



CPAU CVE Profile

Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU)

CO-OPERATION FOR PEACE AND UNITY | CPAU

Working for a Sustainable Culture of Peace

OUR VISION:

A sustainable culture of peace, and a world free of discrimination and violence of any nature, in which everyone has the right to basic needs, social justice, and dignity.

OUR MISSION:

To facilitate the process of peace-building and sustainable social development by mobilizing and building capacities through a participatory approach that builds cooperation, trust, and the transformation of conflict.

CPAU CVE Profile

Co-operation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) began its work as first Afghan-led research and peace-building organization in 1996. To date, CPAU is a major advisory and research institute with two decades of experience in promoting peace and social justice throughout Afghanistan.

CPAU's activities are centered on our key areas of expertise, such as:

- Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)
- Research
- Peacebuilding/ Capacity Building
- Peace Education
- Sports Diplomacy
- Justice Sector Reform Initiatives
- Strategic Communication Services

CPAU's CVE Efforts throughout Afghanistan

CPAU is fundamentally an organization dedicated to peacebuilding initiatives. Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is an essential aspect of this in today's changing landscape, and as such, CPAU seeks to integrate CVE best practices in all of our projects as an educated and resilient people is less likely to resort to extremist actions. CPAU is therefore dedicated to encouraging the linkages between peacebuilding measures and CVE practices.

While the countering violent extremism objectives originally stem from the security and defense arena, the expanding scope of CVE efforts is increasingly touching the area of peacebuilding and both the UN and US have acknowledged the inexorable connection between the two. While CVE focuses on building resilience among populations vulnerable to radicalization, peacebuilding—in its broader agenda of conflict prevention—also focuses on CVE, since violent extremism oftentimes is a driver for conflict and a hinderance for building sustainable peace. CVE in the context of its security efforts brings the conditions for effective peacebuilding which in turn plays an important role for building the capacity of civil society.

CPAU focuses on the aspects which build the resilience and capacity of civil society and thus represents the point where peacebuilding and CVE meet. We are convinced that our peacebuilding experience is beneficial for our CVE work, since peacebuilding practices help us to develop a more in-depth understanding of violent extremism, its causes in localized contexts, and helps us to develop tailored and sustainable approaches to counter violent extremism.

According to this practice CPAU has created a dedicated Department for Countering Violent Extremism.

CPAU's Countering Violent Extremism Department (CVED):

Through its established CVE Department (CVED), CPAU taps into its community network as well as collaborating with national, regional, and international key stakeholders to implement various CVE initiatives throughout the country. Our work on preventing and countering violent extremism reflects established and overarching regional and international PVE and CVE efforts, shaped by the U.S. State Department, UN General Assembly, and Human Rights Council.

Our CVE efforts are grounded in long-term community trust gained by CPAU over the last two decades through our peacebuilding and peace education activities. This gives us unparalleled access to communities across Afghanistan and thereby, the CVED is able to use existing and trusted social and religious platforms for the implementation of our approaches and programs on preventing and countering violent extremism. CPAU's network grants us access to influential leaders and, more importantly, provides us with an intimate knowledge of the issues facing communities across different regions in Afghanistan. This in turn is essential in identifying local drivers for radicalization and extremism and coming up with targeted and tailored methods to countering violent extremism.

CPAU's CVE Department has also proven to be a substantive platform for promoting and enhancing tolerance, community cohesion, social inclusion, pluralism, gender equality, and moderate religious perspectives which we believe are core principles of a democratic society and key tools for eliminating radicalization and extremism. This is also where we are able to link our peacebuilding and CVE efforts through enhancing the people's awareness of their basic rights and by giving them the tools to become advocates for social change. Thus, we are not only increasing the community's resilience but also provide the groundwork through capacity building within the society.

Within the global CVE agenda, CPAU places specific focus on the following items due to challenges Afghanistan faces in its country-specific context. These agenda items are:

1. Challenging Traditional Thinking

We are consistently working to break with traditional and patriarchal norms in Afghanistan especially in regards to traditional gender norms. Our approach is to facilitate systemic transformations and to build capacity among the Afghan female population which, in turn, will have a positive spill-over effect on increasing the community's resilience to radicalization. In past projects we provided training and peace education for female politicians and media workers, established the first ever Afghan Amateur Women's boxing Association (AAWBA), and are currently working on providing women with the tools to become agents within the informal justice sector against gender-based violence. We are furthermore strengthening the position of female Afghan security forces within society as we believe that women in their various roles will be vital for the shaping of a national CVE strategy.

2. The Promotion of Moderate Religious Views and Religious Tolerance

In connection with challenging traditional thinking, we are also working for the promotion of moderate religious views and religious tolerance in order to increase the spread of mainstream Islamic knowledge. To achieve this, we are working closely with the Ministries of Religious Affairs and Hajj, and the Council of Ulema and have excellent working relations with national and international religious scholars. One of our main CVE projects—the Afghanistan Forum—is based on tackling issues affecting Afghan lives, including CVE, conflict resolution, peace building, and women and youth empowerment based on a moderate Islamic perspective.

3. Empowering Women and Youth

In line with our first agenda item, we acknowledge the important role women and youth are playing for preventing and countering violent extremism. Especially in Afghanistan—with one of the world's youngest populations—youth are the primary target group for violent extremist recruiters. This means that young men and women need to build resilience against radicalization tendencies and therefore play an important role in CVE. Linking capacity building with increasing resilience of the most vulnerable populations in Afghanistan, CPAU has provided peace education classes to more than 30,000 male and female students across Afghanistan. CPAU's Peace Education Program promotes a culture of peace, reconciliation and peaceful conflict resolution amongst elementary, secondary and high school children, their teachers and parents. Through using teaching and training

materials grounded in the socio-cultural reality of Afghanistan this program generates a sense of shared responsibility amongst youth for constructive transformation of conflicts, to prevent violence, to encourage individuals and communities to deal with violence proactively, and ultimately build a sustainable peace at the local level.

4. **Strengthening the Counter-Narrative of Violent Extremist Messages through Creative and Innovative Media Strategies**

For the successful implementation of various projects we have collaborated with our partner Twan Media Productions. Twan Media Productions is an Afghan-based production house which is undertaking a selection of significant and challenging media engagements, including the production of radio soap operas and the creation of simple animations for children and regional public discussions about the role of religious leaders. Twan Media produces relevant Public Service Announcements (PSAs) as well as radio shows for us and disseminates mentioned media outputs in order to strengthen community awareness as well as social cohesion which are essential tools for countering violent extremism messages.

5. **Conducting in-depth Research to Identify Local Grievances and Drivers for Radicalization**

CPAU is convinced that thorough research on local grievances and drivers for radicalization is essential for both peacebuilding as well as CVE efforts in order to allow for those measures to be effective, long-lasting and sustainable. As Afghanistan's first locally led research organization, CPAU has extensive experience in conducting quantitative and qualitative research on a community, district, and provincial level. This has included original research on conflict trends, livelihood issues, and human rights, as well as conducting monitoring and evaluation of education, governance, and rule of law projects implemented by international donors, other NGOs, and by CPAU itself. So far, CPAU has conducted more than 70 high-quality research projects with the latest reports including the "Road to National Peace Report" and an assessment of the security and justice situation in Kunduz Province from 2011 to 2014/15 in light of the Dutch Integrated Police Training Mission (IPM).

6. **Building the Civilian Criminal Justice Capacity**

Strengthening the rule of law, awareness of such, and the people's access to the formal and informal justice sector is a basic prerequisite for good governance and thus for building resilience to radicalization and violent extremism. One of the key works CPAU undertakes, in light of our peacebuilding and CVE works, is establishing what are known as Peace Councils, based on the traditional justice system of village elders gathering in community councils called "Jirgas" or "Shuras" to mediate

disputes between parties. Where individuals engage with the formal justice system, we also provide assistance through Justice Support Workers (JSW) –individuals fully trained in either formal or Sharia Law. To date, CPAU has created or worked with around 10,000 shuras/Councils across the country as a significant pioneer in the informal justice sector, using innovative programming to establish long term relations between formal and informal justice sectors.

CPAU's CVE Related Projects:

CPAU has excellent working relations with civil society members, national and international religious scholars, and government officials as well as with relevant ministries such as the Ministries of Religious Affairs and Hajj, the Council of Ulama, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Women's Affairs in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. These relationships enable us to implement all our projects successfully and with substantive community and government support. The section below shall reflect on some of our main CVE activities.

Kandahar Regional Speaker Program - Forum Kandahar and its second phase the Afghanistan Forum: Promoting Tolerance through Dialogue

The Greater Kandahar Forum and its continuation, in the Afghanistan Forum (AF-II) are CPAU's most comprehensive programs in the context of CVE. The second phase of the program is composed of 49 provincial conferences where an estimated 200 participants discuss a particular topic over the course of a two-day session with speeches and group work. The overall objectives of the project are:

- Promoting civic engagement by addressing local issues and debates
- Increasing the understanding and support for religious and cultural tolerance, pluralism, and women's rights
- Matching actors from various civil society, government, and Islamic scholarly institutions with diverse expertise

Both program phases have been successful in giving participants the tools and opportunities to become leaders and advocates in the promotion of positive social change and to take on a more active role in proactively shaping Afghanistan's future while also promoting gender equality and a moderate religious perspective in countering violent extremism.

- Based on the cooperation with religious scholars, the project **Literacy to Counter Extremism and Enhance Security** aims to mobilize Afghan religious forces as advocates for

counterinsurgency in support of the national and international security forces. This project puts emphasis on building resilience through capacity building in the sense of education and training. The specific objectives are:

- Provide literacy classes through religious leaders
- Pro-government strategic messaging through the Council of Ulama and the Ministry of Hajj
- Communicate vital public information by bridging the bottom-up information gap between Imam's constituents and GIRoA
- Facilitate religious scholars radio exchange with communities based on 12 inspiring inter-provincial radio speaker sessions per province

The project's results can be summarized as having succeeded in:

- Improved resilience of vulnerable populations through increased literacy rates
- Streamlined Afghan moderate religious forces and government initiatives
- Effective strategic messaging promoting mainstream religious knowledge and narratives

In the same context, our **Traditional Leaders Development Program I and II: Traditional Voices for Positive Change** which was in cooperation with the Asia Foundation, promoted and increased the support for tolerance, pluralism, and women's rights among religious leaders, traditional leaders, and government officials. Through a multi-pronged approach, CPAU aims to increase the awareness and acceptance of the benefits directly linked to pluralism and tolerance. The project's objectives are:

- Exposure visits for traditional leaders to the US
- Develop Post-visit information-sharing workshops
- Production on public outreach media on the outcomes of the workshops

With the result of having established:

- Three separate one-day information-sharing workshops
- Strengthened role of traditional leaders
- Collaboration with the High Peace Council, Transition Commission, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ulama Council

As basis for CPAU's consistent reevaluation and reassessment of our CVE efforts, we conduct in-depth research as for instance **Drivers of Radicalization - Independent Research Report for the Department of International Development (DFID)**. This research report investigates what drives men to join groups that present themselves as religiously motivated such as the Taliban and the Hizb-i Islami. The study challenges commonly held perceptions

of the radicalization process, addresses attitudes towards ISAF and the Afghan Government, and reflects respondents' opinions on what needs to happen to bring security to Afghanistan. The report

- Identified drivers of radicalization
- Assessed the radicalization process and the level of community support for insurgency forces
- Defined recommendations to enhance security in Afghanistan

CPAU has developed a number of **Women's Empowerment Projects in the Context of CVE**. We acknowledge that women not only are victims but play a crucial role in identifying early warnings of radicalization tendencies within their homes and families. Most importantly, however, they are to be considered agents of change and therefore have to be seen as equal partners in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. As a result, CPAU implements a series of women's empowerment programs and only recently signed a MoU with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to further enhance those efforts. Our latest projects include:

- Fighting for Peace Project - Empowering Young Female Afghan Boxer
- Media Capacity Building for Women Journalists and Politicians
- Women Building Peace - Promoting the role of Afghan women in peace & security processes and in the prevention of gender-based violence in line with UN Resolution 1325
- Preventing Sexual Harassment of Female Soldiers and Police through a Multi-media Campaign

Taking on the capacity building component of our CVE work, we have conducted activities with a strong rule of law as well as peace education aspect. These projects can be seen as providing the groundwork to place our CVE initiatives upon.

Peace Councils

As part of the rebuilding process in Afghanistan it was widely recognized that there was a strong need for a formal, centralized legal system, but also that this centralized 'new' system would have to work with the older informal system. CPAU has been instrumental in working to rebuild the informal justice system, develop expertise and provide legal training, and working to promote linkages and cooperation with the formal law courts. As aforementioned, one of our key projects is the establishing of so-called Peace Councils based on the Shura/Jirga system. CPAU trains the members of these Peace Councils in conflict negotiation and mediation to increase their effectiveness at dispute resolution. At the same time these training sessions encourage the Peace Councils to record their cases in notebooks specifically designed for that purpose and

which are distributed by CPAU. The benefit of case registration by Peace Councils include that CPAU has systematic access to data concerning community level disputes. We utilize these records to generate Local Conflict Trend Analysis Papers (LoCTAPs), and to develop greater insights into local conflict dynamics, threats and opportunities which are valuable for designing tailored approaches tackling these dynamics before they turn into drivers for violent extremism.

Peace Education Program

In continuation of these capacity building initiatives, we also provide peace education, targeting predominantly children and adolescents—the population group most susceptible to violent extremist ideologies and messages. The program includes delivering “Peace Education” from grades 1 through 12 in Afghan schools and promotes a culture of peace, reconciliation, and peaceful conflict resolution amongst elementary, secondary and high school children, their teachers and parents. CPAU’s Peace Education Program generates a sense of shared responsibility amongst youth for constructive transformation of conflicts. It is furthermore aimed at strengthening youth’s resilience to violence and radicalization and enhances social cohesion and to improve community capability to resolve conflicts in a non-violent non-discriminatory way.

As an important creative component of the program, CPAU encourages new ways for the students to communicate with each other and with the outside world. Using animation, students find new creative ways to achieve that. Not only improved communication but also improved knowledge on the use of new technologies and social media are achieved through this activity, thereby building youth’s resilience to violent extremist narratives.

Expanding the Scope of CPAU’s CVE Efforts in Afghanistan and the Region:

CPAU acknowledges that no state can tackle the challenges of violent extremism and terrorism on its own. Therefore, we are currently expanding the scope of our CVE efforts not only on a national level but also regionally with the intention to align our efforts with other countries and key organizations at all levels to counter violent extremism and radicalization effectively.

Afghanistan’s First National CVE Strategy

CPAU is working towards developing Afghanistan’s first National CVE Strategy in cooperation with the Office of the National Security

Council (ONSC). In line with the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, the UN Security Council Resolution 2178, the 2015 Leader’s Summit on ISIS and CVE as well as the 2015 White House Summit to Counter Violent Extremism, CPAU has identified the strong need to develop a comprehensive and workable national strategy in order to effectively combat the spread of extremist ideas across Afghanistan and regionally.

The National CVE Strategy will reflect the context and culture of Afghanistan. It aims to identify drivers of conflict and extremism in order to better involve and streamline state and non-state actors to work towards developing a sustainable Afghan National CVE Strategy that will develop meaningful programmatic streams for ongoing CVE interventions in Afghanistan.

To achieve this, the program intends to create a local, national, and regional consensus on CVE issues and to provide stakeholders the ownership of the process which will be beneficial for bridging the gap between the government, elected officials, and civil society actors in Afghanistan. As a consequence, the national CVE strategy will increase consultative and consensus based governance in Afghanistan and thereby promote engagement on all societal and governmental levels for Afghanistan’s first national CVE efforts.

Based on this, community, government, and international partners will define CVE, map out CVE issues in localized contexts, and lay the groundwork for the initial dialogue between the government and communities susceptible to radicalization. This will include the following activities:

1. Local mapping and database

- a.) Conducting a brief 8-regions survey of people’s perceptions of terrorism, radicalization, drivers of VE and recommendations
- b.) Mapping out of major local organizations/stakeholders, creating a database for future program implementations proposed by the national CVE strategy

2. Regional Discussion Forums (RDF)

The core of the initiative will be formed by a total number of 12 RDFs with one to two RDFs held in one of the 8 regions. It is anticipated that 200 people will join for each two-day event with the aim to identify top the five priority issues related to radicalization/extremism/terrorism. Each conference will be a project on its own based on comprehensive planning, mobilization, networking, and reporting. CPAU will see to it that each conference represents relevant local government institutions and lead donors. The materials produced during the RDFs will build the groundwork from where to develop ONSC’s national CVE strategy report.

3. Policy Papers:

- a.) One short summary paper from each of the 12 RDFs
- b.) One final paper that incorporates material from the Kabul conferences providing major national messages around CVE issues and concrete ways forward for the Afghan government for developing a National CVE strategy

These steps will subsequently culminate in a National CVE Strategy developed by CPAU experts based on our previous assessment work and under the auspices of the ONSC.

Our guiding principles will be:

- Facilitate an active involvement of key stakeholders especially focusing on afflicted communities and civil society actors to guarantee their ownership and support of the process and the resulting CVE strategy
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for all involved parties
- Promote the role of women and youth in developing approaches and solutions and in reflecting local grievances but also in actively shaping and implementing the strategy

More information on CPAU's CVE Efforts and general work:

CPAU's CVE Department: http://cpau.org.af/?page_id=1928

CPAU's Project History: http://cpau.org.af/?page_id=1179

CPAU's Publications: <http://cpau.org.af/?cat=2>

