Countering Political Violence

Electoral Education and Integrity Practice Area

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Incidents of violence occur in an average of one in five elections conducted annually, research shows. While these incidents occur in every region of the world, the violence is more often concentrated in countries in conflict or in the midst of democratic consolidation.

In such fragile environments, political extremism can find expression through electoral violence. This issue is a growing priority for development practitioners and donors, including the U.S. Agency for International Development, which has stated that: “Countering violent extremism (CVE) is central to achieving the Agency’s mission to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing our security and prosperity.”

Creative Associates International’s Countering Violent Political Extremism Program empowers state and non-state stakeholders with programming to prevent, manage and mediate political violence and move toward more prosperous and resilient, democratic societies envisioned.

Countering Political Violence

In addressing the complexities of political violence, Creative has the institutional diversity and expertise to leverage programming resources from electoral assistance, conflict management, peacebuilding, youth and technology communities to craft integrated solutions tailored to address such violence in a given country context.

Political Security Frameworks

Violent political extremism must be understood before it can be resolved. Creative has developed methodologies to identify vulnerabilities for political and electoral conflict and profile political conflict dynamics. By understanding vulnerabilities and conflict dynamics, Creative can develop Political Security Frameworks in the context of a given electoral cycle to prevent, manage or mediate conflict. This framework becomes an administrative instrument for election organizers and assistance providers in countries at risk for electoral violence, enabling them to develop programs to counter these threats.

Security Administration for Elections

Electoral Management Bodies often lack the tools and skills to effectively plan and administer electoral security measures. Creative provides Security Administration for Elections (SAFE) training and capacity building programs for Electoral Management Bodies. Through workshops on either a country-specific or regional basis, Creative trains EMBs in election security planning, organizational design and staffing, coordination mechanisms with other electoral security stakeholders and establishing liaison committees with political parties, civil society and media organizations.

Non-Violence Advocacy for Elections

Civil society can play a role in promoting peaceful elections. Through Non-Violence Advocacy for elections, Creative trains civil society and faith-based organizations to develop advocacy campaigns that promote nonviolent political processes and elections. Advocacy activities under this approach include peace messaging, peace caravans, rallies, social networking sites and media messaging.

Monitoring and Observation of Violence in Elections

Incident monitoring and mapping can also be effective in preventing violence. Creative provides training and capacity building programs for domestic election observation organizations in monitoring and mapping incidents of electoral conflict. Through training, observers learn standardized observation techniques, reporting mechanisms, databases and incident mapping.

Peace Research and Education Program

The Peace Research and Education Program has two components. In partnership with the University of Glasgow, Creative is conducting a global research project on electoral violence. By compiling the largest global database on electoral violence to date, Creative and the University of Glasgow will delve deep into factors contributing to this violence and research best practices for preventing, managing and mediating it.

Creative also offers short courses on electoral violence for university audiences. These courses combine academic research with practitioners’ experiences in understanding political conflict.

Early Warning Systems

Early Warning Systems allow security stakeholders to formulate more effective responses to potential violence. Creative’s Early Warning System capacity has two components: macro-forecasting and micro-forecasting.
In macro-forecasting, Creative employs research methodologies to identify vulnerabilities for violence to occur in a given election. Micro-fasting provides the prediction of specific incidents of violence in that election. Using special software packages, Creative can mine social media sites for key words that alert observers to potential threats of violence. This allows for real-time or near-term early warnings for incidents of violence or protest.

**Political Violence against Women**

The meaningful participation of women in political processes is key to achieving a more secure, prosperous and democratic society. However, this is can be obstructed by political violence against women in all phases of the electoral cycle. Creative’s programming to prevent Political Violence against Women aims to safeguard and empower women in elections through legal framework reform, public education, political participation, incident monitoring, gender-sensitive police training and best administrative practices in electoral administration.

**Youth for Peaceful Politics**

Youth have been a major force for positive democratic progress globally, but this population is also often at risk of recruitment into violent political extremism.

Through six activity areas, Creative’s youth-focused programming works to demobilize those individuals and groups who are at risk of being recruited into electoral violence.

1. Business Partners for Youth brings in local business groups, such as Chambers of Commerce, to offer temporary youth employment during an election period.
2. Youth as Poll Workers trains young people to work at the polls, playing a productive role in democratic processes.
3. Youth Election Observation prepares youth to staff independent or integrated election observation missions, engaging them throughout the electoral cycle.
4. Voting and Citizenship workshops educate young people on voter registration, campaigning, voting and vote counting.
5. Social Media workshops assist youth groups in establishing social media sites to promote peaceful elections.
6. Student Government Elections workshops build the capacity of university students in election administration, empowering them to administer student council elections according to international standards.
As part of the Electoral Security Framework effort, Creative has conducted electoral conflict assessments in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, the Philippines, South Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Creative is a research partner on the University of Glasgow’s Explaining and Mitigating Electoral Violence project to develop conceptual, practical and methodological tools to facilitate an enhanced understanding of electoral violence and strategies for preventing, managing and mediating it. The project will produce a Cross-National Data database of Electoral Violence and a Database of Incidents of Electoral Violence. Combined, these two datasets will provide both a macro and micro level perspective on electoral violence.

**Funding Mechanisms**

USAID has funded Creative’s conflict prevention initiatives through the Elections and Political Processes Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) and purchase orders. Creative currently holds two other funding mechanisms that are prime vehicles for these initiatives.

**PEACE IQC**

Creative’s Consortium has a deep understanding of conflict dynamics and the emerging trends that drive them, particularly as they relate to development. Through USAID’s PEACE IQC, Creative’s Consortium can design and implement activities that mitigate the sources and consequences of violent conflict through three primary areas: knowledge sharing, training and field program implementation.

The PEACE IQC, which allows USAID Missions to use Creative’s Consortium members through sole-sourcing or limited competitive bidding, is a $600 million, five-year contract mechanism.

**YouthPower IDIQ**

The YouthPower Implementation Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDIQ) seeks to empower youth and put them at the center of community change by building the capacity of youth-led and youth-serving organizations and implementing programs ranging from education to workforce development to violence prevention.

The YouthPower IDIQ, which allows USAID Missions to use Creative’s Consortium members through sole-sourcing or limited competitive bidding, is a $375 million, five-year contract mechanism.

**Program Administration**

The Countering Violent Political Extremism Program is led by Jeff Fischer, Senior Electoral Advisor at Creative.

Fischer brings his practitioner experience in electoral security administration from his appointment in 1996 as Director General of Elections, Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as Chief Electoral Officer for the United Nations in East Timor (1999), and as Director of Elections for the OSCE in Kosovo (2000). Fischer has taught courses on Elections and Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa and Managing Elections in Fragile States at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School. He also teaches graduate courses at Georgetown University on International Electoral Policy and Practice and Electoral Violence.

Through the use of technology and social media analytics, Creative can develop early warning systems to forecast political violence and map incidents in real-time.

Creative Associates International provides outstanding, on-the-ground development services and forges partnerships to deliver sustainable solutions to global challenges. Founded in 1977, Creative’s experts focus on education, economic growth, youth, workforce development, governance and elections, among other key areas. Today, Creative has a staff of more than 1,100 people around the world who are committed to working with officials, non-governmental organizations and community members to realize the positive change they seek.

For more information, please contact:

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Photos by David Snyder