



Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove)
Intercontinental Youth Forum (IYF)
21-23 February 2017



Location: African Union Commission (AUC)
Country: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



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I. Introduction

The AUC- CIDO, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and IPSS partnered with an aim to provide an innovative youthful approach to PVE that can bring about change by drawing on the soft power of religion. This partnership gave way to a pilot project implemented by GIZ under the name of Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove).

The uniqueness of iDove lies in three main aspects:

- (1) Provides a cutting edge approach which utilizes technology as a power to counter recruitment of youth into Violent Extremism (VE), de-radicalize target groups (particular focus on youth), and train respective stakeholders
- (2) Promote values of tolerance, mutual respect and better understanding centered around intra- and interfaith, inter-religious and inter-cultural values that are the core principles for integration and peace
- (3) Implement iDove small scale initiatives- in African and Europe- that will prompt learning on the impact of those projects on PVE. The small scale initiatives include Communication and Virtual initiatives, and innovative community initiatives. Frameworks for small scale projects to be developed by youth leaders from African and Europe during an Intercontinental youth forum.

Together these aspects will form the basis for developing a contemporary understanding of the root causes of VE, the diverse approaches used to Prevent Violent Extremism, and knowledge of the effective and impactful approaches. The first phase commenced with the Intercontinental Youth Forum (IYF) alongside launching of communication tools i.e. iDove website (www.au.int/idove), a twitter handle (@_idove_), and the hashtag #iDove. The second phase will comprise of a selection, implementation and M&E of small scale initiatives.

II. Outcomes of the iDove The Intercontinental Youth Forum (IYF)

The Intercontinental Youth Forum (IYF) took place from 21-23 Feb 2017, in Addis Ababa Ethiopia at the African Union Commission, where 40 youth leaders in PVE were selected from a pool of over 4,000 applicants. The 40 youth (19 F: 21 M) come from 32 countries in Africa (24) and Europe (8).

- a. Understanding Radicalization and Violent Extremism;** the forum drew emphasis on two types of VE movements, religious- Islamic and Right Wing. The main objective was to enlighten the youth and draw their attention to various existing types of radical ideologies, provide them with scholarly understanding of the mind set of individuals who turn to extremism, and supplement those perspective with real life experiences of former extremists.

Perhaps the most important message that resonated was that reforming an extremist into a citizen is always a possibility. The two types of VE drew a lot of similarities in:

- Patterns leading to joining of VE groups; the patterns although varied emanate from a grievance that isn't addressed through society which leads to disenfranchisement. This is often circumvented by a welcoming group /network that provides friendship and a sense of belonging along with a compelling binary rationale- usually linked to the extremist ideology.
- Rationale for leaving VE groups; in-depth knowledge of the ideology and an understanding of the path expected to be taken, is usually the antidote leading many to leave or disintegrate from the group.



- Vulnerabilities upon exit; can be summarised in lack of trust in society and institutions. This is usually the main hurdle upon leaving and where individuals often require support to prevent relapse into an ideology.

The sessions all emphasized various learning, such as:

- The importance of investing in understanding the individual reasons leading to VE and conveying them in ways that relate to others, i.e. storytelling
- The importance of distinguishing between a radicalized mind and a violent extremist and accordingly provide approaches and measures for each.
- Knowledge of breeding grounds; Prisons were provided as an example which can lead a person with radical thoughts to become a violent extremist.

- Interfaith Tools**; the IYF focused particularly on dialogue as an interfaith tool. This has proven to be effective during group work. Utilizing more interfaith tools in workshops and forums will help build a positive social identity while demonstrating the positive power of faiths and religion in building peace. Some of those tools include dialogue, ecumenical tolerance, respect, etc.
- Uniqueness of the iDove Brand, Network and Identity**; The selection of 40 youth leaders in PVE comprising of CSOs, Policy Makers and Scholars succeeded in creating a space for rich dialogues between those groups which in turn led to diverse and unique approaches. It is perhaps this setting that created these fresh bonds between youth leaders in Africa and Europe within the span of a 3 days. These youth now known as iDovers, were engaged and empowered to create youth innovative frameworks for PVE, which encompassed not only their experience but that of others. This task has developed a sense of ownership, drive and identity to iDove and to being an iDover. Another reason that provides exceptionality to the iDove brand is that it lends itself to understanding PVE from the nexus of religion and development. The forum culminated with an exercise summarizing the qualities of an iDover, this exercise featured a number of positive intercultural interfaith qualities, where chief amongst them is creativity and open mindedness.
- Framework for iDove Small Scale initiatives**; the youth created frameworks for each of the (1) communication and virtual initiatives, and (2) innovative community initiatives. The themes included, Dialogue; Arts & Sports; Capacity Building; Media Training; and bridging the gap between academia, practitioners and policy makers, to name a few.

III. Expenditure

The project consists of two phases. The first phase of the project, IYF was successfully implemented and expended a total amount of USD 150,000. The second phase comprising of small scale projects is expected to expend a total of USD 35,000. A large share of the expenses has been contributed by German Federal Government/BMZ.

IV. Key challenges

The iDove website of iDove is currently being hosted within the AU website and server. Hosting of the iDove website within AU has various perks such as saving of costs related to renting of server, and technical expertise related to trouble shooting and designers, but comes with the cost of limited flexibility in terms of design and/or frequency and rapidity of updates.



V. Lessons learned and way forward

Lessons Learned

Building Resilience; Radicalization and Violent extremism thrive in ungoverned spaces. Absence of authorities/state often have socio-economic and/or political grievances. Radical groups tend to present vulnerable individuals with an alternative model that provides a refuge for their grievances. The main preventative measure to circumvent the growth of radicalization is through the building of resilient societies which can be initiated through the building and nurturing of positive social identities. These efforts should target influential members of the society, youth and children in general and vulnerable individuals in particular.

Gender; a gendered approach to PVE or peacebuilding at large did not feature prominently neither in the large number of applications received, nor from the speakers perspective. It is important to highlight the positive role of women in the different faith, in C/PVE and accordingly as under-utilized influencers in society at large.

Creating a glossary of Terms; Due to the sensitivity of the topic it is important to create a glossary of terms, in English, Arabic and French for educational purposes and to ensure the consistency of messages.

Way Forward

Two track approach; a two track approach should be developed. The first track should be a preventative track which focus on innovative preventative frameworks and approaches which aim to tackle the root causes of VE, i.e. iDove youth Forum & Small Scale youth initiatives. The second track should support the establishment of a normative framework that would translate the lessons learned from the youth initiatives to develop sound policies to complement existing C/PVE strategies of the different MS and/or continental organizations.

Strengthening of the iDove Network; it is important that the sense of iDove ownership and energy is harnessed and enriched. Deepening the knowledge and exposure of iDovers can be achieved through:

1. Continuous Communication; Providing constant involvement and updates of the progress iDove is making is important. This can also include their participation in the selection, Monitoring, or evaluation of the developed frameworks for small scale initiatives.
2. Tailored training for trainers (ToT) on PVE– which provides focus on the different contexts of religious and right wing- whilst using interfaith tools; this will help them create more sound youthful solutions and transform them into iDove ambassadors and PVE change makers.
3. Peer Exchange/ Mentor-Mentee programmes; Provide constant updates about the iDovers in order to encourage and enable exchange and collaboration between them. This collaboration can be geographically or thematically. This collaboration can be extended through Mentor-Mentee by providing an update of the selected iDovers to the 4,000 and pair similar profiles to provide a makeshift experience-sharing model.

Up-scaling of iDove;

1. Geographic up scaling; expanding the network of iDovers -through the IYF and youth initiatives- to other continents, mainly Asia and Americas. Creating a vibrant network with transcontinental understanding and initiatives is an important counter network to the current extremist networks.
2. Early Warning; Expanding the PVE approach to countries which exhibit early warning signs of VE.



VI. Partnerships and Sustainability

Implementing Partners

The partnership of AUC- CIDO, BMZ (and GIZ as implementing agency) and IPSS highlights both the importance of PVE and the uniqueness of the approach which brings together Policy Makers, Practitioners and Scholars, with an end goal to build a resilient society which will bring about the needed change. The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) also partnered in supporting the iDove IYF.



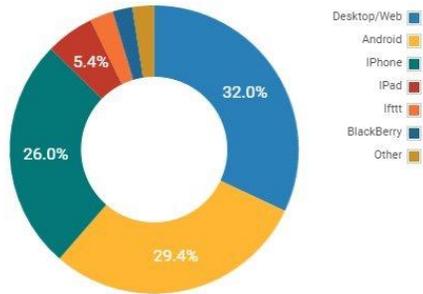
VII. Annexes

Annex I: iDove IYF Social media report (Twitter@_iDove_)

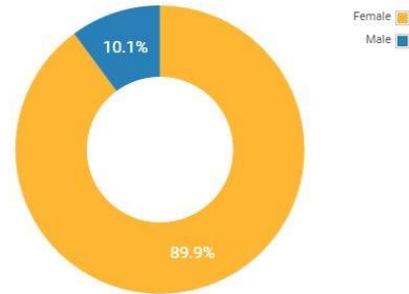
During the three day forum, the account witnessed engagements from people of different background i.e. experts in the field of PVE, people doing initiatives in the field of PVE and interested persons who were willing to deepen their knowledge and understanding on Interfaith as a tool to Prevent Violent Extremism. The account grew with an additional 40 followers and hash tag (#iDove) went as far as America, Australia, Europe and Africa. The attached detailed graphic report summarizes our engagement with the public on twitter from 21-23 Feb 2017



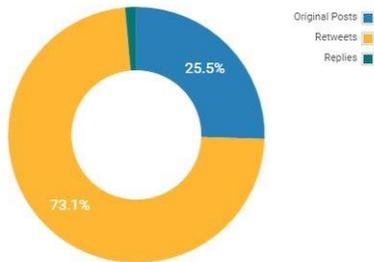
Top Sources



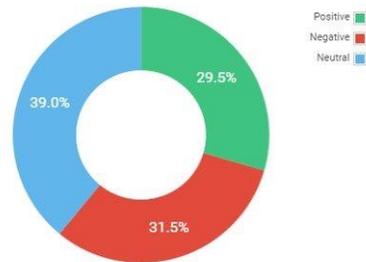
Demographics



Share of Posts



Sentiment



Sentiment Score 48

Conclusion

A positive impression was registered through the discussions and engagements on twitter, use of the hashtag and use of digital posters with a message of goodwill and commitment to iDove from different twitter users. iDove reached over 2 Million impressions, which were detected in North America, Europe, Africa and Australia.

Following the forum, the public continued with the discussions on twitter with the hashtag appreciating the efforts iDove has made in broadening the discussion on Violent Extremism to an Intercontinental level. There were growing demands of coming up with a face book page which is now in existence (facebook.com/iDoveoo).



Annex II. List of iDovers

iDovers

No.	Region	Nationality	Country of Residence	Title	Name	Organization	Email Address
1	Central	Chadian	Senegal	Mr.	Seid Gna-Guele	Institution, Gouvernance Democratique et Politique Publique (IGD2P)/Sénégal	seidgna@yahoo.fr
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5		Central African Republic	Central African Republic	Ms.	Okomo Soignet	URU	kessy_ekomo@yahoo.fr
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