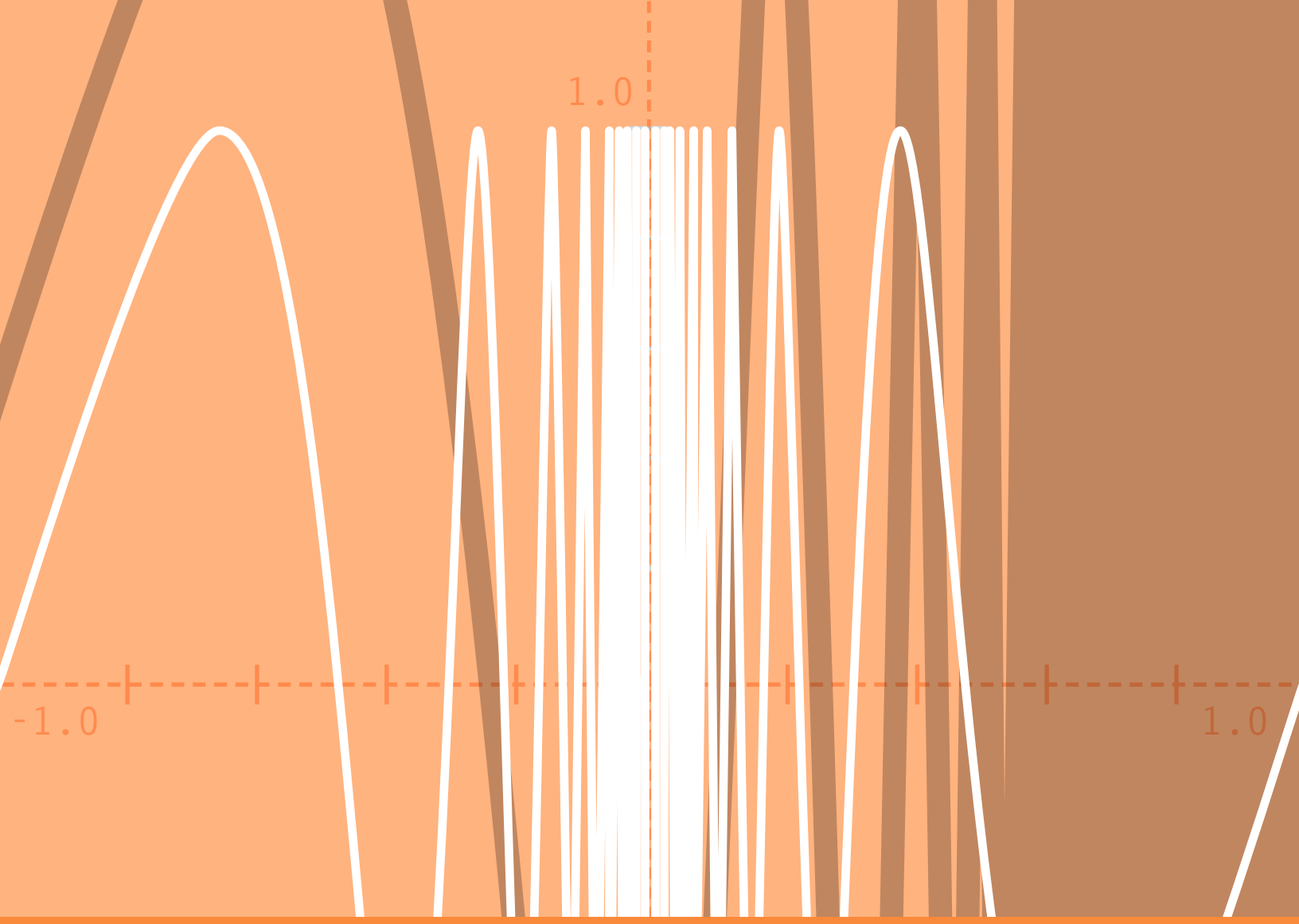


# Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism Programming

## Practice and Progress

BY NAUREEN CHOWDHURY FINK, PETER ROMANIUK AND RAFIA BARAKAT

CGCC
CENTER ON GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

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CENTER ON GLOBAL
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# Introduction

As the threat from terrorism becomes more diffuse, networked, and transnational, with newly emerging lone terrorists or small groups, so too have the tools of counterterrorism continued to evolve. Policymakers and practitioners are focusing more on preventing and countering radicalization and recruitment and improving the resilience of individuals and communities against the appeal of violent extremism. Reflective of these trends, efforts on countering violent extremism (CVE)[1] have emerged in a relatively short period as an increasingly important instrument in the counterterrorism tool kit as an integral part of their wider strategic objectives on countering terrorism. States are more attentive to the development of CVE strategies and are supporting initiatives that move beyond policy development and into implementation. Additionally, multilateral counterterrorism actors, such as the European Union and United Nations, have expanded their interest in CVE activities. Of particular note in this regard is the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), an informal, multilateral counterterrorism body comprising 29 countries plus the European Union that was launched in September 2011.[2] The GCTF serves as a platform for identifying critical civilian counterterrorism needs and mobilizing the necessary expertise and resources to address such needs and enhance global cooperation. In December 2012, the Hedayah International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism was launched as an initiative of the GCTF in Abu Dhabi to assist governments and stakeholders in their efforts.[3] Furthermore, regional organizations and civil society actors are becoming increasingly engaged in the development and implementation of CVE programming.

This shift toward a more proactive approach to terrorism and the resulting proliferation of CVE programming have raised questions and concerns about its effectiveness. Challenges exist not only in designing preventive programs but also in developing tools for measuring and evaluating their impact. For example, developing a CVE intervention requires that a number of questions be addressed: How does radicalization occur, and at what stage in the radicalization process is an intervention warranted? Should CVE programs target all who are sympathetic to the causes espoused by militant groups or only those who have provided active support? Do programs that address some of the grievances often associated with violent extremism, such as underdevelopment, inequality, or sociopolitical marginalization, merit being tagged with a CVE label? What kind of added value can be provided by CVE programs that are not included within development, education, or conflict mitigation and peace-building efforts?

The responses to these questions are important for establishing the scope and parameters of the program and in contributing to the development of indicators against which success can be measured, which should ideally be embedded in program design from the outset. Once the intervention has been designed, however, a number of obstacles remain in measuring its impact. These challenges include (1) determining the scope of the evaluation; (2) attributing causality where

[1] Among the terminology for similar activities are "counterradicalization" and "preventing violent extremism." This report will use the term "countering violent extremism" to denote noncoercive preventive engagement to address violent extremist ideas and behaviors.

[2] See http://www.thegctf.org.

[3] See http://www.hedayah.ae/about-hedayah/about-hedayah/.

the desired outcome is a nonevent, i.e., "measuring the negative"; and (3) obtaining resources and technical expertise to conduct an evaluation.[4] To a large extent, the answers to these questions will vary across regions and contexts and be determined by lessons learned from past practices. Reflecting the prevalence of CVE programs, there is now greater acceptance of the need to invest in program evaluation in order to address the questions and concerns about preventive interventions. It is no longer a question of whether, but how to conduct these evaluations.

Of course, practitioners can look in numerous places for guidance as they address the evaluation of terrorism prevention programs. Several states and organizations involved in deradicalization and disengagement efforts have already undertaken assessment of their CVE work in terms of outputs and outcomes. Their experiences, as well as those of others, including civil society groups, have offered some valuable lessons for those undertaking evaluations in this field. For example, one speaker noted the movement from big programs to smaller, more targeted projects; another presenter spoke of using the media and communication tools such as Facebook to gauge the impact of their work. Participants also spoke of the challenges in eliciting open discussions on CVE-related challenges in programs, and their experiences indicated the value of the media, particularly where fear and intimidation may prevent more-personalized intimate discussions; the media could offer a means of seeding the debate without challenging particular individuals to step forward publicly. As more programs develop to target detainees and help mainstream young offenders postrelease, experiences suggested the vital importance of not locking them into their identities as "formers," which could negatively impact their ability to move beyond their current circumstances. Such lessons have come to the fore as CVE programs have proliferated and generated a set of results and lessons that can inform future practice.

To draw on the lessons and good practices that have emerged from activities related to countering violent extremism and similar fields, the Government of Canada, as part of the GCTF Working Group on Countering Violent Extremism, hosted a two-day international symposium on measuring the effectiveness of CVE programming. Held 27–28 March 2013 in Ottawa and organized by Public Safety Canada and the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (CGCC), the symposium focused on evaluating CVE programming specifically and on sharing good practices to inform the design and further development of projects and programming undertaken by practitioners in government and civil society.

The symposium built on a 2012 colloquium in Ottawa on the topic of measuring the effectiveness of counterterrorism programming, which yielded the CGCC report "From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs." Perhaps the key finding of the symposium is that current efforts in this area demonstrate greater potential for evaluation than initially assessed by many practitioners and that progress in addressing the many challenges related to evaluating terrorism prevention programs is discernible. Symposium presenters offered some initial but concrete suggestions for how CVE evaluations can be done, particularly in terms of timelines, possible use of logic models and indicators, and data collection strategies. Participants also acknowledged that various ongoing and emerging challenges and questions remain to be explored and addressed, including methods for integrating CVE-specific and CVE-relevant measures for the purposes of programming and evaluation. Among the participants were senior government representatives from GCTF member and nonmember states, law enforcement officers, senior UN counterterrorism officials, academics, and civil society representatives.

This report draws on symposium discussions and related literature, emphasizing the ways in which the field has advanced since the publication of "From Input to Impact." It recaps the main conceptual and operational challenges in evaluating CVE programs, as reflected in recent practice, and offers four case studies demonstrating experiences and lessons learned from evaluating CVE programming and progress in the field. This report analyzes the current state of play on that basis and suggests opportunities for further developing the field of evaluation and its application to CVE programming.

[4] Peter Romaniuk and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, "From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs," Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, September 2012, http://www.globalct.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CGCC_EvaluatingTerrorismPrevention.pdf.

# Challenges in Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Efforts

The earlier CGCC report highlighted a number of important factors for consideration during three stages of an evaluation of preventive programming: design, implementation, and analysis.[5] Included among these were the following:

- **Defining the purpose**—A clear understanding of the objectives of the evaluation and the purpose for which it is being undertaken is needed to determine the type of evaluation to pursue.

- **Determining the scope**—In light of the broad range of programming that might contribute to CVE objectives, evaluations need to be clear about the scope of the programming, i.e., whether the evaluation is focusing on a particular project (a vertical evaluation); a policy theme or strategy, such as one specifically focused on CVE efforts through multiple agencies (a horizontal evaluation); or a broad range of programming that collectively contributes to CVE activities (a multidimensional evaluation).[6] Andrew Smith, a terrorism researcher at Monash University in Australia, has further disaggregated the multidimensional evaluations referenced above and noted that evaluations can take place at the levels of project, program, and policy (fig. 1).[7]

- **Identifying an evaluator**—External evaluators bring objectivity and technical evaluation expertise to the undertaking, but they may also be unfamiliar with the project or policy context and therefore miss more-granular transformations or impacts driven by the project. Internal evaluators may have that knowledge but lack the objectivity or the technical expertise to assess an initiative.

- **Selecting content**—What qualifies as a CVE program? CVE engagement is being undertaken in a range of areas, with a number of projects in such other policy domains as education, development, social services, and conflict mitigation. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to know what qualifies as a CVE-specific or a CVE-relevant program and where CVE results may be an additional outcome or impact rather than the primary objective of the program. In particular, evaluating CVE impact may be difficult if it is not explicitly elaborated in the initial design or implementation plan.

[5] Ibid.

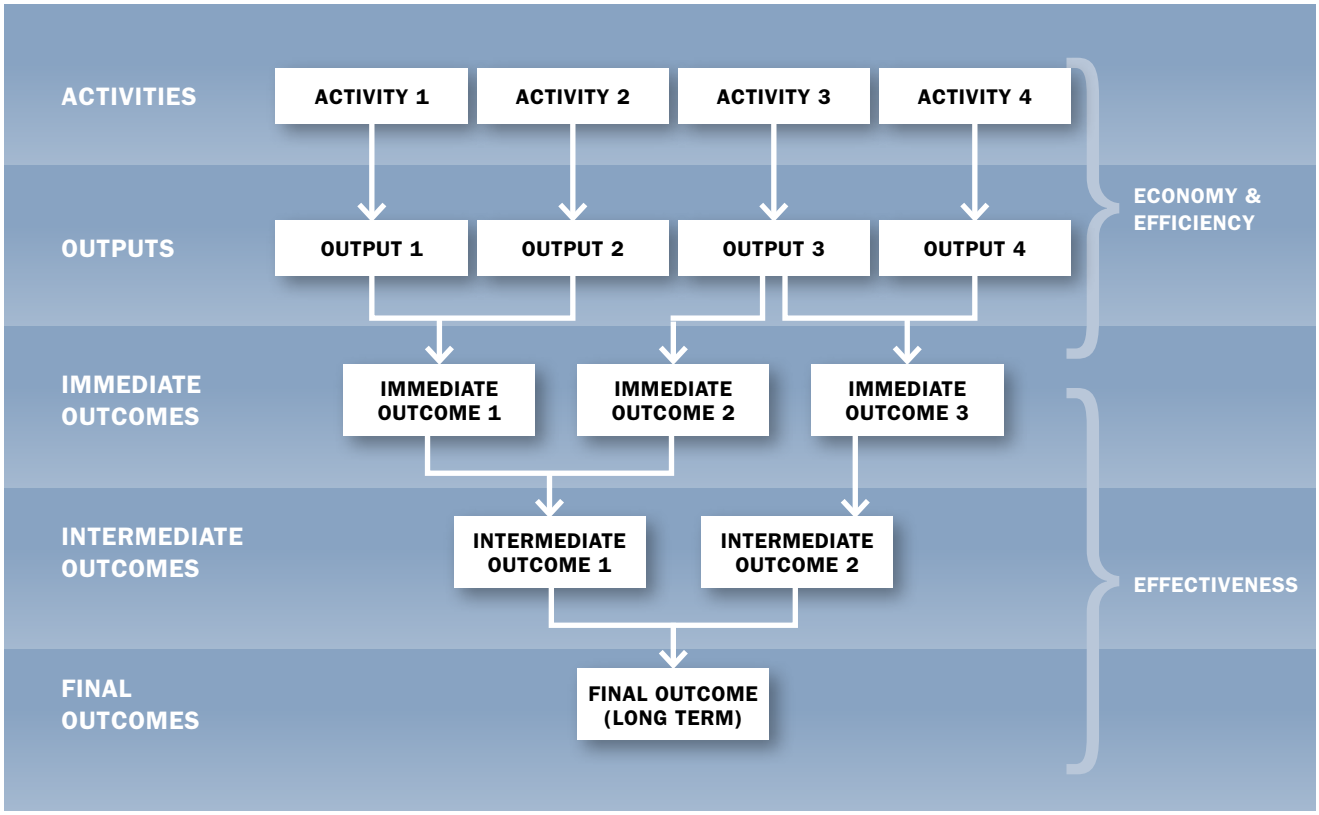
[6] Ibid.

[7] Andrew Smith, "CVE Program Evaluation Practices: Ideal Versus *Post-hoc* Evaluation" (presentation, Ottawa, 27 March 2013) (copy on file with authors).

- **Developing measurable indicators**—A lack of clarity about the nature and range of CVE programming can make it difficult to develop a set of benchmarks or indicators for success. Given the difficulties of assessing the causal relationship between a project and the CVE outcomes, data is likely to be largely qualitative. Yet, some projects working with more-technical aspects, such as communications or media, may be able to develop a set of empirical data to reflect impact.

These challenges reflect the difficulties of assessing the impact of preventive engagement—of "measuring the negative," where success is determined by a nonevent, which was discussed at the 2012 colloquium. The 2013 symposium sought to build on this discourse and explore how these dilemmas are addressed in practice. Practitioners tend to disaggregate between conceptual and operational challenges in considering evaluations of terrorism prevention programs. Moreover, practitioners tend to think about evaluation differently depending on the type of CVE intervention they seek to evaluate. Whether as part of an advertising campaign or a development initiative, a security sector reform campaign or a conflict transformation project, practitioners at the symposium presented a range of approaches that may be adapted to different needs and contexts.

## Figure 1. Logic Model for Developing CVE Evaluations




Source: Smith, "CVE Program Evaluation Practices: Ideal Versus *Post-hoc* Evaluation."

## Conceptual Challenges in Evaluating CVE Programming

A particular challenge arises in evaluating CVE engagement at the community level. A multiplicity of definitions and frameworks are used to inform policy and programs. The absence of a commonly agreed framework makes it difficult to develop a theory of change[8] and relevant indicators and has led to a continuing lack of clarity among international stakeholders about the nature and possible applications of CVE programming.

For example, the U.S. CVE strategy, "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," offers a broad overview of the kinds of programming that fall under the purview of CVE engagement. It suggests a focus on engaging local partners, including "families, local communities and local institutions," and calls for building on existing expertise and institutional infrastructure for "community-based problem solving, local partnerships, and community-oriented policing … [as] a basis for addressing violent extremism as part of a broader mandate of community safety."[9] Yet, identifying, establishing, and sustaining local partnerships remains a challenge for many actors.

Similarly, the Canadian Counter-Terrorism Strategy also emphasizes the need for prevention and engagement activities with communities and other partners at all levels of government, industry, and civil society. Within its "Prevent" element, the strategy aims to, among other things, attain the desired outcome of bolstering the "resilience of communities to violent extremism and radicalization." The strategy adds some clarity about the audience for prevention programming and the threshold for intervention by stating that "[t]he threat from violent extremism is a significant national security challenge. Radicalization, which is the precursor to violent extremism, is a process by which individuals are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs toward extremist views. This becomes a threat to national security when individuals or groups espouse or engage in violence as a means of promoting political, ideological or religious objectives."[10]

The United Kingdom's "Prevent" strategy, part of the CONTEST counterterrorism policy made public in 2006, was revised in 2011 and broadened to include not only groups and individuals whose ideology may be conducive to violence, but also those who espouse nonviolent extremist ideas. The rationale for this is set out in the introduction to the strategy.

> We judge that radicalisation is driven by an ideology which sanctions the use of violence; by propagandists for that ideology here and overseas; and by personal vulnerabilities and specific local factors which, for a range of reasons, make that ideology seem both attractive and compelling.
>
> There is evidence to indicate that support for terrorism is associated with rejection of a cohesive, integrated, multi-faith society and of parliamentary democracy. Work to deal with radicalisation will depend on developing a sense of belonging to this country and support for our core values.[11]

In the United Kingdom, one measure of effectiveness for some programs conducted under the Prevent policy is the government's National Implementation Indicators, which set out a set of national level priorities and policy objectives to be achieved through local government and authorities.[12] This creates a broadly accepted set of indica-

[8] Romaniuk and Chowdhury Fink, "From Input to Impact," p. 9.

[9] The White House, "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States," August 2011, pp. 2–3, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf.

[10] Government of Canada, "Building Resilience Against Terrorism: Canada's Counter-Terrorism Strategy," 2013, p. 14, http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/ns/_fl/2012-cts-eng.pdf.

[11] UK Government, "*Prevent* Strategy," Cm 8092, June 2011, p. 13, http://www.met.police.uk/prevent/prevent-strategy-review.pdf.

[12] UK Department for Communities and Local Government, "National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook and Definitions," April 2008, http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Resources/Documents/n/NationalIndicatorSetFinalDefinitionsApr08Intro.pdf.

tors across various government departments and allows for comparative analyses.

Although each of these strategies sets out a broad framework for CVE engagement and demonstrates an increased emphasis on preventive engagement with communities, they do not clearly define the kinds of outcomes that might be expected from programs. This is unsurprising given that countering violent extremism is an evolving policy theme and portfolio for many of the stakeholders and highly dependent on the contexts in which it is being implemented. For these reasons, CVE programs can be particularly difficult to evaluate at the policy level, although some indications of impact may be more easily derived from individual projects. As counterterrorism experts Clint Watts and Will McCants note, "[T]here is not a shared view of what CVE is or how it should be done. Definitions range from stopping people from embracing extreme beliefs that might lead to terrorism to reducing active support for terrorist groups. The lack of a clear definition for CVE not only leads to conflicting and counterproductive programs but also makes it hard to evaluate the CVE agenda as a whole and determine whether it is worthwhile to continue."[13]

Following on this, Watts and McCants have expressed concern that, in the domestic U.S. CVE program, for example, assigning CVE objectives to a range of agencies, including social services, "dilutes the collective capacity of government as a whole" and risks consuming resources disproportionate to the actual threat.[14] Instead, they have called for the government to shift focus from vulnerable populations to those who have expressed sympathy and support, including law-abiding supporters, for terrorist groups and designate one lead agency for CVE efforts, allowing for the development of programs with clearly defined objectives whose effectiveness can be defined against them.

Drawing on these debates, a common denominator in these CVE strategies is the noncoercive transformation of ideas or behaviors that lend support to terrorist groups and their objectives. A clear idea of the definition of the CVE concept to be applied to a program and an articulation of the theory of change or logic model associated with it also help to determine the kinds of indicators and methodologies applied, as well as assessments of success.

As noted in "From Input to Impact," another critical element in evaluating preventive engagement is the articulation of a theory of change, or outlining why and how the program will achieve its stated objective. Setting out a theory of change clearly or, indeed, any other version of a logic model helps clarify the aims and methods of the project and provides a critical assessment tool to determine if those aims have been met.[15] An important part of this process will be the development of baseline studies to measure the preprogram context and assess the extent of its impact, keeping in mind that, in complex environments, small shifts may represent big successes.

## Operational Challenges in Evaluating CVE Programming

In addition to the conceptual challenges to evaluating CVE engagement, a number of operational challenges have been raised by practitioners and policymakers. These include the limited availability of expertise in evaluation, particularly evaluating programs such as CVE initiatives; securing the resources to undertake evaluations without diverting resources from core programming; ensuring a culture of transparency and receptivity to the results of evaluations; securing the political will to undertake and learn from evaluations; and integrating evaluations into program design at the outset.

A number of civil society organizations represented at the Ottawa symposium noted, for example, that although evaluations were part of their project or program plans,

[13] Will McCants and Clinton Watts, "U.S. Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism: An Assessment," *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes,* December 2012, p. 1, https://www.fpri.org/docs/McCants_Watts_-_Countering_Violent_Extremism.pdf.

[14] Ibid., p. 4.

[15] Romaniuk and Chowdhury Fink, "From Input to Impact."

dedicated resources were rarely set aside to undertake them and concerns were raised that such an endeavor would divert already limited resources from the organizations' core programming. The head of one civil society organization active in CVE engagement and programming suggested that governments might consider transferring some of the expertise and data that may be inaccessible to civil society actors but necessary for evaluations. Several presenters agreed that training experts in the private sector or civil society to conduct evaluations could be a valuable means of enhancing capacity.

The need for greater awareness-raising and training regarding the evaluation of CVE programming was particularly true even of government agencies working in countries or contexts where resources for CVE engagement, particularly evaluation, are limited. Participants further debated the comparability of CVE programming and evaluation experience. On the one hand, the highly contextualized nature of CVE programs makes it difficult to compare programs and assess the applicability of good practices from international efforts. On the other, participants agreed that opportunities to convene at workshops such as those held in Ottawa in 2012 and 2013, bringing together government officials, practitioners, and experts, facilitated greater interaction and understanding of CVE initiatives in different countries and the prospect of good practices and lessons to inform future efforts.

In this regard, opportunities to bring together a broad range of stakeholders highlighted the challenges of evaluation for different types of purposes. Policymakers, civil society groups, and law enforcement officials all faced different kinds of timelines and evaluation needs. As noted above, the purpose of the evaluation helps determine the kinds of indicators and definitions of success. For police officers on the beat, success may be determined by shorter response times, more invitations by communities to interact, more calls with information or requests for assistance, or a higher conviction rate. For government officials, success may be determined by overall expressions of public satisfaction with counterterrorism policies, rising perceptions of public safety and confidence in law enforcement, and a reduction in the number of planned or executed terrorist attacks. The scope and audience for programs may vary in different locations, but peers in other countries or regions may be able to derive lessons learned from their counterparts.

For example, a core component of CVE engagement for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is community engagement (box 1). This includes outreach with youth and broad-based and tailored community engagement, as well as outreach with international partners. Indicators of success might include, for example, an increase in community contact, measures of trust before and after interactions, new contacts, the numbers of tips or leads, or the number of referrals between outreach and operations units within the RCMP. This approach is not dissimilar to community policing efforts in other regions. In some Southeast Asian countries, there are ongoing efforts to adopt community-oriented policing and shift the focus from punishment to problem-solving and building stronger relationships of trust between communities and police. Although these efforts are not necessarily focused exclusively on delivering CVE results, they are a valuable component of CVE engagement and exchanges of expertise and practices among professional peers across varied regions and may be one way of developing more broadly relevant mechanisms and indicators for evaluations.

The conceptual and operational challenges in evaluating CVE efforts are significant, but they are increasingly well defined and widely acknowledged by practitioners. Across the presentations made at the Ottawa symposium, it was striking how quickly the debate about these issues has advanced in recent years and how much more experience practitioners have accumulated in this field. As noted, a principal finding from the symposium is that practitioners share a common understanding of the importance of evaluating CVE programming and of the challenges that entails.

Further, those challenges have not inhibited evaluation activities but have informed the approach to evaluation that states have taken. Evaluations have been and are being undertaken, and there is a growing body of experience in advancing CVE programs and evaluating them.

## BOX 1. ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE'S APPROACH TO COUNTERING RADICALIZATION LEADING TO VIOLENCE

Canada's counterterrorism strategy was launched in February 2012 at a colloquium on measuring the effectiveness of counterterrorism programming, which was organized by the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation with the support of the governments of Canada, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The four components of the strategy include (1) preventing individuals from engaging in terrorism, (2) detecting the activities of individuals who may pose a terrorist threat, (3) denying terrorists the means and opportunity to carry out their activities, and (4) responding proportionately, rapidly, and in an organized manner to terrorist activities and to mitigate their effects.[a]

Focusing on the prevention aspect of the counterterrorism strategy, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) pays particular attention to community engagement programs, such as community policing, to build partnerships. The RCMP's goal in its community policing program is to establish a community-led, police-supported, sustainable response to mutually identified problems and issues. Although issues related to countering violent extremism (CVE) are not a particular focus of the community policing program, in some instances it is an outcome after interacting with communities and listening to their needs and the issues that affect them.

To evaluate its community policing program, the RCMP, in partnership with the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, developed five levels of engagement and five indicators of success to capture the progressive relationship and engagement with communities.[b]

| LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT | INDICATORS OF SUCCESS |
|---|---|
| Level 1—No established relationship between community and law enforcement exists. There is little or no mutual knowledge between them. | ■ Increase in community contacts |
| Level 2—Potential contacts within the community have been identified, but the relationship with law enforcement may be conflicted. | ■ Number of community members participating in each event<br>■ Increase in number of contacts established through an identified community sponsor |
| Level 3—Initial contact established but with limited coverage of crucial spheres of influence. | ■ Pre- and postevent measures of trust, support, and understanding of law enforcement (e.g., through surveys)<br>■ Increase in number of new contacts, community sponsors, and engagement requests from community |
| Level 4—Mutual understanding and shared education is developing. Recurring dialogue is present, and "critical spheres of influence" are addressed. | ■ Increase in number of tips/leads received<br>■ Increase in the number of community-led or supported initiatives to counter violent extremism |
| Level 5—Comprehensive network of meaningful relationships among a community, law enforcement, and partners | ■ Increase in the number of referrals between outreach and operations, and the number of community-led or supported CVE initiatives, as well as the number of community-led CVE initiatives supported by law enforcement |

[a] Tasleem Budhwani, "Violence Reduction and Community Engagement" (presentation, Ottawa, 28 March 2013) (copy on file with authors).

[b] International Association of Chiefs of Police Committee on Terrorism Countering Violent Extremism Working Group, "Community Outreach and Engagement Principles," n.d., http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP-COT_CommPolicingPrinciples__FINALAug12.pdf.

# Emerging Practice in CVE Evaluation

The sessions at the symposium were designed to capture current experience by drawing out a comparison of different approaches by states and the activities of civil society actors and other practitioners undertaking CVE evaluations. There was also a focus on related thematic issues, including community engagement, community policing, and the relevance of deradicalization and disengagement programming. The boxes in this report contain summaries of four presentations from the symposium to give a sense of practice and progress in the field. On the basis of these and other cases presented, six findings reflect the state of play in this emerging field.

First, the difficulties of evaluating CVE programs are understood and appreciated by practitioners, who tend to see them in quite similar terms. Indeed, practitioners have tended to respond to these challenges in similar ways, and several presenters underscored the importance of being pragmatic in using evaluations to assess CVE activities. Pragmatism seemingly is sometimes enforced as a result of resource constraints in deploying evaluation tools, but it can prove to be a virtue in terms of gathering and assessing evidence where there are few direct precedents for doing so. Several presenters noted the importance of anecdotal evidence in assessing the impact of certain CVE interventions. In order to increase the robustness of such data, they suggested pooling and comparing anecdotal understandings in a systematic way or integrating them into the formal evidence-gathering process.

Although acknowledging the dilemmas of self-evaluation, which may be performed by program implementers or even beneficiaries, several presenters emphasized the participation of program staff in evaluations. This can be a method of verifying the observations of others, increasing the size of the data pool, or achieving an intersubjective understanding of a particular effect. There may be a demand for genuinely "participatory evaluations" in this regard, to generate more information about program effects by gathering observations from a broader range of stakeholders. Most presenters described triangulating data, including through open source research, as a useful way to build a more robust picture about the effects of an intervention (box 2). The analogy of jigsaw puzzles was raised, noting that evidence can be pieced together from diverse sources to give a more complete picture of an intervention.

The theme of pragmatism in approaching CVE evaluations resonated across the panels. For some practitioners, especially in law enforcement, CVE programming needs to be flexible and responsive to developments at the neighborhood level. Under these circumstances, the tools of social science must often yield to the "art" of understanding how the target audience in specific communities is impacted. Where there may be no opportunity to undertake a formal baseline study, it is important to know the audience in advance, such that impacts can be intuited in a less formal way.

## BOX 2. EVALUATING PROGRAMS TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM: THE DANISH EXPERIENCES

The Danish approach toward efforts to counter violent extremism includes supporting local governments and actors in preventing radicalization and extremism.[a] This approach is particularly focused on the early identification of risk behavior and signs of concern among professionals and focuses on a preventive social agenda rather than a security one. Their approach targets three levels—the "prevention triangle."

1. General level—building and strengthening the state's resistance against extremist propaganda, for example through campaigns and general education. The focus is on inclusion, democracy, and civic citizenship.
2. Group level—a more focused effort on specific vulnerable groups, for example, youths at risk of radicalization. The idea is to forestall the radicalization process through, for example, role model visits, parents' networks, educational theater, and dialogue workshops.
3. Individual level—includes intervention to revert the radicalization process, for example by municipality mentors, parent coaches, and prison mentors.

### METHODOLOGIES

In evaluating prevention efforts at the group level, the Danish government employed Donald Kirkpatrick's four steps of learning.[b]

1. Reaction: the immediate experience of the course
2. Learning: increased knowledge and changes in attitude
3. Behavior: behavioral changes (is it used in practice?)
4. Results: effects on surroundings

For example, dialogue workshops were held to teach youths in vulnerable areas about the phenomenon of radicalization and extremism, their behavior toward each other, and generalizations and preconceptions about minorities.[c] After the workshop, participants were surveyed to capture their thoughts about the event and whether it changed their behavior or attitudes in a lasting way. In evaluating prevention efforts at the individual level, the Outcomes Star model was employed, where progression was measured before, during, and after an intervention. Individuals received a score from 0 to 4, with 4 being the best score. In measuring one of its mentoring programs, evaluators used two interlinked "progression schemes" that measured signs of concerns (e.g., in behavior, relations, and attitudes) and the individual's resilience and ability to change.

### FINDINGS

1. Use triangulation to evaluate participants as well as professionals (teachers, social workers, and others)
2. Evaluate repeatable efforts
3. Continue evaluations even after courses or projects end
4. Keep questionnaires short and have participants fill them out on-site
5. Register progression and attitude of participants on a number of dimensions, such as attitudes toward politics, government, institutions, minorities, and situations where violence may be justified, such as protecting human rights or ethnic groups
6. Develop "concepts" that reduce local variations
7. Ensure that quantitative data is backed by qualitative research to forestall difficulties in explaining a given effect
8. Integrate the use of evaluation and progression tools in the training and education of professionals if possible
9. Ensure that evaluation and progression tools are in line with the toolbox of relevant professionals and use the same dimensions, structure, arguments, and score line if possible

[a] Michael Karlsen, "Evaluating CVE Programs: The Danish Experiences" (presentation, Ottawa, 15 June 2013) (copy on file with authors).

[b] Donald Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels* (San Francisco: Brett-Koehler Publishers, 1998).

[c] The Danish Security and Intelligence Service (Politiets Efterretningstjenneste, or PET) conducts its own series of discussions that provide channels for group interaction between state authorities and members of the Muslim community in Denmark, known as the Dialogue Forum. See Julian Brett, "Recent Danish Counterradicalization Initiatives: A Case Study on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Dialogue Forum," CGCC, April 2012, http://www.globalct.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/brett_policybrief_121.pdf.

It was apparent from the survey of current evaluation practices that context matters. Evaluation methods and tools have tended to evolve on a trial and error basis, seeking better empirical indicators of program effects while acknowledging the social aspect of evaluation and the importance of relationships (e.g., between law enforcement and the community) in assessing outcomes. When faced with short time horizons and noisy data, evaluators may need to engage more systematically with evaluation experts and social scientists to ensure that pragmatism and rigor are complementary and to "be as robust as possible within resource constraints," as one presenter said. To that end, CVE evaluations that draw on multiple perspectives may be more insightful, given the likelihood that governments and recipients define "effectiveness" differently. Pragmatic observations of this nature are perfectly consistent with evaluation practices in other fields where the dilemmas of "measuring the negative" and related concerns are foremost in the minds of evaluators; the field of CVE evaluation is maturing in this regard.

Second, the symposium yielded insights about the range of CVE programs currently pursued and the methods used to evaluate them. The comparison of state CVE practices made clear that many states pursue multilevel CVE initiatives encompassing strategic communications, community-level engagement, and individual-level interventions. Internationally, a few states have developed strategic communication and development-related programming toward CVE objectives, with the latter sometimes channeled through foreign aid (box 3).

At home and abroad, the audience for CVE engagements was often defined quite broadly. Not all initiatives have been preceded by a formalized risk assessment process, but in many cases, some study of local security challenges has been undertaken. In turn, evaluation strategies tend to reflect the level at which programming is pitched (e.g., surveys where the audience is broadest, followed by focus groups and interviews where programs have a narrower focus). Practitioners tend to prefer to use multiple, formal evaluation tools where possible and, as noted, often endeavor to increase their data pool in less-formal ways. In order to assess CVE outcomes, some evaluations focus on CVE-specific programming alone, although most tend to prefer a more horizontal approach by including an analysis of CVE-relevant programming where possible. In many instances, programs have contributed to CVE objectives without applying a CVE label to those initiatives. Some practitioners have noted that this label can be counterproductive to the program aims in some circumstances. In those instances, practitioners may attempt to disaggregate the CVE impact of an intervention or the extent to which such programs address conditions that experts have recognized as possible drivers of violent extremism.

The relative coherence of emerging CVE evaluation experience is promising as it may increase the comparability of approaches undertaken by actors at the governmental and nongovernmental levels. Yet, several practitioners have noted the value of identifying and reaching out to "best persons," alongside best practices, to advance programming goals and for the purposes of evaluation. Selecting the right partners to help implement and evaluate programs may correlate more strongly with success than the use of any particular policy or evaluation tool alone.

Third, if impressions of current CVE evaluation practice are correct and provided that experiences are documented, shared, and analyzed, there may be opportunities in the not-too-distant future to "close the loop" with regard to CVE evaluation and to draw on multiple examples of experiences in doing so. Practitioners in Ottawa all underscored the importance of evaluation, but they uniformly described it as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. As one senior evaluator noted, "Evaluation is more than 'evaluations.'" The core objective of evaluation is to enhance the effectiveness of CVE programming. Toward this end, a systematic approach to gathering evaluation experience may soon permit the kind of meta-analysis of findings that can be fed back into the program design and planning phases of the CVE policy cycle. Some actors are at or approaching this point and have expressed an interest in sharing information about their experiences in this regard.

### BOX 3. EVALUATION OF CVE PROGRAMMING BY THE U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AFRICA

In November and December 2012, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) commissioned a midterm evaluative study of its programming on countering violent extremism (CVE) operating in East Africa. The evaluation looked at three USAID-funded youth empowerment programs targeted at ethnic Somali youth in Somalia and Kenya.[a] Although the study was not intended as a performance evaluation of the projects, it looked at the comparative results produced by the projects regarding youth resistance to extremist recruiting.

**HYPOTHESIS:** a decreased risk of extremism will result when the enabling environment for extremism is reduced, as measured by five core indicators (drivers of violent extremism).

**METHODOLOGIES:** The study focused on three populations: full-program beneficiaries compared with similar numbers of partial beneficiaries, mostly program dropouts or less-involved participants, and a comparison group of nonbeneficiaries. It looked at almost 1,500 surveys that were carried out by all three of the USAID-funded projects to generate feedback. The surveys centered on five thematic areas representing factors (drivers) that push or pull an individual into violent extremism.

- Level of civic engagement
- Level of efficacy
- Level of support and belief in the power of youth
- Level of individual's sense of identity
- Level of support for use of violence in the name of Islam

The evaluation team also triangulated the quantitative survey results with focus groups that further explored the issue areas with youth in the surveyed communities.

**UNIT OF ANALYSIS:** average (mean) difference between full beneficiaries, partial beneficiaries, and nonbeneficiaries. Two mean differences were tracked, between full beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries and between full beneficiaries and partial beneficiaries. Particular attention was placed on the mean difference between full beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries.

#### FINDINGS

1. Standardize monitoring and evaluating of CVE programs. Establish common metrics for all programs in terms of outputs and outcomes and regularly assess changes over time. For example, the same or slightly modified survey questions can be readministered on an annual basis.

2. Emphasize broad stakeholder engagement. Improved targeting can be informed by greater emphasis on broad stakeholder engagement to reduce the enabling environment for extremism.

3. Improve targeting. Target youth most at risk by partnering with nontraditional organizations, offering services in demand, and adapting program content for broader messaging.

[a] Angela Martin, "Evaluation of USAID Countering Violent Extremism Programming" (presentation, Ottawa, 28 March 2013) (copy on file with authors); USAID, "Mid-Term Evaluation of Three Countering Violent Extremism Projects," 22 February 2013 (copy on file with authors).

Given that CVE efforts are a relatively new tool of counterterrorism policy and the significant investments that states are making in CVE activities, gathering lessons from past and ongoing practice would represent an important and valuable advance in the field. For this reason, there appears to be some demand for the use of standardized terms and perhaps to take other steps, such as development of a typology or framework for analysis or building a database, to ensure that the body of emerging practice can be appropriately leveraged in this regard.

Fourth, the symposium illustrated the contributions that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can make in the implementation and evaluation of CVE programs. Across a range of fields, domestic NGOs that work at the community level and international NGOs that work in regions in which there is an extremist presence have vast programmatic experience, local knowledge, and community access on which to draw (box 4). In many cases, their work can be seen as relevant toward achieving the objectives of CVE efforts. In some instances, they have developed and institutionalized practices for evaluating their work as part of their reporting and accountability processes to public and private donors. For these reasons, a more structured dialogue between governmental practitioners and NGOs on the topic of CVE evaluation may be fruitful moving forward.

Smaller NGOs may struggle to meet the evaluation expectations of funders. Smaller civil society groups may not possess the administrative and technical resources and expertise to conduct and deliver the evaluations that donors, often states or large foundations, may require. Consequently, some have expressed a desire for greater support, in terms of funding and technical assistance, to strengthen their capacities on this front.

Fifth, the growing body of experience in reviewing deradicalization programs can usefully inform the understanding of theories of change around which CVE programs are built. As understanding of CVE concepts grows, deradicalization programs provide an important point of comparison regarding the identification of such causal pathways away from extremism. Deradicalization programs have grappled with the difficult question of evaluating an intangible outcome. For some, success has been defined through behavioral characteristics (e.g., whether detainees exhibit violent behavior, join violent groups, or support the use of violence for political expression). Other programs have ambitiously sought cognitive changes, such as an ideological transformation of a detainee. The latter case especially poses a difficult evaluation challenge, but several programs have developed their own benchmarks or indicators for success that can inform CVE evaluations practices. Recidivism and group membership are more-straightforward measures. Others have looked at individual transformations, participation in community activities and sports, and personal and professional development as indicators of success. Although they may not converge completely with CVE programs, they offer some insights and lessons for the evaluation of transformative interventions such as CVE efforts.

Finally, symposium participants considered the implications of existing evaluation practice for those responding to problems of extremism in diverse or distinctive contexts. As some of the cases captured in this report reflect, CVE programming and its evaluation is most advanced in western Europe and North America, as well as Australia, and it is those states too that have sought to implement CVE measures abroad (e.g., as integrated into foreign aid delivery). In these governments, understanding and expertise regarding CVE activities, especially in so far as they have emerged out of evaluation activities, is perhaps more likely to be consolidated and institutionalized. Yet, other states, including GCTF members and their partners, who are at different levels of development and democratic consolidation, are aware of the emergence of CVE concepts and recognize the value of counterterrorism policies that exhibit an appropriate and effective balance between the tools of hard and soft power. For a number of states and civil society practitioners, however, harnessing the necessary expertise, personnel, and resources to address this need remains a pressing challenge. Again, as understanding of CVE programming grows, a particular concern for CVE policymakers and evaluators is to render findings that are relevant for

### BOX 4. DERADICALIZATION AND DISENGAGEMENT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE VIOLENCE PREVENTION NETWORK

Initiated in Germany in 2001, the Violence Prevention Network (VPN) is a group of experienced specialists in the fields of violence prevention and education. The team works with individuals, particularly juvenile offenders, who have been imprisoned for ideologically motivated acts of violence. The VPN aims to help these individuals take responsibility for their actions and to distance themselves from inhuman ideology. Its prison program includes antiviolence training and civic education, as well as long-term group training in prison and postrelease stabilization coaching.

#### METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the impact of its program, the VPN interviews participants, trainers, and prison staff before the trainings begin, during the trainings, immediately afterward, and one year after the training ends.[a] During a qualitative evaluation of its program in 2010, the VPN obtained records of 188 ex-participants between 2003 and 2009 from the Federal Criminal Record. They found that 13.3 percent of its participants were reincarcerated for acts of violence or terrorism, compared to 41.5 percent of reincarcerations after state interventions.

#### FINDINGS

1. People can change.
2. The first year is the most critical.
3. There is no change in behavior without the capacity for empathy.
4. Gaining insights rather than conditioning.
5. The trainer is more important for success than the methodology.
6. Deradicalization is more than a training program.
7. Secure income increases the possibility for success.

[a] Judy Korn, presentation at "Symposium on Measuring the Effectiveness of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Programming," Ottawa, 27–28 March 2013 (copy on file with authors).

practitioners seeking to advance CVE goals in different environments. Indeed, a focus on evaluation can contribute to an assessment of what kinds of capacity-building assistance may be required by partner governments and civil society organizations considering CVE measures in these contexts.

# Next Steps in Measuring the Effectiveness of CVE Measures

Although CVE efforts are a relatively recent addition to the counterterrorism tool kit, it is now a rapidly growing field. The turn to CVE activities reflects responsiveness to evolving patterns of violence and extremism, as well as a determination to craft counterterrorism policies that strike an effective and appropriate balance among diverse measures toward the goal of preventing and suppressing terrorism. The commitment to evaluation is integral to these objectives. Indeed, on the basis of the symposium results and in light of the prior work in the area, practitioners in this area are presented with a unique opportunity. As CVE practice continues to grow and as evaluation activities of various kinds are undertaken by different governments and other practitioners, stakeholders are well positioned to systematically gather data and findings with the goal of learning from experience.

Few domains within counterterrorism policy lend themselves to completing the policy cycle in this way and realizing the benefits of it. For this reason, the next wave of policy-relevant CVE research should focus on a more thorough mapping of experience, with a view to facilitating comparative analyses and generating insights about effective programming, particularly given the convergence of several domains of policy and practice in developing CVE interventions. There seems to be a demand for this from within the emerging professional community of CVE practitioners, whose networks should be maintained and extended.

The discussions at the 2013 Ottawa symposium suggested a number of follow-up steps, some of which are listed below, to support policymakers, CVE program designers, and implementing partners in furthering evaluation efforts.

- **A compendium of existing evaluation practices and models.** Such a compendium could collate experiences and expertise in evaluating CVE programming across several regions and practices. It could be a living document that serves as a repository of reference tools and research for practitioners to access and offer guidance on the design, implementation, and evaluation of CVE programming. It will include good practices that have emerged from Canadian experiences in implementing CVE-related initiatives and can be expanded as more information is gathered. This dynamic quality can allow it to reflect innovations and evolutions in the domain of CVE practice.

- **A database of standardized typologies of evaluation terms and practices.** This could be independent from or a subset of the compendium. Having a commonly agreed glossary of terms across different countries and actors will allow for comparative analyses and exchanges of expertise and information and help shorten the learning cycle for states.

- **Dialogue and training for governmental practitioners and civil society partners.** Participants at the 2012 colloquium and 2013 symposium agreed on the value of multistakeholder dialogue and training and development opportunities to discuss common challenges and practices. A series of workshops could focus on building the capacities of civil society partners to conduct the kinds of evaluations many governments and international actors are demanding and could be used as a means for strengthening their own capacities for program design and impact assessment.

- **A handbook of evaluation practice for civil society.** An accessible reference tool for civil society actors and field-based actors such as NGOs could support groups that do not have the institutional resources or expertise to undertake evaluations of their work. Such a handbook could offer examples of existing, relevant evaluation models and offer a guide to the design and development of CVE programs and evaluations. Although focused on CVE topics, this handbook could have applications in strengthening civil society capacities for program evaluation more broadly.

The evaluation of CVE programming requires engagement with a broad range of actors whose work contributes to the environment in which CVE projects are undertaken, for example, development actors, educators, traditional and cultural leaders, and the media. To the extent possible, evaluations should include inputs from such actors. Yet, a number of barriers to closer cooperation between security and development actors remain, and the CVE realm is no exception. It is important to leverage every opportunity for broad multistakeholder discussions, particularly as CVE practices evolve and mature, to develop a clearer picture of the impact of CVE programs.

On the basis of current experience, it is feasible to chart a path forward to enable decision-makers to know with greater empirical precision whether they are indeed countering violent extremism. The challenges of formulating, implementing, and evaluating CVE programs are becoming increasingly familiar. In addressing those challenges, however, practice is advancing, and progress is discernible. The symposium demonstrated the potential of consolidating these gains. As terrorism continues to evolve, systematic understanding of how counterterrorism efforts work should remain a priority.

CGCC is a nonprofit research organization that works to improve international counterterrorism cooperation and capacity through collaborative research and policy analysis. CGCC develops innovative counterterrorism programming and training and assists key stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions for preventing terrorism. CGCC is working to improve intergovernmental cooperation at the global, regional, and subregional levels; support community-led efforts to counter violent extremism; ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law; and empower civil society and victims of terrorism to speak out. As transnational threats evolve, CGCC is also working to foster a new generation of holistic, rule of law-based responses to organized crime and other forms of transnational violence.

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