

# Our Schools, Our Responsibility

## Reducing VE Drivers in Jalawlaa and Muqdadhiyya's Education Facilities



# Scoping Report



# Acknowledgement

This scoping report is a result of 6 months of research and the joint efforts of Dr. Maysaa Al-Tameemi and three (L)NGOs: SPF, IID and HORD, within the framework of SILM Fund's 'Our Schools, Our Responsibilities: United in Reducing VE Drivers in Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya Education Facilities' project, which is supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Government. Sustainable Peace Foundation's team of PVE experts led the consortium in producing this scoping report.

## Team

### Leading Expert and Researcher

Dr. Maysaa Ridha Jawad Al Tameemi is currently running the local NGO *Nisaa Al Ghad* for Women and Youth Care and Development. She managed a women community centre that worked in PVE by organizing awareness sessions with vulnerable women and victims of violence. She also assisted in developing research and training curricula on PVE through several committees and the research centre of Diyala University. Dr. Maysaa conducted and attended multiple workshops and training sessions on PVE locally and internationally.

### Hawa Organisation for Relief and Development (HORD)

Hawa Organisation for Relief and Development was established in 2003 in Diyala-Muqdadiya, and works since on women development by introducing women to civil rights and helping them participate in building a society that enjoys and spreads democracy, justice, equality and peace. Hawa works with displaced and returnee families by providing them with psychological, legal and health support, as well as awareness raising activities on community cohesion and PVE.

### Iraqi Institute for Development (IID)

IID is an independent NGO established in 2003 by a few youth activists from different Iraqi ethno-religious backgrounds. IID endeavours to build an Iraqi society that respects human rights and democracy and believes this can be achieved through gradual cultural and political change: IID strives to realise an Iraqi society where non-violence, dialogue, sharing, and civil rights are commonplace.

### Sustainable Peace Foundation

Sustainable Peace Foundation (SPF) is an Iraqi Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) founded in 2019: striving to build and sustain peace through vertical and horizontal participatory methods and grassroots approaches; to reinstate and strengthen lost trust between Iraq's diverse ethno-religious social groups; empower and build the capacities of the very effected communities, with a centripetal focus on marginalised intersecting groups of Iraq's social fabric - such as women and girls, youth and minorities: so they can reduce social tensions, mitigate and transform conflicts through dialogue and non-violent means.

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## Abbreviations

**DA:** Deep Assessment

**Daesh:** Arabic abbreviation for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

**DoE:** Directorate of Education

**FGD:** Focus Group Discussion

**GIZ:** Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

**HORD:** Hawaa Organisation for Relief and Development

**IID:** Iraqi Institute for Development

**INGO:** International Non-governmental Organisation

**KII:** Key Informant Interviews

**LNGO:** Local Non-governmental Organisation

**ONSA:** Office of National Security Advisory

**PTA:** Parent-Teacher Association

**PVE:** Prevention of Violent Extremism

**SPF:** Sustainable Peace Foundation

**VE:** Violent Extremism

## Executive Summary

This report is based on a Deep Assessment (DA) conducted by three partnering organisations operating as a consortium, namely, Iraqi Institute for Development (IID), Sustainable Peace Foundation (SPF) and Hawaa Organisation for Relief and Development within the framework of the 'Our Schools, Our Responsibility: United in Reducing VE Drivers in Jalawlaa's and Muqdadiyya's Education Facilities, funded by GIZ's SILM Fund: the assessment was conducted in Diyala's Muqdadiyya district and Jalawlaa sub-districts' education facilities.

The DA was conducted in April and May of 2022 in selected secondary and primary schools in Muqdadiyya district and Jalawlaa sub-district. The DA targeted 12 schools in total: 3 secondary schools and 1 high school in Muqdadiyya, 8 primary schools (4 in Muqdadiyya and 4 in Jalawlaa).

The objective of the DA was to elicit qualitative data and an in-depth understanding of the drivers of VE – both push and pull factors; the schools' strategy in mitigating these drivers; the drivers to physical violence as well as extremist ideas, which seek to exploit societal, ethnic, and religious tensions in order to marginalise or disfranchise sub-identities and social groups; the methods used by these schools to mitigate the repercussions of structural violence i.e. culturally imbedded violence on their respective students; the schools' strategy in mitigating the effects of inter and intra community grievances and distrust on their respective students; and the government's role along with that of the civil society in addressing the drivers that lead to VE within the schools and their respective catchment areas.

The stakeholders who participated in the DA included: primary school students, secondary and high school students, school managements and teaching staff, members of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), local community leaders, general directors of the Directorate of Education (DoE) in Muqdadiyya and Jalawlaa, ONSA's national committee members in Diyala; and Local and International Non-Governmental Organisations (LNGOs and INGOs) active in the targeted area.

Primary findings with respect to VE drivers among the students at the targeted schools

- Inequitable provision of job opportunities;
- Favouritism and nepotism;
- Marginalisation of one social groups and favouriting the other;
- High rate of unemployment;
- Unfair and inequitable government policies and treatment of Diyala's ethno-religious communities;
- Political exclusion of certain ethno-religious groups.

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Stakeholders underlined the following as contributing factors to increasing student resilience to VE:

- Sports, cultural activities held by the schools can contribute positively to student resilience if they engage pupils of different ethno-religious communities;
- Teacher-student dialogues sessions that result in a more comprehensive understanding of issues that students prioritise and the primary factors that may lead some of them to resort to violent extremist ideas and/or practice violent extremist behaviours;
- Governmental institutions, (L)NGOs and (I)NGOs too have a positive role to play in preventing VE by rehabilitating more schools in the destroyed areas, developing and designing projects aiming to raise the economic and living standards of poor and financially vulnerable families in post-conflict ethnic areas i.e., designing integrated programmes, which include the soft and hard component approach.

## Introduction

Even though years have elapsed since the liberation of the Daesh occupied governorates, including Diyala, the situation remains unstable on the intersecting economic, social, security and political levels. Daesh's presence in Diyala and their genocidal ideology had grave consequences for young men and women who not only witnessed cold blood killings based on identity, but also a destruction of the basic infrastructure, resulting in a lack of basic services and deep divisions between and within communities. This is especially the case in the Daesh occupied areas such as: Muqdadiyya district and Jalawlaa sub-district. Although many schools continued to operate under Daesh occupation, very few children attended these schools. During the Daesh occupations, many students did not attend school because parents refrained from sending their kids to school since they feared Daesh would impose their heavily biased and censored curricula, just as they did in other areas that fell under their control. Parents perceived this as toxic and harmful for their children because Daesh curricula intended to indoctrinate children and young adults with peculiar dogmas and instil them with extremism ideas, which can incite violence.

To scrutinise the negative impacts of Daesh on the education facilities within the areas they controlled within Diyala governorate i.e. Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya; and to examine how these education facilities contribute to drivers of violence and preventing violent extremism, a DA was conducted in the selected schools within the two administrative units.

This DA aimed at investigating the push and pull factors leading school students to VE vis-à-vis identifying the gaps in the existing teaching curricula and schools' practices that may contribute to student vulnerability and resilience to VE within the Diyala's education facilities and communities. By engaging the key stakeholders through a participatory approach, the DA also aimed at increasing peace practitioners' knowledge on education and VE and recommending key entry-points for future PVE interventions and programming.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with students, school managements, teaching staff, PTA members, DoE representatives, Diyala's national committee members of Office of National Security Advisory (ONSA) and civil society actors to reflect on and analyse the push and pull factors for VE among the youth, youth vulnerability and resilience to extremist ideologies; and examine strengths and weaknesses in school curricula, teaching practices and in and out of school activities.

The results of the DA show that education facilities can play a pivotal role in the prevention of violent extremism: the outcomes of the learning process can help nurture good citizens that are resilient to violence. Therefore, it is imperative that we monitor the education system, develop and design effective interventions in

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the education facilities to increase young peoples' resilience and reduce their vulnerability to VE.



## Literature Review

To examine drivers of violence in Jalwalaa's and Muqdadiyya's education facilities, a thorough desk research was conducted in terms of reviewing the available literature.

Unfortunately, hardly any research has been conducted on examining VE drivers in Iraq's education facilities. Thus, it was rendered obligatory to look at any research conducted on a similar topic and context. Most of the reviewed literature look at violence in general rather than the specific niche of examining the very drivers of VE in the education facilities.

Therefore, a succinct overview of the existing literature will be provided to highlight the most salient studies, which bear relevance to the core subject of this scoping report.

In their study, *Allan et. al., (2015)* provide an independent critical analysis of the substantial academic literature on what causes VE. The review examines the 17 hypotheses discussed in the 2008 Department for International Development (DFID) Paper titled 'Drivers of VE: Hypotheses and Evidence' and concludes that VE is multi-factorial and extremely diverse. They add that it cannot be predicted by one variable alone. To develop violent extremist movements, and for individuals to join them, an alignment of situational, social/cultural, and individual factors is required. The study recognises the relevance of economic factors in the context of broad-based violent extremist groups. In conflict situations involving violent extremist groups, socio-economic discrimination and marginalisation do appear to partly explain why extremist groups are able to recruit support in large numbers.

Existing studies have dealt with violence in school from several aspects: aiming at revealing the prevalence of school violence by identifying its most common forms in education facilities (*Gereluk, D. et al., 2017; Hertzog, J. et al., 2016; Al-Maimouni, A. 2017; Al-Ali, M. 2015; Radi, F. 2014; Ibrahim, I. 2008; Al Omari, A. 2014*). The results of these studies demonstrate that violence in general can prevail at schools due to societal factors because students are a product of their environment and are naturally influenced by the VE drivers in their respective societies. Thus, studies scrutinising VE drivers leading students to violence indicate the role of the family and including the methods of upbringing, the nature of relationships within the family and domestic child abuse (*Saeed Al-Dhafiri, 2011; Nisreen Al-Bhairi; Hassan Al-Aouran, 2010; Hanan Al-Shaqran, 2012*). In addition, according to Saeed (*Hamada Saeed, 2005*): violence at schools can be attributed to a range of variable factors: the school's environment and its authoritarian or chaotic characteristics, indifference to regulations and rules; and teachers' classroom management manifested in discriminatory behaviours along with verbal and physical abuse.

Perhaps the most relevant study to the subject of this scoping report is that of Shields et. al., (*2008*) entitled 'The effects of community violence on children in Cape Town, South Africa' whose objective was to investigate the relationship

between exposure to community violence (neighbourhood, schools, police, and gang violence) and psychological distress. Another objective of the study was to identify variables that moderate and mediate the relationship between exposure to community violence and psychological distress. The study considers the student themselves as an important source of information: the methodology adopted by the research was based on face-to-face interviews with 185 children between the age of 8 and 13 from five Cape Town neighbourhood schools. Structured scales were used to measure exposure to several forms of community violence, family functioning, social support, perceptions of safety, and 'unknown' locus of control.

The study suggests that exposure to any form of violence can result in substantial psychological distress among the students. They also concluded that safety functioned as a mediating variable with respect to violence and unknown locus of control such as: social support, family organisation and control reduced the effects of exposure to some forms of violence; however, the study advanced that a 'numbing effect' also seems to exist when students are exposed to extreme violence, such as murder, and that hearing of such extreme violence had the same effects as being exposed to it. Furthermore, the older students tend to suffer from 'exposure accumulation' effect because they have naturally experienced more violence; therefore, they intent to experience more distress.

They concluded that it is important to improve the child's ability to feel safe by reducing the distress that occurs because of being exposed to violence; and that parents and schools can help children cope, but with certain limits. Early intervention, before maladaptive coping mechanisms have developed, also appears to be important.

*Niemi et. al., (2018)* in their descriptive paper using Finnish education as a case study, discuss the challenges and possibilities related to educational institutions as spaces for preventing VE with special regard to the religious and nationalistic ideologies that divert from those inherent in the national hegemony. The study highlights the need to plan counter-terrorism strategies in line with national educational policies through what we conceptualise as 'institutional habitus'. They stressed for education to be a preventive tool against the spread of VE, quality of education should be improved, which is highly dependent on certain factors, such as the level of access to education, the training of teachers, and the quality and availability of teaching materials. The research suggests some common guidelines that education should focus on when aiming to prevent the germination of violent ideologies and increase social interaction within societies. These include, for example, the enhancement of young people's resilience towards extremist ways of thinking by providing them with various types of knowledge concerning international rights and agreements, different worldviews and religions as well as providing the young people with positive, inclusive experiences of schools being a safe social place. However, the study confirms that recent experiences, show that the implementation of educational prevention agendas are a complex task, as execution of their goals may take many forms depending on the ethos and aims of national education.

Prevention of violent extremism is an integral part of peacebuilding efforts. This was stressed in 2017's Stockholm Conference for Peace and Development, which marked a shift in international efforts with a move from traditional countering

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violence towards prevention i.e. early interventions in the cycle of radicalisation to violence. However, Holmes (2017) warns that prevention of violent extremism through peacebuilding should avoid solely focusing on vulnerable communities or social groups because this could result in further marginalisation and stigmatisation. Emerging good practices advance that peace practitioners should equally focus on the resilience of "the many who reject violence and extremism despite facing the same push factor". Thus, efforts to develop and design early interventions to prevent violent extremism should be inclusive in analysing the push factors and assigning equal value to examining the resilience of the majority that is exposed to the same push factors, but does not resort to violence or extremism. An integrated approach would enhance our understanding and contribute to better and more effective peacebuilding interventions.

With respect to the influence of education on conflict and peacebuilding, *Smith (2010)* identified educational aspects that positively influence the dynamics of conflict or contribute to peacebuilding. The study recognises several recurring priorities in conflict-affected situations, such as: establishing security, building confidence in a political process, delivering initial peace dividends and expanding core national capacity. These priorities include 'the provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation and health and primary education. However, generally, education is more than service delivery because it is a means of socialisation and identity development through the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across generations. In (post) conflict contexts, education may therefore be a driver of conflict (fuelling grievances, stereotypes, xenophobia and other antagonisms), or a way of contributing to 'conflict transformation' and 'peacebuilding'. The study concludes that an analysis of education programming in conflict-affected countries indicates a range of interventions at three broad levels: service delivery; education sector reform; and the contribution of education to broader social transformation processes.

The above summary of the exiting literature demonstrates: to date there are no studies specifically looking at the VE drivers in Iraq's education facilities yet alone those of Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya; however, those studies that verge close to the core subject of this scoping report produced certain outcomes, especially Shields' et. al., (2008) study, that are almost in parallel with the outcomes and analysis presented here within the pages of this scoping report.

## Methodology

The current study started on 24<sup>th</sup> of April to 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2022. It adopted a qualitative and quantitative approach using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) analytical method to analyse the results of the DA questionnaire forms.

The DA was conducted on selected schools within Jalawlaa sub-district and Muqdadiyya district of Diyala governorate. These schools were selected based on a selection matrix along with an associated scoring definition, which were developed by the consortium with support of the donor. Twelve enumerators of the three partnering organisations were capacitated on completing the selection matrix by interviewing school management, teaching staff

### Scoring Definitions

- Highest number of IDP students;
- Highest number of returnee students;
- Highest number of ethno-religious diversity;
- Most vulnerable to VE;
- Catchment areas which have experienced a high rate of displacement;
- Preference to mixed gender schools.

and DoE representatives. Once the selection matrix was completed, the highest scoring schools, based on the scoring definitions, were selected.

### Schools Assessed by SPF in Muqdadiyya District

School Name	Education Level	School Type
Ali Eben Abi Taleb	Secondary School	Boys only
Al-Muqdadiyya	Secondary School	Girls only
Bilad Al-Qeddah	Primary School	Mixed gender
Al-Athqiyaa	Primary School	Mixed gender

### Schools Assessed by HORD in Muqdadiyya District

School Name	Education Level	School Type
Al-Tumoooh	Secondary School	Boys only
Zuhair Bin Abi Salma	High School	Boys only
Arbataash Tammuz	Primary School	Mixed gender
Al-Reef Al-Zaher	Primary School	Mixed gender

### Schools Assessed by IID in Jalawlaa Sub-district

School Name	Education Level	School Type
Al-Rakhaa	Primary School	Mixed gender
Aulo Al-Albab	Primary School	Mixed gender
Halkurd	Primary School	Mixed gender
Jamal	Primary School	Mixed gender

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KIIs were conducted to derive information from four groups of respondents who are all directly or indirectly involved in the educational process. The questions of the DA questionnaire were developed to suit each of the four groups of respondents, namely: primary and secondary students, school management and teaching staff, PTA members, NGOs working in the targeted areas. The enumerators were capacitated on Do-no-Harm and field research methodologies to conduct the KIIs. DA forms were analysed, and results were discussed. Based on this, a conclusion and a set of recommendations was made.

The DA questionnaire consisted of 10 Likert Scale survey questions: strongly agree; agree; neutral and disagree and their scores ranged between 1-4. In addition to this, two yes/no questions were included to elicit individuals' beliefs, which gave the respondents the option to tick what they agreed with to elicit individual ideas and beliefs on a very sensitive topic i.e., VE in Muqdadiyya and Jalawlaa selected education facilities. The DA forms included the following topics: push and pull factors of VE in education facilities; the schools' ways of mitigating push and pull factors; motives for physical violence as well as extremist ideas in schools that reflect societal, ethnic and religious divisions that contribute to marginalisation or exclusion of certain identity groups; the methods the school uses to mitigate the impact of acclimated cultural narratives i.e. structural violence and the impact of grievances and mistrust between societies' challenges and conflicts on students and teaching staff. These topics were investigated and elaborated on from five different perspectives: 1. the students of the three different educational levels i.e., primary, high and secondary schools; 2. school management and teaching staff; and 3. PTA members and local communities; 4. ONSA and DoE representatives and 5. Civil society.

The validity of the scale and statements was measured by presenting the questions to a group of 10 specialists in the field of psychology and psychological measurement at Diyala University and Babel University. The percentages of agreement on the validity of the statements ranged between (80%-100%). Eight specialists agreed on the scale of the questionnaire and two asked for the modification of some items for face validity. The stability of the scale was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.903) and Spearman's hash-half (0.763). In the light of the jury members' views and recommendation, modifications were undertaken.

The study sample consisted of 228 male and female students from governmental education schools (primary, intermediate and secondary) in the administrative units' centre and rural areas of Diyala governorate's Jalawlaa sub-district and Muqdadiyya districts. These samples were randomly chosen during the 2021-2022 academic year, as well as 182 PTA members and certain stakeholders representing the local communities and 182 school management and teaching staff at the targeted schools along with 14 civil society organisations working in the area.

Modifications based on the specialists' recommendations

1. Identifying the objectives the study aims to achieve - headlining any other subtitle items;
2. Minimising open-ended questions, especially for primary school students, to avoid lacking information because of an inability to elaborate on the given topics;
3. Increasing multiple choice questions to facilitate test validity and reliability;
4. Adding alternative option to the multiple-choice questions by adding the "other" option;
5. Avoiding some conflict sensitive questions and replacing them with more neutral ones leading to the same results and adhering to the Do-no-Harm principle.

A field survey of the study sample was conducted in 12 public schools, 8 of which were primary and 4 were secondary schools. Four of the primary schools are in Jalawlaa sub-district, both the sub-district centre and its environs; in Muqdadiyya there were 8 targeted schools: 4 in the district centre and 4 in the rural villages to the north of the district. These two targeted administrative units were subjected to terrorist attacks and sabotage by armed groups in 2014, leading to the displacement of many of its residents to neighbouring areas. The data analysis of the DA demonstrates that most of those who were displaced have either returned to their original areas or settled in their areas of displacement. The DA also demonstrates there is little to no reconstruction taking place in most of the areas in Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya; and that these targeted areas suffer from acute negligence by the state institutes, which the respondents attributed to administrative corruption, nepotism, personal and political interests.

It is worth noting certain limitations of this scoping report due to certain uncontrollable challenges. The DA on which this scoping report is based on, only targeted a selected number of schools in the two targeted areas i.e., Jalawlaa sub-district and Muqdadiyya district. This resulted from timeframe limitations along with the limited financial and human resources of the project. A future study should target more schools in the two targeted areas, and possible in the whole governorate, to elicit a fuller and more complete understanding of the push and pull factors that drive school students to VE.

Furthermore, the DA coincided with school exams and this proved very challenging to the enumerators who were conducting the KIs, because the enumerators were

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obliged to conduct these KIIs by reaching out to the stakeholders whom they had accessibility to. This selectivity due to accessibility could have possibly affected the nature of the data that was collected.

Even though conflict sensitivity was considered several enumerators reported that some of the questions in the DA were perceived to be too sensitive, with several respondents from Muqdadiyya's targeted schools refraining from answering them: possibly due to highly sensitive conflicts that prevail in the district. It is thus highly recommended that any future study takes extra vigilance in drafting their questionnaires by taking into consideration the prevailing conflict sensitivity in Muqdadiyya and Diyala in general.

## Deep Assessment Results

The SPSS analysis of 228 male and female students’ DA forms in both Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya demonstrates that, in general, primary school students (154 primary: 81 students in Jalawlaa and 73 students in Muqdadiyya) did not have a clear idea on “VE”; however, those who answered the question as to what they understood VE to be, 64.4% in Muqdadiyya and 98.8% in Jalawlaa, linked ‘VE to many other concepts, such as: intellectual extremism, hurt and destruction, fear and terror, displacement, sectarian ideas, discrimination, and lack of community awareness. Meanwhile, secondary school students (74) in Muqdadiyya were naturally more matured and had clearer understanding of the nuances behind the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘VE’ although only 60.8% of them answered this question while 39.2% refrained; perhaps because they did not have adequate understanding of what VE is or because they feared expressing their thoughts on such a sensitive subject. Most of the students (73.7%) linked ‘VE’ to strict sectarian ideology, terror and intimidation; and lack of acceptance and intolerance to the thoughts and beliefs of the other that is different to them.

The six most prominent contributing push factors that drive students to VE, from the very perspective of students are: 1. unfair provision of job opportunities, which is mostly reliant on favouritism; 2. strong feelings of marginalisation and injustice of certain social groups; 3. the high rate of unemployment; 4. ineffective government policies in the targeted

areas, which favour certain areas over other based on the areas political tendencies and affiliations; 5. ethnic and personal interests; and 6. political exclusion of certain communities and social group.

The SPSS analysis of 182 male and female teaching staff’s DA forms in both Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya reveal that the five most important push factors contributing to VE among students from teachers’ perspective are: 1. ignorance and lack of awareness; 2. unemployment and poverty; 3. weak religious awareness; 4. lack of guidance and counselling; and 5. the use of modern communication devices (smart phones) coupled with lack of parents’ supervision.

### Students’ Perspective of VE Drivers

- Unfair provision of job opportunities;
- Marginalisation and injustice;
- High rate of unemployment;
- Ineffective government policies;
- Ethnic and personal interests;
- Political exclusion

### Teaching Staff Perspective of VE Drivers

- Ignorance and lack of awareness;
- Unemployment and poverty;
- Weak religious awareness;
- Lack of guidance and counselling;
- Modern communication devices coupled with lack of parents’ supervision



The SPSS analysis of 182 male and female members of PTA members and local community leaders’ DA forms in both Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya advanced the following as the six most prominent push and pull factors contributing to VE among students: 1. ignorance and lack of awareness; 2. lack of family supervision; 3. unemployment and poverty; 4. intolerance and lack of acceptance other opinions; 5. social inequality and injustice; and 6. lack of basic services.

PTA Perspective of VE Drivers

- Ignorance and lack of awareness;
- Lack of family supervision;
- Unemployment and poverty;
- Intolerance of the other’s opinions;
- Social inequality and injustice;
- Lack of basic services

To mitigate the factors driving primary school students to VE and in line with Shields et. al., (2008) assertions, it is advanced that schools should engage the students in sports and artistic activities; teachers should hold sessions with students to listen to their ideas and understand the

factors that may lead these students to VE. Evidently, data analysis demonstrates that a great deal of the primary school students surveyed in Jalawlaa 79% participated in school sports or technical activities that were activated after their return to their areas of origin while 21% of the students surveyed did not participate in these activities. In Muqdadiyya district 64.4% of the surveyed students participated in sports and artistic activities organised by the school after they returned from their displacement to their original areas and 35.6% of the students did not participate in any such activity. As for the secondary school students in Muqdadiyya, 48.6% of the surveyed students participated in such activities post-displacement and resettlement in their areas of origin. These sports and artistic activities can also be an effective tool for increasing student resilience

“Sports and artistic activities can also be an effective tool for increasing student resilience and build cohesion between them.”

and build cohesion between them.

Since 75% of the primary and secondary students in both Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya demonstrated an avid will to participate in such activities, especially if these involved students from other schools within their areas or in other administrative units irrespective if these students were of the same ethno-religious background as themselves or not. The most protruding activities that were given a degree of importance due to their reoccurrences in surveyed students’ answers, include: 1. music courses and festivals 24.3%; 2. football tournaments 20.3%; 3. school trips and excursions 8.1% and 4. Art classes and exhibitions 4%. The secondary school students on the other hand, 70.3% of them gave greater value to having the teachers’ support in mitigating the drivers of VE among the students by holding dialogue sessions to understand the reasons and the motives behind why some

Secondary school students perceived regular student-teacher dialogue sessions as an effective tool to mitigate

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students and their relatives would be involved in intimidation, acts of violence and contribute to displacement. What is striking is the fact that 29.7% of the surveyed secondary school students completely ignored this question and refrained from answering it, which is a relatively high number than cannot ignore it. Perhaps they perceived this question a little too sensitive and feared repercussions if they were to answer it, which is an indicator in itself.

The secondary students' answer to the positive and/or negative impacts of the curricula on VE can be construed to be alarming: 20.3% believed the curricula contribute to spreading the notions of moderation, tolerance and acceptance of the other, but 69.8% disagreed, 17.9% overtly stating that certain paragraphs of the curricula emphasise the legacy of historical sectarian and ethnic conflicts and contribute to current ethno-sectarian tensions among the students. Under the axis of the challenges of the historical legacy and the conflicts facing the school from the teachers' perspective, results showed some teaching staff's, 32.6% in Muqdadiyya and 29.3% in Jalawla, drifting behind personal judgments in evaluating the behaviour of some students whose family members have previously been involved with terrorist organisations and terrorist acts. 28% of the secondary school students believe that references to sectarian conflicts in the region in the existing curricula can serve as a contributing factor extremism and resentment among the different sects. Almost a quarter of the students 20% indicated that school names, within their areas, can provoke ethnic differences and fuel sectarian conflicts.

From the school management and teaching staff's perspective: the following activities can contribute to reduce the drivers of VE among the students: 1. holding school activities, such as sports, artistic or musical competitions and events; 2. organising awareness raising workshops and activities for students, teaching staff, PTAs, and the local communities; 3. introducing cultural elements promoting moderate thoughts and renouncing violence in all of its forms in the curricula, especially in the following subjects: Islamic studies, social studies and citizenship including an additional subject on moral and family education to promote cohesion and cohabitation among the different ethno-religious communities and social groups; 4. holding regular sessions that bring the teaching staff, PTA members and selected students – who serve as role models among their peers - to discuss student concerns, issues and challenges and explore ways and means of improving their studying experience and environment; 5. organising periodic questionnaires for students by the school's psychological counsellor to evaluate and explore the underlying factors behind student dissatisfaction and discontent with the educational process, which may lead to VE inside and outside the school if these student sentiments were ignored.

As for Jalawlaa's PTA members and the local communities, 27.5% of them emphasised that school curricula ignore the historical heritage of certain ethnicities in the region, especially that of the minorities and this creates a sense of injustice and marginalisation among ethnic students from minority background. As for the naming of the school, most of the surveyed PTA members and the local

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communities 83.5% confirmed that school names did not contribute to any tensions and conflicts nor did they see any need to amend any of the curricula.

When students were asked whether government agencies and international organisations reconstructed schools or distributed food or aid in any given area within their respective areas whilst neglecting others, almost half of the secondary school students (51.4%) confirmed that there haven't been any school reconstruction in their area while (20.3%) remarked: there were such reconstruction processes but these were implemented along sectarian lines and nepotism; and these were implemented to for specific political ends i.e. to harvest greater votes during elections.

Many of the educational staff members in Muqdadiyya, (69.3%), indicated that government agencies and international organisations have not reconstructed schools, while (30.7%) of them stated that school reconstructions were underway in their areas. Similarly, most of the educational staff members in Jalawlaa (95%) indicated: government agencies and international organisations had not reconstructed schools, while 5% of them stated that school reconstructions were underway in their areas.

Moreover, most of the members of the Parent-teacher association (PTA) members in Jalawla, (86.3%) denied that government agencies and international organisations have reconstructed schools in the region, while (12.5%) of them mentioned the existence of reconstruction operations for schools in the region by the government and international organisations, and no answers were recorded for 1.3% of the total sample. There were no answers for such question in Muqdadiyya, which can be attributed to two reasons: 1. Lack of communication between the PTA members and the local government institution on the one and the international organisation on the other, which means they are not aware who was responsible for the behind the few rehabilitation efforts; 2. There is little school rehabilitation tacking place, in fact most of the destroyed schools have not been rehabilitated and their students were enrolled in other schools in the areas and this in itself burdens these schools with a high student to teacher/class ratio.

63.5% of the students who may have had some family members who were engaged in violence and contributed to displacement: develop strategies to avoid entering discussions with their peers regarding these matters; however, 10.8% of the secondary school students stated they respect their peers opinion even if different to them whilst 9.5% of them preferred to be silent when such sensitive issues are being discussed. Conversely, 6.8% have no tolerance to discuss such issues nor to hear opinions they disagree with from their peers.

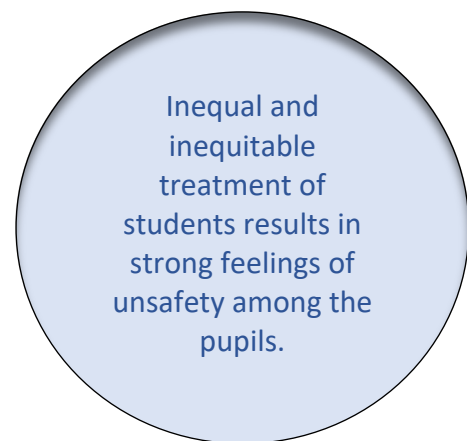
As for Jalawlaa's teaching staff from, who were asked how do they end a conversation with a colleagues whom they do not agree with regarding ethno-religious issues: 27.5% indicated they do not discuss such subjects; 22.5% end the discussion in friendly and understanding manor; 10% said they end the conversation by changing the subject; 3.8% claimed they often end up agreeing with their colleague whom they initially did not agree with their opinion; 2.5% asserted they listen to their colleague to learn of their opposing opinion; 1.3% said

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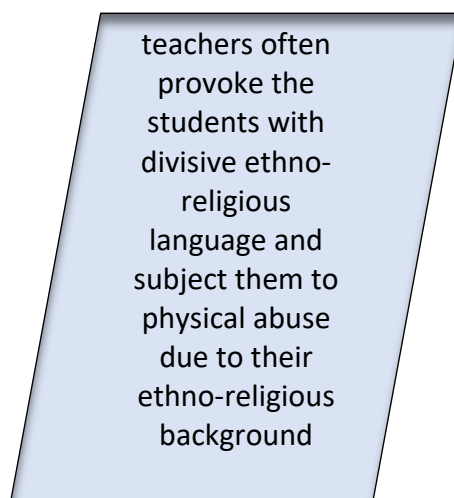
they would debate them in order to persuade them to agree with their opinion by using what they perceive to be facts; and 28.8% of the total sample did not record answers, which is a high percentage that should not be ignored.

PTA members in Jalawlaa remarked that there are grievances and lack of trust among the communities: 35% of the respondents estimated grievances and distrust among the communities to be circa 80% and 60% and 2.5% of the respondents estimated this to be 100%, whilst 2.5% of the total PTA samples from PTA from Jalawlaa did not record any answer.

The teaching staff on the other hand attributed a great deal of the drivers to originate from outside the schools i.e. societal phenomena and state services, which engender ethno-religious divisions and marginalisation of certain groups and they perceive these to drive school students to physical violence and extremism within the education facilities. According to the respondents, these include (in order of the value assigned to them by the surveyed teaching staff): 1. lack of confidence in local governments and their capabilities to provide equal job opportunities for students after their graduation from school; 2. lack of educational services starting from basic school infrastructure to the inability to provide school stationary and uniform costs; 3. feelings of injustice and marginalisation; 4. students being subjected to physical and verbal abuse by some teachers; and 5. the unequal and inequitable treatment of students who end up feel unsafe at school.



The assertions of the teaching staff were confirmed by the student respondents, 16.2% of the students advanced: teachers often provoke the students with divisive ethno-religious language and subject them to physical abuse due to their ethno-religious background.



As for the PTA members who were surveyed in Jalawlaa they attributed physical violence and extremism among the students to the following societal phenomena, again according to the value assigned to them by the frequency of their recurrence - from the highest to the lowest: 1. Being previously exposed to violence, whether in the family or society; 2. lack of awareness and immoderate religious culture; 3. being influenced by former extremist ideas and seeing role models in extremist figures whom the students strive to immolate; 4. lack of confidence in local governments and their capabilities to provide equal job opportunities for students

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once they graduate from school; 5. feelings of injustice and marginalisation; 6. desire to stand out among their peers and gain leadership role in society; 7. lack of educational services starting from basic school infrastructure to the inability to provide school stationary and uniform subsidies; 8. students being subjected to physical and verbal abuse by some teachers; and 9. the unequal treatment of students who end up feel unsafe at school.


## Discussion

The above statistical results demonstrate: students in general and primary pupils specifically do not have a good understanding of VE nor do they fully grasp the semantics of the terminology. Thus, there is a greater need for regular awareness sessions to be conducted within school premises to increase students’ knowledge with respect to VE and its drastic repercussions. This will increase student resilience and reduce violent extremist incidents both in and out of school.

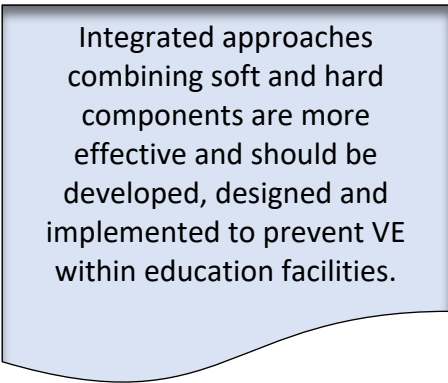
The majority of the respondents, irrespective of their different perspectives, agreed that the primary factors pushing school students to VE both in and out of school are: 1. Strong feelings of marginalisation of one group and favouring the other; 2. High unemployment rate; 3. ineffective government policies that discriminate between the communities; 4. Unfair and unequal provision of job opportunities, which are simply based on favouritism and nepotism. For example, 69% of the PTA members in Muqdadiyya affirmed that the state authorities did not deal fairly with the victims of terrorism in their district, regardless of which sect and ethnicity they belonged too. Similarly, 75% stressed they were not even compensated with a single penny for their properties that were either destroyed during Daesh occupation and/or the liberation of the area.

Thus, the result of this scoping report demonstrates that the stakeholders believe there is a strong sense of perception that government policies are ineffective and may treat the citizens equally nor do they deal with community grievances in an equitable manor, which the stakeholders perceive this as potential factors that may drive students to VE.

This perception of ineffective government policies can possibly be attributed to scare communication channels between the government and the communities of Jalwalaa and Muqdadiyya. Thus., it is imperative that government policies are clearly communicated with the public to mitigate feelings of marginalisation and disfranchisement.



Government policies must be effective, fair, equitable and clearly communicated with the ethno-religious communities of Jalwalaa and Muqdadiyya



Integrated approaches combining soft and hard components are more effective and should be developed, designed and implemented to prevent VE within education facilities.

Therefore, there is a pressing need for the government to develop effective policies and for the international community along with LNGOs to develop and design interventions that integrate the soft and hard components to reduce the push and pull factors driving school students to VE in Jalawlaa and Muqdadiyya. Such an integrated approach should aim to achieve social equality by providing better and equal job opportunities and

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basic services distributed fairly and based on needs rather than favouritism regardless of one's ethno-religious background. The basic service should also strive to rebuild and rehabilitated infrastructure both in the schools and their respective catchment areas.

The civil society, represented by the international and local NGOs, must also develop, design and implement programmes that create and provide equal job opportunities and livelihood means within the schools' catchment areas and implement programmes that increase community cohesion and notions of peace coexistence in these catchment areas.

School managements and teaching staff must pay more heed to engaging the school students in sports, artistic and cultural activities; and conduct awareness raising sessions to explore the push and pull factors that drive their students to VE. These sessions could serve as an early warning mechanism and a feedback mechanism to recommend entry points for future interventions. These sports, artistic and cultural activities were assigned importance since 21% of the students in Jalawlaa and 35% of the students in Muqdadiyya asserted: these activities can and do increase student resilience to VE and contribute to strengthening student and community cohesion to transcend ethno-religious divisions and tensions. As for the awareness raising sessions, it has been recommended that the PTA members also play a pivotal role in these initiatives.

Sports, cultural and artistic activities within and between the schools should be capitalised on to prevent VE in the educational facilities.

School curricula are in dire need of revisions and are required to focus on positive narratives rather touching on ethno-sectarian legacy of historical tensions and conflict. This is of paramount importance since 69.8% of Jalawlaa's and Muqdadiyya's secondary students advanced: the current curricula contain subjects and sections that can be misinterpreted, misconstrued and exploited to drive the students to VE. Other than revisions and amendments of the current curricula, it is imperative that new subjects and topics are added: 48.8% of the teaching staff in Jalawlaa and 29.7% of the teaching staff in Muqdadiyya underlined the importance of adding new subjects and topics to the current curricula to instil the students with notions of good citizenship, tolerance and acceptance along with ethics, morals and family values.

Culturally structured violence among the teaching staff drives students to VE and the teaching staff must be capacitated on PVE lest their attitudes and behaviours negatively impact their respective students.

Another important issue requiring our interventions, as peace practitioners is the fact that 29.3% of the primary school students indicated and 28% of the secondary students stressed: there are teaching staff holding violent extremist attitudes stemming from culturally structured violence that is manifested in their differing and unfair treatment of students based on their sect and ethno-religious backgrounds.

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Therefore, the DoE and the NGO community – both local and international – must capacitate the teaching staff and increase their knowledge on PVE and how to treat the students with equality and equity irrespective of their ethno-sectarian backgrounds.

Thus, the teaching staff should also be capacitated on non-violent communication to mitigate disagreements and differences in opinion with respect to sensitive subjects contributing to increased local tensions and conflicts. This fact was highlighted by 27.5% of the teachers who stated: they avoid engaging in such communication lest they increase the existing tensions, which underlines the importance that they need to be capacitated on non-violent communication and result-based dialogue rather than avoiding such sensitive subjects. Therefore, it is imperative for the peace practitioners to develop training materials to capacitate the teaching staff so that they reinstate lost trust and increase cohesion and understanding among the teaching staff lest the existing distrust between the teaching staff reflects negatively on student attitudes and behaviours.

The relevant authorities, such as the DoE, must also be vigilant and pay more attention in assigning names to the schools. 20% of students advanced that schools named along sectarian lines can and do provoke ethno-sectarian differences. Therefore, it is recommended that schools are named by taking this fact into consideration lest school names contribute towards increasing the VE drivers among the students and the local communities.

The results showed that distrust and grievances among the different sects and ethno-religious communities continue to prevail: the educational staff and PTA members estimated community grievances and distrust to 80%, which is an alarmingly high.



## Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this scoping report, the following recommendations are seen to be imperative and require us, as peace practitioners, to develop, design and implement interventions through these entry-points and pathways. These recommendations include:

1. Future studies analysing the context in other parts of the governorate are highly recommended to provide the peace practitioners with specific localised context analysis;
2. Relevant ministries and their respective directorates along with LNGOs, INGOs and international development partners, such as international donors and agencies, should develop, design and implement interventions that integrated hard and soft components i.e., also rehabilitate and build schools that are student friendly to accommodate for the increasing number of students; and increase student resilience to VE including the reintegration of dropout students into these education facilities;
3. Improve the economy of the targeted areas, that underwent huge destruction during and post Daesh occupation, by rebuilding the destroyed basic infrastructure and provide equal and equitable job opportunities and means of a dignified livelihood means for the communities of the schools' catchment areas; however, lest we do more harm than good, it is imperative that such interventions target the returnees and stayees along with other socially marginalised intersecting groups;
4. Conduct awareness sessions on PVE, peaceful coexistence and social cohesion for the teaching staff to increase their knowledge on VE drivers and their resilience to VE. Such capacitated staff will both: mend their behaviours lest they contribute to the factors driving the students to VE and equally contribute to reducing VE drivers among their respective students;
5. Capacitate and encourage teaching staff to hold regular awareness raising sessions for their respective students to increase their knowledge on PVE and their resilience to VE. These sessions should be held with students of all education levels and at all stages of the schooling system;
6. Support and encourage school management and teaching staff to increase sports, cultural and artistic activities for primary and secondary school students to increase student cohesion and increase their resilience to VE;
7. Support and encourage school managements and teaching staff to hold sports, cultural and artistic competitions within their respective schools and with other schools, especially with those schools whose student represent Diyala' ethno-religious diversity. This increases the students' understanding

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- of the other that is different to them and creates student acceptance and tolerance;
8. Advocate for revisions to the existing curricula, especially those units that may contain some elements that may instigate ethno-sectarian and religious tensions, divisions and conflicts. These revisions should also include the addition of new elements or units that promote social cohesion, coexistence, PVE and non-violence along with non-violent communication, these subjects or units can include human rights and good citizenship;
  9. Capacitate teaching staff on PSS and MHPSS so they can support students that suffer from trauma due to conflict etc.;
  10. For the school counsellors to conduct regular questionnaires with the school students to continue to explore, identify and update the push and pull factors driving the students to VE in Jalawlaa's and Muqdadiyya's education facilities;
  11. Advocate on the MoE and DoE level to make sure they take into consideration the existing sectarian and ethno-religious tensions and conflicts when naming the schools in the targeted areas and Diyala in general. The MoE and DoE should be vigilant and avoid naming schools along sectarian lines;
  12. Establishing a specialised committee within the DoE to regulate the direction given to schools to prevent violent extremism and to monitor teachers' physical and verbal abuse of students;
  13. NNGOs and INGOs to develop extra curricula PVE textbook taught at the schools through the support of MoE and DoE.

## Conclusion

Thus, the results of the DA that are analysed and presented in this scoping report, drew the following conclusions: quality education can increase young women and men's chances of securing a decent and dignified means of livelihood in adulthood and taking part in organised activities can increase their resilience to VE and that schools serve as an ideal place for holding such activities. This scoping report also asserts: the educational system plays a paramount role in preventing the youth from subscribing to VE as it can also contribute to driving them to embrace extremism attitudes and behaviours. In fact, this basically depends on the philosophy of education, the school curricula and the teaching methods used in these education facilities. Having a coherent, progressive and contemporary education system is a crucial factor in mitigating the effects of extremist ideologies and preventing VE in Diyala's education facilities.

It is also of paramount importance to enhance young people's resilience towards extremist ways of thinking by providing them with various types of content knowledge concerning international rights and agreements, different worldviews and religions as well as providing the young people with positive, inclusive experiences of the schools as a safe social space.

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