Hedayah

COUNTER-NARRATIVES FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE) IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

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INTRODUCTION[1]

Terrorism and violent extremism have been threats to South East Asia for decades, with local and international terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda historically establishing networks aligned with local conflicts. For example, Al-Qaeda has established connections with the *Abu Sayyaf Group* (ASG) in the Philippines; *Lashkar Jundullah* in Indonesia; *Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia* (KMM) in Malaysia; and *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The terrorist attack in Jakarta in January 2016 has served as a reminder that terrorism in South East Asia is still a current and ongoing threat. Moreover, it revealed that *ad-Dawla Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa as-Sham* (*Daesh* or Islamic State of Iraq and as-Sham/ISIS) is utilizing a similar model as Al-Qaeda has historically: establishing international networks and recruiting local actors in South East Asia to carry out their aims and objectives.

As part of a comprehensive counter-terrorism (CT) strategy against violent extremism and terrorism in South East Asia, governments are looking at preventive measures, known as "countering violent extremism" or CVE. One element of CVE includes developing effective communications strategies and counter-narratives against violent extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda, *Daesh* and their affiliates.

In order to identify existing counter-narratives relevant to the region, Hedayah[2] and the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) hosted an expert workshop on "South East Asia Collection of Counter-Narratives for Countering Violent Extremism" in Semarang, Indonesia from 21-23 March 2016. The workshop invited twenty practitioners, academics and government experts, including representatives from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The aim of the Workshop was to collect and collate existing counter-narratives for the region, share good practice, and identify gaps for future counter-narrative development. The following report captures the main discussions, reflections and solutions proposed by the experts that attended the workshop.

The views in this report are not necessarily representative of Hedayah, JCLEC or the Australian Attorney General's Department and are based on the assessment of what type of counter-narratives might be effective in the specific context of South East Asia.

The workshop in Semarang was part of a broader project to develop a Compendium of counter-narratives for the South East Asia region, which was one of the recommended outcomes of the regional Sydney CVE Summit held in June 2015, a follow-up to the White House CVE Summit in February 2015.[3] The Compendium will be a revisable and updatable point-in-time document that explains existing good practice approaches to counter-messaging informed by key bodies of research; reflects diverse regional practices; includes multiple best practice case studies of effective counter-narrative campaigns drawn predominantly from the region (and abroad); includes analysis of the key reasons for success; includes a list of commonly used terrorist narratives and corresponding counter-narratives; and includes links to online material (such as reference to video/audio files). The Compendium and the annex of counter-narratives referenced in the Compendium will be made available and accessible through Hedayah's existing Counter-Narrative Library through a link on Hedayah's website.[4]

It should be noted that for the purposes of the workshop and subsequently this report, the term "counter-narrative" refers generally to the responses to terrorist claims or narratives. It can include positive, alternative narratives that reinforce values contrary to violent extremism, as well as the more targeted claims that dispute facts, religious arguments or ideological arguments. For a more nuanced discussion of the different types of counter-narratives, see the recent report by Hedayah and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), the Hague.[5]

[1] The author would like to thank Cemil Kilinc and Lilah El Sayed for their contributions to this report, as well as the experts from the workshop for their edits.

[2] Hedayah is the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, an international, independent, apolitical and non-ideological "think-and-do tank" with the aim to be a hub for preventing and countering violent extremism experts, expertise, good practice and information-sharing. For more see www.hedayah.ae.

[3] The Compendium and workshop are sponsored and supported by the Australian Government's Attorney General's Department as part of their commitment to the outcomes of the Sydney CVE Summit.

[4] For access to Hedayah's Counter-Narrative Library, please contact cnlibrary.admin@hedayah.ae.

[5] Hedayah and ICCT, *Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism*, September 2014, http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/developing-effective-counter-narrative-frameworks-for-countering-violent-extremism.pdf, 2.

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

During the discussions, participants were asked to identify reasons why individuals follow down the path of radicalization and recruitment with respect to localized militant conflicts, transnational and local Al-Qaeda networks, as well as affiliation with *Daesh*. The results are captured in the below chart:

PUSH FACTORS	PULL FACTORS
Some of the main "push" factors, or socio-economic factors and general grievances include: • Islamophobia • Hate speech • Lack of democratization • Lack of education and critical thinking • Ethnic and religious marginalization and intolerance • Poverty • Military operations by Western governments in Afghanistan and Iraq • Feelings of victimhood and secondary trauma related to suffering of Muslims outside the region (Palestinians, refugees from Syria) • Poor justice system • Violence in the community	Some of the main "pull" factors, or psycho-social, individualized emotional factors include: • Political identity • Cultural and religious identity • Influence of media • Feelings of victimhood • Monetary incentives • Idealization of former fighters from Afghanistan and other conflicts • Idea of achieving a "pure Islam" • Sense of adventure • Feelings of power • Opportunity of transformation and change for their communities

THREATS AND CHALLENGES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

During the workshop, participants noted a number of threats both to individual countries and to the region as a whole. These threats can be grouped into three broad categories:

1. the radicalization, recruitment and travel of individuals to Iraq and Syria to join groups such as *Daesh* and Al-Qaeda, and the return of these individuals to carry out attacks in South East Asia;[6]

2. the radicalization of individuals inspired by international conflicts and carrying out lone actor or networked attacks locally; and

3. the association of global violent extremist ideology with localized, national and cross-regional conflicts and the re-energization of these local networks with respect to their allegiance to *Daesh* or Al-Qaeda affiliates.

[6] A December 2015 study by Soufan Group estimates that around 1150 foreign fighters have traveled from South East Asia (including Australia and New Zealand) to Iraq and Syria. Officially, individuals have traveled from Australia (150-200), Indonesia (700), Malaysia (100), New Zealand (5-10), Philippines (100) and Singapore (2). See The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An updated assessment of the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq*, (New York: The Soufan Group, 2015), retrieved from http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

Particularly for South East Asia, transnational terrorist groups and corresponding narratives seek to exploit regional instability and conflict, irrespective of the roots of that instability (e.g. separatist movements, local grievances and/or religiously inspired terrorism). This also includes ethnic divisions that may overlap with sectarian conflicts or divisions between Muslim and non-Muslim populations that allow violent extremists narratives to take advantage of the "us versus them" rhetoric.

At the same time, there is a growing rift between *Daesh* and Al-Qaeda's affiliates in Syria and Iraq, and this means there are also competing influences of power between Al-Qaeda and *Daesh* in South East Asia. Greater divisions and cleavages across the broader violent extremist movements provide more variations and opportunities for radicalization and violence. On the other hand, there are also advantages to these cleavages for developing counter-narratives. Competing ideas from terrorist organizations open up additional entry points for debate, dialogue and engagement with those that are most vulnerable, and fighting between terrorist groups reveals weaknesses that can be exploited.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTER-NARRATIVE WORK IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

Based on the discussions and reflections at the workshop, a number of key recommendations emerged of significant relevance to developing counter-narratives in the context of South East Asia. The below sections outline the key recommendations as well as provide specific examples of local counter-narratives coming from the region.

1. COUNTER-NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL.

There are multiple types and levels of target audiences for different stages down the path of radicalization that range from the general public to sympathizers to vulnerable individuals. Some of the counter-narratives specifically persuasive for South East Asia include:

PEACE NARRATIVES, INTER-FAITH & INTER-ETHNIC NARRATIVES

These counter- and alternative narratives encourage general support for peace and non-violence as well as tolerance between ethnicities and religions. Because South East Asia is particularly diverse in terms of religious and ethnic identity, these sorts of narratives are especially applicable to the region.

AUSTRALIA:

All Together Now, an Australian national charity dedicated to erasing all forms of racism in Australia, created an advertising campaign and hashtag to raise awareness of racism and condemn hate speech. The #EraseRacism campaign created a short animation video to encourage people to speak up if they witnessed racism. This video was distributed across social media channels as well as on large public screens.

The All Together Now Facebook Page can be accessed here: https://www.facebook.com/alltogethernow.org.au

THAILAND:

The movie *Latitude 6* was filmed in southern Thailand as a love story—highlighting both the differences and similarities between the Muslim minorities in the south and Thai society and values in the north. The movie aims to promote tolerance between religious groups as well as provide more accurate information about the insurgency and peace process occurring there.

An English subtitled trailer for *Latitude 6* can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q40N0uxVvV0

RELIGIOUS AND IDEOLOGICAL COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives refute and dismantle the religious and ideological elements of the violent extremist narratives, utilizing religious texts and religious leaders to refute religious claims.

REGIONAL:

Three main religious and ideological arguments were raised by participants that had particular relevance for South East Asia. Participants agreed that the following arguments should be the main focus of religious and ideological counter-narratives, drawing on work by religious scholars from the region:

1. The concept of jihad as necessarily associated with violence, *fard al-ayn*.
2. The concept of *al-wala wa'l-bara*, which polarizes the world between Muslims and non-Muslims.
3. The concept of the "Islamic State" (caliphate) as a political concept that should be achieved through violence.

Participants suggested that alternatives to these concepts can be argued based on Islamic scholarship. For example:

1. Reinforcing the concept of jihad as an internal struggle ("greater jihad" *al-jihad al-akbar*), not a physical or violent one.
2. Emphasizing that Islam is inclusive of all religions and ethnicities.

ISLAM AS PEACEFUL AND NON-VIOLENT

More specific than "peace" narratives, this type of narrative reinforces the positive and peaceful aspects of Islam that provide an alternative to the violent extremist narratives.

INDONESIA:

One example of an institution to generally promote Islam as a socio-religious culture in Indonesia is Wahid Institute. The organization was established to advance the development of a tolerant, multicultural, society in Indonesia, improving the welfare of the poor, building democracy and fundamental justice, and expanding the values of peace and non-violence in Indonesia and throughout the world.

The Wahid Institute promotes a peaceful and plural Islam.
Wahid Institute can be accessed here: http://wahidinstitute.org/

AUSTRALIA:

The Muslim Community Radio 2MFM is a multicultural and multilingual Islamic radio station (24-hour broadcast) that aims to positively influence Muslim attitudes, increase community awareness and understanding, and guide and encourage youth to project moderate forms of Islam. In 2015, 2MFM implemented the "Together, Standing against Extremism and Racism" campaign. It provided engaging and comprehensive media coverage to the greater Sydney Muslim community about the introduction of Australia's new anti-terror laws, educating them about the risks of extremism and reassuring the Muslim community on how to deal with the repercussions of terror related incidents.

FACTUAL COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives underscore the incorrect components of violent extremist narratives, reinforcing factual evidence.

PHILIPPINES

In a 2015 recruitment video in Tagalog, a video message from *Jund al-Khilafah in the Philippines*, "Training Camp,"[7] it was stated that the government of the Philippines was prohibiting Muslims from practicing their true religion by stopping women from wearing the *niqab* and men from growing their beards. Factual arguments and statements can easily refute this, as there is not a prohibition of these forms of religious identity in the Philippines.

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNTER-NARRATIVES

These counter-narratives mainly address the "pull" factors—the emotional or psychological incentives that an individual may feel are beneficial by joining a violent extremist organization.

INDONESIA

Arguments by former terrorists/ fighters may be effective in countering the emotional and psychological appeal, specifically for those that join to address real or perceived grievances, to achieve a "greater good," or to become a "hero." This interview with a former Daesh member from Indonesia undermines the credibility of Daesh by highlighting the corruption within the group.

http://m.news.viva.co.id/video/read/40891-ini-pengakuan-anggota-isis-selama-di-suriah

2. COUNTER-NARRATIVES SHOULD BE TAILORED TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT, CULTURE AND TARGET AUDIENCE, AND THE VARIANCE OF THIS LOCAL CONTEXT IS ESPECIALLY NUANCED IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

As with any CVE work, the counter-narratives may vary between countries, regions, cities and even villages. One participant noted that local problems were increasingly becoming more relevant for extremist and terrorist groups in Indonesia, for example.[8] Finding solutions to local conflicts at a town or village level may help reduce the overall risk of violent extremists being able to influence a particular community.

Moreover, recent radicalization in South East Asia is also reflective of historical conflicts and past networks of violent extremists. For example, while the threat of JI has mostly been eliminated, one of the main political goals of the organization was to form a *Dawla Islamiyah* (regional Islamic caliphate). In this regard, individuals and networks previously affiliated with JI may be particularly persuaded by the political aspirations of *Daesh* if they see the formation of their *Khilafa* (Caliphate) as a legitimate claim. This is the case, for example, with the Indonesian group Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), led by the infamous Santoso, who pledged allegiance to Daesh in July 2014.[9] The group itself claims to hold a small amount of territory in Poso, the historical location of conflict between Indonesian authorities and local JI affiliates. The territorial claim of MIT in Poso and pledge of allegiance suggests that Santoso seeks an official declaration by *Daesh* of a South East Asian *wilayat* (province) in Indonesia, although *Daesh* has yet to establish a province there officially.

Radicalization in South East Asia is also related to the broader political culture of the countries (and how that resonates locally), as well as international and transnational relations, policies and conflicts. For example, according to interviews with former JI members in Indonesian prisons, a common justification for the use of violence was the suffering of Muslims in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as in Bosnia, Afghanistan and the Philippines.[10] Participants agreed that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is a common topic and source of frustration among the general Indonesian population. This means that counter-narratives should at some level address the grievances of national and international politics and conflicts and provide alternative solutions or actions to violence.

[7] See "Training Camp" video: http://jihadology.net/2015/12/20/new-video-message-from-jund-al-khilafah-in-the-philippines-training-camp/

[8] According to one participants' recent study of religiously intolerant groups, organizations sympathetic to terrorism, and terrorist organizations—around 65% of these groups only had their base in one province. Moreover, 55% of the funding for these organizations was obtained at a local or provincial level (as opposed to international or national). This highlights the need for preventive measures, including counter-narratives, to be focused and targeted at the localized community problems and concerns

[9] R. Sugara, R, "Santoso: The Terrorist Leader from Nowhere," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis, 6* (2014), 23–26.

[10] S. Sim, Countering Violent Extremism: Leveraging Terrorist Dropouts to Counter Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia, (Doha: Qatar International Academy for Security Studies, 2013), retrieved from http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CVE-PHASE-II-VOL.-II-Final-Feb-13.pdf.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTER-NARRATIVES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE CHALLENGES BETWEEN ADAPTING ISLAM TO LOCAL CULTURES AND CONTEXTS VERSUS FOLLOWING A FORM OF ISLAM THAT IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY INTERPRETATIONS FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD.

Participants suggested that one way to counter the appeal of groups such as *Daesh* and Al-Qaeda is to emphasize Islamic scholarship cultivated by regionally-based scholars. Participants discussed the need to shift the "center of gravity" of Islamic scholarship and identify religious leaders from within the region that are influential. For example, there was a robust discussion on the difference between being an "Indonesian Muslim" versus being a "Muslim in Indonesia." Participants suggested that South East Asians finding religious identities rooted in localized, contextualized Islam could be one way to counter the violent extremist claim of being "the only pure" form of Islam. However, it was also recognized that Islam itself has historical and religious roots embedded in the Middle East, so too much variation could result in the rejection of (for example) being an "Indonesian Muslim" as being "impure" by those that are most persuaded by violent extremism.

Participants mentioned the example of Islam Hadhari, "Civilizational Islam," that was promoted by Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia. The principles of Islam Hadhari emphasized aspects of Islam that were foundational to civilization-building: justice, peace, economic development, security, protection of human rights, freedom and independence of people, and quality of life for all citizens. Participants at the meeting suggested to draw two lessons from Islam Hadhari: 1) that it was a positive attempt to emphasize Islamic scholarship that had Malaysian roots, but 2) that it was not widely successful because it was seen too much as an "alternative" pathway and therefore somehow "impure."

COUNTER-NARRATIVE SNAPSHOT

DEVELOPING A LOCALIZED FILIPINO *KHUTBA* ("SERMON")

MESSAGE:

A *khutba* series was developed with the support of the Asia Foundation specifically to be used in the context of the Philippines where the *khutba* is not always formalized or standardized. The aim of the *khutba* series was to address some of the main concerns and challenges specifically experienced by Filipino Muslims. The *khutba* series aimed to establish a more central Filipino Muslim identity, discussing topics such as justice, education, rights for men and women, consequence of violence, and the need for peace and tolerance.

The series in Tagalog can be found here: https://issuu.com/lgspa/docs/selected-khutba-maranao

The series in English can be found here: https://issuu.com/lgspa/docs/selected-khutba-english--revised-

MESSENGER

Local religious leaders (imams)

TARGET AUDIENCE

Filipino Muslims

MEDIUM

The *khutba* (sermon) is a central tenant of worship for Muslims, and an opportunity to listen to the teachings of their imam during Friday *jumu'ah* prayer.

4. COUNTER-NARRATIVE WORK MUST BE MULTI-SECTORAL, MULTI-DIMENSIONAL AND BE DISSEMINATED ACROSS MULTIPLE PLATFORMS.

Those developing counter-narratives need advice, expertise and experience from private sector, communications, marketing, as well as practitioners, governments, academics and policymakers. Counter-narratives should also be multi-platform, multi-modal, multi-media and multi-channel to diversify the ways in which messages are disseminated—and digested—by the target audience.

For example, a significant online and social media presence in Indonesia would suggest that leveraging opportunities to spread counter-narratives on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, other types of social media accounts and websites is an effective way to reach a significant number of people. However, it was also noted that radio was widely used in Indonesia, and spreading counter-narratives on radio stations is an under-utilized resource by many civil society organizations (CSOs) promoting peace and positive Muslim identities.

Given the heavy online and social media presence of violent extremist groups in the region, it is also necessary to better evaluate within the local context both the reach and scope of the messages being disseminated by violent extremists as well as the reach and scope of the counter-narrative/messaging in the region. This includes a better assessment of how online material is also spread and transmitted in the offline space (face-to-face engagement).

Moreover, youth leaders and youth influencers (sometimes not the same) should be equipped with tools to facilitate and guide discussions to counter the narrative of violent extremists as well as to develop alternative narratives in both the online space as well as offline. In this regard, peer-to-peer message training and capacity-building is essential for ensuring messages are reaching the most vulnerable individuals through credible sources: their friends and peers.

COUNTER-NARRATIVE SNAPSHOT

***MATA TERTUTUP* ("THE BLINDFOLD")**

MESSAGE:

Mata tertutup (The Blindfold) is a movie in Bahasa Indonesian that follows three stories that grapple with Islamic identity, terrorism and hardship. It shows the consequences of terrorism, with a particular focus on the emotional components of loss and connection to family.

MESSENGER:

The first character, Rima, is a girl searching for religious identity and involved in Darul Islam (Negara Islam Indonesia, NII), one of the organizations that laid foundations for an Islamic State of Indonesia and the ideology of JI. The second character, Jabir, is recruited to become a suicide bomber for a local terrorist group, and is mainly drawn to the organization due to economic drivers. The third character, Asimah, is a mother whose daughter was abducted by Islamic violent extremist groups as she is going through a divorce.

The English-subtitled trailer (original language Bahasa ndonesian) is accessible here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfQmrhWRYOg

TARGET AUDIENCE

General public in Indonesia. The film was also produced with the intention to show in primary and secondary schools and facilitate discussions.

MEDIUM

Movie/Film

5. ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON COUNTER-NARRATIVES SHOULD CONSIDER PROVIDING PLATFORMS FOR FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSIONS ON ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE COMMUNITY.

This includes facilitating spaces that are safe for diverse views and opinions (even if these forums are not public). This might also include spaces within Universities (debating clubs, for example) for youth to discuss difficult issues.

Taboo subjects can open pathways and entry points for potential recruitment and radicalization by violent extremist groups. In this regard, religious figures and leaders in the region may be able to provide answers to difficult questions of interest to the community, especially young people. For example, local *ulema* ("scholars") can provide fatwas around family planning, reproductive health and sexuality if given appropriate platforms to do so. More importantly, *ulema* can also provide advice and counselling on these matters.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

PLATFORM FOR DISCUSSION: YOUTH NETWORK IN INDONESIA

The Gusdurian network in Indonesia brings together youth primarily in Yogykarta, Indonesia to discuss and debate religious identity as well as celebrate the diversity of young Muslims. The network is inspired by KH Abdurrahman Wahid, the fourth president of the Republic of Indonsia, and is led by his daughter, Alissa Wahid. Moreover, the network provides a platform for religious dialogue and social solidarity amongst young Muslims, and a platform for dialogue and discourse around issues which young Muslims in Indonesia find to be the most concerning.

The Gusdurian network website can be accessed here: http://www.gusdurian.net

6. FAMILY AND FAMILY TIES ARE IMPORTANT IN THE SOUTH EAST ASIA CONTEXT, AND PERSUASIVE COUNTER-NARRATIVES CAN BE DEVELOPED THROUGH FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Participants at the workshop noted that radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism are social processes. Thus, efforts to promote social cohesion can also be a strong counter-recruitment strategy for the region.

In the Indonesian and Malaysian context, participants noted that parents were especially influential over their childrens' decision-making. For example, it is a common perception that it was necessary to seek the consent and blessing of parents, especially mothers, before one could participate in jihad or martyrdom. Participants at the workshop cited a common proverb that "heaven is under the feet of the mother," indicating the power that mothers exercised particularly on their children.[11] Participants noted that parents may be able to help prevent Indonesian and Malaysian youth from traveling to Iraq or Syria by prohibiting their children from traveling or participating in martyrdom, temporarily buying time for further engagement and discourse with that individual.

Conversely, parents can also be strong advocates of children joining terrorist organizations and becoming suicide bombers in particular. One participant gave an example of a young drug addict whose mother gave her blessing and encouraged his participation in terrorism because her "child was going to die

[11] This proverb is rooted in Hadith. See example in the following source, Sunan An-Nasa'i 3104

anyway." For this mother, martyrdom, in his case, would give him a chance to redeem himself from his sins as well as provide a "pass to heaven" to others in his family.

7. IDENTIFYING CREDIBLE MESSENGERS ARE IMPORTANT FOR COUNTERING THE APPEAL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS FOR INDIVIDUALS TO JOIN VIOLENT EXTREMISM.

In the South East Asia region, participants at the workshop flagged former fighters as credible messengers, particularly in the case of Daesh defectors for being able to refute the idea that the *Khilafa* in Iraq and Syria is a "utopia." Indonesian and Malaysian participants also pointed out that narratives of former JI members have been incorporated into secondary school and university programs, as these formers were able to provide compelling reasons based on their own experiences on why violence was not an effective tool to address grievances and injustice. These formers were also seen to have the "street-credibility" that religious figures and authorities do not have, by virtue of them having fought in conflict-areas. Participants noted that former fighters are often idealized by young people, with a certain level of "heroism" attached to those that have traveled to foreign conflicts such as Afghanistan and now Iraq and Syria.

Linked to previous discussions on the relevance of family members, participants also pointed out that mothers of violent extremists or mothers of victims of terrorism have also been influential in reaching students in secondary school and university.

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

MOTHERS' SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

The Mothers School model is an initiative of the Vienna-based non-governmental organization (NGO) Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE). The premise of the Mothers School is to develop the capacity of mothers in a number of different countries to be better equipped to prevent radicalization and violent extremism in their children. SAVE works with local organizations to develop a tailor-made program that addresses community issues, including better parenting skills, communication skills, strategies for discourse with children, strategies for involvement in their children's' education, and identifying early warning signs of radicalization.

In the South East Asia context, the Mothers School model was implemented with TANOKER, a locally-based NGO that focuses on cultural traditions in Ledokombo. The model utilized local cultural traditions as an entry point for engaging with mothers in the community including weaving/handicrafts, batik and cultural festivals.

A video about the Mother School model can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90diNrGrN08

More about the program can be found here: http://www.women-without-borders.org/projects/underway/42/

8. BECAUSE SOUTH EAST ASIA IS HOME TO A NUMBER OF DIVERSE RELIGIONS, INCLUDING ISLAM, CHRISTIANITY, BUDDHISM, HINDUISM AND JUDAISM, IT WAS NOTED BY PARTICIPANTS THAT COUNTER-NARRATIVES AND MESSAGING THROUGH INTER- AND INTRA-FAITH DIALOGUE MIGHT BE PARTICULARLY PERSUASIVE AT REFUTING VIOLENT EXTREMIST ARGUMENTS THAT POLARIZE COMMUNITIES.

Participants emphasized the need for religious leaders to encourage dialogue with religious leaders from other faiths and show examples of tolerance towards other religions, in opposition of violent extremists' narratives rejecting other religions.

Participants also noted that sectarianism is a growing problem in South East Asia, partially because of international actors and conflicts influencing the region. While culturally South East Asian society is generally tolerant towards different religions and sects, participants mentioned that broader, international geopolitical conflicts had some effect on the region, particularly due to the strong influence of missionaries historically settling in various parts of South East Asia. This is important because violent extremists sometimes utilize sectarianism as a polarizing factor in their narratives.[12] Participants from the Philippines, for example, noted several cases of sectarian violence that had gone unreported. Participants also noted that while the leaders of the two main Muslim networks in Indonesia (Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah) promoted cross-sectarian dialogue, anti-sectarian messages were often being promoted by imams from these organizations at a more local level.

COUNTER-NARRATIVE SNAPSHOT

A COMMON WORD

MESSAGE:

"A Common Word" expounds on God's commandments to Muslims to love Him and to love their neighbors, referring to their brothers and sisters from the Abrahamic faiths. The website and letter affiliated with the website originated in Jordan, but has gained some traction within Indonesia and the Philippines, for example. The website draws upon scripture to emphasize messages of loving one's neighbor and treating others with kindness. The website also emphasizes points of debate and differences between religions, and reinforces the need for dialogue between religious leaders.

MESSENGER:
Leaders of religious institutions across South East Asia and the world, primarily from Muslim and Christian organizations.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The focus is on the leaders and the adherents of the Abrahamic faith as well as the followers of those religious leaders that have agreed to adhere to the principles

MEDIUM

Website:
acommonword.com

9. COUNTER-NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION SHOULD CONSIDER NOT ONLY THE LOCAL CONTEXT, BUT ALSO THE DIASPORA OF SOUTH EAST ASIAN COMMUNITIES,

Participants at the workshop noted that it was common for one or several family members to work abroad, at least for a short time, to develop their careers and earn a higher salary. These individuals are exposed to different practice of Islam and different religious leaders, and often face challenges of integrating with local religious communities.

This is not to say that diaspora communities from South East Asia are necessarily more susceptible to radicalization than those that remain in South East Asia. However, participants noted a particular danger about diaspora communities: individuals that were radicalized abroad had access to terrorist networks, for example in the Middle East and Central/South Asia, and also connected those networks relatively easily to local conflicts and groups upon return.

[12] See *Dabiq*, Issue 13, Al Hayat Media Center, January 2016, https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/the-islamic-state-e2809cdacc84biq-magazine-13e280b3.pdf.

NEXT STEPS

In addition to this report and final Compendium of counter-narratives for South East Asia, the critical discussions in Semarang will contribute to an online portal of counter-narratives that will be accessible through Hedayah's website (expected September 2016). The counter-narrative library will be an accessible tool for practitioners, policymakers, non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society leaders interested in preventing radicalization and recruitment in both the online and offline spaces. The aim of the counter-narrative library is to provide content and resources for developing better strategies and policies, but more importantly, better positive/alternative narratives and counter-narratives that refute, reject and dismantle the narratives of violent extremists.

The existing content, developed by a consortium of countries and handed over to Hedayah in July 2015, contains open-source material refuting the narratives of Al-Qaeda from a variety of media sources, including video links, academic articles, newspaper clippings, photos, journal articles and TV interviews. The existing collection will be expanded to include regional collections from South East Asia, Middle East and North Africa, Horn of Africa and West Africa/Sahel. The collection will also feature a number of counter-*Daesh* narratives, with a particular focus on formers and defectors.

Discussions at the Semarang workshop assessed a number of ways in which the existing portal can be enhanced to be most effective for users. The counter-narrative library might consider:

1. Ensuring users can create and add content to the library to keep it up-to-date.
   This also includes the ability to comment on existing content, for example, to assess how those counter-narratives are applied in different contexts, if the messenger is credible, or if the content is out-dated.

2. Working with private sector companies to enhance the look-and-feel of the portal as well as link it to existing tools such as Google Alerts, Twitter feeds and Facebook pages.
   For example, immediately after the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium in March 2016, there was a large social media outpour of counter-narratives. Participants recommended that near real-time tracking of these counter-narratives would be a useful feature to help stakeholders identify and amplify the credible messages faster and more effectively. However, it was also noted that this feature would require ongoing technical and content support, and would depend entirely on the long-term funding available for the library.

3. Including a "featured counter-narratives" section of the portal where users can access the latest and most relevant counter-narratives.
   Participants suggested the portal become more interactive, with visual content and links displayed on the home screen.

4. Providing access to relevant toolkits and resources that can assist users in producing better, more effective content.
   This may include good practice guidelines developed by the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) and/or Hedayah, key references in academic and policy literature, as well as guidebooks produced by social media and marketing companies for more effective campaigns.

5. Link users to experts in counter-narratives that may help assist with content development, identifying messengers, design or production of the counter-narrative, and/or communications and marketing strategies.

Participants suggested that the portal would also be useful if it could provide contact details of relevant experts that could assist with developing counter-narrative projects internationally, regionally and locally.

Hedayah's Counter-Narrative Library will be made accessible to a select number of users in Summer 2016, and is expected to be launched formally in September 2016. For more information on the Counter-Narrative Collection, please contact cnlibrary.admin@hedayah.ae.