

FOSTERING SOCIAL RESILIENCE AGAINST EXTREMISM

Leaders for Interreligious Understanding
& Counter Extremism Toolkit

EDITED BY FADI DAOU

www.liuprogram.net



**Danish-Arab
Partnership Programme**

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FOREWORD

The LIU is a Training program based on an integrative and cross-cultural approach of dialogue and formation offered to young professionals from the fields of politics, media, religion, education and civil society, from Denmark and Arab countries (Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria). With the constant support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark in the framework of the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), LIU program was able to complete in 2015 its fourth edition, and offer a level 2 training for 24 of its alumni who wanted to contribute to countering extremism in their societies.

This toolkit represents the fruit of their learning and reflection journey about extremism, with the support of the program's experts and facilitator. Hence it includes three major parts.

Firstly, once can read the conceptual framework of the topic which summarizes the key elements for understanding the issue of extremism. Thanks to Dr. Michael Driessen (Italy), Dr. Ziad Fahed (Lebanon), and Dr. Maria Alvanou (Greece) who, based on their instructor's experience in the e-course of the program, offered these short, yet condensed presentations. During the e-course, the Trainees developed the glossary, which was reviewed by the instructors and is published here as annex to this first part.

Secondly, the toolkit presents some methodological guidelines, offered by the facilitator Gry Guldborg Friis (Denmark), for an adapted implementation of counter-extremism strategies and activities, through dialogue and co-creation methodologies.

Thirdly, the Trainees themselves, as leaders for interreligious understanding and counter extremism, collectively developed five prototypes of activities that can be used by themselves and by others, either as tools to be implemented or as models for the development of other activities to respond in a creative, contextual and diverse way to the issue of extremism.

While this publication neither offers an academic and comprehensive analysis about extremism, nor presents elaborated recommendations for policy making, it has the advantage to contain the essential elements to initiate a reflection and plan initiatives for responding to this global threat.

Hence I am thankful to the teachers, facilitator and trainees who accepted to transform their formation experience into a useful toolkit that can be shared and used by everyone. I hope that the largest number of users will benefit from it, and wish that we will receive the feedback about it on the program blog and facebook page.

Prof. Fadi Daou
LIU Program's curriculum director
Adyan foundation' chairperson



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

WHAT IS EXTREMISM?

By Dr. Ziad Fahed

Although it is obvious that our usage of the concept in this toolkit refers to a pejorative connotation, some like to point that, for example, extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! Martin Luther King Jr. has declared: “The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be... The nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.” Nevertheless our usage of extremism today refers to more than just a belief or an attitude far removed from what is considered to be “ordinary” reality. Extremism means in this toolkit not only a “perspective effect” vis-à-vis a normative and valued status quo, but indicates a threat to the existing order.

Therefore some scholars link extremism to the use of emotional and/or physical violence; and in conflict settings, extremism can manifest itself as a severe form of conflict engagement.

P. Neuman, drawing in part from The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought, goes on to say:

“ Extremism can be used to refer to political ideologies that oppose a society’s core values and principles. In the context of liberal democracies this could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights.

The term can also be used to describe the methods through which political actors attempt to realize their aims, that is, by using means that “show disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others”.¹ ”

Presenting the sources and process of extremism, P. Coleman and A. Bartoli² mention that:

Extremism is “grown”, “constructed”, has an “emotional outlet for severe feelings”, is “a rational strategy in a game over power”, and emerges from “apocalyptic, eschatological ideologies” which at the same time is “a pathological illness”.

It should be kept in mind, however, that the labeling of activities, people, and groups as “extremist” is always, in part, a subjective and political exercise. Donatella della Porta, a leading scholar of social movements and political violence, adds that:

¹ P. Neuman, «Prisons and Terrorism Radicalization and De-radicalization in 15 Countries,» A policy report published by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR), (2010): 12

² Peter Coleman and Andrea Bartoli (2003) “Addressing Extremism,” International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (Columbia University New York)

Extremism is a process involving not only the beliefs and actions of oppositional groups but also of the states they are in conflict with: violence is the result of the interaction of the two and their constructed perceptions of each other's actions, not just the product of one side's ideology³. It is for this reason that extremism must always be studied in relation to both its sources and geopolitical context..

Finally, it is important to add that whereas the dominant narrative tends to blur the distinction between propensity to violence and radical religious ideas, Olivier Roy argues that the process of violent radicalisation has little to do with religious practice. Rather that Salafi ideology is likely to be part of the way that violent networks articulate their narrative⁴. Therefore:

Faith-based and interreligious initiatives are crucial in countering extremism through the protection of the communities and believers from the victimization narrative and the polarization of discourses on the one hand, and through the promotion of interfaith feeling of responsibility for justice, peace, and social cohesion on the other hand.

³ Donatella della Porta, Social Movement Studies And Political Violence (Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalization, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Denmark, September 2009), 9.

⁴ Olivier Roy, Al Qaeda in the West as a Youth Movement: the Power of a Narrative (MICROCON Policy Working Paper 2, November 2008), p. 3.

SOURCES OF EXTREMISM

Dr. Michael Driessen

The sources of extremism are multiple, complex and often very poorly understood. When identifying the sources of extremism, it is useful to make a distinction between:

- **The structures** which frame extremism, including the political, social, historical and economic contexts which seem to favor particular expressions of extremism;
- **The ideas and ideologies** which form within (or without) these structures that give extremism coherence, force, shape and appeal;
- **The personal stories** or life pathways and encounters which have led certain individuals with similar experiences and circumstances to take on extremist ways of thinking, being and acting themselves.

CIVILIZATIONAL DESPAIR

Responding to the challenge of extremism requires, among other things, an understanding of how these various layers interact and how, for example, an individual experience of injustice or dehumanization might be favored by a context of “civilizational despair” as Seyla Benhabib calls it, one that has been built up over decades if not centuries.

WEAK POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

In this respect, scholars have noted how failed or fragile states’ weak political and economic **institutions**, which are incapable of meeting basic security, infrastructure and services, provide especially ripe structural conditions for conflict and extremism. As Robert Rotberg writes, “Failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions.”⁵

FAILURE OF NATION-STATE-BUILDING

Some of the difficulties in state-building that fragile states experience that has enabled such conflict and tension are intimately linked to the global exportation of the Western nation-state-building model. That model triumphed in WWII and again after the Cold War but seemed to struggle against the historical trajectories of regions in the Middle East and Eastern Europe for whom nation and state were not always so synonymous.

⁵ Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *When States Fail*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 5.

BROKEN PROMISES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

Furthermore, the failure of recent waves of democratization and globalization to bring sustainable economic and political reform to these regions, as many had hoped, led many individuals to doubt and violently act against the dream of democracy and its promise that open, free, pluralist politics and societies would create stability and success.

These broken promises, it should be noted, are not confined to regions of conflict and economic underprivileged alone: scholars see them at work in the heart of the West itself.

As Samuel Huntington writes in this regard, “The processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity. In much of the world religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labelled “fundamentalist.”⁶

⁶ Samuel P. Huntington. 1993. “Clash of Civilizations,” Foreign Affairs Summer.

RELIGION AND EXTREMISM

Dr. Michael Driessen

A close look at the structural sources of extremism helps us to understand a lot better why so much (but certainly not all) extremism seems to be religiously expressed today.

The intense media coverage of religiously expressed terrorism, especially in the ongoing civil wars in Syria and Iraq and, particularly, the global role that the “Islamic state” (ISIS) has assumed within them, has fed into the view held by many today that there might be something in the very nature of religion, and, in particular, specific religions like Islam, that promotes extremism and violence.

Arguments of these type, as the scholar William Cavanaugh points out, tend to focus on the irrational (or beyond rational) nature of religions, grounded in absolutist belief systems, which make “rational debate,” compromise, tolerance and pluralism difficult. The stronger the religious belief system, this line of thinking holds, the stronger the absolutist, exclusive ways of thinking and, therefore, extremism. As Cavanaugh argues, however:

Such a neat distinction between the secular and religious and the rationality of one as opposed to the irrationality of the other, is not so clear cut. Secular regimes have proven to be masters of violence too, and the “irrational” belief of many religions has inspired millions to become uncompromising militants for peace.

Cavanaugh adds:

“The violence of religion belongs to the founding mythos of Western identity because it helps establish an absolutist and irrational “other,” against which Western secular political and social arrangements appear modest and rational. The myth is used to legitimate the spread of Western ideals, even by violent means.”⁷

The type of religious organization and its institutions and history also matter in this regard. Scott Appleby make the distinction between two types of religions:

1 | STRONG RELIGIONS

might be more integralist and consume individuals into their worldviews, but they also have more history, tradition and a multiplicity of sources to combat the religious extremists in their own flocks.

2 | WEAK RELIGIONS

on the other hand, are more vulnerable to manipulation by political projects and leaders, and instrumentalized for extremist projects as a result.

⁷William Cavanaugh. 2004. “The Violence of Religion: Examining a Prevalent Myth,” Kellogg Institute Working Paper (312), University of Notre Dame, Indiana, p. 32.

Scott Appleby argues, therefore, that:

It might be better to talk about the “ambivalence of the sacred” and recognize how religious militancy can take on both peaceful and violent forms given different historical and political circumstances, including, especially, those highlighted in the section above.

In such a world, the faith-based contribution and the role of religious leadership in countering extremism become essential, as mediators and interpreters of the sacred, capable of delegitimizing violence in the name of religion and highlighting the historical arc of the great world religions towards love and mercy.

As Appleby writes:

“I find in the ambivalence of the sacred a powerful source of nonviolent peacebuilding, compassion and love of enemy. In accounting for religious violence as well as religious peacebuilding, hermeneutics is everything, contestation is inevitable, and struggle within and outside the enclave is the norm.”⁸



⁸ R. Scott Appleby. 2015. “Religious Violence: The Strong, the Weak and the Pathological,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Peacemaking*, ed.s Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby and David Little. New York: Oxford University Press.

STEPS ON THE PATHWAY TO EXTREMISM

Dr. Maria Alvanou

The Pathway to extremism is not linear, with no “extremist” profile. Yet one can enumerate the important stations/risk factors:

01 | GRIEVANCES

They work as the background scene/ fertile ground. Financial (poverty, unemployment, etc.), social (injustice, social exclusion, etc.), national/ ethnic (conflict, occupation, etc.). Either real or perceived, they usually seem unresolved, generating distress and a sense of injustice and humiliation.

03 | IDEOLOGY RELIGION

Out of mainstream interpretations. Provides the necessary theoretical setting/ worldview/ toolkit. It conceptualizes moral justification of violence and dehumanization. Significant role of a gifted leader or an organized systematic public propaganda.

05 | “TRIGGERING EVENT”

Catalyst for active participation in extremism.

02 | PERSONAL STORY

It includes individual character traits, age (usually youth), gender (underlying gender issues and stereotypes), education (lack of it or targeted). Important parameters: personal trauma (experiencing violence, mistreatment, etc.), grievances of personal/ individual nature (family/ interpersonal/ relationship problems), psychological and emotional problems (vulnerability/ instability), need for identity, purpose and recognition.

04 | GROUP ORGANIZATION

Where indoctrination becomes more systematic. It practically facilitates participation in extremist activity, provides sense of identity, purpose and role. Participation opportunity and recruitment strategies play a big role (internet & e-social networks, religious gatherings, prison, etc.). There is also “lone wolf activity” (reasons may be: lonesome personality, lack of the required social networking, distrust to current groups, etc.).

TIPS FOR COUNTER-EXTREMISM STRATEGY

Dr. Maria Alvanou

The Policy measures for general prevention and for targeting those already embracing extremist views as well as those involved in extremist activities includes the following important steps:

01

ADDRESSING SOURCES OF GRIEVANCES



Necessary to ease tensions. It requires strong political will and often international cooperation. Measures should fight poverty, unemployment, inequality, injustice, racism, etc. Provisions for freedom of expression, democratic institutions and lawful ways of protest (as an alternative to extremist/illegal activity). International community should actively press for ethnic/national/religious clashes to end or be carried out according to provisions of international law.

02

EDUCATION



Culture and education institutes promoting positive behavioral standards like respect for diversity, encouraging free speech and critical thinking, discouraging judgmental attitudes, underlining historical memory (monuments, exhibitions, etc. reminding the loss caused by extremism) and teaching mediation techniques (solving differences in alternative ways).

03

GENDER EMPOWERMENT & EMANCIPATION



Especially in societies and communities with strong patriarchal characteristics. Initiatives for training, job opportunities and active social participation have to be offered for women, who proved to be key agents in social change and peace-building.

04

RELIGION IDEOLOGY



Religion can work positively, highlighting the brotherhood of people, condemning violence, spreading messages of peace, mercy, dignity/value for all. Interfaith dialogue is needed as well as supporting spiritual leaders of moderate rhetoric disapproving extremism. Education about other religions (especially in multireligious societies) beats ignorance and prevents feelings of threat generating defense reactions. In addition, media and the political world could collaborate in communicating and arguing against ideologies of hate and extremism.

05

DISENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS



In prisons, schools, communities. Characteristics: long term, voluntary, working with people in group or individually, aiming to debunk extremist views, promoting positive concepts of tolerance/acceptance, helping with integration, anger management and coping with personal problems.

06

LEGAL AND JUSTICE FRAMEWORK



Legislation and effective court application for prohibiting incitement, hate speech (special reference to internet) and protecting targets of hate crime, prejudice etc. Special provisions for free speech and not labeling/treating certain parts of population as "a priori extremists".

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

Ms. Gry Guldborg Friis

COCREATION: THE POWER OF DIALOGUE

“Awakening the process of dialogue itself as a free flow of meaning among all the participants.”
David Bohm, Wholeness and the Implicate Order.

A. WHAT IS COCREATION?

Co-creation is an approach and a way of developing and working together. Classical positions such as ranks, age and experience are eliminated. You meet **as equal partners with the intent to unfold the potential in between you by deliberately unfolding the synergy effect.**

A co-creation process is often facilitated which leaves the partners with the space to meet each other openly, focused and with curiosity. The ability to be open and wonder about your own limits, perspectives and opinions is an important part of participating in a co-creative process. Questioning fixed beliefs, assumptions and perspectives is crucial. The process aims to reach innovative results serving the whole.

B. WHY COCREATE?

Cocreation unfolds new potentials and gives voices and power to former suppressed voices. **So by getting recognized and acknowledged as a legitimate voice in the society new ways of working together occur.** But not being heard in the establishment can also be a way to require new arenas and approaches to work together.

In a cocreation process you acknowledge that you are only **partly right** and meaning is a social constructed process which takes time, attention and humbleness to create together. By investing that time and attention you create a space where people feel safe and trustful and dare to unfold.

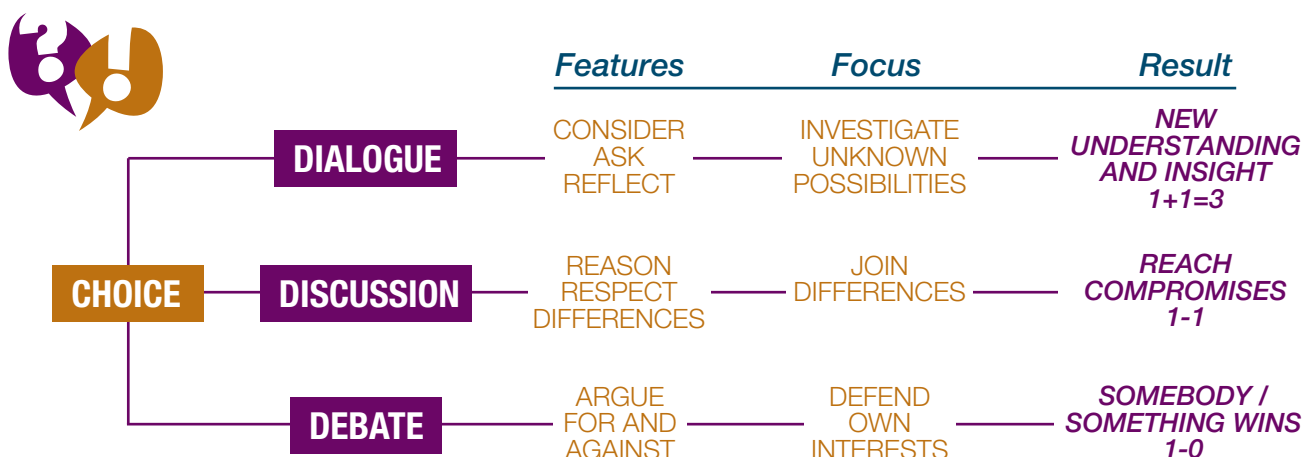
The result is a cocreated, shared and common picture that creates the glue or cement that keeps people together and commit them to take the steps to put the new meaning into actions and results.

DIALOGUE AS A NECESSARY TOOL FOR COCREATION

Creating innovative results in a cocreative process **calls for a certain type of conversation** and a certain kind of being and positioning the relations in the process. The most applicable and useful is dialogue.

The roots of the word dialogue comes from the Greek words dia and logos. Dia means “through” and logos translated to “word” or “meaning”. In its essence, dialogue means **flow of meaning**.

DIALOGUE VERSUS DISCUSSION AND DEBATE



Dialogue is a conversation with a centre, not sides. **It is a way of taking the energy of our differences and channelling it toward something that has never been created before.**

David Bohm writes that - not the intended but positive effect of a genuine dialogue between people – can have a both common and personal healing effect. He furthermore writes that a true is not something that emerge from opinions. It emerges from something else, which he calls **the free movement of the tacit mind**. The tacit level is a level for which we only have a **vague feeling of something**. We are in the field of sensing – not yet spoken or described – but felt or sensed. And by collectively and creatively exploring and investigating this tacit level can create new insights, understandings and, from there, create new common meaning.

Dialogue could be seen as the spirit folded out between people and goes beautifully hand in hand with a spiritual or religious approach to life.

To master dialogue we need 4 capacities and 3 abilities:

CAPACITIES

- 1. Listening
- 2. Respecting
- 3. Suspending
- 4. Voicing

ABILITIES

- 1. Curiosity
- 2. Creativity
- 3. Humbleness

HOW TO DESIGN AND LEAD A COCREATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

If you want to apply the cocreative approach to your organisation or team, it can be useful to use the 4D-model. The model is based on the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) which is a method and a framework (process design) for human and organizational change.

DECIDE WHAT THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE



Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is based on a shift in paradigms on human interaction. The core can be captured in the idea, that we create our common world and future, while we describe it by going into dialogue.

THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF AI

1

WORDS
CREATE
WORLDS

2

INQUIRY
CREATES
CHANGE

3

WE CAN
CHOOSE
WHAT WE
STUDY

4

IMAGE
INSPIRES
ACTION

8

FREE CHOICE
LIBERATES
POWER

7

ACTING
'AS IF' IS
SELF-
FULFILLING

6

WHOLENESS
BRINGS
OUT THE BEST

5

POSITIVE
QUESTIONS
LEAD TO
POSITIVE
CHANGE

9

STORIES ARE
TRANS-
FORMATIVE

10

BE
CONSCIOUS OF
UNDERLYING
ASSUMPTIONS



THE FOUR PHASES OF AI

The model requires four phases where you ensure interaction and activity through the whole process and where every single person commits him/herself to put the common dream into action. It is crucial to cocreate all the phases to ensure commitment from the participants. Formulating the topic in a positive language instead of focusing on its negative aspects gives energy and hope for the process and the participants.

01 | DISCOVERY PHASE

You look back and find your best examples from the past. It can be helpful to use a questionnaire or interview-guide that enable people to talk. This phase is structured, so people interview each other in groups of three. A interviews, B shares his/her best experiences, C listens and takes notes.

02 | DREAM PHASE

It is the most powerful and valuable phase for change. If you can make your participants dream first individually and afterwards share their dreams, you will have a strong base for change.

The challenge here is to create the conditions so that the participants will be in the mood of dreaming. That has to be mobilized and can be supported by individual silence and powerful questions which appeal to the heart and the imagination.

Dreaming should be seen as searching for the highest potential of the participants. We have to allow this to emerge in the dialogues in this phase by exploring and discovering. It is to play the highest potential awake in a beautiful unfolding journey, in an ambience of emerging energy.

“Behind every frustration there is a broken dream.”

Peter Lang, systemic practitioner

03 | DESIGN PHASE

In this phase we get concrete and realistic.
We ask ourselves:

- *If this dream should come through, what is then needed for us to change in our everyday life?*
- *What should I/we do more or less off if we want this dream to be real and concrete?*

We have a focus on everyday conversations and actions. We design strategies and action plans to make the dream come true. In this phase each and every participants in the process commit him/herself to take at least one action that can support the change. Put it in the new and right direction by directing focus, energy and attention. It is important to have time and give space to the participants sharing this action. It creates commitment and courage.

04 | DESTINY PHASE

It is the practical everyday life phase. Here the participants literally put their decided actions into life. They make them grow and give them life, so that the change is being a natural part of the new reality we dreamt about having.





PROTOTYPES

PROTOTYPE 1 - RELIGION -

TOWARDS RELIGIOUS REFLECTION
AGAINST EXTREMISM



Developed by: Sheikh Mohamad Fadl Daoud (Egypt), Fr. Bimen Tahawi (Egypt), Rev. Medhat Nady (Egypt), Mette Madsen (Denmark), Maria Munkholt (Denmark)

RATIONALE

IN THE PRESENT TIME THERE ARE MANY TRADITIONS, MOVEMENTS AND IDEOLOGIES THAT ARE FAR FROM THE MODERATE UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS VALUES. YOUTH CAN BE ATTRACTED BY SUCH GROUPS AND DISCOURSES, AND PROGRESSIVELY THEY CAN ADOPT EXTREMIST IDEAS AND ATTITUDES. THEREFORE, WE THINK THERE IS A NEED FOR A TOOL THAT CAN HELP YOUNG PEOPLE TO THINK CRITICALLY AND TO MEASURE OR EVALUATE THE RELIGION AND IDEOLOGY THEY ARE FOLLOWING, IN REGARDS TO EXTREMISM.

ADDRESSED SOURCE OF EXTREMISM

Misuse of religion

PURPOSE

1. To enhance the critical thinking among young people about different ideologies, by rediscovering the core of the faith experience and its related social responsibility.
2. To foster dialogue between religious leaders and young believers based on the youth's questions and concerns.

TARGET GROUP

The young people vulnerable to extremism (15+ years old).
And the religious leaders who are in contact with young people through pastoral work.

AREA OF USE

In churches and mosques
In civil society organisations
In university
At camps
In relation to sports activities

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Increased resilience among youth towards religiously expressed extremism, with more attachment to tolerance and citizenship.
2. Increased capacity to detect the alarm signals at an early stage of radicalisation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

The tool consists of many different questions that are supposed to make young people think about and reflect on their religious experience. The questions below are only examples, and the list can be completed by additional relevant questions. Everybody using the tool can come up with more questions that suit their individual context.

The tool can be used in many different settings, as for example:

1. The questions can be asked at different posts in a treasure hunt.
2. In dialogue with individuals or groups vulnerable to extremist ideas.
3. When a pastor/priest is teaching a “confirmation-group” or other similar groups.



PROTOTYPES FOR COUNTERING EXTREMISM

THEME	QUESTIONS	RESOURCES
<p>GOAL OF RELIGION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the ultimate goal of your religion? - What is the practical purpose of your religion? - Is religion serving God or people? - Can religion be a positive factor for society? 	<p>The two commandments of love of God and his neighbour.</p> <p>Maqasid a-Sharia (Preserving faith, life, intelligence, progeny, prosperity)</p>
<p>TRADITION AND SOURCES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where do you find the source of meaning about religion? - What are the sources of your information about religion? - Who are the authorities of your sources? 	<p>Holy Scriptures</p> <p>Texts from the tradition</p>
<p>VIEWS OF GOD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the characteristics of God according to your belief? - Can a person through his acts reflects these God's characteristics? - Are you inspired by the love of God? - How are you representing the love of God? - Can a person use violent means to represent love? 	<p>God's names: In Islam: peace, mercy... In Christianity: love</p>
<p>RELIGION AND POLITICAL POWER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who has the political authority in a country? - What are the teachings about political governance in your religion? - What have terrorists done that is good for your religion? - What have terrorists done against the "enemies" of religion? 	<p>Beatitudes (Matthew 5) in Christianity</p> <p>The Constitution of Medina in the Islamic tradition</p>
<p>HUMANITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are terrorists doing that is good for humanity? - How are terrorists serving the common good? - How would your society define a good citizen? - In your attitude towards the people from another religion than yours, are you leaving room for the role of God with them? 	<p>The golden rule,</p> <p>The text "Common word": www.acommonword.com</p>

PROTOTYPE 2 - MEDIA -

MORE EXPERTS FOR BETTER
INSIGHTS



Developed by: Deniz Serinci (Denmark), Rushbah Rashid Højbjerg (Denmark), Marianne Kesserwany (Denmark)

RATIONALE

MEDIA INSTITUTIONS OFTEN REFER TO THE SAME AND LIMITED NUMBER OF EXPERTS. THEREFORE, THE INFORMATION OBTAINED AND LARGELY DISSEMINATED, SHAPING THE PUBLIC OPINION, IS OBVIOUSLY INCOMPLETE IF NOT BIASED, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO COMPLEX TOPICS LIKE EXTREMISM. TO CONTRIBUTE IN MAKING THE MEDIA MORE FAIR AND BALANCED, WE WANT TO WIDEN THE CIRCLE OF EXPERTS WHO ARE KNOWN FROM THE JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA INSTITUTIONS, SO THEY CAN HAVE A A BROADER RANGE OF VIEWS, INSTEAD OF ALWAYS COUNTING ON THE SAME EXPERTS WITH THE SAME PERSPECTIVES.

ADDRESSED SOURCE OF EXTREMISM

Biased and dualistic information (“us” and “them”)
Social divide
Exclusion

PURPOSE

To enable better coverage of issues related to diversity and extremism through new relations between the media professionals and a wider range of experts (called “The New Experts”).

TARGET GROUP

The direct target group is the media professionals and media students. Indirectly the public opinion (Media’s audience) will benefit from a fair and more balanced insight.

AREA OF USE

Media institutions, NGOs, Educational institutions and individual Journalists.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. More fair and balanced media coverage of extremism related issues.
2. Less stereotypical approaches of some issues and groups.
3. Decrease in polarization within society around conflictual views, with more space for rationale debate.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

The tool consist in a meeting that can take the form of a workshop or a seminar, where two groups are invited to join, on the one hand the Journalists and Media professional and on the other hand the so-called “New Experts” who are people of knowledge and experience in the area of diversity and extremism, coming from academic, civil society, communities, etc. backgrounds.

The motto of the meeting is: “Bring 1 Business card and leave with 10!”

The organizers will have to gather the contacts of people and invite them to the meeting, then to facilitate the meeting in an open way that allows people to chat with the maximum number of attendees.

One of the scenarios can be the organization of many round tables by topics; so the attendees, especially the journalists, can freely move from a table to another, hearing the point of views of the “New Experts” and exchanging contacts.

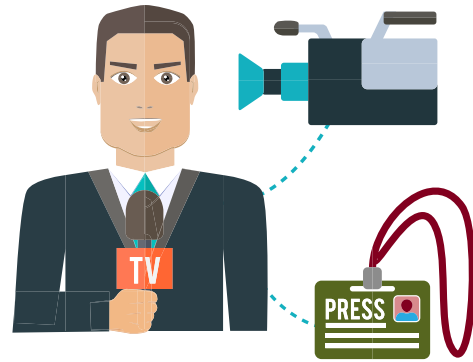
It is useful that the organizers establish a full list of attendees and share it with all.

Later, the organizers can monitor to what extent the “New Experts” are being asked by Media to have their feedback on events.



PROTOTYPE 3 - MEDIA -

JOURNALIST'S ALLIANCE AGAINST
EXTREMISM (JAE)



Developed by: Rana Al Hussain (Syria), Mira Mamdouh (Egypt), Lamiaa Solaiman (Egypt), Sultan Kheir (Lebanon)

RATIONALE

GENERALLY JOURNALISTS WORKING IN DIFFERENT MEDIA INSTITUTIONS HAVE RARELY THE OCCASION TO DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES. FOCUSING ON THEIR SPECIFIC JOB AND THEIR INSTITUTION'S AGENDA, THEY MAY MISS THE OPPORTUNITY OF HEARING OTHER APPROACHES AND EMBRACING NEW PERSPECTIVES, ESPECIALLY IN REGARDS TO THE CASE OF EXTREMISM. SUCH A SITUATION MAY FOSTER POLARIZATION AND DECREASE THE TRANSPARENCY TOWARDS PUBLIC OPINION. THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE THAT THE ISSUE OF EXTREMISM CALLS FOR A "PROFESSIONAL ALLIANCE AMONG THE JOURNALISTS", REGARDLESS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL AFFECTATION, SINCE IT REPRESENTS A SOCIAL FUNDAMENTAL THREAT.

ADDRESSED SOURCE OF EXTREMISM

Polarization in the public opinion
Lack of transparency in Media
Biased or narrow perspectives on debatable issues as extremism

PURPOSE

To improve the Media capacities in facing extremism and peace-building.

TARGET GROUP

Arab journalists and Media professionals.

AREA OF USE

Journalist unions and Media groups.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Increased contribution of Media in addressing extremism in a comprehensive and peace-building perspective
2. Increased awareness about the threat of extremism and the way to deal with its sources

DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

In collaboration with the Journalists Unions and other collective Media institutions, organize workshops to provide the opportunities to the individual journalists to hear the different point of views of their colleagues, discuss them together, interact with some Senior experts (journalists or academics), and hence enrich their understanding of the issues and the reasons behind the variety of positions.

This open dialogue process helps in creating and strengthening the relations among the journalists and Media experts, where they can, from different points of views, contributing in combating extremism in a better and more coordinated way.

This practice can be reflected on a Facebook page where the journalists can be invited to join, share their publication and views, and show their Alliance against Extremism.

For further development, Training with experts can be proposed to the group, which enhances both their capacities and solidarity.



PROTOTYPE 4 - POLITICS -

BRIDGING THE GAP



Developed by: Natasha Al Hariri (Denmark), Amira Tawadros (Egypt), Fasaal Rehman (Denmark), Cheikh Daneel Abdel Khalek (Lebanon), Michael Assaf (Syria), Kholoud Al Khatib (Lebanon)

RATIONALE

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES EXPERIENCE SOCIAL ALIENATION, AND CITIZENS DO NOT SUFFICIENTLY KNOW OR COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER, AND THIS STRENGTHENS THE PREJUDICES AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT THE “OTHER”. THIS ALIENATION AND ISOLATION CREATES A GAP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND POLITICIANS, AND BETWEEN CITIZENS AND CITIZENS. MOREOVER THIS GAP GENERATES MISTRUST AND FALSE CONCEPTIONS. THERE IS A NEED TO BREAK DOWN THE PREJUDICE AND BRIDGE BETWEEN PEOPLE.

ADDRESSED SOURCE OF EXTREMISM

Marginalization
Dehumanization

PURPOSE

To create a platform and a safe space where people can meet and interact with each other and discuss their common challenges, in order to create better collaboration among society’s stakeholders.

TARGET GROUP

Socially marginalized groups (vulnerable youth, ex-prisoners, jobless, etc.)

AREA OF USE

Any open platform for social dialogue.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Increased awareness and acceptance about national diversity, and sense of common identity.
2. Built networks of relation and friendship across ethnic and religious groups.
3. Fostered social cohesion by addressing and dismantling the people's stereotypes.

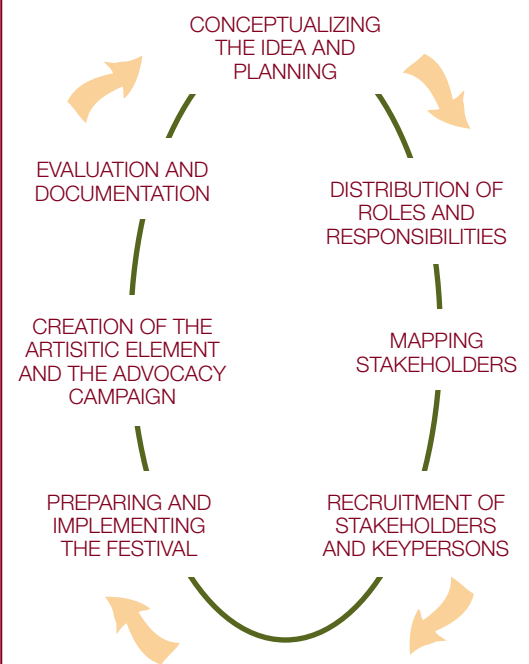
DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

The tool is a citizen's meeting that integrates marginalized people and gathers them together with fellow citizens and with politicians, activists, religious leaders, journalists, and businessmen in one area that represents a neutral and safe place, with a setting open for dialogue.

STEP ONE: It is an activity that brings the marginalized groups, other citizens and political and cultural elites together, and group them in small groups of 6 persons each. The activity would be preferably represented and mediated by an NGO to ensure a safe space. The exercise will be a life story told by the participants followed by a sketch of a person's silhouette drawn on a large piece of paper in a 1:1 scale. The exercise will be to have the participants (who told their life-stories), and the other citizens attending, to fill out the silhouette with the challenges, prejudices, identities, stereotypes, thoughts in a creative and personal way. It can be words, drawings,

art, constructions, that will name and understand the impact of political policies or social trends which leads to marginalization and dehumanization.

STEP TWO: a recruitment of a graphic designer who will visualize this silhouette in an artistic way that will be displayed in the city with a campaign to raise awareness among the community about these challenges, and how to face them and prevent from becoming source of extremism. This also requires a media attention, and advocacy plan to involve decision makers and lead to the needed political reforms to support this work.



PROTOTYPE 5 - EDUCATION -

A REFLECTION ON EDUCATIONAL
PERFORMANCE IN COUNTERING
EXTREMISM

*Developed by: Iman Nabil (Egypt), Wafa Saoud (Lebanon),
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RATIONALE

EXTREMISM CAN START WITH SIMPLE MANIFESTATIONS THAT ARE PRACTICED IN EVERYDAY LIFE, AT HOME, SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITIES. THE TENDENCY OF STUDENTS TO CLASSIFY AND LABEL THEIR CLASSMATES ACCORDING TO NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES IS AN IMPORTANT FACE OF EXTREMISM THAT WE AS TEACHERS FACE EVERY DAY. THE INSTRUCTOR ALSO HAS TO PRACTICE A SELF-ASSESSMENT ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS, TO MAKE SURE THAT HE/SHE IS NOT UNCONSCIOUSLY LABELLING THE STUDENTS AND PRACTICING DISCRIMINATION, OR ALLOWING SUCH ATTITUDES AMONG STUDENTS. RESPONDING TO DISCRIMINATING BEHAVIOURS IN THE CLASSROOM, THEREFORE, REPRESENTS A SIMPLE YET IMPORTANT STEP IN THE CREATION OF A SOCIETY WHICH IS MORE RESILIENT TOWARDS EXTREMISM.

ADDRESSED SOURCE OF EXTREMISM

Ignorance
Exclusion
Absence of education that promotes diversity
Culturally justified violence

PURPOSE

To improve the instructors' skills of how to deal with labelling, discrimination, and bullying in their students' behaviours.

TARGET GROUP

The direct target group is the Educational Community (i.e. school teachers, mentors, advisors, trainers, etc.), and the indirect target group is mainly youngsters and youth (students, beneficiaries in NGOs, etc.)

AREA OF USE

Schools, Universities and non-formal Educational Activities

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Proactive contribution of educational practices in countering extremism.
2. Increased resilience among the youth population (students) towards culturally and religiously expressed extremism, etc.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOL

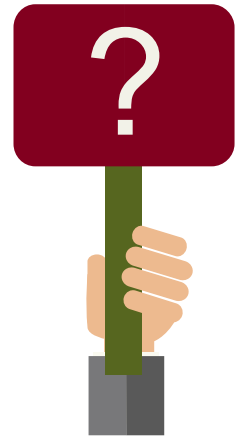
The following questions are designed to stimulate personal reflections about our approach of managing classroom dynamics. Additional resources are also suggested to help in creating a healthy classroom that is resilient to extremism.

Hence the tool is a self-assessment for educational practice in regards of promoting diversity and inclusiveness and countering exclusion and extremism.

The tool can be used on a school level, by a group of Instructors and leads to a collective evaluation, or simply by one instructor. The obtained answers on the questionnaire should help in designing a reform strategy of the practice in classroom to increase the social resilience towards extremism.



QUESTIONNAIRE



1. What kind of diversity is there in my class?
2. Am I paying attention to the differences among my students?
3. Do all my students feel appreciated?
Do I exclude any of them from giving positive and encouraging comments?
4. How do I apply the rules and regulations to my students? Do I treat them equally?
5. How often do I see the non-similar students interacting inside/outside the classroom?
6. How do I think my students are valuing their diversity?
Do they feel proud of or intimidated by their differences?
7. In group work, how do I pay attention to my students' choice of their group members?
Do they choose them in a way that enhances classifications? What can I do in such cases?
8. How many students in my class are isolated? Why do they feel unaccepted?
How can I engage them in different activities to incorporate them into the class?
9. Do my students understand dialogue as a win- win or a win-lose situation?
How can I improve their dialogue skills?
10. How can I treat the cases of bullying in my class? Do I have particular cases of bullying?
Do I close my eyes to bullying in my classroom? If so, why?
11. Why do I have certain classifications in my class (Christian vs. Muslim, tall vs. short, white vs. black, rich vs. poor, Lebanese vs. Syrian, Danish vs. immigrants, etc.)? How can I deal with that?
12. How can I enhance the social relationships between my students in a way that constructs citizens who respect the different other?

MORE RESOURCES FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Diversity: http://archive.adl.org/issue_education/hateprejudice/prejudice7.html#.VcRkOfmqqkp

Intercultural Citizenship: <http://www.adyanonline.net/course/view.php?id=67>

Appreciation: <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/put-ups>

Equality: <http://www.tolerance.org/activity/thats-not-fair>

GLOSSARY

EXTREMISM: Extremism is a complex phenomenon related to beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, and strategies far removed from the ordinary, characterized by exclusivity, «monomania» or «mono-thinking.» While some scholars point out that extremism does not necessarily carry with it a pejorative connotation (i.e. Martin Luther King Jr. accepted the label of an extremist for peace), many other scholars link extremism and exclusive modes of thought to the use of physical and emotional violence, and in conflict settings extremism can manifest itself as a severe form of conflict engagement.

EXCLUSION: It is an instance of leaving something or someone out, keeping apart, cut off. In social, religious, cultural, ethnic, and political contexts we often speak of exclusion as making it impossible for individuals or groups of individuals to participate in common rituals of belonging and community enjoyed by others.

CIVILIZATIONAL DESPAIR: According to Seyla Benhabib ⁹, Civilizational Despair is a widespread, embedded sense of rage, resentment and hopelessness that characterizes today's Muslim world and is the built up product of years of deep-seated cycles of “violence, corruption, and poverty, coupled with the condition of unemployment and marginalization, contempt and sarcasm, exploitation and scorn” suffered by many Muslims across the world and which has been fostered by authoritarian, despotic home governments, regional conflict and the unsparing interference of global powers.

ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION: is the increasing economic integration and interdependence of national, regional and local economies across the world through an intensification of cross-border movement of goods, services, technologies and capital.

FAILED STATE: A state characterized by internal divisions, insecurity and a weak central government which is unable to offer citizens the most important life matters such as security, political participation, jobs, medical care, welfare, education, or infrastructure.

RELIGIOUS MILITANTS: Religious militants are individuals who employ violence as a privileged means of purifying the community and waging war against threatening outsiders. The violent militant religious extremist sees physical violence against his/her enemies as a sacred duty; the militant religious peacemaker strives to sublimate violence, resisting efforts to legitimate it on religious ground. Both types “go to extremes” of self-sacrifice in devotion to the sacred; both claim to be “radical” or rooted in and renewing the fundamental truths of their religious traditions. ¹⁰

UN-SECULARIZATION: the “re-enchantment” of the world after the long century of secularization. The increase of individuals holding strongly expressed religious beliefs worldwide. The rising influence of religious ideology and organizations in national and world politics. The return of religion to the public sphere.

RELIGIOUSLY EXPRESSED VIOLENCE: It is a term that covers a phenomenon where religion is either the subject or object of violent behavior ¹¹. Religious violence is, specifically, violence that is motivated by or in reaction to religious precepts, texts, or doctrines. This includes violence against religious institutions, people, objects, or when the violence is motivated to some degree by some religious aspect of the target or precept of the attacker.

STRONG RELIGION: A strong religion is one whose institutions are well developed and secure and its adherents “literate” in its doctrinal and moral teachings and practiced in its devotional, ritual, and spiritual traditions ¹². Some scholars argue that “Strong Religion” is a primary source to inspire or justify and authorize “deadly violence”, one that emphasizes distinctive religious practices, beliefs, and ideologies as the decisive ingredients in violent movements that may also draw on nationalist, ethnic, or other motivations. Others emphasize how Strong Religion can inspire militants for peace. Strong religion is an interpretive approach, which encompasses works that underscore the capacity of religions themselves to enjoin or legitimate deadly violence, as well as studies of movements, group, networks, and organizations driven primarily by religious goals and dynamics.

WEAK RELIGION: A Weak Religion is one in which the people retain meaningful contact only with vestiges of the broader religious worldview and network of meanings and resources, in which they are isolated from one another and from educations and spiritual-moral exemplars, and in which ethnic, nationalist, secular-liberal and other worldviews and ideologies have a free rein to shape the meaning of those vestiges ¹³. In short, the religious element is relatively “weak.” The question for Appleby ¹⁴ shall be: under what conditions are religious actors (leaders, individuals, movements, institutions) more and less vulnerable to non-religious forces?

FUNDAMENTALISM: The historian George Marsden defined the Fundamentalism: “as the demand for a strict adherence to certain theological doctrines, in reaction against Modernist theology ¹⁵.” Nowadays, the term usually has a religious connotation indicating unwavering attachment to a set of irreducible beliefs. This tendency is most often characterized by a markedly strict literalism as applied to certain specific scriptures, dogmas, or ideologies, and a strong sense of the importance of maintaining in-group and out-group distinctions, leading to an emphasis on purity and the desire to return to a previous ideal from which it is believed that members have begun to stray. Rejection of diversity of opinion as applied to these established «fundamentals» and their accepted interpretation within the group is often the result of this tendency.

⁹ Seyla Benhabib (2015) “Piety or Rage? On the Charlie Hebdo Massacres” *Reset: Dialogues on Civilizations*.

¹⁰ R. Scott Appleby. (2000). *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

¹¹ Wellman, James; Tokuno, Kyoko (2004). “Is Religious Violence Inevitable?”. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion)* 43 (3): 291.

¹² Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*

¹³ Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*

¹⁴ R. Scott Appleby (2012) “Religious Violence: The Strong, the Weak, and the Pathological” *Practical Matters*.

¹⁵ Wikimedia Foundation, “Fundamentalism”: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamentalism>, Accessed May 12, 2015.

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