GLOBAL
CVE
EXPO 2014

SUMMARY REPORT

9, 10 & 11 DECEMBER 2014
ABU DHABI, UAE

GLOBAL CVE EXPO 2014

From 9 - 11 December 2014, Hedayah and The Global Counter Terrorism Forum held the Global CVE Communications Expo 2014 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The Global community comprised of government officials, industry partners, technology specialists, academic experts, and civil society actors to collaborate in developing and implementing innovative CVE communications activity.
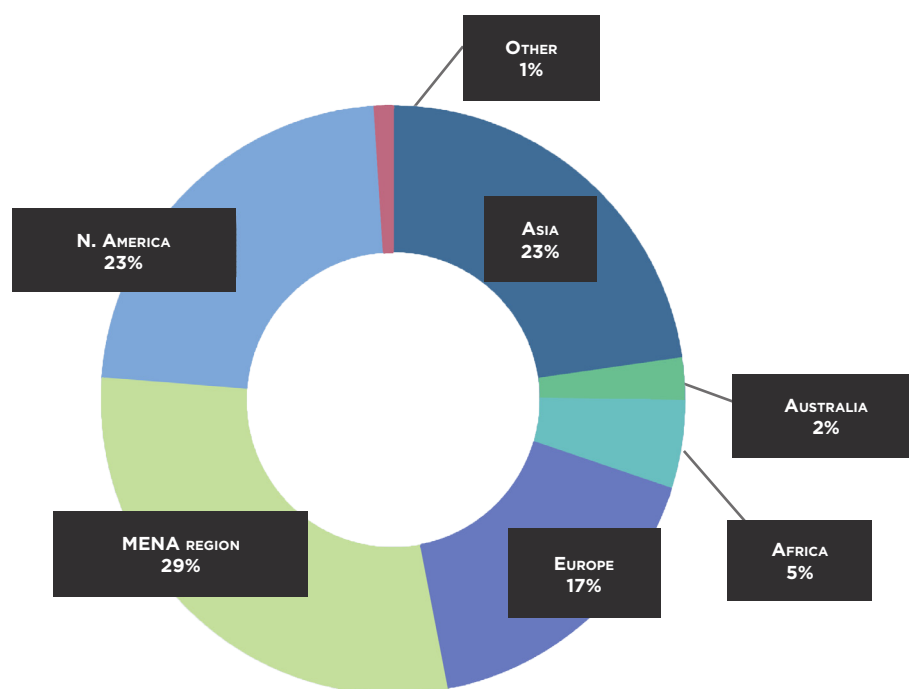
Practitioners and policymakers often agree that Communications is a critical area in countering violent extremism (CVE). Many cite the Internet and social media as being the central development that has enabled the spread of a global radicalizing narrative.

Recent events in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan and France have again raised the crucial issue of communications as an important component of the effort to counter violent extremism and recruitment: the messaging of terrorist groups is coordinated, cohesive, technologically advanced and shows strong awareness of the vulnerabilities of its target audience. Most worryingly, it appears to be effective and able to draw large numbers into the conflict. By contrast, the response, the 'counter-narrative', appears fragmented and ineffective. There is insufficient international co-ordination and insufficient time and resource devoted to it.

It is in this context that there is an urgent need to encourage more effective collaboration on counter-narratives, drawing from experiences of policymakers, practitioners and industry/private sector representatives. In this regard, national security is safeguarded through international collaboration. In response, the Global CVE Expo 2014 was initiated. It had an immense impact on the CVE community by bringing various sectors together as

Guests decide on the panels and workshops they would like to attend.

Figure 1.1 PARTICIPANTS BY REGION
The participants of the Global CVE Expo came from over 40 countries. The majority of which from the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Pakistan.

an opportunity to network and exchange achievements. The Global CVE Expo 2014 was a platform that allowed key innovative strategic thinking combined with practical solutions to be shared with the wider CVE community, which will ultimately be the key component to mitigating violent extremism.

The Global CVE Expo began with remarks from H.E. Ambassador, Faris Al Mazrouei, Assistant Foreign Minister for Security and Military Affairs at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs. H.E. Al Mazrouei encouraged building "cohesions that increase the effectiveness of our communications that reduce the threat of violent extremism." The Somali Minister of Information, H.E. Mustafa Duhulow, delivered the following opening remarks on the progress being made in Somalia using counter- narratives, the promotion of peace and stability and challenges Somalia faces with the violent extremism.

The key themes of Day 1 presented the benefits of improved CVE communications and counter-narratives. Due to the overwhelming digital content, blocking social media content alone is not always effective in countering narratives. With ISIL and other cases, fully understanding the audience is crucial to formulating counter narratives.
Some highlights of the first day included a moving speech delivered by Mr. Michael Haines, the British gentleman who lost his brother to the violent extremist ISIL. The key sentiment he presented was that the victims of ISIL and other extremists should not die in vain. The voices of survivors are critical voices, their narratives and new chapters in their lives can and need to galvanize communities.

Other highlights include the panels that focused primarily on government perspectives on communications and counter-narratives, one particularly on CVE communications with regards to ISIL and another on the lessons learned for target regions.

"What this communications expo today and the last three days has demonstrated is that Hedayah is acting as a very powerful tool for bringing so many diverse actors together in a way that supports our work at the United Nations at a global level"

Dr. Jehangir Khan,
Director of the United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (UN CTITF)

The final session of the day was a counter-narrative film case study presented by the film producer and creator of Abdullah-X, who is also a former extremist. Abdullah X addressed several needs including: critical thinking, protection of mainstream Islam, raising awareness, and reclaiming the narrative.

The first day concluded with the key highlight of the day, a heartfelt exchange between

Mr. Michael Haines, brother of David Haines, British aid worker, gives a heartfelt speech on the capture and loss of his brother by terrorist group ISIL.

Michael Haines and the creator of Abdullah-X. The exchange put the core purpose of the Global CVE Expo into perspective and served as the momentum for the upcoming days.
The second day of the Global CVE Expo went further into formulating a strong CVE communications framework. Participants were able to choose from a number of panels and workshops occurring simultaneously, which examined the need for youth involvement, women empowerment, and mobilizing victims and former fighter voices. Practical, innovative solutions to countering violent extremism were also shared by experts in the field, ranging from social network analysis, branding techniques, and use of entertainment outlets to provide effective counter-narratives.

The key theme of the day exposed participants to new ideas, tools and practical approaches, but more so connected them with one another to undertake concrete activities. It also gave them the opportunity to learn what people in other countries are doing to counter violent extremism and build stronger, more effective narratives that encourage a larger majority of a population, especially youth, to take part in.

Other key themes identified the crucial need of providing psychological support to victims before they can speak to a wider audience. It also underlined the importance of devising exit strategies for former terrorists and recognizing practitioners shared solutions to these challenges on the ground in Afghanistan. These include working with district governments to engage with communities, allowing youth to play an active role in community development, immediately disrupting extremists' narrative moments following an attack, and creating a bottom-up and locally tailored CVE program.
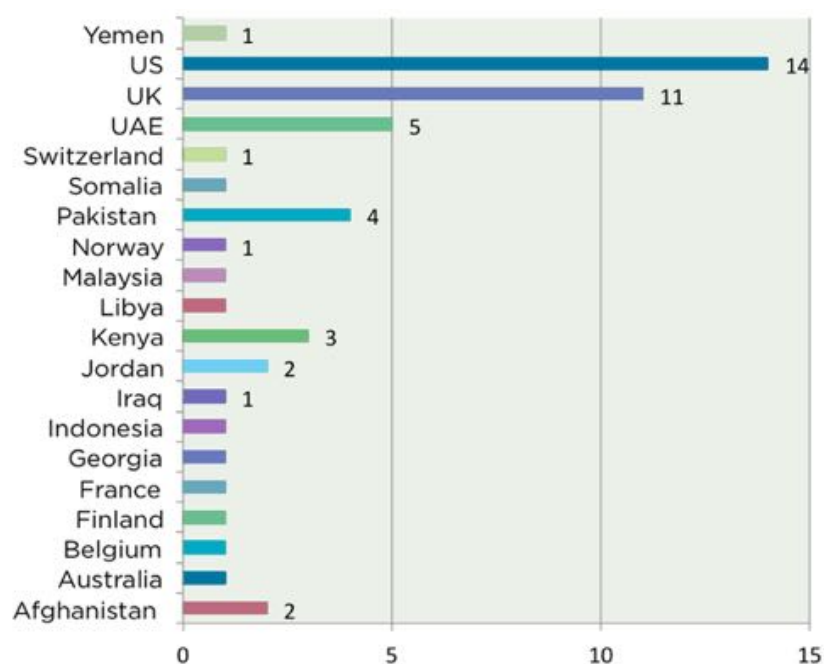
Some highlights of the discussions were the use of innovative media and youth perspectives on effective communication techniques. The core functions, set-up and coordination with agencies on CVE communications, the role of religious leaders in reducing threat with groups, such as Al-Shabab countering narratives, were also examined.

On the final day of the Global CVE Expo, panels and workshops tied together the discussions

Figure 1.3 PARTICIPANTS BY SECTORS
The Global CVE Expo served as a platform for a variety of sectors from government agencies to industries and organizations that contribute to countering violent extremism.

Figure 1.2 PANELISTS AND WORKSHOP LEADERS BY COUNTRY
The Global CVE Expo offered a diverse perspectives from different parts of the world with speakers, panelists and workshops leaders coming from 20 different countries.

of the first two days into effective tools that can be developed and implemented. The use of journalism strategies in deconstructing media and data were presented, in addition to fostering innovation in CVE projects, dissemination of real-time conflict information, social media strategies for anti-radicalization training and using visual media to counter violent extremism.

The key themes indicated the importance of research before, during and after constructing counter-narratives in order to measure the effectiveness of these narratives on target audiences. Awareness of local culture and the ability to engage with local youth has also been recognized as vital counter narratives to violent extremists.

The key highlights of the day were the perspectives brought in by expert speakers, who presented their personal experiences and the situation in their countries. The Libyan Ambassador to the UAE provided an in-depth analysis on the current situation in Libya, which he linked to current incidents and formulated effective solutions through greater tolerance and the increased involvement of religious scholars to help youth.

The second speaker was a victim of the Jordanian wedding who was part of the film Life After Death. The film brought together victims of the 9/11 bombings in New York City, the 11/9 Amman hotel bombings and the 3/11 in an impactful platform with which the audience can engage and interact. Seeing a more personal, human side to what often at times seems to be a very distant using collective solidarity among victims is a powerful tool in combatting violent extremism.

Other main highlights during the day included the significant role that private sector and media companies can play in countering violent extremism. Finally, relative to social media

strategies, a project was presented which uses examples of false messaging and manipulated information online to encourage participants to think critically about the validity of online content. It also demonstrated the indicators of radicalization that a peer group can identify might positively influence that person.

The main outcomes of the Expo benefited from the range of expertise from approximately 300 participants from 40 countries. The Global CVE Expo was the international platform for enhancing networks, fostering partnerships and increasing the number of potential stakeholders relevant to Hedayah, which succeeded in connecting local issues within a global framework and provided the foundation in establishing implementable solutions. The Expo went beyond forging new partnerships, to connect creative individuals and organizations to inspire collaboration.

To close the Expo and also in celebration of Hedayah's second anniversary since its launch on 14 December 2012 by H.H. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Global Counter Terrorism Forum Third Ministerial Meeting in Abu Dhabi, UAE, Hedayah hosted its second anniversary Gala Dinner. The main highlight was the announcement of a € 5 million pledge to Hedayah by Marcus Cornaro, The European Union Deputy Director General of the Directorate General for Development and Cooperation, EuropeAid, to implement programs that will help support civil society organizations around the world and in giving them the tools necessary to develop their own approaches.

Guests from different parts of the world were able to use the Expo as a platform to discuss CVE challenges and solutions.

HACKATHON

A Hackathon is a fast-paced, intensive competition to generate an actionable project idea and plan, with the intention of securing financing and stakeholder partners to make it a reality. While often associated with for-profit business ideas, Hackathon can be used for any type of project. In this case, the Hedayah Hackathon created and developed CVE communications prototypes.

The CVE Hackathon was a featured event at the Global CVE Expo 2014. It was the first CVE Hackathon conducted in the CVE global community. It provided opportunities for participants to engage experts, government officials, technology companies, and community leaders from a wide range of backgrounds, with the potential to secure support to further develop prototypes.

Four dynamic teams took part in a grueling two-day (48 hour) session on brainstorming and building the prototypes from scratch. Given the conference attendees experience and expertise and the range of sectors that were represented, the Expo participants themselves served as an incredible resource throughout the process. Participants were able to enter and exit the "Hackathon Room" throughout the duration of the first two days to the teams in developing their proposals and prototypes. Hackathon teams also used their social media networks through online chat sessions and video calls to support the development of the ideas and work out any technological glitches along the way..

H.E. Dr. Ali Al Nuaimi, Chairman, Hedayah; H.E. Mohammad Abu Shahab, Director Policy Planning Department, UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs; H.E. Maqsoud Kruse, Executive Director and Mr. Ivo Veenkamp, Deputy Executive Director, Hedayah (right to left) sit through the presentation of Hackathon products.

At the end of the 48-hour session, the Hackathon teams had 4 minutes each to pitch their ideas informally to expo participants for feedback from experts representing government, industry, and NGOs. The Hackathon prototypes were subject to comments from a judging panel, and the Expo audience and online viewers were able to vote on a winning prototype.

A panel of judges evaluate the potential of the Hackathon prototypes in CVE. From right to left, Mr. Shaarik Zafar, US Envoy to Muslim Communities, Ms. Wedad AlHassen, Communications Manager, Hedayah and Mr. Charlie Edwards, Director of National Security and Resilience Studies, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

THE CHALLENGE

Below is a description of the challenge that programmers and technology experts responded to during the 48 hours of the Hackathon:

ISIL launched an unprecedented social media and digital campaign to promote violent extremism by leveraging a multitude of online platforms and technologies to spread propaganda, recruit, and radicalize. The group's arsenal of platforms is impressive: Twitter, Facebook, Ask.fm, Kik, What's App, YouTube, Sound- Cloud, JustPaste, Instagram, Surespot, Flikr, Tumblr, Skype Messenger, and many more ISIL's communication staff created apps which automatically sends out tweets to subscribers, video games, bots to hijack computers, as well as utilizing hashtag campaigns to tap into trending topics like Ebola.

ISIL's sophistication rivals professional the world's cutting-edge social media companies, as in some cases we know ISIL used social media for focus group messages. ISIL's use of digital technologies, which includes analyzing big data, has outpaced government efforts and the work of practitioners and civil society organizations working diligently to counter

violent extremism and all forms of radicalizing attractions. Analysts in the New York Times, and other international newspapers have unequivocally stated that ISIL is winning the online propaganda war.

There are many other violent extremist groups operating through online and digital technologies, and ISIL's models and techniques will influence the proliferation of digital violent narratives. The current approach to countering violent extremism online is failing.

Tackling these issues were the core priority of the Hackathon. We need to strategically move ahead in this space quickly and innovate in order to turn the tide on the use of digital technology by violent extremism.

EVALUATION OF PROTOTYPES

The Hackathon prototypes were pitched in the morning of Day 3 to an expert judging panel which consisted of Mr. Shaarik Zafar, Special Representative to Muslim Communities at the US Department of State, Mr. Charlie Edwards, Director of National Security and Resilience Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and Ms. Wedad Al Hassen, Communications Manager at Hedayah. The presentations were also judged by the audience and an online crowd based on the four four categories outlined below. Each category received a score from 1-5, and the average sum determined the team's final ranking. Scores were collected from conference attendees as well as a global online audience that tuned into the live stream of the presentations. The four evaluation categories were:

1. **Feasibility:** Can this solution be implemented effectively with respect to cost, resources, and partnerships?

2. **Scalability:** Can this concept be brought to scale and applied in different places and contexts?

3. **Innovation:** Does this idea creatively use technology to solve a CVE challenge in new ways?

4. **Likely impact:** Will this idea, when implemented, have a measurable impact in countering extremism?

The four innovative prototypes generated at the Expo and presented by the four teams were:

1. **The Believer Manifesto:** The project sought to make young hearts resilient through spiritual empowerment. As an app, it allowed users write their own destiny or purpose to live by.

2. **Ummah Strong:** Presented as the world's largest social movement against extremism. It is a crowd-sourcing platform to mobilize young Muslims for positive expressions of identity.

3. **OnetoOne:** A mobile app designed to reach out to potential extremists and open channels of communications. It tracks social media activity and detects early warning signs of radicalization.

4. **ComeBack2Us:** A social media platform that helps families or friends of extremist fighters to reach out to them and help convince them to come back home.

One2One, one of the four app prototypes presented during the Hackathon.

"The real challenge is to execute that agenda and make an action plan and bring everybody in the world who has an interest in creating a better world with better understanding, tolerance, respect regardless of religion and ethnicity; Hedayah is the hub you can utilize to work on this noble cause we all share."

H.E. Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi,
Hedayah Steering Board Chairman