JOURNAL FOR DERADICALIZATION

Summer 2016
Nr. 7
ISSN: 2363-9849

De-Radicalising Prisoners in Nigeria: developing a basic prison based de-radicalisation programme

By: Atta Barkindo[1]
Shane Bryans [2]

Abstract

The Nigerian Counter Terrorism Strategy recognised that force alone was not enough to combat violent extremist elements in Nigeria and that a multi-faceted approach was required to counter the threat of violent extremism. The Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA) was tasked with developing an ambitious countering violent extremism (CVE) programme consisting of three elements: community-based counter radicalisation; strategic communications; and de-radicalisation. The de-radicalisation element of the CVE programme included establishing a prison based de-radicalisation programme for sentenced and pre-trial prisoners.

The challenge facing ONSA and the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) in setting up the de-radicalisation programme was considerable. Prison conditions were basic; there were no existing offending behaviour programmes on which to build; risk assessment was rudimentary and focussed on escape risk; awareness among staff at all levels of de-radicalisation programmes, their content and how they should be managed, was minimal; specialist staff were in short supply and had no training in running interventions; and resources, both physical and financial, were limited.

This paper sets out how ONSA and NPS went about establishing the de-radicalisation programme and describes key elements of that programme, including: creating a supportive operating environment; risk and needs assessment; types of intervention; and programme management and staffing. It highlights the challenges and lessons that can be drawn from the operation of the programme during its first 18 months, which will be of particular interest to low resource, post-conflict and fragile states that are seeking to establish their own basic de-radicalisation programmes.

Key words: de-radicalisation; Boko Haram; Nigeria; extremism; terrorism; disengagement; prison programmes; interventions.

[1] Atta Barkindo *(African Conflict and Security Analysis Network and the Kukah Center for Faith, Policy and Leadership Research)*

[2] Dr Bryans *(consultant on de-radicalisation, penal reform and criminal justice issues – see: www.panopticon-consulting.org)* is the author of the United Nations *Handbook on Managing Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalisation to Violence in Prison* (UNODC – forthcoming October 2016, in four languages). The authors note with appreciation the contribution from Paul English on drafts of this paper.

Introduction

This paper describes the development and implementation of a prison based de-radicalisation programme in Nigeria. The programme was developed from a zero base in terms of policy, programming, staffing, tools and approach. The authors of this paper were part of a technical assistance team that were involved from the beginning of the de-radicalisation programme development in October 2014 through to the end of phase one in April 2016.[3] During this period the authors had the opportunity to make regular visits to the prison running the de-radicalisation programme in order to observe activities, monitor implementation and have informal conversations with the Treatment Team and prisoners. The visits also provided an opportunity for the authors to mentor the de-radicalisation Treatment Team members. The authors also conducted review sessions with members of the Treatment Team and Treatment Management Team and provided regular training events for the Teams. At various points during the planning and implementation of the programme, the authors had the opportunity to interview alleged members of Boko Haram, and other violent extremist groups, to discuss their backgrounds, motivations, expectations from a de-radicalisation programme and whether the interventions were having an impact.

Terrorist activity in Nigeria

Boko Haram emerged in the late 1990s[4] in north-eastern Nigeria, ostensibly with the motive to enforce religious reform.[5] Within a decade, the group had been transformed from a machete-wielding sect to one of the world's deadliest terror groups. Since 2009, Boko Haram is said to have killed over 17,000 individuals and displaced nearly 2.2 million people, mostly in Nigeria's northeast. The conflict has devastated thousands of Nigerian communities, and slowed the economy. Fishing markets, animal husbandry and irrigation projects have all been abandoned, particularly in communities around the Lake Chad region. Boko Haram has bombed the facilities of the United Nations in Abuja, and destroyed mosques and churches. It

[3] The technical assistance team consisted of a combination of local and international experts in various fields. Members of the team were: Paul English (team leader); Saka Azimazi; Atta Barkindo; Peter Bennett; Shane Bryans; Ahmad Bello Dogarawa; Sherbanu Sacoor; and Andrew Ezadueyan Zamani.
[4] Cook, David. (2011). ''The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria''. *CTC Sentinel* 4(9):4.
[5] Chasmar, Jessica. (2014). ''Boko Haram Leader Declares Islamic Caliphate in Nigeria'', *The Washington Times,* August 24, 2014. Cf. http:// www.washingtontimes.com/.../boko-haram-leader-declares-caliphate-nig...(accessed August 27, 2014).

has targeted a large number of Muslims as well as Christians, irrespective of the ethnicity of their victims. The sect has killed traditional rulers, religious leaders, security forces and politicians. It has abducted girls and women, forcing some into marriage and turning others into suicide bombers.[6] From June 2014 to June 2016, Boko Haram used more than 200 female attackers, killing over 1,000 people across four countries: Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.[7] The group has been responsible for more than 95 per cent of female suicide bombings worldwide since 2014.[8]

Between 2010 and 2012, two major factions emerged following a split from Boko Haram, the *Yusufiyya Islamic Movement* (YIM) and *Jamaa'atu Ansaril Muslimeen fi Biladis Sudaan* (Vanguard for the protection of Muslims in Black Africa) or ANSARU. Both groups denounced Boko Haram's strategy of killing innocent civilians.

In August 2014, Boko Haram declared an Islamic caliphate in Gworza, Borno state, and took control of broad areas of land across the north-eastern region. It implemented parts of Sharia law within the territories under its control, cutting off people's hands, exacting taxes and forcing Christian families to pay the *jizya,* a protection tax for non-Muslims who have been conquered. Shortly before Nigeria's general elections in March 2015, a massive military offensive forced Boko Haram to retreat. At the same time, Boko Haram declared allegiance to the Islamic State (IS), calling itself the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Although there are no recognised violent extremist groups in Nigeria inspired by Christian doctrine, some extremist groups have emerged in predominantly Christian areas of the south. Such groups include the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB),[9] the Ijaw Youth Council of the Niger Delta,[10] the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), and recently, the Niger Delta Avengers. Individual Christians have also been arrested fighting alongside Boko Haram. Understanding the complexity of violent extremism in Nigeria, particularly that extremist violence is committed by both Muslim and Christian

[6] Barkindo Atta and Shephard Michelle. 2014. ''The Abduction of School Girls by Boko Haram'', *Toronto Star*, 26 April, 2014.
[7] Elizabeth Pearson, 2016. Wiliyat Shaheedat: Boko Haram, Female Bombers and Islamic State, Unpublished Article, King's College London, p. 4.
[8] Author's Interview, Elizabeth Pearson, RUSI, London, 4 May, 2015
[9] Meagher, Kate. (2007). ''Hijacking Civil Society: The Inside Story of Bakassi Boys Vigilante Group of South-Eastern Nigeria'', *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 45:89-106.
[10] Scott, Dolezal. (2000). ''The Systematic Failure to Interpret Article IV of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: Is There a Public Emergency in Nigeria?'' *American University International Law Review* 15 (5):1163-1209, p. 1194.

groups, was an important element in formulating the de-radicalisation programme in Nigeria's prisons.

Nigeria's response to the terrorist threat

Nigeria's current counter-terrorism activities were born out of the Terrorism Prevention Act 2011 (as amended in 2013)[11], which provided the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) with a mandate to: act as the coordinating body for all security and enforcement agencies under the Act; provide support to prevent and combat acts of terrorism in Nigeria; ensure the effective formulation and implementation of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy for Nigeria; and build the related capacity of relevant security, intelligence, law enforcement and military services.

The National Security Strategy[12] set out that a military 'hard approach' alone could not adequately counter ideology-based terrorist insurgency in Nigeria. The strategy made clear that the Government also intended to adopt a 'soft approach' to counter-terrorism which would include a countering violent extremism programme.

Nigeria's countering violent extremism (CVE) programme was publicly launched in March 2014 with the aim that it would operate horizontally and vertically across government and includes working with non-state actors. The three main components of the CVE programme were: counter-radicalisation, strategic communications and de-radicalisation, with education initiatives as an additional cross-cutting activity. ONSA documentation[13] described the CVE programme objectives as: identifying the underlying causes of radicalisation (social, cultural, religious and economic); developing strategies that provide solutions; introducing measures to change the attitudes and perceptions of potential recruits; packaging and disseminating the right messages to the populace through strategic communication; assessing the impact of insurgency on the welfare and wellbeing of affected communities; and creating opportunity and hope for people in the affected communities and restoring their faith in the government.

[11] The Terrorism Prevention Act of 2011 was amended by the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act 2013, February 2013.
[12] National Security Strategy, Office of the National Security Adviser, November 2014.
[13] Nigeria's Countering Violent Extremism Programme, Office of the National Security Adviser, 2014.

In implementing the Strategy, ONSA identified a number of objectives for de-radicalisation activities: foster greater respect for human rights and rule of law; develop categorisation of suspects and convicts leading to more effective documentation; train relevant staff on CVE, as prison staff need to be able to professionally handle terror suspects and issues of rehabilitation; develop a range of expert psychologists and counsellors to pioneer rehabilitation efforts and train them in cognitive behavioural therapy and group therapy; utilise Islamic scholars to counter extremist narratives by training them on aspects of dialogue and religious counselling; and offer vocational training for inmates, ensuring they have a basic level of education and acquire skills to assist their reintegration into society.

Establishing a de-radicalisation programme in Nigerian prisons

The National Security Strategy made clear that the countering violent extremism programme should involve the design of a prison based de-radicalisation programme for prisoners under the Terrorism Prevention Act and for suspects awaiting trial, as well as an after-care component for those who might be released by courts or in the event of a government decision arising from on-going dialogue. The National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST)[14] stated that the Ministry of Interior, along with the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS), should drive the de-radicalisation programme in prisons.

While senior officials at ONSA had an extensive and detailed understanding of de-radicalisation programmes, the NPS had limited experience of establishing or running sustained rehabilitation programmes.[15] Existing international guidelines and good practice, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum: *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders*[16], provided only high level principles and were not sufficiently detailed to enable the NPS to use them as a manual to establishing its de-radicalisation programme. In order to fill the knowledge and experience gap, ONSA obtained technical assistance from the European Union within the framework of

[14] The National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), was signed as a Presidential Directive 30th April 2014.
[15] Dr Fatima Akilu was a deputy director in the ONSA with responsibility for the CVE programme, at the time the de-radicalisation programme was developed. Dr Akilu is a psychologist but, at the time of her appointment, had never worked in counter-terrorism. She spent some time studying the de-radicalisation programmes of Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Australia. See: www.apolitical.co/how-to-turn-a-terrorist/
[16] Global Counter Terrorism Forum: Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders (2012).

the European Union Technical Assistance to Nigeria's Evolving Security Challenges (EUTANS). This technical assistance[17], provided by CiviPol (the consulting and services company of the French Ministry of Interior), involved: supporting ONSA and the NPS in designing a basic prison based de-radicalisation model; providing training to NPS personnel; developing risk assessment and case management tools; and writing a detailed de-radicalisation programme guide and training manual. The EUTANS team consisted of a mixture of national and international experts in their specific fields.

ONSA decided that the goal of the prison-based programme should eventually be to change the beliefs, views, values and attitudes of the violent extremist prisoners (de-radicalisation) rather than only changing their behaviour (disengagement from violence). Interventions were focused, therefore, on changing prisoners' radical or extremist beliefs and views, as well as ensuring that prisoners renounced the use of violence to achieve their objectives. It was also agreed early on that interventions should focus on individual de-radicalisation and not on convincing violent extremist leaders to agree to collective disengagement from violence.

Rather than establishing de-radicalisation programmes in a number of prisons simultaneously, the decision was made to pilot a programme in one prison (Kuje medium security prison) in order to concentrate limited personnel and physical resources. Kuje prison was physically upgraded to provide the basic facilities needed to run a de-radicalisation programme. A separate housing block was refurbished to accommodate the violent extremist prisoners, along with a mosque, teaching rooms and an outdoor sports area.

In January 2015, ONSA and NPS held a public launch of their joint de-radicalisation programme. Implementation of the prison based programme began in Kuje prison in March the same year.

Management and organisation of the programme

An Integrated Case Management approach was developed, in which de-radicalisation programme personnel adopted a prisoner-centred, multidisciplinary approach to working with prisoners. The adoption of this methodology enabled personnel from mixed backgrounds and specialism to use a common framework approach, tools and language to assess, identify

[17] For details of the technical assistance team see footnote 2.

needs, monitor progress and update the outcomes during violent extremist prisoners' detention and transition to release.

The NPS personnel selected to be part of the de-radicalisation programme were established as Local Treatment Teams. At NPS headquarters, a Treatment Management Team was created to: develop a de-radicalisation assessment tool; identify, appoint and train Local Treatment Team members; supervise and monitor programme delivery; collate national data on risks and needs; and ensure that the necessary materials, tools, and equipment were available for the programme. In the prison, a Local Treatment Team was responsible for: undertaking risk assessments; identifying appropriate intervention; maintaining case file records; delivering programme interventions; and participating in case conferences.

In addition to establishing the Local Treatment Team and Treatment Management Team, work was undertaken to create a supportive operational environment in Kuje prison. All personnel, including ancillary, supervisory and administrative personnel who did not have a direct role to play in delivering structured interventions, had a part to play in maintaining the conditions conducive to intervention delivery and to supporting progress in de-radicalisation.

Care was also taken to ensure that the officer-in-charge of the prison, who had responsibility for prison security and for ensuring suitable prison regime arrangements were in place for the effective delivery of those programmes within his command, was fully aware of programme requirements and activities and that those requirements and activities were appropriate for the security arrangements within Kuje prison.

The Local Treatment Team held regular team meetings to discuss day to day business, administration, resources, staff management, reporting, and challenges faced. Ongoing case reviews also took place to review progress of interventions and to allow an opportunity to share what worked well and lessons learned. Intervention case conferences were held at set intervals and the first case conference was convened no later than six weeks after a prisoner joined the programme.

In addition to general prison files, it was decided to keep accurate and accessible files on the assessment of violent extremist prisoners and on the impact of interventions. A single dynamic intervention-related case file was therefore developed soon after a violent extremist prisoner's admission to the prison, which was then updated and modified as he progressed

through the institution. Team members were encouraged to keep up-to-date clear case notes of every contact with each violent extremist prisoner.

In order to make optimum use of the facilities in Kuje prison, a clear weekly timetable of activities was designed. The timetable proved to be a powerful administrative tool that provided an appropriate structural dimension to the activities required for effective interventions. It also contributed to an increased sense of order for violent extremist prisoners. The work of the Treatment Team, prisoners' time as part of the programme, and the availability of facilities, were organised through the timetable. The material resources of equipment and supplies, which were largely related to interventions, were also indirectly controlled through effective timetabling.

It was decided to separate the violent extremists from other prisoners by locating them in a self-contained accommodation block and not allowing them to mix with other prisoners during regime activities. Separating violent extremist prisoners from the general population makes them easier to manage and reduces the risk of them radicalising others to violence. This approach has been adopted in a number of other jurisdictions[18] with other countries opting for an integration, dispersal or concentration model.

The EUTANS technical assistance team provided coaching and mentoring for the Treatment Teams (both local and headquarters) throughout the operation of the pilot programme. This included visits to prison, meetings with the prisoners, facilitating Team meetings, reviewing case files, and providing refresher training.

Prison personnel working on the de-radicalisation programme

It was decided to use existing personnel from within the NPS to run the de-radicalisation programme. A selection process identified a core group of personnel who had the necessary skills to deliver de-radicalisation interventions. In many cases, the personnel

[18] For examples of separation see: **Netherlands** (Veldhuis, T.M. & Lindenberg, S. (2012a). Limits of Tolerance under pressure: A case study of Dutch terrorist detention policy. Critical Studies on Terrorism, 5, 425-443); Kenya (President Uhuru Kenyatta, **Kenya**, 16 February 2016, http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-kenya-prison-idUKKCN0VQ0S4; **Saudi Arabia** (Boucek, C., 2008, Jailing Jihadis: Saudi Arabia's special terrorist prisons. Terrorism Monitor, 6, 4-6.Jones; **Philippines** (Morales, R., 2012, Integration versus segregation: A preliminary assessment of de-radicalisation in two Philippine correctional facilities. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism Journal, 35, 211–228; **Australia** (Brown, D., 2008, The effect of terrorism and terrorist trials on Australian prison regimes, in C.Cunneen & M. Salter (Eds.), Proceedings of the Second Australia and New Zealand Critical Criminology Conference, Sydney, Australia, 19–20 June. (pp. 61-76). Sydney: University of New South Wales.)

selected were not always using those skills in their prison work, although they did sometimes use those skills in the community. This included prison personnel who were: imams and pastors; teachers; vocational instructors; arts therapists; psychologists; and medical personnel. A decision was made early in the planning stage not to recruit Imams from the community but instead to use prison staff who were faith leaders in their community. These staff members were selected and carefully vetted by the Government. Other NPS personnel were initially selected by NPS and ONSA and had to sit a number of tests before being appointed to the programme.

EUTANS technical assistance team provided training for the selected de-radicalisation programme personnel. This training focused on: goals and objectives of prison de-radicalisation programmes; identifying the types and purposes of de-radicalisation programmes and interventions, including the role of different actors; de-radicalisation risk and needs assessment tools and how to use them; Integrated Case Management; team working; managing programme interventions; information sharing; roles and responsibilities; and delivering interventions.

The selected personnel were moved from their duty station to work in Kuje prison. Prison personnel had previously been attacked and killed by violent extremist groups as a consequence of working for the government in prisons holding violent extremist prisoners, so secure accommodation was provided for the programme team.

In order to identify Team members, a distinctive 'jacket' was provided for personnel when working on the programme in the prison. This helped to create a common identity among programme Team members.

De-radicalisation model adopted in Nigeria's prisons

De-radicalisation has been a neglected area not only in counter-terrorism policies but also research on violent extremism. However, some recent studies are beginning to provide some valuable insights.[19] Any effort to understand the factors that drive or facilitate

[19] For recent research on the subject see: Altier, M., Thoroughgood, C., & Horgan, J. (2014). Turning away from terrorism: Lessons from psychology, sociology, and criminology. Journal of Peace Research, 51(5), 647-661; Braddock, Kurt and Horgan, J. (2015). Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism 39 (5), 381-404; Williams, M.J., Horgan, J., & Evans, W.P. (2015). The Critical Role of Friends in Networks for Countering Violent Extremism: Toward a Theory of Vicarious Help-Seeking. Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression (October). 45-65;

disengagement or de-radicalisation for each individual will necessarily be based in, or derived from, a particular context. However, although the political and ideological context may be very different, the social and psychological processes involved may well be similar, or at least comparable.

Radicalisation to violence is a process of belief and attitude change towards an extremist orientation that justifies the use of violence to achieve its goals. In some cases the process may take many years, with other individuals it can take only a few months. Underpinning the approach of de-radicalisation is the concept that if an individual can adopt radical beliefs and attitudes that lead to violent extremism, then that individual can also abandon the use of violence through changing those beliefs and attitudes that justify its use.

It is clear from the research that no single model of de-radicalisation is universally applicable.[20] Interventions cannot simply be transplanted from one country to another, even within the same region.[21] To be effective, efforts must be highly tailored to the country and culture involved, the nature of violent extremist group, the individual prisoners participating and the environment into which the former violent extremist detainee is ultimately released.

A basic de-radicalisation model was adopted for use in Nigerian prisons, consisting of four stages: engagement; risk assessment; needs assessment; and interventions.[22]

Engagement: The first stage involved the Treatment Team members getting to know the violent extremist prisoners, establishing a positive professional relationship, developing trust and entering into a constructive dialogue.

Risk: Once Treatment Team members had engaged the violent extremist prisoners, the next stage was for the Treatment team to undertake a thorough risk assessment to

Horgan, J., Altier, M. B., Shortland, N., & Taylor, M. (2016). Walking Away: The Disengagement and De-Radicalization of a Violent Right-Wing Extremist. Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression (March), 1-15.

[20] For case studies and good practice on disengagement programmes and interventions, see: UNODC Handbook on Managing Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalisation to Violence in Prison (Bryans, S. – forthcoming October 2016).

[21] Porges, M. (2011) Reform School for Radicals: Deradicalization programs are justified by their indirect effects. The American Interest. Volume 6, number 6.

[22] Based on the 'risk-needs-responsivity' framework: Andrews, D. A., Bonta, J., & Hoge, R. D. (1990). Classification for effective rehabilitation: Rediscovering psychology. Criminal Justice and Behavior, 17, 19-52; Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2006). The psychology of criminal conduct (4th ed.). Newark, NJ: LexisNexis

identify the reasons for the prisoner becoming a violent extremist offender and the level of risk the prisoner currently posed.

Needs: Having identified the underpinning reasons for a violent extremist prisoner's involvement in violent extremism, Treatment Team members identified risk-related needs. That is, the activity that would help to reduce the risk that the prisoner would engage in, or advocate, future violent extremist activity.

Response: The fourth stage was to implement the interventions that would meet the violent extremist prisoners' identified risk-related needs and thereby reduce risk.

In reality, the process turned out to be iterative rather than linear. Treatment Team members continued to engage the violent extremist prisoners throughout the programme, risk and needs assessments were undertaken on an ongoing basis and changed to reflect the progress, or lack of progress, that the violent extremist prisoner was making. New or additional interventions were identified as the prisoners' risk and needs changed.

Assessing prisoners' risk and needs

Once the refurbishment of Kuje prison had been completed and de-radicalisation programme personnel trained, 45 adult male violent extremist prisoners were identified to participate in the pilot de-radicalisation programme. One of the prisoners was sentenced, the others were all pre-trial detainees; 48 per cent were aged between 31 and 40 years old; 81 per cent Muslims; 60 per cent married and 35 per cent educated to at least secondary school level. Most of the prisoners were alleged to be 'foot soldiers' and low level operatives in violent extremist groups, who showed low levels of deeply entrenched radicalisation. Others were alleged to have: funded violent extremism; accommodated violent extremist members; provided a religious narrative for violent extremism and recruited fighters; or operated as communications and logistics experts. A small number of the prisoners were identified as highly radicalised, influential and powerful and who exercised a degree of charismatic leadership. A number denied any degree of commitment to violent extremism, although this needs to be seen in the context of their pre-trial (remand) status. There were also cases of

individuals who were highly educated to university higher degree level and came from privileged backgrounds.

The first task for the Treatment Team was to engage the violent extremist prisoners. Many of the violent extremist prisoners were, at least initially, resistant or rejected participation in the programme as they were suspicious of the efforts of officials and their motivation for these interventions. Team members built a relationship with the violent extremist prisoners by seeking to arrange for their basic needs, such as elements of accommodation, contact with family and healthcare, to be met by the institution's administration. Once a constructive relationship had been established, members of the Team were able to undertake a formal risk assessment of each violent extremist prisoner.

Members of the Treatment Team were trained to use structured professional judgement and decision-making in conducting the assessments of violent extremist prisoners. Information was gathered, weighted and combined according to the Team's judgment, assisted by a specialist risk assessment tool. The approach was therefore empirically guided, as each Team member was encouraged to consider the same set of risk assessment factors for each violent extremist prisoner they assessed.

Many of the existing generic risk assessment tools and protocols have questionable relevance to violent extremists because the factors used to assess risk did not relate to the background and motivations of this group of violent offenders. A limited number of tools have been developed specifically to assess violent extremist prisoners.[23] These tools have, to date, only been used with limited numbers of prisoners, and in specific jurisdictions and contexts. It is not realistic in many cases to deploy tools as comprehensive as these in jurisdictions with limited resources, in post-conflict situations, or when there are many hundreds of violent extremist prisoners that require assessment.

The EUTANS technical assistance team therefore supported the NPS in designing a simple de-radicalisation assessment tool for use in prisons in Nigeria. Following a review of

[23] See for example: Pressman E., Duits, N., Rinne, T and Flockton, J. (2016) VERA–2R Violence Extremism Risk Assessment – version 2 Revised: A structured professional judgement approach, Nederlands Institut voor Forensische Psychiatrie en Psychologie; and Lloyd, M. and Dean, C. (2015) The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders, Journal of Threat Assessment and Management, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 1, 40–52.

existing tools, including VERA-2[24], a basic tool consisted of 47 indicators grouped under a number of headings was developed: motivation for committing a violent extremist act; level of commitment to violent extremist acts; personality (attitudes, beliefs), feelings, behaviour; context and intent; background, history and capability; and any risk reduction factors. Information was gathering through interviewing the prisoners, observations of behaviour, prison and court records and information from the other government services and agencies.

The tool served as a guide and provided a minimum set of risk factors that the Treatment Team should consider. In some instances, some of these factors were not relevant; in others, additional risk factors had to be added. Each assessment considered all risk factors, even if some were later rejected as not relevant to that particular case. It was made clear to the Treatment Team that risk assessment is not an exact science and that it would not provide a definitive answer as to whether a violent extremist prisoner is likely to re-offend after release. Such tools are indicators of underlying reasons for someone being a violent extremist and can provide some insight into whether the risk of re-offending is reducing as a result of interventions. It was reiterated that assessments should be validated using other sources of information such as staff observations and security intelligence. The key point being that assessment informs decisions about how risk can best be managed and mitigated in the future.

It was recognised that assessing risk had to be done on an ongoing and regular basis, and at a minimum of every six months. The assessments undertaken later in the process were found to be more accurate as personnel, over the months following the violent extremist prisoners' arrival at Kuje prison, had more time to interact with and observe them. Subsequent risk assessments also enabled members of the Treatment Team to reflect on whether the prisoner has shown willingness to complete interventions and the outcome of their participation in those interventions.

Understanding individual motivations for violent extremism

Undertaking the detailed risk assessment enabled the Team to identify which of the wide variety of motivations and factors have 'pulled' and 'pushed' individuals towards violent extremism. Understanding why individual prisoners have gone down the path of

[24] Pressman, D. and Flockton, J. (2014) Violent extremist risk assessment; issues and applications of the VERA-2 in a high-security correctional setting, chapter 9 in Silke, A. (ed) Prisons, Terrorism and Extremist – critical issues in management, radicalisation and reform.

violent extremism was critical for a number of reasons including to: design and apply appropriate interventions; monitor progress and impact of those interventions; and determine the risk of future violent acts.

From the risk assessment it was clear that each prisoner was unique and that factors that motivated them varied from person to person. That said, a number of underpinning generic reasons were identified among several of the violent extremist prisoners in Kuje prison, including: lack of socioeconomic opportunities; marginalisation and discrimination; violations of human rights and the rule of law; poor governance (particularly related to corruption); victimisation; distortion of religious beliefs or political ideologies to justify the use of violence; ethnic and cultural issues; and charismatic leadership and social networks. The risk assessments also found that some people got 'sucked into', or pressurised into, joining violent extremist groups because of friends/family involvement, others were conditioned or lied to; and some were threatened and coerced.

De-radicalisation programme interventions

Having made an assessment of the risks posed by the violent extremist prisoner, the Local Treatment Team identified the risk-related needs. In some cases, those needs related to a lack of education or vocational skills, in other cases the prisoner needed faith-based education or cognitive support.

In order to respond to the identified needs, a range of interventions were implemented that focused on: enabling the violent extremist prisoner to fulfil their needs legitimately; helping them develop supportive attitudes, beliefs and thinking; enhancing the prisoners' emotional tolerance and acceptance; increasing their personal agency; and supporting prisoners to express values and pursuing goals legitimately. Many of these changes required a holistic approach across a number of disciplines and specialisms and a range of interventions.

The interventions were conceived as planned and structured processes designed to assist the violent extremist prisoners to abandon engagement in violent extremist acts or, for those considered to be at serious risk of becoming further radicalised, to avoid committing such offences in future. The interventions were also intended to encourage prisoners to disengage from associating with a violent extremist group or causes and, if de-radicalisation

was to be lasting and complete, to relinquish those beliefs which justify acts of violent extremism.

No specific rewards were offered to the prisoners to participate in the programme. There were, however, a number of incentives such as access to activities, assistance of social work team with family or legal contact, very occasional assistance with medical conditions, and meetings sometimes includes the provision of some refreshment.

As interventions should vary from country to country, to reflect the nature of the violent conflict, cultural and political context of that country, and available resources and expertise, seven types of interventions were developed for use in the de-radicalisation programme in Nigerian prisons.

Motivational interviewing: Motivational interviewing underpinned all other interventions. The purpose was to encourage the prisoner to 'buy into' the programme, build trust and lay the foundation for de-radicalisation. It was intended to engage the prisoner in conversations that would challenge beliefs, attitudes and behaviour regarding violent extremism. The approach used basic counselling skills and open-ended questions that enabled the prisoner to recall details of difficult events and life experiences, affirming experiences and acknowledging personal strengths.

Vocational training and work experience: Vocational training and work experience were useful ways of keeping prisoners occupied, helping to relieve boredom and inactivity that could have an adverse impact on their physical and emotional wellbeing. There were also more positive reasons for assisting prisoners to acquire work skills, including equipping them to find employment on release and thereby provide financially for themselves and their families. In Kuje prison, prisoners were given the opportunity develop trade skills that match demand for services in the communities that they are likely to return to. This has helped to lay a foundation for resettlement and reintegration. Prisoners at Kuje prison were offered training in carpentry work, bead-making, tailoring and basic electrical work.

Education and cultural activities: Education is acknowledged as an essential element in personal development. In the case of Boko Haram prisoners, education can lead to a better

understanding of the social and economic factors that have contributed to their disillusionment with mainstream society. In Kuje prison, as well as basic literacy (English and Arabic) and numeracy, the prisoners had the opportunity to develop computer skills, ranging from learning to use a keyboard to simple word processing.

Art Therapy: A range of creative pursuits were adapted as therapeutic interventions, including creative arts such as: music; drumming; dance; calligraphy; group performances; and traditional handicrafts. The art component was combined with vocational skills acquisition and prisoners took bead-making classes, eventually producing jewellery and decorative items that could be sold. The creative process also enabled the communication of feelings and emotions associated with significant life events. The skill and sensitivity of the art teachers in nurturing a communicative relationship with the prisoners was paramount.

Sports and games: Sports intervention was considered more than just the provision of outdoor exercise. As part of the de-radicalisation programme, sports were used to promote personal development and growth, and proved to encourage pro-social thinking and behaviour. It also served as a platform for engagement and rehabilitation. When the programme started, none of the prisoners took part in sports. More recently, football leagues have been organised with teams from the prisoners, prison staff and general prison population, which has helped to improve the atmosphere of mutual trust and communication. A range of sports interventions were used including volleyball and football.

Religious Intervention: The significance of religious interventions was based on the role that religious ideology plays in violent extremism in Nigeria. Since the approach was aimed at stemming the tide of radicalisation and changing behaviour, faith-based interventions required understanding violent extremist ideologies and countering them with superior scholarly arguments. The narratives applied for countering extremist ideologies were not dictated by the views of any particular Islamic or Christian sect. Rather, they were directed by the central messages of Islam and Christianity with regards to tolerance, balance, the spirit of co-existence and social etiquettes that guide good relationship with others and bring peace and security in society. Basic tenets of both Islam and Christianity were reiterated with prisoners.

Furthermore, the teaching of Islam and Christianity on peace, justice, human rights, tolerance and co-existence were emphasised in line with the contents of *Qur'an* and the Bible. Christian and Islamic teaching on moderation and warning against extremism were also equally highlighted. In many cases, the Muslim prisoners had to be taught Islam from scratch, as they had never seen a *Qur'an* before. Others had a very rudimentary understanding of religion, so the more that they were engaged, the more they began to understand that violent extremism was not a fight for religion, but rather a fight for power and control, and that religion was used by Boko Haram as an instrument for recruitment.

Psychological and Counselling Interventions: These interventions underpinned the decision-making process required to change prisoners' belief systems, resolve psychological conflicts associated with these changes, give up related antisocial behaviours and acquire interpersonal skills for reintegration into the society. Through individual risk assessments, as part of the case conference process, psychosocial antecedents and rehabilitation imperatives were uncovered. The provision of psychological and counselling services assisted prisoners to work through these issues and contributed to their rehabilitation.

In responding to issues which may have led prisoners towards violent extremism, it was also necessary to address other factors such as serious alcohol or drug misuse, and mental health conditions. These were identified through routine medical and admission screening and addressed by specialist personnel, so as not to have an adversely impact on the prisoners' ability to engage in de-radicalisation interventions.

The scheduling and nature of interventions evolved as the Treatment Team gained experience, built their understanding of the violent extremist population, and as the prisoners' rate and nature of engagement increased. The range and extent of classroom materials available to the programme also influenced the delivery of interventions. Some of the interventions led to group activities, e.g. sports, classroom teaching, health lectures. Other interventions, usually involving faith leaders, psychologists and social workers, tended to involve one (or more) team members working with individual prisoners.

Impact of the de-radicalisation programme

Despite the massive investment of resources in this field, few jurisdictions have elaborated robust and succinct methodologies to evaluate the success, or otherwise, of de-radicalisation programmes. Likewise, the academic literature on the effectiveness of interventions generally remains in its infancy and interventions that have been evaluated often do not meet scientific standards.[25] A review of 135 studies found that they were mostly anecdotal, in which no explicit reference to theory and no empirical quantitative or qualitative data was reported.[26]

At a policy level, ONSA decided the goal of the prison-based programme was to change the beliefs, views, values and attitudes of the violent extremist prisoners (de-radicalisation) rather than only changing their behaviour (disengagement from violence). Measuring changes in beliefs, attitudes and behaviour is challenging within the custodial environment. It was therefore decided to use a number of indicators of the impact of interventions including: changes in the prisoners' behaviour; level of engagement with the interventions; number of institutional incidents; and number of interventions completed.

The de-radicalisation programme in Kuje prison is already having a positive impact on prisoners, staff and prison management.

> *'We had a lot of crying in class. At first there was some defiance and especially of the imams, because they felt they had more knowledge than the imams, but as time went on, as they began to really understand what the Koran was saying, there were a lot of tears. People would say things like, "I wasted my life". You know, all of a sudden you're confronted with what you've done. You've committed atrocities in the name of this religion when now you understand that religion actually preaches the exact opposite. How can you now justify why you raped*

[25] See for example: Horgan, J. and Braddock, K. (2010) Rehabilitating the terrorists?: challenges in assessing the effectiveness of de-radicalisation programs, Terrorism and Political Violence, 22, 267-291; Dalgaard-Nielsen, A. (2010). Violent Radicalization in Europe: What we know and what we do not know. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 33, 797-814; Carline, A. (2011) Report to the home secretary of independent oversight of Prevent review and Strategy. London: HM Government; Christmann, K. (2012). Preventing religious radicalisation and violent extremism: A systematic review of the research evidence. UK: Youth Justice Board; Lindekilde, L. (2012) Introduction: assessing the effectiveness of counter-radicalisation policies in northwestern Europe. Critical Studies on Terrorism, 5, 335-344.

[26] Feddes, A. and Gallucci, M. (2015) A Literature Review on Methodology used in Evaluating Effects of Preventive and De-radicalisation Interventions, Journal for de-radicalization, winter 15/16, No. 5.

somebody or killed a child or placed a bomb, so it's tough, it's a rocky road, it's going to take them a long time.[27]

Violent extremist prisoners who previously refused to engage with staff are now entering into positive dialogue and, in most cases, responding constructively. The interventions are providing opportunities to develop alternative ways to meet their needs and some are questioning their involvement with violent extremist groups. Their dissatisfaction and disillusionment with their involvement is being explored. Prisoners are gaining valuable vocational skills and others are learning to read and write. Inconsistencies and inaccuracies in their current beliefs that support violence are being highlighted. Many are gaining a more detailed knowledge of religious texts and alternative interpretations.

An ongoing assessment programme was put in place that had the purpose of measuring changes in level of risk. Given the sensitivity of the information gathered, the authors were not able to directly access the prisoners' files. The most recent risk assessments were reported as showing a lowering of risks across a number of indicators for many prisoners. However, it is still very early days in the programme and it will be important to monitor whether prisoners' initial level of engagement and change is maintained.

As the programme has been operating for such a short period of time, there has been no real feedback to the judiciary and therefore participation has had no impact on sentencing or prison terms. The delays within the criminal justice system mean that so few prisoners are currently sentenced it will take many years to identify any changes to pattern of sentencing under the Terrorism Prevention Act. All prisoners who are sentenced have the possibility of one third remission at the discretion of Officer in Charge (Prison Director). It is likely that involvement in the programme will contribute to the decision making process at the appropriate time, but this has not been tested yet.

As with any prison programme, the real test of success is what happens with the prisoner after release. At a simple level, desistance from violence is the desired outcome of disengagement and reintegration interventions and it is usually measured by an indicator such as re-offending, reconviction or re-imprisonment for a violent extremist offence. But

[27] Dr Fatima Akilu, former deputy director of ONSA with responsibility for the CVE programme, quoted in: How to turn a terrorist (16 October 2015). Available at: www.apolitical.co/how-to-turn-a-terrorist/

recidivism rates can be misleading. They are often inaccurate, reflecting only what is known to security services and the criminal justice system, which can be limited. Measuring the impact of interventions also suffers from the 'dilemma of attribution', that is, relating improved indicators, such as reduced incidences of violent extremism and recidivism rates, to the interventions themselves. There are several factors (local, national and international in nature) that can affect operations and the success or failure of interventions.[28]

For prison staff, particularly those directly engaged with the programme, it has opened up a new channel of handling and engaging constructively with prisoners. The relationship between prison staff and violent extremist prisoners improved overall. The mutual trust that also developed between staff and prisoners inspired more violent extremist prisoners to engage with the programme. In addition, there were incidents of improved relationships between violent extremist prisoners and the general prison staff who were not part of the programme. There were also indications of easing tensions between the violent extremist prisoners and the general prison population.

Prison management has seen the benefit of the programme reviving the culture of documentation, classification and the importance of attending to prisoners on individual, as well as on a group, basis.

Lessons for policy and practice in other jurisdictions

Without significant commitment to an extensive programme of training, prison personnel are far less equipped to manage and implement de-radicalisation programmes. Even where prison personnel have benefitted from a high standard of education, lengthy internal training and are well equipped for their duties, as was the case in Nigeria, there is often a lack of knowledge about the implementation and management of the de-radicalisation programmes. In addition, with limited opportunities (resources, infrastructure, facilities, time) to implement general rehabilitation programmes, as is the case in many countries, that element of professional duties has had less chance to develop. The basis of de-radicalisation programmes, which is in part about individualisation, is almost absent from general prison operations, particularly in post-conflict, fragile and low resource countries. In such countries,

[28] GCTF: Sydney Memorandum on Challenges and Strategies on the Management of Violent Extremist Detainees (2012), Internal Challenge 6.

risk assessment practice is generally more to with risks associated with escape and internal order and less based on more thorough understanding of a range of risks and causes of risks. Professional groups also tend to work in silos rather than inter-disciplinarily towards common goals. To address these gaps, personnel who will be delivering de-radicalisation programmes require an extensive training and mentoring programme to provide the necessary professional knowledge and skills for them to fulfil their individual responsibilities, to introduce the operational skills that enable them to run and oversee the programme and the professional techniques and qualities to work as part of a team in a complex programme.

The professional conduct of prison personnel in delivering de-radicalisation programmes can have a significant impact on the degree of trust that violent extremists have in their government. Conditions in prisons can be harsh. Overcrowding, particularly in urban prisons, increases pressure on the system, resulting in staff having to struggle to meet the basic needs of the prisoners. Despite reform efforts and improvements within many prison systems, those detained often expect nothing less than a tough experience. For prisoners who have previously been detained by security or military forces, they carry their previous experiences of detention. When Treatment Team members work with violent extremists with transparency, empathy and decency, this can have a positive impact on the way the prisoners view government and its institutions. In the Nigerian de-radicalisation programme, Team members had very few resources to attend to the immediate needs of prisoners (such as health, legal issues, family contact, diet etc.), but they worked with the prisoners and the prison authorities to try and resolve such issues when possible. Beyond meeting immediate needs, the Treatment Team gave time; they empathised with prisoners and were neither harsh nor judgemental in their interaction and treatment. The prisoners stated to independent observers that this was the first time in their direct experience that government had showed an interest and they were treated with dignity and humanely.

The consensual nature of de-radicalisation programmes is essential for ensuring legitimate and safe commitment from violent extremist prisoners. The de-radicalisation process has to commence and continue through mutual consent. Desistance, disengagement and de-radicalisation will only be legitimately sustained if those who commit to the programme do so

of their own free will. As part of the Nigerian de-radicalisation programme, Team members met with representatives of the prisoners to run through the basis of the programme, expectations, responsibilities and safeguards. Senior custodial officers within the prison were also involved in the meetings. Prisoners were all given the opportunity to sign a consent form before joining the programme. Throughout the programme, prisoners were able to disengage without consequences. Those who were thinking of leaving the programme were also given the opportunity to discuss their decision and efforts were made to overcome the reasons they had for wanting to leave. Only a couple of prisoners decided not to participate in the programme.

A combination of different professional groups, working in unison for a common goal, can offer opportunities that reflect the diversity of the violent extremist prisoner group. Based on experience with the Nigerian de-radicalisation programme, prisoners participating in de-radicalisation programmes will be a diverse group that may include those who: have been charged with a variety of offences; are alleged to have offended at different times during an emerging and changing insurgency; come from vastly different social and educational backgrounds; have different first languages; and display a wider range of behaviours. The diversity in the violent extremist prisoner population dictates that a risk-response-interventions model should be inter-disciplinary. Often prisoners would build a relationship with different professionals, regardless of the factors which drove them to violent extremism. These were not based on specific risk-related needs but on interests in activities or other personal factors. Those initial interests facilitated building a relationship with the individual Team member, which in turn led to wider engagement with the whole Treatment Team. In some cases, activities such as sports or arts were points of entry for prisoners before they started counselling or faith-based programmes, which demand a greater degree of personal exploration and reflection that can only come through trust. Some prisoners found their initial relationship with the Treatment Team through faith-based dialogue and counselling, as they identified with the role and authority of religious leaders. Once trust had been built through that relationship, they could then move onto other programmes such as education.

Delays within the criminal justice system can be an obstacle to a successful de-radicalisation programme. The slow pace of justice and the uncertainty this raises for prisoners participating in a de-radicalisation programme can be a serious hindrance to its success. Where a prisoner has been charged but has not yet had his case heard, they may not feel confident and safe in discussing their background and experiences with Treatment Team members who are government officials. The Treatment Team in Nigeria had a 'do no harm' approach in delivering the programme but the uncertainties that awaiting trial brings inculcates caution and poses a limitation on interaction between Team members and prisoners. In addition, the uncertainty over a timeframe for un-convicted prisoners makes the planning of the programmes much more complex and this places stress on scheduling and planning for the Treatment Team.

Realistic expectations for those in the de-radicalisation programme need to be established early and should be managed through long term stable commitment from government and its partners. Any de-radicalisation programme should be clear on what it will deliver and have consistent levels of support from national and international entities to avoid inconsistent provision and mixed messages being given to violent extremist prisoners participating in the programme. The ebb and flow of programme support from the prison administration and government bodies in Nigeria proved to be an impediment to effective programme delivery. Commitments and assurances on the content and operation of the programme were not always forthcoming. This was particularly destabilising for those whose experience of government had been negative and where the de-radicalisation programme was seeking to build trust.

A de-radicalisation programme needs to work with prison authorities to enhance classification of prisoners in order to ensure only appropriate prisoners participate in de-radicalisation programmes. Key to the stability and efficiency of a de-radicalisation programme is ensuring that only appropriate prisoners enter the programme. In Nigeria, the programme was based in an existing prison facility, where the classification system was already established and where prisoners were classified as violent extremists based on their documentation (such as their warrant) and the outcome of the Admissions Board process. These alone did not always prove to be sufficient to determine with accuracy whether a

prisoner was a violent extremist, particularly as 70 per cent of prisoners were pre-trial and limited written information was available. The result was that there was some initial uncertainty regarding which prisoners should be considered for the de-radicalisation programme.

Risk assessment tools should be tailored to the national context and kept as simple and straightforward as possible. A number of risk assessment tools have been developed for use with violent extremists. These tend to be complex, resource intensive to administer and used only by specialists such as psychologists. In post-conflict and low resource countries, using such tools is not feasible or practical, particularly where there are large numbers of violent extremists in detention and few, if any, specialists employed by the prison administration. The development of a short risk assessment tool for use in Nigeria proved to be very successful in providing a means to identify the main drivers for each prisoner's involvement in violent extremism, establishing their risk-related needs, and monitoring any changes in risk level.

Thorough documentation should be an essential part of any de-radicalisation programme, together with a systematic collation and robust analysis of the processes and outcomes of the programme. Any de-radicalisation programme should be designed to record and measure change over time and be based on inter-disciplinary opinion and evidence, multiple sources of information, and structured judgment. An "if it is not documented, it has not happened" approach should be adopted. While this was completed to some extent in the Nigerian de-radicalisation programme, with a good standard of individual records, case files they were not collated and the findings and conclusions were not systematically interrogated by an independent oversight body. Emerging patterns of change were also not documented, collated or analysed with sufficient rigour to enable decision makers to make informed choices. The monitoring and evaluation development work that was undertaken during the programme came too late for it to be an entrenched element of operations and oversight.

The process for reintegrating violent extremist prisoners into the community should be a key element in any strategy for reducing violent extremism. The slowness of the justice process in Nigeria, and the sentencing tariff in the Terrorism Prevention Act, mean that there will be no

controlled releases of convicted violent extremist prisoners in the foreseeable future. It was decided therefore not to include a pre-release or reintegration element into the programme at this initial stage. In fact, a very small number of unconvicted prisoners who were part of the original programme were released by the court and received no formal follow up or support after their release. Even with effective disengagement interventions happening in prison, if re-integration preparation is not put in place, the chances of the former violent extremist prisoner re-offending are increased. Consideration should therefore be given to building in basic re-integration elements into programme design. Post release support, supervision and monitoring may require new legislative provision in some jurisdictions.

This paper has set out how ONSA and NPS went about establishing a de-radicalisation programme in a Nigerian prison. The key elements of that programme, including: creating a supportive operating environment; risk and needs assessment; types of intervention; and programme management and staffing, are all potentially replicable in low resource, post-conflict and fragile states. The lessons identified in the paper, drawn from the operation of the programme during its first 18 months, can inform the implementation of prison based de-radicalisation programmes in similar jurisdictions.