

Proposal: **ALBANIA: PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**

RELEASE IN PART B7(F),B6

Proposal #: **CVE-1574**

Funding Requested: **\$99,570.00**

Status: **Proposal Review Pending**

REVIEW AUTHORITY:  
Clarke Ellis, Senior Reviewer

Age: **68 day(s)**

Submit Date: **12 Feb 2015**

**Project Owner(s):**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Phone</b>
1.			
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**Project Summary:**

This proposal expands on the current project (CVE-1162) being implemented by the Albanian Islamic Community (AIC) to engage at-risk Muslim youth in several suburbs of Tirana. In this new project, the AIC will employ social activities and seminars to teach Muslim male youth from high-risk areas about democratic principles, human rights, civic duties, and tolerance. Participants will develop skills to help promote civic values and to identify and report possible cases of violent extremism. This project will add several new elements to the ongoing pilot project. First, the AIC will expand activities to four other at-risk regions. Second, this project will include seminars for parents in these communities, especially mothers, to help them identify and address CVE with their children, following the DHS Community Awareness Brief (CAB) model. Third, the project will expand upon the pilot project's online social website, which serves as an alumni network and reporting terminal.

**Description of Program Proposed:**

This project will expand the pilot project currently being implemented by the AIC outside Tirana by including other regions of the country such as Kavaja (Tirana), Cerrik (Elbasan), Librazh (Elbasan), and Pogradec (Korca). Target participants will be Muslim male youth ages 15-22 years old, along with their parents. This initiative will follow three phases over the course of 12 months. First, participants will engage in social activities such as sports matches and outings to the movie theater to create a closer connection and build trust. The AIC will post photos and descriptions of activities on the project's Facebook page, which was created and is in use for the pilot project. The AIC will identify participants through cooperation with local imams and the Ministry of Education. The AIC team will also identify local government officials as partners to participate in the project's activities in the second phase. Gaining local government support is important to implementing the Community Awareness Briefing in the four proposed regions. In addition, 20 imams from various schools of Islamic thought from the targeted regions will participate in a one-day training in Tirana about the CAB model developed by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL). This activity will help provide a deeper understanding of the project's aim, to increase support for further project

phases. The AIC is currently developing an Albania-specific CAB. In the second phase, the AIC team will organize five seminars with project participants in each region, approximately 400 participants in the four regions. The goal of these seminars is to introduce methods of incorporating democratic and civic values into the lives of Muslim male youth. Topics will include democratic principles, human rights, civic duties, and tolerance. The AIC will build from presentations it developed and is currently using for the pilot project. Material will be drawn largely from USAID and Council of Europe education manuals on democracy. Through these activities, participants will improve their understanding about the role the state has in a democratic society. In three additional seminars in each region, successful Albanian citizens from various fields of work will speak, thus providing role models for the participating youth. This second phase will include a new component to raise awareness about violent extremism among the adult population in identified mosque communities, especially among parents and mothers. In approximately four information sessions after Friday prayers in local mosques, imams trained in the first phase will speak with parents using presentations employing the DHS CAB model. The AIC will also invite local government partners identified in the first phase to participate in these presentations. In the final phase, youth participants will be divided into small groups in which participants will produce their own ideas and projects on integrating democracy in their lives and communities. Participants will be encouraged to incorporate online social networks into their projects, as they are widely used by young people in Albania today. To facilitate that effort, participants will be introduced to the alumni website and network, giving them the possibility to build new friendships and connections. Participants also may learn about how to identify possible radicalization indicators and other suspicious behaviors and to report them either in the anonymous online system or in person with their local imam. To ensure trust, the emphasis of the reporting system will be intervention first by imams, parents, and the AIC. If the danger or threat is imminent or serious, law enforcement will be notified. (Note: This is advice offered by established and successful religious NGOs in the U.S. working on CVE. End Note.)

**Project Context/Rationale:**

Young male Muslims in certain rural and suburban areas of Albania are targeted for violent extremist recruitment due to their poor education, underemployment, feelings of social isolation, and willingness to embrace violent Islamic narratives. This project targets this demographic and will counter violent extremist ideology by teaching young Muslims to use democratic means to solve problems. In March 2014, Albanian police arrested several Albanian nationals and two "self-declared" imams who were charged with recruiting individuals to fight in Syria. The unregistered mosques associated with these individuals were located in two of the neighborhoods originally proposed by the AIC for its pilot project. Since that time, the AIC has performed an in-depth analysis of all the country's mosques to identify problem areas. From this analysis, the AIC has identified four additional target regions to be the site of the expanded project.

**Law Enforcement Nexus (NADR funding only):**

N/A - ESF

**Coordination:**

The project proposal was coordinated through various offices and agencies at U.S. Embassy Tirana. The AIC will be the principal project implementer. The AIC has several important

strengths as an implementing partner. First, it has a history of promoting tolerance and interfaith cooperation in Albania. It has opposed strongly violent extremism, and in the case of the arrests of individuals recruiting for the Syrian conflict, the AIC responded publicly in condemning the acts. Second, the AIC, as the officially recognized representative organization of Sunni Islam communities in Albania, has credibility within Muslim communities. The organization has an extensive network of muftis, imams, and lay followers, providing the AIC with the reach and access it needs to spread the message of countering violent extremism in Muslim communities throughout Albania. The individuals who recruit young people for violent extremism, such as the two "self-declared" imams who were arrested in March 2014, use the false pretense of their position of authority on Islamic matters to convince young people to fight in Syria. The AIC is the best organization to counter that message. In parallel with the pilot project, the AIC is carrying out its own program (non-USG funded) to travel to mosques around the country to teach an Islamic perspective against violent extremism. This proposed project would enlarge and complement those efforts by providing non-religious training that shares the same objective of countering violent extremism within the target communities. Third, the AIC has a good relationship with Albanian law enforcement and other government agencies, which will facilitate communication up from local communities to the state as well as engender a greater amount of trust between officials and religious communities. The AIC will coordinate with the Ministry of the Interior, the State Committee on Cults, local governments, and local high school officials. As in the pilot project, the AIC will meet and cooperate again with the Ministry of Interior to select local representatives who will participate as guest speakers in project activities. The AIC has closely cooperated with the Ministry of Education and Tirana's Regional Educational Offices to present the pilot project among young people in public schools. This cooperation will continue in the four targeted regions. Fourth, the AIC has a good relationship with the Embassy, and we have cooperated closely in designing and carrying out the pilot project, as well as other efforts to promote interreligious harmony in the past. We believe we can work with them in an effective manner. Finally, the AIC has gained valuable practitioner experience through implementing its pilot CT-funded CVE program thus far. It has built important new capacities within its own organization and staff as a result of implementing the pilot project, which the organization can employ further in an expanded project. The project's key coordinator received further training through his participation in the October 2014 EEAS CVE conference in Slovenia, travel which Post supported. Through the pilot project, which has successfully garnered the participation of over 400 youth thus far, the AIC also has improved its internal cooperation between imams of different schools of Islamic thought, such as with Salafi imams that are often close to communities where recruitment takes place.

**Measuring Impact and Effectiveness:**

At the outset of the project, the implementing team will collect qualitative and quantitative data about the targeted regions through surveys, field visits, and interviews with key local actors in order to assess and gather initial information about each region. A group of academics will be hired to gather data through before-and-after surveys of the participants, as well as of their family members, in order to prepare a final report. Consulting academics will use statistical software such as STATA to evaluate surveys. Evaluators will also be present at the various seminars and activities. They will compare the attitudes and opinions of participants and their family members before the start of the project and after in order to determine impact and effectiveness. Findings will also show which activities were more effective and which may need

to be restructured for the future. The AIC will publish the report and promote it through media channels to reach a wide national audience.

**Sustainability:**

The long-term aim of the project will be to cultivate a group of young Muslims, parents, and local imams who will take a key role in their communities and share their newfound knowledge and skills with others. They will also be able to share information more easily with the AIC and law enforcement authorities on possible cases of violent extremism in their communities. The project will provide training and practitioner experience for the AIC and its imams. Given that the AIC already operates a network of muftis, imams, and mosques, they are well-situated to incorporate new CVE capacities into existing networks. The imams trained with the CAB model will continue to share information with their community's members after the project has ended. The goal is that the AIC's own staff and imams, with increased experience and training, could continue to deliver non-religious CVE messages to their communities in the future, to compliment ongoing (separate non-USG funded) efforts to deliver religious-based messages against CVE. The sustainability of the alumni website established in the pilot project will improve by including new participants from additional remote, high-risk areas of Albania. As a result, the confidential channel created during the pilot project will continue to function and through it project alumni can report cases of suspected violent extremism in their communities, which the AIC will compile, document, and share with law enforcement authorities as appropriate. Alumni can also use this channel to share their experiences with their success or lack thereof in promoting the message of using democratic, peaceful means to solve problems in their communities. The AIC will also publish and distribute a final report about the project to key actors, which may use the findings in implementing their own CVE projects.

**Neighborhood, City or Province:**

This project will be implemented in four regions of Albania identified by the AIC as being home to mosque communities most at-risk for violent extremism recruitment: Kavaja (Tirana), Cerrik (Elbasan), Librazhd (Elbasan), and Pogradec (Korca).

**Time Frame for Implementation:**

**From:** 09/01/2015    **To:** 08/31/2016

**Place of Implementation:**

- Albania

**Implementer Information:**

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

**Program Audience:**

**This project will have two main direct beneficiaries groups: young Muslim males aged 15-22 years old and parents living in the four indicated regions.**

**Funding Breakdown:**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Albania	see attached budget	\$99,570.00

**Funding/Implementation Mechanism Type:**

- **Grant**

**Objectives & Indicators:**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
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**Funding Sources:**

- **CVE**

**Fiscal Year:**

**2014**

**Comments:**

04/01/2015 - SUPER USER

OK - cleared by EUR CTWG.

**Award Points of Contact: Roles and Responsibilities**

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**Department of State Roles and Responsibilities**

**The Bureau of Administration, Office of Logistics Management, Office of Acquisitions Management (A/LM/AQM)**

**1. Grants Officer (GO)**

The Grants Officer is the only person authorized award, amend, terminate a federal assistance award, and provide formal, required award approval including those outlined in 2 CFR 200.308 and 2 CFR 200.407. The recipient must contact the GO to request changes to the federal assistance award, terms and conditions including an extension, budget changes, or other requests requiring formal approval. Correspondence should be routed through the GOR.

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E-mail: [Redacted]

**Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT)**

**2. Grants Officer Representative (GOR)**

The Grants Officer Representative is the person with the technical expertise related to program implementation and who is designated, in writing, by the GO to administer certain aspects of a specific federal assistance award. The GOR is not authorized to approve or deny any request to amend the award.

[Redacted]

Counterterrorism (CT)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**3. Program Officer (PO)**

The Program Officer is responsible for the programmatic and/or technical aspects of the pre-award cycle.

[Redacted]

CT

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**The above roles are subject to change at any time without necessitating an amendment to the award by US Department of State.**

Recipients will be notified of any changes via the Grant Solutions System or by email if award is not in Grant Solutions.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Clarke Ellis, Senior Reviewer

**Recipient Administrator:**

[Redacted]

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Equal Access International  
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**Authorized Award Signatory**

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[Redacted]

**Please notify DOS in anticipation of any changes in the above Recipient Administrator Points of Contact.**

Also note that any change in a key person specified in the application or the Federal award require prior approval from the Grants Officer per 2 CFR 200. 308(c)2.