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Countering Violent Extremism in Africa

![USAID]

PROJECT NAME
Countering Violent Extremism I
Countering Violent Extremism II
Countering Violent Extremism III

CLIENT
USAID Africa Bureau; Office of
Sustainable Development; Conflict,
Peace Building, and Governance team
(USAID/AFR/SD/CPG)

PRIME CONTRACTOR
Resonance Global

COUNTRY
Africa regional (multi-country)

TIME PERIOD
CVE I: Sept. 2011 – Oct. 2013
CVE II: Dec. 2014 – Feb. 2017
CVE III: Sept. 2018 – Mar. 2020

Challenge

Violent extremism (VE) poses a major threat to the stability and security of nations and communities around the world. In Africa, it has cost thousands of lives and more than $100 billion in losses, and it continues to challenge critical development goals. USAID Missions in Africa are working with local partners to implement programs that counter the root causes of violent extremism across the continent.

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is a relatively new field, and new advancements are continuously being made. Further, the nature of violent extremism is itself always changing, and P/CVE practitioners must be ready to quickly adapt, translating global best practice to highly variable local contexts. For these reasons, it is critical that P/CVE programs adapt and incorporate new learnings over time.

For its part, USAID is working to continuously develop, disseminate, and apply the growing P/CVE knowledge base across countries and projects. In addition to improving its own approach to P/CVE programs, USAID transfers this knowledge and capacity to local

partners, who can ensure that programs are effective in their community's context. This is vital to helping these community-based programs resolve the root causes that draw people toward VE, so that violent extremist groups are not able to gain a foothold in the future.

Solution

Resonance led three Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) projects to support the USAID Africa Bureau's Conflict, Peace Building, and Governance team to institutionalize and build upon its P/CVE thought leadership and programming.

Resonance's key activities included:

- **Participatory P/CVE Trainings and Workshops.** Resonance organized, designed, and facilitated in-country workshops for USAID Missions across Africa, which were tailored to each country's context and the Mission's P/CVE needs. Resonance designed these workshops using our participatory facilitation methodology, which leads participants through a step-by-step brainstorming and action planning process. Through this process, participants reach consensus and identify practical action items in order to integrate P/CVE best practices into their programming.

- **Online P/CVE Training Courses.** Under CVE II and III, Resonance developed online CVE 101 and CVE 201 training courses for USAID staff and P/CVE practitioners worldwide. The more recent CVE 201 course, available through USAID University, guides viewers through the primary drivers of violent extremism, VE recruitment pathways, the steps for designing a P/CVE program, and programming rules of thumb.

- **Online CVE Community of Practice.** Over the course of CVE I-III, Resonance facilitated an Africa-focused online Community of Practice, called the CVE Forum, that brought together more than 600 P/CVE practitioners and researchers. The CVE Forum provided an active space for members to collaborate, share resources, and discuss best practices in P/CVE. For this network, Resonance curated a weekly CVE roundup, compiling insights from social media, recent new articles, thought leadership, research, and partner program updates related to P/CVE.

- **State of the Art Event.** In 2019, Resonance organized, designed, and facilitated a State of the Art (SOTA) event in Senegal in French and English that brought together more than 60 participants from 18 countries across Africa. The event connected stakeholders from nongovernmental organizations, civil society, local government, and universities to share locally informed lessons learned and foster networks across the African continent. In particular, the conference asked participants to consider how these lessons learned and networks could be adapted to the VE challenges in the Sahel.

- **VE Risk and Resiliency Assessments.** Under CVE I, Resonance conducted VE risk and resiliency assessments for African nations. These risk and resiliency assessments provided an up-to-date analysis of drivers of violent extremism, examining the situation through various lenses – governance, economy, peace/security, social/cultural environment, and gender – with attention to country-wide and regional trends.

Key Results

- Over the course of Resonance's CVE I-III projects, Resonance facilitated 12 P/CVE-focused workshops in Africa for more than 400 USAID staff, interagency staff, implementing partners, local government officials, and representatives from local civil society and youth organizations. These workshops helped diverse actors come together to forge practical action plans for embedding P/CVE best practices into existing country- and community-level development programs.

- Resonance's CVE 101 and CVE 201 training courses serve as foundational training materials for USAID staff and P/CVE practitioners worldwide.

- Resonance brought together more than 600 practitioners and researchers through the online CVE Forum, helping to create a diverse, vibrant, and active network to promote and share P/CVE knowledge, with a specific focus on P/CVE efforts, local dynamics, and applications in Africa.

- Through the State of the Art event, Resonance brought together more than 60 representatives from civil society, government, and academia from 18 countries across Africa. Participants noted in their evaluations that the most important aspect of the SOTA was the opportunity to meet with other P/CVE practitioners and learn from their experience.

- Under CVE I, Resonance conducted two in-depth violent extremism risk and resiliency assessments:

  → **Boko Haram in Nigeria:** In Nigeria, Resonance examined the key drivers behind Boko Haram's rapid expansion, identifying key economic, international, demographic, environmental, and social factors that contributed to the group's evolution. After mapping and assessing prevailing opinions among Nigeria's civilian, military, and government officials, Resonance proposed five strategic actions to combat VE in Nigeria's diverse and divided environment.

  → **Al-Shabaab in Somalia:** Regional variations and diaspora dynamics played a key role in the influence of al-Shabaab in Somalia. Resonance mapped and analyzed drivers of violent extremism across Mogadishu, Southwest Federal State, Jubaland, Galmadung, and Hiran, and we identified internal and external capabilities to combat VE in Somalia. In addition, Resonance provided USAID with policy and program recommendations for development assistance strategies to counter the drivers of VE in Somalia.