

Proposal: **COUNTER-MESSAGING AND ENGAGING WOMEN**

Proposal #: **RSI-1621**

Funding Requested: **\$120,000.00**

RELEASE IN PART B6, B7(F)

Status: **Regional Review Pending**

Age: **0 day(s)**

Submit Date: **24 Apr 2015**

Project Owner(s):

Name	Email	Phone
1. US Embassy		

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B7(F)

Project Purpose:

The goal of this proposal is to combat violent extremism (CVE) in Macedonia by countering ISIL messaging and engaging women and vulnerable populations. Working with and messaging to at risk communities will augment our efforts to encourage the government to enforce existing anti-foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) laws and will frustrate terrorist recruitment efforts in Macedonia. Approximately 140 FTFs have traveled from Macedonia to fight in Syria and Iraq over the past two years, and dozens are estimated to have returned to the region. Macedonia's institutions are struggling to create a CVE action plan, to determine which agency will lead their CVE efforts, and to make the political decision to implement anti foreign terrorist fighter laws. Engaging youth, women, and vulnerable populations through innovative programming, counter messaging, and social media to promote American values is critical and would provide a key CVE component that is currently non-existent in Macedonia.

Description of Program Proposed:

To stem the flow of FTFs from the region, the messaging and community engagement strategy must address the issue at its source, in the communities and among the populations vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists. By delivering effective messaging that counters the dangerous and empty promises of the extremists and instead motivates vulnerable youth to channel their energies into positive activity, the program will attack the root of the problem. Furthermore, by targeting a select and small group of individuals, such as women, the messaging will ultimately be more effective. The messaging goal would be to halt the development of potential foreign fighters and persuade those already contemplating violence to reconsider and redirect their attentions. This proposal will directly assist with the full implementation of two recent UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR). UNSCR 2178, which calls upon governments to stem the flow of FTFs to Syria and Iraq, and UNSCR 1325, which calls for women to play a larger role in international peace and security, and in particular in CVE. Below we outline the specific proposed activities, grouped into two areas: 1) Audience and Messaging Evaluation and 2) Counter-Messaging and Engaging Women. 1. Audience and Messaging Evaluation \$20,000 The first element of the messaging strategy would be a thorough and in-depth evaluation in Macedonia of the target audience to determine who they are, what motivates them, and who and what they respond to. The evaluation also will examine how extremists are reaching out to the target audience, whether through media, social media, community interactions, or other means. This evaluation is crucial to understanding to whom we need to address our message and what

we need to say. We will work with a local organization that understands the communities it will be evaluating. Possible implementers include the regional Helsinki Committee for Human Rights or Association for Democratic Initiatives, both of which have experience in evaluating audiences and messaging. The assessment also could be useful to other posts in the region with similar vulnerable populations. 2. Counter-Messaging Programs: Engaging Women, Youth, and Vulnerable Populations \$100,000 Drawing from the results of the evaluation, we will work with an implementing organization to develop effective counter-messaging strategies specifically targeted to vulnerable populations. Post will work with an implementing partner such as Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), to bring speakers to Macedonia to engage broad audiences on CVE and raise awareness of how to identify and counter radicalism on a community level. Suggested speakers may include former radicals or FTFs who regret their actions. Building on the momentum and awareness gained through the counter-messaging programs and the guest speakers and panel sessions, post could also work with an implementing partner to create intimate women's dialogue sessions and a series of "Mother's School" seminars to equip women in Macedonia with the skill sets they need to identify and eliminate support for violent extremism in their communities. It is generally recognized that women are disproportionately affected by acts of extremism and terrorist violence, but all too often women are on the margins of security discussions and excluded from prevention efforts. Women, however, are in a unique position to contribute directly to CVE efforts, and are often among the first to recognize early signs of radicalization among their children. The project would begin with the development of targeted, intimate sessions for female audiences, and culminate in a six-week "Mother's School." This initiative would empower women in Macedonia to address these issues not only in the private sphere, but also to engage with community structures in the public sphere and through new media and technologies.

Specify explicitly how this proposal advances US national security and foreign policy interests:

Foreign fighters not only attack U.S. interests abroad but also return home more radicalized and more prone to attack U.S. interests overseas and domestically. This proposal promotes the rule of law and democracy, both of which are foreign policy interests and core U.S. values. Furthermore, this project directly supports UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 2178, by helping to stem the flow of foreign fighters while simultaneously increasing women's role in peace and security within Macedonia. Expected outcomes include increased awareness of the dangers of violent extremism and the false promises of becoming an FTF, an enhanced ability of community leaders and civil society to engage directly with vulnerable populations and potential recruits, and a reduced ability of terrorist groups such as ISIL to recruit prospective foreign fighters from this region.

Specify explicitly how this activity supports law enforcement's ability to counter terrorism:

N/A (ESF funding)

What have the sponsors of the project done to coordinate this program with this interagency or multilateral partners? (What offices/agencies have been consulted. How did you ensure this is not duplicative?)

The Embassy maintains a strong interagency team and has consulted with various interagency partners to ensure that this project will be impactful and is not duplicative. The Embassy also

maintains a close working relationship with many key multilateral partners, including the OSCE, EU, and various NGOs. Post is not currently aware of other similar CVE projects, and in fact this project serves to address the dire need for CVE programming. We will work closely with multilateral partners throughout the implementation process, to ensure they are able to contribute in meaningful ways to the project and to share lessons learned and best practices.

Project Monitoring:

A full-time staff member at Post will engage in project monitoring, to ensure the project meets and exceeds project goals.

Time Frame for Implementation:

From: 06/01/2015 **To:** 06/01/2016

Place of Implementation:

- Macedonia

Implementer Information:

Implementer Partner	POC Name	POC Email	POC Phone
1 n/a	Specific Partner TBD		

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Program Audience:

The target audience for these sessions would include vulnerable populations such as youth, the unemployed, low-income families, and women. The sessions would take place primarily in Skopje and Tetovo, the main communities from which fighters have been re

Funding Breakdown:

Country	Budget Item	Amount
Macedonia	Audience and Messaging Evaluation	\$20,000.00
Macedonia	Counter-Messaging Programs: Engaging Women, Youth, and Vulnerable Populations	\$100,000.00

Funding/Implementation Mechanism Type:

- Grant

Objectives & Indicators:

Objective	Indicator
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Funding Sources:

- CVE

Fiscal Year:

2015

Comments: