Fostering Peaceful Communities in Morocco

Morocco has been leading efforts to counter violent extremism, yet young Moroccans are still at risk for falling into extremist groups.

Government-led efforts to build community resilience to violent extremism and address grievances that contribute to radicalization have made significant progress. However, even more local outreach is needed to further engage civil society leaders who can reach at-risk individuals within their own communities. The Fostering Peaceful Communities in Morocco project seeks to build a network of resilience at the local level.

Quick Facts

1. Communities were selected due to a presence of extremist activity, grievances fueled by marginalization and a lack of projects focused on CVE.

2. In recent years, more than 1,500 young Moroccans have joined violent extremist groups abroad.

3. A network of trained community leaders will help collect and distribute lessons learned from the project within Morocco and among CVE experts in the U.S.
The project has piloted an approach that supports local religious and civil society leaders to work together in their own communities to address the factors that make individuals more vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by violent extremist organizations.

Funded by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, the project works with 13 local leaders, from Islamic scholars to youth activists, in four areas that have historically been susceptible to violent extremist radicalization and recruitment, particularly among youth. Creative Associates International implements the project in partnership with the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy and several local partners.

**Assessing and addressing local drivers**

Through hands-on collaborative trainings, the project has strengthened the capacity of local religious and community leaders to identify and address drivers of extremism within their communities. Participants learned how to recognize and understand factors that can increase vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment and gained practical skills to reach those most at-risk.

Taking their knowledge back home, these leaders conducted assessments that identified potential vulnerabilities to radicalization and recruitment into violent extremist organizations. With this information, they developed and implemented community-driven interventions to address these drivers of extremism and foster community cohesion and youth inclusion.

In Beni Mellal, for example, program participants launched the “Together for Tolerant Communities” activity, which works with vulnerable youth. By building their life skills, enhancing their confidence, improving their sense of belonging, and exposing them to values of tolerance, the program aims to build the youths’ resilience to radicalization.

In Casablanca, members of the Alumni Association of Hassan II Mosque School are working with current students to carry out the “Together for a Community Built on Peace and Forgiveness” initiative. Through workshops on the theory and practice of countering violent extremism, they are training the next generation of Islamic scholars to be agents of resilience to violent extremism in their communities.

In Fès, four high schools are bringing a culture of human rights and nonviolence into the classroom. The “Promoting Tolerant Discourse in Schools” activity, jointly run by religious and civil society leaders, educates students on nonviolent communication and raises awareness about the need for tolerance, rooted in both religious and secular perspectives.

And in Salé, a local civil society organization is equipping women to be part of the solution. The “Countering Extremism towards a Peaceful Community” initiative is training 60 undereducated, underemployed women – youth as well as mothers – on how to recognize warning signs of radicalization and act to prevent their loved ones from joining violent extremist organizations.

In all four communities, activity leaders continue to learn and adapt their initiatives to have the most success in reducing risk, building resilience and creating more peaceful communities.