**Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing
as tools to Counter Violent Extremism**

Introduction

Countering violent extremism (CVE) initiatives tackle conditions conducive to radicalization into violent extremism with the ultimate aim of denying terrorist groups new supporters and recruits. The strategies and tools that governments and civil society organizations use to counter violent extremism vary, reflecting differing conditions and settings. The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) has ad- dressed some of these strategies including: 1) focusing on prisons and delineating good practices on rehabilitating and reintegrating into society violent extremist of- fenders who have disengaged from violent extremism; 2) enumerating good practices on working with victims of terrorism in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack; 3) exploring the importance of multi-sectoral (i.e., government institutions, agencies, the private sector, and civil society) approaches to CVE; 4) examining the methods of CVE communications most resonant with key audiences; and 5) measuring the effectiveness of CVE programming.

Interwoven through CVE initiatives is the need to develop solutions relevant to the audience being addressed. Despite the growing importance of the Internet, radicalization to violence continues to take place primarily at the local level, often through face-to-face engagement. Therefore, locally-relevant CVE initiatives are central to the success of any strategy. Two key CVE tools that emphasize local strategies are community engagement and community-oriented policing. Community engagement and community-oriented policing are related tools that focus on building trust with local communities and engaging with them as partners to develop information-driven community-based solutions to local issues. Such engagement is meant to raise community awareness about the threat of violent extremism, to provide them with the necessary tools, and to empower them to intervene and prevent radicalization and violence. The more aware communities are of potential threats to their security, the more empowered they are to be resilient against it and the better prepared they can be to counter the threats themselves.

Community engagement and community-oriented policing initiatives should be tactfully and carefully tailored to the local conditions and cultures, as well as every State's legal system, while also respecting international law. However, GCTF members have identified several non-binding good practices that can inform the CVE policies, approaches, and programs of GCTF members and others, as well as create a foundation for continued dialogue, collaboration and research among interested GCTF members and other interested stakeholders. GCTF members and non-members alike are encouraged to consider the following good practices, where appropriate, as they seek to strengthen existing or develop new programs or policies in this field.

These non-binding good practices were developed during and following two ex- changes among CVE practitioners from GCTF members and non-members alike in Washington, DC in March 2013. They are not intended to be exhaustive. The GCTF's CVE Working Group may choose to expand or modify this list to take in- to account the experience of States' and other relevant CVE good practices in these fields.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

Good Practice 1: Approach community engagement and community-oriented policing as long-term, sustained strategies, not short-term tac- tics, and do the requisite research in order to understand local problems and grievances so that a local community is not targeted for security reasons but is engaged for its own benefit.

Community engagement requires building trust between officials and community members in order to establish a relationship of collaboration. Experience proves that such relationships cannot be built overnight and should be cultivated and maintained over time in order to have effect. It is critical to have at least the beginnings of such relationships in place before engaging the community on the issue of radicalization to violence and empowering them to become part of the solution. Furthermore officials should approach communities with basic knowledge of their local dynamics and the issues they face in order to demonstrate to the community that they are not engaging the community solely because of potential security threats arising within the community. Both officials and community leaders emphasize that a securitized relationship – one in which the security concerns of officials crowd out community concerns in other ar- eas of government responsibility – is counterproductive to genuine community engagement and ultimately leads to distrust and bad relations. In com- munity-oriented policing, initiatives should focus on proactively engaging the local community to share information and better serve their needs – not just employing traditional law enforcement methods or gathering security-related information.

Good Practice 2: Establish the methods with which to build trust in the community.

Trust is an integral part of community engagement and community-oriented policing, but one that does not occur naturally and without concerted and sustained efforts. Community members across many regions have stated that to build trust, practitioners and officials should be honest and transparent in their efforts to engage the community, respect the community's traditions and culture, listen to their grievances and make demonstrable efforts to address them, and ensure that they maintain integrity and professionalism in their conduct and interactions with the community. If possible, it is helpful to use officials who come from a similar culture and background to the community with which they are engaging; this can help facilitate trust. Openness, candor and humor are powerful tools in the hands of engaging officials;

however, humor should be used with great care, as it does not always translate well across cultures. Engaging officials need to be accessible to communities when communities need them.

Good Practice 3: Ensure that engagement efforts are broad based and fully inclusive, not solely focused on one community or one specific ideology.

It is important to counter all ideologically-motivated crime, taking in- to account that the appeal to committing violent actions by an individual in a community is based on a violent ideology that justifies these actions. Furthermore, engaging only certain communities or ideologies undercuts the credibility of governments and practitioners who declare that violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations must be countered. Those undertaking community engagement and community-oriented policing efforts should therefore define the parameters of violent extremism and counter it impartially in whatever forms it may take.

Engaging in a Local Context

Good Practice 4: Take a holistic approach to community engagement and community-oriented policing that involves all sectors of the society in order to find the right partners and sustain the engagement.

Although many communities have formal leaders who ably represent their peers, un- derstand their communities and should continue to be at the forefront of community engagement initiatives, community engagement and community- oriented policing efforts tend to work best when multiple sectors within a community are involved in the initiative. It is important to incorporate community influencers who are not formal leaders into any engagement plan. This will ensure that engagement has the best chance of reaching a broad cross-section of individuals within the community and it also has the potential to aid in developing trust with different levels in the community. Providing local-level engagement officials with a broad range of potential partners, such as private sector businesses, national and local government agencies, NGOs, academia, local health care providers, teachers and the media, could give them more tools to respond to community needs. By the same token, practitioners of community-oriented policing should have access to the breadth of local law enforcement and should not be isolated from senior law enforcement leadership by excessive levels of hierarchy.

Good Practice 5: Engage women as positive change agents in their communities.

Many practitioners have internalized what research has shown – women, especially mothers, carry authority within their families and communities which can translate into positive influence against violent extremism. These practitioners repeatedly observe that women are the gate-keepers to their communities and, as such, should be involved in creating and maintaining CVE initiatives. Relatedly, the experience of community engagement to counter-gang recruitment shows that gang members were influenced to cease violent gang activity when they were faced with the prospect of having to explain their actions to their mothers.

Good Practice 6: Engage youth and leverage schools for positive messages.

 Research on youth and radicalization to violence focuses on the age group of 15-25 as the most targeted group for recruitment by violent extremists. Other research from similar fields such as gang recruitment defines the age of susceptibility even younger. What, therefore, holds true for com- munity engagement and community-oriented policing is that initiatives should specifically involve youth input and inventiveness. Given that violent extremist recruiters specifically target youth, it is the youth who should be involved hands-on to help develop projects and messages that will resonate with their peers on the dangers of violent extremism. Furthermore, placing educators and community members in schools and other relevant fora to engage at-risk youth with positive messages or to provide counseling or other services can be an effective method of CVE, and can leverage the community in actively countering violent extremism.

Good Practice 7: Designate a specific individual to be the point person for engagement with the community.

Dedicated community liaison officers can focus solely on developing programs that build trust with the community and ensuring that law enforcement officials are aware of any violent extremism reported in a community. This can also keep traditional intelligence-gathering and community relationship-building separate.

Amplifying the Message through Engagement

Good Practice 8: Empower communities to develop a counter narrative to the violent extremist narrative and amplify the alternative message through all forms of media.

Community engagement and community- oriented policing initiatives can take many forms, including engagement through TV, radio, and the Internet. Maximizing the ways in which one en- gages, targeting the message, and diversifying the content ensures that the message gets out to a broader audience. Furthermore, given that violent extremists use all these tools and more to recruit individuals, CVE initiatives should also use the same tools in order to counter the appeal. When engaged in CT efforts, traditional law enforcement has tended to focus its efforts on terrorists and their active supporters. Terrorists, however, give great attention to their audience; that is how they recruit. In order to therefore counter radicalization to violence and recruitment most effectively, practitioners should work with local communities to highlight the specific locally persuasive counter-narratives that refute or negate the narrative advocating violence as the answer to perceptions of injustice inflicted on self, family or community. Using specific statistics on the non-feasibility of violence as an effective means to an end can help introduce doubt and counter the terrorist narrative.

Good Practice 9: Engage both former violent extremists and victims of terrorism to communicate counter narratives at both the local and national level.

Using formerly radicalized viole*n*t extremists can add legitimacy to the narrative that violence is not the answer. Former violent extremists who come from certain settings have innate credibility and can relate to at- risk youth who may be in similar situations as they once were. Victims of terrorism also have innate credibility because they are a testament to the violence, trauma, and suffering that terrorism can wreak. Community engagement and community-oriented policing efforts that involve former extremists or victims of terrorism carry the resonance needed to make an impactful statement.

Providing Training to Practitioners

Good Practice 10: Tailor community engagement and community- oriented policing trainings to address the issues and dynamics of the local community and to instill awareness of potential indicators and behaviors.

To maintain the trust and respect integral to community engagement and community-oriented policing, practitioners should be trained properly on the parameters of engagement and how it relates to the local contexts where they are engaging. For example training manuals on community-oriented policing as well as smaller "pocket guides" aimed at informing front line officers on potential behaviors and indicators to raise awareness of violent extremist threats versus behavioral norms could be distributed to local police. Furthermore, front line law enforcement should be trained on community cultural, societal, and religious behavior and be able to distinguish it from potential criminal and violent extremist indicators and behaviors. Training methods and materials should be continually updated and revised to keep up with the evolution of threats and with conclusions/good practices developed by members of GCTF and other relevant entities.

Evaluating Effectiveness

Good Practice 11: Build assessment metrics into projects during concept development.

Though it is inherently difficult to prove causality, there are ways in which to measure community perceptions before, during, and after a given community engagement or community-oriented policing initiative. Such measures can take the form of polls, surveys, focus groups, or community round-tables.

Good Practice 12: Recognize that community engagement and community-oriented policing involve establishing, developing and sustaining enduring relationships.

Devise concise metrics appropriate to measure effectiveness at each stage of that process.