PRELIMINARY
FINDINGS

Evaluation of a pilot project on
"Countering violent extremism in the
regions of Maghreb and Sahel"

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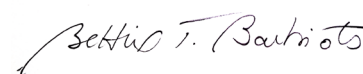regions of Maghreb and Sahel"

FOREWORD

Violent extremism and terrorism are persistent threat to peace and stability, disrupting the lives of ordinary persons. In the Sahel and Maghreb regions, the number of incidents continue to increase, and along with this, the number of fatalities and the geographical scope of affected areas, pulling evermore innocents into the associated whirlpool of conflict, violence, criminality, poverty, frustrations and hopelessness. In 2018 alone, 220 incidents led to 389 fatalities. This was a significant increase to 2017, when 44 recorded incidents resulted in the deaths of 55 persons. The impact of violent extremism and terrorism has been particularly felt in the Sahel region. Again in 2018, 174 villages - 94 of which are in Mali alone - suffered repeated attacks and abductions.

Given the extent of violence and the modus operandi of targeting remote villages and isolated communities, it is no surprise that the effects have been most strongly felt by those already marginalised and discriminated against - not least women and youth. Since 2015, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) has been working with these at-risk communities in the Sahel and Maghreb, helping them recognise, address and alleviate the causes of radicalisation, community conflicts and ethnic-based violence. Reflecting UNICRI's belief in local capacity to resolve indigenous conflicts, the assistance has been provided through grass-root organisations, operating at the community level.

Four years into what can only be described as a complex engagement, UNICRI is proud to present the preliminary findings of an evaluation of the work carried out by these grass-root organisations in strengthening the resilience of their communities. It is not without caution and an ample amount of courage that we are sharing these preliminary findings – an unfinished product for the time being. Much work has been done, yet much more remains to be done. The observations, conclusions and recommendations you will find here are formed as a result of our reviewing the work of only one third of grass-root projects in nine countries. By sharing these findings already now, we expect to contribute to an essential dialogue that will help us to continue to improve our work in these regions and on this issue. We hope that external consultations will support us further sharpen the nature of our interventions, expand our network of local partners, improve the robustness, detail and granularity of data gathered, as well as help us better formulate action-oriented and implementable recommendations.

Our approach, and indeed this very project, may be ambitious, yet we are already seeing promising results. In light of this, we are evermore committed to pursue all avenues in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism, both in the Sahel and Maghreb regions and beyond.

Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas
Director a.i. of UNICRI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to identify the root causes of radicalisation and violent extremism, and establish what kind of interventions are more effective in building the resilience of a community towards the appeal of resolving grievances by violent means, UNICRI launched a comprehensive multi-year effort in nine countries of the regions of Maghreb and Sahel in 2015. The project, which is still ongoing and not expected to conclude until 2020, does not provide definitions of vulnerabilities to be addressed, the types of groups that should be considered at risk nor the type of support to be provided in order to reduce the groups' vulnerability. This was left to selected implementing organisations to do, ensuring the development of a context-specific definitions. Although this approach may arguably carry certain risks, it provided UNICRI at the same time with ample space for testing different approaches and forming conclusions based on evidence and primary data from the field.

Following an intensive period of implementation, UNICRI has initiated an evaluation of the projects implemented by 83 organisations in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia. UNICRI's role in these projects has been to gather and organise data; evaluate the interventions' relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, prospects for sustainability, visibility and encountered challenges; as well as identify elements that have the potential to make the communities and persons less vulnerable to violent extremism. With one third of the evaluation analysis completed, the preliminary findings can already be shared to stimulate discussion and help UNICRI enrich its evaluation methodology while sharpening the projects' focus and effectiveness.

This report provides information on the difficulties and grievances of populations living in selected, marginalised areas of the nine above mentioned countries and recommends some general approaches to adopt in implementing projects with similar objectives.

When it comes to grievances, as this report also suggests, they are always complex in nature and can be informed by political reasons as much as by social, economic, security or psychological frustrations. Furthermore, the element of chance can also never be excluded, that is, the opportunity afforded by the presence of members of organised armed groups or violent extremist groups within or in proximity to a community. Incidental reporting suggests that a number of people the projects worked with either knew personally or knew of persons who have joined armed or violent extremist groups. This preliminary report contains an extensive list of grievances, without necessarily determining their prevalence in any given geographical area.

Overall, the reported difficulties and grievances can be grouped in four major policy areas: governance, education, economy and security sector. The greatest number of them are related to governance, with strong demands for:

(a) political freedom,

(b) equal opportunities and social inclusion, and

(c) fair treatment and equal access to justice.

When it comes to demands for (a) political freedom, they concern

(a.1) inclusive governance,

(a.2) citizen participation and dialogue,

(a.3) institutional accountability and trust in elected officials,

(a.4) equal access to basic state services, and

(a.5) social justice, including fair distribution and access to natural resources.

Given limited educational opportunity, and thus limited potential for obtaining a sense of worth, a number of grievances were related to the lack of equal access to elementary or religious education, and a general lack of opportunities for livelihood-generating skills. The latter was coupled with frustrations about social respect and recognition, usually obtained through employment. For instance, high unemployment rates are considered in some regions as a greater source of insecurity than the threat of terrorism. In other cases, the concept of borders and their closing for security reasons directly clashes with traditional migratory routes for labour. Finally, when it comes to the security sector, the communities reported living in conditions of compromised safety, with the security forces lacking accountability and transparency.

In general terms, all interventions strove to, in some form or other, address a structural problem by either compensating for a service not being offered by the state or encouraging active citizenship in order to push state structures to become more representative of its varied population. The structural issues were strongly intertwined with and, in some instances, further compromised by prevailing or changing cultural, geopolitical or environmental conditions.

Within this context, the kind of support offered by the projects to render communities more resilient to radicalisation and violent extremism depended on a combination of factors whose number and importance were dictated by the specificities of the context. As the projects could not address all of the grievances voiced, implementing organisations chose to deal with those that they considered either most pressing and in need of immediate attention, or else those that they could reasonably count on positively affecting circumstances.

In addressing the selected issue or issues, one notable difference in the approach of local and international organisations operating locally became immediately apparent. The local, community-based organisations naturally incorporate in their

approach the most prevailing cultural element in these communities: religion. The approach reflects the central position of religion and religious leaders in the lives of these communities' members. This has been the case in both the Sahel and Maghreb regions and in all countries where the interventions are taking place. All projects led by local organisations incorporated reflections of and references to Islamic teaching. In some cases, they went even further, choosing to deal directly with religious issues, either by supporting Koranic schools or working with imams. This was not the case with international organisations operating locally
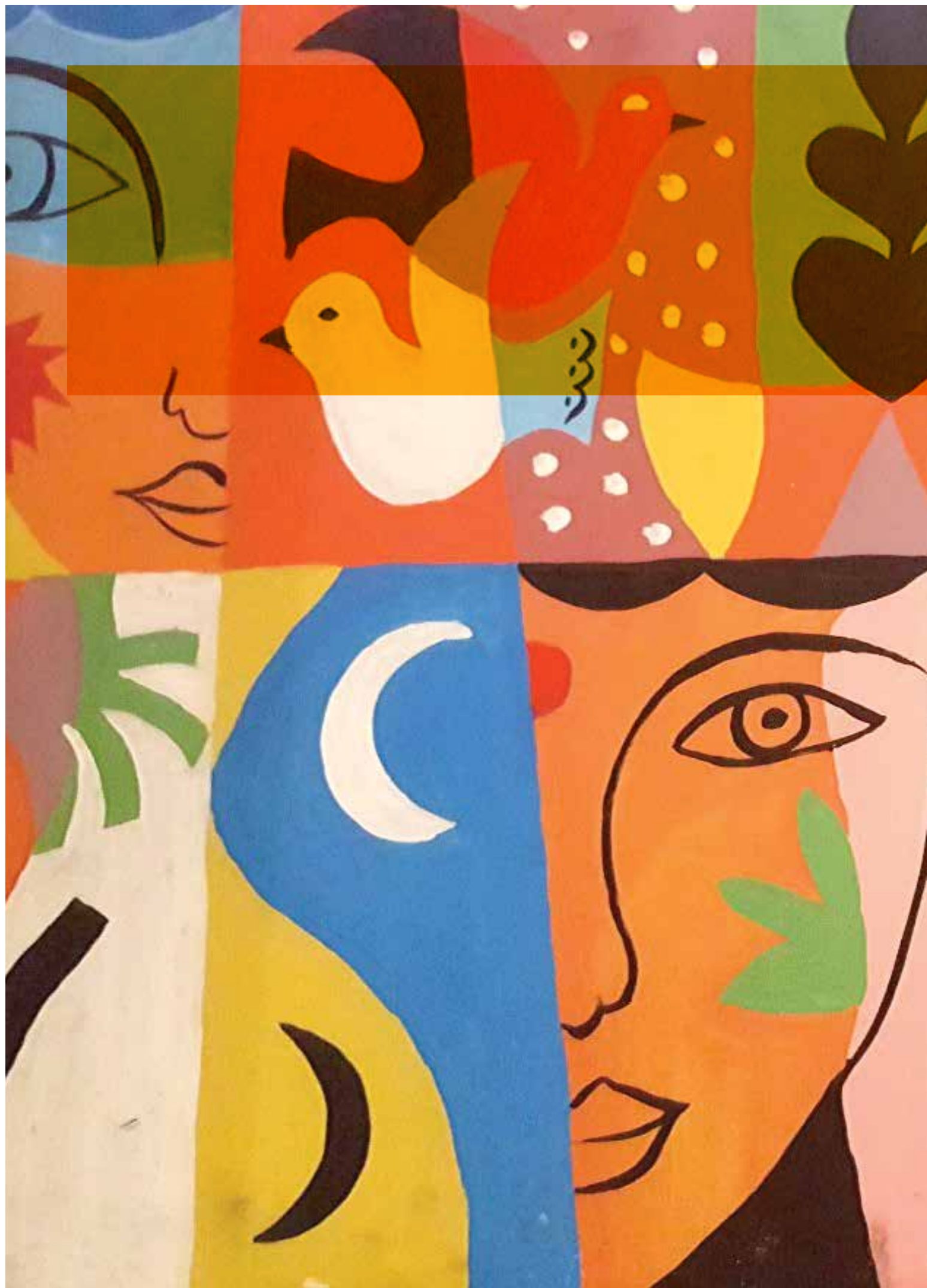
In addition to this sine qua non factor of assistance, UNICRI has identified other elements that can boost the ability of community members to deal with radicalisation tendencies on their own, including:

- **Empowerment and participatory approach:** Activities targeting youth that involve youth in all steps of the way, including giving proper consideration to their frustrations and helping them define the grievances, teaching them tools to address and resolve grievances as well as engaging them in activities designed to improve their condition. The same is true for any other marginalised group - they need to be part of both problem definition and the search for a solution.

- **Thorough understanding of the local context and cultural preferences:** The only way to avoid reinforcing existing conflicting or tense relationships, injustices and grievances within a community is an in-depth knowledge of existing conflict dynamics, stakeholders and their roles. Context analysis needs to inform the proposed interventions in a manner that it does not clash with the logic of communities' values and practices.

- **Promoting diversity and pluralism:** The structure of actions' participants needs to reflect the social tissue of the community through the involvement, or rather non-exclusion, of members that are marginalised or discriminated against, such as women, cadets sociaux, ethnic tribe members, minorities, refugees, returnees, former slaves, etc.

- **Focused and repeated engagement with vulnerable groups over a longer period of time:** Building trust in a community and boosting the community's confidence in their own efforts takes time. Continued engagement over time is a better guarantor of the projects leaving behind (informal) structures or networks with a potential to perpetuate the good results and ensure sustainability.

- **Critical thinking:** Programmes that develop or reinforce cognitive skills to recognise manipulation and differentiate facts from opinions, render individual members of the community more resilient.

- **Vetting the implementing partner:** It is important to ensuring that grass-root organisations are led by people that have the trust of the community, developed over years of advocacy and engagement, people who have demonstrated a strong personal investment in the issue, people that put their personal reputation at risk and have an extensive network of contacts to ensure that the initiative gets off the ground.

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Violent Extremism is
"when you do not allow for a
different point of view; when
you hold your own views
as being quite exclusive,
when you don't allow for the
possibility of difference and
when you want to impose this
view on others using violence
if necessary."

Lynn Davies[1]

1   Davies, L. 2008. Education Against Extremism, Stoke on Trent and Sterling. Trentham Books.
    Available at: https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cld/UserFiles/File/DAVIESeducationagainstextremism.pdf

1 CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION:
QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

What are the causes of violent extremism? What motivates a person to decide to associate himself or herself with a group that uses violence to make its voice heard, demands considered? What would make that person consider less drastic alternatives to addressing his or her grievances? What would those alternatives be? What kind of support should be provided to make that person resilient to the path of radicalisation? At what level should support be given: personal, community-level, national, or some mixture of the three?

In 2015, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) launched a comprehensive effort to address those questions. With support from the European Commission, it set out to test different strategies in nine countries of the regions of Maghreb and Sahel with the aim to prevent and counter radicalisation, terrorist recruitment, and violent extremism. In order to identify practical, innovative and sustainable measures that could help in advancing this objective, the initiative engaged civil society organisations operating at the community level. Three years into implementation, UNICRI has launched an evaluation of the implemented actions and has preliminarily identified elements that can strengthen the resilience of local communities to radical narratives.

2015

September: Project Steering Committee Meeting, Brussels (10 Sept)

2016

January: Signed agreement with the European Commission

June – July: Call for proposals, Maghreb (09 June – 17 July)

August – September: Call for proposals, Sahel (02 August – 14 September)

2017

March: 3 activities

April: 1 activity

May: 15 activities

June: 18 activities

July: 23 activities

August: 10 activities

September: 16 activities

October: 22 activities

November: 21 activities

December: 31 activities

2018

January: 34 activities

February: 23 activities

March: 35 activities

April: 37 activities

April: Project Steering Committee, Brussels (18 April)

April: Mid-term Meeting, Tunis (24 April)

May: 31 activities

May: Mid-term Meeting, Nouakchott (10 May)

June: 18 activities

July: 18 activities

July – August: Call for proposals, Sahel-Maghreb (23 July – 19 August)

August: 15 activities

September: 23 activities

October: 37 activities

November: 46 activities

December: 18 activities

2019

January: 1 activity

February:

March: 1 activity

April – May: Grant agreements signed with 7 new Sahel-Maghreb porjects

May: 1 activity

June: 25 activities

July: 7 activities

August:

4 INCIDENTS   **4** FATALITIES
ALGERIA

18 INCIDENTS   **35** FATALITIES
LIBYA

2 INCIDENTS   **2** FATALITIES
MOROCCO

8 INCIDENTS   **4** FATALITIES
TUNISIA
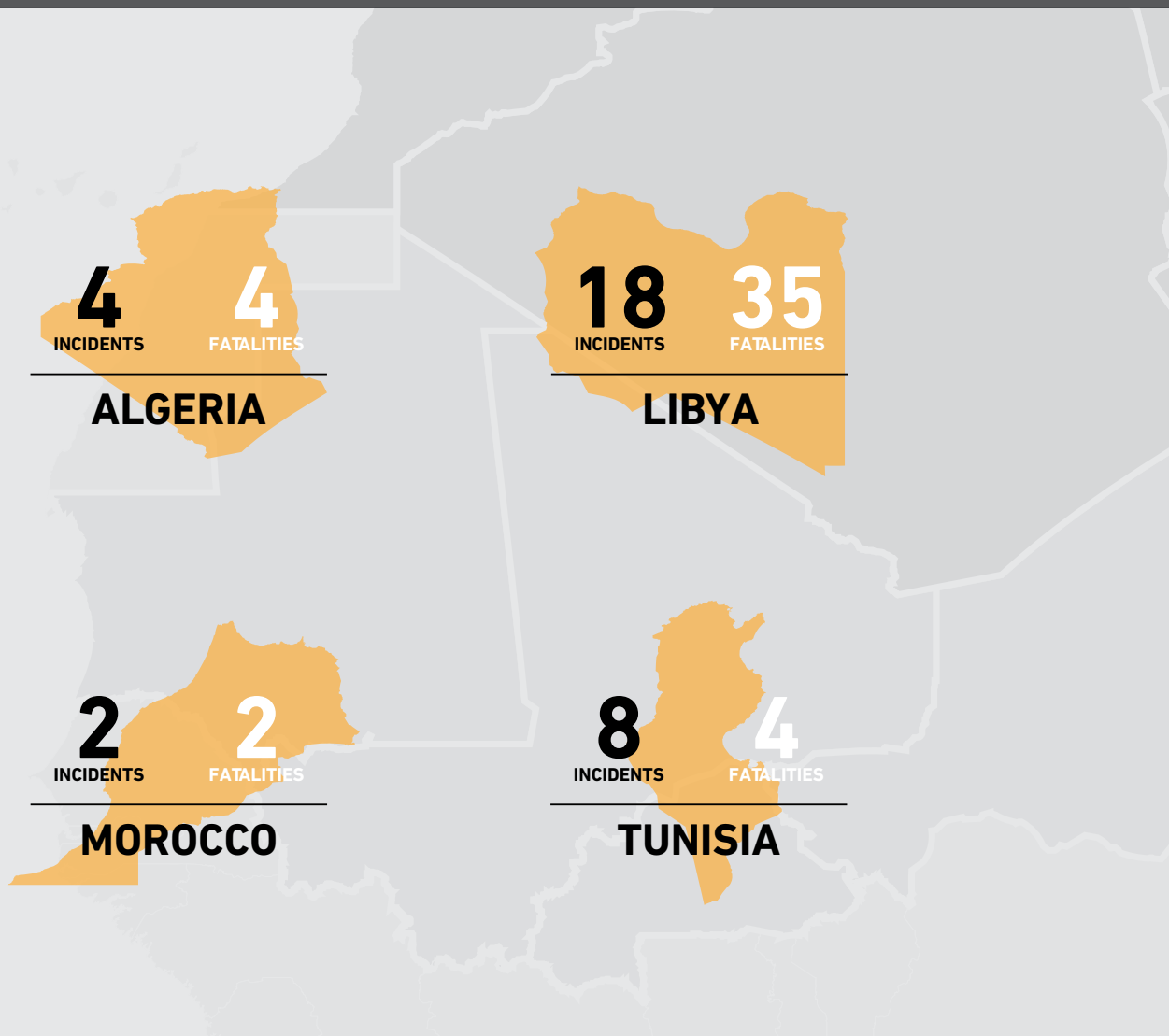
Graph 1: 2017-2018 Rebel groups' violence against civilians*

I.1. BACKGROUND:
UNICRI, WHO?

UNICRI has been working with the countries in the Maghreb and Sahel since 2009. In line with its mandate, it has assisted the governments and the international community in tackling the threats that crime and terrorism pose to peace, security and sustainable development. The assistance is fostering just and efficient criminal justice systems, the formulation and implementation of improved policies, and the promotion of national self-reliance through the development of institutional capacity.

As a member of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact of the United Nations, UNICRI contributes to the implementation of coordinated and coherent efforts across the United Nations system to prevent and counter terrorism. It supports Member States in preventing and countering the appeal of terrorism and recruitment by strengthening national capacity. UNICRI supports the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as per the General Assembly Resolution 60/288, with particular attention to measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

Meanwhile, the security situation in the countries of the Maghreb and Sahel has continued to be volatile and unpredictable. Based on the media coverage as well as

*

For the purposes of this illustration, UNICRI looked at instances of violence involving armed rebel groups perpetrated against or causing harm to civilians. The types of violence considered included attacks, abductions and explosions. The numbers do not include violent events involving ethnic or political militias. The source of information is the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, https://www.acleddata.com/).

4

74 **50**
INCIDENTS FATALITIES

BURKINA FASO

1 **18**
INCIDENT FATALITIES

CHAD

1 **0**
INCIDENTS FATALITIES

MAURITANIA

119 **265**
INCIDENTS FATALITIES

MALI

37 **66**
INCIDENTS FATALITIES

NIGER
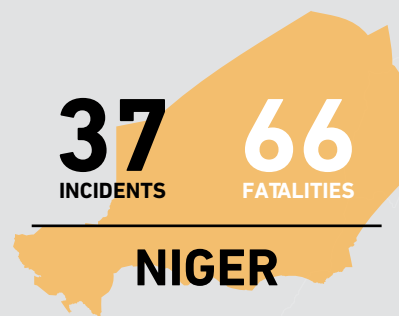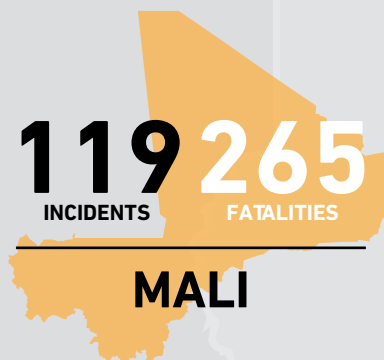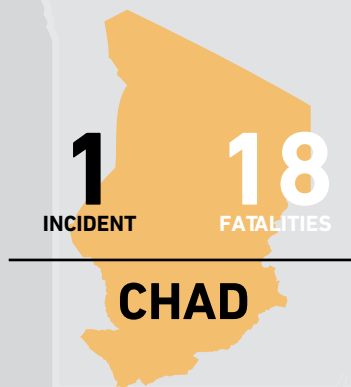
the reporting from UN agencies operating in the field and the grass-root organisations contracted by UNICRI, there have been at least 139 incidents in 2018, resulting in at least 492 deaths.[2] A number of those incidents took place in areas where UNICRI projects were being implemented. For instance, March 2018 saw clashes between the military and an armed group in the Kasserine mountains in west Tunisia, the area where a UNICRI project was offering arts and crafts lessons to youth.[3] The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) reported 77 armed group attacks in 2018 in the Mopti region of Mali alone,[4] where two UNICRI projects worked with local communities. These incidents caused the activities to be postponed, cancelled or rescheduled to a different location.

2   This is a preliminary number. The instances of death are possibly even higher. UNICRI will further verify these figures to break them down into terrorist attacks and tribal tensions.

3   The project "Interdisciplinary Mobile Cultural Activity (IMCA) for youth vulnerable to socioeconomic exclusion and violent radicalization and recruitment" involved rural youth from the Kasserine governorate in Tunisia. News on the incident was reported by https://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/actualite-national-tunisie/314856/kasserine-des-affrontements-entre-l-armee-et-un-groupe-arme.

4   According to MINUSMA reports, the incidents involved members of Donzo Ton (traditional hunter groups) as well as Dogon, Fulani and Bambara tribes. All (quarterly) reports of the United Nations Secretary General to the UN Security Council on the situation in Mali can be accessed here: https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/documents.

I.2
PILOT PROJECT

"Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in the Regions of Sahel and Maghreb" is a pilot project that UNICRI launched in July 2015. Following field research on civil society organizations and activities in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia, UNICRI determined relevant actors, gaps, needs, priority areas for intervention, and general terms for engaging local partners. It held information sessions in these countries to ensure that relevant civil society actors were aware of the pilot project, after which it published international calls for proposals:

■ For civil society organisations operating in Maghreb countries in June 2016,

■ For civil society organisations operating in Sahel countries in August 2016, and

■ For civil society organisations operating in both regions in July 2018.

The call criteria stipulated the applicants be engaged in conflict prevention and mitigation, democratic citizenship development, and local community empowerment. General, non-exclusive indications were given as to the preferred objectives of the proposals. A set of administrative criteria ensured the selection of applicants with demonstrable ethical principles and requisite capacities to run projects of similar size and value.[5] Different contracting modalities were employed to further guarantee diversity among organisations, with a ceiling set at 60,000 USD for locally-based organisations.

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5   The administrative criteria applied for vetting out organisations included previous experience in running similar projects, sound financial management record and personnel capacity. Sample guidelines for grant applicants can be accessed here: http://unicri.it/in_focus/files/CfP_SAHEL_ENG_Aug.pdf.

> " The reasons most commonly used to explain the phenomena of violent extremism in Tunisia are youth unemployment, poverty, marginalization, cultural desertification, the increasing disappointment of young people vis-à-vis the political sphere, and their ignorance of the universal values of citizenship. "

A partner from Tunisia

I.3 APPROACH:
TO BE WILLING NOT TO KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS BEFOREHAND

The project did not set out with a theory to prove. There was no clearly delineated approach to follow in its implementation from the outset. Very few, and rather general, substantive criteria were defined for the grass-root organisations. The organisations were expected to be operational, but not necessarily headquartered, in the nine countries. They were required to possess previous experience in conflict prevention and mitigation, democratic citizenship development and local community empowerment. Nevertheless, such experience did not need to be extensive.
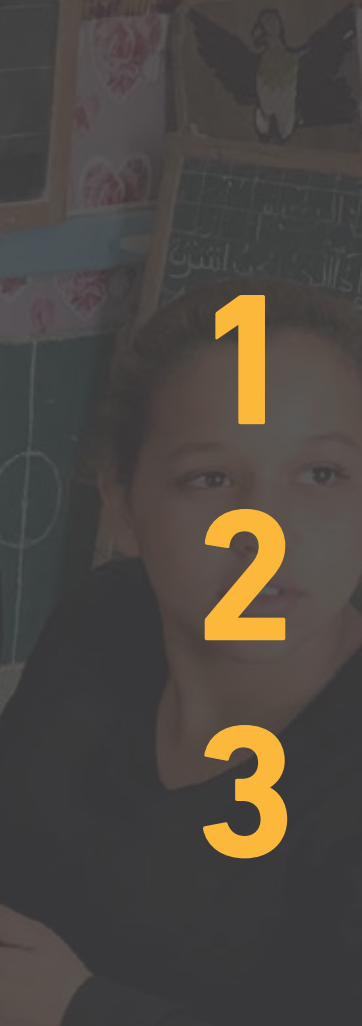
" What kind of support should be provided to make a person resilient to radicalisation? "

PICTURE

Handicraft workshop in Tunisia

1 **2** **3**

In other words, UNICRI did not:

Define which vulnerabilities constitute a risk for radicalisation or for joining violent extremist groups, and should be addressed;

Restrict the type of groups that could be considered at risk of radicalisation or joining violent extremist groups, and should be targeted; nor did it

Offer guidelines as to how the perceived vulnerabilities should be addressed and groups at risk engaged.

This modus operandi envisaged careful monitoring and evaluation on the part of UNICRI. Proposals for interventions had to come from the communities that would benefit from them, without any preconceived ideas on the part of UNICRI as to the nature of proposals, implementers or ultimate beneficiaries. Such an approach was built on trust in local capacity to resolve indigenous conflicts and a belief that the impetus for building community resilience to radical tendencies has to come from within and be owned by the community. UNICRI believed that a demonstration of ways to resolve inherent vulnerabilities and present alternatives to joining violent extremist groups would be more effective and last longer if coming from the communities themselves.[6]

Moreover, by not proposing solutions to seemingly similar problems manifested in nine countries with different political, economic, social and geographic environments, UNICRI hoped to receive more varied, context-specific and innovative solutions, while avoiding non-implementable approaches imposed from the top down. It further wished to be in a position to observe how the communities defined vulnerabilities and persons at risk. By collecting and comparing such definitions, UNICRI hoped to be in a position to gain better insights and propose general evidence-based conclusions.

Of course, such an open and flexible approach carries certain risks. Portrayals of local conflicts as presented by applicants may be partial and influenced by their political aspirations. The proposed interventions may be ephemeral in nature and not create enough momentum for the desired change to take root. In such circumstances, outright failure is a reasonable possibility. However, despite these limitations, UNICRI embraced the pilot nature of the project, considering it an opportunity for learning and enhancing the general understanding of the effectiveness of programmes addressing violent extremism through primary data. By comparing interventions that could be considered disappointing with those perceived as successful, UNICRI expected to be in a position to better understand the reasons behind either – success or failure. Such an approach carries with itself an opportunity to form conclusions based on tested approaches and evidence from the field.

6   This is one of the lessons UNICRI has learned during years of managing development assistance programmes and projects in close collaboration with the countries across the world and in a number of security-related fields. It is supported by conclusions reached by other international organisations operating in similar contexts, such UNDP, and international researchers. See, in particular, UNDP's research report "Journey to Extremism in Africa".

I.4 **SELECTION**

UNICRI has received 229 applications from not-for-profit and civil society organisations as well as media, women, and youth associations during the three calls for proposals.[7] There were both international and local applicants from nine countries.

Of these, UNICRI awarded funding to 31 organisations in the overall amount of over 3.3 million USD. An initial batch of 24 organisations started implementing activities in 2017 and are concluding their work in 2019. These include 14 projects in the Sahel region and another ten in the Maghreb countries. The remaining seven organisations have started the implementation in mid-2019.

In line with one of the call criteria, preference was given to projects with a regional reach, as opposed to projects implemented in one country only. This preference was particularly relevant during the selection of proposals received during the first two calls. Consequently, nine of 24 projects had activities in at least two countries.

Otherwise, the geographical distribution of projects within the regions was not predetermined. During the selection process, UNICRI[8] sought to ensure that targeted areas were those considered most at risk, that ultimate beneficiaries constituted most vulnerable groups and that a varied group of implementers was entrusted with implementation. Moreover, attention was paid to proposed intervention approaches. The selected projects offered diverse approaches to strengthening resilience in different geographical, political, social and economic contexts, addressed a variety of subject matters, and were of different duration and volume. In this way, UNICRI respected the pilot nature of the project and allowed space for learning critical lessons.

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7   In particular, UNICRI received 85 applications during the first call for proposals, 41 applications during the second call and 103 applications during the third call.

8   Selection has been made by an international panel consisting of UNICRI staff and independent experts.

31 Organizations

3.3 Million USD

"

A demonstration of ways to resolve inherent vulnerabilities and present alternatives to joining violent extremist groups would be more effective and last longer if coming from the communities themselves.

"

I.5 **REVIEW METHODOLOGY**

Of the 24 projects that received funding following the first two calls for proposals and launched activities in 2017, 22 are the subject of this review. The review excludes two projects that are managing a portfolio of micro-grants in the Maghreb and Sahel. Through these micro-grants, funding has been made available to another 52 projects: 38 in the Maghreb and 14 in the Sahel. Along with seven new projects currently being launched, they will be the subject of review in 2019, allowing UNICRI to evaluate the effectiveness of a total of 83 projects: 31 directly managed by UNICRI and 52 micro-grants supervised by UNICRI implementing partners. This will bring the number of projects reviewed per region to 51 for the Maghreb and 32 for the Sahel.

Furthermore, this review was based on information received from the funded organisations as well as observations made by UNICRI during its monitoring activities.[9] It includes contracts, project descriptions as annexed to the contracts, progress reports and all substantive documents produced by the organisations, along with the reports of field missions, teleconferences, co-ordination meetings and mid-term evaluations produced by UNICRI. This comprised on average more than 10 management–related documents per project, with additional 11 manuals and guidebooks, four research studies, and numerous presentations made at training events. In total, over 235 documents have been analysed.

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9   During the review period, UNICRI relied on a team of seven members: four core project team members, two consultants and one intern.

As for the type of information considered:

1. Particular attention was given to **the conflict analysis** presented by the implementing organisations and voiced by participants in their activities. This includes all context-specific particularities, such as geography, climate, and political developments as well as the profile, gender, age, ethnicity, level of authority and involvement of stakeholders.

2. Information on the suggested **intervention approaches** was considered, including the type of conducted activity, its frequency within a project or across projects, participation patterns, and nuances that depended on the context, organizer preferences, or the type of stakeholders.

3. **The implementing organisations** were also carefully analysed: their vision, declared ethical standards and corresponding actions, authority they (appear to) command in a community,[10] their social capital along with managerial, analytical and administrative capacities. Within the organisations, attention was paid to the involvement and the role of women, and the presence of persons with strong leadership capacity.

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10 As can be discerned from their network of contacts and influence with traditional and official authorities, demonstrated by the latter's response to invitations to participate in project activities.

This information has been used for mapping perceived root causes of radicalisation and, at the level of a community, the type and extent of particular vulnerabilities and grievances.

At the national level, it helped inform the setting provided, or not provided, by the state, as perceived by local communities. In parallel, a map of all intervention approaches has been created allowing for the identification of those frequently applied as well as those that yielded results or resonated within a wider community already during the lifetime of the projects.

In the case of the latter, considered by UNICRI to be good practices, UNICRI looked for any element that conceivably acted as an effective enabler, including the role played by the implementing organisations themselves.

PROJECTS ➡️

CONFLICT / PROBLEM ANALYSIS ➕ **INTERVENTION APPROACH** ➡️ **DESIRED RESULT(S) OR LACK THEREOF**

⬇️ ⬇️ ⬇️

ROOT CAUSES — **VULNERABILITIES GRIEVANCES** | **TYPE OF INTERVENTIONS** | STATISTICS — **IMPACT, IF ANY**

FREQUENT INTERVENTION TYPES

⬇️ ⬇️

CONTEXT — **COUNTRY OVERVIEWS** | **GOOD PRACTICES** | NECESSARY INGREDIENT
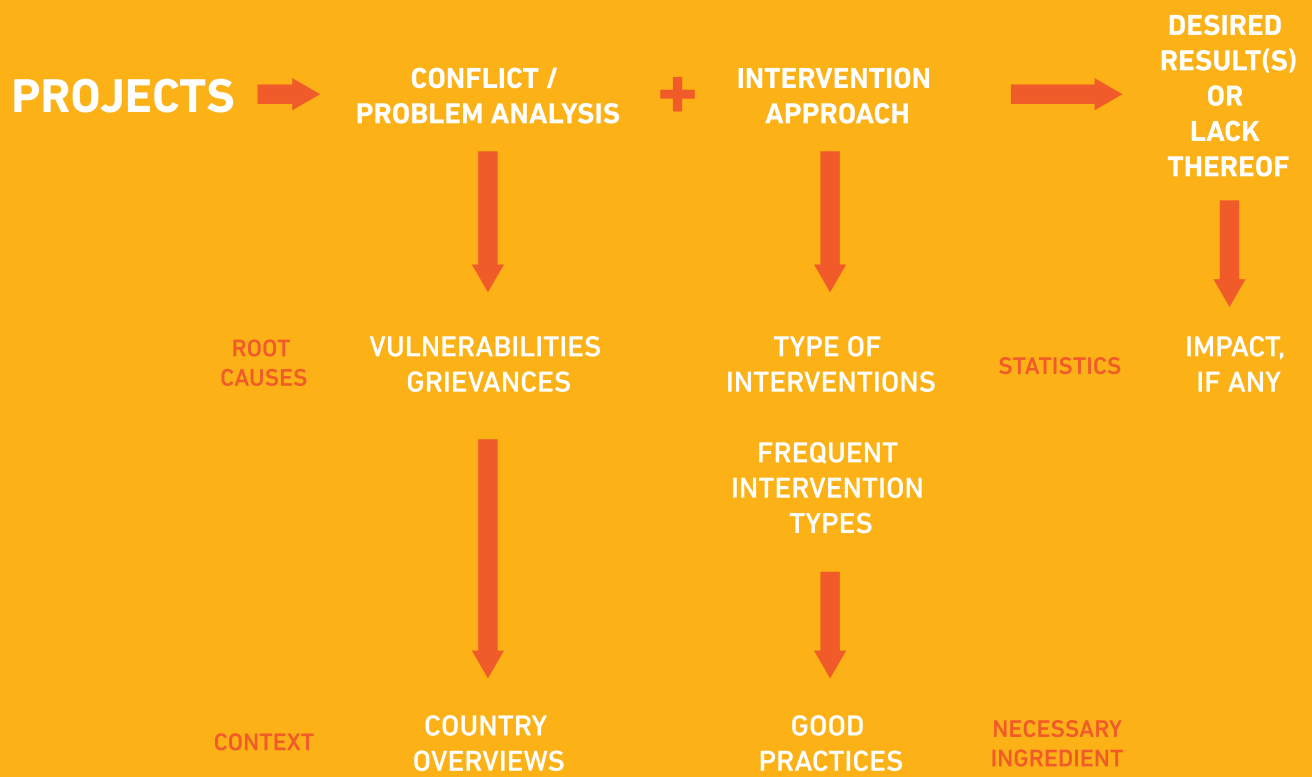
Chart 1: Review Methodology

PICTURE

Weekend sport activities in Tunisia.

2 CHAPTER II
OVERVIEW OF
INTERVENTIONS

II.1 **WHERE**

The geographical distribution of the 22 reviewed projects was as follows:

MAGHREB: 8 PROJECTS	SAHEL: 7 PROJECTS	REGIONAL: 7 PROJECTS
1 in Libya	1 in Burkina Faso	1 Regional-Maghreb
1 in Morocco	4 in Mauritania	6 Regional-Sahel
6 in Tunisia	2 in Niger	

Five projects were carried out in rural areas, including the mountainous communities of the Kasserine governorate in Tunisia, arid expanses of the Gourma area in central Mali and north-western Burkina Faso, or nomadic communities of Mauritania's Trarza and Brakna regions on the border with Senegal. Eight projects addressed the population of urban or suburban areas, such as the outskirts of Nouakchott in Mauritania or the coastal city of Sirt in Libya. Nine projects had activities benefiting both rural and urban populations.

As expected given the nature of the projects, the areas of implementation frequently overlapped with high levels of insecurity, inter-community tensions, and conflicts. These are the areas where the violent extremist groups operate and the G5 Sahel Joint Force[11] is frequently present.

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11 As per Resolution 2359 Peace and security in Africa: http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2359

UNICRI
INTERVENTIONS

TERRORIST INCIDENTS
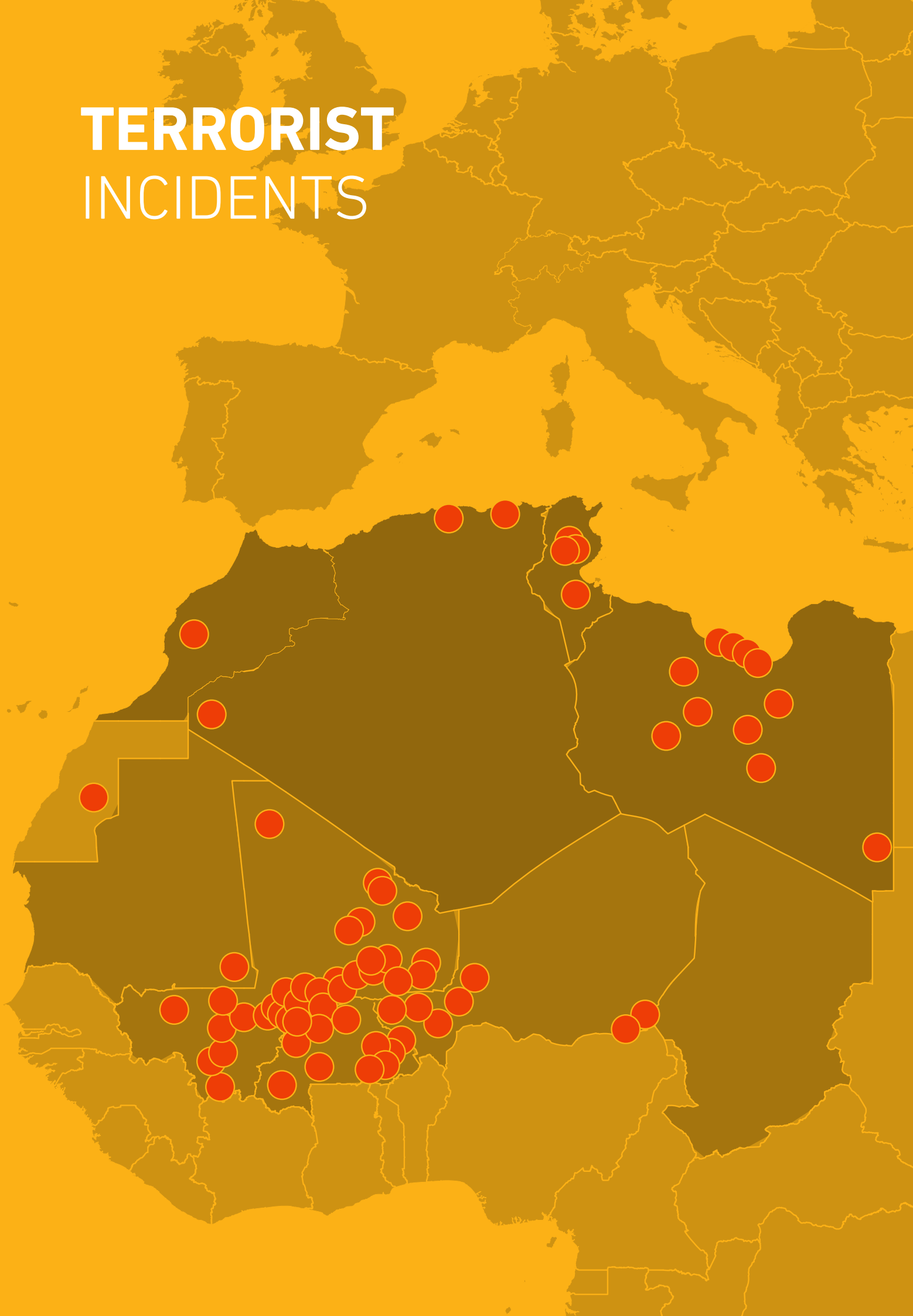
II.2 **FOR WHOM**

The youth are considered a largely underrepresented and marginalised group of the population. The impetus for change in many of the targeted counties, especially in the Maghreb, came precisely from this segment of the population, most notably in Libya and Tunisia. However, the post-revolution administrative set-ups have failed to harvest their energy for economic, social and political development, leaving them with hardly any outlet for channelling it.

With this in mind, the projects worked predominantly for the benefit of the **youth**. This was done both directly, by conducting activities with the participation of young people, or indirectly, by benefitting service providers, such as educators, religious leaders or parents. The implementing organizations were asked to define the specific target group, by also considering the age groups of young people frequently recruited by terrorist groups. Such an approach revealed socially and culturally contextualized differences. The concept of maturity varied across the cultures and regions the projects worked in, with upper age limits of adulthood differing from those in Western cultures.12

In its totality, the projects benefited youth and children between the ages of five/six and 35, as follows:

- Kindergarten children,

- Elementary school children;

- Koranic school students;

- High-school students;

- University students; and

- Mostly unemployed, working-age men and women (up to 35 years of age)

They included children living in dire poverty, street kids, school drop-outs, unemployed and working young men and women at risk of radicalisation or recruitment. Among them were former slaves, tribe members, farmers, nomadic herders, refugees, internally displaced or returnee youths, prison inmates as well as civil society activists. Some of them had negative experiences with law enforcement services, having been subjected to violence or arrests.

12 The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/

Another important cross-cutting target group was represented by **women**. They included pre-school and school-age girls, adolescent unmarried women, young married women, and women with young kids. A number of them had been victims of violence, with one project addressing the needs of rural women with disabilities. A few projects worked for the benefit of women exclusively, whereas all made efforts to reach out to different categories of the female population. An ambitious goal of having up to 50% women among participants was set, with varying success in achieving it. One of the frequently reported difficulties was ensuring female participation in activities involving arts, public demonstrations, or activities led by male professionals. In more than one instance, the families expressed reluctance to allow them to participate. In a few other cases, young male participants expressed discomfort in participating in activities involving groups of mixed gender. These cases compelled the implementing organisations to find different mitigation strategies. Activities involving women and led by women had an initial advantage. However, all projects that made efforts to ensure female participation reported positive results without exception.

All the same, focus on ensuring female participation was not consistent. This was evident in projects which targeted vulnerable groups that were already difficult to reach, such as nomadic cattle breeding communities, tribal communities living in remote areas considered terrorist hot spots, or refugee camps inaccessible due to the imposed security restrictions on movements. In these and similar very traditional environments, where gender divisions are more strongly expressed, the efforts to secure the desired number of participants came at the expense of numerical gender equality. This may eventually compromise the sustainability of efforts given the increased peace-building potential of projects that involve community members of both genders. A number of implementing organisations reported that the outspoken messages of peace by female members of the community can act as a strong deterrent to terrorist groups' recruitment success.

Apart from youth and women (one widely perceived as a group at risk of radicalisation and recruitment, and the other as a group with a strong deterrent potential), the projects also worked with **community leaders** - members of the community with vested authority, influence, or potential to address or better channel perceived grievances. These included secular and religious authorities coming into contact with at-risk youth, namely imams, Koranic school preachers/teachers, tribal leaders and educators from either formal structures of learning or civil society associations. Another group included opinion makers, such as television, on-line, and radio journalists, and journalist associations. Finally, a small number of projects involved public officials, addressing structurally imbedded injustices.

By addressing most vulnerable and highly marginalised groups, the projects often came into contact or worked directly with **minority groups and diverse ethnic tribes** across the Maghreb and the Sahel.[13] These groups have included:

- Amazingh in Tunisia;
- Bambara in Mali
  (Segou and Mopti regions);
- Bozos in Mali;
- Touareg Daoussakhs in Mali and Niger
  (Tillabery region);
- Dogons in Mali
  (Mopti region);
- Dozos in Mali;

- Fulanis in Mali and Burkina Faso
  (Mopti and Sahel regions);
- Tamashek in Mali
  (Gao region);
- Touaregs in Mali and Niger
  (Timbuktu, Gao, and Tillabery regions);
- Songhai/Sonrai/Zarmas in Mali and Niger
  (Mopti, Gao, and Tillabery regions);
- Soninke in Mauritania

Based on present calculations:

1,683 individual persons have directly benefited from the **22 projects**. If one also considers indirect beneficiaries, the number of attendees at project-organised events raises to **20,997**, a figure that is set to increase as the review proceeds and data are further verified.[14]

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13 Sahel is also the name of one of the regions of Burkina Faso.

14 UNICRI is in the process of gathering and verifying the data disaggregated by age, sex, ethnic group and location.

II.3
HOW

The numerous and different activities carried out by the projects across countries have been classified into 13 categories allowing comparisons across projects. These categories include:

1. **Training courses** 2. **Vocational training courses** 3. **Remedial teaching**	4. **Workshops** 5. **Conferences** 6. **Debates**	7. **Interviews** 8. **Meetings**	9. **Radio shows** 10. **Campaigns**	11. **Theatre** 12. **Music events** 13. **Sporting events**

The categorization[15] was based on the activities' purpose, format, and type of interaction. Based on their purpose, for instance, the analysed activities served to instruct, advocate, raise awareness or gather information.

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15 Another 30 events are presently uncategorized ("other") as they do not fall under any of these 13 categories. As all remaining projects get reviewed and data extracted, UNICRI expects that the categorization will be further refined.

The instructional activities could then be further subdivided into those providing:

- ■ Remedial teaching, such as literacy and French language courses;

- ■ Vocational training to youths without an income-generating skill;

- ■ Lecture-style training for a particular context-specific skill; and

- ■ Joint learning through discussion and exercises in workshop-style settings.

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In Mauritania, 380 school children received remedial teaching in Arabic, French and geography.

"

REMEDIAL TEACHING
380 primary school students
VOCATIONAL TRAINING
951 youths
TRAINING EVENTS
547 participants
WORKSHOPS
785 participants

Table 1: Instructional events - the attendance break-down

In terms of numbers, the majority of events implemented were training courses. The topics they covered included:

- Civic education;
- Conflict analysis, including gender conflict analysis;
- Non-violent approach to conflict management and resolution;
- Position of women in religious discourse and democratic, legal culture;

- Advocacy and leadership;
- Debating and managing debate clubs;
- Critical thinking;
- Strategy development;
- Social media and cyber-crime;
- Job search techniques.

The vocational training included courses in plumbing, electricity, carpentry, floor tiling, horticulture, rosemary oil distilling, female and male hairdressing, wicker, glass, clay and plaster handicrafts, and elephant reserve conservation. In addition to vocational training courses, 234 Tunisian rural youths also participated in workshops on break-dance, mural painting, photography and henna tattoo. In Mauritania, 380 school children received remedial teaching in Arabic, French and geography.

Theatre and radio programmes proved an effective communication tool for sensitizing in general, and in particular rural populations, bringing the topics closer to them. In Tunisia, street theatre performances - based on real experiences and highlighting the perceived attraction of violent extremist groups and the role of women in creating a modern state based on tolerance - toured the cities, raising awareness and initiating debates. The debates then continued on social media platforms. In Niger, radio programmes encouraged citizens of border areas to trust and collaborate with security forces.

Ecological and health campaigns, sporting events, and music shows were often organised in communities with diverse social and ethnic groups as a means to promote social cohesion. Most of such events were introduced with messages of peace and tolerance.

In addition to the type of events organised, differences could be observed in the approach the implementing organisations applied during the execution. The following differences could be observed:

PICTURE

Participants in a theatre workshop in Tunisia.

GRASS-ROOT EVENTS FOR REACHING CRITICAL MASS

Orchestrating community events to raise awareness of the general population until a critical consensus-building mass has been created, then engaging with institutions.

as opposed to

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH INTEGRATED

Working at the community level, and in parallel engaging with institutional decision-makers. Advocating for a change with both sides until the critical moment has been reached, when the step towards the change becomes all but necessary, and the most logical, next step.

ENCOURAGING TRAINED YOUTH LEADERS TO TAKE INITIATIVE

Empowering young people with leadership skills, selected from a pool of trained youths, and encouraging them to devise, organize and lead local initiatives addressing perceived grievances.

as opposed to

PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGES

Having young people trained by their peers to carry out activities already identified as addressing grievances. Trained young leaders are not given free rein to take initiative but are encouraged to be part of a larger mission of the implementing organisation.

23

II.4
WHO:

The projects have been implemented by local civil society organisations, media associations and international organisations well-established in the nine countries. Based on the location of their headquarters, there have been six international and 16 local civil society organisations, as per the following breakdown:

INTERNATIONAL

■ Belgium: 1 organisation (operating in Libya);

■ Italy: 1 organisation (operating in Morocco);

■ Spain: 1 organisation (operating in Tunisia);

■ United States: 2 organisations (operating in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger);

■ United Kingdom: 1 organisation (operating in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger).

LOCAL

■ Burkina Faso: 1 organisation;

■ Libya: 1 organisation;

■ Mauritania: 4 organisations;

■ Niger: 5 organisations;

■ Tunisia: 5 organisations;

Having a mixture of local and international organisations allowed UNICRI to analyse possible differences in the approach stemming from cultural interpretations.

> Local staff members were essential for establishing a relationship of trust with communities, encouraging their participation and acting as cultural interpreters.

Overall, international organisations were generally well versed in problem analysis, project design, and implementation. They knew the area well, were careful to carry out stakeholder interviews, and complete conflict and baseline analysis prior to launching activities engaging the local populations. Competence, commitment, and confidence have been well demonstrated. These organisations applied a participatory and inclusive approach, allowing the communities to devise conflict mitigating and peace-building activities. A number of them had years of experience in pursuing the cause with the very same communities. More often than not, they relied on local staff members to reach areas most at risk. Prudence required limited exposure of non-local staff in activities that had to do with violent extremism in areas that are remote, isolated and where violent extremist groups operate. In such circumstances, the international staff risked becoming an easy target. Moreover, local staff members were essential for establishing a relationship of trust with local communities, encouraging their participation in project events and acting as cultural interpreters.

The grass-root organisations frequently demonstrated difficulties in responding to project management expectations, in particular in meeting reporting requirements. Some of them had limited experience collaborating with international organisations. These local organisations compensated for this lack of administrative experience with strong commitment, continued presence on the ground and well-established networks. By engaging in activities meant to prevent or counter radicalisation and violent extremism, they have, occasionally, put their reputation at stake, requiring a fair amount of diplomatic skill in articulating problems in their communities. They also stood to lose from a not-so-well perceived association with international funding and a sensitive topic. These organisations frequently relied on a strong, well-connected, well-established, influential and charismatic leader, who was most often the founder and had extensively worked on building community trust. This kind of leader had substantial social capital, and the organisations' work was part of his/her long-term vision to make a change. However, such organisations risked losing the position of influence they enjoyed within communities should there be a change in the leadership.[16]

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16 https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/06/how-civil-society-can-help-prevent-violence-and-extremism

Breakdance workshop in
Tunisia.

II.5 WHAT

Finally, what kind of grievances did the projects seek to address? As mentioned above, UNICRI did not stipulate the preferred type of issues that needed to be tackled. It invited the applicants to elaborate the problems communities have been facing, their effect on radicalisation tendencies, and the most appropriate and effective course of action to take in order to address them and make the communities more resilient. As a result, UNICRI has received detailed country- and community-specific analyses, which have continued to be updated throughout the implementation period through reports on violent incidents, community tensions, and administrative bottlenecks. These reports were complemented with status updates and field mission reports from a UNICRI consultant based in Mauritania.

The table below depicts a comprehensive list of issues that have been reported as undermining community resilience. Overall, 22 grievances have been identified encompassing political, social, educational, economic and security issues.[17] Even though all of them have been reported as critical for the local communities, not all of them have received equal attention and treatment. The implementing organisations have not, or could not, define suitable measures to address each and every one. This could be attributed to the limitations of their reach: in most cases, the grievances stem from weaknesses in the execution of justice, which are most effectively addressed through institutional measures. However, these measures are beyond the reach of grass-roots associations, which can, at best, advocate for changes in the legal framework, a process that can take years and does not bring immediate tangible benefits to affected communities.

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17 It is worth noting that establishing clear categories is difficult. As more projects are reviewed, UNICRI expects that this categorisation may undergo some, if slight, revisions.

Overall, 14 of 22 reported grievances have been addressed by the projects. The table offers information on the intervention logic along with an indication of countries where interventions took place:

GRIEVANCIES3	INTERVENTION LOGIC	COUNTRY
DEEPENING VULNERABILITIES		
POLITICAL FREEDOM		
INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE		
Democracies in transition, with weak foundations for resilient democracy and full respect for human and civil rights. In some cases, they are undergoing a crisis of legitimacy.[4] The states are centralised, frequently stunting the growth of regions. Villages and tribes still have a hereditary transfer of power. Certain groups of the population are not represented politically. They report a sense of abandonment and a general crisis of democratic values, accompanied by a lack of confidence in institutions.	Developing manuals and organizing civic education on active citizenship, advocating for the adoption of a school curriculum on civic education.	Libya
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION		
Restricted freedoms of expression and assembly, with lack of funds for civil society. Lack of dialogue opportunities.	Training, empowering, holding debates, advocating for media reforms. Developing manuals and organizing civic education activities on active citizenship, advocating for the adoption of a school curriculum on civic education.	Libya, Mauritania, Tunisia
INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY		
Unfair or abusive conduct of state authorities reported cases of corruption, trafficking, misuse of financial resources and clientelism. Lack of trust in government institutions and elected officials, with an increasing sense of impotence. Difficult economic situation of journalists compromising their independence. In some cases, general threats of intimidation, acts of violence or attempts of control over journalists. In some regions, populations blame the media for exaggerating incidents and stigmatizing their region.	NOT ADDRESSED	

EQUAL ACCESS TO STATE SERVICES

Absence of state services and protection by security services in particular. Presence of armed criminals and criminal groups undermining security and/or offering those services in lieu of the state. In areas where there are mass movements of people due to economic or security reasons, there are no state services to mitigate the effects or the ensuing conflicts. Violent armed groups take advantage of the situation, also by setting training camps near civilian settlement camps. In some states, cases of segments of the population lacking identity papers and being in de facto slavery.	Conducting interviews with vulnerable groups, authorities, and leaders to establish source(s) of grievances.	Mali, Niger

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Access to land or water obstructed or contested between settled farmers and nomadic herders. Natural resources not fairly distributed, migrating animal needs not considered. Immense wealth accumulated in the circles of power. In some cases, wealthy individuals from the capital cities use nomadic tribes to herd their cattle, who end up in conflict with local tribes.	Conducting interviews with a vulnerable group (Fulanis) to establish security perceptions, research studies and awareness-raising campaigns. Carrying out vocational training and providing employment support for eco-guardians of elephants and their natural habitat.	Mali
Social and political marginalisation, or even discrimination against certain ethnic groups based on their ethnicity.	Conducting community activities to build social cohesion, including, theatre performances, sporting and musical events.	Mali, Mauritania

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inequality, marginalisation or stigmatization of vulnerable groups, including women, youth, herders, minorities and former slaves. Social polarisation between the land-owning aristocracy and "social minors". Customary power monopolized by a small number of families descended from traditional chieftaincies. Ban on inter-caste marriages as a manifestation of the omnipresent customary hierarchies among the Fulanis. Wide-spread neglect of women interest groups. Challenges in integrating returnees within the host communities and risk of alienation and marginalisation.	Implementing peace-building initiatives designed and led by "social minors": ethnic minorities, women, unemployed men, returnee and host communities. Organising group work with the participation of both genders, to form social bonds. Sport, music events, eco-days: social events aligning different groups around a non-controversial issue such as planting trees, sanitation, garbage collection. Promoting the use of theatre and radio for broadcasting positive messages of non-violent conflict resolution. Training for imams on democratic values enshrined in legal documents.	Mali, Mauritania, Tunisia

FAIR TREATMENT

EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Unresolved land or water access disputes. Lack of clear land division feeding inter-ethnic disputes. Women cannot inherit land. The violent extremist groups positioning themselves as protectors.	**NOT ADDRESSED**
Limited resources available to the justice sector, with precarious working conditions of the courts. Legal insecurity: criminal legislation with vague definitions of terrorism along with excessively restrictive counter-terrorism measures.	**NOT ADDRESSED**
Impunity and partiality of justice perceived as creating more frustrations than "jihadism". Contested legal decisions, allegedly based on favours, not the law.	**NOT ADDRESSED**
Lack of legal protection for certain groups, such as women, making them vulnerable to abuse. Women's legal rights not recognized nor observed.	**NOT ADDRESSED**
Lack of access to justice in remote areas where herder families' livestock are often stolen by bandits.	**NOT ADDRESSED**

SENSE OF WORTH

EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION

High levels of illiteracy, reaching 60% in some regions (literacy in Mali's Mopti region is less than 40%). Critical thinking underdeveloped. Girls not always allowed to go to school. Lack of educational infrastructure, in particular schools adapted to migrating communities. Teachers poorly trained, badly paid. Lack of culturally appropriate educational programmes, in the languages of the communities. The educational programmes are frequently based on the colonial model that is no longer well suited to the local context.[6]	Delivering remedial teaching classes in Arabic and French for elementary school kids. Mauritania

Vocational training in Mauritania.

LIVELIHOOD GENERATING SKILLS		
Unskilled labour force. Some countries have seen an explosion of Koranic schools, with young people receiving extensive religious' education but neither technical qualifications nor the possibility of professional integration. They frequently lack basic literacy. For many of them, it is difficult to be employed at a mosque, so many opt for teaching the Qur'an without pay, becoming vulnerable to mobilization by violent extremist groups.	Organising vocational training for self-employment on horticulture, plumbing, electricity, carpentry, floor-tiling. Organising vocational training for eco-guardians of a natural reserve on fire managing and elephant protection. Combining vocational training with French language, geography and civic education classes.	Mali, Mauritania, Tunisia
ACCESS TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION		
Lack of structured religious education and institutional supervision of religious schools. Lack of knowledge of religious texts and/or closed-minded interpretation. Education for imams does not address topics related to civic and democratic values nor legal framework in which gender equality and respect for human rights are enshrined, perpetuating exclusion. Islamist discourse is used to challenge the authority, be it traditional or formal, with ideology used as an opportunistic cover ("branding strategy") for drivers that are more basic but less often expressed (i.e. quest for independence, break from tradition, hierarchy), providing legitimacy to the guerrillas.[7]	Organising public or youth debates using Sharia law examples, preparing a guidebook on peace education with examples taken from hadith and Qur'an. Conversely, training imams on democratic values enshrined in legal documents. Advocating with the imams' union for standardizing/changing their education.	Libya, Mauritania, Tunisia

RESPECT, RECOGNITION		
LIVELIHOOD-GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES		
Dire poverty, economic hardship, economic marginalisation, lack of work and development opportunities. Young men from the central Sahel communities lacking financial means are not permitted to marry, and cross the threshold to adulthood, risking social marginalisation. In some regions, high unemployment rates (much higher than the national average) are considered a greater source of insecurity than the terrorist threat. High rate of graduates with higher education among the unemployed exacerbates the feeling of disappointment and marginalisation.	Organising vocational training for self-employment, including analysis of market opportunities, and practical training on job search techniques. Instilling a sense of pride and appreciation for agricultural work.	Mali, Mauritania, Tunisia
Youth unemployment leading to an abundance of unstructured time.[8]	Organising vocational training and complementing it with remunerated work opportunities as eco-guardians in an elephant natural reserve.	Mali
Declining natural resources and desertification leading to impoverishment and increasing inter- and intra-community tensions.	Organising vocational training for eco-guardians to defend the elephant habitat from wild fires and timber harvesting.	Mali
Closed borders presenting barriers to migration routes, restricting migration for labour. Criminalisation of economic migration.	NOT ADDRESSED	
PEACE AND SECURITY		
SAFETY		
Insecurity perpetuated by tribes co-opting violent extremist groups for protection from rival tribal groups or from the (perceived) threat from security forces.[9] Certain areas, border areas in particular, marked by terrorist activity.	Conducting interviews with a vulnerable group (Fulanis) on their perceptions of security, conflict analysis training, and peace-building initiatives. Carrying out research studies. Promoting social cohesion.	Mali, Tunisia

ACCOUNTABILITY OF SECURITY FORCES

State of emergency with extended discretionary powers of the security and defence forces. Inexperienced, young, ill-prepared or ill-trained solders. Certain ethnic groups (Fulani) poorly represented within the forces and suffering the consequences of this situation. Crimes committed or perceived to be committed by security forces with impunity, including: ill-treatment, abusive and sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, extortion, and extrajudicial killings.[8] Protracted abuse of women giving rise to a desire for revenge to redeems women's honour.	NOT ADDRESSED

TRANSPARENCY OF SECURITY FORCES

Perceived complicity between the army and ethnic militias. Defence forces poorly communicating their mandate to the local population, resulting in local population's hostility. Foreign armed forces inadequately communicating with the communities or the local forces, feeding rumours, suspicions and misunderstandings. Violent extremist groups benefitting from this situation by spreading propaganda to turn local population against the foreign contingents. Citizens not providing information on suspicious activity or persons to security forces.	Offering training and support to eco-guardians to encourage them to observe procedures for communicating with local security forces on suspicious activity or persons (poachers or otherwise). Broadcasting radio programmes promoting collaboration between refugees, and defence and security forces.	Mali, Mauritania

TABLE FOOTNOTES

1   A number of projects reported, and continued to report, grievances falling under different categories. However, they frequently addressed only one or very few of them. As such, the reported grievances, related for instance to inclusive governance, are valid for more than one country, but have only been directly addressed in Libya, using the described intervention logic.

2   The situation can make institutions weak, leaving space for trafficking and other types of criminal behaviour, which in turn gives rise to corruption and bad governance, undermining the functioning of the administration. The leads to a negative feedback loop.

3   According to the research conducted by the International Alert, in the hierarchical societies of the central Sahel, the line between youth and adulthood is determined, apart from the numerical threshold, by an individual's social, marital and occupational status. Sahelian anthropology refers to the concept of 'social minors' (cadets sociaux) to describe all those whose status attracts low levels of recognition. Source: Raineri Luca, If Victims Become Perpetrators, Factors contributing to vulnerability and resilience to violent extremism in the central Sahel, June 2018, available at https://www.international-alert.org/publications/if-victims-become-perpetrators-violent-extremism-sahel.

4   While not directly reported, it is important to add the effect of insecurity on the schools' operations, which has resulted in the closure of more than 900 primary schools in Mali.

5   The implementing organisations reported that a rise in radical religious discourse can be observed in Sahel, especially among the youths. They suggest that the moralizing discourse of radical clerics encourages (youths') questioning of the customary and religious authorities' support for the clientelist governance system in some of the Sahelian states. Still, one of the conducted research studies shows that actors aligning themselves with a radical reading of Islam are not violent and that in fact the influence of violent extremist groups is strong in regions where institutionalized radical movements are not.

6   At times giving rise to exodus and engaging in risky attempts to emigrate to Europe.

7   While not explicitly found in the reporting, it can be deduced that insecurity is also frequently created by groups of traffickers of all kinds.

8   See also article by Corinne Dufka, West Africa director at Human Rights Watch, Burkina Faso's atrocities in the name of security will help terrorists' ranks, published by the Washington Post on 12 June 2019. Available at: (https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/06/12/burkina-fasos-atrocities-name-security-will-help-terrorists-ranks/)

CHAPTER III
CONCLUSIONS

III. 1
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

There are a few limitations that need to be considered:

- ■ The review covered 22 of 31 projects managed directly by UNICRI. Crucially, it did not include another 52 projects that have received micro-grants through two implementing organisations.

- ■ While a few of the covered projects completed their work, most of them are still ongoing at the time of writing, with another seven launched in mid-2019. As such, full project documentation is yet to be received and reviewed.

- ■ While some good practices can already be noted, analysis is still ongoing. As such, impact can only be discerned at this time.

- ■ The evaluation has been complemented with a media analysis of the projects to establish the extent to which their interventions received attention from external sources, such as media outlets or social media channels. The review has not yet considered sources other those managed by the implementing organisations, those suggested by them, and UNICRI's own media reporting observations. Moreover, the media analysis largely excluded reporting in Arabic, other than what has been reported by the organisations themselves.

These limitations are expected to be largely overcome during the final review that UNICRI will carry out in the forthcoming months.

In general terms, what can be noted is that all interventions strove, in some form, to address a **structural problem**, either compensating for a service not being offered by the state or otherwise encouraging active citizenship to push state structures to become more representative of its varied population. Overall, the projects addressed four policy areas:

1. Governance;

2. Education;

3. Economy;

4. Defence (and law enforcement).

Interviews conducted with local populations, debates, and workshops, all pointed to structural issues. In each case, the communities were dealing with more than one of these issues. For instance, tribes living in border areas between Mali and Niger, face poverty, social exclusion and security issues, which are causing constant migratory flows as people search for jobs and security. This is also true for the mountainous areas of Kasserine in Tunisia or the Gourma region spreading from Mali into Burkina Faso. In addition, the Gourma region is exposed to the environmental pressures of desertification, exacerbating vulnerability.

III. 2
GOOD PRACTICES

Irrespective of the approach, whether it was vocational training, workshops on cyber-crime, political debates, radio plays or culture clubs, practically all projects worked on showing the ways in which structural deficiencies could be overcome. However, one can observe one **main difference** in particular in the approach applied by local association compared to the approach of international organisations. Both worked with the same social groups, in the same areas, be it urban or rural, and held the same types of events. However, the local organisations have naturally incorporated the most prevailing cultural element in these communities in their approach: **religion**.

With this in mind, the main qualitative difference between the two approaches becomes obvious:

CASE 1	CASE 2
Both international organisations and local civil society associations would hold conflict analysis training course.	Both international organisations and local civil society associations worked on encouraging active citizenship through teaching civic values and awareness of constitutional provisions.
The local associations would include in their delivery reflections of and references to Islamic teachings.	The local associations would always connect these values with those expressed in Qur'an and hadiths.

This approach reflected the central position of religion, and religious leaders, in the lives of these regions' marginalized communities, where mosques are both visited for, at least, Friday prayer, and serve as public spaces for community gatherings, and where imams serve numerous roles - as preachers, community educators and news sources.

If, as has been shown by numerous research studies, violent groups recruit using a mixture of push and pull factors, all having to do with the above grievances and promises of self-worth, recognition and inclusion, they are doing so by also invoking the language and the cultural code of Islam, which are close to the hearts and minds of local youths and act as a societal glue in many of these very diverse communities.

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"

The local organisations have naturally incorporated the most prevailing cultural element in these communities in their approach: religion.

"

STRUCTURAL GRIEVANCES	+	COMMUNICATION CODE OF RELIGION

PICTURE 1

Manual promoting peace, non-violence and citizenship read by Koranic school students in Niger.

PICTURE 2

Religious discourse and democratic culture workshop in Tunisia

The local associations used the same approach for the opposite effect. They have done so without providing any specific elaborations in their reports and work plans. Only by reviewing documents used in their events, such as material used during training courses, remedial teachings and workshops, or messages broadcast during sports events or radio programmes, can one note the use of religiously inspired references. This could be interpreted as a consequence of a relatively limited structure of standard project management documents, which are generally influenced by more secular, Western culture.

In the hypothetical opposite situation, both local and international organisations would make no (observable) references to religious ideology at any point in their work: not in their selection of stakeholders, types of activities, locations or in their material. Such a situation would imply that religious ideology either has minimal importance or is indeed irrelevant for making local communities more resilient to violent extremist groups' propaganda and recruitment strategy. This leaves the projects to address solely the political demands and vulnerabilities created by structural deficiencies elaborated in the table in Chapter II.5.

Instead, local implementing organisations across the two regions of Maghreb and Sahel adopted an approach that recognises the importance of and demonstrates deep respect for the culture embedded in Islamic world-view by incorporating Islamic values and teachings into their counter-radicalization efforts. Interestingly, even in cases where international organisations provided local youth with training grounded in universal values of respect for human rights and gender equality, and empowered them to devise and carry out peace-building activities, these youth leaders organised activities that either involved religious leaders as powerful local influencers, or relied upon the values of Islam with which they have been raised.

III.3
SUCCESS STORIES

A few organisations have succeeded in their advocacy efforts and have, while working with communities, entered into formal agreements with governmental agencies. Such agreements are expected, although not guaranteed, to expand and perpetuate the progress made. For example:

LIBYA	A local organisation signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education to incorporate the project-produced manual on active citizenship into the elementary school curriculum.
NIGER	A manual for Qur'anic school teachers on Islamic arguments promoting peace, non-violence and civic values has been produced with 2,000 copies distributed to schools and used as part of the curriculum. The teachers in these schools had previously not used any particular textbook for the instruction. Teachers from schools not included in the project asked to receive the manual.
TUNISIA	A local organisation engaging imams in discussions on constitutional provisions and women's rights has received recognition from a number of key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry signed a partnership agreement with the organisation in February 2018 to continue working on imams' education.
MAURITANIA	Two local organisations received a note from the Ministry of Islamic Affairs acknowledging their efforts in training young people from rural areas on issues of tolerance.

A number of other projects demonstrated that the values disseminated have been adopted by the participating youths, women, imams, etc. and made their own. These projects publicly addressed issues considered off-limits, offered novel approaches to dealing with sensitive issues, sparked reflections on previously unconsidered topics, or connected issues that before seemed unrelated.

For example:

■ 75 young men and women from nine cities across Tunisia have come together and produced three street theatre plays. They have toured the country, performing the plays in the public spaces and attracting diverse audiences. The plays focus on radicalisation, the joining of violent extremist groups and the position of women in society. They were followed by public discussions, which continued on the social media platforms engaging an even wider group of youth. The feedback from the youth who have participated in the play production suggests that the approach to treating these topics from the starting point of universal values and Tunisian culture was very effective, inspiring them to continue with civic engagement in their communities.

■ Students of a high school from Guercif, a town in the north-west of Morocco, have staged a theatre play based on a real story about a young Moroccan from a wealthy family who was radicalised via social media over a period of 21 days. Drawing attention to the ease with which the young can fall victims to the messages of radicalisation, the play has won a theatre competition of the Guercif province in February 2018, qualifying for the regional competition in Oujda. While the play has not entered the national competition, the play's director, a high school teacher who had attended training through the UNICRI pilot project, has decided to stage the play with other classes in his school and continue refining it. The plan is to organise a tour in the province of Guercif, and, this time, to present the play in Arabic.

■ In the Gourma region of Mali, grounds have been created for the precarious long-term cohabitation of people and elephants. The pastures used by elephants have been safeguarded, with livelihoods of the tribes of the area ensured through vocational training in eco-guardianship. Thanks to the training, eco-guardians have started patrolling the natural reserve, building breaks against bush fire and reporting to state rangers on suspected activity related to elephant poaching and trafficking. The local communities have agreed upon a charter on using the shared space, keeping the inter-communal tensions over the use of resources at bay. None of the trained eco-guardians have been reported leaving their job and joining extremist groups that are present in the same area.

III.4
TRIALS AND ERRORS

The identification of good practices and success stories was made possible through comparisons across the projects looking at: the type of chosen interventions, the frequency at which they brought together members of a community or communities, the roles assigned to community members, the extent to which such interventions included diverse members of a community, the size of those encounters, whether any efforts were made to include governmental service providers, and the outcome of those efforts. The comparisons allowed UNICRI to also understand the instances where efforts did not lead to any particular or lasting outcome, at least within the lifetime of the project, and identify elements which led to such an outcome. For example:

■ Engaging governmental agencies and their representatives in their official capacities requires complying with time-consuming procedures. One project relied on a government ministry to authorise partnerships with youth agencies working at the community level. The process took nearly a year to complete, during which the project was effectively on hold. The project required the participation of these local youth agencies as they were among the only sustainable presence within the local communities mandated and paid to work with youth. Helping them reinvigorate and improve their engagement with youth in the targeted, isolated communities would mean a difference between youth having a safe place to organise after-school activities and engage with each other in meaningful ways, or else having no place to go. The substantial, yet reasonably foreseeable, delay led the project to take short-cuts in its implementation, undermining its long-term strategy.

■ Understandably, communities that are starved of resources and opportunities for meaningful engagement of their youth have a myriad of issues requiring attention, all of which are of seemingly equal importance. Without a proper initial stakeholder and conflict analysis, it may be frustratingly difficult to decide which single issue to address through a project of limited duration and funding, or, for projects trying to address more than one issue, to which particular issue to give prominence. One project responded to such a challenge by organising an impressive number of diverse activities in an effort to engage with different segments of targeted communities. These included the production of a guidebook on peace education; debates with journalists, university students, women, imams, and the general population; remedial teaching for elementary school kids; vocational training for older school kids; training events:

concerts; and ecological campaign days. The topics were mixed and often broad, covering sanitation, hygiene, journalism, education, sport and music. All of the topics and activities were selected as the most relevant for enhancing resilience in the poor and isolated areas at risk. However, the relatively short time-span of the project did not allow for relationships established during these activities to be consolidated or strengthened. The sheer ambition left the activities neither well-connected nor structured enough to create stable partnerships between municipal authorities, imams, women, or youth.

■ Some projects demonstrated internal inconsistencies. While the importance of involving women and giving them a meaningful role within the implementation was understood, and excellent indicators to demonstrate achievement of desired results were developed, some projects failed to capitalise on these women's newly-imparted skills and confidence. One project enabled female preachers to become trainers for imams, grounding their training on constitutionally-guaranteed rights. However, these female trainers were then not engaged in courses on these very topics that were offered by the project to imams.

■ Religion, and Islamic teachings in particular, were confirmed to be one element present in all activities carried out by the local implementing organisations. They recognised its importance in the everyday lives of communities they were trying to support and the needs that religion sought to address. One project pressed this further by putting an even greater emphasis on religion. Responding to a request from the youth with whom it worked, the project scheduled a debate in one local community on a topic touching on the organisation of religious life and structures. However, due to its contentious nature, the local authorities cancelled the debate. The resulting drop in enthusiasm among the participating youth led a few to abandon the project.

Needless to say, nearly all projects encountered challenges of some kind. The ones elaborated here are those that put a significant strain on a project or compromised its strategy. Yet, these particular challenges, time-consuming bureaucratic hurdles, overcommitting to an unrealistically long list of goals, internal inconsistencies in project execution, and engaging with contentious topics without authorities' consent, are of a nature that could have reasonably been expected to compromise any project.

III.5
RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Looking into the causes of a community's vulnerabilities inevitably requires us to look into the past. For example, present land disputes raise the questions of who originally owned the area, be it herders or farmers, which strongman usurped those rights through, perhaps, unfair appropriation, how were the new ownership rights upheld and whether the original land distribution was fair at all. Such an analysis would surely cover tribal relations, applied mechanisms of justice, environmental degradation, migratory and wider geopolitical pressures.

What we have learned through the process of monitoring the implementation of different projects across nine countries is that the successful mechanisms for reinforcing community resilience need to be future-oriented. Certainly, they need to incorporate a thorough conflict and stakeholder analysis to avoid deepening existing grievances and injustices. They also need to carry out a context analysis to ensure that the intervention follows the logic of local communities' values and practices, as well as to understand the environment in which the communities operate. However, from this starting point, they then need to proceed with creating an environment in which the communities themselves can discuss and agree upon the future they want to be part of.

Through an analysis of the above-discussed elements, UNICRI can draw some preliminary conclusions regarding the type of interventions that are most likely to be effective in strengthening the resilience of a community.

WHAT SHOULD BEING DONE?	WHERE SHOULD IT BE DONE?	HOW SHOULD IT BE DONE?	WHO SHOULD BE DOING IT?	DOES ANYBODY NEED TO KNOW?
TOPICS	**AREAS OF INTERVENTION**	**APPROACH**	**ORGANISATION**	**VISIBILITY**
STRUCTURAL DEFICIENCIES Programmes address issues that render certain groups of population (particularly) marginalised and vulnerable	**UNDER PRESSURE** Areas where basic state services are not provided, have suffered distortions, or cannot meet the expressed community demand	**PARTICIPATORY** The issues addressed by a programme are defined by the community through a participatory approach	**TRUST** Programmes are led by people that have earned the trust of the community over years of advocating for the issue	**GENERAL POPULATION** Programmes instil hope that change is possible, that efforts to reduce vulnerability are being made
PERCEIVED DEFICIENCIES Programmes address issues that are perceived by marginalised members of the community as unjust	**REMOTE** Areas that are difficult to reach and, as such, un- or underserved by basic state service	**CODE THAT RESONATES** The programmes make clear references to cultural specificities and, in particular, to the chief ingredient of communities' lives: Islamic teachings	**STRONG PERSONAL INVESTMENT** Programmes are led by people that, should it fail, put personal reputation at risk	**YOUTH** Programmes bring reassurances to youth that there are viable alternatives to joining violent extremist groups
		INVESTMENT OF TIME Programmes create opportunities to engage with the communities on frequent occasions over a longer period of time, building their confidence and engagement	**SOCIAL CAPITAL** Programme is led by organisations that are community-based or rely on persons with great social capital	**COMMUNITY** By involving women, programmes broadcast their importance to the community, improving their social status
		CRITICAL THINKING Programmes develop cognitive skills to recognise manipulation and differentiate facts from opinions, rendering individual members of the community more resilient		**WOMEN** By engaging women, programmes empower them to communicate messages of peace, tolerance and alternatives within their household

SUBSTANTIVE: Align the approach with the declared target group

- **PEERS INFLUENCE PEERS:** Give youth a vision for their future and a world that is wider than their village. Engage them in debates based on values and principles of dignity, self-worth, recognition, emancipation, and empowerment. If youths are the declared target group, then youth-run organisations should be supported and funded, not discriminated against based on their age and perceived lack of credibility.

- **WOMEN FOR WOMEN:** Women (associations) are in the best position to reach women in these regions. In certain societies, such as those involved in projects in Tunisia, young people may at first shun opportunities to work with women. The projects have frequently relied upon women as powerful players in peace initiatives. While perhaps a somewhat controversial issue for the project initially, neglecting to engage women is *de facto* neglecting to engage half of the targeted population group.

- **COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM BY NOT COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**: Acknowledge that dealing with violent extremism goes beyond projects addressing the issues of security and ideology. Some of the most effective interventions countering violent extremism do not specifically deal with violent extremism *per se*. On the contrary, they deal with culture, education, employment, creating and strengthening social networks. The kind of support needed to make a person or community more resilient to radicalisation and violent extremism depends on a combination of factors whose number and importance are dictated by the specificities of the context.

SUBSTANTIVE: For better or worse, the community knows

- **KEEP THE MOMENTUM:** Recognise and use foreign assistance projects for what they are - an opportunity for change with sudden influx of human and financial resources, technical know-how and reinvigorated energy. The community knows best its problems and workable solutions. Projects work best when they connect that local knowledge to availability of means and tools. Projects can also encourage communities to establish necessary, though often uncomfortable, relationships across ethnic, religious or social divides, as well as motivate communities to overcome the general inertia of the status quo,

- **LOCAL OWNERSHIP:** Engage local staff who enjoy the trust of the local community, with the cultural awareness and high drive to carry out activities. International staff can be involved as supervisors, mentors, or first-time trainers, that is, as facilitators for transferring technical know-how and experience. Their role, however, needs to be limited to nearly invisible. Visible work is best done by people from the communities themselves. This will ensure that once the project is over, the local community can continue to benefit from the relationships established during its execution. Responsibility in execution most easily translates into ownership post-execution.

- **EMPOWERING LOCAL ACTORS**: Identify potential champions of the desired change and their level of influence. The change is local and can only be brought about by the members of the communities. It is more effective to ensure that local role models are participating and contributing to the projects at their level of authority. While not all actors can be directly involved in the execution, they all need to be aware of the process and a role that is suitably assigned to each of them.

METHODOLOGICAL: Walk the talk

- **SUBTLE ART OF INVOLVING WOMEN:** It is important to understand the often numerous and frustrating obstacles faced by women in joining project activities. Identifying the right local partners to facilitate their participation is one way of sending women the right message. Organising promotional events during which the type of activities and their purpose is explained to their families and wider social networks can help create the trust to enable their participation.

- **ACHIEVEING GENDER PARITY**: Keep gender (and age) disaggregated data. Participation of a great number of women in project activities can be reassuring, suggesting that a project is gender-balanced. However, keeping the data would help confirm or dispel this perception:

    (a) What is the role of women as project beneficiaries? Are they members of audience and passive recipients, or active, involved participants of activities who contribute ideas and proposals?

    (b) What is the percentage of women participating in the project compared to that of men?

    (c) Are there any women among the implementing organisation's staff members?

    (d) What is the role of women within the implementing organisation? How many are in decision-making and operational positions, such as project managers and project officers, as opposed to supporting roles of assistants and accountants? [18]

- **CONDITIONAL ASSISTANCE:** Reward incremental steps in the right direction and demonstrations of genuine advancements with continuing financial assistance. While it is fine to engage organisations that have no female members among their staff, consideration should also be given to conditioning continued assistance upon the inclusion of female staff members. In other words, if principles and values are defined and agreed on from the outset, the local organisation should be incentivised to act according to those principles and values.

- **FEEDBACK LOOP FOR GROWTH:** Offer technical capacity-building to actors showing potential but with limited resources and perhaps lacking specific project management skills. It is time-consuming to mentor local partners in, for instance, report writing or developing logical frameworks. Yet, having gone through the process of selecting a trusted partner that shares the same values and principles, and who will stay in the area of intervention beyond the project closure to continue working on the issues, the additional effort of building project management capacity is a worthwhile investment. Making time for positive feedback loops during implementation enhances the long-term effectiveness of projects and ensures that local partners can replicate the approach in their future activities.

- **TROUBLE WITH IMAGE, TROUBLE WITH LOCATION**: Ensure that location selected for events is congruent with the intended audience or, to the very least, does not adversely affect attendance. Some projects reported difficulties encouraging adolescent youths to attend events held in elementary schools or nurseries. In some cases, adolescent youth did not feel comfortable participating in activities with younger children.

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18 As is also argued by Lisa Schirch in her article on Eleven African innovations in peacebuilding, "too often women's peace networks have gone unrecognized, creating a perception that there is an absence of women's leadership for peace. Article is available here: https://lisaschirch.wordpress.com/2019/04/17/11-african-innovations-in-peacebuilding/

> "It was very hard for me to live and work with girls who do not wear a hijab, girls who dance, young men I do not know. Being a girl who wears a hijab and is quite conservative, it was a challenge for me to accept these differences. I have changed my attitude and a way of thinking thanks to the project, I have become more open-minded, I accept differences, I have become very tolerant."
>
> A female participant from Tunisia

EVALUATION: Fight the impression of evaluators as "a wolf in sheep's clothing"

- **AUTOMATE COMPARABLE DATA COLLECTION (identikit):** As the project is based on piloting diverse initiatives in diverse areas, it has proven important to develop a tool for collecting data that can enable the easy management and comparison across initiatives. The categories of data to be collected need be defined by and aligned with the project's overall objectives and values. For instance, more granular monitoring of data on youth and women beneficiaries as part of ensuring their participation has been one of the pilot project's stated goals. While at the level of a single project it might be obvious that local organisations are doing their best to engage the right type of audience, only by comparing data across projects, regions and countries could right conclusions be drawn and recommendations formulated.

- **NOT SO EPHEMERAL CHANGE OF VIEWS:** Questionnaires can be a very powerful tool to explore critical thinking skills, the ability to discern facts from fiction, and the participants' perception of the effectiveness of violent extremist groups in advocating for a desired societal change. While one should recognise that the views of one individual person can be ephemeral, it is crucial to create conditions to be able to observe to what extent the aggregate force of projects has been able to change a multitude of views and perceptions on critical topics. Without even the most modest tool for detecting changes in perceptions and observing the direction of these changes, the projects remain in the dark about the true impact of their efforts.

- **REVERE RESULTS NOT ACTIVITIES:** Indicators measuring whether the projects are headed in the right direction and achieving their stated goals are the only management tool with some level of credibility. If set well, they can be crucial in guiding implementation. There is a need to make indicators the topic of discussion in monitoring and evaluation meetings. They are to be agreed upon from the start and then consistently reported on. While the completion of activities is much easier to track, the gathering and analysing of performance indicators can make a difference: satisfaction of participants, the confidence they have gained, the extent of their ability to replicate what they have learned through the process is more reassuring than the fact that they have attended a certain number of training events.
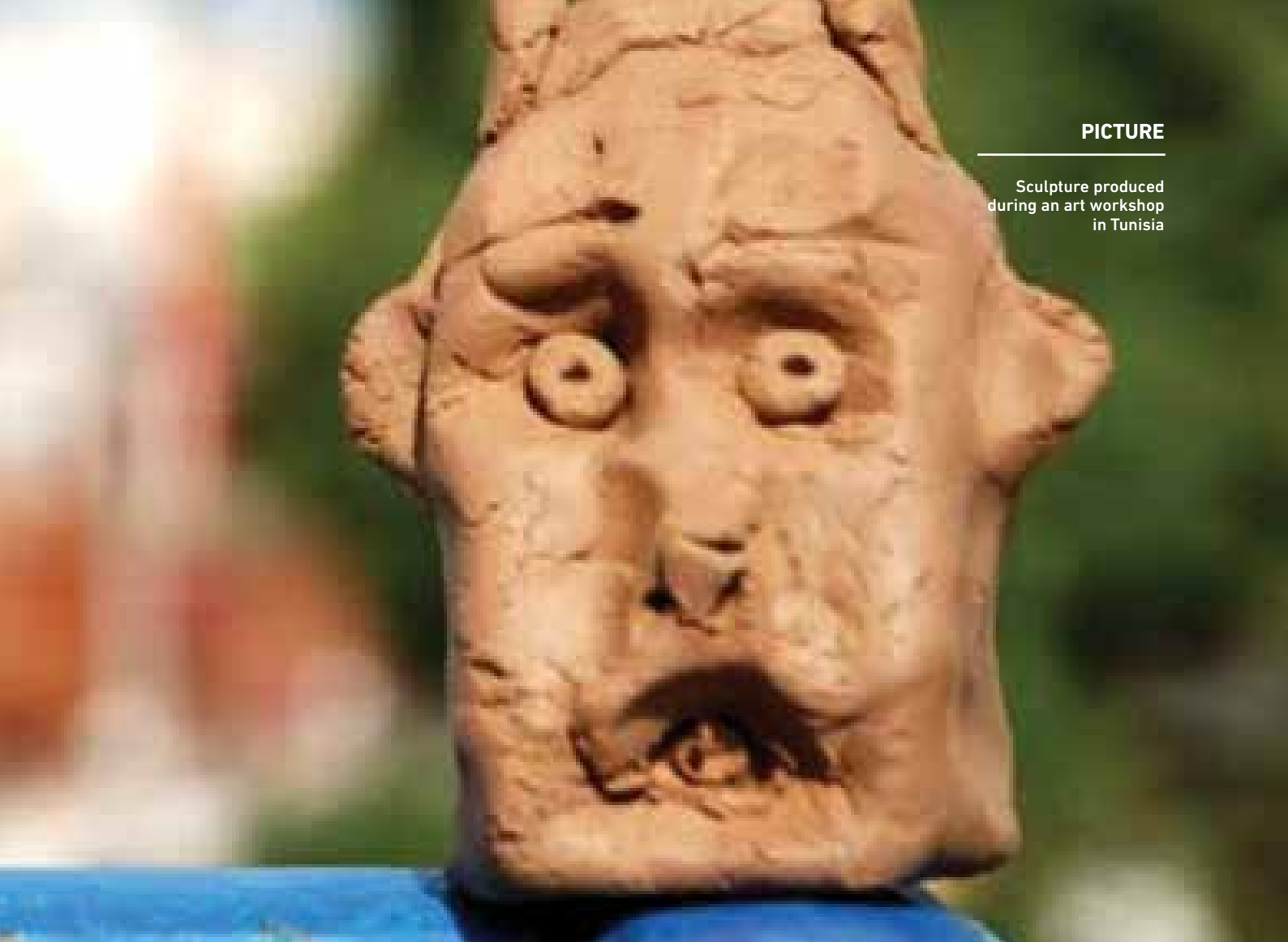
COMMUNICATION: The power of the positive message

■ **THE TROUBLE WITH VISIBILITY:** Violent extremist groups have proven to be well-versed in using social media to advocate for their cause and to (pre)recruit members. The communication efforts to counter these groups need to be just as effective. While issues are sensitive and need to be handled with care, even the most conservative projects have, with advancing implementation, embraced the need for communicating positive messages of peaceful cohabitation and non-violent conflict resolution. All projects should set clear, however minimal, communication targets for the designated audience of relevance from the outset.

■ **THE POWER OF MENTORING, AGAIN:** On average, local grass-roots associations would benefit greatly from mentoring to help them better report and communicate results. The effective reporting to funders and the wider, local public can make the difference between trust gained or trust lost, allowing these community-led organisations, with their zeal and commitment, to continue working effectively for the benefit of all.

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