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Training Materials

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Module 1: Understanding Extremism: Basics of Violent Extremism, Its Impacts, and Drivers

This training module aims to provide a foundational understanding of violent extremism, including its definition, the factors that contribute to its emergence, the impacts on individuals and societies, and how to identify its drivers.

 Description of the Module	The "Understanding Extremism: Basics of Violent Extremism, Its Impacts, and Drivers" training module provides participants with a foundational understanding of violent extremism, focusing on its definition, causes, impacts, and the factors that contribute to its emergence. The module begins by clarifying what violent extremism is and how it differs from other forms of radical ideologies. It emphasizes the role of violence in achieving ideological, political, or religious objectives and explores the range of social, political, economic, and psychological factors that can lead individuals to embrace violent extremism. These factors include feelings of alienation, discrimination, political disenfranchisement, or exposure to extremist narratives. In addition to explaining the causes of violent extremism, the module highlights its far-reaching impacts on individuals, communities, and societies. These impacts include not only physical harm and psychological trauma but also broader consequences like social fragmentation, political instability, and threats to national and global security. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for identifying the drivers of extremism, such as radicalization processes, personal grievances, and the influence of extremist networks. Ultimately, the training module aims to equip participants with the tools to recognize the signs of violent extremism, comprehend its root causes, and understand its broader implications, fostering the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies.
 Goal	The goal of the "Understanding Extremism: Basics of Violent Extremism, Its Impacts, and Drivers" module is to provide participants with a comprehensive foundation



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Learning outcomes

for understanding violent extremism, including its causes, impacts, and key drivers. The module aims to equip individuals with the knowledge to identify the signs of violent extremism, recognize the factors that contribute to its emergence, and understand its effects on individuals, communities, and societies. Ultimately, the goal is to foster awareness and understanding of violent extremism in order to inform effective prevention and intervention strategies, contributing to efforts to reduce its spread and mitigate its harmful consequences.

Knowledge:

- Participants will gain a clear understanding of the definition of violent extremism and how it differs from other radical ideologies.
- They will learn about the various factors that contribute to the emergence of violent extremism, including socio-economic, political, and psychological drivers.
- Participants will understand the far-reaching impacts of violent extremism on individuals, communities, and societies, both at the local and global levels.
- They will acquire knowledge about the process of radicalization and how extremist ideologies can spread through individuals and communities

Skills:

- Participants will develop the ability to identify the signs and indicators of violent extremism in individuals or communities.
- They will enhance their skills in assessing the drivers and root causes of violent extremism and understanding the broader societal context.
- Participants will gain skills in designing and implementing strategies for preventing violent extremism and supporting intervention efforts.



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	Attitudes: • Participants will cultivate a proactive attitude toward preventing and addressing violent extremism within their communities and organizations. • They will develop a more empathetic understanding of individuals at risk of radicalization, promoting a more supportive and inclusive approach to intervention. • The module encourages participants to adopt a collaborative mindset, fostering cooperation between different sectors and communities to counter violent extremism effectively.
Theory	The theory behind the "Understanding Extremism: Basics of Violent Extremism, Its Impacts, and Drivers" module draws from several key frameworks that explain the emergence and dynamics of violent extremism. One central concept is Radicalization Theory, which describes how individuals or groups move toward extremist ideologies and violence. Radicalization is often a gradual process shaped by a combination of personal grievances, ideological exposure, and social influences. Over time, individuals may shift from more moderate beliefs to adopting extreme views, with violence seen as a legitimate means of achieving their goals. This process is frequently influenced by social networks, peer groups, and media that reinforce extremist messages. People often derive their identity from the social groups they belong to, and in cases of violent extremism, they may adopt extreme ideologies to strengthen their connection to a group. When individuals feel marginalized or threatened, they may engage in violent actions to defend or promote their group's identity, viewing others as enemies or threats. This theory helps explain why individuals may resort to violence out of loyalty to their group or a desire to protect their group's perceived interests.



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References	Factors like poverty, discrimination, or lack of opportunities can create a sense of deprivation, which may push individuals toward extremist ideologies as an outlet for their anger. Violent extremism, in this context, becomes a way to express frustration and seek retribution for perceived wrongs.
	UNESCO, <i>Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy-makers</i>, https://bit.ly/3dMNwt0 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Discussion%20Paper%20-%20Preventing%20Violent%20Extremism%20by%20Promoting%20Inclusive%20Development.pdf https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1139&context=jss

Activities:

Activity 1		
Introduction to Violent Extremism		
	Type of Activity	Frontal Lecture
	Duration	60 minutes



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	Teaching Methods	Brainstorming; presentation
	Required Resources	Whiteboard or flipchart; Projector and screen; Power Point presentation; Hand-outs - slides with definitions (optional)
	Learning outcomes	Participants should be able to: - Explain what violent extremism is, including how it relates to radical ideologies and the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives. - Differentiate between "extremism" (the adoption of extreme views or beliefs) and "violent extremism" (when those extreme views lead to the use of violence). Recognize key terms related to violent extremism, such as radicalization, terrorism, and ideology, and understand their relevance in the context of violent extremism
	Description of the activity	The facilitator will begin by asking the participants two questions: When you hear the term 'violent extremism,' what comes to your mind? What words or ideas do you associate with extremism in general? The answers will be written in a white board or flip chart. Afterwards the facilitator will continue presenting the overall topic, including: What is violent extremism? Key concepts and definitions The difference between extremism and violent extremism. Participants will be invited to ask questions for clarification and contribute with sharing their knowledge. During the presentation, the facilitator will provide concrete examples from the real world about each concept and definition.



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		UNESCO offers a definition of extremism and violent extremism, arguing that “‘extremism’ refers to attitudes or behaviours that are deemed outside the norm. This basic dictionary understanding highlights the inherently subjective nature of the term, which can take on different meanings depending on who defines the norm and decides what is acceptable or not accordingly”. Violent extremism, instead, “refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals”¹.
	Tips for the facilitators	Avoid overwhelming participants with too much text on slides. Instead, use key points, and explain them verbally. Allow participants to absorb the content without feeling bogged down by excessive information. Make sure to define terms like "extremism," "violent extremism," "radicalization," and "terrorism" in simple, accessible language. Avoid jargon or overly academic language that might confuse participants. Some participants may have personal experiences related to violent extremism (e.g., survivors, first responders, or people from affected communities). Be mindful of this and ensure the session doesn't trigger negative emotions or uncomfortable memories. Offer participants the option to step out if they feel distressed. To avoid overwhelming participants with too much information at once, break the session into smaller segments and pause for discussion or questions in between.
	References	%20Inclusive%20%20Development.pdf https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/radicalization-violent-extremism.html

¹ UNESCO, *Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy-makers*, <https://bit.ly/3dMNwt0>



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	Skills Connected	The session helps participants think about how to prevent or counter violent extremism by recognizing early signs of radicalization and understanding the factors that lead individuals to adopt extreme ideologies. Understanding the global context of violent extremism helps participants develop a broader cultural awareness and sensitivity, particularly in terms of how different societies perceive extremism and violent behavior.
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Activity 2		
Impacts of Violent Extremism & Drivers of Violent Extremism		
	Type of Activity	Frontal Lecture, discussion
	Duration	90 min
	Teaching Methods	Presentation
	Required Resources	Projector and screen; Power Point presentation; Handouts - slides with definitions (optional)
	Learning outcomes	Participants should be able to: - Understand the impacts of violent extremism, thus raising the awareness and reflecting about the impacts in their community.



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		- Recognize the drivers of the violent extremism.
	Description of the activity	Part 1 - Impacts of Violent Extremism (30 min) The facilitator will present different impacts: social impacts, political impacts, economic impacts, psychological impacts; giving concrete examples. The presentation will be followed by an open discussion, encouraging the participants to speak up about the local impacts of the violent extremism. Part 2 - Drivers of Violent Extremism (30 min) The facilitator will present possible drivers of the violent extremism, focusing on: - Interpretations of religious texts that justify violence against perceived enemies. - Political ideologies that reject the existing political order and advocate for violent overthrow or revolution. - Beliefs in the power of one ethnic or national group. - Lack of economic opportunities can make extremist ideologies seem like an appealing way out of social exclusion or poverty. - Low levels of education or access to quality education. - Perceptions of social injustice or unequal treatment. - Authoritarian regimes or lack of political freedoms. - A sense of being marginalized or excluded from mainstream society. - Personal trauma, such as the loss of a loved one, or feelings of betrayal, injustice, or humiliation. - AI-generated deep fakes used for propaganda. - Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, or personality disorders can make individuals more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Part 3 Open discussion (30 min)



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		The facilitator will ask questions related to the elaborated topic, and the participants will be encouraged to talk about their own communities and their experiences. What are the drivers of violent extremism in your country? What can we do? Which are the immediate steps to be taken by the government, civil society, schools, etc? How YouTube or TikTok contribute to the spread of extremist ideologies? What role does misinformation play in fostering violent extremism?
	Tips for the facilitators	Share real-world examples of communities or countries that have experienced the impacts of violent extremism and what has been done to address both the impacts and the drivers. The facilitator should guide the participants viewing individuals who join extremist groups as individuals who may have been shaped by their environment, experiences, and personal circumstances. Emphasize that the causes and impacts of violent extremism vary across different contexts (e.g., rural vs. urban areas, different religious or cultural settings). Be aware of cultural and regional differences when discussing both the causes of extremism and responses to it. Respect local values and perspectives, especially when dealing with cross-cultural groups. Emphasize the importance of collective action, resilience, and the role of individuals and communities in building peace and preventing radicalization.
	References	https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Discussion%20Paper%20-%20Preventing%20Violent%20Extremism%20by%20Promoting%20Inclusive%20Development.pdf



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		https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1139&context=js
	Skills Connected	

Activity 3		
Case Studies and Real-Life Examples		
	Type of Activity	Group work, discussion
	Duration	90 min
	Teaching Methods	Presentation
	Required Resources	Case studies and questions
	Learning outcomes	Participants should be able to: - Know more about global and local examples of violent extremism - Understand better the trends and patterns in radicalization



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	Description of the activity Part 1: Group work: (1 h) The facilitator divides participants in small groups and assigns them to analyse case studies of different forms of extremism prepared in advance, providing concrete examples from the real world about each concept and definition. The facilitator is encouraged to share global examples: - Case Study 1: groups driven by ideological and political factors, including a desire to establish a "caliphate" and oppose Western influence. - Case study 2: Groups like the National Front in France and other neo-fascist movements have been fuelled by anti-immigrant sentiments, economic dislocation, and perceived threats to national identity. - Case study 3: Boko Haram in Nigeria emerged out of a combination of poverty, corruption, political failure, and a distorted religious ideology. Each case study will be followed with certain question which will lead the discussion in the group work. The facilitator will assign a group leader and note-taker for each group. Part 2: Group work presentation: (30 min) Participants present and share in plenary insights and lessons learnt during the group work and the presentation.	
	Tips for the facilitators Make sure everyone understands the purpose of the group work. Be specific about what the group is expected to achieve by the end. Encourage members to voice alternative perspectives and explore different viewpoints. Create an environment where disagreement during the group work is seen as part of the process and can be handled respectfully.	
	References https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/information_manipulation_rvb_cle838736.pdf	



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		https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-safeguarding-learners-vulnerable-to-radicalisation/case-studies
	Skills Connected	

Activity 4		
Discussion and reflection		
	Type of Activity	Open discussion
	Duration	30 minutes
	Teaching Methods	Discussion
	Required Resources	Flipcharts or whiteboard
	Learning outcomes	Participants should be able to: - Facilitated group discussion on the factors contributing to violent extremism. Reflection on personal experiences or perceptions of extremism.



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	Description of the activity	Prompt questions: What do you believe are the most significant drivers of violent extremism in your community or country? How can local leaders or communities work to address these drivers? -What role can individuals play in preventing radicalization? Reflection Activity: Ask participants to write a short reflection on how they view the relationship between extremism and the social, political, and economic factors in their own lives.
	Tips for the facilitators	Briefly review the goals and key points of the training. Ask participants to reflect on what they have learned. Encourage participants to share their own takeaways. Consider asking the following questions: - What new ideas or strategies will you apply moving forward? - What challenges do you anticipate in implementing what you've learned? How has your perspective shifted as a result of today's session?
	References	n/a
	Skills Connected	



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