



# RAN ISSUE PAPER

## Developing counter- and alternative narratives together with local communities

### Introduction

When national security is at stake, it is hardly surprising that there is a tendency to focus on the national, and on security. However, developments over the last decade, as the field of preventing/countering violent extremism learns from the neighbouring area of public health, have taken the discussion towards the local, and towards communications, to achieve more effective results. Some residue of an earlier approach remains nonetheless, with counter- and alternative narrative campaigns often developed without the input of local communities, and unnecessarily securitising the debate. This paper sets out an argument for addressing this shortcoming, and identifies some advice for frontline practitioners based on academic literature, good practice examples and lessons learned from adjacent fields.

This issue paper was written by RAN C&N co-chair Jonathan Russell.



## Introduction

A senior security official in the United Kingdom reflected about an early lesson he learned when developing work to counter violent extremism (CVE): “There was a time a decade ago when we thought we could sit in Whitehall and fix local issues with a very long screwdriver.” He was referring to the now oft-repeated mantra in CVE that work should be bottom-up, not top-down. Like related fields of development and post-conflict stabilisation, there is now widespread acceptance of the need to build meaningful relationships with grassroots communities and work together on this shared problem.

The evidence shows that [Prevent](#), the United Kingdom’s CVE strategy, learned its lesson. By 2015, it could boast of a local coordinator network that worked with over 2 790 different institutions, 130 community-based projects impacting over 25 300 participants, and a grant fund of GBP 3.6 million distributed among local authorities in 50 priority areas considered most vulnerable to the threat of terrorism. Furthermore, it worked with a new [Prevent Duty](#) in institutions such as schools, prisons and universities that mobilised existing local networks to reach those most vulnerable to radicalisation and safeguard them from extremism.

This is true across the European Union too. The European Union’s anti-terrorism coordinator Gilles de Kerchove claimed in a speech in 2017 that local authorities and community partners have a substantial role to play in identifying possible threats, and leading on prevention, education and integration approaches to P/CVE <sup>(1)</sup>. These approaches all have a communications element, and this mantra can be applied to the realm of counter- and alternative narratives to contribute a digital aspect to the solution. Given the increasingly digital nature of the threat – indeed, de Kerchove notes that the internet allows for the speeding up of the radicalisation process – this is to be taken seriously.

Beyond the Communications and Narratives Working Group, on which this issue paper is focused, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) boasts two other working groups that have localisation as a core principle: [RAN Local](#), which works with local authorities and at a local government level to promote inspiring practices and models; and [RAN YF&C \(Youth, Families and Communities\)](#), which recognises the importance of engagement with and empowerment of local communities to prevent radicalisation.

This paper considers whether communications approaches to CVE, most often known as counter- and alternative narratives, should also be localised. To make the case for this, this paper examines the key pillars of effective communications and considers which of them require localised elements. It looks outside the world of CVE to ascertain good practices, to extremists in order to appraise their strengths and weaknesses, and to the track record of CVE around the world, to identify case studies for this approach. Based on this, the paper sets out some tips and tricks for practitioners who want to develop counter- and alternative narratives together with local communities, pointing out key pitfalls and offering ways to avoid them in order to maximise effectiveness.

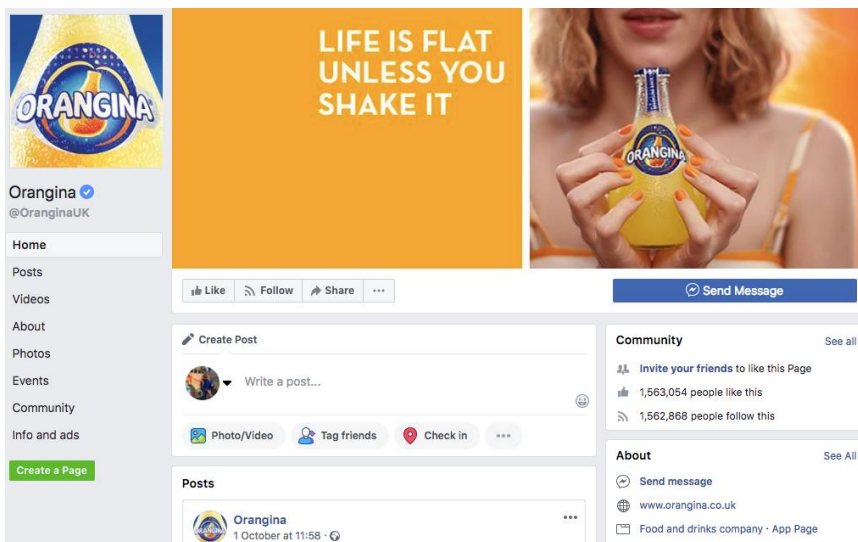
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<sup>(1)</sup> Malvesí, L. Terrorists can’t access weapons, EU anti-terrorist coordinator says after Spain attacks. EURACTIV, 28 August 2017. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/terrorists-cant-access-weapons-eu-anti-terrorist-coordinator-says-after-spain-attacks/>

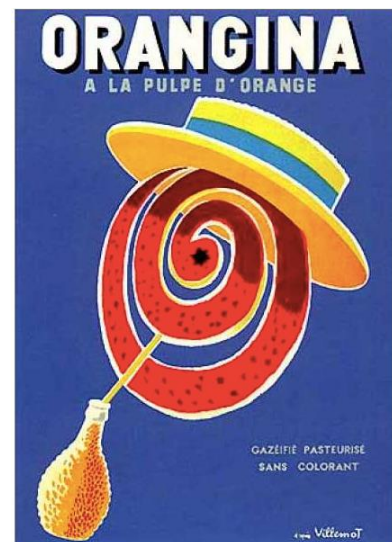
## Effective Communications

Effective communications has, at its heart, a robust understanding of the target audience with which you are trying to communicate. This means having a clear idea of the target audience (encompassing demographics such as age and gender, and interests such as football or rap music) and of the communications environment (encompassing the ideas, news, views, messages, information and emotions) that surrounds them. Any message, content or campaign will resonate differently depending on these two aspects.

In the advertising industry, there has been a significant evolution. Thinking back to the 1950s, big companies would broadcast messages to consumers and tell them what they needed. There was very little targeting. With the emergence of the internet since the 1990s, it is unsurprising that digital advertising attracts the bulk of companies' budgets. This has opened up possibilities.



*Orangina (2018)*



*Orangina (1955)*

For example, they can retarget audiences based on their online behaviour, they can interact with their consumers on social media to receive feedback and add a human face to their brand, they can encourage user-generated content as part of their marketing strategy, and they can use influencers, who may be more trusted than the brands themselves. In each of these different aspects, this evolution has necessitated a richer understanding of target audiences and communications environments.

It is hard to think of a successful political campaign that has not been locally organised, locally oriented or locally delivered. The trend in the second half of the 20th century of travelling speakers allowed campaigners to meet and build relationships with local voters, frame their arguments and narratives through local issues, and make promises that would have local impact on voters' lives. In this, politicians learnt from civil liberties activists: Francis Townsend who campaigned for social security, Inez Milholland for suffrage, Martin Luther King for civil rights – all had a particularly local element to their communications and politics. Former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Tip O'Neill [summarised it best](#) when he said “all politics is local.”




This has been followed, unsurprisingly, and not unlike the advertising sector, by a digitalisation of this trend into the 21st century. Most notably, Barack Obama was lauded for building the [single biggest grassroots operation in political campaign](#) history in 2012. He famously used microtargeting on social media to connect candidates with constituents, and ensure that they were reaching the key audiences (swing voters, and supporters who might not get out and vote) with key local messages. This was only possible due to his campaign manager Jim Messina's strategic '[Voter Contact Program](#)', in which thousands of volunteers talked to over a million potential voters, and recorded the issues that mattered to them, and details on their voting history. His team developed a bespoke blueprint for all of their prioritised local areas. This deep understanding of target audiences was intrinsically linked to a commitment to prioritise the local in everything that they did. The rest is history.

Top Tip: Can we be as committed to understanding our target **audiences** and their concerns as Obama was? Yes We Can.

Despite the globalist or nationalist narratives propagated by extremists, localisation is also an important part of the success of violent extremist organisations. Indeed, despite dozens of potential warning signs of someone vulnerable to radicalisation, the most likely indicator of propensity to engagement with violent extremism is proximity to current extremists, due to the [exposure factor](#). This shouldn't surprise us: extremism is a political phenomenon, and is spread through communications. Extremist organisations may have local chapters and a hierarchical structure to aid recruitment, even if they retain the same overarching [narratives, ideologies and methodologies](#). Understanding the local dynamics and the make-up of local communities is an often missed aspect of understanding the problem of radicalisation. Extremists, when effective, will exploit local vulnerabilities and seek to avoid local resilience factors. Effective work to counter or prevent violent extremism must do the opposite and address these local vulnerabilities, by leveraging these local resilience factors and filling in the gaps where they are found.

The centrality of the target audience and communications environments is true in countering violent extremism too, and is the underlying rationale for the [GAMMMA+ model](#). After all, how can a practitioner be expected to achieve his Goals with a particular Audience without knowing that audience and their environment comprehensively? Indeed, while the Message and the call to Action may be tied closely to the Goal, the Messenger and the Medium will be chosen in respect to the communications environment of the target audience. And in both respects, it would pay to heed Tip O'Neill, and value the local just as much as Obama and Messina did in 2012.



The GAMMMA+ model was developed by the RAN Communications and Narratives Working Group in 2017 to give a consistent framework for practitioners seeking to develop their own communications strategies to prevent or counter violent extremism through counter- or alternative narratives. The components are Goal, Audience, Message, Messenger, Medium, Action, and Evaluation.

Graphic provided by C&N member Luke Newbold

## Valuing the Local

So what are the particular aspects of counter- and alternative narrative development in which local communities can add value? And, what are the particular considerations for this sort of approach?

### *An academic perspective*

It is worth considering the academic perspective, to attempt to close the gap between academics' and practitioners' approaches to localised communications-based approaches to countering violent extremism.

French academic Dr Noémie Bouhana emphasises this in her work on the [social ecology of radicalisation](#). Dr Bouhana argues that CVE practitioners focus excessively on "susceptibility" to moral change when considering vulnerability, and neglect their exposure to radicalising influences, which predominately occur through "setting". Place is a constant theme of her CVE theses, and she argues that to both understand the problem and come up with meaningful solutions, it should be a key theme for CVE work. This academic argument is the strongest one yet for developing hyperlocal counter- and alternative narratives together, and therefore in partnership, with local communities.

Moreover, in her work with Paul Gill and Emily Corner on the multifinality of vulnerability indicators for lone-actor terrorism, they emphasise the role of susceptibility to exposure to radicalising settings. In short, individuals may carry all of the vulnerability factors to propensity for terrorism, but if they are not exposed to radicalising forces (recruiters, etc.), they will be unlikely to commit violent acts <sup>(2)</sup>. Comparable to this thesis, Brian Van Brunt, Amy Murphy and Ann Zedginidze identify that most individuals who appear to fit the profile for radicalisation, using any preferred vulnerability matrix, fail to radicalise, and put this down to the

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<sup>(2)</sup> Corner, E., Bouhana, N., Gill, P., The multifinality of vulnerability indicators in lone-actor terrorism. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, Vol. 25, Iss. 2, 2018, 111–132.



presence of resilience factors in any given setting<sup>(3)</sup>. These include: “self-control, adherence to law, acceptance of police legitimacy, illness, positive parenting behavior, non-violent significant others, good school achievement, non-violent peers, contact to foreigners, and a basic attachment to society.”

To strengthen these arguments for considering the local aspect to risk and resilience, various academics, including Ellis and Abdi, promote the idea of community resilience rather than individual resilience, arguing that there are three types of social connections that are critical to a resilient community in relation to violent extremism: bonds, bridging and linking<sup>(4)</sup>. Important to counter- and alternative narratives is their finding that building an atmosphere of trust, respect and co-creation are essential ingredients to effective community-based prevention work.

Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack agree in their research which explored community resilience in Denmark, identifying that impact is minimised without trust, despite high levels of knowledge and training<sup>(5)</sup>. A CERTA report supports this, and promotes cooperation with families, close friends and mentors alongside religious communities in order to build resilience<sup>(6)</sup>.

Beyond a decision to work with local communities, and a recognition that doing so is central to both problem identification (understanding vulnerability) and solution formation (developing resilience), and the appreciation of the building blocks for doing this effectively (establishing trust, fostering meaningful relationships), there remain several key components that are more specific to counter- and alternative narratives, for which there is also academic grounding. First are Staniforth’s recommendations taken from the realm of community policing, which give guidance on how to reach young people (and by extension, other credible messengers and support networks)<sup>(7)</sup>. Second is Braddock and Horgan’s recommendations for constructing and disseminating counterspeech, emphasising the importance of hyper-targeting not just at the point of dissemination (so you reach the right audience) but also at a production and messaging level, so that you influence the audience effectively<sup>(8)</sup>.

### ***A deeper understanding of target audiences***

[Academics may disagree](#) on the particular vulnerability factors that contribute to a conducive environment for radicalisation, but the ones that appear time and again in relevant literature are the following seven factors, when present in a given target audience: identity issues, personal crises, history of criminality, exposure to extremism, grievances, unmet aspirations, and system failure. As is reflected in the academic literature reviewed above, vulnerability, like other aspects, has particular local dimensions and reflections. There will undoubtedly be local vulnerabilities that are present in a particular area. This could be the local

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<sup>(3)</sup> Van Brunt, B., Murphy, A., Zedginidze, A., An exploration of the risk, protective and mobilization factors related to violent extremism in college populations. *Violence and Gender*, Vol. 4, Iss. 3, 2017, 81–101.

<sup>(4)</sup> Ellis, H., Abdi, S., Building community resilience to violent extremism through genuine partnerships. *American Psychologists*, Vol. 72, Iss. 3, 2017, 289–300.

<sup>(5)</sup> Dalgaard-Nielsen, A., Schack, P., Community resilience to militant Islamism: Who and what?: An explorative study of resilience in three Danish communities. *Democracy and Security*, Vol. 12, Iss. 4, 2016, 309–327.

<sup>(6)</sup> CERTA, Modstandskraft mod radikalisering og voldelig ekstremisme. 2016. <https://viden.sl.dk/artikler/boern-og-unge/socialt-udsatte/modstandskraft-mod-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme/>

<sup>(7)</sup> Staniforth, A., Preventing terrorism and violent extremism. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

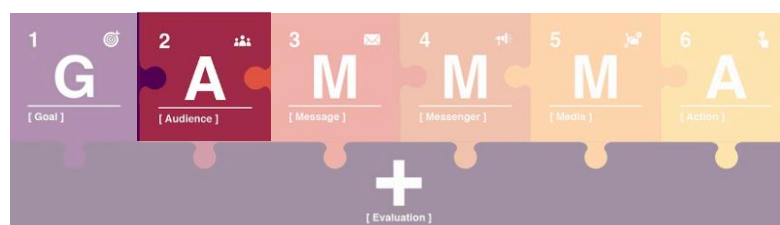
<sup>(8)</sup> Braddock, K., Horgan, J., Towards a guide for constructing and disseminating counternarratives to reduce support for terrorism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 39, Iss. 5, 2016, 381–404.

presence of an extremist organisation, network or individual – of either the ideology of concern (say, Islamist), or the reciprocal ideology (say, anti-Muslim). There could be local conditions such as poor access to services, low attainment in education, a significant wealth disparity, a lack of community cohesion between migrant groups and indigenous populations, a recent history of violence in the local area, established narratives about the local area, and local grievances relating to any of these conditions.

A good counter- or alternative narrative will understand the specific, and often local, vulnerabilities, attitudes, behaviours, interests and media consumption habits of a particular target audience. Sometimes the target audience will be defined by these factors rather than by other demographic factors. This is to be encouraged, to move beyond broader profiling, towards informed, audience-led communications. For example, rather than aiming to reach 18–25-year-old Muslim men in Belgium, a campaign could aim to reach 18–25-year-old Muslim men in Vilvoorde, Belgium (hyperlocal) who are exposed to ISIS propaganda (vulnerability), who consider political or religious violence to be appropriate (attitude), who have liked a certain Facebook page (behaviour), who enjoy watching football (interest), or who read a particular diaspora newspaper (media consumption habits). All of these factors will give a deeper understanding of a target audience, and should therefore influence the strategy, creative production, and delivery of a good counter- or alternative narrative campaign, having a significant impact on effectiveness.

Beyond the above, local communities and stakeholders may also have access to a greater range of local insights than may be available through open-source research, or otherwise held by communications practitioners. Understanding the particular dynamics within a community, appreciating the hyperlocal nuances in a particular area, such as the gangs operating on a certain street, or the demographic changes of an area over a period of time and anticipating important local dates for festivals, events, protests or meetings, may all be important elements of the context to keep in mind when creating a counter- or alternative narrative campaign. Moreover, as part of a wider commitment to “do no harm”, a consistent piece of advice within the CVE (and indeed all policy) domain, an appreciation of the local dynamics is absolutely essential, and one should be wary of thinking that external actors, without this understanding and a rich feeling of these dynamics, can have an exclusively positive impact.

**Top Tip:** At minimum, take the time to visit the location of your target **audience** and understand the local dynamics. Far better is to partner with local communities to gather these all-important audience insights. The audience is the most important aspect of a campaign, so prioritise this.



### ***A local approach to resilience-building***

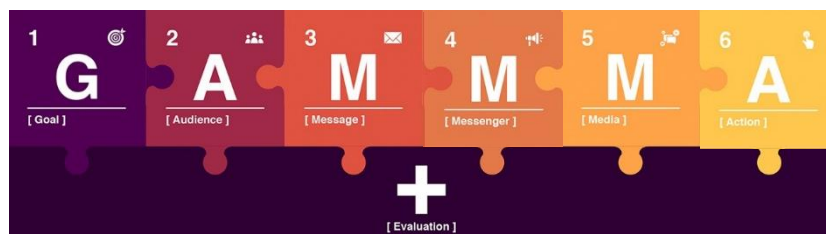
Comparable to local vulnerabilities, there will surely be local resilience factors that have prevented the widespread emergence of radicalisation. After all, despite the prominence of radicalisation in certain areas,

largely explained through a conducive environment and the presence of vulnerability factors mentioned above, radicalisation only affects a very small proportion of the population. Programmes, institutions and leaders may have contributed to building trust, social mixing, confidence, wellness, self-esteem, meaning, purpose and a sense of belonging, among other things. These may be related to established local interests, be they local football clubs, youth centres or community events.

A good counter- or alternative narrative campaign should consider the particular sort of resilience it seeks to build among a target audience in order to prevent radicalisation. For example, if identity issues are identified as a local vulnerability, campaigns may wish to build a sense of belonging. Communications practitioners should look to local sources of belonging to leverage in order to achieve this communications objective. Building partnerships with these local institutions to aid the delivery of the counter- or alternative narrative is wise, as is considering their existing offline activity, to which a campaign could drive the target audience, as part of the call to action. This enables a more robust offering that goes beyond “talking the talk” towards “walking the talk”. It facilitates improved evaluation opportunities as well, moving beyond performance metrics of an online communications campaign, and towards measuring attitude and behaviour change, and therefore an assessment of impact.

Local communities may also be a good source of messengers, role models, influencers or contributors for counter- and alternative narratives. Their proximity to the target audience, credibility as local voices and ability to speak with emotion about local issues all contribute to authenticity, which is influential in improving the transmission and retention of messages – a central part of attitude and behaviour change. As role models, it is likely that target audiences will be more able to identify with local individuals, as they could relate their messages and experiences to their own lives, again having a positive impact on behaviour change. Local influencers, such as YouTube vloggers from the area, members of the local football team or the imam of the local mosque, may all be able to relate to the target audience on several grounds, and vice versa. Telling their own stories and sharing their own experiences is a particularly good way of doing this for a counter- or alternative narrative – local voices may be able to share examples of how they overcame difficulties, addressed grievances or responded to extremist attempts to radicalise them, building empathy, confidence or other resilience factors among the target audience.

Top Tip: Local communities are great natural sources of resilience. Seek to leverage existing assets in the community (youth groups, schools, places of worship) in your campaigns as strong offline calls to action. Partnership with local communities will also help you find the right messengers for your counter- or alternative narrative.






Beyond this, it is fair to say that informal actors, such as family members, peers and sports coaches, defined as “stakeholders without a formal mandate to conduct CVE, and acting without a formal relationship with government” <sup>(9)</sup>, are only found locally. Leveraging these hyperlocal assets within the setting of your target audience is essential for effectiveness. Considering their potential within counter- and alternative narratives requires a further commitment to engage and collaborate within local milieus. The next section of this paper focuses on the best ways to engage with local communities in order to develop effective counter- and alternative narratives.

### ***Engaging with local communities, to develop counter- and alternative narratives***

Sociologist Roger Hart’s seminal youth engagement model ‘[The Ladder of Youth Participation](#)’, in his 1997 report for UNICEF *Children’s participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*, provides a sensible framework for engagement with local communities in communications approaches to CVE too.

**Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation**



- Rung 8: Young people & adults share decision-making
- Rung 7: Young people lead & initiate action
- Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people
- Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed
- Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed
- Rung 3: Young people tokenized\*
- Rung 2: Young people are decoration\*
- Rung 1: Young people are manipulated\*

Note: Hart explains that the last three rungs are non-participation

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Hart’s Ladder of Youth Participation argues the bottom three rungs (manipulation, decoration, tokenism) should not be considered as participation at all. A debate continues about the top two rungs, which differ based on whether young people lead by themselves, or in partnership with adults. Many believe that shared decision making is most beneficial to both young people and adults. Others believe that young people are most empowered when they are making decisions without the influence of adults.

In practice, this means that frontline practitioners, campaign managers, local CVE coordinators and policymakers, all of whom may seek to develop counter- and alternative narratives with local communities, should consider the nature of their engagement. While it may be decided by these stakeholders that local community voices are the best Messengers for a campaign, to treat them solely as Messengers arguably restricts them to Rungs 1–4 of Hart’s Ladder. Instead, it is recommended that local communities are engaged more fully in the development of counter- and alternative narratives, and empowered through capacity building approaches to lead on the development of these communications themselves, elevating them to Rung 8 of the Ladder.

Moreover, and as part of the “do no harm” principle, there should be additional consideration given to the avoidance of stigmatisation of communities when engaging in CVE work, particularly when this is communications-based, and centring around counter- or alternative narratives. Stigmatisation is likely to occur when a community is essentialised. Unwittingly, communications practitioners may feed a “them vs us” narrative, by choosing to focus communications on a very narrow target audience, if they do so unsympathetically, and without thinking about risks and how to mitigate them. Linked to this, there is a

<sup>(9)</sup> RAN C&N Working Group Meeting, Helsinki, 20 September 2018.



danger of negatively impacting the credibility of local stakeholders within communities, or worsening the relationship between local stakeholders and our/their target audiences if due care is not given to this possibility. Furthermore, if the relationship with local community stakeholders is not prioritised and conducted in the right fashion when developing counter- and alternative narratives, communications practitioners could inadvertently add to grievances and end up having a negative rather than positive effect. In the worst case scenario, this could make radicalisation more rather than less likely, and be counterproductive.

Top Tip: Prioritise developing meaningful relationships with local communities built on trust, in order to do no harm. Take care to avoid stigmatisation, and as per Hart's model, aim for shared decision-making with local community stakeholders.

Beyond the risks posed by the potential stigmatisation of local communities through engagement in the development of counter- and alternative narratives, it is worth considering other risks too. In particular, governments may wish to avoid engagement with, cooperation with, collaboration with or funding of local community members or organisations without a robust due diligence process, so as to avoid unwittingly supporting those who oppose the government, support extremists, or could present any other form of policy or political embarrassment to them. The same should be true for other stakeholders, who should consider the unintended negative consequences to counter- and alternative narratives stemming from choosing unsuitable partners.

It follows, from these risks and approaches to mitigate them, that the relationships between different stakeholders and local communities must be built on trust. For effective collaboration and co-development of counter- and alternative narratives, common values, interests and objectives must be sought as a pre-requisite.

### ***Learning from inspiring practices***

#### **Jamal al-Khatib (AT)**

[Jamal al-Khatib is a good practice example](#) of an alternative narrative campaign developed with local communities. The primary aim of the project is to deliver authentic alternative narratives to counter jihadist propaganda and ideology through the methods 'Online-Streetwork' and biographical work, targeted at young people vulnerable to extremism, those who are members of extremist groups and those who are receptive to the idea of prevention. Developed by the NGO 'Turn – Association for the prevention of violence and extremism', which is a network of youth workers, filmmakers, scholars of Islamic studies, young Muslims and non-Muslims, and formers, Jamal al-Khatib is rooted in the story of a young prisoner who left the jihadist subculture in Austria who wanted to help others making the same mistakes.



From this starting point, the project united a number of diverse individuals who had the same aim: youth workers, scholars of Islamic studies, filmmakers, digital managers, and other young people from a Muslim background wishing to take a stand against violent jihadist fanaticism. Some of these young people had also left the jihadist movement, and they provided additional content directly based on their life experiences.



The character Jamal al-Khatib was developed as a means of integrating the different biographical episodes of the young people into a single narrative. Instead of writing a book, Turn decided to shoot short films, as this would counter extremist propaganda on its own home ground — the internet. Through biographical narratives, interviews, text-writing and the co-drafting of film scripts, the participating youngsters and young adults reflect on their own lives and the situation of young Muslims in general. By speaking for themselves and openly discussing their experiences and thoughts, they achieve a level of authenticity that could never have been achieved without their contribution, and a greater impact with the target audience. The team, together with the nine youngsters, reflected on the biographical texts, transformed them into film scripts, shot the movies, released them on different social media platforms, and there entered into a diverse discussion with the target groups.

Turn called this approach Online-Streetwork: whereas traditional street work/social work tries to connect with hard-to-reach groups of potential clients, Online-Streetwork sets out to transfer this methodological approach to the internet, the virtual places that represent an important aspect of the lifeworld of today's youth. To bring the project to life, Jamal al-Khatib worked with young people who have left the jihadist subculture as well as other youngsters with a Muslim background who were actively involved in the project and the content production (involving them in team meetings on a regular basis, film production and online delivery). This meant that feedback loops with the local communities and target group representatives were a constant part of the project, and, consequently, enabled them to respond to their ideas and criticism all along. In addition, Turn has kept the videos online to guarantee open access for CVE practitioners, and several practitioners are already using the films, including in schools.

### **Families Matter (UK)**

[Families Matter is a campaign](#) led by the UK charity Families Against Stress and Trauma (FAST). Launched at the height of the foreign fighter phenomenon, when hundreds of Britons travelled to areas of conflict — mainly Syria and Iraq — and either died or were deemed unlikely to return, leaving behind families torn apart by grief and unanswered questions, FAST decided to launch a campaign to supplement their work with families coping with these issues. FAST is active in local communities and offers counselling services to those affected by radicalisation. This campaign tried to raise awareness about the risks of radicalisation and online grooming so that families can intervene and be resilient. The campaign focused on the emotional impact on families, equipping family members with the knowledge and confidence to spot and challenge radicalisation. The campaign included a campaign film, website, educational resources, series of offline workshops in important local areas and PR activity around a launch event supported by the UK Home Secretary.



By working closely and locally with those who had been affected, FAST built up trust with these families, and some of them decided to tell their stories in the campaign. The Families Matter campaign, along with a subsequent Spot the Signs campaign, have become cornerstones of FAST's workshops with parents in local areas affected by radicalisation. Over a quarter of a million people have viewed

the campaign film, and the online guidance has been read by thousands of parents. Feedback from at-risk family members indicated that the campaign had helped them explore and discuss this difficult subject in the family home.

## Conclusion

This paper sets out the benefit of engaging with local communities in the development of counter- and alternative narratives. To almost every aspect of the GAMMMA+ model, such engagement adds value. As shown, this is not unique to CVE, but rather a key aspect of every sort of communication. However, saying it is one thing, and putting it into practice is something else entirely. Therefore, this paper includes tips throughout to guide frontline practitioners and some case studies to inspire them when commencing future work.