



8 Guiding Practices for Countering Violent Extremism from a Human Security and Young Peacebuilders' Perspective

Human Security Collective and UNOY Peacebuilders, April 2015

To effectively address violent extremism, a human security approach which is holistic, context-specific and people-centred is a necessity. Human security guards the essential freedoms, safety, identity and human dignity of all people.

The ultimate goal and responsibility of any security policy, including countering violent extremism policy, should be the preservation and protection of the freedoms, safety, identity, and dignity of individuals and their communities.

The important role of young community leaders in fostering resilient communities is often overlooked. Young people often have in-depth knowledge of young people's security situation as well as innovative ideas to improve the daily safety within their communities. The practices below provide guidelines for policymakers working in Countering Violent Extremism on how to work with young people as positive change-makers. These guiding practices complement and reinforce the [Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding](#).

1. Young people must be recognized as positive agents of change, capable of assessing threats in their communities. **The inclusion of young people** will shift their potential to peacebuilding efforts as opposed to leaving them vulnerable to recruitment by insurgency groups. It will give them a sense of ownership of conflict and peace. Neglecting the majority of a population is planning for disaster, not mitigating it.
2. The ideas and expertise of young female and male community leaders must be acknowledged as assets. They are valuable allies in tackling the most urgent security issues. Young people must be actively supported to design and implement **innovative alternative community security approaches**. They must be provided with opportunities to develop their skills in leadership and to monitor



their daily safety issues. This prepares them to better engage with key stakeholders at the local and national level in the security field.

3. The specific and **gendered grievances** and vulnerabilities that young people have must be recognized. Safe spaces must be offered to share experiences, including access to psychosocial support, justice and other support services for their rehabilitation and reintegration.
4. Support must be granted to young people and youth-led organizations who are **influential among their peers** in order to foster leadership skills. They are capable of reflecting patterns of inclusion and exclusion, to work proactively to address young people's grievances and to foster a culture of peace and tolerance.
5. **Youth-led peacebuilding organizations** that work for democratic values and peacebuilding must be supported through funding and allocation of other resources specifically for youth-led organizations. Their activities must not be limited.
6. Opportunities must be created for young people's **sustained and institutionalized participation**, ownership and leadership in local, national, regional and international decision-making processes. This ensures that young people can influence practices and policies affecting them, including issues of countering violent extremism. An enabling environment needs to be created for young people so that they have a viable alternative to violence, and can help bring about change in their communities.
7. Interventions targeting young people from a countering violent extremism perspective must be **conflict sensitive**, and also sensitive to the inequality and division among and between young people, their peers and communities, and ensure that these are not exacerbated or reinforced. Preconditions that create violent extremism are weakened by context specific assessments and providing remedies that are short-term responsive and long-term strategic.
8. Restricting civil liberties and civil society space in the name of security is counterproductive. **Civil society organizations are essential partners in countering violent extremism** as they have valuable knowledge and relationships that are essential for transforming conflict. An inclusive and comprehensive strategy to involve civil society will gain public support, earn legitimacy, support democracy, and have lasting positive effects.



About the authors

Human security collective (HSC) is a foundation with a strong background in development, conflict transformation and security. HSC bridges the gap between people and security. We address the asymmetric character of decision-making in the domain of security by ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement, and protect and expand the operational and political space of civil society. HSC connects local human security with global security, engages civil society with important security agendas on conflict prevention, counter terrorism and de-radicalization. www.hscollective.org

UNOY Peacebuilders is a global network strengthening sustainable youth-driven peacebuilding. We connect 60 youth peace organizations across 40 countries. Our goal is to create a world where young people have the opportunity and skills to contribute to peace. We work to strengthen youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, facilitate a safe space for dialogue and conflict transformation, develop the organizational capacities of our members and to bring the voices of young people to policy makers on a regional and global level. www.unoy.org | [@unoy_peace](https://twitter.com/unoy_peace) | info@unoy.org