

## **THE CARTER CENTER**

*Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism*

*Phase I Cohort Workshop 5 Report*

*March 2018*

### **Executive Summary**

The Carter Center (TCC) convened its fifth workshop in Switzerland on March 20-21, 2018, building on the four previous meetings of the Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Extremism project (PVE). The same group of 20 influential Muslim religious and community leaders from Belgium, France, Morocco, and Tunisia returned to Switzerland with the clear objective of finalizing the proposals for their local PVE projects. These projects were the product of the skills learned and the experiences shared during the first four workshops. Having developed more than 60 local projects across multiple sectors, including online media, religious outreach, and youth engagement,

conflict resolution in the MENA region. Having already built up trust throughout the preceding four workshops, participants were motivated by the prospect of mentoring the new cohort of religious and community leaders and, eventually, meeting them to share lessons learned. This will ensure that, in due course, TCC can step back with full confidence that the PVE projects will flourish under local ownership.

### **Project Overview and Lessons Learned: Broadening the Scope of Work**

Houda Abadi, TCC associate director, led an interactive session on the effects of Daesh's territorial defeat and the rising tide of Islamophobia in the West. Since the group last gathered in March 2017, Daesh's propaganda production had experienced a dramatic decline. From a peak of 30 new propaganda videos released every month in 2015, Daesh videos dwindled to 13 videos per month in 2017. In the first three months of 2018 combined, a total of 15 videos were published. The change in quantity was echoed by a change in content. In 2018, no videos exalting the social services of the so-called caliphate appeared. By contrast, noticeable rises occurred in the proportion of videos featuring strong religious arguments (27 percent) and espousing military operations (67 percent). Participants suggested that the shift in Daesh narratives requires an

To familiarize participants with the new style and substance of Daesh propaganda, participants were requested to



to build across ideological divides within their own communities. Participants were also pressed to ensure in their work youth and female inclusion and empowerment.

### **Harnessing the Power of the Media to Build a Strong and Credible Brand**

brand communication director, provided participants with tactics for designing compelling stories to achieve social change. Effective stories rely on the who-what-how approach: who is being targeted; what is the content of the story; how is the audience reached? These messages can gain additional weight with the participation of so-called influencers. Rational influencers, such as the news media, academics, and politicians, target the celebrities, entertainment media, and cultural icons

harness their projects to other figures and organizations with grass-roots social capital. Even very high-profile figures can be persuaded to endorse a project pro bono, if the project is relevant, credible, and timely. The presence of these influencers will ensure that their target audience will

Aware that many proposed projects envisaged the creation of an online platform, Fornier warned participants that most consumers of online media do not access directly a website by typing the address. Rather, they access websites through links, Google or social media. She therefore urged participants to employ keywords to promote their websites; this will boost the search engine results.

Messages will also circulate much more widely if they are positive. Hope sells. This was vividly illustrated to participants through their analysis of two different campaign videos. The first

matter, it was dealt with in a positive manner and the video buttressed a strong storyline with statistics. Participants were impressed that the campaign was achieved with very modest resources, in large part because it responded to a clear need and demonstrated flexibility and pragmatism. The second video focused on a UNHCR appeal for support for Syria. However, this video presented an altogether different version of an otherwise familiar and desperately tragic story: This

story was laced with notes of optimism and powerful images touching the subconscious, thereby inspiring the audience.

### **Design, Monitoring & Evaluation (DM&E) and Project Proposals**

advisor, helped participants refine their mini-grant proposals by creating robust goals, planning activities, and developing mechanisms to evaluate and report the direction and drive for the projects would come from the participants themselves.

The establishment of robust goals began with the participants seeking to capture the essence of their vision. The vision was honed until it became a SMART goal (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bounded). Base then offered advice as participants devised activities to support their vision and SMART goals. They deconstructed their project activities into primary activities, the key actors (supporters and/or opponents) of the activities, the expected changes resulting from the planned activities and the underlying assumptions.

### **Belgium Project Proposal**

On a per capita basis, Belgium has the highest number of Daesh recruits ,000 Youth for as a force for change in the present and the future and to inspire and immunize their peers from Daesh propaganda and Islamophobia. The goal is to have trained 1,000 young men and women by 2020. The 1, rganizations, politicians and other actors in their local communities. They will gain technical media training and be empowered to deconstruct hate discourse. Pre- and post-training evaluation forms will allow progress to be gauged. Qualitative monitoring will result from focus groups. Quantitative monitoring will result from tracking the unique views and activity on online discussion platforms.

## **France Project Proposal**

project is a three-pronged approach tackling Islamophobia and Daesh terrorism. It consists of: 1) symposia in Annecy, Roubaix and Brest; 2) development of websites and social networks; and 3) support for Muslim converts and their families. These activities will be based on the following three pillars: 1) inform participants and local communities on the reality of Islam; 2) train participants with the necessary tools; and 3) act and offer real-world solutions.

## **Morocco Project Proposal**

...eved by nurturing productive young people who possess respect for others. The Moroccan participants aimed to train 30 young men and women ages 25 to 40 to become leaders in civil rights and religion. This cohort, in turn, ...ch train 10 youth, for a total of 30 leaders and 300 empowered youth. Through an online platform, the training will provide the tools to understand religious texts and develop communication and social media skills. The Moroccan group confidently stated that ...-grant would be supported by financial pledges from local partners. The presentation ended with an assurance that they have greater local credibility and will therefore have a significantly deeper impact on the ground.

## **Tunisian Project Proposal**

Tunisia was the first country to succeed in a democratic Arab Spring ...soldiers, civilians and tourists have died as well at the hands of Daesh in Tunisia. To prevent young men and women from joining extremist groups and to re ...project proposes to develop an e-platform to foster increased collaboration and information-sharing among youth. Tunisia ranks tenth in Africa in terms of number of internet users.<sup>1</sup> The participants noted that Tunisian youth are more connected and mobile than ever before. For

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wamda.com/2013/04/12-key-statistics-on-how-tunisians-use-social-media-infographic>

