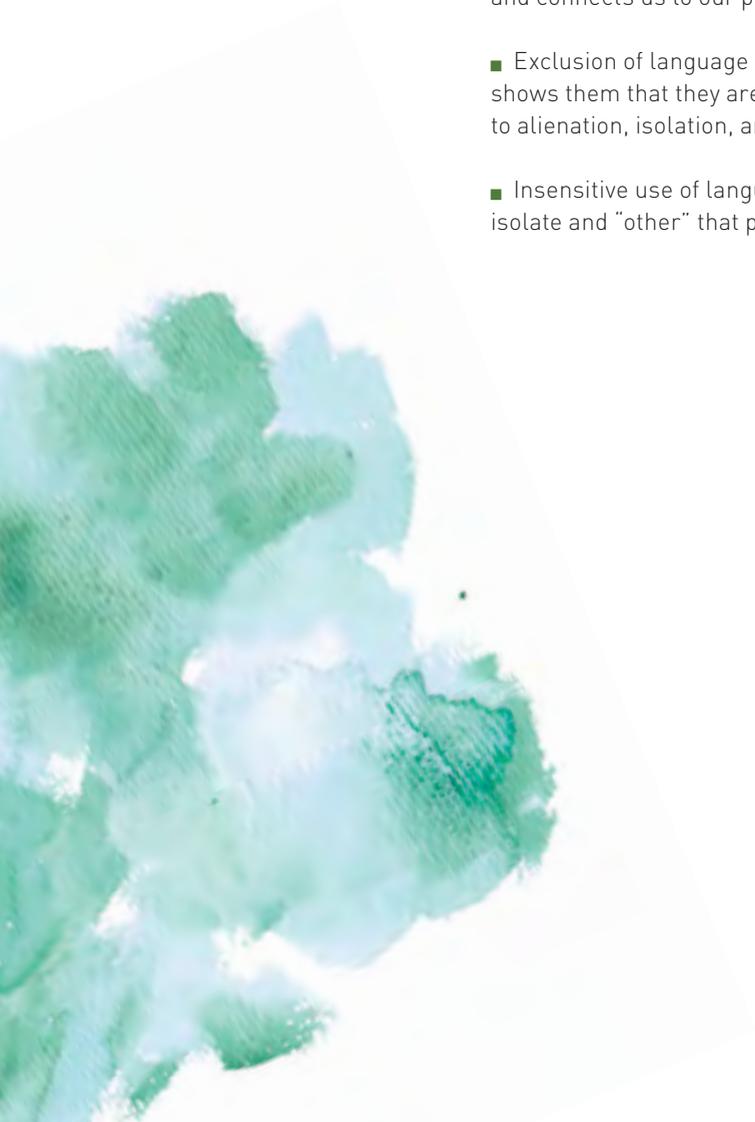
# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

**YOUNG PEOPLE:**

1. What language(s) do we speak at school? Why these? What other languages may be spoken here and why? Why don't we speak them?

2. What words are used in my school or community to describe minority groups around me or in the news?

3. Are these words encouraging or discouraging to these minority groups?

4. Do I ever repeat these words?

5. Are these words ever used to describe the majority group?

**TEACHERS:**

1. What other languages do students in my class speak?

2. Do those whose mother tongue is not the language of tuition understand the program well? If not, what can I do to help them?

3. How do I describe certain groups that are represented (or not) in my classroom?

4. How may this impact my students' understanding of self or community members that may exist in local, national, or international contexts?

**MEDIA:**

1. Which words are most commonly used to describe minority groups?

2. How do these differ from the words used to describe the majority?

3. How may the different terminology I (or other journalists use) affect those I describe?

**POLICY MAKERS:**

1. Do our policies include and describe minority groups?

2. If so, what words are used to describe them and how may this foster (or not) an inclusive community for our society?

3. Do we provide education in mother tongues for those minorities who need them?

4. Do we invite minorities to discuss policies related to their education and language use?

**SCHOOL INCLUSION FOR MARGINALIZED
OR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH**

Not all young people can attend a regular academic program.
Reasons for this include gender discrimination, lack of accessible
infrastructure (e.g., disabled students), financial limitations, proximity,
the need to work or help at home, and nomadic lifestyles.

Complete exclusion from the school community will exacerbate the
sense of "othering" for these young people. Schools cannot meet
the demands of every group or guarantee accommodation for all
needs, but there are actions we can take to broaden the scope of
opportunities available to all young people, including those unable to
attend a formal school program.

**Teachers:**

■ Prepare self-contained (i.e., no textbooks needed) activities and
material that students can take back to their communities to share
with peers who do not attend school.

■ Empower young people to be a part of outreach initiatives to non-
students. Encourage students to see themselves as ambassadors
who can connect to their non-student peers, share with them, and
learn from them. Pay particular attention to supporting students in
discovering what they may be able to learn from non-student peers to
foster respect and equality in the outreach.

**School administrators:**

■ Include open activities in the school schedule for all young people in
the community, for example after school programs or open day events
(a sporting event, a science fair, a cultural festival, etc.) to which non-
students are invited.

■ Make school facilities, such as gyms and auditoriums, open to non-students. This will promote interaction between students and non-students, and reduce the sense of "othering" among those who are unable to participate in the full school program.

■ Allocate time and resources for teachers to develop activities for the full youth community (students and non-students)

■ Encourage youth to be outreach ambassadors for young people who do not participate in the regular school day: share take-home material with them if they are interested, invite them to participate in open school activities and to make use of school facilities, so that the school becomes a community center the supports all young people, not only those with the means to attend the regular academic program.

**Policy makers:**

■ Provide financial and technical support for schools to do community outreach and to operate programs that include non-student youth.

### DISCUSS CONTROVERSIAL AND DIFFICULT ISSUES

If schools and teachers fail to acknowledge the issues that concern young people, they will become increasingly irrelevant and weaken their influence and impact. Engaging with students on issues such as identity, belonging, justice, and violence demonstrate respect for their emotional and intellectual development. Schools and classrooms can be safe spaces for students to ask difficult questions and formulate and debate their own opinions.

■ Teachers: Provide students with safe spaces (online or offline) to construct their definitions and examples of "extremism" and "moderation." This encourages student participation in a shared social project and empowers them to direct the conversation on difficult issues. Have students construct their definitions in small groups and share with the class. After discussions, ask students to reflect on any changes they may want to make in their definitions. Remember that the goal is not to arrive at a correct definition and students should not be expected to agree on a right answer. The purpose of the exercise is for students to see, and develop comfort with, the imprecision in these words. Other words for the exercise could be crime, theft, poverty, violence, justice, inequality, nationalism, patriotism, supremacy, tolerance, empathy, sympathy, etc.

■ Teachers: Provide examples of violence that might be justified, for example when personal safety or the safety of a loved one is at

risk. Then begin to change the situation slightly and ask students to consider when violence becomes unacceptable in their minds. Discuss the process they move through to make these conclusions and address differences without asking students to reach consensus.

■ Teachers: Have student analyze historical cases in which violent and nonviolent means were used to achieve outcomes. Speaking openly about the advantages of violence can lead to a more nuanced conversation about the risks of violence and the advantages of nonviolence resistance. After students have had the chance to share their ideas and beliefs, use resources such as Erica Chenoweth's TED Talk to underscore some of the historical conclusions we can draw about violent and nonviolent social change. Another resource is the game "War of Mine."

■ Teachers: Use the Erica Chenoweth TED Talk referenced above to provide students with an example of someone who changed their mind about a topic that was important to them. Based on Chenoweth's talk, what changed her mind? Chart the process that Chenoweth took: participation in a workshop with people who held different beliefs; a series of encounters in which she maintained her position; the invitation of a colleague who disagreed to work collaboratively to discover which position the evidence would support; and two years of active research. Ask students to consider what ideas or beliefs they hold that would require such a long, involved process before they would relinquish them. Ask them to share any experience they have had changing their minds about something. What process did they go through to come around to a new way of thinking? What do they think would be the most effective way to get other people change their thinking?

■ Teachers: Ask your students to respond to the question "Am I a bully or am I bullied?" Allow them to explain why they don't fit into either category if they would like. Ask them to reflect on why they feel the way they do about how they experience (or don't experience) bullying. Allow students to share what they've written if they want.

■ Policy makers: Design material and in-service training for teachers to aid them in bringing in controversial and difficult topics to their class.
*See Resource 11. Talking about Terrorism: Responding to Children's Questions*
*See Resource 12. Guidelines for discussing difficult or controversial topics*
*See Resource 33. Guide "What if I was wrong?"*

## DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING OF STRUCTURAL BARRIERS AND INJUSTICE

To build strong and influential relationships with young people, interactions must be founded on respect and honesty. Talking openly about structural injustice and barriers to equality is a prerequisite for having a meaningful dialogue about how young people can respond to these situations without resorting to anger and violence.

■ Teachers: Introduce students to a cast of imaginary characters who have been born into a variety of circumstance, from a sick child born into poverty to a child born with no legs to a healthy child born to rich parents, etc. Tell students that they will be assigned one of these identities and their participation in the rest of the class activities will be determined by which identity they are assigned. Before they know which circumstance they receive, however, they need to design a framework that will determine who participates in the activities. Will accommodations be made for the inclusion of poor people? Will wealthier people be expected to subsidize the participation of others? Will activities be accessible to those with handicaps or illnesses? *See Resource 13. John Rawls, "The Veil of Ignorance"*

■ Teachers: As a class or in small groups, focus on a structural injustice or barrier, such as poverty, gender discrimination, racism, etc. Ask students to imagine the things they do over the course of a normal day or week. How would these be impacted if they faced this structural barrier? When would they notice it and what would be different about their lives? Have students write and share aloud the first-person narrative of their experience living with this structural barrier. Afterwards, discuss with the students what it felt like to imagine themselves in such a situation.

## UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Language barriers can increase isolation and prevent young people from developing a sense of community and belonging. Students who speak a different language at home might also struggle to integrate their home life and school life. Ensuring the school environment is reflective of the linguistic diversity of students can help build bridges and support young people in developing confidence in an identity reflective of their unique experiences, culture, and background.

■ Teachers: Begin a class speaking a foreign language if you know one. Don't provide any explanation or make special attempts to help students understand what you are saying. Just speak for 5 - 10 minutes as though it is a normal lesson, perhaps asking students a few questions and expecting their answers. After a few minutes, return to your usual language. Ask them what it felt like when you

spoke a language they didn't recognize without showing any effort to help them understand. Then ask them what groups might feel this way in the course of their normal day. Tourists? Immigrants? Refugees? Ask them to consider how else language barriers might interfere with a person's daily life (recognizing junk mail, buying food at a supermarket, reading a map, reading street signs or store signs, etc.). What resources would different groups have to draw on in these situations?

■ Teachers: Find out which languages your students speak at home. If a student is interested, allow them the chance to teach their language to others in the class.

■ Teachers: Find out if the parents of all students can understand the language of instruction. If not, work with the family and the school administration to make sure parents can read information sent home by the school, have an understanding of topics and themes covered, and review any informational material that might impact the student's experience at school (such as permission forms for field trips, invitations for the parents to join activities, etc.).

■ School administrators: Learn which languages are spoken by students at home and integrate these into the school. As a starting point, this can be as simple as having a welcome banner in the school with greetings in all student languages.

■ Policy makers: Reach out to communities to determine what their language needs are. If some people in the community speak a minority language, see if someone from that group is available to support town hall meetings in translation. Encourage young people from a minority language group to consider a political internship in which they translate material for other members of their language groups.

■ Policy makers: Ensure that communities have learning resources and assessment instruments available in their native languages.

## PROMOTE INCLUSION AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL

Cultivating inclusion and understanding is a broad objective for teachers and school administrators to undertake. The actions to realize this goal, though, can be small. We have identified exercises that can be folded into a typical school day and included questions for reflection to make this work more accessible. We also encourage stakeholders to take a long-term view of progress, implementing the actions that are most relevant and repeating or revising them

regularly to create schools and classroom that support a cultural shift towards violence prevention.

■ Teachers: Understand your own biases and prejudices. For this, identify student groups in your class based on race, religion, and other characteristics. Map out what you know, think, and feel about each group. Reflect on where your knowledged and feelings come from. Is there any prejudice in them? Consider the following questions: how can I model a perspective that encourages inclusion? How does my method of communicating and acting encourage integration and respect for difference? Are there any ways that my culture and history have influenced the way I think and behave, to the detriment of certain groups?

■ Teachers: When you start discussing a new topic in class, bring in 5-6 opinions on that topic from very different people. Ask your students to read them and decide which ones are more common in their community and why. Ask them to identify which ones are less accepted and why that is the case. Discuss with them what the implications of having each perspective might be. What informs each belief and what challenges it?

■ Teachers: Divide your class into two or more groups. Identify a relevant issue to discuss. Ask your students to represent and defend the side they disagree with. Afterwards, ask them to reflect on their experience. How did they try to dismantle a position they hold? How did they look for weaknesses in their own beliefs? Are there any aspects of the other side of the issue that they feel some agreement with?

■ Teachers: Take students on field trips to different places or worship, multicultural centers, communities, or other areas where they can interact firsthand with groups to which they do not belong. By including different perspectives in the formal curriculum, teachers demonstrate to students the intellectual significance of understanding diversity.

■ Teachers: Narrate a story that might seem familiar to your students. Describe a young person who gets up, interacts with her parents, visits her friends. In the end, share that the protagonist belongs to a group you believe your students may have antagonistic feelings. Ask your students how they feel about the story. Was anything surprising? If so, what surprised them? What actions that the protagonist takes (for example, being affectionate with friends and family, taking care of a sibling or parent) they feel are incompatible with the group to which the protagonist belongs, and what is the root of that sense of incompatibility?

■ Teachers: Ask students to write down answers to the following questions and then discuss them in pairs. What makes me think the way I do? How sure am I of what I believe in? How different or similar are my ideas to those of other people? Why do we have different or similar perspectives? Then ask the listener and writer to switch places -- have the listener repeat what writer has said. Does the writer feel her emotions and opinions are accurately reflected by the listener? What sounds different from what she intended when she hears her answers expressed by someone else rather than spoken and written herself?

■ Teachers: Identify different role models from other cultures and countries. Devote some time each month to discuss those people (through arts, for example) and how they are changing or where the change in their communities.
*See Resource 10. Global Oneness Project*

■ Administrators: Invite mindfulness, empathy and compassion experts to school and to work with teachers.

■ School administrators: Have a wall at the school where each month you showcase in a creative and interactive manner what students can learn about a particular issue from different people and nations across the world. For example, the theme of environment protection can invite discussion of what students can learn from indigenous people or countries with different environmental policies.  If you talk about human rights, you can showcase what the different human rights issues are relevant for different countries and compare countries that prioritize collective rights over individual rights and the other way around.

■ School administrators: Have all students and teacher agree to code or a Golden Rule for the school community. An example could be "this school is where everyone's body and feelings are safe." Ask teachers to write the Golden Rule on a large piece of paper and have everyone in the class sign it. If possible, hang all these signed documents together to illustrate the community focus on securing a safe place for all people.

■ School administrators: Map out the diverse population you have at your school - students' ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. Meet with their parents and the students themselves to discuss how their experiences can be shared with the school community (if they would like). Identify teachers they can work with on designing and implementing school-based projects that reflect their culture, religion, or language and that will develop other students' and parents' familiarity with the diversity of the school community.

■ Policy makers: Provide teachers and school administration with in-service training on working with diverse communities. Such training should cover topics of culturally-relevant and sensitive pedagogy, communication with students and parents, and representation in class and schools. Establish on and offline forums where they can communicate with teachers and staff from other schools to share their best practices and ideas.

■ Policy makers: Design a mentoring program for teachers to help them develop projects for their diverse classrooms and help students from stigmatized communities integrate successfully.

## USE TEXTBOOKS RESPONSIBLY

No matter how bland and generic they may seem, textbooks are influenced by the biases, assumptions, and experiences of the people who fund them, write them, and use them. If we are conscious of potential limitations, we seek out quality textbooks and make judicious use of material to encourage critical thinking and analysis.

■ Teachers: Consider developing a textbook with your students and their families. This collaborative project can be more representative of your classroom and community and may supplement some of the parts of the textbook you use in class.

■ Teachers: Review your textbooks before each lesson. Consider if the material in the textbook is representative of what you want to teach. What voices are left out? Find ways to supplement textbooks with other material and remind students that they can be critical in their assessment of their textbooks.

■ Teachers: Provide samples of old, outdated textbooks to highlight the evolution of knowledge and understanding. By reflecting on old texts that seem outdated or inaccurate, students are more likely to apply that critical lens to current texts as well.

■ Teachers and school administrators: Before you choose textbooks, consider who wrote or sponsored this book? Is there an explicit or implicit agenda in it? Is it fair? Is it up to date?

■ Policy makers: Develop and select textbooks in consultation with marginalized communities.

■ Policy makers: Give more power to schools and teachers to design their teaching and learning material reflective of their local circumstances. Provide technical and financial support to them.

■ Policy makers: Require all textbooks to be transparent about the stakeholders who participated in creating them, as well as reflective of the fact that understanding and perspective in the textbook will not be timeless: as societies change and learn, textbooks must be adjusted and revisited to reflect how we have advanced.
*Resource 14. UNESCO MGIEP Embedding Guide*

**PROMOTE STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING**

Student-centered learning allows students to practice critical engagement with the material and better prepares them to formulate and express their ideas.

■ Teachers:  When you introduce a new topic, draw out what students already know or believe about it. This activity will help to engage students in critical reflection and will show to them that their knowledge and contribution are respected.

■ Teachers and school administrators: Create surveys to circulate among students on a regular basis to learn more about their successes and struggles. This will impress upon them your interest in their individual experience in the classroom, beyond test scores and grades.

■ School administrators: Set aside a certain day in a week for a high school student to take charge of the classroom and the school. Provide training on pedagogy, administration, and leadership in education for those students who are interested and are willing to get engaged. Support students in feeling that they are integral parts of the school community and that their contributions are valuable and important.

As student-centered learning can be particularly challenging for teachers with a large number of students, we identify further actions for large classes.

■ Teachers: Each class or week identify students who you can delegate some tasks to (handing out assignments, doing some classroom chores, and others).

■ Teachers: Encourage peer to peer learning. Divide students in small groups in which everyone can participate and share. Academically stronger students can mentor students who struggle. Foster a sense of teamwork and reward students for building these relationships -- both the mentor and the mentee. Break topics down into smaller sections and have small groups study different parts of the lesson carefully. Then invite the groups to deliver "lectures" on what they

have learned to the rest of the class.

■ School administrators: Support teachers in designing creative, out of classroom experiences for students. Activities can include field trips into the community and visits to speak with experts and local leaders.

■ Policy makers: Organize forums for teachers and school administrators from different schools and localities to get together online and offline to share their concerns to receive help and guidance and to exchange best practices that they can implement. Support the use of online communities for teachers to connect with one another and share ideas and resources.

### HELP TEACHERS USE THE GUIDE

Teachers and school administrators often struggle to make limited resources meet extraordinary expectations and community demands. Policymakers who find value in the youth voices and recommendations in this guide can provide guidance, support, and incentive to educators who would like to implement suggested actions.

### POLICY MAKERS

■ Socialize the guide with a small group of administrators and teachers.

■ Provide incentives for schools to send staff and teachers to participate in workshops to learn about the guide, its recommendations, and how they can use it effectively.

■ Focus the workshops on the same outcome that teachers would expect from the students in the classroom – provide the diversity or the geopolitical context to broaden teachers' worldview.

■ Share a few images of flags of different countries with teacher participants. Include the stories behind the flags - some from origin myths, some symbolic representations of key ideas, some literal depictions of objects. Ask each teacher to create a flag for his classroom, with an explanation for every color and element. Share with the full group. Discuss afterward what everyone learned about the classrooms and the perspectives of the other teachers, and consider how this exercise could be used with students.

**SUPPORT ETHICAL CLASSROOM AND ASSESSMENT METRICS**

Students assessment instruments can present challenges a young person's academic success, particularly if that young person belongs to a cultural and linguistic minority groups. Students may struggle to understand words and meanings or cultural references in tests. They may need more time to respond to test questions. When necessary accommodation is not made, these students may perform less successfully, have trouble advancing in school, and find themselves at an increased risk of dropping out.

■ Policy makers: Align assessment instruments with learning objectives and material that students and teachers have access to. Consult teachers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds who can test assessment instruments to identify how students will relate to them.

■ Teachers: communicate learning outcomes and assessment criteria to your students. Ensure that the assessment material is aligned with the outcomes of the learning.
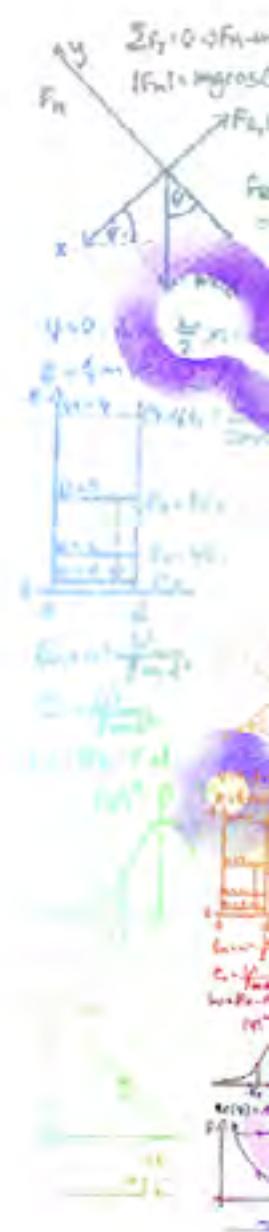
# Beyond
# Formal Education

"Sports, arts, and culture provide valuable opportunities to engage youth, women, and communities. They can also help in the development of alternative, positive means to understand and to address the grief and tension that can contribute to support for violent extremism. Sports, arts and culture are valuable tools in discussions of differences and diversity, history, experiences and hopes of many people."

- Elena Novotni, 27

Our beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices emerge from a complex intersection of what we feel to be true and how we rationalize our way to the conclusions we hold. Formal education influences both our feelings and our thinking process, but the scope of our full education is informed by so much more. In this chapter, we will look at the role of arts, sports, volunteering, and informal actors such as families, friends, and community and religious figures in fostering empathy, mindfulness, and critical thinking. We will underscore the importance of providing the resources for young people to develop these emotional and cognitive skills through informal and non-formal engagements.

"At the Red Elephant Foundation, we came up with a program called "ChalkPeace." Our workshops are very simple: we don't teach a thing. Instead, we learn together. We occupy a space where the participants become active and critical thinkers. We ask them to share what they see around them, and encourage them to respond to what they see. We then simulate situations, where we make them see that they are stakeholders

in a grander world that could well be peaceful. We then guide them gently into a simulated understanding of what a world filled with conflict would look like. Then we let them make the choices for themselves."

- Kirthi Jayakumar, 29, The Red Elephant Foundation, India/ Global

## "THE BEST WAY TO CHANGE IS TO ENGAGE."

"I believe in offering tools for integration for [migrant families] and their children. Either it would be sports activities, cultural activities or a mentorship program with other segments of the welcoming society, we need to take this action to ensure peaceful and civic coexistence."

- Pau Amigo Navarro, 31, Spain

Discussion of different ideologies and beliefs has limited impact when there is no engagement with those who hold such beliefs. Heidi Ross (2003) comments on the paradox of terrorism that it combines a "deep passion and commitment with indiscriminate (and sometimes impersonal) violence." This is to say, people who commit terrorist attacks or hold violent extremist ideologies are not sociopathic, but rather emotionally motivated. PVE work that does not take emotions into account cannot respond to the fact that young extremists are often antagonistic towards those from different groups without reflecting on the source or logic behind their antagonism, driven instead from a

place of confused or unexamined emotion.

Folding emotion into efforts to prevent violent extremism is a challenging task. There is still no scientific consensus on what emotion is, whether emotions are universal, or how they can be accurately measured (Beck, 2015). But there is some indication that our feelings are a better predictor of the prejudices we hold than our beliefs and stereotypes (Talaska, Fiske, & Chaiken, 2008). The integrated threat theory of prejudice holds that fear is largely the driver behind the formation of prejudicial beliefs (though "negative stereotype" is here categorized as a type of threat, along with realistic threats, symbolic threats, and intergroup anxiety) (Oskamp, 2000). The task of responding to emotionally-fueled prejudice is complicated by the ambiguity that surrounds our understanding of what emotions are, how they are influenced, and how that influence can best be reversed or challenged.

The prejudice that stems from internally entrenched logic presents its own challenges. In the previous chapter, we discuss how we can use formal education to engage with the ideas young people hold and use the classroom as a space to complicate and problematize how each reaches their rational conclusions.

Confronting emotionally grounded prejudice is a more nebulous target. In this chapter, we will focus on dynamic interactions and exchanges that add to the repertoire of experiences from which a young person draws their conclusions about the world. Interventions that broaden the scope of experience increase the likelihood that people will challenge their prejudices and question their assumptions about those they consider "others." This encourages reflection without passing judgment.
Consider a Youth Contributor from Buddhist-majority Myanmar who describes the organic changes in perception inspired by her friendship with a Muslim peer.

"Education isn't just formal. It requires people on the ground willing to combat racist assertions and ideologies. Especially white people. Even if the person you're correcting or arguing with doesn't get the point immediately, someone else will be watching online or in person and will be inoculated from radical ideas later on."
- Weston Gobar, USA

*"I used to misunderstand Muslim people. I don't understand why they kill animals, why they don't like dogs and why they create violence. But I have got a friend who is Muslim, and I realize that religion is good, but it is people that aren't good."*
Aye Thandar, 20, Myanmar

Aye Thandar's Muslim friend may not have entirely debunked the beliefs and prejudices she holds about Muslim people more generally. Another Youth Contributor from Myanmar claimed, "Not all Muslims are bad people, but all bad people are Muslims." It's possible to expand a worldview that allows for the possibility that "other" people are good, but maintains that bad people still disproportionately come from groups of the "other."

But openness and empathy are not static places at which we arrive; they are trajectories along which we can travel. No single interaction or experience can claim absolute responsibility for creating an open and accepting mindset. Instead, each experience makes it that much more difficult for prejudices and hostilities to take hold.
Interaction is a form of education without instruction. There are no learning objectives or standards against which to measure the success of an interaction. Creating programs that encourage interaction will support young people in their full development. This is a long process of providing opportunities for social, emotional, and intellectual growth. It is slow and incremental work. Some interactions will take hold, provide the basis for friendships, and inspire greater moral imagination. Others interactions may leave a person unchanged. This is why effective PVE initiatives must provide ongoing dynamic support that incrementally expands a young person's worldview.

*"Preventing extremism requires behaviour change and the best way to incite behaviour change is to let people engage in direct action with others. I mean, practice all notions and values in action. When they act together and sense how diversity works for them rather than against, they shift to*

*be proponents and preachers of such values."*
Yassein Hussein Mohamed Salman, 30, Egypt

The direct action that Youth Contributor Yassein identifies is the defining advantage of informal education programs. We will begin this chapter by exploring how such direct action can impact the social, emotional, and intellectual development of young people, making them more resilient and less vulnerable to violent extremism ■

# GETTING USED TO
# ONE ANOTHER

**M**uch of PVE discussion extols the virtues of tolerance without considering how pejorative the idea of tolerating one another can be. Tolerance is a relatively weak virtue, as it presupposes that homogeneity is better than difference. As Tom Greggs (2016) puts it: "Tolerance works on the basis of highlighting the distinction between the powerful and the less powerful, the majority and the minority, it works on the basis that variance or difference isn't a good thing to be celebrated – it's something to be put up with." To be "tolerated" is not flattering.

This sentiment is echoed by Youth Contributor Rim Sabrina Sassi, who goes further in her critical assessment of tolerance to call it a "passive form of rejection." If we embrace this passive rejection as the goal to which we aspire, we set an unacceptably low bar for building empathy and connect in and between communities.

*"There is a constant call for "tolerance" from governments, and I believe events have proven that this is not enough to build peaceful societies. It should be a threshold, not a ceiling to aim at. We need to go further than tolerance. I believe tolerance casts away the awareness of our interconnectedness. I am afraid that tolerance can become a passive form [of] rejection and that's dangerous. I want to encourage policymakers and grassroots workers to aim at fostering compassion, empathy and a sense of interconnectedness in our societies to bridge divides."*
Rim Sabrina Sassi, 29, France

Compassion, empathy, and interconnectedness are qualities that can be fostered but not necessarily taught in a traditional sense. In most formal iterations, teaching involves a process of looking at something: examining, considering, and assessing. But the work that needs to be done to foster empathy and connection is different. It's the work of looking not at someone but with someone. We want to encourage young people to look at the world from the perspective of someone with a different background or belief system, not try to look at those differences.

How do we encourage young people to step into another belief system or set of life experiences? We can promote open dialogue, find opportunities for exchange, and encourage constructive debate. There are also strategies

for making classrooms spaces where students are more likely to develop and exercise mindfulness, empathy, and compassion, as we discuss on page 121-122 in the previous chapter.

But empathy and mindfulness training are not the only ways to achieve these aims. If they were, we would see far fewer compassionate and empathetic people. Although investigative science can help us understand, identify and strengthen these skills, they are part of our human potential with or without formal interventions.

We also recognize that not all stakeholders, schools, and communities will be able to implement the full scope of projects such as mindfulness and empathy training. And one study suggests that a superficial treatment of this approach can be counterproductive, worsening narcissism (Young, 2017).

There are opportunities beyond the classroom to encourage and develop empathy, compassion, and mindfulness in young people We can create spaces for social, youth-guided interaction that does not seek to instruct in empathy or understanding but rather allows people to engage their inherent humanity. We can do this with the most basic of premises: a football match, a dance party, a collaborative art project. This provides the opportunity for interactions that support the organic development of empathy and interconnectedness.

Interaction builds moral imagination. It allows people to express, whether directly or indirectly, how they experience their world. It's similar to how you experience stories, entering into them imaginatively and empathizing with the characters. Stories are the most basic form of expression we have to share and record our human experience. By exchanging our stories, we invite other people to experience our unique reality, informed by our individual beliefs, history, and culture ■

*Fostering Open
Dialogue through
Theatre*

*I am a gay Christian. Growing up, I felt the pressure to identify with either one of these aspects; either the heterosexual identity that was a large part of me, or the religious identity that is traditionally harmful to those who are not heterosexual. My passion for theatre – a community that is traditionally very critical of faith – compounded this identity crisis.*

*I hated the notion that because of the traditional binary between certain groups I must choose between being gay and being Christian. This brought a lot of pain and struggled to the formative years of my life – would I ever truly belong to my faith, because I am gay? Could I reconcile the two identities within myself, or where the two mutually exclusive? In addition, the theatre community was a difficult place to navigate in light of my identity: it is traditionally accepted that it is difficult to come out as a gay man within the Christian community, but it is equally difficult to come out as a Christian within the theatre community, where many people have found refuge from the sterility and rigidity of religion.*

*I sought to navigate this internal struggle through the development of play. This was a means to create a space for myself in worlds where I felt I didn't belong – a space in the theatre community to tell my story, as well as a space in both the LGBTQ+ and Christian communities to share the internal struggle of identifying as both gay and a Christian. This play, called oblivion, was written from the perspective of a gay man struggling with the effects of being ostracized and judged by his Christian community from a young age, seeking to be 'cleansed' of his faith. This play works to showcase the first-hand experience of someone who is struggling with the mental dissonance and mental illness caused by a systemic oppression and exclusion because of their conflicting identities.*

*Oblivion manifested first as a fifty-minute production at the University of Calgary, Canada, including an interactive session to discuss the issues highlighted by the performance. We were fortunate to spark a positive response from the community, who requested more discussions of this nature. As a result, my friends and I decided to continue this play – this*

*time through my own theatre company, Third Street Theatre, touring the show through different church communities.*

*What an incredible experience. Through the showcasing of oblivion, a play that addressed the binary nature of identifying as gay and Christian, as well as highlighting in a very vulnerable manner the harm perpetrated by both groups towards the other, we were able to inspire those from both groups to seek common ground and build empathy. This play has been a way to allow those from a Christian background to empathize with and experience the first-hand struggles of those working to navigate their conflicting identities. It is a tool to bring together those from the Christian and LGBTQ+ communities to space where they can foster open dialogue, and seek opportunities to reconcile between the two groups. This is particularly emphasized by the nature of Act 2 in the play, where audience members have the opportunity to converse with the creative team.*

Jonathan Brower, Canada

Jonathan's experience as a gay Christian forced him to wrestle with conflicting identities. In this case, there was a deep and clear dissonance between the communities with which he identified. The less a young person feels supported by his community, the greater the risk that this dissonance leads to feelings of isolation and exclusion, which can function as dangerous push factors towards extremism.

Jonathan was able to use his play as a platform to resolve and process his internal conflicts. Creating opportunities for young people to express their feelings of exclusion and isolation through art serves two key purposes: they provide catharsis on a personal level, and they result in artwork that can speak to and influence others. The performance developed by Jonathan created an opportunity for people from his two communities to have an open dialogue and work towards understanding and reconciliation. When we encourage young people to process their struggles through art, we are not only enabling a therapeutic process of creation for the artist but also supporting the production of art that can speak to larger audiences.

Through dialogue, interaction, and collaboration, the individual takes precedence over ideology. Social instinct drives us to connect with each other as human beings, to judge the individual in front of us based on the manner in which our interaction with him unfolds. If we see someone first as a person, it is much harder to work backward to reduce him only to one belief, assumption, or ideology.

This does not mean that different perspectives will align and or that people will agree with one another simply because they interact. But the objective of interaction is not agreement. In the words of the Scriptural Reasoning movement, a resource for inter-faith dialogue whereby people of different faiths come together to read and reflect on their scriptures, people might learn to 'disagree better' - to understand their disagreements more fully, to examine their own beliefs critically, and to explore what commonalities they might share.

This type of interaction incorporates the difficult reality of injustice. What can we tell students who conclude quite rightly upon looking at the world that they have been dealt a bad hand, and that other states and actors can legitimately be held responsible? How should we encourage people to feel empathy towards those who have extended to them no such empathy? This is not something institutions can instruct or mandate -- it is barely something we have the logical grounds even to encourage.

What we can do is create the space for interaction in which young people might feel for one another connection, communality, and friendship that will make it difficult to hate the other, even in the face of proved, demonstrable injustice. Interaction, not instruction, guides us towards the better instincts of our humanity. To accomplish this, we must provide the opportunity for relationships to be forged that are conducive to the development of empathy, critical thinking, and compassion.

Philosopher Kwame Appiah argues that conversation across traditional boundaries is the starting point in becoming a more global community: "Conversation doesn't have to lead to a consensus about anything, especially not values; it is enough that it helps people get used to one another" (2006, p. 82). An education that supports young people in "getting used to one another" is accomplishing the difficult work of developing critical emotional skills. To see this work in action, we will consider a few of the unconventional approaches that achieve these goals ■

Interaction, not instruction, guides us towards the better instincts of our humanity.

*"Their Differences
Only Made Them
More Interesting"*

*I moved to Macedonia three years ago; I was going to volunteer in a small town, and I couldn´t be any more ignorant about the realities of the community I would soon fall in love with.*

*Before starting my research on the country I was planning to live in, all I knew about Macedonia was that it was located in the Balkans – a region torn by war, decades of foreign occupation, ethnic animosities, all aggravated by a precarious economic situation. What I was about to discover was something that the press rarely bothers to talk about: that not everything is black and white, and that there is a strong civil movement in the country that mitigates for peaceful cohabitation, for progress and change, despite the challenging political and economic situation that they are bound to face.*

*I volunteered for the Center for Intercultural Dialogue, a youth center in Kumanovo. At first glance it might seem like a place where young people come to have fun – the walls of the building are covered with drawings, it is always dynamic, there is a lot of laughter inside, and it gives an immediate vibe of a happy place. But what is not clear at first glance is that this is a place that bridges the gap between two communities that are utterly segregated and hostile towards each other.*

*Kumanovo is a town located in the North-Eastern side of the country. It is probably one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Macedonia. After the 2001 war, the city saw an ever-intensifying division between the Albanian and Macedonian communities; people sold their houses to move into other neighborhoods, schools segregated into purely Macedonian and Albanian, it was not common anymore to have mixed shops, bars, cafes, and restaurants. Today, there is almost a physical line that divides the city, making it quite difficult for young people to have an opportunity to meet each other. Combined with the common rhetoric of "the other," young people often fall into the trap of building stereotypes towards the other ethnicity that are solely based on the assumption that what is different is bad.*

*This is how the idea of opening Multikynmu was born. It was an initiative of a group of people who wanted to offer youth a safe place to meet, work and have fun together. Multikynmu celebrated diversity: the workshops and events that were held in the youth center had a bilingual approach – no language was more important than the other. The intercultural activities were meant to educate the young generations to value each other for their differences and to build friendships and collaborations based on common values. The youth workers were trained to address potential conflictual situations and to properly understand the various layers of identity that the participants were displaying.*

*Since its inception in 2006, CID and Multikynmu acted as local youth hubs where great project ideas were developed, strong friendships were born, and everyone could find a space to be heard, understood and accepted. Hundreds of young people attended workshops where they learned to recycle, dance, act in a theatrical performance, write poems, create a radio show, think critically and defend their rights. Several generations of young people have already passed through the "school of CID," and they keep supporting the youth center by coming back whenever they can to visit, facilitate an activity, see old friends, bring a present or simply remember the old times.*

*In May 2014, when an alleged terroristic attack hit the city, a general state of panic locked people in their houses, spreading a sense of uncertainty and fear. Around two dozen policemen lost their lives in the exchange of fire, and several Albanian civilians were arrested on accusations of plotting a terrorist attack. Because the situation was never officially investigated, it is still unclear what exactly happened in the days around the 9th of May 2014. What is clear though is that the media was pushing the theory that there is a dangerous ethnic conflict in Kumanovo, which was not the case. Nevertheless, the events of May 2014 risked undermining the efforts of reducing the existent division in town. More than ever there was a need to bring trust back into people´s homes and to create more spaces and opportunities for young people to come together and overcome the fear of*

*the otherness.*

*Multikynmu took that role upon itself and multiplied its efforts to act as a bridge between cultures: with an online campaign named "Together – Sebashku – Zaedno," Multikynmu invited all the followers not to fall into the trap of believing that there is an ethnic conflict in Kumanovo. Multikynmu organized a youth camp, in which around 50 young people from several schools spent the weekend together. The youngsters came home to the parents who displayed reluctance in letting them attend the camp and shared positive impressions from the camp. "So what if my roommate did not speak the same language as me? We made an amazing drawing together!" or "I learned this great game from an Albanian/ Macedonian kid that I want to show to my friends" or "We are planning to go for a coffee together next week, why didn´t we do this before?"*

Every time, friendships are built, stereotypes are shattered, walls fall down.

*The youth camp became a beautiful tradition that is happening several times a year now. Every time, friendships are built, stereotypes are shattered, walls fall down. The inevitable happened – by interacting with each other, the youngsters understood that they have a lot in common and that their differences only make them more interesting, that there is a lot to discover about each other.*

Center for Intercultural Dialogue
www.cid.mk

Multikynmu youth center
www.multikynmu .mk

Elena Ceban, 27

A segregated city like Kumanovo in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, rife with ethnic tensions driven by ingrained hostility and media bias, provides fertile ground for young people to absorb hatred and contempt. Young people whose parents prohibit them from interacting with a different group are likely to pass this hostility and hate to their children. As Elena reflects in her discussion of MultiÐÐÐÐÐ, providing safe spaces for young people to meet and interact with those who are linguistically and ethnically different - those they were taught to view as the enemy - helps to counter animosity through experience. Young people are not told to think or feel differently about another group. They are simply given a chance to interact with that group and reach their conclusions.

Through informal interactions, artistic projects, and caring for the common space, they unlearn the ingrained stereotypes, develop an interest in each other's lives and cultures, and establish trust. Such natural interactions result in questioning of the established order and forging of friendships despite difference and history of enmity ∎

# WHEN WRITERS GO TO WAR: PVE AND THE ARTS

Every culture, religion, and society finds some form of expression through the arts. The evolution and ongoing creation of art reflect both individual and collective identity. Art is inspired by, and relevant because, it reflects fundamental traits of the human experience such as loss, love, belonging, exclusion, loyalty, and betrayal. In this sense, it is a source of connection that relies on many of the drivers we encounter when we examine why young people turn towards or away from violence and extremist ideologies.

This is most persuasively represented by young people who found an alternative to violence in the power of art -- not by retreating into an aesthetic sanctuary but by utilizing artistic expression, rather than violence, to shape the world. In Tunisia, a young boy abandoned his conviction to travel to Iraq and join ISIS after a friend implored him to use his talent as a writer to wage a "peaceful jihad" (Khelifa, 2017). When he later reflected on his change of heart, he identified the opportunity to make a different choice as critical to his decision to reject violence. In this section, we will focus on how art can provide an alternative form of communication or engagement, expanding the opportunities that young people have when they make defining personal decisions.

The story of the Tunisian boy inspired the launch of Mobdiun - Creative Youth, a nonprofit in Tunisia that promotes youth's social inclusion and social transformation through arts, culture, sports, and technology. Similar initiatives, such as Proyecto Ja'ab, operate on the same principle: outreach that empowers young people as artists gives them ownership and pride in their individual and collective identity, their heritage, and their history, providing the same validation on which violent actors often rely to recruit followers.

*The collective writing
as a tool to prevent
violence*

**M**aya could read in the stars that a New Era started the 21st of
December 2012. Proyecto Ja'ab is not a casual adventure. It's
a product of this New Era that is based on dialogue, respect of
the ancestral knowledge, peace and the common efforts to reach common
goals. Last year, the International Federation of Journalism affirmed
that México was the third most dangerous country in the world for
journalists after Iraq and Philippines. Every 22 hours there is a cruel
abuse committed against a journalist in this country (Artículo 19). This
situation directly affects freedom of expression in the region. México is
also known for the violence related to the drug trafficking, the violence in
the routes of migration of young people from Central America going to the
US and the violence against women, among others.

While this region is one of violence, it is also one of amazing, creative
minds and natural talent for arts. These are assets with the potential to
change the situation and bring peace to communities often threatened by
violence. This is exactly what we are doing through Proyecto Ja'ab and
SOM Editorial Colectiva.

Our work began with a reflection on the significance of stories. We
naturally seek out books that resonate with our essence and identity. We
want to see ourselves in characters, to use books and stories to better
understand our world. Imagine how easy it is to feel disconnected from
the power of stories if you do not have access to stories that speak to you. If
an indigenous boy goes to the public library to read a story about a Maya
wizard and only finds a book about Hogwarts, how will his sense of his
own culture's value and important be diminished? Too often, inspiring
stories happen far away from countries that don't have a relevant role in
the global world. This situation must change.

One of the aims of Proyecto Ja'ab is to fill the public libraries of the Maya
region with innovative books made by young people and to generate a
literary platform for them to deepen their identities and shared heritages.
Almost 700 public libraries are active in the Southern Mexican states of

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> read a story about a Maya
> wizard and only finds a
> book about Hogwarts,
> how will his sense of his
> own culture's value and
> important be diminished?
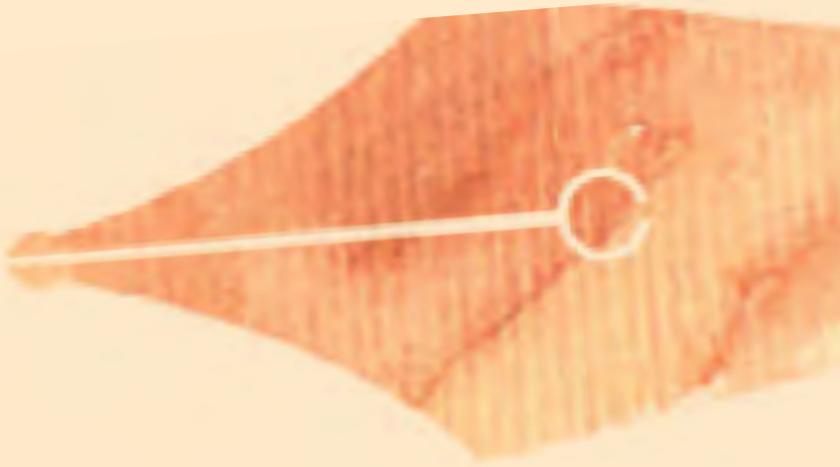
*Quintana Roo, Yucatán, Campeche, and Chiapas. Our principal objective is to highlight the huge power that youth have in every part of the world to reverse violent contexts and to create new worlds through a more inclusive education that they lead themselves.*

*More than 500 hundred young people from twelve cities in five countries (El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, and México) have been connected to produce collective literary arts. We started this adventure in a region that integrates one of the most unsafe borders in the world situated between México and Central America, where Human Rights are violated daily. Our collection has twelve books, one for each city where we have organized our writing workshops.*

*The books have been written in museums, streets, parks, schools, universities, ancient Maya cities, public libraries, public spaces and cultural centres. We can write collective books in prisons, in hospitals, in refugee camps and anywhere else. The formula is open and cheap. A collective book can be written in any place, at any time and with all kinds of people. Even if the participants are not able to read or write they can share graphically what they think and what they feel. Expressing ourselves through literature permits us to make a catharsis and to increase our self-esteem.*

*The twelve cities where books have been created have shared their urban soul through our collection. Proyecto Ja'ab has promoted books made by fewer than ten writers and books made by more than fifty writers. We have had three operational phases, each one managed by collectives of youth. The first one is the writing phase (more than 500 writers in twelve*

A collective book can be written in any place, at any time and with all kinds of people. Even if the participants are not able to read or write they can share graphically what they think and what they feel.

*cities), the second one is the production phase, and the third one is the socialization of the books in the public libraries. We invite participants directly, joining SOM Editorial Colectiva with the institutions and the different groups. Once participants accept, we just need a space to work, various sheets of paper and pens or pencils (no computers) and we start sharing ideas through a collective inspiration about the main proposal. Then, when we define the structure, and we start dividing the poems to be written, the plot, the characters, the chapters. Each book is unique and special, and it's difficult to specify the time that we need to write a collective book: in one morning a collective book can be made. At the end of the workshop, we read the texts collectively, sharing what we have done together.*

*Our special and genuine literary experience will support, in few months, one thousand public libraries and cultural centres in the Maya region in promoting reading among youth with books made by them collectively. In this ancient region, the ancestors traveled along the sacbés, the sacred paths that unify the old Maya cities. We have created a sacbé of participatory literature, storytelling, and story-sharing that has engaged more than fifty organizations and associations. Our innovative experiment wants to stop the violence, the lack of freedom of expression and the lack of reading habits through nodes of creative and creative literature.*
*The Maya culture is known worldwide for its marvelous textiles. Our young transnational family has created a unique textile of stories that will be read in few months through one thousand non-violent spaces. We strengthen the power of the collective life through collective books.*

Joan Serra Montagut, Mexico/Spain

The work of Proyecto Ja'ab responds to the dangers of geopolitical othering and exclusion by creating artistic validation of cultures and heritages often excluded from mainstream literature. Social and cultural isolation can push young people towards justification of violence and hate. Joan Serra Montague, the young founder of SOM Editorial Collective, has galvanized a communal process of artistic creation to combat this isolation and strengthen community identity. This validation comes not only from the process of creation but the inclusion of these books in libraries in the region, creating a permanent literary footprint that provides inspiration and validation for future generations.

The model of Proyecto Ja'ab is one we will return to in our recommendations. As Joan mentions, this work is flexible and affordable. SOM Editorial Collective is evidence that prevention strategies with far-reaching impact -- those that, like Proyecto Ja'ab, include many community representatives and address broad, geopolitical inequalities -- can be implemented in affordable and practical ways ◼

"Violent extremism evolves through different layers, starting from frustration moving to racism ending in terrorism. To prevent the last stage, we have to cure it from its roots. Art is a major tool to combat this phenomenon. It is a tool through we can communicate easily with youth and share awareness among them and let them express their frustrations and their social grievance. It is through art that we can educate them on values of acceptance and tolerance between the different cultures."
- Youness Ben-Abbou, Chantier Sociaux Marocains, Morocco, supported by The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

The importance of identifying with a protagonist, as underscored by the Proyecto Ja'ab case study above, can help young people examine more closely their own cultures and challenges. Seeing oneself reflected in the art can be as powerful as seeing the other reflected in art -- it encourages a broader conversation about who you are, who you appear to be, and why a gap between those two identities might exist.

The movie "Watatu," for example, a production of a community-based group in Kenya, discusses the relationship between diverse religious and ethnic communities in Mombasa. The release of the film prompted conversations regarding extremism among youth who had often felt oppressed and silenced by the risk of judgment. "Watatu" gave a voice to a Muslim community frequently subjected to portrayal as violent and dangerous extremists.

*"Now there is dialogue; people are talking freely about the issue of radicalisation, something that was not there before and for me, this is a big step. In a place like Mombasa where most of the population is Muslim, it was very hard to try to discuss information on matters of extremism without being seen as a traitor. But with the help of the movie "Watatu" people watch it and see how the issue has been handled so carefully. They feel safe talking about the problems and coming up with positive solutions."*

Mwajumla Asha, 27, Kenya

As Mwajumla Asha explains, the movie helped this stigmatized and silenced community discuss a topic that had been seen as taboo and dangerous. Creating a safer space to discuss extremism and radicalization resulted in people deliberating the causes and searching for solutions to counter it. If young people are not able to discuss the relationship between religious practice and religious extremism they will be ill-prepared to recognize the differences between the two. In the previous chapter, we discussed how teachers and administrators could provide opportunities for discussion in schools. In some communities, using art to introduce controversial topics may be more effective or socially acceptable.

An arts-based approach to PVE also provides opportunities for young people to receive validation of their experience and identity. Media such as painting or dance are vehicles for non-verbal communication and maybe a less intimidating means of expression for young people to convey difficult experiences of exclusion, identity conflict, and isolation. The process of fictionalizing a painful reality through writing or theater can provide the distance a young person needs to share difficult emotions and experiences.

In Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp, for example, young refugees produce a humorous soap opera that addresses some of the darkest challenges they face in their daily lives (Dunmore, 2016). The production provides both catharsis and entertainment. It serves as a medium to share both the profound challenges of refugee life and to underscore the reality that the young refugees behind the drama are just like any young person -- sharing the fears, joys, and ambitions we find anywhere in the world.

The arts provide dynamic and affordable media that community, governments, and schools can use in strengthening a culture of prevention. PVE is not a short-term objective, but a slow process that requires repeated and varied engagement. By harnessing the power of art, both as a form of expression and a tool of communication, we can increase the types of non-violent options for young people looking to explore and assert their individual and collective identities ■

"A young boy who is good at playing football or tennis can be made a PVE ambassador on his team. With this, he can be taught how to take responsibility, be accountable and have the commitment at both individual and team level and can, in turn, use the same skills and attitude to effect positive change in his community."

- Daisy Aleppo, 25, Uganda

Much like arts programs, sports can build bridges between diverse cultures and religions. Sports activities can be used to promote intergroup cooperation and unite diverse individuals in achieving a common goal. Repeated experiences of intergroup contact -- or, more simply, interactions with the "other" -- contribute to building more inclusive societies and more empathetic, mindful citizens. In this section, we will discuss the role of sports in providing intergroup contact, engaging young people, and building confidence and self-esteem.

# HUMANIZING THE OTHER

"Sports or co-curriculum activities are a positive outlet for youths as it fosters teamwork, social and leadership skills and promotes goal setting and instills a sense of identity and belonging. Sports also creates opportunities to address other factors that may lead to violent extremists such as health and safety, gender disparities and conflict resolution in a setting where learning is interactive and viewed as fun."
- Timothy Ilu Ngao, 28, Kenya

Sports enriches collective relationships through the adoption of democratic behavior and teamwork and encourages intergroup relationships (Fernandez Gavira, 2007). They foster values such as teamwork, leadership, and goal setting. While many PVE interventions employ intergroup contact, leveraging team sports is one of the most effective ways to provide a diverse group of individuals with a reason to collaborate towards a shared goal and to celebrate shared successes.

Sports programs are also uniquely valuable in the longevity of their appeal. The development of empathy and mindfulness is a slow process that must be reinforced over time. Embedding PVE in formal institutions is instrumental to the effort, but these measures will not provide the continuous availability of interaction, particularly not in a form as appealing as a football game or cricket match.

Sports provide a forum in which young people can develop important emotional skills through an exercise that feels like pure recreation.

*"Sports activities are key in developing children abilities to prevent violent extremism.  For example, in our schools, we encourage frisbee, as it gives students opportunities to solve conflicts in the game without the interruptions of the referee. I believe this game develops the habit of*

*solving argument without using violence."*

Stephen Katende, 26, Uganda

The facility for conflict resolution, identified by Youth Contributor Stephen Katende, is especially important in communities or societies that have populations of diverse or divided ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Sports allow young people to resolve issues in the course of the game -- issues that they are less likely to be associated with intrinsic elements of their identity or attribute to their inherent differences. When young people resolve a conflict on the court or field, they realize their capacity to reach solutions. This may seem trivial in the context of a game. But resolving a disagreement is an emotional exercise that demands communication, mutual understanding, and compromise. Providing young people with safe places in which to practices these skills encourages the emotional competence they will need to handle conflicts with higher stakes ■

# CASE STUDY:

## *Football for Peace in Somalia*

ool, Sanaag and Mudug are disputed regions in Somalia between the self-declared state of Somaliland and the Puntland region of Somalia. This long-standing conflict has exacerbated the divisions between local communities and led to political and clan conflicts. To give young people in the regions an opportunity to build peace by engaging in community integration activities and dialogue, the Football for Peace tournament was designed. The tournaments include hundreds of participants from diverse communities of these areas and from 3,500 to 4,500 community representatives, including women, traditional chiefs, elders, authorities, and local media. The youth of the conflicting clans are mixed to form one team. The project showed to these young people what a healthy engagement with others is and how they can coexist without conflict.

Since the project started in 2015 as the first regional youth activities, it has allowed youth from diverse districts of the region to meet and compete in a peaceful way. They also attracted the attention of thousands of young Somalian people in other regions of the country ∎

Football for Peace takes a two-pronged approach to breaking down barriers and strengthening communities. The first strategy is to assemble a team of young people from different clans, providing a low-stakes opportunity for different groups to work towards a shared goal. The second aspect of the program is the inclusivity of game, which invites all community members, including women, officials, and elders, to participate. This can further validate working cooperatively with other groups, demonstrating to young people that even adult members in their community can have positive interactions with different clans.

## E-SPORTS

Although most sports take place on a field or court, as the internet assumes an increasingly important role in the activities of young people, the popularity of e-sports has increased as well. E-sports are worldwide video gaming competitions, and they provide an opportunity for relationship building in their own right.

Although video games are often stigmatized due to their strong emphasis on violence, many e-games foster collaboration rather than confrontation. E-sports are a good resource for promoting and forging virtual relationships between communities in conflict. They foster dialogue and collaboration among people who might never have the opportunity to interact in person.

As a PVE strategy, e-sports are still a relatively untapped resource. This is bound to change sooner rather than later: imagine an international gaming championship for peace, or a PVE electronic sports world cup. By taking advantage of all aspects of sports culture, including e-sports, cultures, and communities can find new and innovative ways to engage young people, maintain interest, and connect disparate groups.

## ENGAGEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY THROUGH SPORTS

Intergroup contact, while an excellent objective of a sports program, need not be the primary focus of every sports clubs or initiative that works towards the prevention of violent extremism. Sports also serve as a medium of engagement for young people who lack employment opportunities or have dropped out of school. Participation in sports provides young people with a sense of inclusion and purpose, reducing isolation from the larger community.

In some cases, such as the Africa Yoga Project case study below, sports programs can provide young people with employment opportunities that communities otherwise struggle to provide ■

## CASE STUDY:

### *Africa Yoga Project*

**T**he mission of the Africa Yoga Project is to educate, empower, elevate and expand employability of youth in Africa using the transformational practice of yoga. The project creates opportunities for youth to become self-sustaining leaders in their communities.

Catherine Njeri, a graduate of the AYP program, grew up in a Kenyan slum. Her father had left, and her mother's alcoholism left the burden of caring for younger children on Catherine. She became inured to a world of police brutality, daily violence, and crime.

*"At a young age, I was responsible for a lot of things; my dad was not around, my mom was unemployed, I was taking care of my whole family of five. We were living in one small house made of iron sheets. We had no running water, no bathroom, and no electricity, and I was afraid of crime in the area. I was responsible for the getting the money to feed us. In 2007 I went to my first yoga class, Paige was teaching girls in the slums. I learned that I had the power to be independent, the power to change my life.*

*"Now I am a fully certified level 3 Baptiste yoga teacher; I support my daughter, I have a salary, I'm so happy about my life. My dream is to help other women and girls in Kenya to access the same power and have the ability to shape their destiny."*

*Her training as a yoga instructor changed not only her employment opportunities, it changed what she believed about the future of her country and her vision of the world her fellow countrywomen can create. "I have this vision for Kenya, and I know it is not a dream, it's a reality. It's a place where women, no matter where they come from, can feel free, powerful, strong and in control of their future and their health. I believe that yoga can make this happen. And me and girls of AYP, we are going to make this happen!"*

The program believes that growth comes naturally when beneficiaries themselves are allowed to lead. Teachers return to their communities as leaders, someone to look up to. They carry a message that "if she can, maybe I can too!" And there is a clear path to follow ■

The employment opportunities provided by the Africa Yoga Project foster a sense of purpose and achievement with tangible financial benefit. The program broadens the scope of opportunities available to young people who complete the training, affording them greater ability to make constructive choices for themselves and their families.

AYP also uses a sport with a unique relationship to identity. Yoga began as a physical, mental, and spiritual practice in India (Basavaraddi, 2015), but has been widely and controversially repurposed following its introduction in the West as a fashionable and expensive form of exercise. Africa and Asia are home to countless yoga retreats and teacher training workshops predominantly attended by Western women. By training young people from Kenyan slums to master and profit from this repurposed form of yoga, AYP has captured part of an economy that is largely reserved for well-off expats in Kenya and delivered the benefits to some of the country's poorest citizens. This process dismantles some of the "othering" perpetuated by restricting access to yoga to only those with significant means.

## Sports and Self Esteem

In addition to building stronger communities, sports provide benefits to the individual (Aspen Institute, 2015), including improved self-esteem, leadership skills, greater academic achievement, and longer attention span. Such advantages improve the resiliency of young people and increase the probability that they will better handle challenges, rebound more quickly from disappointments, and maintain a healthy sense of community engagement ∎

# CASE STUDY:

## Yoga Morning@ Vladivostok Community Project, Russia

*The idea of the project was born out of the Youth School on Community Project Management, organized by the Department of Youth of the City of Vladivostok (Russia) in May 2014. It started with a simple idea of bringing peace to people, helping them to relieve stress, and promoting a healthy lifestyle through the practice of yoga and meditation by the sea.*

*In Russia, yoga for a long time has been perceived by many as a cult rather than a tool which brings peace, cohesion, and mindfulness to minds and strengths to bodies. As someone who had been practicing yoga for a while, I knew what benefits yoga and meditation can bring to people who practice it regularly. For me, it was clear, that in a country where a few have so much, and many have so little, it was fundamental to give people from different socioeconomic backgrounds an opportunity to practice yoga for free under the supervision of qualified instructors and make the practice attractive to people of different ages and genders. Thus, engaging with all aspects of the community was essential. The principle of accessibility (free of charge practices) was at the core of the project: it was not a business, it was (and always be) a project for the community. This is how it all started.*

*The project has been running for four years now, and it has constantly been growing and developing, providing more and more citizens with an opportunity to release stress and anxiety through yoga.*

*On the weekends, from June till late September community members get together early in the morning to practice yoga by the seaside. The practice forges new friendships which otherwise might not have been made, thereby strengthening ties within the community. Everyone is welcome; there are no boundaries or limitations.*

*Our audience is diverse: people who have been practicing yoga for a few decades and those who come to try yoga for the very first time in their life, people of different genders and from various backgrounds.*

*Additionally, at the end of every open-air yoga season (summers in Russia are quite short) we organize family festivals. We try not only to promote a healthy lifestyle, but to educate and organize activities for people of various genders, ages, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to promote equality, dialogue, and human rights. This year we celebrate the end of the season with yoga and meditation sessions, art workshops for children, healthy food and drinks.*

*In 2018 we will be celebrating five summer seasons since the project was founded. We look forward to the new season as we are positive that it will bring more people who wish to practice yoga and meditation, new teachers who want to contribute to join the yoga movement by the sea thus contributing to the community, and new partners (from both private and public sectors) to help the project develop and grow.*

*We plan to celebrate our 5th anniversary with the yoga retreat by the sea – listening to the waves, breathing in the fresh air, and breathing out the stress and anxiety. For us, yoga is more than just a practice; it is a way of living.*

Elena Killiakova, 27, Russia/Australia

Elena's yoga initiative brings together a diverse group of people to forge friendships and provide a sense of belonging. It also focuses on the specific benefits of the sport for the individual: lower stress levels, greater attention span, and lower levels of depression. The project is designed to be easily accessible for groups typically excluded from such activities for financial reasons. It is also easy to participate without a long-term commitment. Initiatives that include this feature are critical to creating a PVE culture. Participating in a yoga session is a simple, straightforward activity from which young people will receive an instant sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Sports programs that function on a drop-in basis turn healthy choices into easy choices.

## ROLE MODELS

Direct practice is not the only means by which sports can improve the emotional and psychological well-being of young people. Popular athletes, whether world-renown or local, serve as role models who help young people imagine positive futures for themselves. Respected leaders and icons, particularly those at the local community level, can have significant leverage and influence over at-risk youth. Community-based PVE initiatives should recruit sports role models when possible to improve their reach, their relevance to young people, and their impact.

*"Together for Peace"*

*I heard people in my village narrating about frequent late-night raids of police, police attacks targeting youth, corruption in the panchayat, trafficking of girls and supply of dadans. What shocked me more was the missing of young boys and girls from the village and joining banned extremist outfits.*

*I decided to stay and work in my village. I opened a non-government skill development centre for young boys and girls to find them employment opportunities. I took the help of the local legislature to convert the village playground into a hockey ground where other sports like football, kabaddi, and cricket could as well be played. Girls were also encouraged to play football, hockey, cricket, and kabaddi. In spite of resistance from their families, girls joined different sports when awareness was created through film shows about girls playing hockey, football, and cricket and winning matches and making careers also. I invited friends to train our young boys and girls on physical fitness and sports. That created wonder. Our playground became full of life both in the morning and in the afternoon. The village teams including that of girls played and owned tournaments.*

*Faith or caste-based conflict no more exists among the new generation of youth. They understand the role of each as a team to win a tournament.*

(The story is written by Saurian Dash, Youth Coordinator, SRADHA_India. The protagonist wishes to remain anonymous.)

This anonymous Youth Contributor used sports to address the factors that lead youth to violence and extremism in his village. Such initiatives provide engagement opportunities, structure, and a sense of purpose to young people who may have limited means of community support. By encouraging the participation of girls, this initiative also challenges some of the conventions that promote gender discrimination and gender-based violence. When these gender stereotypes are shattered, young women enjoy better opportunities and greater respect, and young men develop healthier attitudes towards groups often demonized and disrespected ∎

> Faith or caste-based conflict no more exists among the new generation of youth. They understand the role of each as a team to win a tournament.

# VOLUNTEERING & SERVICE LEARNING

"Youth should participate in educating, building skills, and assist vulnerable youth with developing strong social and emotional well-being which are essential components to preventing violent extremism. Youth should have the mindset to become a strong social force to promote peace and combat political and religious radicalization."
- Shougat Naxbin Khan, 28, Bangladesh

Volunteering and service learning projects encourage skill development, empowerment, and civic engagement of young people. Projects should respond to community needs and should engage the insight and participation of the young people who volunteer to work on them. This process supports the growth of stronger communities and empowers young people while building professional skills and community resilience (Smith et al., 2010). As Youth Contributor Anesa Colakovic says:

*"Youth work and volunteering opportunities in young age can enhance the creative and innovative capacities of young people in ways to create a drive for positive change."*
Anesa Colakovic, 27, Serbia

Effective volunteer and service learning projects empower young people by engaging their skills to deliver lasting benefit to the community. Potential benefits of these programs include the development of civic engagement, opportunities to form new friendships through service, and lasting contributions to the initiative or project the young person serves. These programs also create

opportunities for different generations to work together towards a common goal (Latham, n/d).

Youth Contributor Stephen Machua identifies the opportunity that volunteering presents to engage the demographic dividend[18], in constructive and structured projects. This is particularly important in countries that have struggled to find opportunities for their demographic dividend. While a large employment-aged population can deliver great economic benefit, if the infrastructure to provide job and educational opportunities are missing, this same population can pose a greater risk of instability and violence.

*"Volunteerism is a unique skill that every young person should have. It builds patience, commitment and the much needed "Heart for Humanity." The demographic dividend amongst youth population should actively contribute to the social, economic and political development of different communities globally. This will reduce the number of frustrations experienced. Being a driver of positive change requires composure which is often gained through exposure to realities of the world. Youth have a chance to build a strong character whether a support system exists or not if they are quite aware of their potentials."*
Stephen Machua, 27, Kenya

Young people who volunteer on a regular basis are fifty percent less likely to engage in any destructive behavior such as substance abuse (Latham, n/d). They demonstrate improved mental health, exhibiting reduced stress and depression and greater sense of purpose (Segal & Robinson, 2017). Regular volunteers are more likely to feel happy about their own lives (Harvard Health Publishing, 2014), as our Youth Contributor from Canada reflects below:

*"I know someone who is optimistic about the world, despite what's happening. That person told me they are going to change the world, one action at a time. Now I think the world is only the way we shape it."*
Youth Contributor, 19, Canada

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[18] A demographic dividend occurs when a country has a disproportionately large youth population. In many cases, it is considered an economic advantage because the majority of the citizenry can participate in the labor force

# CASE STUDY:

## *Engaging Youth in Volunteering*

After completing my degree in development studies, I applied for the position of project supervisor in Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Pakistan's project, Pakistan Youth Initiative (PYI). The core themes of this project were peacebuilding, social cohesion, and active citizenship. I was offered the position titled as National Volunteer (NV)-Project Supervisor. My first job was to recruit youth volunteers. In total I along with the team recruited 59 youth volunteers for two exchange visit cycles between Islamabad/Rawalpindi and Multan. The youth hailed from the cities of Islamabad/Rawalpindi and Multan. After the recruitment, the youth volunteer underwent two 10-days detailed training on active citizenship, understanding conflicts and enhancement of leadership skills. At the end of each training, we supported the participants in designing and implementing 16 social action plans based on education, resolving conflicts, awareness raising, combating gender-based violence and marginalization and promoting peaceful norms to prevent extremism. During the two years period, a total of 16 action plans were implemented, 8 in each cycle and each region, i.e., two regions, Islamabad/Rawalpindi and Multan.

The results achieved are sustainable, and the youth, as well as VSO, received widespread recognition for this unique initiative. Some examples are listed as follows.

■ One action plan titled as "Peace has no religion" was implemented in Islamabad, Pakistan. The youth volunteers in collaboration with the local community's influential designed and implemented action plan to reduce the ethnic tension and promote social cohesion. It has provided the opportunity to uncover the positive things that could be mutually agreed between Muslims and Christians community.

■ The participants identified a local practice of committing violence against women of their families. The women had faced from minor to life-threatening violent acts in the communities nearby, where numerous disputes at the community level go unnoticed. The youths held focus group

discussions with communities, women, and men to explore more. They then held meetings with local youths (boys and girls) and launched a radio campaign against gender-based violence issues.

■ Establishment of peace committees and the reach out of radio shows to a greater number of indirect primary actors were results achieved through the project which shows community ownerships as these peace committees are still operational. Using the platform of the peace committee the community members meet regularly and resolve issues and conflicts from minor level to life large life scale threatening scale.

*While implementing all social action plans based on the themes of peacebuilding and social cohesion, I could feel a change, not on a larger scale but a start. I can vouch for my word that the change we brought with our volunteers in our community is here to stay. The change is sustainable, but this is not the end. I will work until the day I make this place, my community, free from violent behavior.*
Alina Sarfraz, 25, Pakistan ■

Alina's experience engaging young people resulted in community-tailored peacebuilding projects that responded to local needs. Her work supports young people in analyzing and improving their communities, skills that require open-mindedness, critical thought, and community engagement. Alina's voice also evidences the sense of purpose that volunteering can provide. Bearing witness to the positive effects of this volunteer program inspired her lifelong commitment to her community. When young people feel truly empowered to realize positive change for themselves, their friends, and their families

Volunteer and service learning programs can forge a direct link between a young person's skills and the community they want to shape. But these experiences can also backfire: a volunteer or exchange experience can entrench a person's assumption of differences between groups, exacerbate inequality, and promote "othering." Poorly executed exchanges can reinforce perceived differences, placing the volunteer group in a position of superiority, such as delivering aid, instruction, or assistance to a presumably lesser, needy group of recipients.

This is detrimental to both groups and will usually fail to build meaningful and transformative connections between them, no matter how much time they spend together. If interaction only occurs in the context of inequality, it is unlikely to dismantle the very inequality on which it depends.

This inequality can also be exacerbated by volunteer opportunities, as they are afforded only to those who can work without pay (and in many cases, to those who can pay a placement fee for the experience of working without pay) (Smith et al., 2010). Volunteer experiences bolster resumes and school applications, setting volunteers apart from their peers who spend their time on less glamorous exercises such as part-time jobs. A young person who volunteers in a foreign country for a summer can easily internalize the notion that her contribution is of unique and inherent value to "outsiders." This sense of innate superiority will only grow if, upon her return to her home country, she receives academic or employment opportunities denied to her less-fortunate peers who worked mundane summer jobs ■

# KEY
# LEARNINGS

- Values central to PVE: critical emotional development, empathy, compassion, and others, cannot be taught, but experienced and learned from the lens of the person who holds beliefs different from others

- Formal education can have limited effectiveness in preventing violent extremism when it overlooks how individuals think and what they feel

- Informal and nonformal educational initiatives complement formal education. They do not instruct in values and beliefs but engage young people in dynamic interactions and exchanges. Such inter-group interactions organically broaden youth's understandings of other belief systems and help confront prejudices and assumptions. Interactions should be ongoing and dynamic to provide opportunity for gradual social, emotional, and intellectual development of a person - no single experience can do that

- Arts, sports, and community volunteering opportunities provide opportunities for interaction. These activities create space for dialogue and collaboration: being exposed to the "other" helps us accept this individual, a human being, over ideology.

- Such interactions are not supposed to make young people agree with each other. They intend to examine beliefs, explore commonalities, and understand differences

- Art is powerful resource to give voice to young people express themselves and share their world; it gives them pride in their identity and heritage and helps communicate difficult emotions

- Sports promote intergroup cooperation and unity and help learn to resolve disagreements

- Participation in community volunteering provides an individual with a sense of inclusion and purpose, while also benefiting the wider community

# INFORMAL INFLUENCERS

**Y**oung people are not only shaped by activities they participate in and ideas they are exposed to but also by the people they respect and admire. Friends, family, and community and religious leaders impact what they believe, how they relate to the world and others, and how resilient they are. Such figures are often presumed to be the front line actors against radicalization and violent extremist ideologies. They often face enormous pressure to recognize worrying signs of radicalization or extremist tendencies and intervene to prevent their growth. But as Youth Youth Contributor comments, communities often fail to see signs and prevent violence.

*"His friends and family should have noticed something." This is a phrase we often hear after news reports about teenage boys who suddenly decided to escape their happy homes in Germany and join the Islamic State in Syria. Close people cannot always prevent someone from becoming an extremist. In today's world, parents, teachers or friends can't always control what media and messages someone consumes on the smartphone or which people someone communicates with."*
Youth Contributor, 29, Germany

A young person's loved ones may not always understand what is happening, what they can do, or who they can ask for help. As stakeholders in preventing violent extremism, we must create systems and outreach strategies to empower families, friends, and leaders to understand what to look for and to know how to respond.
We can also promote dialogue and openness even in the absence of warning signs. We can provide information and guidance to support families in discussing violence, isolation, and extremism with their children as a way to destigmatize these issues. In the case study below, both the authors, the young founders of an online PVE initiative covered in detail on page 283-284, and the mother of a young man recruited by ISIS reflect on the limited resources available in answering questions and acquiring a deeper understanding of risks.

**T**here is no comparison to the effect one feels in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. You grow up with your family, friends, and community; the pain of watching one being hurt is like none other. In 2013, our community was shaken by the Boston Marathon Bombings. I can recall sitting at home, watching the events unfold piece by piece, waiting for the next explosion. The questions I had were endless. From why to how, I realized that my mother did not have the answers to the questions I asked, and it was the first time that I had confronted this. I attempted to ask these same questions in school the next day and yet again, no answers.

It is with this background in mind that we created Operation250 (Op250). Many American schools below University level have yet to integrate terrorism into their curriculum, and during the process of creating Op250, we spoke to teachers, principals, and school superintendents, who all said they felt like they didn't have any answers about terrorism- it was all just "too complex." Because of this, many kids are going into the depths of the internet to get answers to questions that their parents and teachers may not have. The problem is larger than just ignorance about terrorism, but online safety as well.

Christianne Boudreau is an advocate and practitioner of PVE who works diligently to prevent more children from becoming like her son Damian, who was radicalized in their home of Calgary Canada and died fighting for ISIS in 2014.

In the early stages of developing Op250, we had the opportunity to sit down with Christianne. She described to us the details of Damian's radicalization - his seeking of a purpose, his desire to change the state of the world, an innate intelligence that made it very difficult for him to understand why world leaders could make such poor decisions. She said it was a transition in his life that made him so vulnerable, a gap that left him feeling. Christianne said she saw the changes in her son, the slow removal from family life, a change in friends, conversion to Islam, all things that could signal potential

> I realized that my mother did not have the answers to the questions I asked, and it was the first time that I had confronted this

radicalization, but she didn't have the knowledge to understand the severity of the situation.

We asked her what she thought could have made a difference, or what could make a difference going forward. She said, for her personally, she needed someone to listen to her, to validate her fears and recognize that there was a legitimate issue. She also needed a basic awareness. She didn't know about radicalization until two police officers knocked on her door to say her son wasn't studying abroad in Egypt but rather fighting for a terrorist group in Syria.

Christianne also mentioned an unparalleled need to begin teaching critical thinking and online safety to children beginning at a young age. In her opinion, child safety locks and looking over their shoulders 24/7 will not keep them safe down the road. Hiding the truth only makes them more curious and unprepared to digest reality when they come face to face with it. Moreover, she said she felt that there's pressing need to address an absence of education surrounding radicalization and violent extremism.

(Nicolette San Clemente, Tyler Cote, Danielle Thibodeau, Jaime Keenan, Jonas Pierribia and Neil Shortland, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Center for Terrorism and Security Studies, USA)

Christianne's reflections underscore the need for policymakers to develop support structures that reach communities before there is a problem. Normalizing conversations about issues such as isolation, extremism, and social inclusion can help communities understand warning signs when they do arise. It can build stronger networks of informed peers and family members who are more likely to notice and be better prepared to intervene. Finally, it can increase the likelihood that young people will find validation and support before radicalization progresses.

Christianne encourages engagement over avoidance. Building effective preventative infrastructure means we must address the barriers many communities face, including both an unwillingness and an inability to discuss issues of violent extremism.

# FAMILIES AND GUARDIANS

"Families are the first line of defense in keeping youth safe from violent extremism. In fact, many of the most fruitful and positive leads reported to authorities have come from concerned family members or community leaders."
- Balungwe Sylvette, 27, D.R. Congo

Families and guardians are more important actors than peers in recognizing behavior that may indicate a growing tendency towards violence (Cragin et al., 2015). Unfortunately, they are often not equipped with proper knowledge, skills, and tools to recognize and respond to signs of radicalization and violent extremism. To engage families in PVE efforts, governments must invest safe and confidential support programs that earn the trust of concerned parents and guardians. See recommendations at the end of the chapter for more specifics on this.

Families and guardians may not understand what identity and belonging issues their children face. They may find it difficult to help them identify and address vulnerabilities, particularly if they are unfamiliar with the signs and push and pull factors that drive violent extremist behavior. They may be uncomfortable or feel ill-equipped to discuss difficult topics related to violent extremism, such as the causes of extremist ideologies or the reasons someone would join a violent extremist group.

To better support families, governments and policymakers should provide information on what to look for and how to have open conversations with children about these issues. Schools can support this effort by providing material to all parents and guardians, and encourage everyone to engage in open conversations. This will reduce some of the suspicion and mistrust that develops if parents feel their child has been singled out. The inclusion of all young people and their families will support a stronger PVE culture that promotes open discussion about issues such as belonging, identity, and social support.

As much as it is necessary to educate families and guardians and provide help to them to address any issues at home, their role should not be limited to identification of signs of violence or exclusion, or discussion of violent extremism and its ideologies. Families and guardians need to understand how they - as bearers of particular mindsets and beliefs - shape their children's attitudes and behavior. As Youth Contributor Amber Rafique Awan reflects:

*"Should also train parents to curb homegrown violence and to create peaceful environment, as education starts from home and child do what they see."*
Amber Rafique Awan, 32, Pakistan

Families and guardians may be part of the problem especially "when the parent-child relationship does not exist or is difficult" (Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCF), 2015). In case of broken or estranged relationship, families have a limited influence on their children's decision-making. Some families may not be able to provide a safe environment for their dependents where non-violent beliefs and behaviours can be developed organically. This is often the case when young people experience violence at home, for example. Families and guardians that are supportive of violent extremist groups and actions "provide an enabling environment for young people to join extremist groups, either decisively or unknowingly" (Veenkamp & Zeiger, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that men and women may have different roles in young people's lives. Mothers "are often best-placed to identify, predict, and respond to potential vulnerabilities" young people may have towards violent extremist (GCF, 2015). Women are also central to offering meaningful counter-narratives: they can humanize the victims of terrorist attacks and discuss the hardships a family of a recruit may experience (GCF, 2015).

Male figures play a prominent role in shaping young people's perceptions of masculinity. Notions of masculinity are often abused, manipulated, and militarized by violent extremist groups (GCF, 2015). The role of men should then be countering these notions and shifting the narrative from violent masculinity to "culturally-relevant, non-violent values of protection of, and provision for, family" (GCF, 2015) ■

I WISH MY PARENTS..

- Was more flexible.

- Paid more attention.

- Were together.

- Were good and caring parents.

- Gave the internet a chance.

- Were healthy.

- Allowed and understood their sons or daughters interest to learn if no financial problems.

- Participated in children education sector for their development.

- Believed what I say than what the others are saying

- Were less parent-ish.

- Made me understand from a young age that we are all the same.

- Had let me play with toy cars or watch my dad fix things in the garage. They always assumed I wouldn't be interested because I was a girl, even when I expressed interest. I also wish my mother hadn't brought me up on stories of rape and the dangers of men and boys. I wish I could have had male friends as a child without being mocked by my parents for having a "boyfriend." I wish kids could just be kids without having to follow strict gender roles before they're old enough to care what gender even means.

- Had the willingness to know more about what I love and what interests me.

- Had introduced me to volunteering since I was five years old

- Spared more time to teach me other things other than doing my homework that I was given from time to time by the teachers.

- Were lawyers.

- Were open-minded and had a chance to get exposure to different cultures.

- Were perfect.

- Were well educated.

- Were more involved.

- Were less overprotective and let me experience the world more.

- Never stopped the current supportive motivation to me to gain education and achieve my dreams.

# FRIENDS AND PEERS

*"A key attitude is to be able to build healthy relationships and friendships, that are non-manipulative, non-abusive, and in line with the good values of peace, and consistent with one's overall vision for the world."*

*- Dexter Sam, 31, India*

Building strong and positive bonds with other young people is an essential part of healthy growth and development. Friends provide social security and comfort and often understand frustrations better than families. Positive friendships provide safe space for young people to feel accepted, explore their interests and identities, foster social skills, and develop a sense of belonging (de Guzman, 2007). They can help mobilize a young person's energy for success and healthy behavior. As Youth Contributor Kiki succinctly explains, "Friendships teach you the real values of life."

Friendships do not always have positive influence, however. Some peer relationships may contribute to risk-taking behaviours. In-group competition for status among peers can push youth to adopt more extreme ideas and actions (Bartlett et al., 2010), especially if the status is "equated with defiance and violence" (Bartlett & Miller, 2011). In 2014, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Science found that "friendships are more decisive in recruiting" young people than terrorist propaganda simply because young people may want to be with their friends who are already part of violent extremist groups (McVeigh, 2014).

An individual's path to violent extremism depends on a number of push and pull factors acting together. Peer relationships influence how young people perceive and respond to these factors. Those who feel alienated or isolated by their peers are more vulnerable to exploitation by groups that promise inclusion and acceptance (Focus Adolescent Services,n/d).

"Being in a class once where there were at least ten nationalities in a 20 pupil class [changed the way I think]. I can say that you don't know somebody unless you start talking to that person. So everything starts with communication; thus students should be encouraged to gain friendship with everyone not just have a specific peer group."
- Kiki, 34, Indonesia

"Young persons taking up the challenge of building a peaceful world must be open minded with large hearts and able to learn and unlearn from peers."
- Abubakar Ibrahim Banaru, 31, Nigeria

## RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Religious leaders have unique influence in how young people develop their sense of identity and belonging. Much like guardians and parents, these leaders often command more reverence than a young person's peers. But often young people will also find these leaders easier to approach with difficult issues and questions than they find their families.

Religious leaders can be powerful influences in how resilient young people are to manipulations of their faith by violent extremists. In many communities, only religious leaders will have the authority and legitimacy to dismantle such manipulations. They can amplify the religious values and ideals on which most faiths are based, such as the Golden Rule, justice, compassion, service, humility, and humanity. Religious leaders and their institutions provide consistent guidance in the moral and ethical goals to which community members should aspire. They assume as their duty a regular communication, through sermons, lectures, and conferences, to remind people to strive to be good, helpful, forgiving, and generous.

Most religions and religious leaders strive to regulate and minimize violence. Religious violent extremism exists at the far edges of religions, and religious leaders are best placed to strengthen and promote teachings of their faith that honor values such as peace, empathy, and mindfulness. They can offer counter-narratives (Bhulai, Fink, & Zeiger, 2014) and when needed they can "directly address the religious dimensions of violence and conflict," something that governments and other actors in the community are often not knowledgeable enough to do (Mandaville & Nozell, 2017, p. 3). Youth Contributor Olanipekun Caleb Ibukun suggests that religious schools and leaders provide more resources for the education one receives about one's religion:

*"For parochial schools, allowing students access to translated religious texts would help deepen the understanding of their religion and empower them to challenge extremist narratives that use religious rhetoric to justify violence. Extremist like Boko Haram was able to find justification for their actions in the Quran by thwarting the right interpretation of the Quran, vis-à-vis the Jihad war. Religious leaders need to educate the youths in what the Quran says about Jihad. This should not be limited to teachings in the mosque, but also the Islamic education (Islamic schools) activities should be monitored by trusted groups and report any case of content delivered that may lead to Violent Extremism and gender-targeted violence. Seminars and public lectures can also be used as a formal approach, to show their stand against violence."*
Olanipekun Caleb Ibukun, 27, Nigeria

Olanipekun suggests two strategies to prevent violent extremism: one is to engage religious leaders in efforts to teach peaceful interpretations of their religious texts, and the other is to monitor the teachings of religious schools. Monitoring can infringe upon the freedoms and rights of groups and demonize them in the eyes of the greater community. But the engagement of religious leaders, if given broad support, could build resiliency even in young people who encounter extremist propaganda in schools. In Morocco, Soufiane states that,

*"Religion is always taken as part of the problem, but we need to look at it as part of the solution and engage with religious leaders to stop the spread of violent extremism."*
Soufiane El Hamdi, 27, Morocco

From Youth Contributor Bhagya Wijayawardane, we hear a call for religious leaders to extend their reach beyond their followers and develop broader relationships their communities.

*"Religious leaders should be united and connected with the community to a larger extent. Their work should be linked to the community as a whole."*
Bhagya Wijayawardane, 28, Sri Lanka

Religious leaders have often risked their reputation and safety to promote understanding and peace. Catholic Bishop Munoz protected 2,000 Muslim refugees during the Central African Republic massacres of Muslims and Christians that began in 2013. For his actions, Munoz states that *"For us, there's no such thing as a Muslim person or a Christian person, everyone is a human being. We need to protect those who are vulnerable"* (LaCroix International, 2017).

This recognition of humanity above religion is, in fact, a key principle of most faiths. Below, an Imam reflects on the power and responsibility of religious leaders in cultivating this respect for human life and dignity ■

# CASE STUDY:

## *Interview with an Imam*

**T**he following interview was conducted by Alice Chan,** a religious literacy graduate student in Canada, with a local imam in her community.

**What role do religious leaders play in preventing violent extremism?**

*Religious leaders speak to the heart of people's decision-making and identities. It is the faith leaders who set the parameters of acceptable behavior, who can initiate the transition from conflict to cooperation. Religious leaders not only have authority, but they also have access, and this is crucial. If violent extremism is to be tackled effectively, it must be challenged on all fronts.*

*Religious leaders have access to all ages and all social levels. Religious leaders have the authority to speak into existing conflicts and divisions. Through their presence, they have unrivaled access across boundaries of age, gender, geography, education. And they have the capacity and vocation for action. To engage with religious leaders, of course, requires theological and cultural sensitivity. But the possibilities when we do so are transformative and offer authentic hope.*

**What groups should religious leaders strike to address in their PVE efforts?**

*Engaging youth is crucial to efforts to preventing violent extremism. Too many young people from all over the world are still recruited by terrorist organizations, this means that we have a lot more to do to reach out to youth and listen to what they have to say in order to rally them to the cause of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as peace, security, and co-operation.*

Unity is not conformity of thought, unity is conformity of the heart where we understand that we each are different in our understandings, in our orientations, in our ideologies, in our methodologies, but at the end of the day, we are serving one humanity.

**What advice would you give other religious leaders in engaging in discussions about preventing violent extremism?**

*One of the fundamental objectives of faith beliefs is to unite the people. A lot of people think that unity is about conformity of thought. Unity is not conformity of thought, unity is conformity of the heart where we understand that we each are different in our understandings, in our orientations, in our ideologies, in our methodologies, but at the end of the day, we are serving one humanity.*

*Faith leaders must work together in preventing extremism as it affects us all. We cannot allow the common enemy of humanity, the devil, to divide and conquer.*

*When it comes to not being divided, we need to keep in mind an Arabic proverb about the three bulls. It has a famous tagline "I was eaten the day that the White Bull was eaten." Here's the story.*

*There was a Red Bull, a Black Bull, and a White Bull. A lion tries to attack them every so often, but the lion is unsuccessful because the three bulls are united. Until eventually the lion becomes clever one day and he speaks to the Red Bull and the Black Bull and says "I promise to leave you alone if you let me eat the White Bull." The Red Bull and the Black Bull agree, and the lion devours the White Bull. Then the lion gets hungry again, he goes to Black Bull, and he says "I promise to leave you alone, just let me eat the Red Bull." The Black Bull agrees, and the Red Bull is eaten. Then the lion comes back and is going to eat the Black Bull. So the Black Bull says to him "I was eaten the day that the White Bull was eaten."*

Imam in Toronto, Canada

# CASE STUDY:

## *Changing the Radical Narrative around Islam*

*A*s a young boy growing up in Delhi, I lived a comfortable, middle-class existence. My father was an IRS officer whose beliefs swung from atheism to communism to Sufism while leaving the family to develop their own beliefs. I grew up removed from the religion I was born into—Islam—and my only interaction with other Muslims would be from my extended family.

*In college, I began to find connections between science, which I loved, and Islam. Because of this, my interest in the Quran grew rapidly, and a strong belief in God developed. While on the one hand, I was getting more interested in the religion, on the other, I relied heavily on the interpretations of clerics and extremists muslim leaders to explain what Islam stood for. Increasingly, I was exposed to radical and extremist Muslim thought leaders that enforced only one interpretation of Quranic verses, and heavily discouraged independent Quran study or questioning. I not only imbibed this definition of Islam, but also leveraged my natural inclination towards public speaking to hold informal talks in my college communities about the "truth" of Islam. And, I slowly started distancing myself from anything that seemed 'un-Islamic.'*

*A significant inflection point in my journey came when one of my other natural inclinations, research, and reflection, began conflicting with this approach to Islam. I began to pull away from my extremist teachers towards more progressive Islamic scholars like, who preached a more peaceful version of Islam. They went on to contradict my extreme positions and taught me the key lesson of how the same religious text could have multiple interpretations. Feeling betrayed by my former teachers, I now began to research and interpret the Quran for myself, often leveraging my former speaking spaces to introduce my new understanding of Islam.*

*I soon realised that to truly stem and change the tide of radical Islam within the Indian Muslim community, the country needed to open more spaces for youth like me to explore their relationship with Islam. I recognised that a majority of young Muslim people, who kept their religion front and center, were being*

*swayed by the prevalent extremist ideology. I recognised that I had to target the same communities and present an alternative, more accepting view of Islam to the youth.*

*A radical interpretation of Islam has been politically exploited by extremist and terror groups to spur Muslim youth to widespread violence and disruption. Leveraging the power of close study of the Quran, I am creating a network of empowered Muslim youth and clerics in India to challenge and change the current radical narrative around Islam, and replace it with a peaceful understanding of the religion that models overarching tolerance.*

Focusing often on the same texts often cited by currently prominent clerics as bases for violence, I model how a believing mind can discover more fundamental teachings of peace and inclusiveness.

*I am creating a new pattern among Islamic youth, scholars, and women, of personal exploration of the Quran as a foundation for being faithful Muslims and peaceful citizens of India. Focusing often on the same texts often cited by currently prominent clerics as bases for violence, I model how a believing mind can discover more fundamental teachings of peace and inclusiveness. The study takes place within a growing network of sustained relationships among students, teachers, clerics, and like-minded Muslims. I encourage dialogue within the community and with the true source of Islamic authority—the Quran.*

*My work shifts the relationship to authority, emphasizing the believer's responsibility to interpret the Quran. Rather than unquestioningly adopting the teachings of clerics, I constantly reinforce questioning for oneself the meaning and context of the text. This work disrupts a potent link between teaching that claims a mandate from the Quran for violent behavior against perceived injustice or immorality.*

*I work with non-religious citizen sector organizations, schools and Islamic centres to target Muslim youth and young ulemas (Islamic Teachers) and provide a supportive structure for them to study the Quran. Also, I am also cultivating a network of influential core group of 'preachers' who promote this alternative and harmonious version of Islam. Through my online and offline platforms, I am creating a path to approach Islam through critical thinking and open debate to understand the purpose of the religion. In doing so, I am building crucial, legitimate spaces to fulfill the demand for such reform within Islam.*

*In this manner, I believe that I can challenge the current power centres within Islam, promote an understanding of Islam that most Muslims believe in, stem the tide of extreme radicalisation in India and across the world, and pursue justice from a position of peace and nonviolence.*

Basit Jamal, India

Youth Contributor Basit Jamal recounts a journey in which different religious leaders manipulated his understanding of religion and empowered him to seek out his own religious conclusions. Ultimately it was the positive influence of these leaders that led to Basit's work to improve religious literacy among young people in his community, providing support and guidance to encourage them to seek out lessons of inclusion in their faith.

As governments and policymakers seek strategies for engaging religious communities in mobilizing for prevention of violent extremism for young people, they should pay close attention to how they can identify and empower young leaders like Basit. He invites young people to engage in critical thought that can guard against manipulation, encouraging young people of faith to form their own conclusions based on their own analysis. Young people cannot be spoon-fed peaceful religious narratives, but they can be empowered to seek out these narratives themselves.

Policymakers can support this by providing funding and opportunities for young people to be the ambassadors of their religion, sharing their learnings with others and participating in interfaith exchanges with youth from other faiths. Creating public, shared places for worship, highlighting and celebrating a variety of religious occasions, and investing in young people as religious voices are all strategies that governments can take to empower young people to become more reflective regarding their own beliefs and open regarding the beliefs of others ■

■ Families and guardians shape an individual: the environment they create at home teaches young people what is right and what is wrong and thus leads them to either engage in peaceful interaction or violent actions. Families and guardians are often ill-equipped to identify signs of radicalization and discuss violent extremism and all related topics (ideology, politics, media, curriculum, etc.). Families and guardians can be part of the problem: they may not have a relationship with their child, may have an unsafe environment at home, or may support violent extremist groups which normalizes them in the eyes of an individual

■ Depending on communities, female and male figures can have different roles in PVE and thus different support from policy-makers

■ Friends can provide stronger security and comfort, and mobilize young people for success and positive behavior. As friendships have a powerful presence in young people's lives, friends with negative risk-taking behavior can influence a young person to follow their lead, even to violent extremism. This happens when a young person doesn't have a strong support system to safeguard them from such influence

■ When families and friends fail to help an individual to belong or being accepted, religious and community leaders can play this role. Religious figures can do this through sharing of a peaceful understanding of a belief system, and a community leader can help to find a sense of belonging and inclusion. Relationships and engagement of these leaders with communities can differ, and it's important for policymakers to understand what their influence is

**PROVIDE RESOURCES TO FAMILIES AND CLOSE RELATIVES TO ADDRESS WARNING SIGNS IN YOUNG PEOPLE**

Parents and close relatives can be the first line of defense if they can see signs of radicalization or extremism. However many are not prepared to recognize the warning signs their children display. Even those that do see a problem are unlikely to take any action if they believe doing so would place their child at risk. To ensure adults feel comfortable using available resources, these resources must be designed as support systems, not investigative tools.

**Policy Makers**

▪ Operate a safe, anonymous helpline for families and close relatives, as well as concerned school professionals and teachers. This helpline should have three key features.

▪ Encourage action: Callers should receive advice on how to respond and should be oriented towards external resources that might be relevant for the identified situation. Encourage callers to take small, immediate action, such as speaking with the young person directly and seeking out opportunities to broaden the young person's social interactions. This will empower the caller and provide them with non-threatening action they can take to promote the health and safety of the person for whom they have concerns.

▪ Invest time in interactions with callers. Don't focus exclusively on the warning signs, but also learn about the interests and personality of the young person. This will help issue better recommendations of how to help and will impress on the caller that the young person is seen not as a threat or an enemy but as a complete individual who deserves protection and assistance.

▪ Build relationships with people who call and follow up if possible. Ensure that callers know they can receive follow up support and

resources from the helpline and that the young person is welcome to contact the helpline directly to speak with the respondent.

**Teachers:**

■ Maintain consistent communication with parents related to the content of school activities (not only to grades). Ensure parents have access to the themes, events, and projects in which their children are spending time. This will allow parents to connect with young people about what is happening at school and will help parents and teachers compare any warning signs or concerns.

**Families and Guardians:**

■ Pay attention to the content of your child's school experience, not only his academic performance. If you have concerns about his behavior, reach out to teachers to find out if they see the same signs at school. Talk to your child about friends, hobbies, and interests; ask questions about what he likes or dislikes in school. This will create continuity between his school and home life and can strengthen an overall sense of community security.

■ Show interest in your child's experiences both at school and outside. Pay attention to sudden behavioural changes that might concern you. Whether they are related to radicalization or not, these signs can indicate that your child could benefit from additional support from you and other adults.

**School administrators:**

■ Provide a system for teachers and parents to maintain contact, such as a website where teachers can share what themes and topics they are covering in class. This will allow parents to have a link to their child's classroom without demanding too much of the teacher's time.
■ Train and prepare teachers to respond to warning signs related to radicalization and extremism with concern for and attention to the health of the individual. Encourage them to see that these young people are in need of support. Teachers should not be trained to approach their students as threats or react to them from a place of fear.

**Policy Makers:**

■ Engage families and guardians in development of necessary resources to empower them to initiate difficult conversations. These resources need to be directly relevant to their contexts, shaping the dialogue around their role in preventing violent extremism, and developing community connections to support one another in

prevention of extremism. These tools might include critical literacy, diversity, and methods of activism (to prevent the frustration towards injustice that often fuels extremism in young people from being diverted to violence), as well as basic guides to discuss push and pull factors and look for any worrying signs.

■ Create and disseminate material on how the attitudes, behavior, and actions of families and guardians can contribute to a young person's estrangement, isolation, and violent thoughts and actions. Include small exercises that families can do, such as mindfulness and reflection exercises, which might help maintain a calmer and emotionally safe environment in a young person's home.
*See Resource 21. Centre for Prevention of Violent Radicalization Leading to Violence*

### NURTURE ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Involving young people in their communities provides a sense of empowerment, belonging, and collective identity. Community outreach and interaction develops a stronger sense of citizenship and promotes civic leadership. These are critical skills that young people can use to respond to challenges in constructive ways.

■ Teachers: Support students in researching a cause or organization that resonates with them. Ask them to prepare a list of actions that they can take to advocate for the cause or support the organization. Have students prepare their research to the class, advocating for their classmates to try one or two of the action points they have identified.
*See Resource: 24. Institute of Strategic Dialogue YouthCAN - Youth Innovation Labs*

■ Teachers: Have the class work as a group to identify a problem they see in the school community and propose a way solve it. Ask them to prepare small presentations to discuss the topics with the wider community.

■ Teachers and school administrators: Invite guest speakers to speak to students about what their role is in the wider community. They can be family members, religious and community leaders, or experts in different fields.

■ School administrators and teachers: Provide extra credit or grade weighting or other formalized incentives for students to volunteer.

■ School administrators: Identify issues or problems regarding the school that students might be able to help with. Seek out their input and proposals. Ask teachers to devote time to getting feedback from their students. Make sure that the issues you ask teachers to raise are issues that student feedback can truly influence. Even if the ideas or

recommendations are not implemented, share the decision-making process with teachers and students and let them see how their feedback factored into the choices and solutions.

■ Policy makers: Host a youth-only town hall. Work with schools to provide teachers an outline of how a town hall works so that students can prepare questions in advance.

■ Policy makers: Give young people the opportunity to share community research they have done, problems they have identified, and solutions they propose at town hall events. Ensure that local politicians also attend.

■ Policy makers: Recognize the achievements of young people who are implementing their own projects and initiatives. Provide grants, awards or technical assistance for youth-led initiatives.

## USE SPORTS TO BUILD COMMUNITY AND REDUCE ISOLATION BETWEEN GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Sports provides intergroup contact in which young people cooperate to work towards a shared goal and enjoy the experience of celebrating shared successes. Sports activities also create opportunities to resolve disputes in relatively low stakes environment, laying the foundation for young people to exercise conflict resolution skills in off-the-court encounters as well.

■ School administrators and policymakers: Set up sports tournaments between different schools and educational institutions with diverse populations. Invite non-student youth to participate. Mix the teams so students from different localities, schools, and backgrounds can play in one team. Invite families, community, and religious leaders, and other stakeholders to participate in the tournaments and support them. Focus on the topics of dialogue, conflict resolution, team building.
*See Resource: 26. Play by the rules - The Seven Pillars of Inclusion*

■ School administrators: Open school sports facilities to communities. Encourage weekend sports practices that would bring together students and their families.

■ School administrators: Identify sports that are played by members of your community or people in other countries that do not require financial resources. Learn the rules with your school and try to play some of such games, discussing with students and teachers the roots and the importance of that sport for a particular community. Invite members of the community to such events.

## ACCOMMODATE RELIGIOUS NEEDS AND DEVELOP RELIGIOUS LITERACY

In many societies, overlap between religion and state schools raises fraught and tense debate. But if possible in your context, incorporating religious literacy and accommodation into the school setting can be an excellent way to ensure young people are knowledgeable about different faiths and experienced in respecting those differences.

■ School administrators: Facilitate open dialogue on the limitations of the administration on accommodating different religious groups. Ask teachers to participant in this dialogue and to imagine the needs of all students in their classes. Are there students whose needs the school can't meet? If so, how can the school community still acknowledge and respect those needs?

■ Teachers: Identify, together with the students, the different groups that the school/class might not be able to accommodate. Even if no one in the class feels their needs are not accommodated, ask students to think of what group might feel unwelcome or disrespected if they joined the class. How would students respond to those feelings? What kind of accommodation would be possible? How would they feel if asked to make accommodations for another student? Then flip the scenario: imagine they are attending a school in which the student's religion is the minority faith. What aspects of religious practice would the student want to be accommodated? If that were not possible, what steps could the school community take to show that they respect and honor the student?

■ Teachers: Invite religious scholars and leaders to speak to the class. Ask students to share about their own religion if they would like (this is not a task that should be a requirement). Ask students to interview their parents about their religious beliefs and history, and then to share what was new or surprising that they learned from these conversations.
*See Resource 23. Scriptural Reasoning*

■ School administrators and teachers: Take students to different places of worship. Try to enlist the support of a religious leader who can run through the traditional prayer or worship ceremonies with the class.

■ School administrators and teachers: Include parents in discussion of how different faiths are honored and respected. Invite parents to share what they feel is most important for their child to have when at school regarding religious freedom. Invite parents to discuss in front of the class and with their children how they practice their faith. This can be helpful even if everyone shares the same faith, as many

families will have different ways of practicing a shared religion.

■ School administrators: Ensure the school recognizes different religious holidays, especially for holidays that are not awarded days off. Ask someone from the religious community to share with the school what the holiday is, why it exists, and how it is observed. If you have students of a particular faith, you can invite them to do this as well, but be sensitive to the fact that some students would prefer not to join in. While you want them to feel their faith is respected, you also don't want to encourage people to see them as a mouthpiece for their religion rather than a complete person.

■ Policy makers: Encourage religious exchange between young people. Have young religious leaders drive interfaith dialogue, share about different religious holidays, and answer questions that other youth might have. Designate a shared prayer or reflection space where different faiths can worship. Encourage young people to use this space to show each other what their prayer rituals look like. See Resource 18. Disrupt Extremism

### INCLUDE FAMILIES AND GUARDIANS IN LEARNING

Fostering connection between a young person's home and school life can provide consistency and continuity. Family members and teachers can better support one another if there is strong communication between school and home. This communication also provides a stronger support system to look for and respond to warning signs that a student is struggling. Conversations between families and teachers can identify inconsistencies in behavior or concern patterns that might indicate the student could benefit from support.

■ Teachers: Give students assignments that require interaction with their families, such as interviewing someone in their household. Ask students to find out from a parent, guardian, or caregiver what they remember learning about a subject that you are covering. Have students discuss what difference they discover in how information and teaching styles may have changed over time. Ask them to reflect on how that may change the experience of the student.

■ Teachers: Design activities to bring your students, their families, and school staff to build meaningful partnerships with a common goal - invite parents and the wider community members to school cultural festivals and sporting programs. If you are working with students on identifying causes, they support, involve families in strategies for how young people can rally communities to make a difference.

■ Teachers: Include students in conversations you have with parents. Have student-teacher-parent conferences to share information about

the child in school and to learn what may be similar or different about the child at home. If the child is old enough, ask her to prepare the agenda for the meeting and to lead the discussion.

■ Policy makers: Encourage a whole society approach by providing funding for schools and teachers to implement projects that include families and communities in their classroom projects.

## USE ART TO NURTURE EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

Art projects can be incorporated into any subject to encourage students to see their studies from a different perspective. Artistic express can facilitate students' exploration of difficult or complex emotions, and artwork can forge connections between individuals and groups.

■ Teachers: Ask students to partner with a classmate and share an emotional experience with each other. When they have each shared a story, have partners separate and work on projects independently. Each student will create a visual representation of the emotion they heard from their partner. When the artwork is shared with the full group, ask other students to guess what emotion is being depicted. Consider how different people view emotions and ask students to discuss why this might be the case and how this can complicate the process of expressing and understanding the emotions of others.

■ Teachers: Ask students to imagine another person who lives in the same country or community but in some way is different from them. Ask them to write a first-person narrative about that other person: what is the background of that person? What kind of problems does she or he have? Why? What kind of emotions does this person experience? How is this person different from the student?

■ Teachers: Ask your students to imagine that they have a brother or a sister living in a different part of the world - someone they have never met and don't know much about. Ask them to write letters or emails to that person. What do they want to know about their brother or sister? Based on that, what might their brother or sister want to know about them? What do they think would be most important to share? What about their lives is most reflective of who they are?

■ Teachers and school administrators: Encourage your students to create small art clubs to express themselves. This can be anything from creative writing, painting, sculpture, art from recycled material, drama club. Discuss one theme for each semester and invite students to work within that theme. For example, ask members of each club to present their ideas about peace or related issues in the artistic format of their choice. Have an open day when they can showcase their art to

each other and other community members. Exhibit their art in school.

- Teachers: Ask students to keep a journal in which they record their emotions at that moment. Dedicate 3 - 5 minutes each day or a few times per week to writing in the journals. You can provide prompts or allow for free writes. At certain points, ask the class to review their journal entries and consider how they feel about their emotions now that some time has passed.
*See Resource 15. UNESCO MGIEP Blue Dot Magazine*

- School administrators: Invite art leaders of your community to support your students as mentors or to give workshops to develop creative skills.

- Policy makers: Designate a free public space in which student art can be displayed. Provide themes related to issues the community is facing and sponsor contests to represent those issues through art. Advertise exhibits to the broader community and invite student artists to speak about their work on a panel at the opening.

- Policy makers: Consider how you can partner with schools and communities to create an initiative like the SOM Collective's Proyecto Ja'ab (see page 207-210).

### ENHANCE RELIGIOUS LITERACY IN THE COMMUNITY

Religious leadership can support schools and communities in recognizing members of all faiths and bridge divides between groups.

**Religious leaders:**

- Learn about what aspects of your faith are most likely to be used by those recruiting extremists.

- Discuss common misconceptions with congregation.

- Teach and guide students to appreciate the common values upheld by different religions - show them where Christianity agrees with Islam, where Islam agrees with Hinduism, where Buddhism agrees with Islam, etc.

- Discuss contradictions and historical relevance.

- Encourage young people to ask questions about their religion and their religious texts without feeling that they are disrespecting the belief.

- Ensure that teachers of relevant subjects get sufficient exposure to

interfaith dialogues and engagement with the aim of reducing their own prejudices against other faiths.

■ Ensure that school libraries are stocked with sufficient literature and other learning resources (for teachers and students) that present alternative interpretations and narratives of those religious texts and concepts that are misused or abused by recruiting extremists.
■ Facilitate linkages between relevant teachers and various youth-led faith-based community activists and role-models who are involved in intrafaith and interfaith peacebuilding activities and in building resilience against violent extremism.

**Policy makers:**

■ Provide opportunities for religious and community leaders to engage with academic community to develop strong strategies grounded in research on more effective community engagement.

■ Encourage interfaith communication between young people by devoting public space to supporting these interactions. Provide opportunities for young people to teach each other about the different traditions, practices, and tenets of their religion.

■ Support people from different religions in publicly celebrating their holidays, festivals, traditions; encourage opportunities for non-practicing people to learn about these events.

■ Ensure that school administrators get sufficiently exposed to the importance of interfaith dialogues and engagement with the aim of reducing their own prejudices against other faiths and becoming more confident in initiating discussions and activities on religious peacebuilding.

# Media and the Internet

# TRADITIONAL MEDIA

**T**raditional media[19] **has been the target of much criticism in recent years,** from dire predictions that they will soon be obsolete to rebukes over biased coverage. But while the influence of online media has grown rapidly, traditional media continues to represent the only formal source of news for the nearly 48 percent of the world's population without Internet (Internet World Stats, 2017). This makes it a powerful resource in reaching many demographic groups critical to prevention efforts. In this section, we will discuss how traditional media can function as a resource for PVE or a weapon that can aid or exacerbate violent extremism ∎

# BIAS IN TRADITIONAL MEDIA

**M**edia that disseminates credible, accurate information helps to eradicate biases and prejudices that unscrupulous and inaccurate reporting fuel. What industry has a better platform to help us learn about the world, prepare us to debate the threats we face, and empower us to negate those risks by building stronger ties with those from different backgrounds and beliefs?

Unfortunately, in its treatment of issues concerning violent extremism, traditional media has often been seen as an enemy to accuracy. As Youth Contributor Binza Ngindo points out, this can further entrench the beliefs that lead to extremism and encourage violence.

[19] Traditional media refers to television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other print publications.

*"The stereotype being inflicted on some communities is one to be denounced. The bias in the reporting on extremism in media is a practice that is encouraging more extremist act."*
- Binza Ngindo, 31, South Sudan

Media bias and misrepresentation feeds into the othering of communities, dehumanizing groups of people and legitimizing violence against them. Narratives that focus exclusively on the suffering of victims of violent extremist acts, while omitting any mention of the drivers of violent extremism, tacitly imply that the plight of individual groups is inherently less important than that of others. Media reports are themselves a form of education. If handled irresponsibly, they peddle a type of understanding that encourages and emboldens hateful, discriminatory beliefs.

Many media outlets promote storylines they know will resonate with, rather than challenge, the beliefs, and misconceptions of their readers or viewers. As our youth contributor from Malaysia reflects in the following quote, the strongest-held ideas are often rooted in fear of the dangerous other and not faith in the possibility of shared humanity:

*"It is easier for human nature to believe what they fear is true as opposed to having faith that the unknown isn't as bad as it seems. Our world is more prone to immediate retaliation in violence than it is to react in kindness. Fear and the lack of understanding is at an all-time high pushing people to live in survival mode. Severe punishment, an act to stop the migration of refugees, and a declaration such as the public call by Philippine's President to bring to justice, dead or alive drug users and pushers will not prevent violence, and neither will it solve any of the existing problems."*
- Youth Contributor, 31, Malaysia

When media reports cater to the assumptions of their audience, they fail to encourage the emotional and intellectual courage to imagine a shared humanity. Instead, they reinforce the perception that the "other" is fundamentally different -- innately both less deserving of empathy and more likely to incite violence and danger.

"The current discourse has become very sensationalist; it is all about clickbait and traffic. This recklessness among the media means that people become desensitized whenever they see stories about violent extremism appearing in their feeds. We need a more nuanced approach that humanizes both the victims and the perpetrators. We were not always like this, and we need to understand the source of this rancor, where it's coming from and why it's persisting."
- Youth Contributor, 34, Zimbabwe

"Sensationalized journalism hampers any development towards unity and peace. Mainstream media tends to highlight negative cultural stereotypes which may be biased towards the majority. If the media can serve as a powerful tool to combat racial discrimination, then issues related to violent extremism would not persist."
- Krista Nido, 26, Philippines

# MUSLIMS AND WESTERN MEDIA

One of the most prevalent media biases is the time and attention devoted to Islamic-related terror attacks, particularly when Westerners are the victims, and the negligence in comprehensively covering both non-Islamic terror and Islamic-related attacks that injure and kill Muslims. One study suggests that news media covers violent acts by Muslims as much as 449 percent more (Kearns et al., 2017) than it covers acts of terrorism or violent extremism undertaken by non-Muslim groups

or individuals in the US. A non-Muslim perpetrator would need to kill seven more people than a Muslim perpetrator to receive the same media coverage.

*"Being bombarded with negative news about certain religions and ethnic groups, I notice this have an (unconscious) effect on even the open-minded people. What results in a lack of tolerance. I notice it with the people around me."*
- Youth Contributor, 30, The Netherlands

As indicated in the anonymous Youth Contributor above, the media's influence in promoting hate is particularly insidious because it encourages the unconscious deepening of mistrust and prejudice, even among people who may think themselves open-minded, progressive, and empathetic. Partly thanks to the media's coverage, the perception of terrorism in many parts of the Western world has become synonymous with what is often called 'Islamist terrorism' -- itself a problematic term that attempts to "discursively link the religion of Islam with terrorism, thereby forming an unconscious and seamless association between the two" (Jackson, 2006).

The simplistic association of any religion with violence represents a failure to understand the real manifestations of religious violent extremism. As we covered in Chapter 1, proponents of religious violent extremism manipulate and misinterpret a theological framework to earn the support of followers. While any religion is vulnerable to this, the inaccurate association between religion and violence has been far more damaging to the public perception of Islam than to any other practice.

These public perceptions impact not only how people are treated within their societal context but also how public policies are designed and implemented. Exposure to stereotypic media depictions influence our thoughts and feelings about the other and solidify reductive assumptions and associations about different groups (Mastro, 2009). The continuous "negative news condition" of Muslims as terrorists results in severe threats to civil liberties and human rights within the United States and globally (Vedantam, 2017). Those exposed to such content are more supportive of policies such as domestic surveillance, aggressive foreign actions, interventions abroad and unconstitutional policies against Muslims domestically or Muslim majority countries (Saleem et al., 2015). When such systems are implemented, they can function as a push factor that reinforces the social isolation and structural injustice that fuels violent extremism. The media's influence in shaping a less accepting and less just society also makes that society a more hospitable environment for nurturing hate and justifying violence.

Consider the media response to the Chapel Hill shooting in North Carolina

in which a white man shot his three young Muslim neighbors execution-style. Despite the murderer's history of bigotry and racist beliefs, the police maintained that these young victims were killed over an "escalated parking dispute" (Anokhi Media, 2015). Had the ethnicity of the victims and perpetrator been reversed, there is little doubt that media would quickly denounce the crime as terrorism. The sensationalism of racialized and marginalized individuals, particularly those that are not white Christians, "is symptomatic of the larger patterns of Islamophobia and governmental targeting of Arab and Muslim communities which legitimize hate crimes" (Shahshahani, 2015).

The news media has a societal responsibility to report with accuracy and consistency. But this often means either passing up an opportunity to pander a loyal audience or actively angering or challenging that audience. Independent, non-profit media outlets may provide a balanced perspective and fact-based report, but they are not enough to dismantle the stereotypes that many for-profit media companies promote.

We need more than active institutional checks against unethical reporting and consolidate grassroots effort that prioritizes highlighting and disseminating the voices of those often marginalized or dehumanized in the press. This can involve teaching journalism in school – both to empower young people to be the spokespeople of their own experiences and to develop a generation of young people capable of critically evaluating and judging the news they encounter ∎

# SATIRE OR HATE: CHARLIE HEBDO

Our criticism of media's failure to represent groups in an unbiased fashion stems from an assumption that it is their responsibility to do so. But how do we react to satirical media outlets that make no such claims to objectivity or impartiality? Below, a Youth Contributor reflects on his attempt to understand how he categorizes the controversial magazine Charlie Hebdo, which received international attention after being attacked by two shooters who claimed allegiance to al-Qa'ida (Aljazeera, 2015) ∎

## CASE STUDY:

*"Is it hate speech?"*

**T**o understand the issue of Charlie Hebdo and the issue around **it we** need to first acquaint ourselves with the history of French satire (and culture) and then the dynamics of intercultural interaction in a globalized fiber-optically connected world.

Remi Piet, assistant professor of public policy, diplomacy, and international political economy at Qatar University writes: ***"Was Charlie Hebdo excessive? Absolutely. But political and social satire is in itself excessive, and Charlie Hebdo's cartoonists have proudly waved this excess as their coat of arms in the typical French tradition dating back to even before the French Revolution" (Piet, 2015).***

Arthur Goldhammer, a French translator, based at Harvard's Center for European Studies says: ***"It's an old tradition of French satire to be particularly obscene and vulgar" (Robb, 2015).***

With the exponential rise in migration and communication/information brought about by advancements in transportation and technology, there has been a clash of cultures that has been brewing of late. What may be offensive in one culture may be deemed a commonplace thing in another. For example, the satire that the French people practice may not necessarily be understood by say someone from another culture. But how can, and to what level should, different cultures accommodate each other requires a global and a more in-depth discussion. Under the Right to Freedom of expression, Charlie Hebdo has every right to offend, however so should the object of criticism have the right to express offence (the basics of freedom of speech and expression). Je Sui Charlie Hebdo or "I am with Charlie Hebdo" campaign received a lot of support, without much discussion on the issue, but rightfully in solidarity for the event - the killing of civilians and police personnel. The absence of debate on the core issue made a lot of individuals apprehensive in voicing their opinions on the usage of vulgarity and obscenity by Charlie Hebdo in their satirical publications (should they be labeled as being an apologist

for terrorism) (Shabi, 2016). Worst, if you were a Muslim, then you could quickly be labeled as an extremist yourself. Which only creates more misunderstanding and hatred, thereby laying the foundations for xenophobia.

Every individual should have the fundamental ability to understand that the Islamist extremists do not have the right to define the broader Muslim community (and the media should not represent them as so). This would not be fair to those who do not stand for violence, and Islamic indoctrination – one amongst the slain in the Charlie Hebdo shootout was a young Muslim police officer defending the law and justice system of the country. Also, many others expressed themselves in the manner that Ms. Sabria S. Jawhar has; she says "The media's glib labeling of the murderers as *"Islamic extremists" ignores the fact that Islam does not teach killing people who blaspheme. The Qur'an is explicit in its response to blasphemers: 'Do not sit with them" (Jawhar, 2015).*

*Satire without an intent to reasonably, and critically, commentate on a broad range of social issues is not satire and simply just offensive – often falling into the category of hate speech or a politically/ideologically driven tool. In the case of Charlie Hebdo, many interpret their content as hate speech, and then there are those who see them as ones who expose social evils, and then there are also those who just don't have an opinion (I feel it is vital that we take them into account too). I have tried to research and understand different perspectives on Charlie Hebdo merely to inform my understanding of the issue. My preliminary opinion on Charlie Hebdo's work is - It's hateful, it's vulgar, it's obscene. But, is it hate speech? I still don't know. (Sajid Sheikh, 28, India)*

Sajid's reflection on the attack and his acknowledgment that he does not feel comfortable categorizing the publication as hate speech or vindicating it from such accusations is a reminder that dialogue and research cannot answer every controversial question. This can be a challenge for schools and families who want to provide young people with comforting and confident answers. But the work that Sajid is doing to explore different opinions and analyses is perhaps more effective in building intellectual flexibility than receiving a pat answer would be. When teachers or parents guide a young person's interaction with media, encouraging this kind of independent analysis can build critical engagement skills. It can also reinforce the message that although not all questions can be answered definitely, any question can be asked in the classroom or home ∎

# "THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT ME"

**O**ne of the basic tenets of misleading media is the breakdown of complex conflicts -- conflicts that involve centuries of turmoil, violence, truces, and lies -- into bite-sized narratives with a good guy and a bad guy.

Because these stories are about our world, we don't hear them as simplistic narratives of good versus evil. We listen to them as stories about ourselves. From a Muslim boy made to believe he is a terrorist by birth, to a child of a colonial legacy who sees every action his country takes as a morally justified attack against an enemy, the media educates, or mis-educates, each of us in our own identity ∎

## CASE STUDY:

*"I've been so demonised I almost believe it myself."*

> *I watch the news, and they're talking about me. They're saying that young «jihadi apprentices» are being arrested at the airport. They're calling them terrorists. I read the online comments on the paper's websites. They're talking about me as if I was an animal. Someone so heartless, so unscrupulous, that their only desire is to kill innocent people. They assume that I'm crazy, that I'm a monster. I'm not who they think I am, but who would believe me? I've been so demonised that I almost believe it myself. I never wanted to hurt anybody, but who would believe me? All I wanted to do was to go somewhere where I would finally feel accepted, but who would believe me?*
>
> *The media has such unbelievable power in the world today. If they wanted to, they alone could do so much to change people's minds. But instead, they spread hate, divide communities, stigmatise, and mislead. When our only window on the other is the daily news, and the image is distorted, there's no wonder that hate prevails."*

Youth Contributor, Canada

The Canadian youth's reflection that he feels himself beginning to believe the media's characterization of who he is underscores the profound impact of media representation in identity formation and "othering." In this case, the experience of being the other is so aggressively promoted that this young person's isolation comes not from his community -- not from a sense that he is being kept out of society because of society's rejection of him -- but from his own growing suspicion that there is something wrong with him. He begins to see his exclusion as a result, not of other's intolerance but his own inferiority. The internalization of this isolation and social rejection is a push factor that can drive young people to embrace violence. If young people subjected to this kind of treatment already feel that they are the monsters portrayed in media, there is less incentive for them not to behave in ways that society suggests they are destined to behave ∎

*Ethnic Conflict in Russia and Media Response*

In 2006 my small town in the north-west of Russia experienced a conflict that led to the forceful relocation of an ethnic and religious minority group. Traditionally a white Russian space, since the start of the wars in Chechnya [Muslim part of Russia] in the 1990s, it accommodated around 50 families from the war-stricken region. People who were visibly very different from the dominant population. While at the time it seemed to me that the relations between the two groups were quite peaceful, the year 2006 showed how wrong I was.

A fight between two groups - white Russian and Chechen men – broke out at a restaurant one night. Started by two Russian criminals, the fight ended by the Chechen men murdering four Russian bystanders who were not part of the dispute. The murder of four ethnically Russian men, two of whom I knew very well was, unfortunately, just the beginning of the madness. The incident did not only showcase the deep-rooted problems of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society of Russia; it showed how easy it is to ignite hate and fear in young people through media sensationalism and narrow-mindedness and racism of authorities.

During the demonstrations, the Movement Against Illegal Immigration and several extremist websites calling for white Russian supremacy inflamed the situation, targeting specifically young people, eventually turning a peaceful call for justice into a pogrom. The young people fueled by the extremist rhetoric of 'us' vs. 'them' destroyed the restaurant where the murder took place together with several businesses of Chechen people. Lives of the Chechen women, men, and children were put at risk too. It was not only limited to Chechen people at that point. A sports school that at the time hosted representatives from Central Asian countries was set on fire. The local government couldn't control the situation and deal with it in an informed and constructive manner. The governor blamed the Chechen people for the conflict and shared in his address to the media that "the main reason was that a group of representatives of another people [Chechen] behaved audaciously and arrogantly, and ignored the mentality of our people."

Media played a critical and vastly negative role. Like fire in a forest, they were spreading a message that Chechen people threatened to create a second Beslan in the city [Beslan school siege and massacre in a small Russian city in 2004 that saw 334 hostages, mainly children of school age, killed by terrorists]. Students were scared to go to schools that were said to have bombs and terrorists in them. Federal government authorities were very vocal in various media outlets too. One deputy of a liberal-democratic party stated that the rights of people in Chechnya should be limited. Another called for a law to divide the population of the country into local people [meaning white Russians] and migrants [meaning non-white citizens] whose movement within the country, in his view, should be closely tracked.

Following the extremist ideologies that led to youth engaging in violence against this ethnically and religious minority group, as well as media and government statements of fear and hate, the Chechen families that had established and peaceful lives in the city, had to leave it for good. (Youth Contributor, Russian Federation)

This situation in Russia shows the willingness of the media to capitalize on the fear and racism responsible for dividing the community. Media sensationalism also hampered critical thinking and empathy on the side of the dominant group and led the citizens to side with politicians who advocated limiting rights and liberties of the minority. Media coverage legitimized the push for unjust government policies by giving prominent voice to their proponents and by fueling audience fear. To the religious minority, it effectively showed that they were not wanted in this society. In this case, the role of the media functioned to support the process of "othering" from three angles: the inflammation of fear and intolerance in the majority group; the legitimization of intolerance and revocation of basic rights of the minority group; and the demonization of the minority group such that they were effectively driven out of participation in their own society ∎

# TRADITIONAL MEDIA AS A RESOURCE FOR HATE

In addition to the biases that inform how groups are covered and **damages** how they are perceived and treated, media can also play a role in the communication strategies of violent extremists or of PVE efforts. We will briefly consider an example from both sides to show how the media can be used to promote either call to violence or calls to peace.

## RADIO

Radio can be a convenient tool for extremists as it is difficult to intercept or track transmissions especially if these transmissions are remote or originate outside of the receiving territories. In Rwanda's genocide, directives from two radio stations owned by the Hutu (Radio Rwanda and Radio Télévision des Milles Collines (RTLM) (Concordia University Transcripts, n/d) urged a largely illiterate population to engage in mass violence and ethnic cleansing. Radio broadcasts were used by Hutus extremists to first create division in the society by disseminating rumors, anti-Tutsi hate, and misinformation. It was this constant bombardment of hate media and false information which would lead to the radicalization of a large segment of the Hutu population, who would go on to carry out of the bloodiest genocides of the 20th century.

Similar to the massacre in Rwanda, in 1983-1987 Zimbabwe's Fifth Brigade under the authority of Robert Mugabe waged a terror campaign murdering over 20,000 civilians (Genocide Watch, 2012) who were accused of supporting armed dissidents of the rivalry ethnic Ndebele group (Mpala, 2013). Media in Zimbabwe controlled by the government of Mugabe was complicit in supporting the massacre by not even mentioning the atrocities towards the Ndebele (Hill, 2011). Media propaganda machine created a messianic image of forgiving and loving Mugabe who could not do anything wrong (Machingura, 2012).

"Many people who engage in destructive activities only do so because they lose a sense of right as a result of compelling yet negative and false narratives. I have observed this in my home country where propaganda was an obvious contributor to a genocide that took place in the 80s. The hateful narratives against minority ethnic groups in Zimbabwe persist to exclude other groups out of political participation."
- Nomagugu Nyathi, 30, Zimbabwe

# TRADITIONAL MEDIA AS A RESOURCE FOR PVE

### TELEVISION

*"What we need [in media] is a discourse which brings people together by bringing important issues that unite them to the surface."*
Hayat Douhan, 29, Morocco

*"Media can play an active part to promote the culture of harmony and peace. We as youth should use media (social media, print or electronic media) to voice against factors that lead to extremism such as low literacy, access to opportunities and promotion of values such as valuing humanity."*
Alina Sarfraz, 25, Pakistan

Just as media can be used to encourage violent extremism, it can also disseminate and elevate advocates for peace and justice. We discussed earlier how the Rwandan genocide was incited through the messages on local radio channels. In stark contrast, Radio Muhabura (Radio Beacon) was used by the Rwandan Patriotic Front to share "a strong civic national identity" that did not divide the country into Hutu and the Tutsi but united them as citizens of one state (Concordia University Transcripts, n/d).

Another example of the constructive power of media comes from South Africa. After the apartheid ended, South Africans who had lost family members and loved ones demanded justice and answers. The country had to choose one of two paths: hold trials for all who committed crimes against humanity or establish truth and reconciliation committee.

South Africa chose the latter. Truth and reconciliation commission assembled to provide closure for those whose loved ones had been disappeared or killed. All those who committed human rights abuses had to stand before the committee, describe what they did and demonstrate that their actions had been politically motivated. All the confessions were broadcasted by SABC TV and radio as an effort of nation building (Moore, 2015). The broadcasts reached not only millions of South Africans but also millions around the world, who watched as a nation that had suffered hate, racism, radicalization, extremism, inequality, and violence came together (Moore, 2015). It disarmed segments of the population who sought to utilise violence as retribution, while allowing all South Africans to participate in the reconciliation process[20] (Moore, 2015).

SABC TV also produced a documentary on the truth and reconciliation process. The key message of the film is the need to first acknowledge the harm that was inflicted before attempting to repair or relieve it. It featured people who had committed crimes during apartheid but had gone on to work for the betterment and healing of the country. The film's meditation on the process of recovery after massive injustice underscores the lengthy process of working towards peace. It is not effective or just to ask people to behave peacefully; instead, the violence of past injustices must be addressed and acknowledged, and the victims must have a role in how the history is recorded and the future defined. Media is an invaluable resource in this process: it is an effective way to reach vast numbers of people and encourage their participation in the process; it provides a way to share stories beyond the immediate community, which indicates to victims that their experiences have global acknowledgement and recognition; and it empowers other victims, both those who are currently victimized and those who have not seen crimes against them acknowledged, to imagine the difficult path towards justice.

Fiction-based television programs have also sought to bridge divides and prevent extremist ideologies from taking hold. One example is "Ziko & Shreko," a series of short videos shot and produced by Syrian refugees in a camp in Lebanon (Dunmore, 2016). For the audience beyond the camp, these videos humanize a group of people about whom many harbor reservations and suspicions. (To read more on Ziko & Shreko, please see page 213-214)

Another example of traditional media promoting peace is a multi-nation series "The Team" developed by Search for Common Ground (SCG). The show aims to "transform social attitudes and diminish violent behavior" in conflict and post-conflict countries through a drama that merges football and soap opera (SCG, n/d). In each episode, a football team whose players come from diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, tribal, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds must overcome their differences.

The Team is an accessible production, shot locally and supported by the talents of local actors and scriptwriters. The series exemplifies how to break down barriers, communicate across difference, foster understanding, and resolve conflicts. It also delivers these important messages through a medium that young people turn to simply for entertainment ■

I WISH MEDIA...

- Didn't make us think what it wants us to think.

- Promoted inclusion.

- Disappeared.

- Was not that aggressive.

- Oh god. I wish the media realised that their job isn't to give both sides of the story, their job is to let us know the truth.

- Showed the real story to the public.

- Don't make a story that makes public to conflict.

- Shared my opinions and people like me for change that supports our education reform nationwide.

- Were impartial and covered all the facts.

- Stopped stigmatizing communities, one community at a time, and stopped promoting hate directed at specific groups of people.

- Stopped stigmatizing people and showed people that violence and injustice are intolerable.

- Communicated messages that reflect reality as it is, and that it plays a key positive role in the community.

- Showed positive things about Africa and not negative stories.

- Would highlight more stories of teachers and supervisors that build and mould children's futures. Along with well-paid sportspeople, actors, and politicians, teachers should also be held up as role models. And their stories should also be told as narratives for inspiration.

- Would show real news objectively and don't just show negative news which will have a negative impact on our collective mindsets as well but positive news showing opportunities and how to successfully deal with challenging

situations.

▪ Could start reporting the best of what our society has other than reporting a negative picture.
Would stop being so biased and close-minded.

▪ Focused less on disasters and horror stories, more on hope and encouragement. Less on critics, more on gratefulness.

▪ Was neutral.

▪ Gave the positive news about the communal harmony rather than just showing anything, everything and irresponsible hate speech content.

▪ Was all impartial.

▪ Was honest. It really frustrates me to see the false, seductive, information and pressure that comes with it.

▪ Was able to explore more the intolerance, inequality and inappropriate experience that faced by the students and include some lesson there. This could be the lesson for the public to help in participating the right education.

# KEY LEARNINGS:

- Traditional media outlets (radio, newspapers, television) are still actively used by youth as a source of information

- These media sources often promote narratives that resonate with their audience instead of challenging beliefs that can be harmful and dangerous

- Some groups are portrayed in a stereotypical and negative way, perpetuating and ingraining dehumanizing stereotypes that support "othering."

- Such portrayal increases discrimination and racism towards these groups and isolates them from the mainstream society which can push them to seek belonging and answers in violent extremist groups

- Media stereotyping can drive popularity for racist and bigoted public policy that further alienates minority groups, denies access to basic human rights, and increases the risk of isolation functioning as a push factor for these populations

# NEW MEDIA

**N**ew media refers to digitally-driven information and content. The meteoric rise of new media has reshaped the way we consume, share, and disseminate information. The Internet boasts over 3 billion users and social media claims over 2 billion users. From user-generated content to viral news stories, new media has transformed the way we understand and interact with our world and each other.

## THE AGE OF FAKE NEWS

Among many impacts of social media on new consumption, one of the most consequential developments is the rise of fake news. Nearly since their inception, social networks such as Facebook have contributed to the reporting and disseminating of news stories. But popular stories are often incorrectly sourced, misrepresented, or wholly fabricated.

New media is driven by the ability to produce viral content. This pushes media sources to appease, rather than educate, their audiences. Fake news can earn an internet media company attention, interest, and advertiser dollars. Distrust of conventional news sources (for example, the political trend on both the right (Bedard, 2017) and the left (Sanders, 2017) in the US to lambast mainstream media as unreliable, unethical, and misleading) has further complicated the process of evaluating what you see, read, and hear. If the establishment brand of news is convincingly portrayed as deceitful, people may develop a greater willingness to trust alternative sources (including those peddling alternative facts) (Bradner, 2017). Such stories often confirm and escalate an audience's fears. In turn, confirmation bias further cements audience loyalty.

The popularity of social media allowed for the alacritous spread of fake news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). In the wake of its rise, we can see important realities about our society laid bare.

One such reality is the overwhelming failure of society to adequately equip people with the skills necessary to judge critically the sources and substance of the news they consume. Recognizing fake news requires

critical consideration. This is a competency that can be practiced and strengthened through interactions that challenge, question, and invite curiosity.

As part of our recommendations in this chapter, we encourage schools to incorporate journalism into their curricula. This provides an opportunity for young people to see that their voices and perspectives can guide the narrative we see in our media. Not all young people will go on to be journalists , but young people who have this experience will likely be better prepared to evaluate their interactions with media and to critically consider the information they encounter throughout their lives.

The fake news industry has demonstrated how effective it is to appeal to emotion over logic. Attempts to counter the phenomenon must acknowledge the emotional factors at work. Fake news has influenced how people vote, what people believe about the actions of their governments, how people respond to acts of violence and terror, and what they believe is required to protect or strengthen communities. The beliefs that fake news promotes are beliefs to which an audience has a strong emotional connection. Simply providing access to more credible information is unlikely to persuade people to abandon what they feel to be true ∎

# THE INTERNET

**T**he Internet is one of the most effective methods to reach young people today. Unsurprisingly, the implications of online activity on violent extremism and radicalization have been the focus of much debate since the rise of online connectivity. The low-budget recruitment strategies and the "dark web" that sustains and spreads the reach of extremist groups are concerns for anyone working in PVE. But the Internet also presents a revolutionary medium for improving efforts in peacebuilding, PVE, and education.

The Internet has become a crucial educational resource. It provides essential support for homework, projects, and research, as well as a complement to traditional learning methods. Young people who do not attend school can access massive open online courses (MOOCs) and other online learning platforms. The Internet provides to children and young people the opportunity to learn about diverse cultures, peoples, histories, and knowledge systems. It also provides access to differing perspectives and views, which can help dispel stereotypes and prejudices.

Young people are increasingly turning to the Internet with both curiosity and trust. They look online to find everything from how to get out of the "friend zone" to how to grow potatoes. The vast range of tutorials that can be found online allows us to learn different things from different people at any time of the day or night. Internet diversifies our ways of learning and thinking. The increasing popularity of YouTube tutorials exemplifies a peer-to-peer learning environment that changes not only the way young people access information but also what information they can access and who is presenting it.

Of course, the enormous potential of this openness can be used for ill as easily as for good. Just as the trust and curiosity that young people might place in a Google search can better equip them to face both emotional and academic challenges, the vulnerability of their interest can be manipulated by those looking to recruit followers to their causes. While this risk must inform part of the PVE discussion, it should also underscore the fact that we must make Internet an active part of a culture of PVE. The fact that Internet can be used to promote hate and incite violence is also evidence that it can be used to do the opposite, particularly if interventions can identify and earn
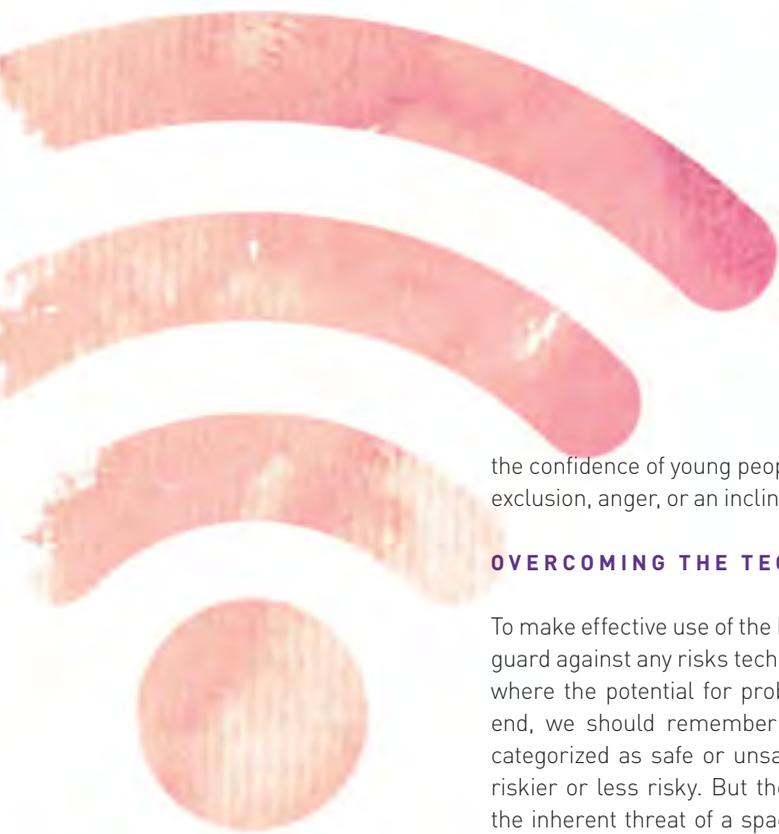
the confidence of young people who are drawn online to resolve a sense of exclusion, anger, or an inclination towards violence.

### OVERCOMING THE TECHNO-DETERMINISTIC APPROACH

To make effective use of the Internet as a preventative resource and to best guard against any risks technology has introduced, we need to understand where the potential for problems and solutions really lies. Towards this end, we should remember that online spaces cannot be simplistically categorized as safe or unsafe. As in the offline world, some spaces are riskier or less risky. But the level of risk is primarily determined not by the inherent threat of a space but rather by the capacity of individuals to protect themselves from that threat. The behavior, intent, and awareness of internet users determine how dangerous an online interaction will be.

This is because the Internet itself is not objectively anything. It's a space that is constantly defined, redefined, and revolutionized by the people who interact with it. If we take this approach, it's easier to see the Internet not as a potential threat but simply as a communication channel.

"Internet is just a medium of communication. Thus, blaming internet to spread radicalization amongst youth is not a strong argument. We have to resolve the underlining issue of radicalization/extremism rather than discussing its spread
- Sajid Khan Muhmand, Pakistan

A techno-deterministic approach would state that due to the spread of Internet-based platforms, there is more danger of young people becoming radicalized, implying that new technologies are intrinsically capable of influencing people's behaviours. But the Internet is not a messenger. Whether for radicalization, peacebuilding, or PVE it is only a medium. Fuchs (2014) states that new media platforms, such as social media, are not technological networks but techno-social systems in which technology supports human activities. These structures are composed of technology and but driven by human agency.

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"Is there really a link between Internet and youth radicalisation? I don't think so. Radicals can build their speeches away from media and computers. Most violent decisions of the planet (wars, etc.) are taken out of the collective debate on the Internet, in the domes of power away from the public opinion. The most dangerous and violent situations that occur in the world arise from the offices of executives of multinationals and hegemonic Governments, not from the Internet, which is an inclusive box where you can find the best and the worst of ourselves.
- Joan Serra Montagut, Spain/Mexico.

---

People use technology. Technology does not use people. Why is this distinction important? Because when we discuss "the power of digital media" we must be clear about where -- with whom or what -- that power truly lies. The power of media and technology is engendered by its users. Therefore efforts to improve safety and decrease risks associated with technology should take human agency as their primary focus. But if we recognize the primacy of human agency, we can reduce the risks we see in online spaces through a variety of preventive measures -- including, of course, education.

In the case study below, we look at an online safety project that was born out of the recognition of how the Internet can serve as a weapon of extremism or a guard against it.

## CASE STUDY:

Operation 250 -
*A Project for Online
Safety*

A**merican schools below University level** have yet to integrate terrorism into their curriculum, and during the process of creating Operation 250 (Op250), we spoke to teachers, principals, and school superintendents, who all said they felt like they didn't have any answers about terrorism- it was all just "too complex." Because of this, many kids are going into the depths of the internet to get answers to questions that their parents and teachers may not have. The problem is larger than just ignorance about terrorism, but online safety as well.

Regarding Online Safety (which we felt was a fundamental enabler of many of the terroristic problems we were investigating) we found that 25 percent of American teenagers have seen a hate website and 14 percent have seen a website that explains how to build a bomb (Lee & Leets, 2002).

Protecting kids against the complexities and dangers of the internet is believed to be easy, yet half of the country's teachers say they are not teaching it well enough (National Cyber Security Alliance, 2011).
It quickly became clear to us that parents and teachers, a part of two of the most important social constructs in a kid's life, have not been given the resources to convey this topic effectively.

Thousands of Westerner's (6,000 more precisely) have left the comforts of their home country to fight the ideological war halfway across the world. ISIS has created numerous propaganda materials which are arguably specifically for children. A series of their videos show boys as young as 12 years old storming around with handguns in a video game'sque' manner shooting down tied up prisoners. It can be surmised that these videos intend to disillusion or inspire western youth through their glorification/ normalization of harrowing violence.

According to a report by The Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, forty-four Western children have attempted to commit acts of terror in the name of ISIS against their own nation since 2014. Fifty

percent of these children had contact with an official ISIS recruiter online, and seventeen percent were members of a sleeper cell. Twenty percent of these children had no formal contact with a sleeper cell or an ISIS recruiter indicating that they were likely radicalized by their widely available online propaganda material (Simcox, 2017).

These numbers do not solely distill the strength of ISIS's marketing/ recruiting tactics, but they also reveal severe weaknesses of the West at a societal level: How could such a contemptible terrorist organization convince western children to join them halfway across the world? To leave their families? Or to stay home and commit acts of terror in their name?

As the caliphate dissipates and the existence of ISIS evolves into their next phase, many hope that terror online will disappear with the groups claim to the territory. But in fact, if and when the group leaves the world scene, the problem will not go. They have left merely a benchmark or a standard for future terrorist organizations and online recruitment.

### OPERATION250

With a budget of $2000 and complete flexibility as to how we could respond to the issue of extremism, in fall 2016, a team of University of Massachusetts Lowell students developed an educational program called Op250 that seeks to educate children (using educators in local schools and parents as gatekeepers) about the risks of being "online." Op250 aims to educate children, parents, and teachers about online safety and about how they can most effectively protect themselves from encountering online violent extremist material and individuals. It is an interactive, multi-media campaign that is hosted online but designed to be implemented offline with our three target audiences. Op250 directly seeks to support the following goals:

*1. Educate citizens about the threat of online recruitment and radicalization.*
*2. Develop innovative community-based responses to this threat.*
*3. Increase the resilience of communities.*
*Since our launch in November 2016, one of the anticipating pushbacks*

we were well aware of and ready to face was- receiving negative feedback. This would include teachers not willing to bring this into their classrooms, criticisms, students not being interested in the topic, and receive critiques on our content. Luckily, we have not run into any of these problems. This, however, is the reason we chose not to

exclusively talk about terrorism and violent extremism. When speaking to our audiences, we mainly stress online safety. We realized that some parents might not be so keen on having their elementary school children learning about terrorism. Being a bit broader (the additional online safety facet) lessens the chance of teachers and parents being unwilling to incorporate our program into the classrooms. By focusing more on online safety with younger children, and slowly incorporating discussions about terrorism as they get older, we felt that we would be placing ourselves in the best position to build strong relationships with schools.

At first, our main target audience was students. We still had the three separate audiences which also included parents and educators. However, our main concern was reaching children and adolescents. Soon after we launched, we realized we were getting all of our feedback and recognition from the gatekeepers. This occurrence solidified a notion we already had about our abilities to effectively reach our youngest target audience through the internet: it would be extremely difficult to accomplish successfully. The turning point was very quick, only a couple of weeks after the launch of our platform we lessened talking about reaching students and instead started talking about the formation of our new advising group, the Partners of Operation250, which is comprised almost entirely of parents and educators.

For P/CVE to be effective, it needs to be addressing the contextual circumstances that are unique to the community it exists within. As the world modernizes at a rapid rate and our youth become more technologically dependent and savvy, it is critical that we prepare them with the emotional critical thinking abilities and the knowledge to protect themselves in our newly digitized world.

Although we try to PVE online as quickly as the terrorists evolve and change their tactics on the internet, a more sustainable approach (and one highly advocated by Op250) would be instead to educate youth on methodological thinking processes that avoid the oversimplification of complex problems- something our society doesn't stress nearly enough. If we teach our youth how to work through their problems critically so they may find effective solutions; they will be less vulnerable to the lures of radical online recruiters who are skilled in 'solving' heterogeneous personal issues with their violent vendettas. (Nicolette San Clemente, Tyler Cote, Danielle Thibodeau, Jaime Keenan, Jonas Pierribia and Neil Shortland, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Center for Terrorism and Security Studies, USA)

Just as ISIS content has spread rapidly online, projects such as Operation 250 can harness the same reach and power, galvanizing young people to reject violence while still finding a sense of community, purpose, and identity in online groups. To be successful, such projects need to be relevant to the locality and the target audiences. Circumstances of each community should be taken into consideration to develop content contextualized to their needs. Each target group should receive tailored messages that support their unique role in preventing violent extremism. By better preparing different groups to have these conversations, Operation 250 increases the human resources young people have in their communities and broadens the opportunities they have to get answers to difficult questions. Part of the impact of Operation 250 is to use the internet to promote offline conversation and solutions.

## ONLINE CHOREOGRAPHERS

If we are to craft effective education-centered approaches to online PVE, we need to look not to a dangerous Internet but rather to good online emotional choreographers. Youth Contributor Carla Chianese identifies the danger of manipulation as a problem at the heart of online interactions. She also points to the fact that this manipulation is not an act of the medium but rather an act of individuals who hide behind the medium:

 *"Social media can manipulate young people without us even knowing! For example, 66% of Facebook users get their primary source of information from Facebook itself. In an election, for instance, Google's search algorithm can shift the voting preferences of undecided voters by 20% or more - up to 80% in some demographic groups - with virtually no one knowing they are being manipulated. Experiments showed that search Rankings could influence how voters feel about candidates. The order in which you see search results matters and the algorithm behind that order are controlled by individuals. Imagine what this kind of manipulation does in sensitive social-political environments, especially with underrepresented, oppressed young people who are searching for a way to actively participate."*
Carla Chianese, Kenya

The individuals Carla refers to are what we will term online choreographers. Internet-based platforms such as social media set a "choreography of assembly" (Gerbaudo, 2012) where managers of different pages become emotional choreographers who can promote collective action. They are online influencers. They use emotional enticements to attract and attach people to one cause or another. While the Internet delivers incredible scope, it is a powerful tool only in the hands of an actor who can wield this broad reach effectively.

Online communities are built on the premise of experiencing an individual sense of belonging through association with a collective identity (Darling 2008). A skilled choreographer working toward prevention of violent extremism can leverage the uniquely intimate yet anonymous space of an online community to draw out difficult issues and concerns that young people inclined towards extremism might feel. The most effective group leaders will foster an environment in which young people can share their struggles. These communities establish a shared mood and cultivate a sense of hope, both crucial factors in creating the trust necessary to move young people away from violence (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Some of these charismatic leaders, of course, are also choreographing initiatives that promote extremist ideologies. These influencers use the same sense of belonging to earn loyalty. But rather than build a relationship of trust and hope to move away from violence, they stoke a young person's instinct to embrace violence. The bond between leader and follower determines the extent of influence. Online spaces provide a flexible environment for these bonds to develop. In an age when people meet and fall in love online, we should not find it surprising that effective online choreographers can cultivate strong enough relationships with young people to incite them to action.

Social media platforms do not reproduce the hierarchies and structures of power that exist in the offline sphere. In the online realm, choreographers derive their power from soft leadership: a form of directing and influencing others based on the strength of the relationship, not on demand for hierarchical obedience. These choreographers underscore a fact about the Internet that is often misunderstood: online spaces are not horizontal spaces. They are not leaderless, and they are not intrinsically democratic. While barriers to entry that persist in the offline world have been reduced in many ways in the online world, a leader or a group of leaders are always responsible for critical aspects of running online spaces, promoting online messages, establishing the identities and encouraging the actions of online communities.

As we explore the role of the Internet in PVE efforts, we will emphasize the importance of looking not to a vague online space but the interactions of specific actors, leaders, or users.

## THE YOUTUBE MILLENNIAL INFLUENCERS

YouTube is an online video sharing platform that allows users to view, rate, report, and comment on content. The dependence on user-generated videos encourages a participatory culture in which ideas, artwork, advocacy, and entertainment are shared by people around the world.

YouTube has also become a valuable resource for informal and non-formal education. The platform provides a repository of information and entertainment available free of charge and is particularly attractive to young people because it allows for peer-to-peer learning. Young people can produce their own videos, and young viewers can seek out content directed and produced by peers who most appeal to their interests. This dynamic has made YouTube a popular platform for informal mentorships to develop (Duncum, 2011).

YouTube can facilitate intercultural dialogue, either by providing content related to different religions, cultures, and traditions or simply by supporting the exchange of content between young people who belong to these different groups.

## ONLINE GAMING

Online gaming can be an effective way to bridge the gaps between young people from different backgrounds, to counter stigmas and stereotypes and to foster collaboration between players from different cultures, religions, and ethnicities. It can nurture sociability, solidarity and a sense of belonging. Platforms such as 'Games for Peace,' a community dedicated to bridging divides between young people in conflict zones, illustrate the potential for different groups to connect with one another based on shared interests. The Games for Peace organizers use popular video games with the elements of communication and collaboration to develop trust and friendship between children in conflict zones who are often taught to hate each other. The program operates with youth from Israel, Palestine, and several countries in the Middle East.

## THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide refers to the socioeconomic inequality that prevents many people around the world from accessing the Internet, as shown in the table below. While it may seem in highly-connected regions that Internet is a worldwide phenomenon, Internet penetration globally is only 49.7 percent.

*Table 3. Internet users and penetration rates estimated for March 31, 2017 (Internet World Stats, 2017).*

| World regions | Penetration rates (% Pop.) | Internet Users |
|---|---|---|
| Africa | 28.3 % | 9.4 % |
| Asia | 45.2 % | 50.1 % |
| Europe | 77.4 % | 17.0 % |
| Latin America/Caribbean | 59.6 % | 10.3 % |
| Middle East | 56.7 % | 3.8 % |
| North America | 88.1 % | 8.6 % |
| Oceania/Australia | 68.1 % | 0.7 % |
| WORLD TOTAL | 49.7 % | 100 % |

The digital divide excludes half the world's population from online economic, political and social participation. Online access is limited by factors such as the lack of telecommunication infrastructure, poverty, and lack of education[21] (Luxton, 2016). This means that people who are poor, uneducated, or geographically isolated are less likely to have access to online spaces where different viewpoints can converge and where young people engage with diverse topics. It also means that these groups have fewer opportunities to share their own experiences with young people from more privileged circumstances. When access to the Internet is limited, filtered, or controlled, the opportunities for meaningful and broadly representative dialogue decrease for everyone.

**DIGITAL ACTIVISM AND #PVE**

"The youth have the power to define and influence media through the power of social technology. This allows us to interact with the entire world and learn from each other in an efficient and virtually personal manner."
- Pillay Yugesh, 32, South Africa

[21]Education in this context means lack of skills, awareness, and cultural acceptance of the internet, as well as fluency in the languages available online. (Luxton, 2016).

"We must become much better at building stronger, cross-global, networks. The same way that radical groups are using social media and technology to reach out, we must gather positive forces and spread counter-narratives. We must convince young people that they are not alone, that the dark side is not the answer. That we are one, not separated."

- Jenny Gustafsson, 35, Sweden

By taking advantage of the resources that social media platforms offer, contemporary activists use the Internet both as a communication channel and as a platform for galvanizing communities around common causes.

Digital activism can support grassroots efforts to combat radicalization and foster collaboration between activists around the world. Online infrastructure allows local PVE movements to more easily "go global" and for global PVE movements to go "glocal"[22] (Zuckerman & LeJeune, 2014). This flexibility supports PVE practitioners in adapting prevention strategies to their local context. It also allows for local efforts and lessons learned to be shared with a global community.

### CIVIL RESISTANCE OR CLICKTIVISM?

As digital technologies redefine the nature of civic and social engagement, activism, protest, and civil resistance have begun to change shape. We have seen a rise of concern regarding "clicktivism," the idea that a relatively superficial action such as liking a Tweet or Facebook page has become a stand-in for more concrete and impactful action (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014). We also must answer questions regarding the actual impact that digital activism can have, particularly when a campaign emerges out of anger and frustration, but does not centralize around a clear argument, agenda, or set of demands.

The online opportunities that gave rise to these questions have also had a positive impact on community building and advocacy. Digital activism can complement and enhance offline activism. It can build stronger

[22]Glocalization refers to the adaptation of global tendencies to specific local contexts and cultures

broader movements exactly because it is a relatively easy way to join a campaign (Karatzogianni, 2016). Expanding the opportunity for people to learn more, contribute, and participate, can strengthen the force of a collective voice in the long run.

Digital activism creates strong online communities. Supporters who join an online cause with a relatively minor commitment suddenly have access to a group that shares a clear goal and identity. If this identity resonates, initially superficial supporters are more likely to engage more seriously over time, moving beyond basic clicktivism. For example, when the ALS ice bucket challenge went viral, the ALS Association reported that participation in traditional fundraising initiatives increased by 30 - 100 percent (Ryan & Logan, 2014). Online awareness raising can translate to spikes in offline action.

### #JESUISPARIS BUT #JENESUISPASNIGÉRIA

The same low barriers to action and participation that make clicktivism appealing also allow for the mass expression of goodwill and condolences following devastating events such as terrorist attacks. The hashtag culture highlights the outpouring of support when these events unfold. But the silence with which social media meets tragedy and violence in some parts of the world says as much about our on and offline society as does the tsunami of thoughts and prayer that flood Internet in response to other events.

When simultaneous and coordinated attacks hit a theater, restaurants, and bars in Paris on November 15th, 2015, New York's World Trade Center and Sydney's Opera House displayed the French flag colors on their facades in a show of solidarity. The previous month, when 102 people were killed and 508 injured in suicide bombings in Turkey and 224 people were killed in an ISIS bombing in Egypt, neither the US or Australia were inspired to use their landmarks to express their sympathy. Neither did these attacks inspire the online flood of solidarity so quickly triggered by the violence in France.

Perhaps expressions of emotion on social media in the wake of an attack or disaster are superficial opportunities for people to demonstrate compassion and kindness without sacrificing anything. How much does it really matter, then, if this emotional outcry doesn't occur after each attack?

It matters to young people who hear in the silence a message that some countries only care about some people. The Internet reveals the divergence in who is viewed as valuable and who is not.

Online silence confirms the sense many young people have that a globally unjust geopolitical system has determined their
lives are not worthy of protection.

This divergence is exacerbated by the digital divide. Although the internet is a worldwide network, the entire world isn't online. Online trends do not reflect the values and interests of the world, only the values, and interests of those with internet access. Young people who identify with groups who are disproportionately denied online access may feel isolated by online trends and conversations that make little allowance for the half of the world who can't participate in them.

## CENSORSHIP

The rise of social media platforms on which people can express their opinions and thoughts has complicated the question of how to find the line between freedom of expression and the incitement of violent extremist acts. Information Communication Technology (ICT) industry giants such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are still struggling with how to decide when removal of user-generated content is the ethical responsibility of the company and when it is an encroachment on free speech.

The question of censorship provoked some of the most disparate and varied opinions from our Youth Contributors. Some, like Abdalla, believe that the best way to prevent the spread of violent extremist ideologies is to prohibit websites and media outlets that spread such ideologies.

*"I agree in the close monitoring of social media when it comes to PVE of extremist materials and propaganda tools. I concur with the idea of removing or prohibiting sites that carry out violent and extremist ideologies."*
Abdalla Rashid, 28, Kenya

Alfred and Kafaa share a similar opinion that depriving extremists of the attention and coverage they seek will not make them heroes in the eyes of some vulnerable people who will want to emulate their violent actions.

*"French authorities decided not to make public the pictures of the killers of a local priest in France which according to them gives the killers a lot of publicity so other extremists will feel compelled to emulate to enjoy the same publicity. Most of these extremists desire to die as martyrs. This for me is one way to get them disinterested in the acts."*
Alfred Kamanda, 31, Sierra Leone

*"Through its coverage, the media spreads fear in the hearts of global citizens and implements the aims of the extremists. Unconsciously, the media plays the role the extremists want it to play."*
Kafaa Msaed, 27, Lebanon

Similarly, we heard from young people who believe the best way to interrupt recruitment efforts is stricter monitoring and censorship of online activities:

*"It seems that media and social media is a direct way for recruiting youth and brainwashing them. Therefore more strict monitoring systems should be applied."*
Wala' Al Jallad, 31, Jordan

Other Youth Contributors believe that shutting down social media is not the best strategy in addressing violence and instead suggest we need other solutions developed by authorities to manage the spread of violent extremism.

*"Regulation [of the internet] at country level may not be effective. In Uganda, the government claimed that there was a security threat ahead of elections and so instead of monitoring and regulating social media usage, It (Government) shut down the social media in Uganda. I believe there could have been a better way of managing this."*
 Alexander Kyokwijuka, Uganda

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Youth Contributor from Côte d'Ivoire asserts that censorship is "against human values" and suggests youth should be provided with appropriate media education so they can interact responsibly with the information they encounter online.

*"Censorship of the Internet is not the solution. Internet censorship is against human values, against the freedom of expression and democracy. We are all aware that the Internet has brought a radicalization and extremist groups help to have a vast land of recruitment and pass their ideals. The Internet is a necessary evil; it is a double-edged sword. Is it because my knife cut me I should throw away a tool for cooking? The solution would be to show how to use it."*
Youth Contributor, Côte d'Ivoire

Youth Contributor's condemnation of censorship is not rooted in naiveté about the dangers of the internet. He recognizes the role Internet plays in facilitating the spread of extremism. But if censorship threatens basic freedoms, democracy, and even our human values, then we must imagine other responses and counter mechanisms.

To consider what effective responses might look like, we can look more closely at the individual we are trying to reach. Whether our concern is provoked by a young person who is sharing disturbing content or by one seeking out that content, parents, teachers, and policymakers have ample opportunity to intervene in ways that will make Internet users more responsible and discerning, such as the media and information literacy actions covered in the next section.

Focusing efforts on interventions other than censorship does not mean all content should necessarily be protected. Youth Contributor Boitshepo Motsamai identifies a need for engagement and follows up as the critical part of a response to dangerous online content.

*"In aspects where violent extremism is taught using social media, it is considered hate speech and immediately removed. However, the muffling of their voice doesn't end their ideologies. Although banning them on social media provides a first step, a follow up of dialogue within these extremist groups provide a follow up into understanding their means of their movement and in essence using their language to counter terrorism."*
Boitshepo Motsamai, 25, Botswana\

This brings the focus back to the individual actor. As Boitshepo recognizes, simply removing questionable material doesn't end an ideology. In some cases, this removal may function to exacerbate push factors such as social isolation, marginalization, and othering, reinforcing the idea that not everyone's rights, emotions, and feelings are equally valid and valuable.

Freedom of speech provides access to different information, opinions, and ideas. Even expressions of anger, intolerance, or frustration are sources of information from which better practices can be developed and improved. As we discussed early in Chapter 3, dialogue does not need to end in agreement. The relationship between conjecture and refutation is the foundation of knowledge (Pinker, 2014). In other words, we learn from engaging with content, including content we don't like.

If we take free speech as an opportunity for learning, even if we don't agree with different positions stated, we are opening a door for development and growth. But not all speech seizes this opportunity; and in our eagerness to protect freedom of expression, we must also consider what protections we want to ensure against verbal abuse, stigmatization, and online bullying. As one Youth Contributor stated, freedom of expression need not blindly condone hate and abuse.

*"I agree with the promotion of freedom of expression and speech without injurious prejudice to others."*
Abubakar Ibrahim Banaru, 31, Nigeria

Abubakar Ibrahim Banaru is identifying a line on which there is little consensus. As our online world evolves and interacts with our offline world, our beliefs about how to engage with content will evolve as well. Our focus, then, can remain on the value of dynamic education, both to better handle the content we encounter today and to better prepare ourselves and our young people for the content that will appear in the future.

*"If censorship is the solution, then why do we need education? Censorship in the hands of government regulatory bodies means repression and abandoning freedom of speech. If we have well set and thought of educational systems and the right means to allow youth [to] understand the consequences of violent extremism, then we can avoid it. It's through using the political socialization tools well to spread awareness and knowledge that we can prevent violence."*
Kafaa Msaed, Lebanon

We encourage a focus on preventative strategies such as media and information literacy in our recommendations. When equipped with the skills to navigate the online world effectively, young people can better analyze media messages, produce their own narratives about what they see, engage in healthy discussion and debate, and build stronger online communities.

Youth Contributors from both the pro-censorship and anti-censorship perspectives insisted on the value of media and information literacy to build safer environments both on and offline.

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"Extremism thrives off of prejudice, social isolation, and ostracisation. One of the most important skills is media literacy – having a strong grasp on the information environment of the emerging digital era will not just equip our future leaders with the tools to address global problems, but will diminish the causes that drive isolated parts of society to turn against it — instead, including them as part of an interdependent community."
- Shawn Carrie, 28, USA

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"Media literacy is a great asset - to know where to get information, to filter what is on TV or online, and to use social media as a change engine."
- Youth Contributor, 29, Germany

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"One of the core prerequisites is developing skills in media and communication. Providing the competences to young people to let them become more cognizant of the information they are exposed to, and the efficient and purposeful media creators and storytellers instead of keeping them as passive consumers of information and media technologies is a crucial proactive measure for change. Having these skills equip young people like the both potential victims and agent of change to feel more empowered, and included."
- Vedat Sevincer, 34, Turkey

Media and information literacy (MIL) supports young people in developing critical thinking and analytical skills for accessing, processing, and producing information (UN Web TV, 2017). This empowers them to effectively deconstruct extremist narratives they may discover online. Providing MIL to young people increases the likelihood that they exercise independent thinking when they go online.

Media and information literacy objectives can be folded into classes with other focuses. Please see recommendations at the end of this chapter and in the Action Guide for how teachers of any subject can encourage young people to critically evaluate the media content they consume.

## RELIGIOUS MEDIA

Religious media can be used to debunk the myths employed by religious extremists to justify violence. Religious media can also support interfaith dialogue to bridge divides between different religious groups. Consider the following example:

*"The use of religious media is a powerful tool in countering violence, conflict, and terrorism. Opposition groups wrongly present Islamic teachings, conduct wider negative campaigns and have seen a success in changing mass attitude, winning political support and recruitment of youth to their lines. On the other side, a balanced counter violence awareness doesn't exist to inform youth on the real teachings of Islam and build people's attitudes in the interest of making peace. Islam is a religion of peace; there are many verses of peace in Holy Quran and sayings of Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H). Youth will start to work for Peace when an appropriate campaign is taken up to inform youth and communities on the real teaching of Islam to prevent violence and live in peace."*
Youth Contributor, 35, Afghanistan

Religious media has a unique position from which to challenge extremist teachings. As Youth Contributor from Afghanistan indicates, the role of religious media can be to challenge manipulations of the religion while still embracing that religion. This approach lessens the threat to a young person's identity because the push for critical consideration comes from a source firmly ensconced within the world of the young person's chosen practice. There is no implicit or explicit implication about the fault of the religion itself, and this means religious media can relate to the faith and identity of those it reaches to promote more inclusive and peaceful interpretations ∎

# KEY LEARNINGS

- Media in all its forms has a tremendous power to shape public opinions, behaviours, and actions on any matter

- Traditional and new media have largely abused their power and in many instances contributed to fueling conflicts, isolating and demonizing minority communities, and stoking fear and hostility

- Innovation in technology has opened up online information and news floods. There is very little to prevent people from sharing inaccurate stories or concocting and promoting their own fake stories. Fake news has become an unfortunate staple of our media information experience, stoking racism and xenophobia and more deeply entrenching dangerous push factors such as isolation and othering

- Censorship or regulation of such online spaces or media, in general, may not be a good answer. To build resilience and counter violent extremist narratives, we need to acquire media literacy skills, not merely remove violent extremist content

- A variety of traditional and new media, online spaces and technology can be used to help find common ground between communities. They include television series, radio plays, online gaming, social media, and others

**TEACH JOURNALISM**

**A**lthough media has often fueled misunderstanding and prejudice that further isolate minority groups, it can also be an effective tool for promoting diversity of perspective, communicating relevant information, and building stronger relationships between different groups, communities, and countries.

By empowering students to drive their own media narratives, we can accomplish two key goals: the first is to demonstrate that anyone, belonging to any group, can shape the manner in which a story is told. Young people who feel the media does not represent them should feel empowered to change that reality themselves.

Secondly, young people who do not go on to pursue journalism will carry with them the critical skills of analysis that they learn from these exercises. They will gain firsthand insight into how a story is shaped, how journalists make choices about what they say and believe, and how information can be conveyed or miscommunicated. This will support the development of critical media literacy to influence the way they consume news and media messaging.

*See Resource 34. Creating Role Models in Media Enterprise*

▪ Teachers: Provide students with classes or class units on journalism. Invite media experts and journalist to work with students or to deliver guest lectures. Have students produce a media project of their own: a magazine, newspaper, TV or radio channel, news blog, or YouTube channel that allows students to conduct research, investigate, and constructively express their opinions and perspectives.

▫ History: Invite students to imagine they live in another era and must report on the events and people of that time; imagine they belong to a different group or community, and ask them to imagine how that group identity might influence the way they research, analyze, and present their ideas.

□ Science: Ask students to report on a scientific event or discovery as though they are presenting the information to a group of people who may be offended by the new information, for example, Galileo's theory that the Earth was not the center of the universe. Ask them to consider how they would cover such an event, what concerns they might have about how the community responds to what they say, and what they feel the role of a journalist or the media is when handling a controversial subject.

□ Literature: Have students write an investigative profile of a character from a novel. Encourage them to find the text examples where the dominating perspective of the character is challenged or problematized by information offered by other characters. How does a journalist decide which sources to trust?

## DESIGN DIGITAL LITERACY AND MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY TRAINING

Media and digital literacy promote responsible online behaviors and make young people less vulnerable to misleading content. These skills also have an offline application, as they develop the critical and analytic capacity of young people and assist in promoting reflective consideration of material, opinions, and narratives.

■ Teachers: Identify articles from different sources on one particular topic. Ask students to discuss such questions as What is the author's position and opinion in the article? Who is the author? What are the assumptions she or he may have? Why does she or he have these assumptions? What implications may they have on the representation of the information in this article? Are there any limitations or contradictions to this position? How can this article be interpreted by different people in different contexts?

■ Policy Makers: Invest in localized digital literacy programs for teachers and youth. Consult with researchers, NGOs, civil society, and young people to determine what local needs should be the focus of the programs.

■ School administrators: Ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to support students in achieving digital literacy. Provide appropriate training, including introducing teachers to the technologies and website that will be most popular with their students.

## ENSURE ONLINE SAFETY

■ Policy makers: Ensure companies and national legal bodies have a documentation system for censorship. This information should be available to the public.

■ Policy makers: Consult with human rights groups, NGOs, civil society, and activists to explore alternatives to censorship.

# CONCLUSION

**T**his guide is the product of the diverse submissions of young people who have raised their voice to realize positive change. Our Youth Contributors shared stories from 58 countries, from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and from a range of socio-economic conditions. Our editorial board, a group of seven young people from six countries, read each submission and identified the common themes that shaped the focus of this guide. In this process, three key messages emerged

> We heard a call to go beyond conventional teaching and training and to embrace the impact of lived experiences.

One message was the need to increase opportunities for young people to practice emotional competencies such as empathy, kindness, and mindfulness in experiential settings. We heard from young people who wanted others to experience the opportunities they had been granted outside the classroom. They advocated for the power of creative interventions in formal school settings. They emphasized the impact that non-formal actors such as parents and peers had on their educational experiences. We heard a call to go beyond conventional teaching and training and to embrace the impact of lived experiences.

We also heard the need for interventions with greater scope and depth, designed to create a culture that prevents violent extremism. We received stories of small interactions that set a person ever so slightly in a different direction. We learned about interventions that planted quiet doubts about prejudicial beliefs and conversations that undermined justifications for violence. Our contributors identified a need for interventions that focus on both small and big changes, that pursue immediate, local goals as well as broad, universal objectives, and that work towards building more open, inclusive, and understanding cultures in which different prevention efforts complement and strengthen one another.

> we heard the need to act now.

Finally, we heard the need to act now. This is the final message we would like to emphasize as we conclude our guide. Your action is powerful. Your contribution is the next step in building the strength and resilience in young people in your community. As you consider the impact you hope to have, remember the broad scope of engagement that our Youth Contributors identified as meaningful.

Reflection is action. What can you learn from the stories, questions, and recommended activities in this guide about how your own experiences and biases influence how you interact with the world? What impact will your reflection have on realizing the culture you want to promote?

Conversation is action. What are the questions or topics that you find most difficult to bring up with young people in your community? What resources can you find to support you in addressing these challenging topics? What do you think the benefit will be – both for young people and for yourself – in having more open and honest discussions?

Compassion is action. Mindfulness is action. Recognition is action

Compassion is action. Mindfulness is action. Recognition is action. These are all competencies we can practice ourselves and model to others to show our commitment to being an active part of a better society.

The Action Guide is designed to identify engagement opportunities for all stakeholders. Some are involved projects that require time, preparation, and resources. Others are small steps that will help create a safer society more open to large-scale interventions and more likely to benefit from them. No action is too small to contribute to building a more resilient and just world.

Finally, remember that silence, abstention, and apathy are actions as well.

Finally, remember that silence, abstention, and apathy are actions as well. From our local communities to our globalized world, none of us is isolated from the impacts of others. When you choose not to participate, you weaken the call for equality and justice. When you decide not to intervene in the face of abuse, you perpetuate the notion that this behavior is acceptable. If you don't know where to start, start by showing up and joining the conversation. Start by looking at the gap between the community you have and the one you want to have. Start by asking those around you to do the same. Start by listening to the voices of young people and understanding their experiences, even if you don't agree with their conclusions or beliefs.

Start by listening to the voices of young people and understanding their experiences, even if you don't agree with their conclusions or beliefs.

We want to see broad change. We want communities, countries, and governments to seek justice before praising peace and we want to see global inequalities close. But to show that we are serious about demanding this change, we have to show that we prioritize it in our own conduct. With this in mind, we urge you to determine what action you believe is most relevant to your context and take that action today. The transformation of a culture of injustice begins the moment you choose to act ∎

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## UN Resolution 2250 and Youth Response

**1. Youth Responses to UN Resolution 2250**
Collected anthology of survey responses discussing the implications and opportunities presented by the Resolution from youth around the world. http://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/YouthCAN-UN-PVE-Survey.pdf
Ideal for setting the context of policy-level measures to PVE and CVE.

**2. United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY)**
Youth toolkit for UN Resolution 2250.
http://unoy.org/en/2250-toolkit/
UN Resolution 2250 annotated and explained.
http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/2250-annotated-and-explained.pdf
Ideal for young people and youth-led organizations.

## Chapter: Understanding Violent Extremism

**3. Human Rights Watch - Terrorism/Counterterrorism**
The website offers news, reports, images, and videos on extremist activities in contexts worldwide.
https://www.hrw.org/topic/terrorism-counterterrorism
Ideal for young people, teachers, and policymakers.

**4. The Free Initiative**
The website provides resources on understanding and preventing far-right violent extremism.
http://thefreeinitiative.com/about/
Ideal for teachers, parents, and policy makers.

**5. Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), European Union**
Network of frontline and grassroots practitioners who work with people who have already been radicalized, or are vulnerable to radicalization. RAN provides support and tools for different stakeholders, including counter-narratives and exit strategies.
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network_en
Relevant for policy makers, NGOs, teachers, and parents.

## Chapter: The Appeal of Extremism

**6. Against Violent Extremism (AVE)**
A unique and powerful network of former violent extremists ('formers') and survivors of violent extremism who work together to push back extremist narratives and prevent the recruitment of 'at risk' youths.
http://www.againstviolentextremism.org/about
Ideal for young people and policy makers.

### 7. Extreme Dialogue

A resource to help initiate difficult dialogue and talk about the issues that lead to violent extremism. The focus of the website is a series of stories and videos from former extremists, each with teaching materials that help students engage with the push and pull factors of extremism, as well as thinking critically about their own influences.
http://extremedialogue.org/
Ideal for teachers, NGOs, and parents.

### 8. Fight against Radicalization Online

Provides resources that help to understand violent extremism and its lure, challenge stereotypes, and build an understanding of violent extremism.
http://www.faroproject.org
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and parents.
Chapter: Formal Education

### 9. Generation Global

This initiative provides first rate teaching packs specifically for PVE and connects schools through video conferences as way of learning through dialogue.
https://generation.global/
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and NGOs.

### 10. Global Oneness Project

Offers free multicultural stories and accompanying lesson plans for high school and college classrooms.
https://www.globalonenessproject.org/
Ideal for teachers and school administrators.

### 11. Talking about Terrorism:

Responding to Children's Questions
Book written by Jamieson, A. and Flint, J. Published in 2017 by Brilliant Publications.
The book is ideal for teachers and parents to help them discuss terrorism with children and young people.

### 12. Guidelines for discussing difficult or controversial topics

The following resources can help engage in controversial discussions with young people.
1) Centre for Research in Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines
2) Centre for Teaching – Vanderbilt University Difficult Dialogue: https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/difficult-dialogues/
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, and parents.

### 13. John Rawls, "The Veil of Ignorance"

The resource helps educators discuss the issues of social justice with young people. The game is based on the concept developed by political philosopher John Rawls that once we don't know what circumstances we are going to be born into, we will choose the most advantageous and just societal structures for all to live in.
http://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/veil-of-ignorance
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, and parents.

### 14. UNESCO MGIEP Embedding Guide

Offers concrete guidance for authors of mathematics, science, language, and geography textbooks on how to 'embed' peace, sustainable development, and global citizenship in textbook content.
http://mgiep.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/COMPLETE-GUIDEBOOK_Textbooks-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf
http://mgiep.unesco.org/textbooks-for-sustainable-development-a-guide-to-embedding/
Ideal for textbook authors, teachers, and policy makers.

### 15. UNESCO MGIEP Blue Dot Magazine

The magazines provide helpful information and resources on peace, sustainable development, mindfulness, empathy, and other contemporary issues in education in a very accessible manner.
Issue V http://mgiep.unesco.org/bluedot/violent-extremism-what-makes-a-violent-extremist-the-united-nations-response/
Issue VI http://mgiep.unesco.org/the-blue-dot-issue-6-rewiring-the-brain-to-be-future-ready/
Ideal for parents, teachers, and policy makers.

### 16. UNESCO: Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: Teacher's Guide
Helpful resource to manage classroom discussions on violent extremism and key messages to deliver to young people http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002446/244676e.pdf
Ideal for teachers and school administrators.

### 17. UNESCO - Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy-makers
Provides an overview of action areas and implementation strategies to PVE through education.
http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002477/247764e.pdf
Ideal for policy makers and school administrators.
Chapter: Beyond Formal Education

### 18. Disrupt Extremism
Youth-led initiative and network to prevent violent extremism. Provides resources and training on interfaith dialogue and religious literacy.
https://www.disruptingextremism.com
Ideal for teachers and young people.

### 19. United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
Various resources, projects, and tools for young people, their parents and teachers, for discussions, learning experiences, and civic engagement.
https://www.unaoc.org/
Ideal for young people, teachers, and policymakers.

### 20. Living Safe Together
This website provides information on what non-state and state actors in Australia do to build society resilient to violent extremism.
https://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/resources/pages/home.aspx
Ideal for everyone - teachers, parents, policy makers, among others.

### 21. Centre for Prevention of Violent Radicalisation Leading to Violence
The Centre has developed various user-friendly resources for key stakeholders.
Research resources - https://info-radical.org/en/research/publications/
Guides with background information - https://info-radical.org/en/prevention-en/guides/
Practical tools - https://info-radical.org/en/prevention-en/tools/
Guide "What if I was wrong?" - http://etsijavaistort.org/en/guideen/
Ideal for everyone: parents, teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

### 22. How a Danish Town Helped Young Muslims Turn Away from ISIS
Fascinating article looking at the successful example of some Danish policemen who managed to substantially reduce radicalization through some counter-intuitive thinking
http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/485603559/npr.org/485900076
Ideal for policy makers, parents, teachers, and NGO workers.

### 23. Scriptural Reasoning
Brings religious leaders and thinkers together to discuss the commonalities and differences between their faiths. It is a way of building bridges between communities of faith, and becoming more religiously literate in the process.
http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/
Particularly relevant for religious leaders and NGOs, and can be used by teachers.

### 24. Institute of Strategic Dialogue YouthCAN - Youth Innovation Labs
Provides immersive, activist-led events that create a secure environment to facilitate capacity-building while giving participants the contacts, tools, and resources needed to develop campaigns for preventing violent extremism.
http://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/YouthCAN-Labs.pdf
Ideal for activists, youth, policy makers, and community leaders.

### 25. Football for Peace Initiative
The project contributes to peace building in a universal language - sports. It advocates, educates, and challenges minds.
http://footballforpeaceglobal.org/
Ideal for activists, youth, policy makers, teachers, parents, and community leaders.

### 26. Play by the rules - The Seven Pillars of Inclusion
A collaborative effort to ensure child safety, anti-discrimination, and inclusion in sports. It has developed a framework known as the seven pillars of inclusion to guide sports clubs in ensuring all people have equal access to sports participation.  https://www.playbytherules.

net.au/
Ideal for activists, youth, policy makers, teachers, parents, NGOs, and community leaders.

### 27. ThoughtCo
Discusses ways teachers can help prevent school violence.
https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-help-prevent-school-violence-8175
Ideal for teachers and school administrators.

### 28. Great Good
Reports on groundbreaking research into the roots of compassion, happiness, and altruism.
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/education
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and parents.

### 29. My Jihad
Public education campaign that seeks to share the proper meaning of Jihad as believed and practiced by the majority of Muslims.
https://www.myjihad.org
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, policy makers, and parents.

### 30. Turnaround for Children
Provides tools and strategies for schools with high concentrations of students impacted by adversity, in order to accelerate healthy development and academic achievement.
https://www.turnaroundusa.org/who-we-are/
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, parents, and policy makers who work with underprivileged kids in adverse areas.

### 31. Mothers against Violence
Provides different kind of help, support, and resources to understand the role of women in prevention of violent extremism and help engage them.
http://mavuk.org
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, parents, and policy makers.

### 32. Serve to Unite
Connects young people with global mentors from Against Violent Extremism and The Forgiveness Project, provides opportunities for student-designed artistic and volunteer projects, works to establish a dialogue between groups.
https://serve2unite.org
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, parents, and policy makers.

### 33. Guide "What if I was wrong?"
Helps organize activities that allow participants to move forward in a process of self-discovery, discovery of others, and exploration of the world around them.
http://etsijavaistort.org/en/guideen/
Ideal for everyone: parents, teachers, and administrators.
Chapter: Media and the Internet

### 34. Creating Role Models in Media Enterprise
Offers young people an opportunity to express their emotions and experiences while learning transferable skills based around production. The website provides resources and workshops.
http://creatingrolemodels.org.uk/programs-workshops
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, parents, media representatives, and policy makers.

### 34. Operation250
The website seeks to educate about online safety and how to most effectively protect themselves from coming into contact with online violent extremist material and individuals.
https://www.operation250.org
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, and parents.

### 35. Common Sense Education
Provides comprehensive learning resources for digital citizenship to empower students to make safe, smart, and ethical decisions online
https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, and parents.

### 36. Prevent Violent Extremism
This portal assembles recent research on violent extremism and social media.
https://preventviolentextremism.info/

Ideal for young people and teachers.

### 37. Digital Disruption
Resource about media and information literacy. Through the use of videos and ideas that can form part of a curriculum, students develop resilience and critical thinking towards the information they are receiving both on and off line.
 http://www.digitaldisruption.co.uk
Ideal for teachers and media representatives.

### 38. UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Resources
These websites provide access to interactive and intercultural resources to help teach MIL in formal and nonformal settings.
http://unesco.mil-for-teachers.unaoc.org/
http://en.unesco.org/themes/media-and-information-literacy
https://milunesco.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Media_and_Information_Literacy_and_Intercultural_Dialogue.pdf
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, and media representatives.

### 39. A Manual for Combating Hate Speech Online through Human Rights Education
Resource to combat hate speech online step by step https://book.coe.int/eur/en/human-rights-and-democracy/6023-pdf-bookmarks-a-manual-for-combating-hate-speech-online-through-human-rights-education.html
Ideal for teachers, school administrators, and media representatives.

### 40. MIL CLICKS
Media and Information Literacy: Critical-thinking, Creativity, Literacy, Intercultural, Citizenship, Knowledge and Sustainability is a social media innovation led by UNESCO. This strategy uses social media to expose people to become more media and information literate and raise awareness about the importance of media and information literacy (MIL).
http://en.unesco.org/MILCLICKS
Ideal for teachers and school administrators.

### 41. 'YouTube's Creators for Change'
Announced in September 2016, Creators for Change is a global initiative dedicated to amplifying young YouTubers using their channels to front social change to promote messages of tolerance and empathy.
https://www.youtube.com/yt/creators-for-change/
Ideal for young people and teachers.

### 42. 'Abdel en Vrai' (Youtuber)
Abdel En Vrai, the Muslim-Belgium-Moroccan comedian with 15,662,802 views, has been recognized for his work and named one of YouTube's Creators for Change. Sugar-coated with humor, his videos speak about a stark reality for Muslims in Belgium where Islamophobia is rampant and 67 percent of the population feels invaded by immigrants. "Obviously, let's face it, they don't consider Swedes and Italians as immigrants," Abdel explains in one video. "When I saw this statistic, I thought I should maybe refresh Belgians' memory." (French language)
https://www.youtube.com/user/Abdelscenedup
Ideal for teachers and school administrators.

### 43. "The War of Mine" Game
This war survival video game allows young people to see what civilians experience of a war or conflict.
https://thiswarofmine.gamepedia.com/This_War_of_Mine_Wiki
Ideal for teachers and young people.

In September 2016, the education sector from the UNESCO headquarters and the UNESCO category 1 research Institute, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) organised the first *International Conference on Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education: Taking Action, in New Delhi, India.*
The conference culminated with the presentation of a "Youth Action Plan" containing three clear, tangible action points. One action point was the development of a **youth-led** guide on Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education. The #YouthWagingPeace is the result of that call to action. Supported by UNESCO MGIEP and the Government of Australia, and spearheaded by two coordinating lead authors and five lead/chapter authors, the #YouthWagingPeace is an amalgamation of reaching out to 2000+ youth, integrating 150+ concrete voices and experiences from over 58 countries from all corners of the world. After analysing these voices and experiences, and supplemented by the literature, the guide puts forth tangible action guidelines for teachers, school administrators, policymakers, youth and other stakeholders with the power to positively influence the behaviour of a young person.

SUPPORTED BY

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