



10 Steps Governments Can Take to Support the Critical Role of Civil Society in Preventing Violent Extremism

Evidence demonstrates that efforts by governments and multilateral actors, particularly security-focused initiatives, are not sufficient to prevent violent extremism. Governments and multilateral institutions need to work more closely with other sectors of society to address the relevant underlying drivers of this phenomenon. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are especially important as they are citizen-led, locally rooted entities that have the access and long-term commitment needed to foster social cohesion and respect for equal rights and pluralism in their communities. This call for collaboration and inclusion is enshrined in the former UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and in a growing number of national PVE action plans. To put the promise into practice, governments can take the following 10 steps:

Remove Legal, Political, and Financial Impediments to existing civil society-led PVE actions.

- 1. Assess and remove impediments to the legal and political space for CSOs working to serve communities and address drivers of VE.** This includes ensuring their physical safety, data security, ability to organize, and respect for their independence and credibility in the eyes of the community.
- 2. Alleviate financial obstacles to mobilization efforts of CSOs,** including by ensuring that international counterterrorism financing standards do not have an adverse impact on the ability of CSOs to access funding and by supporting existing independent funding mechanisms.
- 3. Expedite the issuance of visas and offer multi-entry visas** to facilitate CSO participation in regional and international PVE conferences, workshops, and trainings.

Create capacities and opportunities for effective strategic and practical collaboration between national governments and multilateral bodies and civil society on PVE.

- 4. Integrate the ethos of respect for and partnership with CSOs into governmental policies and programs,** including training front-line and other government officials in working with nongovernmental actors.
- 5. Ensure that independent and diverse CSOs participate in the analysis of issues and in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of national PVE strategies, plans, policies, programs, and coordination mechanisms,** paying specific attention to ensuring cross-sectoral representation of youth and women-led organizations.
- 6. Facilitate the involvement of CSOs in the full spectrum of PVE programs** including ones involving potentially sensitive issues or controversial actors (e.g., "formers") by recognizing the existing work by local CSOs (especially women and youth entities that are often less visible) and providing venues to enable the exchange of ideas, solutions, and lessons.
- 7. Support the development of national PVE networks** that provide relevant CSOs with more opportunities to engage with and learn from each other and from other key PVE stakeholders.
- 8. Encourage the United Nations and other relevant multilateral organizations to prioritize regular, sustained engagement,** including through existing mechanisms, with local CSOs on critical aspects of the PVE agenda.

Support credible CSO-led programming to identify and address drivers of violent extremism.

- 9. Support local CSOs with the most credibility in the relevant community,** not simply government-friendly ones, to support effective implementation of PVE measures.
- 10. Be sensitive to the potentially stigmatizing language of PVE,** language that can turn away potential CSO partners and endanger communities and practitioners.

¹The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of all GSX steering group members and partners.