



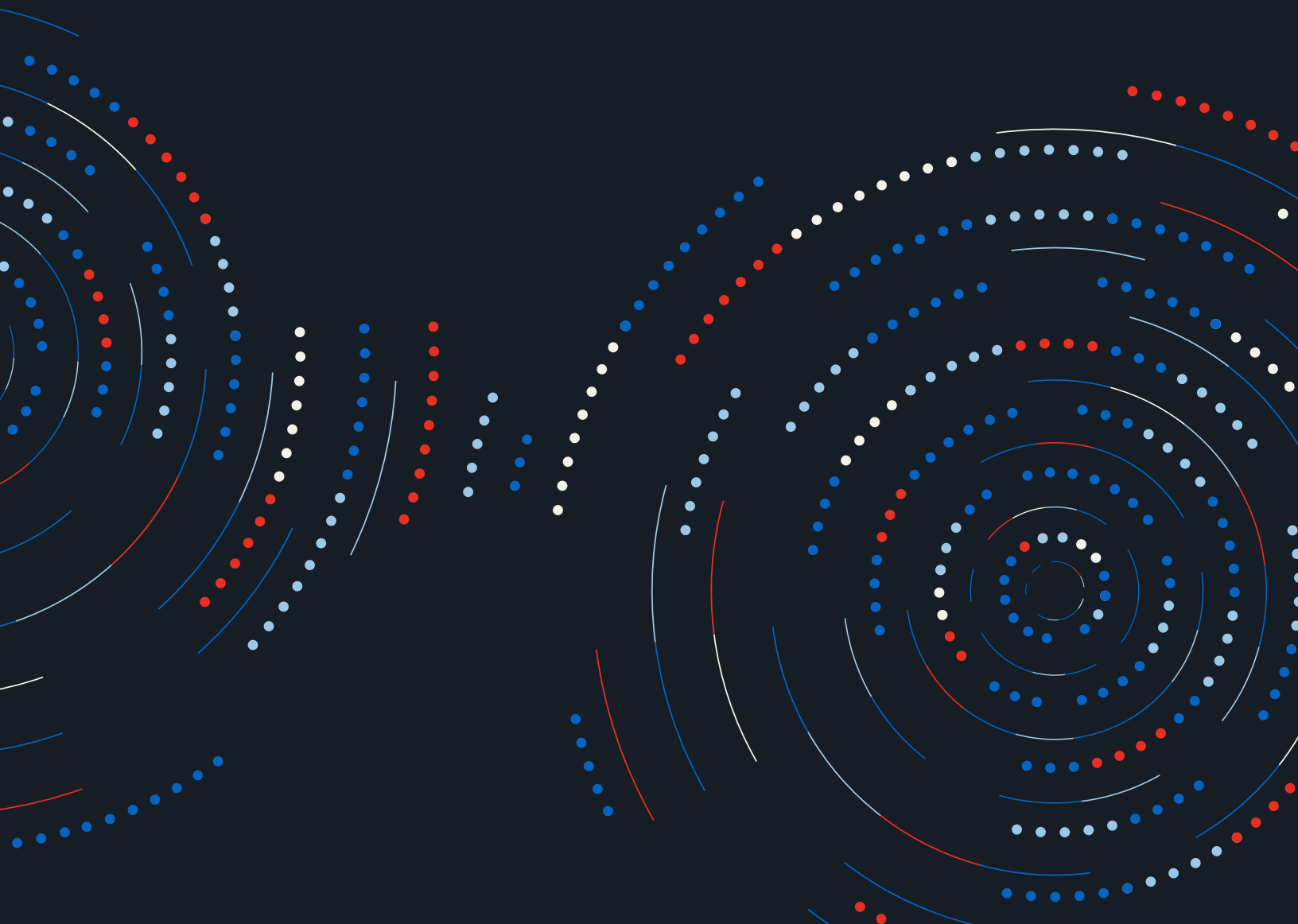
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# Enhancing Efforts to Prevent Violent Extremism by Leveraging Behavioural Insights

## Lessons Learned from Practical Experiments

Developed by the United Nations Development Programme,  
Nudge Lebanon and B4Development





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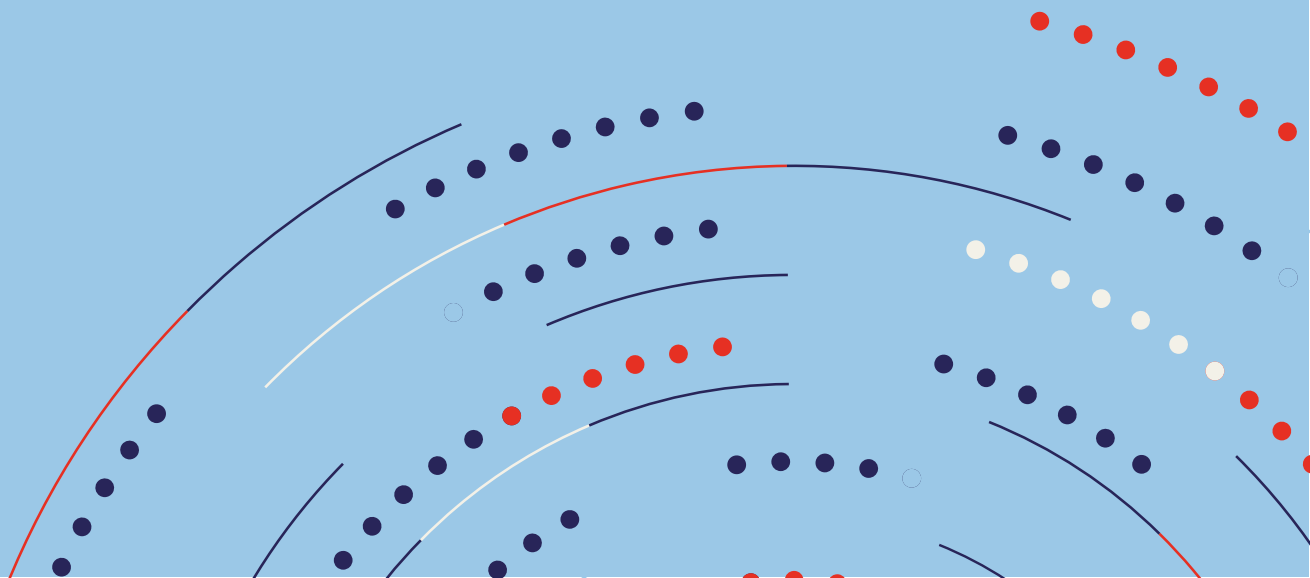
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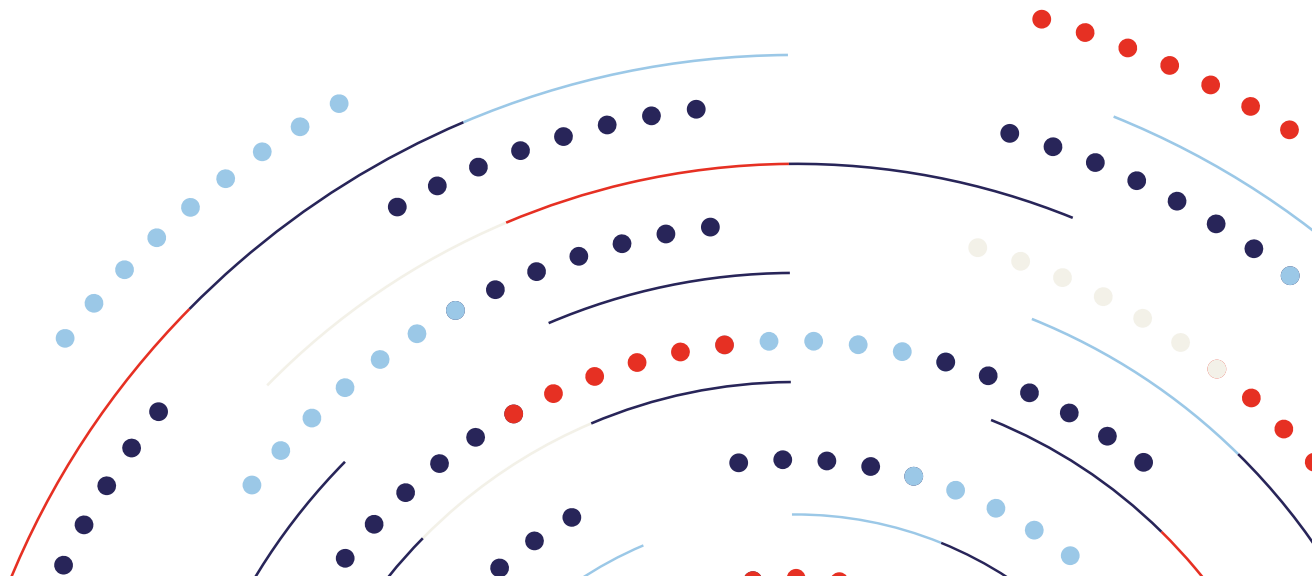


# Index

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	6
Introduction: Behavioural Insights for Prevention of Violent Extremism .....	7
The Approach of the Experiments .....	7
Experiment Summaries .....	9
Pakistan: Reporting of Grievances to the Gender Desk in Multan .....	13
Context .....	14
Challenges and Behavioural Barriers Identified .....	15
Intervention .....	15
Results .....	16
Lessons Learnt .....	17
Uzbekistan: Youth for Social Harmony in the Fergana Valley .....	18
Context .....	19
Challenges and Behavioural Barriers Identified .....	19
Intervention .....	20
Results .....	21
Lessons Learnt .....	22
Tajikistan: Increase Female Applicants to Entrepreneurship and Employability Workshops .....	23
Context .....	24
Challenges and behavioural barriers identified .....	24
Intervention .....	25
Results .....	25
Lessons Learnt .....	26
Final Conclusions .....	27
Endnotes .....	28

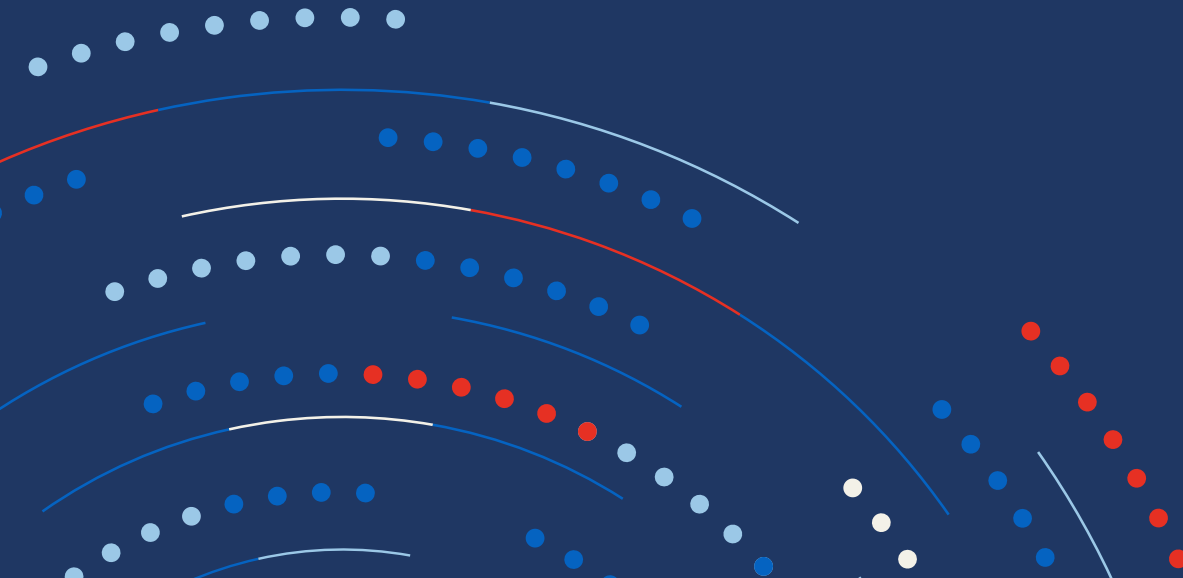
# Figures

Figure 1: Stages for applying behaviourally informed interventions in PVE.....	8
Figure 2: Multan, Pakistan.....	10
Figure 3: Fergana Valley, Uzbekistan.....	11
Figure 4: Shahrtuz District, Tajikistan.....	12
Figure 5: Services offered by the Gender Desk.....	14
Figure 6: Cultural challenges and behavioural barriers identified when referring cases to the Gender Desk.....	15
Figure 7: Behaviourally informed reminder flyer.....	16
Figure 8: Commitment card.....	16
Figure 9: Impact of the intervention on the grievance reporting behaviour.....	16
Figure 10: Breakdown of grievances according to the Gender Desk services.....	17
Figure 11: Cultural challenges and behavioural barriers identified when enrolling in employment courses.....	19
Figure 12: Most common reasons identified for participants to drop out of the employment courses.....	20
Figure 13: Illustrative sample randomization between the control and treatment groups.....	21
Figure 14: Impact of the treatment on attendance rates (n= 142).....	21
Figure 15: Contributing factors to the low enrolment rates of women in the workshops.....	24
Figure 16: Breakdown of the intervention results by control and treatment groups.....	25
Figure 17: Breakdown of attendance by control and treatment groups.....	25



# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>BI</b>	Behavioural Insights
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>ECI</b>	Educational Correctional Institution
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>LLD&amp;R</b>	Local Level Disengagement and Rehabilitation
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NEET</b>	Neither in Employment or in Education or Training
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PBF</b>	Peacebuilding Fund
<b>PO</b>	Public Organization
<b>PVE</b>	Prevention of Violent Extremism
<b>SMS</b>	Short Message Service
<b>STRIVE</b>	Strengthening Resilience Against Violent Extremism
<b>UC</b>	Union Council
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UN WOMEN</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



# Introduction: Behavioural Insights for Prevention of Violent Extremism

UNDP implements risk informed, conflict-sensitive and evidence-based development solutions for preventing violent extremism (PVE) at the global, regional and country levels to meet the priorities set out in the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.<sup>1</sup> With PVE programming in more than 40 countries, UNDP aims to meet the demand from government, civil society, and human rights experts for increased investment in research and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of PVE initiatives, and to promote an evidence-based and risk-sensitive approach that demonstrates measurable change in attitudes, behaviour and institutional functioning.

UNDP recognizes the great potential for behavioural insights (BI) as an important tool to be embedded in PVE programming, capable of enhancing the impact and measurement of programmes, increasing participation and inclusivity, and contributing to global discussions on effective approaches for PVE. BI is defined as an approach to policymaking that combines knowledge from psychology, and the cognitive and social sciences, with robust measurement approaches to understand how people make choices.<sup>2</sup> These insights are then used to design policies and initiatives that 'nudge' people's decision-making in a way that promotes positive social change while preserving freedom of choice. Experience shows that the application of BI to a diverse range of challenges, from health to recycling, has led to rapid and statistically significant increases in the cost-effectiveness and impact of policies and programmes.

BI has been applied to development practice at an accelerating pace in recent years, with more than 50 behavioural initiatives<sup>3</sup> identified within UNDP, catalysed in part by the in-house experimentation capability brought by UNDP's Accelerator Labs since 2019. The application of BI across the United Nations system is set to grow further with the Guidance Note on Behavioural Science,<sup>4</sup> released by the United Nations Secretary-General on 21 June 2021. BI has proven to be an essential tool for decision-making as well as strengthening evidence-based programming and M&E, enabling actors to shift from assumptions about what works in programming to deeper understandings of human

behaviour, experimentation, and faster feedback on what works and what does not. In this regard, BI is a 'state-of-the-art' addition to the toolbox for designing and measuring PVE interventions by promoting experimentation and learning mind-sets; building empathy and understanding of target beneficiaries and stakeholders; involving users and beneficiaries in design and behavioural mapping processes; and accounting for incorporating behaviour, not just in the design process, but also throughout M&E processes.

In recent years UNDP has carried out five BI experiments specifically targeting PVE programming in Sudan, Yemen, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. The five experiments were recently referenced in a recent World Bank publication<sup>5</sup> mapping the use of behavioural science across 17 international organizations. Within UNDP, the experiences gained from these experiments have contributed to the development of the practitioner guidance, *Applying Behavioural Science to Support the Prevention of Violent Extremism: Experiences and lessons learned*,<sup>6</sup> which provides step-by-step support for practitioners to make use of the behavioural sciences to address violent extremism.

This report supplements the practitioner guidance by showcasing the detailed interventions, results and lessons learned from the three most recent experiments conducted in 2020–2021 in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. As such, it aims to provide practical insights for practitioners on how to design and carry out BI experiments for PVE by providing insight into both the design process and the results of these three experiments.

## The Approach of the Experiments

Three BI experiments were carried out in Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 2020 to 2021, aiming to integrate BI into UNDP's PVE programming. Other United Nations entities in the participating countries were invited to participate in all stages of the process, which resulted in participation from UNICEF,



International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN Women, enabling collaboration and learning throughout the United Nations system.

Each experiment was applied to ongoing PVE projects in the respective countries to test whether specific changes in the programmatic approach could enhance the impact or results of the designed activities. This approach was based on an assumption that the impact of the experiments would be three-fold: staff and partner capacities on BI would be enhanced through the implementation of the experiments; the impact on targeted beneficiaries would be enhanced through positive results of the experiments; and lessons learned and results would be transferred to similar programming and contexts, contributing to a more systemic integration of BI across the PVE practice.

The experiment process, led by UNDP in partnership with Nudge Lebanon and B4Development, included four main phases:

1. Initial capacity building of staff through a series of online workshops aiming to strengthen the knowledge and skills on core BI concepts and to provide an opportunity to practice using behavioural science tools through designing and conducting their own experiments;
2. Design of interventions based on contextualised analysis in each country;

3. Implementation of interventions with local implementing partners in each country, including collection of data and results;
4. Debrief and documentation of results and lessons learnt in country intervention briefs.

The design of the experiments followed the process outlined in the UNDP practitioner guidance,<sup>7</sup> through which staff were supported to analyse and identify the main parameters of the experiments. This involves the six key stages of identifying, designing and testing behaviourally informed interventions that support the goals of PVE-related projects (Figure 1).

The experiments applied the main framework and tools described in the guidance, including the SHAPE DIFFERENCE framework developed by Nudge Lebanon to develop nudges and plan behavioural interventions in experiments.

To safeguard beneficiaries, all experiments underwent ethical reviews before initiation to ensure the protection of beneficiary groups, manage risks and adhere to the do no harm approach. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation modalities had to be adjusted to adhere to health advice in countries, and several aspects of the experiments were implemented online, including advisory support from Nudge Lebanon and workshops provided to beneficiaries.



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