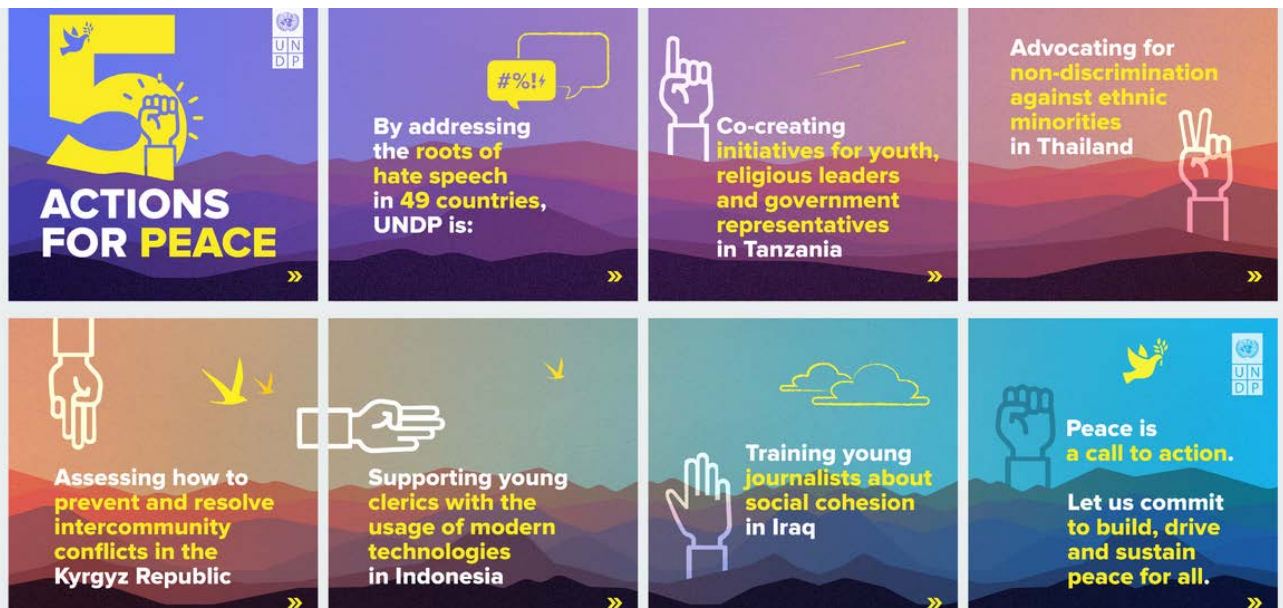


Quarterly Highlights



July - September 2023

Global Highlights



Innovative Intra and Inter-faith Peacebuilding: Pursuing Freedom of Religion or Belief for the realization of the SDG 2030 Agenda and beyond

In partnership with the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action Consortium (JISRA) and the Bahai International Community, UNDP co-organised a high level side event during the UNGA 78. The aim of this event is to create momentum for dialogue and future collaboration and partnership between local actors and policymakers at the national and global level working on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Additionally, the side-event will be a platform for stakeholders to discuss the challenges they face in advancing FoRB for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, and look forward to strategising on the promotion of FoRB in the post-2030 agenda.



For more information on events, visit our dedicated [Trello Board](#).

International Day of Peace - 21st September

The web story, '[Living with each other peacefully is our common duty](#)' was published in celebration of the International Day of Peace. The article focuses on UNDP's work with community leaders, government, religious leaders, and CSOs in Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania. A set of accompanying social media content was also designed, including a [carousel](#) which can be used across various social media platform.



Quarterly Coordination Meeting

On 25th July, the quarterly (2023 Q3) virtual meeting was held with focal points from the regional bureaus to share updates since the last meeting (13th April), including upcoming events and new knowledge products.

Regional Highlights

Regional PVE Community of Practice (CoP): Virtual Session on ‘Evidence-based research, advocacy, cross-regional response’ - 23rd August

The session focused on evidence-based research, advocacy, cross-regional response and examples of sub-regional (Atlantic Corridor Project) and country level (Peacebuilding approach to address violent extremism in Somalia).

The recording is available [here](#).



Policy Dialogue: Options for Stabilization and Prevention in African Regions Affected by Violent Extremism, Tokyo – 24th August



UNDP, together with the JICA Research Institute for Peace and Development, supported by the Sophia Institute for Human Security (SIHS), convened a policy dialogue on ‘Options for Stabilization and Prevention in African Regions Affected by Violent Extremism’, leveraging on the findings of the new emerging evidence-based studies – UNDP PVE Report Series. The event provided a space for policy dialogue between the Japanese policymakers and practitioners and national/regional stakeholders on the emerging findings from the reports and unpack their strategic policy and programmatic implications for the international community, and more specifically for Japanese interventions through stabilization initiatives in regions like Liptako Gourma and Lake Chad. It highlighted Japan’s role as a steadfast ally in tackling the intricate challenge of violent extremism.

The recording is available [here](#).



Policy Dialogue: Policy Dialogue on Violent Extremism in Africa, The Hague - 31st August

UNDP, together with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized a policy dialogue on the UNDP PVE report series. The event brought more than 30 participants, including officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and other ministries, NGO community, and some researchers, and it provided a space for exchange of insights on the reports with an audience of policy makers, researchers and practitioners.

Launch of “Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in the Atlantic Corridor” Project

In collaboration with the UNDP Country offices (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo) the Atlantic Corridor Project was launched in July 2023. The project, funded by Germany, Denmark and Australia, is driven by an evidence-based and phased approach, which will inform the design and tailoring of specific country-packages in the (5) target countries. The project is structured around three outputs: 1) National PVE coordination and capacities strengthened in target countries to develop, coordinate and effectively implement PVE interventions at the national, subregional and local levels; (2) At-risk communities in target locations respond to radicalization factors leading to violent extremism and their resilience is strengthened to prevent radicalization at hyper-local levels; (3) National PVE strategies and programming are informed by regional research and analysis on violent extremism.



5th EU-UN Leaders’ Dialogue on Counter- Terrorism 12th July

The deputy director of the UNDP Representation Office in Brussels, Georges van Montfort, represented UNDP at the EU-UN Leaders’ Dialogue which aimed to discuss thematic alignment between EU and UN Agencies regarding the threat and response to terrorist activities. The need to strengthen prevention efforts and collaborate more effectively to overcome silos was underlined. Globally, EU CT Coordinator, Ilkka Salmi, highlighted the increasing risk from extremism and terrorist activities in the digital space as well as a new form of so-called anti-establishment extremism, fueled by disinformation that operates within and beyond the EU.

Country Highlights

Bangladesh

On 20th August, the Government of Bangladesh approved the second phase of UNDP's Partnerships for a more Tolerant, Inclusive Bangladesh (PTIB), with financial support from Norway. In this new phase, PTIB is strategically placed with the Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC) of the ICT Ministry and will contribute to the Government's objectives for a digital, innovative, and smart Bangladesh, building on achievements and lessons learned in preventing violent extremism from the first phase (2017-2023).

Cameroon

On 3rd July, the Human Rights Observatory (HRO) from the far north of Cameroon participated in the 4th forum of the Governors of Lake Chad, members of the Prevention of Violent Extremism platform in the Far North region of Cameroon. The HRO presented peacebuilding tools used such as the local interreligious peace committees; the Youth Leadership Program; and the cooperation platform between defense and security forces and CSOs; to address the threat of violent extremism and human rights in the region. Further information of the event can be found [here](#).

Cote d'Ivoire

The UNDP Cote d'Ivoire Country Office developed a [clip](#) illustrating progress made in 2023 as part of the PVE project, "Support to youth and women engagement for crisis prevention social stability, and peace consolidation in Northern Côte d'Ivoire", co-financed by UNDP and Germany.

Mali

In Mali, 566 religious leaders, including 355 men and 211 women, were trained on the guide to preaching that was developed under the PROSMED Programme in support to the stabilization of Mali, and 50 teachers of madrasas and Christian schools, including 7 women, were trained on a specific module on the prevention of Violent Extremism to be taught in their schools. Moreover, 91 religious actors including 15 women participated in 8 workshops organized to discuss the issue of violent extremism, terrorism, and radicalization and to formulate messages against radical speech to be disseminated on social networks and community radios.



Somalia



A Peacebuilding Approach to Address Violent Extremism in Somalia: Inception Workshop was held in Mogadishu, 6 to 13 July 2023. Tapping on the significant influence of the Ulema (the religious scholars) in Somalia society, UNDP organized a workshop aimed at exploring roles and ways through which the Ulema can contribute to peacebuilding efforts: insider mediation, tolerance and peace dialogue. The workshop was attended by over 50 scholars representing all regions and states of Somalia.

Tajikistan



The UNDP Tajikistan conducted a 2nd exchange workshop for over 80 members of Advisory Groups on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE AGs), which placed a strong emphasis on facilitating robust knowledge and experience sharing among eight PVE AGs.



Separately, in a joint effort, UNDP Tajikistan and the Fight Extremism (Counter Extremism Project) organized a 5-day training program on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) from July 31 to August 4th. This training was designed for over 30 professionals, including psychologists, social workers, and rehabilitation professionals who are actively engaged in assisting individuals returning from conflict areas to Tajikistan.

SPECIAL FEATURE 1

Of the Quarter

International Day of Peace, Iraq

Forgiveness and reconciliation – the road to community peace after loss

Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq - "I remember the day so clearly," Sayed Jawad shared, his voice steady but laden with memories.

In their neighbourhood, a fierce clash had unfolded between the police and a group of insurgents. It was chaos. Amidst the turmoil, Ala'a, his son, hearing his cousin's desperate cries, rushed outside to help. That moment marked the end. Ala'a was struck by a bullet and despite his family's best efforts to rush him to a hospital in Baghdad, it was too late. He passed away at the tender age of 21. "Ala'a was the dearest of my sons," Sayed shared, his voice tinged with profound sadness. "He was handsome, a dedicated student who had a passion for media," he added, his pride mingling with grief. "As he lay dying, he asked me not to seek revenge for his murder," Sayed continued, a deep sense of pride emanating despite the sorrow that filled his heart.

Sayed Jawad a Shi'ite Muslim religious leader from Tal Afar, Ninewa Governorate, Iraq who lost his son during a community clash. (Photo credit: Sayed Jawad/UNDP Iraq).



Forgiveness over retribution

In honour of Ala'a's remarkable request, Sayed chose forgiveness over retribution, extending his forgiveness even to those involved in the tumultuous clashes on that fateful day. "The success of the Iraqi people, whether Sunni, Shi'ite, Yazidi, or any other group, hinges on forgiveness and the rejection of collective punishment," Sayed affirmed with unwavering conviction. "In the end, there is no difference among us. We are all formed from the same clay and water. Revenge serves no purpose," he said with a resolute tone. Since 2004, Sayed Jawad, a Shi'ite Muslim religious leader from Tal Afar, Ninewa Governorate, has been working to fight sectarian tensions between groups in his community with the aim of bringing people together in the name of peace. He is a member of the Tal Afar Local Peace Committee, where he plays an important role in managing local conflicts and encouraging communal reconciliation in Ninewa. "Peace and coexistence are among the priorities of our religion and the foundations of our human morals. With peace, development is achieved and the country flourishes, and with conflict, rights are taken away and human dignity is violated," Sayed concluded.

Sayed Jawar (right) with other religious leaders from his community – Ghdeer Ahmed Noori (left) and Ivram Benjamin, a priest is in the centre. (Photo credit: UNDP Iraq).



Restoring the social fabric and unity in communities
Sayed Jawad's story is just one among the many shared during the peace and social cohesion workshops coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

Through these capacity-building workshops, UNDP aims to promote moderate religious discourse and social cohesion in communities through their religious leaders. The workshops bring together religious leaders from diverse sects and faiths and serve as a powerful platform for discussing ways to advance reconciliation, promote coexistence, and combat violent extremism.

Through its Integrated Social Cohesion Programme and in partnership with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, UNDP has hosted nine such workshops since 2020 reaching approximately 620 religious leaders in all the five liberated governorates of Anbar, Ninewa, Diyala, Salah al-Din and Kirkuk. These are from various religious groups including Shia and Sunni Muslims, Christians, Kakai, Yazidis and Baha'i. Each of these religious leaders has congregations in the thousands, so the impact of messages delivered is both powerful and far-reaching. These meetings have become platforms for religious leaders who have formed committees to work together to spread peace and cohesion messages with their varied congregations. UNDP hopes to keep working with these leaders and utilise their spheres of influence to better promote sustainable peace, community cohesion and coexistence as well as prevent violent extremism.

UNDP's Integrated Social Cohesion Programme supports efforts towards peaceful and more cohesive societies in Iraq. Its work on capacity building for religious leaders is made possible with the generous contributions of the Government of Denmark.

SPECIAL FEATURE 2

Of the Quarter

International Day of Peace, Tanzania

Injecting Values of Humanity and Religious Resilience in Zanzibar

Since 2014, in partnership with the UNDP Tanzania Country office, the Center for Youth Dialogue (CYD) has contributed towards peace promotion and particularly from year 2015 CYD has taken the initiatives to enhance the Global Sustainable Development Goal number 16 (Ensuring Peaceful and Prosperous Societies for Sustainable Development.) With this regard, pertaining CYD contribution in peace, security, social cohesion, and development; hereby are the quotes and testimonies of potential figures that engaged in CYD projects including UNDP demonstrating their stories of change and how significant does these related interventions transform the positive adoptions to peace promotion behaviors in their surrounding communities.

CYD believes that the involvement of key decision makers from government especially from peripheral societies in peace awareness initiatives, is a steppingstone to acquire necessary skills to unify and convince the people they lead to come together, collaborate out of their differences and growing together as a single community with common dare and share in promoting individual and social development.



Apart from being priest, Rev. Stanley Lichinga is also a Permanent Chairperson of Zanzibar Anglican church. He says that, the church that he leads, 'Anglican Church' is an Association Member of four main churches that resembles the all other churches' issues to different platforms and with that union, they have the direct access among themselves (intra-churches relationships, for example, Anglican to Catholic, Catholic to Lutheran and Union of Pentecost Churches), as well as having direct access to Government, Office of Mufti and Muslims Committees where at several times they have already seat together to discuss tangible issues that needed an urgent call for discussion, mutual understanding and common awareness/resolution.

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We are now witnessing positive changes and the people are harmoniously living together, collaborating, and share the common values towards individual and social developments despite of being possessing the differed perspectives.

- Katib Habib Ali, District Administrative Secretary of Tumbatu Sub-District from Northern Unguja Region.

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Leila Khamis Islah is an indirect beneficiary of PVE related interventions implemented by CYD and UNDP. She is from the office where the current sheha of Mambosasa shehia was engaged in the pertained interventions. She shares her experience on how the interfaith related dialogues have brought the positive impacts in cementing mutual understanding, collaborations and sense of harmony among the people of different religions in Zanzibar, particularly women and children.



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Interfaith tolerance awareness to adults, has automatically enforced behavioural adoptions to children to live by loving each other and understanding that having different religion is not a reason to be subjected to suppression and oppressions

-Leila Khamis Islah, member of Mambosasa Sheha's Committee and Coordinator of Women and Children Affairs committee in Shehia of Mambosasa, Zanzibar.

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