A Nimble (NMBL) Approach to Youth Engagement in P/CVE

There is no shortage of excellent theory and practice in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), much of which has been developed and carried out by some of the almost 5 000 practitioners within the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), and many case studies of which are included in the RAN Collection.

However, given the renewed emphasis on "multi-stakeholderism", it is clear that a true asset of RAN is its ability to network these practitioners and empower them to become more than a sum of their parts. But, this may be insufficient. These stakeholders will come from different backgrounds, perspectives and practice areas, and it would be naive to think that they will be able to cooperate seamlessly.

This handbook therefore aims to bridge the gap between two such stakeholders, frontline practitioners and youth, to facilitate their better coordination towards P/CVE objectives. And, given the historic lack of emphasis on youth engagement in P/CVE work, it considers that youth may not be currently engaging directly in this area, but could be empowered to do so, and therefore contains tips for doing this safely and effectively.

RAN Issue Paper

Introduction

Across the EU, each Member State sees different priorities in P/CVE depending on their national threat picture; their context, culture and legislation; and the resources they have available, which include the strength of civil society (or lack thereof). However, due to the scale and complexity of the challenges posed by radicalisation, violent extremism, terrorism, and its prevention, consensus has emerged around two areas. First, that we should be promoting a multi-stakeholder approach, as no single government department, agency, practitioner or actor is able to achieve the objectives in isolation; and second, that youth, as one potential stakeholder, are perennially underused in this domain, and that we should collectively attempt to address this shortcoming.

More acutely, youth engagement within P/CVE rests on several observations:

- first, that in the first decade of P/CVE, young people were more likely to be considered part of the problem than part of the solution, due to the fact that young people constituted the highest percentage of individuals joining extremist groups;

- second, that a commitment to localised P/CVE requires leveraging pre-existing relationships in the settings of vulnerable individuals, and that peer-to-peer relationships (i.e. young people to young people), are hugely important; and

- third, that due to the success of counter-terrorism efforts, including but not limited to P/CVE, violent extremists were changing their recruitment and radicalisation strategies and tactics more often, leading to the shortening of generations (or development of micro-generations). This means that 18 to 25-year-old extremists are behaving differently to 25 to 35-year-old extremists, not least in their adopting of evermore innovative approaches to communications and technology. P/CVE practitioners have to keep pace to remain effective, and young people from these different generations are essential partners in order to do this.

As P/CVE continues towards a public health model whereby whole communities come together to prevent the emergence of threats, identify problems as they emerge, and leverage their existing individual and collective strengths to find solutions, focus will shift towards the relationships between stakeholders, and improving the ways in which they cooperate. To facilitate this, it will be necessary to generate approaches, models (and in this case, a matrix) to find common interests, a shared language, and a mutually appropriate framework. This paper sets out a new model to bring to life the European Commission and the Radicalisation Awareness Network's commitment to multi-stakeholderism, and is designed to be used by frontline practitioners and young people, to achieve shared P/CVE objectives.

Background

The European Commission has committed to the empowerment of and engagement with youth in P/CVE through the creation of RAN Young under the auspices of the Youth, Families and Communities Working Group (RAN YF&C), which held its first meeting in March 2017, and which will be elevated to the status of full Working Group from 2019 onwards. In the intervening period, RAN Young has met four times to discuss a variety of practice areas, and has engaged dozens of young people who are already aware of P/CVE, either in a professional or volunteer context.

RAN Young members have subsequently become part of the constituencies of the other nine Working Groups, and have contributed a youth perspective to these different

practice areas (education, local, remembrance of victims, etc.). However, most notably, RAN Young teamed up with the RAN Communications and Narratives Working Group for a Joint Meeting in Madrid in April 2018 to find a common language and approach, and share inspiring practices, between communications practitioners and young people, and establish future areas for cooperation. Subsequently, as part of the Policy and Practice event, a third stakeholder, policymakers, was introduced to the discussion, in true multi-stakeholder spirit. This practical guide will support this continued collaboration.

RAN Young also conducted a study visit to Leicester in June 2018, acknowledging that there are areas within the EU, of which Leicester is one, where P/CVE work does engage and empower young people effectively. This practical guide builds on some of the lessons learned in Leicester, and attempts to codify these inspiring practices for future and transferable use across the EU.

RAN is not alone within the EU when it comes to promoting the empowerment of young people to prevent or counter violent extremism. The European Commission has supported the Kofi Annan Foundation to consider youth leadership and role models within this broader area. This led to the formation of Extremely Together, a global movement for young people, headed by 10 young leaders, all of whom have very different experiences and expertise within P/CVE. Similarly, YouthCAN is a network that attempts to bolster youth-led P/CVE efforts internationally, enabling exchange of knowledge and practice, to foster collaboration and co-creation, with a particular focus on counter-speech at their Youth Innovation Labs. Ahead of the writing of this guide, the authors conducted an open research consultancy with the members of RAN Young, Extremely Together and YouthCAN, and this guide builds on some of their advice.
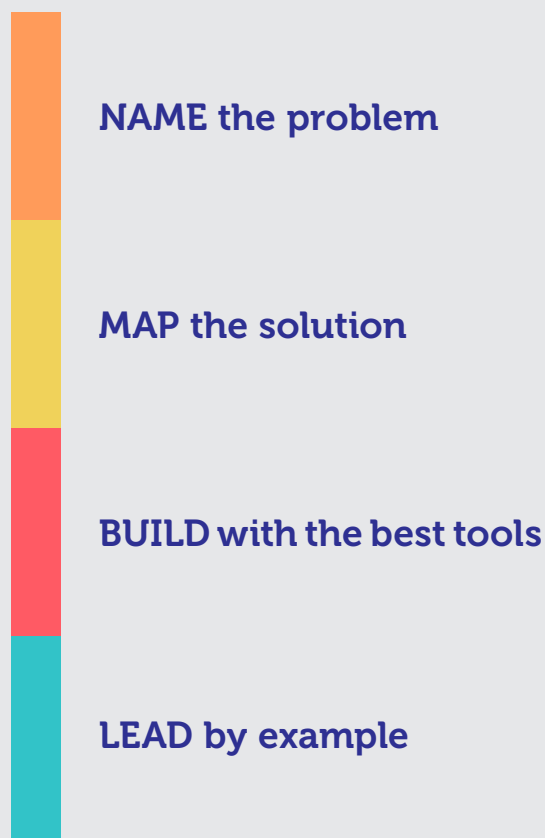
The NMBL Approach

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide practitioners working with young people with a step-by-step guide on how best to engage them in any initiatives that seek to prevent or counter violent extremism.

The approach outlined below is ideal for all practitioners, be it individuals working with youth (e.g. youth workers) to develop a programme and organisations that work with youth in some way (e.g. organisations with youth services or youth-led organisations).

The advice contained within has been developed with a combination of research, programme and practical experience to create what RAN calls the NMBL Approach ("nimble").

The NMBL Approach to youth-focused P/CVE is more than just a cute acronym — it is a philosophy that underpins effective youth engagement planning and project design. Being "nimble" is not only about being adaptive to external challenges, but also to be reflexive enough to identify and work with internal ones. Being NMBL is a sure-fire way to achieving this.

The NMBL Approach provides practitioners with an easy-to-remember mnemonic when embarking on youth-focused P/CVE.

NAME the problem

MAP the solution

BUILD with the best tools

LEAD by example

Using the NMBL Matrix

Included at the end of this Handbook is the NMBL Matrix. The Matrix has been designed as an easy and efficient way to plan proposed P/CVE activities with young people based on the NMBL Approach described throughout. It is by no means exhaustive, and is intended to help practitioners visualise their ideas, whilst making sure the relevant considerations are being addressed in some way.

Name the Problem

Before anything, the most important thing to do before starting any P/CVE initiative is understand the context within which you are operating from. A one-size-fits-all approach is never recommended for P/CVE as the drivers and manifestations of violent extremism are different in every context. The obvious place to start is by naming the specific issues that you are noticing in your community setting and identifying what might be causing them.

Q: How is violent extremism appearing in your context?

Violent extremism is an umbrella term that encompasses a spectrum of behaviour:

- Damage to property (including graffiti and stickers)

- Hate speech, both online and offline

- Community/group violence and violent protest

- Hate crime and terrorism

Be clear on the way violent extremism is manifesting in your community as each type might involve slightly different considerations. For example, if violent extremism is manifesting as physical violence or damage to property, you might need to consider the role of police or your school if it is taking place in the schoolyard.

It is also worth remembering that while violent extremism may manifest differently online and offline, both types are important aspects of your context. Modern life melds the two, and while there is some theory to suggest individuals behave differently online (e.g. the online disinhibition effect), understanding and naming the problem requires a comprehensive view of as many domains as possible.

Q: What are the identifiable drivers of this behaviour?

Though there are various push, pull and personal factors that influence violent extremist behaviour, P/CVE initiatives based in communities are best placed to address the collective drivers (i.e. influences that affect more than one individual or family). This is important to remember as violent extremist groups and causes focus heavily on notions of collective experience and identity.

Consider the following drivers:

- Political drivers such as global events, conflict zones, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

- Socioeconomic drivers such as lack of employment opportunities and income, access to quality education (academic and ideological), and perceptions/levels of civic participation.

- Cultural (or cross-cultural) drivers such as discrimination, community conflict and collective narratives ("shared traumas and glories").

Q: How are youth being affected by these influences?

As we now know, young people (defined as between 19 and 25 years old) are not only the most affected in terms of targeted recruitment and violence, they also have the potential to be the most effective agents for change. Regarding the various ways youth are being affected by current challenges:

- Are they being targeted by recruiters?

- Are they being exposed to harmful/hateful ideologies?

- Alternatively, are there active youth groups/activities interested in developing a capacity for P/CVE?

Being clear about this at the outset is integral in designing a programme or initiative that engages young people in the most meaningful way possible. Quite simply, if your programme or initiative is not interesting or relevant to young people, they are unlikely to stay engaged and invested in it. Recognising the appeal of recruiters and ideologies is essential when trying to understand your target audience, and generating an equal and opposite appeal is a major challenge for P/CVE initiatives.

Q: What other dynamics do you need to account for in your setting?

It is important to give yourself the space to also account for the "X factors" in your setting. This means considering both the assets in your community that could bolster your programme and the risks that might impact upon its effectiveness and reach. Remember that the aforementioned drivers may be broadly similar across many different contexts, but the way communities interact with each could be quite different from one another.

Influential Figures and Groups

This could be influential opinion leaders who are good role models. Or, it could be negative influences (extremists, preachers, violent groups, etc.) to which vulnerable individuals are exposed. Think about what their messages are and what opportunities or risks they present. Can your organisation leverage the positive aspects of this? Or, will you need to mitigate the impact of any negative influences like active extremist groups or groups that are critical of your programme's aims?

Other Manifestations of the Causes

Violent extremist behaviour is only one manifestation of the multifarious factors that influence radicalisation. To fully understand both the susceptibility of young people to moral change and the susceptibility to exposure to radicalising settings, it is important to view a context comprehensively and from all perspectives. This

will help you design an action that is most suitable to the problem and context, improving effectiveness and mitigating risks.

Perceptions of P/CVE

The stigmatisation of P/CVE programming is a very real and tangible obstacle to community buy-in for programming. Taking this into account is inevitable when planning. What is the temperature of this issue in your community? Are people apprehensive or receptive? Think about what you can do to make people more comfortable with your initiative.

Why Isn't the Problem Worse?

Somewhat counter-intuitively, it is worth asking yourself this question: "What is present in this context that is having a preventative effect?" Programme design need not happen from scratch, and sometimes the best sources of prevention are pre-existing, and simply need to be optimised. Failure to recognise this can lead to a misallocation of resources, a misdiagnosis of the problem, and negative unintended consequences when it comes to disturbed community dynamics.

Map the Solution

Identifying the driving forces of violent extremist behaviour in your community is merely the first step. The next step is to map the important aspects of a proposed solution so that the programme meets the needs.

Q: Who will be the main focus of your programme?

Or, more simply, who do you want to help first? This question is directly linked to the earlier question of "How are youth being affected?" — think about this in terms of what makes the most sense based on the needs you have identified earlier. Will you work primarily with:

- young people being targeted for recruitment;

- building communities of support for young people; or

- entire communities-at-large?

This question is a balancing act of vulnerabilities facing youth and the assets that youth possess. It is understandable to want to engage directly with young people directly affected by extremist influences, but this may not always be possible. It may not also be where you could be most effective. Consider some of the following when making this decision:

- What audiences do you have access to?

- How are you and/or your organisation perceived by young people?

- Are there existing youth networks you can tap into instead?

Beyond an assessment of your target audience, it is important to understand more about them and to be as focused as possible, as insights gathered during this Mapping the Solution phase of the project design will come in handy later on.

- What demographic factors do they share (age, gender, location, criminal history, etc.)?

- What are the most acute vulnerabilities they face (identity issues, personal crisis, unmet aspirations, grievances, etc.)?

- What radicalising settings are they exposed to (local groups, social media pages, media consumption habits, extremist preachers, etc.)?

Q: What will be the main aim of your programme?

P/CVE work can look like any number of projects, all with very different aims. As violent extremism is a social issue, so too is the required response. This means that programmes should be designed to have their own areas of focus, while

complementing existing initiatives in order to maximise collective impact. Depending on the challenges you have identified earlier, you could consider one of the following areas to focus on (as identified by USAID, Promising practices in engaging youth in peace and security and P/CVE, 2017).

Prevent Violence and Recruitment

This category refers to broad-based prevention initiatives that seek to build community assets and protective factors against violent extremist push and pull influences. This is the most pre-emptive form of P/CVE work as it focuses on communities and individuals who are concerned about or susceptible to violent extremist influences but are not necessarily engaging in it.

Work that seeks to prevent violence and recruitment before it starts includes:

- working across communities and religious groups to foster trust, dialogue and mutual understanding, building social cohesion and decreasing marginalisation and injustice;

- working with other young people to speak up and address grievances constructively, without violence, by building skills in communication, advocacy and collaborative problem solving.

Facilitate Youth Disengagement

This category refers to initiatives that seek to facilitate exit or disengagement for young people who are actively, or have been actively, involved in violent extremist activity in some way. This is more of an intervention-style model of P/CVE work, but with an attempt to provide opportunities for exit before participation becomes illegal, and could involve working either directly with vulnerable youth or with their communities of support.

Work that seeks to facilitate youth disengagement includes:

- working with young people who have joined violent extremist groups so that they can make a new choice, embracing peaceful approaches to addressing their grievances;

- linking young people with their peers and empowering youth to help other young people see a peaceful future for themselves, talk about their dreams, fears and aspirations, and gain skills in responding to conflict constructively;

- working with former violent extremists, ex-combatants and returned fighters to help them rebuild and strengthen healthy relationships with their families and communities;

- working to provide equal resources to all young people in the community, in order to avoid negative incentives to choose violence as a way of accessing services or resources.

Produce and Amplify New Narratives

This category is an acknowledgement of the significant role that media (mass and social media) has a sensitising or desensitising influence on young people's

behaviour. Young people now inhabit a media environment that is unprecedented in terms of access to information, and ways of communicating, which presents both a threat and an opportunity.

Producing or amplifying new narratives could involve any number of the following:

- actively countering binary narratives about violent extremism, and instead amplifying new stories about peace and positive role models, fostering discussion about the future;

- sharing stories and ideas about a future without violence through traditional media outlets to reach millions of people of all ages;

- inoculating audiences from extremist influences by: pointing out the hypocrisies of extremists, revealing their tendency to manipulate the vulnerable, raising awareness of the audience's vulnerability to influence, and challenging extremist arguments by presenting them in a weak form with counter-speech messages;

- using social media to amplify new, authentic, original voices that connect with those vulnerable to online recruitment and violent extremist narratives;

- supplying alternative narratives that provide resilience-building messages to correspond to the psychological drivers of radicalisation seemingly provided by extremists, such as belonging, purpose, meaning and self-esteem.

Establish Meaningful Partnerships

The final broad category of P/CVE work essentially looks at repairing importance pieces of "broken" social capital within a community. In community settings where opportunities are perceived to be, or are actually, limited to a particular community, extremist groups often try to exploit this imbalance to feed their injustice narratives and/or sow the seeds of distrust towards the broader community.

There are a number of ways that meaningful partnerships can be established through P/CVE initiatives. These include:

- partnering with local and national governments, as well as international institutions, to design policies and strategies that prevent and counter violent extremism;

- working with other youth, civil society organisations, research institutions, religious leaders and governments to identify and address drivers of conflicts and marginalisation;

- working to build trust with police and other security forces, promoting collaborative approaches that enhance community security, and building trust between youth and security actors.

Remember that staying focused on a primary area of P/CVE does not preclude being effective in other ways. For example, if you set out to create a social media campaign that targets young people who are being targeted by extremist messages and hence stem recruitment, you may also be facilitating meaningful partnerships with other audiences, such as parents and frontline workers working with youth.

Bonding, Bridging and Linking (Ellis & Abdi, 2017)

In a study looking at the role of communities in preventing violent extremism, Ellis and Abdi identify three main functions that should be harnessed when developing programming.

- bonding relationships between people from the same community;

- bridging relationships between people from different communities;

- linking relationships to supporting community infrastructure.

These three functions all support the underlying finding that "social connection" is at the heart of community resilience to violent extremism, but also how important it is to look at social connection beyond just the interpersonal realm.

Q: What skills will your programme empower young people with?

The opportunities and vulnerabilities will be different in each context, but the following starting point will remain the same for everyone.

"Young people should be considered as natural preventers, peer-to-peer intervention providers, credible messengers in counter-speech and potential innovators who can deliver new approaches."

P/CVE youth initiatives, to be effective, do require a focus on some form of youth empowerment — so which ones should you focus on? A helpful way to think of this is to think of the types of skills you could build in three broad categories, as previously identified by RAN Young:

- Knowledge Empowerment refers to any programme focused on increasing theory and/or information that could be conducive to P/CVE outcomes. This can range from learning specifically about P/CVE, legal frameworks and referral pathways, and broader issues such as global injustice or the role of religion.

- Personal Empowerment refers to any programme that focuses on increasing the emotional/cognitive resilience and well-being of participants. The needs tend to be social and emotional and can range from identity/faith-based programmes and youth mentoring to cross-cultural/generational relationship-building programmes.

- Skills Empowerment refers to any programme that focuses on increasing the practical/working knowledge and expertise of participants. These tend to be utilised in the context of diversionary programmes that help individuals and communities create alternative pathways to violence. These can range from learning trades, advocacy and running organisations to communications and media training.

There's likely to be a significant degree of overlap between each type of empowerment, so bear in mind that these categories are intended as a guide only.

Refine your primary focus, but do not discount the various ways your programme could benefit the young people who take part in it.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of P/CVE programmes that have demonstrated good or promising outcomes. Use these as inspiration for the initiatives you might consider for your community.

Knowledge Empowerment

> Increase P/CVE Knowledge

It is difficult to talk about serious issues and the effect they are having on a community if there is no space to discuss them. Quite often, young people will not be given the opportunity to discuss and/or learn about violent extremism due to sensitivities around the subject, or a lack of confidence. Programmes that seek to increase knowledge around P/CVE can be an effective way of opening up this dialogue, and "taking the temperature" of community feelings and experiences with violent extremism.

Programmes that aim to increase knowledge can take a number of formats, including:

- specific workshops about P/CVE;

- community-based conversations, etc.

Example: Extremely Together is a youth-led social movement to prevent violent extremism. The leaders developed a toolkit that aims to increase P/CVE knowledge among their generation, and are delivering this through a global roadshow. See: http://www.extremelytogether-theguide.org/

> Increase Knowledge on Related Issues

Young people may not understand the difference between faith and ideology. They may not understand that extremists attempt to manipulate vulnerable individuals with their narratives. They may have only been exposed to one perspective on widely held grievances or political/geopolitical questions. They may not appreciate the compromises that are required for political or diplomatic decision-making. Programmes that seek to increase knowledge on these topics can have an inoculating effect for young people and prevent radicalisation.

Programmes like this can take a number of formats, such as:

- official forums and town halls organised in partnership with local authorities;

- roundtables, events or conferences organised by think tanks and featuring authority figures.

Example: CVE organisation Quilliam regularly holds briefings, roundtables and conferences at which they encourage the participation of young people. One example is their university series Right2Debate. See: https://m.facebook.com/Right2Debate/

Personal Empowerment

> "Spaces" for Community Building

Similar to the space you create for learning about P/CVE, not all initiatives have to be direct in their P/CVE focus to have worthwhile outcomes: community resilience is about social connection. Therefore, the focus of these programmes tends to be more about creating opportunities and building relationships (both within and across communities) through shared interests. These can include:

- sports

- arts

- religion

- informal educational

Example: More than a Game is a sport-focused youth mentoring programme in Melbourne, Australia that uses team-based sports to address issues of identity, belonging and cultural isolation amongst young Muslim men. See: https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/167/110

> Mentoring and Leadership Opportunities

Mentoring and leadership opportunities can be one of the most effective forms of peer-to-peer intervention, as other young people have more capacity to be good influences on their peers than anyone else. These programmes can also appeal to young people who are looking for skills that could increase their employability and/or have considerable networking opportunities.

Example: Edventure developed the Peer to Peer: Challenging Extremism programme throughout universities that encourages collective action and creativity, and inspires mentoring and leadership to prevent violent extremism. See: http://edventurepartners.com/peer-to-peer-challenging-extremism/

Skills Empowerment

> Media and Communications Skills

Given the omnipresence of media in the lives of young people, both their experiences of and interactions with a chaotic media environment are crucial to their personal and emotional development. Media and communication skills-building can be thought of in three broad ways:

a) harnessing emerging technologies to bolster credible voices and narratives;

Example: The Institute for Strategic Dialogue developed the Counter-Narrative Handbook for all practitioners, including for young people, to develop counter-speech. See: https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf

b) empowering critical thinking and digital literacy;

Example: Connect Futures develops educational programmes and counter-speech with a particular focus on supporting frontline practitioners and young people, and has focused on empowering critical thinking and digital literacy skills. See: https://www.connectfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SFY-Evaluation-.pdf

c) cooperating with social media companies.

Example: Creators for Change is a global initiative run by YouTube to encourage video content creators and influencers to make content for social good, and provides guidance to practitioners about how best to use their resources effectively. See: https://www.youtube.com/yt/creators-for-change/

Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving

Strengths-based conflict resolution and problem solving skills are another way to help young people practice resilience, particularly if there are strong negative influences of extremist narratives present in a community context (such as real or perceived inequities between different communities, and clashes of values and identity).

Example: German-based organisation 180 Degree Turn supports young people, providing them with guidance, knowledge and training to become successful and to gain prosperity, with a particular focus on conflict resolution and problem solving. See: http://180gradwende.de/

Pro-Social Activism and Philosophy

Anneli Botha argues that young people in their mid-to-late teens are most prone to radicalisation and more at risk of falling prey to extremist recruiters because they have stronger reactions to external political events and perceived injustice. This is perhaps the most direct way of helping young people engage with injustices they feel passionately about.

Example: YouthCAN encourages young people to use their energy and passion for social change to pursue activism towards P/CVE objectives, and brings like-minded youth together to achieve that common purpose. See: https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/YouthCAN-Labs.pdf

Q: Are there any other programmes in your setting that do work and could impact upon your programme?

It is important to remember that P/CVE is not a one-person/organisation job and that work which aims to improve community resilience is a coordinated, multifaceted effort across a number of organisations. Consider where you or your organisation would fit into the community asset pool.

- What other initiatives are out there in your community?

- Have you identified a gap in programming or are you replicating other programming?

- If you are considering activity that is being done by other organisations, what will you do differently and how could you leverage each other's work?

Q: What is the appropriate level of youth centredness?

Generally, youth-focused initiatives can be divided into two categories: youth-driven and youth-supported initiatives. Youth-driven means initiatives that are by youth, for youth. They tend to be, but not always, more informal and require less supervision. Youth-supported means initiatives that are with youth, for youth. They tend to be, but not always, more formal and require more supervision.

Ideally, any P/CVE youth initiative should aim for a balance between highly engaged young people and their communities of support. Roger Hart's 'Ladder of Children's Participation' provides a useful scale to measure and maintain levels of engagement. In practice, frontline practitioners working with youth will need to make a judgment call about what level of involvement to have in both the direction and administration of any initiative.

- Did you or your organisation come up with the idea? (i.e. as opposed to a group of young people or a youth organisation)

- Are you providing the majority of the resources and goodwill?

- Are there legislative requirements or safety concerns that require adult supervision?

As a general rule, if your answers to these questions tend towards the affirmative, the more involvement you should have. However, it will also carry with it a greater responsibility to work with young people to build and run a programme that targets their interests.

Build With the Best Tools

This section is where the "rubber hits the road". Now that you have identified both the challenges and the ideal solution, it is important to build practices that optimise youth engagement in any initiative or programme from the very beginning. This is particularly important in programmes that require significant adult supervision and oversight. The following is a list of important considerations that come from research and from feedback by youth organisations wanting to do work in P/CVE.

Collaboration

One of the recurring pieces of feedback regarding working with young people for P/CVE is the idea of "pseudo-involvement". Young people often report feeling tokenised in programming designed for their benefit because they are:

- not always consulted about important decisions;

- don't feel their input is given equal weight with that of other experts or stakeholders;

- made to feel unprofessional due to their age.

Genuinely collaborative practices are some of the most important aspects of working with youth if the aim is to empower them.

- Consider a co-design approach, where possible: this means building programmes with the very people who will use and benefit from them — i.e. young people.

- Formalise your youth partnerships within your organisational structure.

- Do you have memorandums of understanding or contracts in place?

- Is your youth mandate in your organisation's constitution, strategic plan or other foundational document?

- Ensure youth representation is always present when significant decisions are made.

- Role model collaborative behaviour by actively seeking and nurturing multidisciplinary partnerships.

Consider what partnerships will be beneficial beyond those with young people. Tweaking existing programmes through improved targeting, improved technology and a youth orientation may be exactly the sort of innovation that is required to address the problems you have identified. It will also help make your action sustainable as there will be stronger and longer-lasting foundations.

Technology

What is the best way to use technology to both work with and work for the empowerment of young people?

- Understand how young people in your community use technology — is access to phones (with data) a given or an issue?

- What platform will you use to keep young people informed of any developments and decisions about the programme/initiative?

- How will you share resources and ideas with young people in order to improve their own knowledge? Will it be via email?

- Are there any expectations regarding social media?

This is certainly an area where your project could be youth-driven rather than youth-supported. Understanding the very latest technology and how it could support your initiative, reach your target audience effectively, will certainly be improved through a stronger role for youth in this building phase.

Timing

One often overlooked aspect of working with youth is timing. Sufficient notice should always be given when requesting participation, as young people are increasingly time-poor. This includes not only when events will be held, but how much time will be required. Commitments to take into consideration include:

- education (do they study at university? community college? night school?);

- work (do they work nights? or weekends?);

- cultural and religious commitments (are there any significant holidays coming up?);

- other commitments such as significant events that might clash (e.g. other youth events like festivals, childcare commitments, etc.).

This aspect is therefore linked to incentives. Why should young people participate in this action? What is in it for them? Through timing, can you remove barriers to their participation, and can you provide incentives (material or otherwise) for their active involvement?

Environment

If P/CVE initiatives generally represent an attempt to bring difficult communities of people together, then the environment in which the main activities are held is a crucial element. Think about what the environment represents both physically and symbolically:

- Is it a sufficiently neutral space? — i.e. is everyone welcome, regardless of beliefs or identity?

- Is it safe?

- Is it easily accessible?

- Is it conducive to being productive?

And, beyond this, is it practical for young people to attend this environment, or are you asking them to drastically change their habits and behaviours in order to participate?

Confidentiality and Sensitive Information

Because of the nature of P/CVE, particularly in community settings with significant involvement with violent extremism, you need to consider how to handle potentially sensitive information that could be shared, including disclosing or displaying:

- engagement (own or other people's) with violent extremist content;

- involvement in activities with or by extremist groups;

- intention to harm, themselves or another person.

As a general rule, be transparent and professional about how someone's information is handled from the very beginning. Due to scepticism about P/CVE and its reputation in some communities, getting on the front foot in this aspect is important in order to build trust and a mutually cooperative environment.

Recognition

"When working with young people I think that it is important to award their effort, given time and ideas so that they could feel the appreciation and see the direction of their involvement."

- Payment, reward or the covering of expenses is an essential consideration for youth participation.

- Accreditation, celebration and recognition of children or parents of young children should be apparent.

- Certificates, award ceremonies, celebratory events, publicity and positive media.

- Ask how the individuals involved would like to be recognised.

Managing expectations

It is understandable to want to do honourable work in a P/CVE programme, but a failure to temper optimism can lead to burnout and disengagement. If a programme aims to do too much, it can be easy to lose perspective on the smaller achievements that are still worthwhile. On the other hand, if a programme is too specific, you could lose sight of the long-term goal.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

"I think that young people will be interested when they see what they can do, what opportunities they have in front of them, and what they can do for their peers and even families, communities, etc."

As frontline workers and practitioners working with young people, this final aspect of the NMBL Approach is about maximising your positive influence on them.

While the aim is to work with young people, you have the responsibility of being an anchoring influence on them. Both what you *say*, and what you do, should *reinforce* the structure you have built for the initiative. Be a role model and an inspiring **leader**.

Communicate clearly, simply and frankly with young people

- Talk with young people, not about them.

- Be natural — young people can easily pick up on play-acting and patronising language.

- Be consistent in your interactions — check in with them regularly but empower them to come to you with concerns.

- Avoid negative, judgmental or biased communication — try being critical and curious instead.

Conduct yourself in a way that a role model does, demonstrating the type of behaviour you expect from them

- Create room for frank discussions, and chances for young people to try new things.

- Consult them on difficult issues you may face as they arise. Let them see how you deal with conflicts.

- Expose them to examples of good practices from their peers and people who are influential to them.

Be transparent about decisions and problems you may encounter along the way

- Set clear boundaries as early as possible — if you aren't able to adopt a recommendation made by young people, or you disagree with something they have proposed, use it as an opportunity to explore other options.

Genuinely invest in your relationship with young people

- Focus on the process of building a relationship, not just the outcome of a programme.

- Don't go too fast. Building a relationship and trust takes time, so it's a game of patience.

SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR DIFFERENT SECTORS

The NMBL Approach should not replace existing inspiring practice guidelines, handbooks or models when it comes to what to do; rather it is an approach and a set of tips and tricks to advise on how to collaborate with young people effectively.

The principles of NMBL are the minimum standards that can be applied across all sectors working with young people to P/CVE. However, the way in which you actively engage in this work with young people will differ depending on the role. There will undoubtedly be considerations specific to your role, which will assist you in both your planning and your performance.

Communications Practitioners

For communications practitioners designing counter-speech campaigns, and following RAN advice to engage young people in every aspect of the GAMMMA+ model, the NMBL Approach is a guide for how to do this effectively.

- Ritzmann, A., & Meines, M., RAN Guidelines for effective alternative and counter-narrative campaigns (GAMMMA+), Issue Paper. Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2017.

- Ritzmann, A., Involving young people in counter and alternative narratives – why involve peers?, Ex Post Paper. Madrid, Spain: Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2018.

Teachers

Teachers, for whom P/CVE has become an extension of their safeguarding duties, have an abundance of resources available to them to become confident in this domain. The NMBL Approach should be seen as a supplement to that and to help teachers move beyond seeing young people as potentially vulnerable to extremism, towards generating peer-to-peer initiatives and inspiring youth leadership in P/CVE.

- Lenos, S., & Keltjens, M., RAN EDU's Guide on training programmes: 'Effective and confident teachers and other school staff'. Helsinki, Sweden: Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2017.

Social and Youth Workers

Social and youth workers typically have a role to detect early signs of radicalisation and to offer alternative pathways for vulnerable youth. They can also be positive role models or mentors, and can use their considerable experience and training in working with young people on a range of social challenges, to achieve P/CVE goals. However, social and youth workers can also play an empowering role to encourage youth-led initiatives, and could apply the NMBL Approach to this domain.

NMBL Matrix

The NMBL Matrix is a condensed version of this Handbook and is for anyone planning any P/CVE initiative or programme with young people — this can be frontline workers and youth leaders/groups themselves.

Each section has its specific set of instructions — some sections require you to select the most appropriate answer; other sections will contain prompts for you to identify how you will address certain issues.

The NMBL Matrix is intended to be used as a planning aid, in conjunction with this Handbook. In the interest of co-design with young people, we would encourage full transparency and recommend that all stakeholders fill out this Matrix collaboratively at the beginning of a project, and refer to it throughout its design, development and implementation.

Name the Challenge (Select and describe as many as possible)					Notes
How is violent extremism appearing in your context?	Physical	Verbal	Online	Offline	
What are the identifiable drivers of this behaviour?	Cultural	Socio-economic	Political	Other	
How are youth being affected by these influences?	Targeted	Vulnerable	Exposed	Empowered	
What are the perceptions of P/CVE work?	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Other	
Are there any other group or community dynamics that could impact your programme?	Influential groups or individuals?	What community resources do you have/need?	Are there positive influences to leverage?	Are there negative influences to mitigate?	

Map the Solution (Where possible, try to select one option for each question)					Notes
Primary aim	Prevent violence and recruitment	Produce and amplify new narratives	Establish meaningful partnerships	Facilitate youth disengagement	
Primary target group	Vulnerable youth	Communities of support for youth	Wider community		
P/CVE skills	Knowledge	Personal	Skills		
Existing programmes?	There are no existing programmes. We have identified a gap.	There are existing programmes, but ours will be different			

Level of youth centredness
(Try to select one for each question, where possible)

Are there legal requirements?	N/A	Low	Medium	High
Are there safety concerns?	N/A	Low	Medium	High
Who owns the IP?	Entirely youth	Mainly youth	50/50	Entirely organisation
Who will contribute resources?	Entirely youth	Mainly youth	50/50	Entirely organisation
Overall	By Youth, For Youth		With Youth, For Youth	

Build with the Best Tools
(Consider answers to all of the questions in each row)

Notes

Collaboration	Is your programme's youth commitment formalised in your structure?	How will youth be represented when significant decisions are made?	What needs have to be met in order for caregivers and other adults to work with young people?	What other stakeholders can add value?
Technology	Does everyone have the same access to technology?	What medium will you use to stay in touch/ consultative?	How will you share resources with young people?	
Time commitments	Educational?	Work?	Cultural religious?	Other?
Environment for activities	Is it neutral?	Is it easily accessible?	Is it safe?	Is it conducive to productivity?
Dealing with sensitive information	What will be done with personal information?	Engagement or involvement with VE activities?	Intent to harm self or others?	
Recognition	Can you remunerate work performed?	How will basic expenses be covered?	How will you acknowledge people's contributions?	
Potential partners	Who could champion / promote your programme?	What can you do yourself?	What would you need others to do?	

Lead by Example
(consider answers to all of the questions)

Notes

How will you guarantee?	Good communication	Role-modelling conduct	Transparent decision-making and problem solving	Investment in your relationships

RESOURCE LIST AND FURTHER READING

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