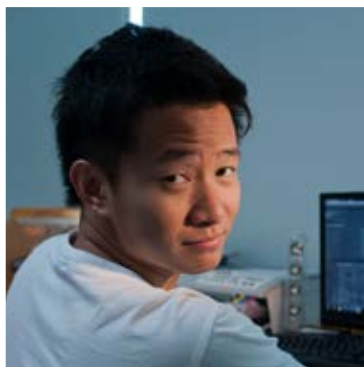


Frontlines

Young people at the forefront of preventing and responding to violent extremism



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UNDP Global Report

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Foreword

Frontlines Highlights Youth's Central Role to Prevent Violent Extremism



The youthful profile of many recruits into violent extremist groups have put a *de facto* spotlight on youth, with a growing and somewhat narrow concern over their radicalization.

It is high time that we recognize that only a minority of young men and women are engaged in such violence. Moreover, youth are often the victims of violence perpetrated by extremist groups. They are also often the subject of excessive security measures.

In response to the increasing - yet still inadequate - attention to youth in policy discussions on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), UNDP has carried out this comprehensive and multi-country research, entitled *Frontlines*. The report analyzes and synthesizes the perceptions and aspirations of youth in order to better understand their role in PVE. The report fills a knowledge-gap in terms of systemic information on how youth engagement in PVE should look like and what approaches may work best.

It is our hope that *Frontlines*, which includes illustrative examples and policy and programming recommendations, will be an invaluable tool for national and local governments, UN agencies, development partners, academic institutions, civil society and youth organizations, movements and networks.

This study also serves as part of a United Nations (UN) System-wide approach to PVE. *Frontlines* contributes to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security, the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2016) and the UN Youth Strategy ("Youth 2030", 2018).

If the object of policy and programming is ultimately to design and support effective approaches to prevent violent extremism while

upholding human rights standards, then it is vital that we better understand and nurture youth-led action on the ground. I believe that this report achieves this goal. Thus, the report aims to support a paradigm shift in thinking about youth's role in PVE in order to find more effective approaches.

The evidence collected clearly highlights that engaging with young people in a tokenistic way to prevent violent extremism will never suffice as an effective preventive approach.

Young people have a central role to play in PVE. They should be valued, promoted and supported as allies and partners for change. In all regions of the world, often with little support, and in challenging environments, young people have already taken up bold and effective action, using the full spectrum of PVE approaches. This ranges from online and offline advocacy campaigns to promoting the disengagement and reintegration of former fighters, to supporting education initiatives, to generating new insights and data analysis.

Such inspiring grassroots actions can bring fruitful results in other parts of the world. It is our hope that this report will serve a catalyst for a new generation of forward-looking actions that truly promote and support youth empowerment for sustainable development and peace.

UNDP and our partners also have an opportunity to unite more closely together, align actions and goals, and pursue a powerful youth-inclusive approach to prevention. In this respect, UNDP looks forward to both strengthening existing; and building new partnerships in this crucial area.

The standout message from *Frontlines* is that youth must take a front and centre role to prevent and respond to violent extremism.

Achim Steiner,
UNDP Administrator

Foreword



Terrorism and violent extremism, which have now reached unprecedented levels, divide communities, exacerbate conflicts, fuel hate and jeopardize our collective efforts to promote and protect human rights. In other words, these phenomena hamper sustainable development and peace, sometimes for generations.

This excellent report by UNDP, *Frontlines*, addresses assumptions about the role of youth in the context of violent ex-

tremism, maps concrete examples of initiatives led by youth movements, platforms and organizations to prevent the phenomenon, synthesizes focus group discussions which fed into the development of *The Missing Peace*², and articulates a much-needed call to action. It also offers a useful contribution to the implementation of “Youth 2030”, the first-ever United Nations Youth Strategy³, launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in September 2018.

Even though young people are joining violent extremist groups more than any other age demographic, evidence shows that the vast majority of youth neither fall prey to the tactics of terrorists, nor are participating in violence. On the contrary, young people are our biggest hope and, rather than downplaying their overwhelmingly positive role, we should build on their aspirations and prodigious efforts to build resilience and social cohesion.

This convincing report invites us all to identify, promote and partner with youth-led initiatives and to prioritize powerful preventive approaches over ineffective -or even harmful- remedial measures.

Violent extremism is a grave and complex multi-dimensional threat, which should be addressed through principled, human-rights based and coordinated responses, and more importantly, with young people at the heart.

Jayathma Wickramanayake,
United Nations Secretary-General’s
Envoy on Youth

Acronyms and abbreviations

AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
CVE	Countering violent extremism
C/PVE	Countering and preventing violent extremism
CSO	Civil society organization
FGD	Focus group discussion
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
IS	Islamic State
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGC	UNDP Oslo Governance Centre
PVE	Preventing violent extremism/prevention of violent extremism
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOY Peacebuilders	United Network of Young Peacebuilders

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