PREVENTION OF RADICALIZATION AND EXTREMIST VIOLENCE
Canadian Practitioners Network
Expert Meeting Days’ Report
March 19–20, 2018,
Université du Québec à Montréal
Canada
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Index of Contents

02  Foreword

03  Executive summary

04  About the participants

05  About March 19: information sharing and training

09  About March 20: best practices

12  Conclusion: What's next?
Our increasingly globalized world has put to the forefront the complex interactions between local and global contexts, not only by increasing exposure to injustices and inequalities but also by strengthening global solidarity movements. Moreover, the tensions in our societies are progressively polarizing our social spaces. Amid the democratization of the Internet and the rise of social media hate speech, violent extremist movements have become more than ever able to reach audiences both globally as well as within our most private spaces. Fortunately, our ability to unite in a common global and local effort has also grown stronger. This effort starts with sharing our experiences and expertise. It is with this goal in mind that the CPN-PREV hosted on March 19 and 20, 2018 two meeting days with experts of the field within the Building Connections conference: Preventing Violent Extremism in Canada. The objective of these two days was to pool expertise in order to reflect on information sharing and training programs, as well as to discuss best practices in prevention and intervention in matters of radicalization and extremist violence.

The meeting hosted a diversified group of experts from different sectors with in-depth and on-the-ground expertise in this complex and multidimensional phenomenon. These two days were thus particularly enriching and sowed the seeds for highly promising partnerships and projects.

On behalf of the CPN-PREV team, I want to thank you personally for your participation, and the contribution you made to these necessary discussions. I hope that the outcomes of this event will consolidate the emerging International Guidelines Consensus Committee (IGCC) and pursue our collective conversation and efforts.

Best,

Ghayda Hassan, PhD
Director and founder, CPN-PREV
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CPN-PREV supports coordinated collaboration, capacity building, and knowledge mobilization among key sectors and stakeholders through a nationwide multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach. Our goal is to generate best practices and involve cross-sector collaborations by providing knowledge mobilization opportunities among researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and members of community organizations.

During the two meeting days that were hosted by CPN-PREV on March 19 and 20, different actors presented their organizations and models on information sharing and training programs, as well as evidence collected on best practices. The national and international experts then helped push discussions further in matters of prevention and intervention of radicalization and extremist violence.

In terms of training, the experts highlighted the importance of clearly defining objectives, methods, and target populations in order to assess local needs and adapt programs to local realities. It was agreed that an essential part of training is about building and sustaining capacity, rather than delivering content. Evaluating the impact of training programs is also considered as a top priority, so as to identify constructive changes, as well as unexpected harms.

In terms of best practices in the PVE/CVE domains, the experts highlighted the importance of local contexts in connection with global aspects. This is especially important because developing best practices is about evaluating the level of trust in existing evidence, as well as taking into consideration promising practices in low-resource settings. In addition, experts concurred that PVE/CVE programs should be assessed for positive and harmful effects. Equally important, developing best practices should not only consider “What” best practices are but also “Who” the best practitioners are in relation to “which” audience. Finally, the experts highlighted that best practices, once developed, should be adapted to each practitioner or community context.
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DISCUSSIONS ON INFORMATION SHARING AND TRAINING

The key elements extracted from the meetings are presented below in bullet-point format.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES OF THE DISCUSSIONS

- To push further the dialogue about CVE and PVE
- What should the prevention of radicalization and extremist violence look like?
- To share the challenges and opportunities that practitioners have in their contexts
- To know what is done on the ground and to get the input of those working at the local level

PRESENTATIONS

- Presentation of CPN-PREV, Ghayda Hassan from the CPN-PREV
- Training professionals on the prevention of violent radicalization: Opportunities for a consortium SHERPA/RAPS & CPN-PREV, Cécile Rousseau from SHERPA/RAPS and Paola Porcelli from the CPN-PREV
- Presentation of Hedayah: Building capacities, Cristina Mattei from Hedayah
- Presentation of the Radicalisation Awareness Network(RAN), Pomme Woltman from RAN
- Training programs: Experiences and reflections from the Segerstedt Institute, Robin Andersson Malmros from the Segerstedt Institute
QUESTIONS/SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

How do we conceptualize and develop a training program?

- Recognize the heterogeneity of definitions of radicalization and extremist violence.
- Understand the local context of risk and protective factors.
- Understand the local context of practitioners.
- Do not re-invent the wheel; start with existing practices instead of starting from scratch.
- Include the plurality of perspectives from diverse fields.
- Draw parallels from other fields such as cultural competency for law enforcement, including lessons about potential harms from training. (e.g., reinforcing or exacerbating stereotypes)
- Train on content and capacity.
- Include best practices but also inform on what not to do.
- Decentralize approaches to training.
- Ensure strong coordination of training programs and follow-ups.
- Conduct follow-ups after the knowledge has been transferred.
- Enhance sustainability of training.
- Develop replicable activities and models.
Who is best placed to play what role for what purpose, and how can training support those roles?

- Consider and question assumptions that collaboration is the solution.
- Understand the underlying political agenda in training: Training is not neutral.
- Include practitioners from the onset as training-module designers.
- Identify trusted trainers who are perceived by communities as legitimate speakers and include them in training design and implementation.
- Develop “train the trainers” programs and include follow-ups.
- Think sustainability when building capacities/training/transferring knowledge.
- Find and support a network of positive influencers. (challenge/imperative)
How do we evaluate training programs? / How do we measure the outcome of training modules?

- User satisfaction measures are good but not a reliable indication of training success.
- Develop a theory of change that integrates a logic model for training evaluation.
- Integrate the evaluation at the conceptualization phase of the training.
- Define and operationalize the expected outcomes on practitioners’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices. (KAP)
- Define further outcomes for change in target populations.
- Conduct longitudinal evaluations (currently lacking) of the training programs in order to provide information on implementation, positive impacts, harms, and costs.
- Measure progress for practitioner training; areas of potential focus discussed include calming fear, feeling more comfortable with context and the complexity of issues, understanding one’s role, knowing where to go for help, and developing a sense of readiness.
- Collect information about adverse unintended consequences, such as a sense of paralysis, or reinforcing/exacerbating stereotypes.

IN BRIEF

We... need to know what the good practices are in training design and evaluation.

We... need to know what the bad practices are in training design and evaluation.

We... need to train on content and capacities.

It is a TOP priority to evaluate existing training modules.
DISCUSSIONS ON BEST PRACTICES

The key elements extracted from the meetings are presented below in bullet-point format.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES OF THE DISCUSSIONS

- To reach a common understanding of what constitutes a best practice.
- To share assessments on the state of evidence on prevention/intervention programs.
- To reflect on the next steps in terms of generating evidence based best practices.

PRESENTATIONS

- Main conclusions of CPN first three systematic reviews: Arber Fetiu, Deniz Kilinc and Sarah Ousman from the CPN-PREV
- Best practices: Primary Findings from a study on evidence-based practices, Robin Andersson Malmros from the Segerstedt Institute
- RAN Collection of Practices, Pomme Woltman from RAN
- Countering Violent Extremism, Cristina Mattei from Hedayah
- Common evidence from terrorism and criminal studies, Paul Gill from the Department of Security and Crime Science, University College of London

QUESTIONS/ RESULTS OF DISCUSSIONS

What is the state of evidence on the impact of PVE/CVE programs?

- We need to systematically synthesize and rate the state of evidence on good practices.
- Emerging systematic reviews show evidence that de-radicalization programs have lower success rates and more negative side-effects (e.g., stigmatization, suspicion, fear) than prevention programs.
- Evidence shows that intervention efforts may be more successful if they focus on change of intentions rather than change of beliefs. (e.g., disengagement vs. de-radicalization)
- Evidence from comparative studies in the education field shows improvement in knowledge about violent extremism and positive attitudes of participants, but does not inform on the ways these processes may link to the actual prevention of violent extremism.
None of the studies included positive-negative comparative outcome measures or comparisons with other interventions/control groups. (e.g., people might have left the group anyway, even without the intervention)

Evidence still does not clearly inform us on what really works, in which contexts, how, and for whom; such evidence remains largely anecdotal, and more about what not to do than what to do.

Consider evidence from the broader literature on mentor/offender treatments. Some look relevant to CVE, though care is needed on drawing parallels on when and how change happens. (e.g., change could come from mentor influence, or simply separation from problematic context)

How can available evidence improve practices in the PVE/CVE fields?

- Efficient prevention programs cannot be developed as long as the processes of radicalization to violence remain under-documented.
- There is huge variation in life stories – 'data' on cases tends to be insufficient to capture this.
- Knowledge about the processes leading to violent extremist attacks will remain limited as long as researchers do not have the ability to access “security” sector information on individual cases and connect them with other sources of information.
- Simultaneously, access to restricted files poses important ethical challenges.
- There is a danger in evidence-based ‘models,’ being applied too widely without consideration of context.
- More examination is needed about context. Focus in CVE is often primarily on individuals, but situation can be more important as a focus for change than motivation. Influences can be hyper local, such as small group dynamics and highly specific social networks, and a risk in one context may be protective in another.
- Better connections need to be made between the research and practice fields by making research understandable and applicable “on the ground” and ground expertise relevant to research design.
Time, patience and appropriate funding are important for success in areas such as building trust, identifying relevant voices, reaching parents, overcoming misperceptions about the motives and methods of organizations, etc.

Mapping is key to evaluating coordination, including to help capture gaps and duplication.

Ethical concerns need to be addressed.

**IN BRIEF**

- We... need to define the term "best practices" more precisely.
- We... do not yet know what is the state of evidence on PVE/CVE programs.
- We... need to identify diversity and overlap in the existing practices.
- We... need to identify the gaps in evidence and develop future research to address these gaps.
- We... need to give more attention to good and promising practices.
- We... need guidelines on what to do in different contexts, instead of how to apply the same program to different contexts.
- We... need to connect practitioners with each other and then connect them with researchers and policymakers.
- We... need more effort to document sequences pathways, and markers of change.

*Once a model becomes evidence-based, it should continue to be evaluated.*
Following the synthesis and pooling together of the diverse discussions, the CPN-PREV suggests to put in place three initiatives:

I. A platform for sharing training and evaluation models

We propose to create a confidential platform for sharing materials and contents related to training programs and evaluation models. This platform will be open to members only, who will sign an agreement to confidentiality and full respect of authorship and intellectual property. The platform will be simple and efficient, such as a Google Drive folder where experts could drop relevant documents they consider beneficial to all.

If you are interested in joining the platform, please inform CPN-PREV’s Knowledge mobilization coordinator at gosselin.marie-eve@uqam.ca.
II. International Consensus Guidelines Committee

CPN-PREV will implement the International Consensus Guidelines Committee (ICGC) during the fall of 2018. The Committee will bring together approximately 60 experts from diverse sectors and disciplines from approximately 20 countries. These experts are identified via a systematic mapping of PVE/CVE research, practice and policy centers worldwide, ideally involved in review and guidelines development.

If you would like to join or recommend an expert in the field, please contact CPN-PREV’s Knowledge mobilization coordinator at gosselin.marie-eve@uqam.ca.

III. Local Consensus Guidelines Committees:

CPN-PREV will implement a Canadian Consensus Guidelines Committee (CCGC) whose main responsibility will be to adapt the recommendations generated from the International Consensus Guidelines Committee to the specific Canadian context. We encourage each expert on the International Consensus Guidelines Committee to think of ways to adapt the practice guidelines generated by the ICGC to their specific country/context.

If you would like to join or recommend another Canadian expert in the field, please contact CPN-PREV’s Knowledge mobilization coordinator at gosselin.marie-eve@uqam.ca.
Thank you

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