Violent extremist movements are at the center of a rising death toll from conflict worldwide, research shows. Just a handful of such movements—including ISIS, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and Al-Shabab—fuel the world's most violent wars, concentrated in collapsed or fragile states in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. They use sophisticated tools of internet technology and social media to radicalize, recruit, and arm young people regionally and globally. The global urgency of countering this violence was reflected in the U.S. administration's decision to convene the three-day *White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism* in February 2015.

While attention currently focuses on Islamist movements, violent extremism is a global, centuries-old problem. Similar movements rooted in disparate political, nationalist, or religious ideas have driven recent or current violence in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Burma, the Balkans, Colombia, and elsewhere. Extremist causes germinate in communities seeded with grievances of marginalization or exclusion. They grow and turn to violence where peaceful solutions seem elusive. While policing or military force aim to contain or defeat such movements, these tools cannot dry up the emotional and social wellsprings of radicalization—and indeed can worsen the problem. Any real resolution of violent extremism requires a peacebuilding approach.

The U.S. Institute of Peace provides thought leadership on violent extremism by addressing it within the larger context of any society, seeking locally owned and sustainable solutions to build resistance to radicalization. To do this, USIP fosters the political inclusion of all groups in a society and supports accountable and responsive governance, especially on justice and security matters. The Institute works to strengthen relationships among a society's disparate groups, including youth who are vulnerable to recruitment by extremists. USIP also helps to develop peaceful ways to address grievances.

**Research:** USIP conducts field study to shape more effective programs to counter violent extremism. For example: What are the features of a community that can keep its youth less vulnerable to the lure of violent extremism? USIP is conducting in-depth interviews in selected communities in Kenya and Afghanistan to pinpoint those factors, and expects to publish the results later this year.

**Training and Education:** The Institute has developed training programs for government officials, police officers, lawyers, religious and civil society leaders, and other key professionals from countries confronting extremism. These courses are offered at the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law in Malta and at Hedayah, a center in Abu Dhabi for countering violent extremism. They promote the rule of law, human rights, police reform, and educational strategies to prevent radicalization. They train participants for conflict resolution, more effective communication, and collective action in their communities.

**Fieldwork:** USIP works with local organizations in conflict zones to develop new approaches to countering violent extremism. The results include joint problem-solving projects between women interfaith leaders and police in Nigeria, for example. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, communities use
advertisements on rickshaw taxis and cellphone videos to promote tolerance and oppose violence. The Institute helps shape these programs on the basis of its research and evaluates them to learn new, better practices.

**USIP PUBLICATIONS**

USIP experts publish in-depth reports, as well as short, timely policy briefs, to distill the results of research, report on lessons learned from fieldwork, and suggest new solutions. Recent publications on violent extremism include:

- **Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective** (September 2013). This Special Report examines how peacebuilders can overcome basic challenges to the policies and practices of countering violent extremism. It urges greater coordination and clearer lines of engagement between security policymakers and the peacebuilding community.

- **Youth Radicalization in Pakistan** (February 2014). This PeaceBrief examines the process of youth radicalization and recommends how policymakers can best confront this growing challenge.

- **Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?** (June 2014). Drawing on a study in six northern Nigerian states, this Special Report helps explain how youth are radicalized and recruited into Boko Haram, and what Nigeria and others can do to prevent it.

- **Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan** (October 2014). Ethnic discrimination, drug trafficking, corruption and other ills have opened space in Kyrgyzstan for Islamist groups to radicalize youth, notably in the Ferghana Valley. This Special Report recommends steps to counter that trend and preserve Central Asia’s first experiment in democratization.

**USIP EVENTS**

The Institute frequently brings together thought leaders, scholars, experts, policymakers, and elected officials to discuss issues and exchange ideas. In February 2015, USIP partnered with the State Department and USAID to host a high-level conference of civil society activists alongside the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. Participants discussed their research and programs to oppose the violence bred by extremism internationally. The Institute is working with the State Department and USAID to advance recommendations from that summit. Institute events on the topic have included:

- **A Role for Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism**: In September 2014, USIP gathered prominent religious leaders, including Nigeria’s Pastor Esther Ibanga and the Mauritanian scholar, Sheikh Abdullah bin Bayyah, to examine the critical role that religious leaders and groups can play in not only opposing violent, radical ideologies but also addressing their root causes. The group met with policymakers in Washington and at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

- **Human Rights Defenders on Religion and Gender in Extremist Violence**: With the Carter Center in Atlanta, USIP hosted human rights defenders Washington D.C. in February 2015 to examine how activists can weave protections for women and religious considerations into the broader campaigns to oppose violent extremism. Participants included activists from Iraq, Nigeria, and Libya, and focused on the conflicts in those countries. In addition to public meetings, the group held private discussions with U.S. policymakers.

- **Women Preventing Violent Extremism: Charting a New Course**: In March 2015, the Institute convened women civil society leaders from India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania to discuss their work on preventing violent extremism in their communities. Participants examined how their initiatives fit into the United Nations-led campaign to engage women globally on peace and security issues based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325.