Youth Led Pathways from Extremism

A White Paper for UNESCO and the United Nations Community

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Recommendation Summary

I.   ***Understanding the phenomenon of youth radicalization and de-radicalization is bolstered, available, and widely disseminated and used by young people and youth stakeholders to develop new narratives and improve national/local policies and actions;***

1. Empower youth as researchers. Supporting youth to lead on research projects positively contributes to their development, enhancing their skill set, and empowering them to investigate issues that can be used as a launching pad to drive change. They are much more likely to be in touch with the mechanisms and structures that facilitate and discourage extremism recruitment.

2. Research into online and other resources that have a proven history of improving outcomes for youth substance abuse, suicide, and violence in similar at risk communities (Aboriginal youth, extremist youth) to address cultural despair.

3. Research and development of a variety of virtual, graphic, and narrative superheroes that can form alternatives to extremist, colonialist, and gender-biased models of leadership.

4. Research into understanding the differential motivations of male and female youth in their involvement in extremist groups.

5. Seek both age cohort but also intergenerational resources for building and maintaining a sense of cultural stability (but not superiority) in youth at risk for extremist alliances, which goes along with building intercultural communication. Building intercultural communication may well fail if those taking part have a sense of cultural insecurity/inadequacy/despair with no remedy for that experience of cultural "emptiness".

6. Ensure that all programs and policies are shared among major UN agencies and NGOs. Coordination of consistent programming and messages across UN entities.

II.   ***Young people and key youth stakeholders become key actors in preventing and countering violent extremist content online;***

1. It is important to recognize that initial processes of radicalization predominantly occur offline. While the Internet is an important secondary socializer and potential catalyst for radicalization, offline processes must be better addressed in preventative measures, particularly within schools, universities, and prisons. Online counter-extremism work must learn from the successes and failures of offline counter-extremism, and coordinate with offline efforts.

2. Expand the use of existing youth programs designed to foster citizenship, education, and active youth engagement. Expand these for use in online settings and expand opportunities for civic engagement through online and other media.

3. Expand the use and promotion of applied youth leadership programs designed to give youth the skills necessary to more effectively lead their local societies in more stable and civil directions.

4. Comprehensive community capacity building programs are needed to firmly engage youth and provide ownership of local decisions that impact them.

5. Research into replicable country-based cohorts of "train the trainer" youth leaders to develop workshops on intercultural communication (non-virtual); establish a sense of cultural heritage (non-extremist); and build a sense of future hope through envisioning non-violent forms of political co-operation in group forms.

6. Researching alternative pathways for youth out of extremist positions. Once one goes down the extremist path, it can seem like the only way out, and it can be addictive. Seeing extremism as an addiction within the public health model can help us better understand what interventions will provide realistic and positive outcomes in a) getting youth off the extremist path, and b) ensuring their ongoing flourishing and re-habilitation in a post-extremist environment. Models of supports used in addiction and mental health rehabilitation are potential resources here.

7. Ensure that all programs and policies are shared among major UN agencies and NGOs. Coordination of consistent programming and messages across UN entities.

8. Ensure that empathy education programs and content be incorporated into government, NGO, and other efforts designed to thwart extremism recruitment and youth radicalization.

III. *Mobilize and empower media professionals to work together to combat radicalization and online hate speech, particularly in countries suffering tensions and conflicts.*

1. Establish metrics to measure efficacy of programs.

2. Ethical journalism and mass communication master course.

3. Research into establishing an online world-wide "911" response when youth seek to connect to extremist websites, giving them an immediate alternative option at the time of first Internet contact, potentially connecting them immediately to "recovered" role models as trained responders as well as other resources.

4. Counter-extremism and counter-terrorism should be separated at a strategic and delivery level. International governments must consider the central co-ordination of counter-extremism, separate from their individual security, defense, and anti-terrorism units.

5. Negative measures, including government-backed censorship and filtering initiatives, are ineffective in tackling online extremism; they tackle the symptoms rather than the causes of radicalization. Motivated extremists and terrorist affiliates can evade such measures easily through the dark Internet, virtual private networks (VPNs), and even video game

platforms. Blocked materials consistently reappear online and there is no effective way for ISPs or social media companies to filter extremist content.

6. Counter-speech and positive measures are critical in challenging the sources of extremism and terrorism-related material online. Community engagement and civil society action are essential components of such positive measures and, as such, counter-speech initiatives should be civil society-led and, in some cases, supported by governments.

IV. ***Online communities become actively involved in the design and implementation of creative research, outreach and media campaigns, sensitizing young people, policy makers, opinion leaders and the general public, contributing to counter violent extremism and radicalization.***

1. Research into forming online networks that facilitate cross cultural communication and indeed involve actual facilitators working virtually; research on, and trials of formats that build cross-cultural communication in marginalized youth who turn to the internet for companionship, self-identification, and self-assertion.

2. Empower Youth as Activists for Peace through Social Media. To compliment and advance the *Youth as Researchers* efforts, structures and programs must be developed for youth researchers to immediately translate their findings into counter-extremism narratives and calls to action.

3. Youth driven anti-extremism media campaigns are needed.

4. Ensure that all programs and policies are shared among major UN agencies and NGOs. Coordination of consistent programming and messages across UN entities.

5. Establish a wide range of structures to recognize and praise the counter-extremism of youth activists and positive change agents.

6. Develop, promote, and maximize the use of online structures to help build social support, empathy development, and extremism reduction, and provide positive mentorship.

Introduction

Today, over 3.5 billion youth and tens of thousands of communities in developing regions (domestically and abroad) face massive challenges brought about by limited access to education and socio-economic development opportunities. The number of youth worldwide (15-25 years of age) is at an all-time high. According to the United Nations, a third of the 7 billion people on Earth are age 15 or younger; half of all global citizens are under the age of 25. This demographic 'youth bulge' is unparalleled and further compounded by the fact that 85% percent of all youth live in less-developed countries and areas. This reality creates an environment in which the active engagement of young people and their communities is essential to high impact capacity building, global security, gender equality, equal access to education for all, and a host of personal and socio-economic development outcomes. If ignored, this setting may likely signal a tipping point where failure to ensure youth engagement jeopardizes stable, civil societies worldwide. Most visible are issues of drug addiction, violence, early pregnancies, preventable disease, and most alarmingly, the increasing drift of disenfranchised youth to extremist and terrorist activities. Beyond the individual and community level, youth engagement has national and global implications.

Youth engagement and development is a global security and stability issue, particularly in fragile states. In places were youth are marginalized or excluded, particularly in times of strife and upheaval, the consequences are dire. We need look no further than the Arab Spring and related uprisings of the last 5 years, where initially youth were the driving force of change and the voices of social justice. But as youth were consistently excluded, marginalized, and side-lined, the violence and social unrest seen so clearly in Egypt, Libya, and Syria emerged. Had structures been in place so youth could have contributed to reshaping civil society, the outcomes would likely have been remarkably different. It certainly would have been the case that significantly fewer youth would have been drawn to extremism.

The active engagement, and resulting significant contributions of youth to local life and beyond, is receiving increased attention from a variety of sectors. Through the work of the United Nations, UNESCO, UNICEF, and a host of other organizations, youth are being positively empowered, engaged, supported, and provided with the vital skills necessary for active citizenship. These are the cornerstones and basis for countering extremism and decreasing youth recruitment to such organizations. This shift in how we view the role of young people represents and calls for an accompanying dramatic paradigm shift in policy, research, and programming. It calls on us to honestly challenge age-old stereotypes, our own preconceived notions of youth efficacy and commitment, and to actively seek the inclusion of youth as our equals in social change. It calls on societies to be open to the engagement of young people as current contributors to society and not simply adults-in-waiting.

Youth engagement and related activities (community capacity building, youth researchers, social supports, and empathy development) are not all that there is to challenging the problem of extremism. They are, however, major factors that can have significant impacts and provide a clear logic for effective application. Our work and the work of our colleagues in various youth focused international development sectors shows massive success. Research on youth and program evidence show conclusively that societies are made better, more stable, and more secure when youth are active participants.

We have an equally impressive body of knowledge proving that youth themselves are better off for being part of the process. Their engagement results in far stronger social, psychological, and developmental competencies, leading to adaptability, resilience, and a long list of positive developmental outcomes. Youth engagement is not the only part of the equation

that will end extremism and terrorism, but it is an essential part nonetheless. It is something we can, and are, achieving. And because we can do this, we must. In the end, the benefits of youth inclusion and engagement are real, measurable, and tangible. The impacts discussed above are not just ideas. They are facts, supported by a wide and diverse body of knowledge, research, and applied programming. Through all of these, a consistent finding has been evident: *Engaged youth equate to stable, secure, civil, and just societies.*

A final note on extremism prevention should be mentioned. In sexual violence and other prevention research, age 5, and even under, is considered an ideal time to begin forming models of equity and mutual respect. While our focus here is youth (age 15-25), we should also consider earlier interventions for children. This would mean developing a replicable program of techniques and materials for use in ages 5 up to the tweens. Graphic novels on such issues as budding cross-cultural friendships and the success of such alliances, together with age appropriate cell phone games and other materials, should be considered, as well as more traditional school materials and activities.

Lastly, extremist and radicalization knows no boundaries. While much of the attention in recent years is often associated with Islamist radicalization, religious and other ideological extremism (radical Christian, Jewish, and others; supremacists and separatist groups) in general pose an ever-present threat, as frequent and as real as Islamist extremism.

A Way Forward: Youth Led Research, Activism, and Social Change
The active engagement of youth can take many forms in many contexts. Nonetheless, in this white paper we focus on five settings in which youth engagement is particularly useful in the fight against extremism and beyond. These parallel, and are imbedded within, the *UNESCO Empowering Youth to Build Peace* anti-extremism framework:

> *Youth Empowerment Online and in their Communities*. Empowering youth online and in their communities and key youth stakeholders on topics relevant to counter-radicalization, by building their competencies and skills, and by equipping them with creative tools and knowledge;

> *Youth as Researchers*. Supporting multidisciplinary research on linkages between youth, Internet, radicalization/de-radicalization, research-informed policies, and actions;

> *Youth as Communicators and Change Agents*. Supporting creative media campaigns, youth driven research, and outreach strategies targeting policy-makers and opinion-makers, as well as the general public (including young audiences);

> *Engaging Youth in Media Campaigns*. Strengthening mobilization and cooperation between youth, media professionals, and practitioners to combat radicalization and online hate speech.

> *Empathy Education*. Facilitating the development and application of empathy as a cornerstone of functioning societies and countering extremism.

The Importance of Public Private Partnerships: Linking Government and Nongovernmental Responses to Extremism

We must stress, from the beginning, the importance of pubic-private partnerships that bring together government and nongovernmental responses to youth extremism. Both are essential, but independently, particularly at the governmental level, active efforts may be seen with suspicion, conflicting interests, and ulterior motives. Transparency, particularly across multiple levels (governmental, regional, and local levels) is essential to a unified fight against youth extremism and radicalization.

In response to this critical environment, we must consider several key questions that have implications for this paper, and in which responses must be situated:

1. The 'government' features in all responses. How are government/s trying to address youth extremism and what role do they play as readers of this document?

2. If governments are to play a role, they need to be offered a positive engagement strategy (as opposed to the widely acknowledged negative impacts of censorship), but charging in fact them with some counter-extremist specifics, such as NGO-government co-operation?

3. In many countries, youth are very disaffected and or disconnected from government, which has not had a great record of generating and maintaining youth involvement in political opportunities that build stability and counter extremism. A central question is how do we encourage governments to significantly work with youth and community partners in counter-terrorism initiatives?

In many ways, most governments are severely limited in their their confidence, trust ratings, and significant engagement with youth in general. In terms of engagement around counter extremist activities, active efforts are virtually nil. This is partnered with widespread youth disaffection from politics, and often civic engagement, that not only distances them from politics but from extant government structures as well.

In this setting, a government involvement strategy is needed with specifics to engage youth and NGOs in counter extremism efforts rather than just mandating action scenarios. Action efforts must be framed from the beginning in collaborative efforts with NGOs and youth to maximize content, applicability, and impact.

Understanding the Factors Shaping Youth Extremism

Challenging extremism is the duty of all responsible members of society, in large part because cultural insularity and extremism are products of wider society's failures to foster a shared sense of belonging, attachment, and commitment to advance liberal democratic values. Citizen engagement, particularly among youth, is vital to challenging all the factors shaping extremism.

The research literature and analysis by organizations active in this area suggest that radicalization of all varieties (religious-related extremism, far right, violent, non-violent) is made more likely where an individual is exposed to an ideology, often justified in reference to a fabricated narrative about recent history and current affairs; where the individual encounters an individual or group (either in real life or virtually) who can articulate that ideology and relate it to the individual's personal circumstances and context; where an individual doubts their national/cultural identity or sense of belonging in their country; and, finally, where an individual perceives a grievance (real, imagined, or exaggerated) to which there seems to be no suitable response.

It is important to note that youth attracted to extremism may have positive and negative attributes drawing them in that direction. Negative attributes include an overwhelming desire to control others, a sense of individualized fame, a sense of revenge for perceived injustice either personally or more generally culturally experienced, etc. However, there are some positive attributes, such as a realization that competition in the ruthlessly capitalist environment of cultures, such as the US, is not a game marginalized youth can play and win at. Understanding youth's attraction to extremism as their recognition (albeit not a necessarily cognitive one) that their rates of under/unemployment and prospects for the future mean throwing their lot into the dream of the middle-class is often a lost cause from the beginning, should be read as an aspect of their resilience. The question then becomes how can this resilience be harnessed otherwise.

These factors, which interact with one another and are mutually reinforcing, help to explain why some individuals are more at risk from radicalization than others. For each, a series of reactions and structural responses are important and have been shown to be successful:

1) ***Real and Perceived Grievances.***
   Emotive issues, such as the war in Gaza, attacks on mosques in the UK and elsewhere, and the profiling of plane passengers, all have the potential to alienate or stigmatize ordinary Muslims with the possible result of making them vulnerable to the exploitation of such issues by extremist propaganda. In these settings, government representatives must be made aware of the implications of such actions on these issues with the aim of effecting a more effective government policy. Here, success is not only seen in effecting government policy, but also in showing the public that it is possible to express legitimate grievances with social and political issues without having to adopt simplistic narratives of there being a 'war on Islam' or 'war on Christianity'. As a result, effective counter extremism efforts lie in enabling a large number of individuals and communities to directly express their grievances, and in allowing teachers and concerned citizens to appreciate how such grievances can be exploited by extremists to slot into a simplistic and divisive narrative.

2) ***A Perceived Lack of Real Alternatives for the Future.***
   We must stress that youth engagement and empowerment in the development of civil societies is not an abstract or idealistic idea in the fight against extremism. It is far from it. For example, in much of our work throughout the developing world, it is not at all uncommon to see youth (16 or younger) serving as the heads of households. In settings

where previous generations have been decimated by disease and conflict, youth engagement is not a theoretical concept. Here, youth take on real-world ownership of challenges out of absolute necessity to ensure their own survival and the survival of their families and communities. We must remember that the majority of the world's youth exist in such settings. Engaged young people have been the cement holding these fragile environments together and ensuring stable, civil societies.

More importantly we must remain keenly aware that faced with disease, violence, and extreme poverty, the temptation to give up hope and connection to local life is ever-present. Youth without hope of a future and no opportunities for involvement in governance or civic, moral, and political engagement, and facing challenges to their identity, are lost and exponentially more vulnerable to exploitation, recruitment to extremism, and violence. It is here that extremism fills the vacuum and promises meaning, power, and salvation to an ever-growing stream of disenfranchised recruits.

3) *Cultural Isolation, Threats to Culture, and Despair.*
We know from Aboriginal experiences in Canada, the US, and Australia that colonization has destroyed large swathes of intergenerational cultural integrity and security resulting in disproportionately high rates of substance abuse, sexual abuse, and teen suicide. While inter-cultural communication is obviously important, it is also necessary to understand how fragile and vulnerable youth are when they come from settings of cultural threat or cultural genocide. This is not something we find easy to address because it is not primarily a material-resource based problem: job opportunities won't fix it. It is important to recognize extremism from a public health perspective: it can helpfully be perceived of as a form of addiction that indicates cultural, material, and spiritual needs are not being met at a very basic level. Looking at a) how Aboriginal communities have built resilience in the face of cultural despair and b) public health conceptualizations of how to build and support healthy cultural resilience could be important resources for this initiative. Lastly, while youth-on-youth communication is obviously key, it would not be wise to ignore intergenerational relationships that build a sense of secure cultural fabric.

4) *Crisis of Identity.*
Recent youth and social science research has furthered understanding of how an intergenerational disconnect between religious leaders and youth can create anxiety over identity, which itself may render an individual vulnerable to extremist influences. On a political level, research on ethnic and religious minority involvement in UK and European politics carries a number of major policy recommendations for political parties on how to avoid institutional racism, by introducing greater transparency in the selection process for candidates, for example.

Likewise, for the media and the general public, research and practice evidence has demonstrated how divisive language, for example, that contrasts 'Islam' with 'the West' can alienate ordinary Muslims. Similarly, such language in many setting is seen as threatening 'traditional Christian values'. In doing so, change agents have consistently argued against language that divides 'us and them,' for example, by referring to 'the Islamic world', 'Muslim countries', and 'the Muslim community', and has praised language that avoids stigmatizing

ordinary citizens of all religions. This has also been seen in a range of social and psychological research focusing on the development the self. In challenging and extreme settings, the creation of the 'other' or clear identification of those unlike us, can contribute to radicalization.

A related fear is that competition with the 'others' will result in diminished opportunities for the self, especially, but not exclusively, by a long shot – in contexts of impoverishment and financial stress. This is the perfect breeding ground for xenophobia, which cannot be underestimated in a consideration of what comprises extremism, with racism as a sub-category of the xenophobia.

5) **_Absence of Realistic, Effective, and Affective Alternative Role Models_**.
One element that ties together youth attracted to extremism from all over the world is the lack of positive and gender-equal models of heroism (at the local, national, and international levels). Not to be forgotten is Fanon's work on the despair that results from the black man's identification with white super heroes on the comics of the West (chapter entitled "The Negro and Psychopathology" from Black Skin, White Masks (1952)). This is borne out by graphic artists' search for appropriate male and female Islamic superhero figures (see the furor over Marvel comics' adoption of a female American-Islamic superhero, Kamala Khan, in February 2014). For a positive example see:
http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/01/15/377385882/in-jordan-the-comic-book-superheroes-fight-extremism

6) **_Extremist Ideology._**
For public sector workers and for society at large, the outreach training workshops and briefings of anti-extremist NGOs have helped many people to understand better how Islamism differs from Islam and how far-right extremism can bolster Islamist narratives. Similarly, other NGOs have made sure to draw clear distinctions between the constructive contributions of mainstream Christian and Jewish groups, and the far-right ideology of radical groups and associated radical organizations (Klu Klux Klan, Jewish Defense League). For effective counter-extremism efforts, governments should link together with NGOs and local community partners to combat extremism narratives that serve to support recruitment and radicalization of youth, particularly online. Likewise, for policy-makers and academics, research has highlighted the role that Internet discussion forums, television channels, prisons, and the leadership of university societies can play in promoting extremism, even if they do not break the law. In terms of civil society, outreach efforts have contributed to the proliferation of the large number of counter-extremist blogs, demonstrations, and civil society organizations that have emerged.

7) **_Extremist Recruiters_**.
To those in government, the media, and the general public, the work of anti-extremism NGOs has highlighted the danger posed by organizations that promote such extremism and by individual recruiters such as Anwar al-Awlaki, long before he received general recognition as being an extremist recruiter. Not only do these organizations raise the alarm, but they also publicly challenge extremists and directly confront their arguments in order to undermine their ideology and supporters. Given these NGOs effectiveness in identifying and curbing extremist

agendas and actions, governments should develop partnerships with these organizations to provide support for better counter-extremist efforts at a national scale.

For those seeking it, these NGOs provide a public counter-argument to the rhetoric and narrative of extremism. For radicalized Islamists, or those tempted to embrace other radical religious organizations, vocal refutations, and renunciations of extremism undermines their ideology by shaking their confidence in it. NGOs have also publicly challenged far-right extremists in order to undermine their arguments and their supporters. For extremists on the far-right, the promotion of vibrant alternatives to extremism and campaigns to challenge misconceptions about all religions undermines the racist narrative that these religions are religions of terrorism and violence.

8) Empathy Education.
A vital component to countering abusive, violent, and antisocial behaviors is the presence, activation, and application of empathy. In the setting of extremism recruitment, this essential human attribute may very well be the key to thwarting radicalization and extremist behaviors. Despite this critical importance, few if any, programs exist with the sole purpose of building empathy among children and youth. It is therefore essential that programs and content be incorporated into government, NGO, and other efforts designed to thwart extremism recruitment and youth radicalization.

Background and Approaches to Countering Extremism and Fostering Positive Youth Development

The active engagement of youth in their societies has been increasingly documented as an essential component of establishing stable, civil, and productive societies. It shows particular promise for providing youth with a clearly defined role in local society that can challenge a host of negative outcomes (extremism, drug use, sexual violence). A variety of forms and contexts of engagement exist, however. Program and policy makers must remain aware of these and target engagement to the desired outcomes and support appropriate settings/structures that already exist.

Understand forms of engagement and opportunities for challenging extremism
Civic engagement is not a neutral concept, but rather encompasses a variety of forms and perspectives surrounding relationships between the individual, community, and broader society. Various discourses and viewpoints carry particular messages and understandings about the purpose and nature of youth as citizens more broadly. To fully understand the significance of civic engagement to youth, it is necessary to examine how particular forms of civic engagement relate to the experiences and social positioning of young people and how it can actually help address problems.

Throughout the research and literature, five key themes are evident. These invoke youth civic engagement/action as a desirable and much needed activity. While these viewpoints are not mutually exclusive, they each contain distinctive strands. These five perspectives are summarised in Table 1 below and then elaborated on to further understand their potential and impact for the self and society.

Table 1: Perspectives for Youth Engagement

Discourse	Impact	Key Aim	Concern for …	Desirable …
Democratic citizens	*Society*	Participation	Recognition; voice; right	Engaged in decisions and influence
Justice	*Society*	Understanding and tackling injustice	Acknowledging root causes of structural inequality	Social justice
Care self	*Self and Society*	Build social support and resilience	Build strengths in adversity; Prevent escalation of problems; Increase protective factors	Supportive/more effective networks and programmes
Positive Youth Development	*Self*	Idealised adulthood	Adaptation; Behavioural/ cognitive/ moral adaptivity; Life Skills	More socially adapted individuals for future adulthood; Social conformity; Less risky behaviours
Belonging	*Self*	Cultivate affective social inclusion	To increase attachments to place and others; build social capital – trust, networks, norms; Find spaces for sense of inclusion	Stronger connectedness; Better Interactions; Stronger youth-adult interdependencies

Understanding Governmental, Institutional, and Grassroots Approaches to Youth Engagement

Definitions of youth civic action are often very broad, including everything from membership of associations and reading newspapers, to active political engagement. Elkman and Anna (2009) argue that such definitions are too vague and are not conducive to precise empirical analysis. Their typology of forms of civic engagement acknowledges that some people actively choose not to engage with political or social issues, that some are engaged at the level of social involvement or action, while others are involved in conventional or unconventional political activities. They developed the concept of 'latent political participation' to describe the activities that include social involvement or engagement but cannot be considered as 'manifest political participation' (2009, p.8). In their typology, civic engagement activities are individual or collective actions "intended to influence circumstances in society that is of relevance to others, outside the own family and circle of close friends" (p.15); forms of engagement that may be 'pre-political'. These civic engagement activities are an important element in the creation of politically active citizens in that, as well as yielding value for individuals and society, they enable young people to learn the skills and develop networks of necessity in political activity.

Table 2: Elkman and Anna's Typology of different forms of disengagement, involvement, civic engagement and political participation.

| | Non-participation (*disengagement*) | | Civil participation (latent–political) | | Political participation (manifest) | | |
| | Active forms (antipolitical) | Passive forms (apolitical) | Social involvement (*attention*) | Civic engagement (*action*) | Formal political participation | Activism (extra-parliamentary political participation) | |
						Legal/extra-parliamentary protests or actions	Illegal protests or actions
Individual forms	Non-voting Actively avoiding reading newspapers or watching TV when it comes to political issues Avoid talking about politics Perceiving politics as disgusting Political disaffection	Non-voting Perceiving politics as uninteresting and unimportant Political passivity	Taking interest in politics and society Perceiving politics as important	Writing to an editor Giving money to charity Discussing politics and societal issues, with friends or on the Internet Reading newspapers and watching TV when it comes to political issues Recycling	Voting in elections and referenda Deliberate acts of non-voting or blank voting Contacting political representatives or civil servants Running for or holding public office Donating money to political parties or organizations	Buycotting, boycotting and political consumption Signing petitions Handing out political leaflets	Civil disobedience Politically motivated attacks on property
Collective forms	Deliberate non-political lifestyles, e.g. hedonism, consumerism In extreme cases: random acts of non-political violence (riots), reflecting frustration, alienation or social exclusion	"Non-reflected" non-political lifestyles	Belonging to a group with societal focus Identifying with a certain ideology and/or party Life-style related involvement: music, group identity, clothes, et cetera For example: veganism, right-wing Skinhead scene, or left-wing anarcho-punk scene	Volunteering in social work, e.g. to support women's shelter or to help homeless people Charity work or faith-based community work Activity within community based organizations	Being a member of a political party, an organization, or a trade union Activity within a party, an organization or a trade union (voluntary work or attend meetings)	Involvement in new social movements or forums Demonstrating, participating in strikes, protests and other actions (e.g. street festivals with a distinct political agenda)	Civil disobedience actions Sabotaging or obstructing roads and railways Squatting buildings Participating in violent demonstrations or animal rights actions Violence confrontations with political opponents or the police

Elkman and Anna's typology is useful in that it draws attention to the range of forms that youth civic engagement can take, of which conventional political participation is just one. International evidence suggests that youth are not apathetic or disinterested in civil society and politics, but that their engagements on issues occur in other spaces. Youth also engage in many issues in more ordinary and sometimes individualized ways. The increased usage of social networking sites on the internet are recognized as forms of engagement by many youth, who feel they do not have a public space or public recognition factors in place to engage with others.

Factors Shaping Successful Community Based Approaches and Programming

Community, Local Connectedness, Belonging, and Attachment

Against the backdrop of what is viewed as an increasingly individualised society, we can find a discourse which perhaps sees civic engagement as a means to forge a sense of belonging among young people to something wider than their individual selves. This interest stems from a desire to create stronger connections for youth towards others in the places they live and the spaces they interact in.

Wilkinson (1991) and others (Brennan; Luloff; Krannich; Bridger; Flint; Theodori; Field; Allen; Korshing) view community as non-static and more interactional. They all see the emergence of community as a dynamic process of bringing people together. This intergenerational perspective is particularly useful in explaining the process leading to civic engagement. All localities are composed of numerous distinct social fields or groups whose members act to achieve various individual interests and goals. Connecting these individual fields

is the "community field" which serves to coordinate and unite individual groups into purposive community wide efforts. It cuts across class lines, organized groups, and other entities within a local population by focusing on the general and common needs of all residents. Through this interactive process, an entity can emerge that is far greater than the sum of its parts. The key component to this process is found in the creation and maintenance of channels of interaction and the development of informal positive relationships among groups, which would otherwise be directed toward their more individual interests. Through these relationships, individuals interact with one another, and begin to mutually understand general common needs. Where this can be established and maintained, increases in local adaptive capacities materialize, resiliency becomes possible, and community can emerge.

As residents and groups interact over issues important to all of them, what has come to be known as community agency, or ways for local action and resiliency to emerge (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff and Bridger, 2003; Brennan and Luloff, 2007). Agency reflects the building of local relationships that increase the human capacity of local people. It can therefore be seen as the capacity of people to manage, utilize, and enhance those resources available to them in addressing locality wide issues (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff and Swanson, 1995; Bridger and Luloff, 1999; Luloff and Bridger, 2003; Brennan, 2007). The application of agency can be seen in civic engagement at all levels.

Of ultimate importance is the fact that such engagement and interaction helps carve out a clearly identified place for youth in local society, as well as their sense of self and identity. Awan (2015; page 6) stressed this as an important step toward stability and positive societal development, stating that "this search for identity and belonging is an intrinsic part of adolescence and early adulthood, and occurs universally in young people everywhere. However, as the case studies of many radicals will attest, this process appears to take on an urgency and prominence in these individuals that belies its ubiquitous, and often mundane, nature. Identity crises inspired by alienation, racism, dislocation, globalisation, changing value-systems, anomie and a host of other issues, present a heightened state of vulnerability and might compel individuals to seek solace in beguiling narratives that offer a safe and welcoming community of like-minded 'outcast' individuals."

Youth Shaping Civil Society through Interaction and Social Networks
The active engagement of youth directly shapes the development of functioning local communities as well. As young people share a common territory with others, they interact with one another on a routine and substantive basis. These interactions can lead to the development of more purposive and focused actions, culminating in collective capacity and the emergence of 'community'. Interaction is a pervasive and constant feature of community life that provides substance to its ecological, cultural, organizational, and social psychological aspects (Wilkinson, 1991). Such interaction gives direction to processes of collective action and is a source of common identity, attachment, and connectedness (Wilkinson, 1991; Bridger, Brennan and Luloff, 2009).

Similarly, social ties and social networks are essential to fostering and sustaining civic engagement (Claude et al., 2000). Such ties are integral parts of one's sense of community, directly related to attachment, and influence the willingness of youth to act on behalf of the community (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). Community ties take different forms (strong and weak; formal and informal; through organizational involvement or casual interaction), each of which shape the conditions for youth civic engagement and community development in different ways (Chaskin et al., 2001). Strong ties, such as those among family and close friends, are intense, frequent, and developed over long periods of interaction.

Alternately, casual friends, acquaintances, and co-workers, with whom we do not have intimate relations, also serve a vital function of connecting us with the wider society. These 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973) represent an important resource. Through increased social networks and interaction with weak ties, youth become aware of issues that are in need of action, as well as opportunities to participate in direct actions to address these (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990).

It is important to note that even in the case of online activities, youth's "real world" social behaviors, like demonstrating verbal aggression and participating in risky activities, proved significant predictors of engaging in negative behavior online, specifically cyberbullying (Roberto et al., 2014). This indicates the importance of a multi-pronged approach to identifying, engaging, and protecting at risk youth.

The Central Role of Social Supports

Social support is widely seen and well established as an integral component for coping with the stresses of everyday life (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Brugha, 1995; Sanderson, 2012). While often viewed as a given, there is consensus among many researchers that a full understanding of what constitutes social support remains elusive in the professional and academic literature (Veiel and Baumann, 1992; Cutrona, 1996; Eckenrode and Hamilton, 2000). Levine and Perkins (1997) emphasize its somewhat complex character: "The words, actions and feelings that constitute support can differ depending on the persons, problems and circumstances" (p.229). According to Veiel and Baumann (1992), it is difficult to establish one clear definition of social support, although Cutrona (1996) in her review defines it very neatly as "acts that demonstrate responsivity to another's needs" (p.17). Effective social supporters provide help and act as a buffer to stress and conflict, which has been well-established within the research literature (Cobb, 1976; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Gottlieb, 1985; Tardy, 1994; Dolan and Brady, 2012).

Importantly, there is evidence over several decades to indicate that perceptions of social support are of equal importance (if not more important) than actual support received (Cobb, 1976; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Cutrona 2000; Pinkerton and Dolan, 2007; Dolan and Brady, 2012). Cutrona et al. (1990) neatly describe support as being in the "eye of the beholder" (p.30). Thus, a person who feels that support is available, even if this is not the case, may be strengthened by this false belief. Conversely, a person who has a perception that nobody is interested in supporting him/her may never access or mobilise plentiful available support. Heller and Swindle (1983) found that those who perceive themselves as able to access support may have good relationship skills in the first place that helped them enlist support. Conversely, they also found that others, because of their perceived feelings of isolation, were restricted to only seeking help from formal agencies, welfare, or the police, despite widely available social supports. This is a particularly important finding in communities where distrust of such formal agencies is high, cutting out even that means of social support for isolated youth. It is important to emphasise that the enlistment of social support is co-dependant on factors within the person as well as the dynamics in his/her social environment (Cassel, 1974; Cobb, 1976; Antonocci et al., 1990; Cotterell, 1996). Informal support which is available outside of office hours is naturally occurring and is usually at no cost or of particular importance. This is neatly summarised by Whitaker and Garbarino (1983), in their renowned phrase, as the bread and butter of relationships.

For any young person, being able to enlist social support is a core part of their capacity to function, thrive, and contribute to society. Accessing others in a young person's social network – including nuclear and extended family, peer based friendships, positive school and leisure contacts, and adult leaders of positive influence – can provide robust social support that is key for positive youth development, to 'buffer to stress' and to facilitate coping and wellbeing (Tracy

and Whittaker, 1990; Cutrona, 2000; Dolan & Brady, 2012). The types of support available for young people typically include tangible, emotional, esteem, and advice assistance, all of which can be generated and supplied regularly through political and social civic engagement activities involving youth (Dolan, 2012).

Four main types of support have been identified by Cutrona (2000). First, 'concrete' reflects practical acts of assistance between people; for example, a person minding a sister's young baby while she goes shopping. It has been noted that too often this need for basic practical help is either missed or underestimated by professionals (Holt and Dolan, 2010; Sanderson, 2012). Second, 'emotional' support comprises acts of empathy, listening, and generally 'being there' for someone when needed or in times of trouble (Cutrona, 2000). It can be difficult to gauge the need and appropriate fashion in which to offer emotional support, but it has particular strong currency, and is generally perceived as helpful even when offered as an alternative to other types of identified need (Cutrona, 1996). Third, 'advice' support is that which goes beyond the advice itself to the reassurance that goes with it (Cotterell, 1996). Fourth, 'esteem' support centers on how one person rates and informs another of their personal worth. For families, this unconditional regard and commitment is the foundation stone of their personal social support system (Cutrona, 2000). In addition to noting the different types of support, it is important to recognize that there are variations in the quality of support, which depend on: closeness of relationships (Cutrona and Cole, 2000); the reciprocity entailed in the support (Eckenrode and Hamilton, 2000) and its durability (Tracy and Biegel, 1994).

Building Empathy, Care, and Social Protectiveness

Although it receives less attention, civic engagement can be seen as a means of creating a more caring, empathic, and supportive environment in the lives of young people, particularly those who are vulnerable. Whereas the positive youth development discourse applies to all young people, the care factor is of particular relevance to young people who experience challenges, such as poverty, damages in family structures, incarceration, health issues, disability, and exploitation. Traditional youth services would often emphasise addressing a young person's problems, such as poor academic performance or social isolation, before they are deemed ready to take on leadership roles or engage collectively with others to bring about social change. Pittman et al. (2003, p.14) argue that the assumption that young people need to be 'fixed' before they can be developed runs counter to what is known about human motivation and adolescent development. They believe that all youth need to be challenged as well as cared for and there is a need to weave together opportunities to develop and engage. Likewise, Dolan (2010) argues that civic engagement should be seen as a means by which the needs and rights of vulnerable young people can be simultaneously addressed.

Civic engagement acknowledges the rights of young people to democratic participation and in doing so, their resilience and social support can be enhanced. The study of resilience focuses on how some individuals, in spite of exposure to a series of adverse experiences, manage to escape any serious harm (Coleman and Hendry, 1999). Longitudinal studies of risk and resilience have shown that many young people, despite being exposed to serious risks during childhood, cope well and demonstrate positive outcomes in adulthood. These studies have attributed this resilience to the presence of protective factors that help to mitigate against the effects of early disadvantage. The implications of this for providing a pathway out of extremism and a mechanism for re-entering and contributing to stable, civil societies is massive.

The Role of Communications, Social Media, and Social Networks

Awareness of and access to extremist materials, updates, recruiters, and other content today is unprecedented. While in the past individuals tempted toward radical activities would have to actively seek it out and be thoroughly vetted before even begging to become involved. Today they are but a few keyboard strikes away at any time. This is compounded by the incredibly high quality of social and digital media being produced by extremist organizations, all designed exclusively for a potential youth recruit audience. Few, if any, counter-narratives have been produced that challenge the quality and attractiveness of these persuasive messages, and of those that do exist, none are youth driven; they most often originate out of formal government structures.

Countering Online Extremism

To counter online extremism, three forms of action have been traditionally taken: Negative Measures, Monitoring Measures, and Positive Measures. However, few have actually engaged the target audience: vulnerable and other youth.

The Effectiveness of Negative Measures

Most governments currently rely heavily on negative measures to counter terrorism online. However, there is a large body of evidence that shows the overall ineffectiveness of negative measures, such as blocking, filtering, and taking down content, to combat terrorism online. Negative measures alone do not adequately tackle broader extremist trends, nor do they contribute to an overall depletion of terrorist-related materials available online. There are many examples of this, in particular relating to the terrorist group ISIS, where material is being rapidly taken down by social media platforms only to reappear just as quickly. Furthermore, many Internet services are based overseas and have no presence in the US or UK, and therefore have no compulsory agreement with law enforcement in these countries. In fact, some scholars consider the United States' First Amendment itself an obstacle to achieving comprehensive Internet hate speech regulation (Nemes, 2002; Franco and Warburton, 2013). For this reason, increasing negative measures to include 'extremist content', which has yet to be fully defined in legal terms, would push a larger network of online users to seek platforms that might be less willing to work with the UK/US government. These may be platforms based in non-UK/US jurisdictions or on smaller anonymous networks.

Expanding negative measures to include unwanted extremist content that does not breach defined legal terms, would also push users that feel targeted into the dark web where monitoring is no longer possible. Some communications theorists believe that the disconnected nature of data storage inherent of cloud computing technology poses particular dangers for youth to be exposed to dangerous and illegal activity (O'Brien, 2014). This increases security risks if counter-terrorism and counter-extremism practitioners are impeded from monitoring and surveillance. Finally, expansion of the government's role in negative measures may lead to public perceptions of governments policing thought. This perception of western tyranny and hypocrisy, already highlighted within extremist/terrorist propaganda, is exploited for radicalization and recruitment purposes. Whereas current government efforts in negative measures have shown to be ineffective, government bodies can begin using alternative methods for countering terrorism and extremism online. These alternative methods, described below, include an increased focus on monitoring online activity as well as employing positive measures. In addition, governments should partner with local NGOs and communities who have an

established record of effective online counter-extremism efforts, to better combat extremist and terrorist online activities, particularly those targeted at youth.

The Effectiveness of Monitoring

　　　　Monitoring extremist and terrorist trends online, particularly using social media as a tool for visualizing networks, has been crucial in recent surveillance as well as counter-terrorism and counter-extremism initiatives. Not taking down extremist content that does not breach counter-terrorism legislation is a valuable way for governmental and non-governmental practitioners to build a more accurate picture of the radicalization process and to improve evidence-based strategies to tackle it.

　　　　Monitoring of extremist and terrorist-related materials is also highly effective through NGO and think tank channels. Dedicated organizations monitor this area of online activity in order to understand better current social and political movements, and inform governments and the wider public about trends. For example, organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League have devoted resources to engaging actively with hate speech, alerting targeted groups about threats, and connecting local police about criminal activity (Henry, 2009). This is of high importance in understanding the processes and trends in radicalization that lead to violent extremism and terrorism. Only in understanding these processes and targeting sources can they be better addressed, deterred, and prevented by both government and civil actors. Mapping online extremism also allows for more targeted and, therefore, more effective prevention work.

The Effectiveness of Positive Measures

　　　　In recent years, and particularly in response to the current crisis in Syria and Iraq, there have been a number of counterspeech campaigns and positive measures taken to counter Islamist extremist trends. Some groups, campaigns, and organizations work specifically to address extremism while others have more broad goals that include countering extremism.

　　　　Examples of organizations that target extremism directly in the UK include *Counter Extremism Project* – a non-profit international organization made up of international leaders; *Inspire* – dedicated to counter-extremism and gender inequality and responsible for the #MakingAStand campaign; *Stand for Peace* – an interfaith organization aimed at tackling extremism; and the *Against Violent Extremism* (AVE) network – using ex-extremists to tackle radicalization processes and challenge extremist messaging. There are also many examples of individuals and decentralized actors that are not part of any formal organization that have united together to counter Islamic State more recently, both on and offline. An excellent example of a decentralized counterspeech campaign that went viral was the #No2ISIS social media campaign. Such case studies provide insight after the fact, but have generally not yielded measurable data that can be compared across cultures and situations.

　　　　Finding ways to use information and communication technology to improve the lives of youth and their communities all over the world is a critical area of communications research efforts (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, and Ólafsson, 2011; Smahel, Wright, and Cernikova, 2014). While thus far little communications research has focused specifically on the issue of radicalization, data from other areas of intervention research, including health and safety interventions, provide indications for the shape such research should take in the future. For example, findings indicate young people increasingly are more likely to respond to danger prevention strategies on the internet that they find personally empowering. We also know that family dynamics, including

parenting style and ideology, impact children's willingness to have parents regulate their online activity, a critical issue in protecting youth from radicalization (Byrne and Lee, 2011).

It is important that governments reconstruct how they define deliverables and move away from implementing extra negative measures that have proven to be ineffective in the overall goal of countering radicalization processes and/or making terrorist-related content or communication online less accessible. Positive measures that challenge extremism are more effective compared to negative measures because they are able to: a) target specific audiences thought to be vulnerable to extremism, b) measure and track viewership trends, and c) co-ordinate with offline counter-extremism initiatives.

Additionally, it is essential to understand the landscape in which these extremist and terrorists operate online. Today, extremist groups have a well-defined business model, in which digital platforms guide their strategies: they know their audience and have a clear, strong message, backed by a "sophisticated and global" marketing scheme. This allows them to successfully target vulnerable groups, particularly youth, who are in transition and searching for meaning or purpose (Lawrence et al., 2015). Their message attracts members, who are able to "like" "friend" "share" "follow" or "link" with the ideologies and hope purported by online recruiters. Lawrence et al. (2015) explain that "to counter [extremism's] influence, we must understand what extremists believe, their values, what motivates them – and what constitutes the rebuttal." This is an example of how governments can actively engage with communications and media academics and professionals to link intelligence of extremist's motivations and organization with digital platforms to devise effective and targeted counter narratives. Lawrence et al. (2015) call for an organized effort across the private, public, academic, and NGOs communities to pool resources and expertise in developing and launching successful counter-narrative brands, products, social networks, and political campaigns.

Civil society is much more effective in challenging extremist and/or terrorist propaganda streams as, in essence, extremist movements are themselves peripheral civil society movements. However, that is not to say that the government, NGOS, and private sector do not have a large role to play in facilitating and counterspeech initiatives. Governments play a key role in providing infrastructure that encourages and supports counterspeech initiatives. Government support can be implemented through financial assistance and incentives given to organizations, movements, and communities that are putting forward targeted counterspeech. Governments should also facilitate counterspeech initiatives structurally through prevention, and co-ordinate on and offline efforts to counter extremism.

Private sector companies, particularly social media companies and ISPs, can also work to facilitate counterspeech in a way that provides tangible deliverables to counter-extremism. These private companies benefit from supporting counterspeech content as a means of countering online extremism, since it creates a healthier realm of ideas within their platforms and naturally develops a more hostile environment for individuals wanting to use online platforms for extremist and/or terrorist-related purposes.

A Way Forward: Recommendations for Countering Youth Extremism

Based on the bodies of knowledge, identification of factors for successful outcomes, and frameworks for engaging youth in the development of civil societies, the following recommendations for action are provided. These parallel, and are imbedded within, the four key themes of the *UNESCO Empowering Youth to Build Peace* anti-extremism framework:

I.   Understanding the phenomenon of youth radicalization and de-radicalization is bolstered, available, and widely disseminated and used by young people and youth stakeholders to develop new narratives and improve national/local policies and actions;

1. Empower youth as researchers. Supporting youth to lead on research projects positively contributes to their development, enhancing their skill set, and empowering them to investigate issues that can be used as a launching pad to drive change. They are much more likely to be in touch with the mechanisms and structures that facilitate and discourage extremism recruitment.

2. Research into online and other resources that have a proven history of improving outcomes for youth substance abuse, suicide, and violence in similar at risk communities (Aboriginal youth, extremist youth) to address cultural despair.

3. Research and development of a variety of virtual, graphic, and narrative superheroes that can form alternatives to extremist, colonialist, and gender-biased models of leadership.

4. Research into understanding the differential motivations of male and female youth in their involvement in extremist groups.

5. Seek both age cohort but also intergenerational resources for building and maintaining a sense of cultural stability (but not superiority) in youth at risk for extremist alliances, which goes along with building intercultural communication. Building intercultural communication may well fail if those taking part have a sense of cultural insecurity/inadequacy/despair with no remedy for that experience of cultural "emptiness".

6. Ensure that all programs and policies are shared among major UN agencies and NGOs. Coordination of consistent programming and messages across UN entities.

II.   Young people and key youth stakeholders become key actors in preventing and countering violent extremist content online;

1. It is important to recognize that initial processes of radicalization predominantly occur offline. While the Internet is an important secondary socializer and potential catalyst for radicalization, offline processes must be better addressed in preventative measures, particularly within schools, universities, and prisons. Online counter-extremism work must learn from the successes and failures of offline counter-extremism, and coordinate with offline efforts.

2. Expand the use of existing youth programs designed to foster citizenship, education, and active youth engagement. Expand these for use in online settings and expand opportunities for civic engagement through online and other media.

3. Expand the use and promotion of applied youth leadership programs designed to give youth the skills necessary to more effectively lead their local societies in more stable and civil directions.

4. Comprehensive community capacity building programs are needed to firmly engage youth and provide ownership of local decisions that impact them. Included should be efforts designed to:
   a. Improve community involvement and civic engagement;
   b. Increase alliances and coalitions for citizen mobilization;
   c. Increased public advocacy of issues effecting communities;
   d. Increase resident satisfaction with groups they belong to; and,
   e. Make more resources available to communities and citizen groups.

5. Research into replicable country-based cohorts of "train the trainer" youth leaders to develop workshops on intercultural communication (non-virtual); establish a sense of cultural heritage (non-extremist); and build a sense of future hope through envisioning non-violent forms of political co-operation in group forms.

6. Researching alternative pathways for youth out of extremist positions. Once one goes down the extremist path, it can seem like the only way out, and it can be addictive. Seeing extremism as an addiction within the public health model can help us better understand what interventions will provide realistic and positive outcomes in a) getting youth off the extremist path, and b) ensuring their ongoing flourishing and re-habilitation in a post-extremist environment. Models of supports used in addiction and mental health rehabilitation are potential resources here.

7. Ensure that all programs and policies are shared among major UN agencies and NGOs. Coordination of consistent programming and messages across UN entities.

III. *Mobilize and empower media professionals to work together to combat radicalization and online hate speech, particularly in countries suffering tensions and conflicts.*

1. Establish metrics to measure efficacy of programs:
   - Design, test, and disseminate a social science-based scale to measure impact of UNESCO-supported programs that promote pro-social values in all UNESCO theme areas worldwide.
   - Support initial translation of scales into Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, as well as other languages of strategic interest.
   - Employ scales to establish measurable outcomes for intervention and engagement programs.
   - Allow organizations around the world to use scales to increase comparability of programs and establish best-practices.

2. Ethical journalism and mass communication master course:
   - Create a course to engage undergraduate journalism and mass communications students in active ethical decision making.
   - Involve both future journalists and other future media professionals, such as public relations students, in the creation of ethical communications materials.
   - Draw upon research in Peace Studies, International Studies, and Journalism Criticism as well as traditional Journalism Ethics materials.
   - Make syllabus and supplementary materials available to universities world-wide.
   - Create a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) version of the class available to students, professionals, and other interested parties.

3. Research into establishing an online world-wide "911" response when youth seek to connect to extremist websites, giving them an immediate alternative option at the time of first Internet contact, potentially connecting them immediately to "recovered" role models as trained responders as well as other resources.

4. Counter-extremism and counter-terrorism should be separated at a strategic and delivery level. International governments must consider the central co-ordination of counter-extremism, separate from their individual security, defense, and anti-terrorism units.

5. Negative measures, including government-backed censorship and filtering initiatives, are ineffective in tackling online extremism; they tackle the symptoms rather than the causes of radicalization. Motivated extremists and terrorist affiliates can evade such measures easily through the dark Internet, virtual private networks (VPNs), and even video game platforms. Blocked materials consistently reappear online and there is no effective way for ISPs or social media companies to filter extremist content.

6. Counter-speech and positive measures are critical in challenging the sources of extremism and terrorism-related material online. Community engagement and civil society action are essential components of such positive measures and, as such, counter-speech initiatives should be civil society-led and, in some cases, supported by governments.

IV. *Online communities become actively involved in the design and implementation of creative research, outreach and media campaigns, sensitizing young people, policy makers, opinion leaders and the general public, contributing to counter violent extremism and radicalization.*

1. Research into forming online networks that facilitate cross cultural communication and indeed involve actual facilitators working virtually; research on, and trials of formats that build cross-cultural communication in marginalized youth who turn to the internet for companionship, self-identification, and self-assertion.

2. Empower Youth as Activists for Peace through Social Media. To compliment and advance the *Youth as Researchers* efforts, structures and programs must be developed for youth researchers to immediately translate their findings into counter-extremism narratives and calls to action.

3. Youth driven anti-extremism media campaigns:

   - Partner with an international academic communications organization such as the International Communications Association (ICA) or the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) to create an annual UNESCO-driven media campaigns competition.

   - Allow undergraduate strategic communications teams from around the world to submit campaigns on a focal area for one of UNESCO's sectors or theme areas. This could rotate annually.
     - All campaigns would include local primary research, media strategies, and creative executions in one of the organization's official languages.
     - Students would also report the results of a pilot campaign, executed in the language of instruction for the team's university.
     - Invite top 3—5 teams from around the world to present their campaigns at the UNESCO Youth Forum or other appropriate venue.
     - Create a panel of international communications experts to judge the entries.
     - Implement winning program in targeted areas of interest.
     - Make campaign available in all areas of the world for pro bono media distribution.

4. Ensure that all programs and policies are shared among major UN agencies and NGOs. Coordination of consistent programming and messages across UN entities.

5. Establish a wide range of structures to recognize and praise the counter-extremism of youth activists and positive change agents.

6. Develop, promote, and maximize the use of online structures to help build social support, empathy development, and extremism reduction, and provide positive mentorship.

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