

The GCC Countering Violent Extremism Network

IMPACT EVALUATION REPORT 2017



Overview

This Impact Evaluation Report of the Gulf Strategy GCC Countering Violent Extremism Fellowship programme is based on the pilot programme launched in March 2016 and the regional follow-up meeting for the pilot phase in March 2017.

The report comprises of the following sections:

Section I: The network Conference Summary and Next Steps Report

Section II: An independent evaluation of the impact of the Fellowship

Section III: Appendix

- Transcripts of the pre-conference interviews with Fellows
- Individual impact stories from Fellows compiled using the expressive writing programme

The report submitted here summarizes the high level impact of the pilot programme and its methodology of creating a peer-to-peer network of GCC Fellows. The report specifically addresses the impact at the individual level as well as at an organisational level. It is followed by a summary of recommendations should the programme continue and to build a broader base of GCC Fellows. The evidence suggests that it is possible to build a network in the Gulf, despite the many challenges. This network can act as a means of sharing UK expertise and a mechanism for UK posts to gain greater insight into extremism across the region. What is needed is an injection of resources to build the network up to around fifty people working in this space. To support projects initiated by this network and to work towards linking it to the GCC Secretariat to share or take over its funding. A key lesson is that this should be presented in the Gulf as a Fellowship in London on UK counter extremism that is open to GCC nationals nominated by their governments. The GCC network elements should be secondary in presenting the opportunity. On this basis the recruitment base can be developed and grown. It is also vital that resources are allocated in good time and that recruitment lead time of 4-5 months is allowed to cultivate interest and work with posts on identifying Fellows. Finally, that the network needs to evolve into a project-network through which direct collaboration between GCC countries can be cultivated.

The role of the Expressive Writing element in the programme was an important additional feature which should be retained and expanded. The individual testimony of the Fellows showed that it embraced as a means of building individual capacity for increasing resilience and well-being for groups at risk of radicalisation in the GCC and Iraq. It should form a central part of the methodology of these programmes going forward.

Some suggested next steps agreed by the Fellows in the recent regional meeting are proposed below – to strengthen the network and create additional impact over time.

1. Network Project 1: Social media campaign pilot
2. UK Fellowship 2: Second UK programme to coincide with Gulf Summit

3. Research Project 1: Deliver research findings by the Founding Fellows at the next UK programme
4. Country Engagement 1: To produce a concept note on UK-Kuwait co-operation on the national strategy
5. Impact Report 2: To measure and outline the impact of the Fellowship

Section I

The GCC Countering Violent Extremism Network: Next Steps

"Foreign policy used to be something that happened overseas ... Now we see the impacts of foreign policy issues coming home. The distinction between what is foreign and what is domestic is increasingly blurred."

HMA Kuwait, Matthew Lodge, addressing the UK-GULF Countering Extremism Network at its meeting in Kuwait City, March 2017.

Aim:

To develop the most extensive network of practitioners possible in the Gulf States to achieve a step change in the effectiveness of counter extremism measures across the region.

Objectives:

- 1.To deliver joint and individual country projects that have measurable impacts on the efficacy of countering extremism initiatives in fellowship countries.
- 2.To develop and grow the platform through which the exchange of best practice can take place between the UK and GCC and within the GCC.
- 3.To develop and disseminate easy to replicate best practice projects across the network.
- 4.To develop mechanisms for projecting countering extremism interventions from the Gulf to the rest of the region by encouraging the GCC states to work with the UK in developing a wider Middle Eastern and North African practice based network.

Outputs Overview:

There were a number of specific next steps identified over the course of the meeting by the Fellows. These included:

1. Network Project 1: Social media campaign pilot
2. UK Fellowship 2: Second UK programme to coincide with Gulf Summit
3. Research Project 1: Deliver research findings by the Founding Fellows at the next UK programme
4. Country Engagement 1: To produce a concept note on UK-Kuwait co-operation on the national strategy
5. Impact Report 2: To measure and outline the impact of the Fellowship

Outputs Detail:

I. Network Project 1: Social media campaign pilot

The development of a pilot social media campaign to test out the impact of learning from UK experts, to road test the national strategy in Kuwait and to see what GCC wide impacts can be achieved.

It was agreed at the concluding session of the Fellowship that the network would be mobilized to focus on a specific pilot project that could demonstrate impact initially between now and July and then at the Ministerial Summit in the autumn.

To achieve this objective in the time required it is necessary to agree on a communications campaign that has a measurable and felt impact across the region in the period leading up to Ramadan and then during Ramadan, culminating in a short presentation at the Gulf Summit in the Autumn.

The Fellows present at the conference agreed to incubate the social media campaign project in Kuwait, working closely with the Kuwaiti team from the Ministry of Information, on the utilization of the new online channel of older television output from the 1950s to the 1990s. This channel is called Qurain TV - media.gov.kw/LiveTV1.aspx. Some highlights of the campaign would include:

- To package items from older shows that will be shown with simple messaging, most of which would be reviewing/satirical but would also contain an underlying messaging campaign on the idea of Kuwaiti and Arab identity before polarization and the rise of sectarianism.
- It will need to be accompanied by a cultivation campaign for online discussion of the shows which will be highly critical and satirical.
- This blogging on the design, style, production values, and content of these shows will be promoted to younger and more successful bloggers.
- In addition, development will be encouraged of a review style programme of old television and old television news.
- This will be designed to encourage a narrative of shared identity, shared narrative, shared cultural heritage and a larger meta narrative of an Arab identity that was defined by consensus and inclusion rather than polarisation, violence and exclusion.

II. UK Fellowship 2: Second UK programme to coincide with Gulf Summit

To recruit for a new Fellowship to extend the coverage into other ministries, increase country coverage, deepen country networks and spread best practice further.

The UK-GULF Countering Extremism Network is developing a GCC wide network of practitioners focused on countering extremism. The network has already established:

- A peer-to-peer network in some relevant ministries across four GCC states
- A working methodology for UK programmes that enable knowledge transfer
- A platform for providing bespoke advice and engagement with participants on a one to one basis

- A means of sharing analysis of the current practice in countering extremism strategies and considering what training and development programmes might be of assistance to be delivered through the network

The inaugural UK residential workshop programme combined sessions designed to pool experience and best practice with inputs from the participants and from UK government departments, civil society organisations, and counter extremism experts from the UK and the region. The emphasis was on countering extremism both on and off line with an emphasis on upstream communications strategies and the sharing of expertise and approaches to downstream challenges. Personal development sessions built transferable skills in leadership and project management, through a Theory of Change approach, to enhance the implementation of projects. The follow-up conference focused on analysing – together and with colleagues from Iraq – what dynamics had changed over the course of the year and how those changes had impacted on the Fellowship’s Theory of Change.

The pilot and the follow-up have demonstrated that the individual approach is also well attuned to the cultural and social norms of the GCC, and that in the context of systems in which individuals and their connections matter sometimes more than institutions and processes, the impact of the model is magnified further. This approach is also scalable across the region and by bringing non-GCC states into the discussion, as with the inclusion of the former Minister of the Interior in Iraq, it connects the Gulf with the wider region.

The aim should be to establish an active and managed network of up to 50 counter extremism practitioners across the GCC, to utilise this network and connect it with other networks across the wider Middle East, and to work more deeply with this team to develop a Project-Network. A key issue identified by the Fellows was the need to extend the ministry spread that is involved and extend the work to other areas. The ministries that are currently represented, connected or that have been mentioned as being a desirable extension (marked *) of the network are:

Map of Ministerial coverage

Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Information	Ministry of Religious Affairs	Ministry of Justice	MOD/Royal Court
KSA	Kuwait	Oman*	Bahrain	Oman
Bahrain	Bahrain	KSA*		

The most effective way of addressing this governmental spread issue is to run one or two more UK based Fellowships. This is essential to deepen and extend the network coverage but also to build and develop support for the range of initiatives to be developed.

III. Research Project 1: Deliver research findings by the Founding Fellows at the next UK programme

To design a research project on the influence of structural drivers of extremism and radicalisation in the GCC, which explores the balance of factors including ideology, economic inequality and uncertainty, sectarian politics and other dynamics. This research will be mapped onto practice policy and project proposals that can be implemented by country hubs and collectively across the GCC.

The research will refer to the framework presented by Martine Zeuthen (RUSI) at the network conference, which separates structural motivations from individual incentives and enabling factors in the radicalisation process. Developing an understanding of how political and economic structures as drivers of extremism in the Gulf underpin these other aspects will increase the effectiveness of projects targeting individual incentives and enabling factors such as social media.

This need not be a full-blown piece of primary research but rather a piece that looks at existing secondary sources already produced by a variety of actors across the region. The objective needs to be as practical as possible with the aim of ensuring that further work does not duplicate work that has taken place. The research should also be based on the premise that the purpose of the network is to implement change and not to be a research based organisation. However, the network must recognize and build into its work going forward the importance of an evidence based approach to policy making.

IV. Country Engagement 1: To produce a concept note on UK-Kuwait co-operation on the national strategy

To draft a proposal for bilaterally working with the Kuwaiti team drafting the national communications strategy for CVE, and link it with the Bahraini work in the same space.

On their return from the 2016 Fellowship programme in London, the Fellows from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information formed a cross departmental internal committee designed to prepare a national communications strategy for countering extremism in Kuwait. The committee meets weekly and has adopted the Theory of Change approach they worked on in the UK as the basis of the strategy they are developing. They have incorporated many of the insights and practices explored in the UK programme but have changed and adapted these to conditions in Kuwait and have also been influenced by best practice in other GCC states, notably Saudi Arabia. This exchange of information represents the three-way connectivity that characterizes the Fellowship experience along with experiential learning and the knowledge transfer model.

UK to Fellowship country – Fellowship country to Fellowship country – Fellowship country to UK

V. Impact Report 2: To measure and outline the impact of the Fellowship network as a methodology within the CVE space:

A Report to be submitted measuring the impact of the Fellowship Network to date.

Impact Matrix/Mapping of Pilot Phase

No Impact	Individual	National Project	Society	GCC/Regional
Qatar	Oman			
UAE	Kuwait	Kuwait		
Yemen	Bahrain	Bahrain		
	KSA			

There will be independent evaluation of the Fellows' impact stories and these will frame the detail of the delivery of the programme going forward. This impact evaluation methodology will continue to be embedded in each strand of the programme. The objective for the next phase of the project will be impacts as mapped below.

Planned Impact Matrix/Mapping of Phase Two

No Impact	Individual	National Project	Society	GCC/Regional
UAE	Oman	Oman	Oman	Awareness of the Project
Yemen	Kuwait	Kuwait	Kuwait	
	Bahrain	Bahrain	Bahrain	
	KSA	KSA	KSA	
	Qatar	Qatar		

Section II

Impact Assessment Report

By: Martine Zeuthen & Gayatri Sahgal, Independent Evaluators

CVE Fellowship M&E Recommendation Report

Executive Summary

The CVE specific fellowship is a programme designed for strategically identified representatives from relevant ministries in the GCC countries. The programme takes the fellows through a CVE training which includes lessons learned from UK's PREVENT strategy as well as inputs from the GCC region. The training programme is followed up with a loosely structured networking arrangement for fellows to discuss and agree on a way forward and utilise their CVE experience in their respective home countries.

The underlying logic of the programme is if strategically identified fellows are taken through an intense learning experience with a group of like-minded fellows then they will use the learning to influence policies and initiatives in their respective countries. The programme also assumes that the network serves as a platform for sharing ideas and challenges when seeking to implement CVE work.

Based on a rapid assessment, the M&E team found that while the TSRN programme has achieved many of its aims and objectives, further efforts can be undertaken to strengthen impact. It was particular noted that Expressive Writing was a new and important addition to fellowship programme.

Achievements:

- **A unique opportunity for networking.** The TSRN fellowship network presents a unique opportunity to serve as a networking and awareness raising platform for CVE actors and bureaucrats across the Gulf States.
- **Enhanced strategic thinking lead by fellows.** The fellowship programme process has contributed to a number of positive developments for the fellows and their government organisations. Such as contributing towards the development of a national communication strategy in Kuwait led by the Ministry of Information. Other examples include more individually driven experiences such as the thought leadership provided by fellows from Oman and Bahrain.

Suggestions For Enhancing Impact

- **Invest in taking individual experience to organisational change** Fellows need to be provided with more direction and understanding of how to translate lessons from the programme including those learnt from the network, in carrying out their individual responsibilities as well as strengthening the capacity of the ministries to respond to the threat of VE.
- **Expansion of networking arrangements and better facilitation of existing networks.** Current arrangements such as the *Whats-App* group should be expanded and efforts undertaken to

facilitate more structured discussions that are moderated to ensure a plurality of views. Additional steps should also be taken to expand the existing space for networking.

- **Clarify the objectives** to the fellows of the purpose of the programme, the need for more technical and specific trainings tailored to the needs and interest of fellows.
- **Adopt a more criteria driven selection process** of fellows that ensures a critical mass of representatives from various ministries who are committed to participating in the programme, creating partnerships with other CVE initiatives in the region, and ensuring greater budgetary commitments and clarifying expectations around the budget.
- **Strengthen the M&E processes to capture impact.** Through an articulation of a clearer Theory of Change (ToC), developing an M&E plan prior to implementation and focusing the evaluation on capturing the strength and quality of the network through frameworks such as network analysis. Such initiatives will be essential for capturing impact of the fellowship going forward.

1. Introduction

The Stabilization and Recovery Network (TSRN) has been leading a Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) based fellowship programme for the Gulf States, since February 2016. The programme which is being funded by the Cabinet Office (CO), aims to build a network of civil servants and government representatives working on different aspects of CVE related issues across the Gulf region. The current membership of the fellowship includes primarily members of the Ministry of Interior, Justice and Information, identified by Foreign Commonwealth Office representatives in the Gulf countries.

To provide an initial assessment of the strength of the fellowship network in supporting CVE work in the region, TSRN engaged a team of two Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) specialists prior to a planned follow up meeting of the fellowship programme. The engagement's purpose was to assess primarily through interviews with the fellows, the achievement of the programme one year on and to analyse key limitations and lessons learnt as well as suggest recommendations for strengthening programming and taking it to scale. More specifically, the M&E was structured around three key focus areas -

- 1) Individual experience and learnings of Fellows one year on
- 2) Impact of the network and potential of the joint project
- 3) Suggestions for building on this work and conclusions on the viability and impact of taking such individual based personal development and project enhancement work to scale

The following report is structured around these three aspects and begins with an initial section that describes the programmatic context and the methodology adopted in conducting the assessment. Following this, the purpose of the network is articulated in a separate section based on the consultant team's own understanding of the aim of the fellowship programme and how it seeks to contribute to change. In the succeeding sections, the findings on the three key focus areas are detailed with the largest section of the report consisting of recommendations and suggestions for consideration should the fellowship be taken to scale.

2. Programmatic Context

The Fellowship was implemented through an initial residential programme held in March 2016 in London. The participants included 12 representatives from the Ministry of Interior, Justice and

Information. The programme, combined sessions designed to pool experience and best practices with inputs from the participants and from the UK government departments, civil society organizations, and counter extremism experts in the region.

Following this meeting, a follow-up fellowship programme was held in Kuwait in March 2017. The follow up meeting was attended by four of the original fellows as well as new potential fellows that the original fellows had invited. Most of these were from Kuwait's Ministry of Information. The follow-up conference focused on analysing the dynamics that had changed over the course of the past year and how these changes had impacted the Fellowships overall objective.

During the first and second fellowship programmes, an informal *Whats-App* group was established by the Fellows to encourage debate and discussion around CVE related issues. The *Whats-App* group included members not only from the fellowship group but also members of the TSRN network. Inclusion of TSRN members helped ensure that a certain level of contact was maintained with the fellows after the initial meeting.

3. Methodology

The methodological focus was on understanding and capturing information on the focus areas, one year on from the initial fellowship meeting. The focus was on understanding Fellows perceptions of the initial fellowship programme, the networking experiences following this meeting as well as any changes and or learnings that have emerged as a consequence of such a programme. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding, the learnings of the second programme were also captured during the data collection, but were not treated as the primary subject of this review.

The methodology consisted of the review of programme documentation and previous monitoring data as well as semi-structured interviews with fellows during the Follow Up programme.

To understand the purpose of and structure of the programme, the availed data and programme documentation was first reviewed. Following this, the M&E team had three phone meetings with the TSRN team which further shed insight on the design and structure of the programme.

To guide the interview process, the M&E team developed a questionnaire, based on previous questions as well as the consultants own understanding of the data needed to support analysis of the three focus areas. The questionnaire was structured around the following areas –

- Individual learnings of the fellows both expected and self-reported and behavioural changes related to such learnings,
- The impact on networks and relations among fellows and on individual ministries as a consequence of such networking,
- Feedback for strengthening current and future programming efforts

(See Figure below for details on the design and structure of the questionnaire)



Figure 1. Questionnaire Design

3.1 Limitations

The small sample size of respondents limited the ability of the M&E team to evaluate the full extent of programme's impact. The total number of fellows who participated in the first meeting held in February 2016 were twelve, however only four of the initial group participated in the follow-up meeting held in Kuwait.

The criteria for the selection of fellows was not clear which limited the scope for assessment of the programmes impact. The fellows were selected by FCO representatives in the GCC such that while some basic criteria may have existed, the extent to which it was followed and how it was connected to the achievement of the overall objective was not clear.

The profile of the fellows particularly their interest levels indicated a self-selection bias which also further complicated the assessment of impact. Along with somewhat unclear criteria of selection, the fellows all seemed to have an interest and engagement with the subject. The group of fellows who participated in the programme was quite specific than if a random selection of fellows had been made. For instance, many of the fellows appeared to have an interest and stake in the topic and had been working on improving their knowledge outside the programme as well.

Due to a number of challenges not as many fellows as intended were able to participate in the follow up meeting in Kuwait. One such challenge was the visa restrictions however this was in the instance of the participation of the former minister from Iraq overcome by a skype call in. Another fellow also participated via skype.

Prior to the meeting one of the M&E consultants was requested to prepare a presentation on CVE lessons from East Africa, this was primarily initiated to bring in perspectives from projects undertaken on CVE elsewhere. The presentation by an M&E team member during the follow-up meeting was considered to be a potential ground for bias as it could influence the way in which the fellows responded and interacted with the team member.

3.2 Remedial Action

Apart from the selection criteria regarding the selection of fellows which was determined during the design phase of the project, the consultant team took specific steps to raise and address the remaining methodological restrictions.

To address the problem of limited sample size, all the fellows present were interviewed. The 'new fellows', who had joined the fellowship in Kuwait for the first time, were unable to answer all the questions regarding the initial training and questions around being a part of the network. The analysis presented in the following report is therefore based on the data that the team was able to collect.

The M&E team discussed the request for presentation by one of the Consultant's with TSRN to ensure an acceptance of the potential bias this would introduce to the data. It was agreed to proceed with presentation as well as follow up interviews.

4 Fellowship Programme Aims and Objectives

Prior to participating in the follow-up meeting the consultants had a notion of the principal activities, but not a detailed enough understanding of the aims and objectives, particularly as they related to the type of impact or change that the programme was hoping to achieve. While the M&E team was not explicitly required to comment on the aims and objectives of the programme, having an explicit articulation of the ToC was thought to be critical for designing the M&E strategy.

Following conversations with the TSRN team during the follow-up meeting, the team was able to more clearly understand the type of change that the programme was interested in achieving. The team attempted to articulate these insights into a short *programme description statement*, outlining the activities and how they relate to the overall objective of the programme along with the assumptions which undergird the achievement of such objectives.

As such the programme, could be described as follows:

The CVE specific fellowship is a programme designed for strategically identified representatives from relevant ministries in the GCC countries. The programme takes the fellows through a CVE training including lessons learned from the UK as well as input from the GCC region to allow for conversation around the specific GCC context in terms of threat of VE as well as government and non-state responses. The training programme itself is followed up with a loosely structured network of fellows who can discuss and agree to a way forward for utilising their CVE experience in the respective home government and positions.

The logic is if strategically identified fellows are taken through an intense learning experience with a group of like-minded fellows then they will use the learning to influence policies and initiatives in their respective home countries. It is assumed that the experience also has a personal impact that enhances the commitment from each fellow in their future work in relation to CVE. It is also assumed that the network serves as a platform for sharing ideas and challenges when seeking to implement CVE work. The fellowship network offers a support function to address such challenges and discuss emerging ideas.

While this description is a step towards the articulation of a broader ToC, it is recommended that going forward the TSRN team pay special attention to the following key aspects when reviewing and revising the TOC of the programme;

- The level of impact that can be expected is determined in part by the selection criteria of the fellows, which requires further consideration. Recommendations for criteria that could be used in future follow up, are articulated in the section on suggestions and ideas.
- Given the sensitivity of the design to contextual changes, it is important that the selection criteria also be designed to ensure that a critical mass of fellows from key ministries are included in the programme;
- Explicit articulation of the objective of the fellowship as it relates to both individual learnings and how these are supposed to translate to influencing policies and programmes for more organizational level change. If there is no clear objective because the fellowship is designed to accommodate the needs of the different fellows, then this should be also be clarified.
- Nuanced understanding of the type of role that the network is expected to play or if it's role is to serve as only a platform for the sharing ideas.

5 Findings From the M&E Exercise

The findings are organized into those that relate to individual experiences, the impact on the network and organizations as well as feedback from the monitoring visit on steps for improving current and future programming before taking the programme to scale.

5.1 Summary of Individual Experiences

Fellows appeared to have a clear understanding of their learning objectives which were reportedly met by the programme. From the interviews, it became clear that most fellows were engaging in the fellowship with the aim to learn about violent extremist (VE) ideologies, recruitment practices as well as strategies for addressing the threat of VE. For many of them learning from the UK experience was an important aspect especially *'to gain an insight into the strategies that succeeded and failed, so as to learn from this and apply them in the development of country specific CVE strategies'*¹. In the interviews, it came across that in particular the presentation around strategic communication had made an impression as many of the fellows were from the Ministry of Communication and had a particular interest in understanding how to counter extremist narratives. Conceptually however there appeared to be some confusion about the terminology of CVE, VE and CT. This may not be a concern in and of itself, but if the purpose was to increase an awareness and understanding of these terms, then it appears that there is some follow up work needed.

Networking was primarily through a *What's App* group which could benefit from more structure and facilitation. When asked about the network most of the fellows referred to the *What's App* group as the principal medium of communication and networking. The group which was created by TSRN served as a platform for sharing of information – articles, books, news reports, on a broad range of CVE related issues more than a specific discussion forum. In their feedback, fellows expressed a desire to focus the conversation towards more specific discussions that were also well moderated. One fellow in particular highlighted the need for a more facilitated discussion in order to limit the domination of more prejudicial views. According to this fellow, conversations prompted by some members had opened the space for sectarian rhetoric particularly around anti-shia propaganda.

Current networking arrangements could be expanded. While acknowledging that CVE challenges were different across the contexts, fellows also expressed a need for expanding the current networking arrangements. As one fellow described, *'we don't have a tangible way of working*

¹ Pre-Follow-up meeting Interview with Fellow – Bahrain;

together. Next step of the fellowship should be to collaborate more on exchanging ideas to work more effectively². During the conference the suggestion of establishing a common GCC CVE office as well as a GCC strategy was made. Given the different position and roles played, this seems to be a potentially relevant avenue to pursue. Prior to implementing such a strategy its usefulness in the context of how it fits into the programme's ToC, would need to be considered.

The suggestion for greater collaboration was also made with the viewpoint that the diversity of the group offered a unique opportunity for building a more inclusive network that encapsulated different perspectives. The fellows explained that prior to the process thought that they could never learn from and work with colleagues from other GCC countries. After the meetings, they have found that it was possible to collaborate and that there were some shared lessons to be learnt across the GCC.

5.2 Impact of the Fellowship

The possibility for impact assessment was limited due to limitations related to the design of the programme and data collection processes. One of the requirements for the consultants was to describe the impact observed. From a systematic perspective² the data collected thus far was not sufficient to assert impact and in the absence of any control group it was difficult to attribute changes in individual experiences to the fellowship programme, alone. Moreover, the reduced sample size and the selection criteria as indicated in the methodology section, was not clear which also did not allow for an effective impact assessment.

These limitations were discussed with the TSRN team who requested the M&E team focus efforts on gathering key insights on networking relations and organizational level changes. The following section presents a synthesis of the main changes reported by the Fellows during the interview and data collection process.

5.2.1 Networking Changes

Creation of a collaborative environment. As was also noticed by the UK government representative in the meeting, over the course of the year fellows have established a trusting relationship and are willing and able to discuss and share with each other. Although, there are issues that they would not be able to discuss with colleagues in the region, the environment was found to be more relaxed and collaborative than it has often been seen in the Gulf. This clearly has a potential for possible follow up programmes.

5.2.2 Organizational Level Changes

Organizational level changes take time. While most fellows reported that they had learned a lot from the UK experience and found it interesting, not all were however able to adopt such learnings to their context. More direct training was identified as one of the principal limitations of the programme which limited impact at the organizational level.

Some steps were however taken by the programme particularly around assisting fellows in designing a ToC for their CVE strategy. These efforts contributed towards evolving the discussion around a national communications strategy in Kuwait led by the Ministry of Information. Strategies included in the national strategy for Kuwait included the adoption of a ToC approach, as well as some of the ideas

² Pre-Follow-up meeting Interview with Fellow - Bahrain

gained from UK's experience but adapted to Kuwaiti conditions. Other examples are more individually driven experiences such as the thought leadership provided by fellows from Oman and Bahrain.

More efforts however can be taken to translate learnings. While the above efforts constitute important achievements further efforts can also be undertaken. Such support would include a stronger emphasis on how fellows can translate their learnings more specifically into daily work and how these could be expected to translate into organizational level changes.

As a summary, the fellows have been exposed to various parts of CVE, have learned about what worked and did not work in the British approach. They have been met and learned from fellow civil servants from other Gulf states and heard their analytical views of the threat. What they have had less opportunity to do is to take this learning and experiences into practice either at policy level or practically as such the behavioural change cannot be assessed at this stage.

5.3 Suggestions, Ideas and Recommendations

At the two day meeting in Kuwait the consultant got the opportunity to meet, interact, interview and discuss with the TSRN team, the fellows and the representatives from the UK government as well as read existing data from the fellowship meetings in the London. Based on these interactions the following suggestions were noted for improving programmatic efficiency, strengthening M&E systems and taking the programme to scale.

5.3.3 Overall Suggestions to the Fellowship

- **Clarify and explain the objective to the fellows;** from interviews and discussions the data suggests that there is a need to further clarify the objective of the fellowship, who it is aimed at and the type of change or impact that it is hoping to achieve. It is important to explain what the intention is and why TSRN is leading this process on behalf of the UK. Such articulation is needed to clarify how success of the programme can be measured as well as who should be in the programme and what they should be expecting.
- **Get technical on the training;** a reoccurring theme at the meeting in Kuwait was the desire of the fellows to go a step deeper, potentially with the fellows getting the opportunity to gain more specialised knowledge. The facilitated process needs to be combined with further technical expertise in the areas relevant to the objective and the fellows. When thinking about CVE strategies and how to engage other line ministries the fellows underscored the need to hear the perspectives from civil servants working in these relevant ministries to understand their views and those of lower level implementers. As an example, if critical thinking was identified as a relevant area of interest, it would be valuable to have representatives from Ministry of Education as well as actual teachers as part of the discussions. This could be complemented by a greater emphasis on Expressive Writing.
- **Get specific on the training;** following this point there was a desire to also gain a more comprehensive understanding of their particular sector as it related to CVE. For instance information ministry representative were interested in going deeper within their line of work and engaging with newer strategies for countering extremist narratives. This should be considered both in the network between meetings and in actual meetings. In meeting this demand it would be important to balance the competing needs.

- **The un-challenged conversation;** regarding possible networks and follow up conversations happening outside the actual meeting such as the *What's App* groups are an interesting opportunity for staying in touch. However, it would be useful to be more clear on what the objective is - is it to continue the learning process, it is to discuss issues relating to the next meeting. Currently it appears to be an unstructured platform for sharing of information without much guidance or facilitation. While the current platform represents a convenient medium, mechanisms for ensuring the filtering or countering of prejudicial and sectarian views do not seem to be in place. Although the *Whats-app* platform facilitates debate and sharing of information, more efforts need to be undertaken to explain the purpose of the platform and to establish mechanisms for moderating content.
- **Focus on how they can use this in daily work;** the interviews with the fellows underlined the limited applicability of lessons and experiences learned during the fellowship trainings. As such the consultant team recommends a clear plan and focus on how the fellows can be supported in translating the lessons from the fellowship into practice for the fulfillment of their individual duties and for influencing the functioning of their organization, more generally.

5.3.3 Suggestions for Strengthening M&E

If the fellowship network is taken to scale and TSRN and its donors would like to continue to learn more about the effect of a network like the fellowship, a number of approaches would be worth considering:

- **Identify the type and level of change that is being sought;** through a more clearly articulated purpose and direction of the network a ToC could be developed for the fellowship which would help identify the change that the fellowship is seeking to achieve. A clear objective of the change which is being sought would help the programme implementers identify and measure change more accurately as well as allow for a clearer articulation of how the different activities contribute towards the achievement of the ultimate objective. In defining the change it may be important to define the impact at both the individual and network level.
- **Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan** to assess impact there is a need to develop an evaluation and monitoring plan from the outset. The development of the plan would need to follow a highly systematic approach and would require close collaboration between the M&E lead with the fellowship director. The fellowship may have to be structured to satisfy an evaluation design which would first need to begin with an articulation of the ToC.
- **Use more context specific tools for designing evaluations:** To gauge the strength of the impact it is suggested that the programme implementers TSRN adopt a network – evaluation model which focuses on assessing the strength and the quality of the connection between individuals and organizations³.

³ See NGO network analysis Handbook for details on the network approach
http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/Dersham_NGO%20Network%20Analysis%20Handbook%20Final.pdf

5.3.3 Suggestions for Scale Up

- **Selection of individuals is crucial:** The selection criteria of fellows is of critical import and needs more clarification and specification. Specifically, emphasis should be paid to the following key aspects;
 - **Develop specific criteria:** informed by analysis on who leads / is relevant for CVE in each country it is commendable to develop selection criteria of the fellows. Who is relevant to have in the programme and why? The FCO in each country can help identify alongside with the existing fellows however, there should be a clear articulation of who fits in the fellowship and why.
 - **Test for commitment;** another suggestion that was raised by the participants was the wish to ensure commitment, which could include retaining only those fellows that are able to contribute frequently and effectively to the network; there was a desire to make the programme ambitious, relevant and focused and also ensure a level of commitment.
 - **Critical mass;** a final recommendation regarding selection of fellows and numbers is the need for having 2-3 from each represented ministry an example is the Ministry of Information in Kuwait. Where more than one fellow was represented in the first trip and now more have joined since. Depending on the ultimate objective of the programme the feedback from the participants seems to suggest that multiple representative from the ministry are able to more easily advocate for organizational changes than if only one member was to do so. Multiple representative working together facilitate discussions at national level and provide space for a bit more team work in developing ways to translate lessons learned into activities (in broadest sense) at national level.
- **Link to other CVE processes;** the world of CVE is rapidly expanding and there are a number of other organisations working in the Middle East. It could be worth considering pros and cons of linking the fellowship up to these processes or at least being aware of what others are doing and how the work maybe relevant to the fellows. Efforts to reach out to other organizations however would be most useful if strategically done and with the objective that fellows are made aware of what others are doing and if those processes can contribute to the success of the fellowship programme.
- **Need for budgetary commitment and clarity of expectations:** If the programme is to be scaled up and include a larger number of participants and fellows, then there needs to be clarity on the budgetary commitments and expectations. Lack of budgetary commitment was identified as a primary stumbling block to efforts for expanding the networking arrangements, ensuring more facilitated discussions, translating learnings into organizational changes and also ensuring a more robust M&E processes to capture impact.

6. Conclusion

The TSRN fellowship network presents a unique opportunity to serve as a networking and awareness raising platform for CVE actors and bureaucrats across the Gulf States. Based on the M&E exercise, while the fellowship programme has met some of the main learning objectives of the fellows and has created a collaborative environment, more efforts can be undertaken to strengthen current

networking arrangements and ensure that lessons learnt can be translated at the individual and organizational level to create impact.

Current arrangements such as the *Whats-App* group should be expanded and efforts undertaken to facilitate more structured discussions that are moderated to ensure a plurality of views. Additional steps should also be taken to expand the existing space for networking and here some of the suggestions offered by the fellows could be suggested to the FCO for consideration.

Steps need to be undertaken to link lessons learnt from the fellowship programme to individual and organizational level changes. Fellows need to be provided with more direction and understanding of how to translate lessons from the programme including those learnt from the network, in carrying out their individual responsibilities as well as strengthening the capacity of the ministries to respond to the threat of VE.

To improve these aspects as well as ensure greater programmatic efficiency, a number of steps can be undertaken these include – suggestions for clarifying the objectives to the fellows of the purpose of the programme, the need for more technical and specific trainings tailored to the needs and interest of fellows, including an expansion of the use of Expressive Writing both for individual reflection and as an additional tool of deradicalization.

In addition for taking the programme to scale, efforts can also be directed towards, adopting a more criteria driven selection process of fellows that ensures a critical mass of representatives from various ministries who are committed to participating in the programme, creating partnerships with other CVE initiatives in the region, and ensuring greater budgetary commitments and clarifying expectations around the budget.

Apart from these, M&E systems and processes can also be strengthened through an articulation of a clearer ToC, developing an M&E plan prior to implementation and focusing the evaluation on capturing the strength and quality of the network through frameworks such as network analysis.

Section II

Annexures

Annex A

Pre-conference Interview transcripts for:

1. Fellow from Bahrain
2. Fellow from Bahrain
3. Fellow from Bahrain
4. Fellow from Kuwait

Annex B

Pre-Conference Interview Notes (attached PDF)

Annex C

Expressive Writing and Listening exercise submissions by Fellows

1. Fellow from Oman
2. Fellow from Bahrain
3. Fellow from Kuwait

Annex A:

Pre-Conference Interview Transcripts

Fellow from Bahrain

Learning's – Expected

1. What did you hope to gain from the Fellowship programme both personally and operationally within your workplace?

An understanding of how to deal with extremists, not so much the ways that they think but how to prevent them from actually carrying out extremist acts.

2. How did your objectives compare with your ministries?

Very similar objectives to the those of the MoI. You have to align your goals with theirs.

Learning's – Achieved – Self professed

3. To what extent do you feel that the fellowship has helped you achieve your objectives?

It helped her but not that much. Says they haven't been given what they need from the fellowship in order for it to help. Need more from the fellowship, should be given whatever they need.

4. What is your understanding of CVE? Has this understanding changed in the last year, what would you attribute this change to?

Already knew that it exists because of the events that have happened. Understanding hasn't changed that much. Already knew that extremists exist, how they think, what they want, but need to know how to deal with them.

5. What were your learning's - if any, from the presentation of the UK CVE strategies?

Prompt: To what extent were they applicable to your context?

In some ways the UK and Bahraini contexts are similar, but not in the way that they deal with extremism. Our region is much smaller than the UK, we can't apply the UK strategies to Bahrain directly because of the differences between them.

6. Has the information provided on strategic communication strategies had any impact on your CVE work?

Cannot say whether it has or not.

Behavioural Change – Actualized or implemented

7. What are the areas where you are currently implementing CVE work?

Prompt: In the last year has there been an expansion in the areas? If so, what would you attribute this expansion to?

Not allowed to say.

8. What impact if any has collaboration with other fellows had on your CVE work?

Prompt: What level of collaboration have you had with other fellows and those who you met at the last programme?

Prompt: Have you made any changes as a direct result of the programme network?

Prompt: Has any collaboration been extended to your organisation?

It does but not that much because we are all working in different sectors. Don't keep in touch much, although sometimes fellows send news and useful books etc. via the WhatsApp group but not significant impact on work.

Organizational Change

9. What have been the main lessons from this programme?

Prompt: Has the fellowship network assisted with this in any way?

Prompt: Has this impacted on your organisation in any way?

Prompt: Have you faced any challenges in implementing the lessons from the programme?

Main lesson for her was the strategy presented by BB, Theory of Change. Didn't feel the programme provided her with any new information that wasn't already available to her e.g. online...

10. In what ways, if any, do you feel the network can impact on CVE efforts in the Gulf in the future?

Fellowship programme has to provide more direct training to implement the learning. Should open a centre for the fellowship with two or three people from each country working in it, to centralise efforts and collate information.

Fellow from Kuwait

Learning's – Expected

1. What did you hope to gain from the Fellowship programme both personally and operationally within your workplace?

Personally, hoped to develop the skills to counter narratives of extremism and develop more cooperation on CVE with the UK. Professionally, wanted to learn how the Ministry can target extremism hoped to develop more proactive initiatives between UK and Kuwait, sharing best practice and expertise for developing Kuwaiti CVE programme.

2. How did your objectives compare with your ministries?

The ministry was very helpful when she returned, wanted to hear her insights from the programme. Major objective to promote national identity and moderate Islam, and to use soft power to combat extremism (i.e. in line with her objectives after attending the conference).

Learning's – Achieved – Self professed

3. To what extent do you feel that the fellowship has helped you achieve your objectives?

Really helpful to learn from the other people around us. Gave her a taste of how they can develop, specifically targeting messaging of vulnerable populations, tackling and identifying these cases. From the perspective of the Ministry, made a lot of progress on strategy, programme gave them a roadmap. Set up a unit for countering extremist messaging as a result. Have done a lot of work since, for example TV shows, campaigns, private sector involvement. Involvement of the other fellows led to more far-reaching outcomes, internally and regionally.

4. What is your understanding of CVE? Has this understanding changed in the last year, what would you attribute this change to?

In the Kuwait context, it means trying to promote a moderate view of Islam and to make sure that the youth are not lacking purpose. CVE is an attempt to focus their energy on something productive for them and their country. Not easy because youth are vulnerable targets for recruitment and negative influences in the region. So CVE for Kuwait means instilling a sense of national identity that encapsulates all sections of the community. Creating a unified front against sectarianism.

5. What were your learning's - if any, from the presentation of the UK CVE strategies?

Prompt: To what extent were they applicable to your context?

Certain programmes were more specific to the UK context, but it was interesting to see how the UK uses soft power to counter negative influences, particularly to do with identifying extremism and vulnerable people in the community. The UK has focused on the psychological factors, which in the Gulf they are not so focused on. Very beneficial aspect.

6. Has the information provided on strategic communication strategies had any impact on your CVE work?

Started to use stratcomms before but now her Ministry is more focused on developing it. Not using their capacities to the maximum, which requires training and creating awareness among their employees. They started

to do this in her ministry, but need to use more of different aspects like social media. They did the hashtag conference last year which started to do this.

Behavioural Change – Actualized or implemented

7. What are the areas where you are currently implementing CVE work?

Prompt: In the last year has there been an expansion in the areas? If so, what would you attribute this expansion to?

Khalid did a report on isolated communities which was very useful and interesting, and the ministry has started using more cultural aspects, particularly for youth and preventing them from being influenced by extremism. This has been developed.

8. What impact if any has collaboration with other fellows had on your CVE work?

Prompt: What level of collaboration have you had with other fellows and those who you met at the last programme?

Prompt: Have you made any changes as a direct result of the programme network?

Prompt: Has any collaboration been extended to your organisation?

She has been away for six months so it hasn't had impact on her own work. But they are regularly in contact via Whatsapp group, sharing information etc.

Organizational Change

9. What have been the main lessons from this programme?

Prompt: Has the fellowship network assisted with this in any way?

Prompt: Has this impacted on your organisation in any way?

Prompt: Have you faced any challenges in implementing the lessons from the programme?

Main lessons is that you have to have a very specific vision of how to deal with extremism. There are solutions that are very broad, but it is hard work to have a solution that is tailored to Kuwaiti society. Needs a proactive approach, not just a general vision. Must be bottom-up, not just top-down. Must be greater awareness at different levels within the Ministry. Need a good stratcomm agenda.

10. In what ways, if any, do you feel the network can impact on CVE efforts in the Gulf in the future?

The fellowship made her realise that there is a real necessity for a GCC CVE effort, because each country is implementing its own individual targeted agenda. In order for the GCC to act as a unit, this is particularly important when it comes to stratcomms and exchange of information between different ministries. Need a unified agenda.

Fellow from Bahrain

Learning's – Expected

1. What did you hope to gain from the Fellowship programme both personally and operationally within your workplace?

Personally I had little idea about extremism and how it works on people in Bahrain. Through my field, I am working in the Cybercrime and Financial Crime department, so I am dealing with some criminals and terrorism crime so now I know what extremism is and how it can be used to change people's thoughts. The programme improved my understanding of the concept of extremism.

2. How did your objectives compare with your ministries?

I didn't follow up with the Ministry of the Interior when I returned from London, I think Latifa might have more information on this as she is working in this department.

Learning's – Achieved – Self professed

3. To what extent do you feel that the fellowship has helped you achieve your objectives?

We have not seen anything happen in the Cyber terrorism field in terms of communication between the countries. This affects all the cases that we are working on which come from outside of the country.

4. What is your understanding of CVE? Has this understanding changed in the last year, what would you attribute this change to?

Before joining the workshop I didn't know that there was extremism, or that there were extremists trying to influence others and make them commit terrorist acts. Now I know that people committing terrorist acts are forced to do it through speeches, and it happens in our country. We have some cases that, because some people are giving speeches, other people believe in them and are committing criminal acts because of what they being are told. The problem is that this is not a crime for the people giving these speeches [i.e. inciting extremism]

5. What were your learning's - if any, from the presentation of the UK CVE strategies?

Prompt: To what extent were they applicable to your context?

I learned that we have to work together to find a law to make extremism a crime, to criminalise those who are giving these speeches all around the world, we need to recommend to all the countries to make extremist speeches and ideology a crime.

6. Has the information provided on strategic communication strategies had any impact on your CVE work?

Actually it is not affecting my work because I am not working in extremism, but we wrote some reports when we came back to the terrorism department.

Behavioural Change – Actualized or implemented

7. What are the areas where you are currently implementing CVE work?

Prompt: In the last year has there been an expansion in the areas? If so, what would you attribute this expansion to?

Cybercrimes and extremism. When we are dealing with criminal acts relating to extremism, it is still not a crime. We arrest who we can for these crimes based on the law and they go to the prosecution and to the court, but it depends on what the law says here in Bahrain, but there is no law that affects the person who made the speech [inciting extremism] that made the man commit the crime. So it is only the people on ground committing the crimes who we can arrest, not the person who is making the speech that causes the crime, as there is no law that affects this person.

8. What impact if any has collaboration with other fellows had on your CVE work?

Prompt: What level of collaboration have you had with other fellows and those who you met at the last programme?

Prompt: Have you made any changes as a direct result of the programme network?

Prompt: Has any collaboration been extended to your organisation?

We still communicate on the Whatsapp group and we communicate in our work if we have any questions, but it does not really impact my field. I have other connections [more relevant to cybercrime] in the GCC and the UK who I can contact if I need information.

Organizational Change

9. What have been the main lessons from this programme?

Prompt: Has the fellowship network assisted with this in any way?

Prompt: Has this impacted on your organisation in any way?

Prompt: Have you faced any challenges in implementing the lessons from the programme?

We have learned the importance of fighting extremism at every level of society around the world, because it affects everyone.

Challenges: On the legal side, there is no legislation for extremism, this is our only issue. In our field we are working with the legislation that is there, we have to fight with it.

10. In what ways, if any, do you feel the network can impact on CVE efforts in the Gulf in the future?

There should be more members joining the network who are in charge with developing legislation in the different countries. If there was more involvement from legislative powers it would be easier to transmit information to them and between the countries.

Fellow from Bahrain

Learning's – Expected

1. What did you hope to gain from the Fellowship programme both personally and operationally within your workplace?

Hoped to get a better understanding of extremism and terrorism. What is controlling them and how are they using tools (media, equipment) to organise and brainwash people. How could he use this information in his crime detection and forensic work in cases relating to terrorism.

2. How did your objectives compare with your ministries?

Same objectives. Combating and countering extremism and terrorism.

Learning's – Achieved – Self professed

3. To what extent do you feel that the fellowship has helped you achieve your objectives?

Most important thing learned = Theory of Change and how it can be applied. He is using ToC to solve problems across various different contexts, not just counter extremism e.g. management, his new position in border control. Listing threats and thinking about how to apply ToC for strategy and outcome etc. ToC really useful.

4. What is your understanding of CVE? Has this understanding changed in the last year, what would you attribute this change to?

Before I thought counter extremism was only a concern of the security services, but I came to realise that a lot of different bodies should be included in the huge process, e.g. Ministry of Information, the media, Ministry of Education, police, research. Mind has been opened to the different levels of the issue and how it is present at different levels of society.

5. What were your learning's - if any, from the presentation of the UK CVE strategies?

Prompt: To what extent were they applicable to your context?

Saw how in the UK, the media and schools, research institutes (Chatham House... etc. have key roles in the counter extremism process, goes beyond security. Learned a lot from UK strategies like Prevent etc. Learned about the UN action plan and how they can use it to engage internationally.

6. Has the information provided on strategic communication strategies had any impact on your CVE work?

Very useful. Saw how extremist organisations use communications to pull in their victims and how we can respond and counter this using communications. E.g. internet and social media.

Behavioural Change – Actualized or implemented

7. What are the areas where you are currently implementing CVE work?

Prompt: In the last year has there been an expansion in the areas? If so, what would you attribute this expansion to?

If he is working on a case, he has a better understanding of the context. E.g. if he is working on a criminal case relating to extremism, he treats it differently because he understands the whole process of extremism (brainwashing, ideology etc.). His personal understanding has changed his approach to cases of extremism and terrorism.

8. What impact if any has collaboration with other fellows had on your CVE work?

Prompt: What level of collaboration have you had with other fellows and those who you met at the last programme?

Prompt: Have you made any changes as a direct result of the programme network?

Prompt: Has any collaboration been extended to your organisation?

Haven't really directly communicated, only through the groups. We don't have a tangible way of working together. Next step of the fellowship should be to collaborate more, exchanging ideas to work more effectively. Better integration between the fellows needed, suggested having a workplace where they can all work together that they can come back to.

Organizational Change

9. What have been the main lessons from this programme?

Prompt: Has the fellowship network assisted with this in any way?

Prompt: Has this impacted on your organisation in any way?

Prompt: Have you faced any challenges in implementing the lessons from the programme?

The programme is impacting his organisation indirectly through his better understanding of the issue and context which has enabled him to do his job more effectively. Change from the bottom.

10. In what ways, if any, do you feel the network can impact on CVE efforts in the Gulf in the future?

Depends on the coordination and cooperation between the fellows. Need involvement from Gulf states who didn't attend (Qatar and UAE). We need to work together as a united front. Need to work with all the Gulf states, identifying Gulf-wide and country-specific threats to implement unified GCC strategy and promote security.

Annex C:

Expressive Writing & Listening Exercise – Fellow Submissions

Fellow from Oman: Self Reflection – Expressive Writing Exercise

I will divide the answers into three sections as follows:

1. Reflecting on our first meeting

One year on since our first meeting in London, it will be safe for me to say that my first encounter with the program fellows was comforting, and reassuring. Being the only representative of my country, I was worried that the program will be very strenuous and that our divergent views might not culminate in a semi unified definition from a GCC perspective.

On reflecting on the sessions of our first meeting, I felt more relaxed when we worked in groups regardless of the country of origin where we were allowed to present and express our views freely in various exercises.

I also felt that the bonding, bridging and brokering exercise was instrumental in enhancing the intra group cohesion and synergy. As a result, I felt more confident as the workshop progressed to present my personal views freely to my colleagues. However, I felt the program was so intensive and compressed in a relatively short period of time.

Having said that, the program offered me a very wide exposure to topics and ideas that have now proved valuable to my research in CVE. Moreover, it has inspired me to explore a wide range of literature both in Arabic and English and to look for the underlying causes of extremism from philosophical perspectives.

If I were to describe the fellowship program in three words I would say it is , useful, interesting and prestigious
I owe a debt of gratitude to the program organizers for accepting me as a member in the program and for their hospitality and excellent coordination

My greatest strength following our first meeting is the ability to work closely in a network of people with similar interests but different backgrounds.

Finally I hope this network of professionals will be more closely connected through continued learning and exchange of ideas among the fellows and the program organizers through physical meetings and in the virtual world.

2. How can we build on the success of the program?

The founding members of the fellowship program are to a large extent qualified individuals whose official duties are directly or indirectly related to CVE. Since this program is for CVE professionals and is a long-term partnership endeavor between the UK and the GCC countries, I would recommend the following points for consideration:

- The program is marketed at a high level in the GCC and UK. Up to this moment, the program for instance is not adequately promoted in law enforcement agencies and civil society institutions concerned with CVE in the GCC. The UK PM's speech at the GCC summit and her reference to CVE as one of the UK priorities and potential areas of cooperation with the GCC should be used as a marketing tool for the program. Visiting UK

dignitaries (Sec of state for Defence, Intelligence and security officials, etc.) should promote this program in discussions with their GCC counterparts.

- There should be a quarterly individual assignment (written work of about 5- 10 pages) or a reaction paper to a particular topic pertinent to CVE. This will ensure that fellows are committed to the program and are kept up to date with CVE as a discipline. Fellows must also present a 15 minutes paper at the forthcoming meetings illustrating their work, research, achievements etc. in CVE since the last meeting.
- A sifting process must be applied where fellows who do not meet the minimum requirements of the program are given a letter of appreciation for their work while those who prove to be valuable assets to the program are elevated to senior positions or become senior members.
- Stricter admission procedures must be put in place. English language proficiency is a must. In addition, CVE should be directly related to the nominees' line of work. This is stated in the program requirement but I think an admission test, interview is required to determine the most qualified candidates.
- In order to maximize the benefits of this program for both the GCC and the UK, it would be useful, I think, for the UK to admit a number of UK CVE professionals to work side by side with their GCC colleagues (Middle age, high fliers etc.).
- A biannual meeting should take place alternately in UK and the GCC. Summer time around July /August is more convenient since most people tend to take their vacations around this time.

3. The Expressive Writing Exercise

Having viewed the slides and the video clip included in your previous emails, the exercise seems like a useful tool to use in deradicalization. However, I think the fellows would benefit from an in class exercise/ scenario. Perhaps a case study might help in order to substantiate our understanding of this exercise.

Fellow from Bahrain: Self Reflection – Expressive Writing Exercise

1. How have I applied the learning to my work? What do I want to know more about?

In the months following the Fellowship, I put forward a community engagement initiative to help identify and respond to early manifestations of extremism, which includes promoting youth employment and education programs for extremist groups. In that initiative, I stressed that CVE should be viewed with a focus on prevention that reflects the need for more nuanced measures and responses than the use of force. It encompassed community engagement, development, education, strategic communications, and public-private partnerships, and enhance resilience against them.

One challenge that I face daily is that many practitioners continue to use the terms “counterterrorism” and “CVE” interchangeably, when in reality they represent very different approaches. I sense this is because the practice of CVE has suffered from a lack of clarity in its definition and scope.

Despite growing interest in CVE, funding opportunities appear to still disproportionately favor those law-enforcement centric approaches, and engagement with civil society has been problematic when undertaken outside a truly consultative process. There is a potential for abuse as intrusive preventive and responsive measures are adopted and short-term responses are sought to what is a long-term challenge. However, rather than make the case for dismissing CVE efforts, these concerns underscore the need to get it right. Which is why in the same proposal, I discussed the importance of putting aside funding for CVE efforts.

The most important take away from the Fellowship is that prevention is therefore more critical than ever. Efforts to further CVE need to address some of the criticisms put forward and adapt to enhance their reach and effectiveness. Governments are often not the best interlocutor on these issues- as we have heard from the UK’s experience- communities, experts, the private sector, and the media are all key ingredients to making CVE more effective and sustainable.

As far as what I want to know more about, I would like to more about how extremism could be understood as an emotional outlet for severe feelings.

2. How to build on this network

I would suggest moving the Network under the umbrella of the Gulf Cooperation Council. From there, the Network’s cooperation could enable the development of interdisciplinary expertise in the prevention of extremism, providing a forum in which various professionals discuss current issues and the most suitable responses to them.

The Network could be responsible for the following: enhancing cooperation to prevent extremism; monitor the status of extremism in the Gulf states; provide information on any local developments to various authorities and local cooperation teams; develop communication between relevant actors; increase situational awareness and know-how of extremism via seminars and training; produce an annual report of its activities, including an estimate of future developments and recommendations.

3. What do I think about expressive writing exercises as tools for combatting extremism?

Though it does not appear that studies have been done on the efficacy of expressive writing as a tool for combating extremism, this style of writing does go well with the self-examination used in treatment and support groups. It provides a way to explode one’s feelings about their experience with extremism, to discover root causes of extremism, and in general work toward a better understanding of how one’s mind is working.

Some might argue that extremists have a history of traumatic experiences, and used extremism to deal with it. By using expressive writing to explore these experiences, the individual has the emotional freedom and the opportunity to begin coming to terms with, and possibly reduce the distress related to, the original trauma. Because it can be done by anyone at any time, without the need for professional supervision, it offers an additional avenue of self-study for the individual who is pursuing rehabilitation without the assistance of a therapist.

Fellow from Kuwait: Self Reflection – Expressive Writing Exercise

After watching the video on expressive writing my first thought was how fantastic it would have been if I was exposed to such kind of training after the gulf war. Dr. Jensen explains Trauma as “a deeply distressing event”. I believe that children’s brain does a great job in recording memories even if they did not understand the impact of them at a young age these memories come back as a form of trauma as one becomes an adult. My Uncle was taken as a P.O.W never to come back. As a result my grandfather had a stroke when he found out and died two months later. we lived in a basement during the time. I remember the night when soldiers raided our house searching for valuables. As my family was hiding in our basement, my mother asked us children to hold our breaths and as we did so my sister’s arm was paralyzed.

This past month I was lucky to have been invited by the UNHCR to visit a Syrian refugee camp in Lebanon and I thought of how wonderful it would be if they had a chance to be trained in expressive writing to free themselves of their traumas and the daily humiliation of having to complain of their situation to others, a chance we did not have.

1. During the fellowship:

The best parts were:

- The explanation of radicalization strategies
- The isis brand.
- The stories of radicalization in western countries.
- Strat Comms.

I would have loved if we had come up with an international project or a campaign towards the end of the fellowship. Or worked with one of the organizations in the U.K instead of sitting inside listening to theories.

- I was frustrated at our Chatham House experience where nothing was said to us.

2. Personal Development:

The lecturers at the U.K made me realize that I had interests in topics besides my field of work which I started getting involved with such as CVE, international affairs & Global.

3. Our Aims in our CVE team in Kuwait is to focus on promoting moderation and tolerance.

My work goals:

- To have a strong message on our media that unites us in Kuwait as a nation.
- To contribute in reshaping the youth’s way of thinking.
- To motivate my co-workers.
- To use technology and social media to help promote moderation and tolerance.
- To find the right partners to collaborate with on a bigger scale project.
- To get higher authorities to accept our objectives and projects.

- To have a clear strategy that everyone agrees on.

4. **My personal difficulties:**

Lack of critical thinking in the work field:

- Inequality
- The difficulty of persuading teammates of different backgrounds