The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism

Introduction

The nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism comes in many forms and manifestations, exacerbating the threat to international peace and security. Understanding the ways in which transnational organized crime and terrorism are linked is becoming a priority concern for many States. In this regard, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2195 (2014), on the interaction of terrorism and cross-border crime and its impact on international peace and security, called upon States to better understand and address the nexus between organized crime and terrorism as a threat to security and development.

Unravelling the nexus poses a number of challenges, ranging from the absence of a universally agreed definition of organized crime and terrorism to obtaining and analyzing relevant information on the phenomenon. These challenges are exacerbated by local variations that shape how this nexus emerges, and how it evolves. Despite these obstacles, isolating the links between terrorism and transnational organized crime presents a unique opportunity in the fight against both threats. In particular, the nexus presents a point of organizational vulnerability to terrorist and transnational organized crime groups. As a result, knowledge of how, when and where the nexus emerges can be used as an effective policy tool.

More recently, concerns on how to effectively address the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism have been expressed by UNSCRs, including 2322 (2016) which calls upon States to “enhance cooperation to prevent terrorists from benefiting from transnational organized crime, to investigate and to build the capacity to prosecute such terrorists and transnational organized criminals working with them” and UNSCR 2370 (2017), which urges Member States to “strengthen, where appropriate, their judicial, law enforcement and border-control capacities, and developing their investigation capabilities of arms trafficking networks to address the link between transnational organized crime and terrorism.” Further, it is vital that all counterterrorism and anti-crime efforts account for international human rights norms and the rule of law, including the UNSCRs on Women, Peace and Security.

Although historical studies of transnational organized crime and terrorism have highlighted that these entities differ in their motivations, since 9/11 there has been a growing operational, organizational and conceptual convergence. In other words, terrorism and organized crime are known to have cooperated and coexisted; and, each has learned to use the tactics of the other. In some regions, terrorists are benefiting from the criminal experiences of the individuals they have recruited, who provide expertise in counterfeiting documents, and access to weapons and explosives; whilst in other regions, terrorist groups are financially benefitting from their direct involvement in the trafficking of arms, persons, drugs, and artefacts and from the illicit trade in natural resources, including gold and other precious metals and stones, minerals, wildlife, charcoal and oil; and from kidnapping for ransom and other crimes including extortion, and bank robbery. Finally, in other regions, organized crime has employed indiscriminate violence against civil populations as a way to secure territorial influence.

1 See also GCTF, Zurich-London Recommendations on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online, Good Practice 1. www.theGCTF.org.
The nature of the nexus is, more often than not, defined by local context: the political environment, available resources, and existing policies of State response. Thus, for example, a terrorist group like Hezbollah\(^2\) - is known to operate like an organized crime group, motivated by profit, but also by honour and revenge – is said to cooperate with the Mexican drugs cartel Los Zetas to achieve mutual strategic and geographic objectives (i.e. a typical ‘alliance’). In Asia, it is the Taliban in Afghanistan that operates with similar motives in a comparable way. In Africa, groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Shabaab have exploited weak state structures and corruption to directly engage in criminal activities, including drug trafficking and kidnapping for ransom (i.e. appropriation of tactics).

Finally, in Europe, there is an emerging trend of (petty) criminals evolving into terrorists; as was the case with Abdelhamid Abaaoud (Paris 2015 attacks), Mohammed Lahouaiej Bouhlel (Nice, Bastille Day attack 2016), and Anis Amri (Berlin 2016). This trend was initially exacerbated by ISIL/Da’esh promoting the recruitment of individuals in Europe to carry out low-cost attacks by self-financing through petty crime (i.e. ‘integration’ of one entity into another).

Terrorist groups benefiting from transnational organized crime, and transnational organized crime benefitting from the use of terrorist tactics, may contribute to undermining affected States, specifically their security, stability, governance, as well as social and economic development.\(^3\)

The present document comprises a set of non-binding good practices, which may guide countries as well as global, regional, national and local organizations as they develop policies and initiatives that target terrorism and transnational organized crime.

This document is based on discussions held with government officials, international, national and regional organizations’ representatives, members of the academicians, experts, and other relevant stakeholders during four regional meetings.

The regional meetings were held in Algiers, Tirana, Singapore (INTERPOL), and Nairobi, focusing respectively on the following regions: West Africa and the Sahel, the Balkans, Southeast and South Asia, and the Horn of Africa and East Africa.

This Good Practices document is divided into four main sections, covering priority areas where urgent action could be taken. The sections are (a) legal considerations, (b) research and information sharing, (c) local engagement, and (d) capacity building and law enforcement.

The ‘legal considerations’ section outlines strategic good practices that can support States to develop an institutional framework. Good Practices listed under ‘research and information sharing’ primarily relate to facilitating the capacity of States to identify the nexus and monitor its development – both functions are needed to provide an evolving understanding of a threat that is not static. ‘Local engagement’ highlights the importance of local communities in fighting threats to security and development. As the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism plays out within local communities, local engagement invariably becomes part of the front-line efforts designed to address the nexus. Finally, the ‘capacity building and law enforcement’ Good Practices are focused on helping States elicit the greatest efficiency and effectiveness from their authorities by incorporating an understanding of how detailed knowledge of the nexus can be used as a tool to enhance anti-crime and counterterrorism strategies.

\(^2\) As per Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/1426, the European Union (EU) designates the Hezbollah Military Wing as a terrorist group.

Good Practices

A. Legal considerations

Good Practice 1: Seek coherence between domestic anti-crime and counterterrorism legislation, with regional and international legal conventions and protocols related to terrorism and transnational organized crime.⁴

A bridge should exist between domestic legislation and regional and international legal conventions that a country is a signatory to. This will allow for the efficient use of both legal frameworks to address a nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism. Given the evolving nature of transnational organized crime and terrorism, it is paramount to identify convergent areas in anti-crime and counterterrorism policies rather than opting for one-size-fits-all solutions devoid of local context. Importantly, should be placed on implementing existing protocols and policies, or in developing and enhancing new protocols, where needed, that specifically address the environmental factors that facilitate the nexus. This will provide legal practitioners with the necessary tools to investigate and prosecute criminals committing nexus related crimes, i.e. those that enable or support terrorism.

Moreover, national laws and policies could seek to reflect those at a regional level on the topic of the nexus to ensure a higher level of consistency. This is important so that those accused of committing crimes that fund terrorism, or facilitate the use of terrorism, are not able to exploit loopholes in the legislation of different countries. It is also essential that national law enforcement policies maintain a degree of flexibility to incorporate varying conditions, context-specific dynamics that may occur in local contexts, also taking into consideration the evolving nature of crimes and the need for legislation to remain relevant.

Another important legal aspect in the prevention and fight against the nexus, is the reinforcement and harmonization of policies and laws on privacy, including protection for witnesses and whistle-blowers (see also Good Practice 13). Such laws would encourage all actors to share information with law enforcement authorities that can be decisive in detecting, investigating, prosecuting and sentencing cases where a form of the nexus exists.

Good Practice 2: Enhance anti-corruption legislation by strengthening integrity in state institutions, upholding the rule of law and discouraging the involvement of officials in illegal activities.⁵

Corruption can act as an enabler of transnational organized crime and terrorism. Criminal networks often rely on various levels of political protection and seek to keep certain business sectors and spheres of influence under-regulated, under-enforced and underdeveloped. For this reason, a hard-line stance could be taken to root out corruption, and strict anti-corruption measures need to be enforced. Reliable local partners that can support anti-corruption efforts in the branches of governments, including the parliament, judiciary and the security agencies, may be identified. This can be especially difficult, however, when informal/illicit economies have become intertwined with official economies, such as in some cases when these economies have extensive involvement in poppy cultivation, control certain trade routes or are selling legal products.


B. Research and Information Sharing

*Good Practice 3: Conduct additional research to increase understanding of all aspects of the nexus to develop context-specific responses based on evidence-based research.*

Whilst it would be ideal to centralize all research activity related to the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism to prevent duplication of efforts, and to promote the joint development of, at least, regionally-based understandings of how to map the nexus, and ultimately how to extract watch-points that can be used to monitor what are, by nature, complex and multi-dimensional relationships.

This does not eliminate the need for additional research to be conducted to further enhance understanding of this complex concept. Additional research priorities include:

1) Further understanding the different ways in which transnational organized crime and terrorism can be linked, and how different forms of the nexus develop and evolve over time. This research would build upon existing theories and models of the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, and further define characteristics that are common to both organized crime and terrorism at any one point in time;

2) Organizational and operational issues regarding both organized crime and terrorist groups, including but not limited to: the organizational composition of criminal and terrorist networks, the environment where they meet, the behavioural patterns of each group, their communication channels and strategies, their use of technology, their recruitment strategies and employment, the licit and illicit means they use to finance their activities, their strategic use of violence;

3) The use of illicit activities as a possible source of funds for operations. This includes research into terrorist group engagement in human trafficking, migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, maritime piracy, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, environmental/wildlife crimes, cybercrime, telecommunication fraud, contraband of goods, etc. Further research could also be carried out on the facilitating role that corruption may play;

4) Economic analyses that examine the origins and beneficiaries of illicit or shadow economies and informal financial systems. This would specifically look at their role in facilitating the emergence of a nexus, particularly in relation to terrorist financing; but also in terms of how both terrorist groups and transnational organized crime groups learn from the licit and illicit financial operations of the other (i.e. the role of organizational learning);

5) The identification of vulnerable groups, including women and youth as both perpetrators and victims, and the role of the diaspora community. This would include researching to understand how information about the interaction between transnational organized crime and terrorism could be provided by these groups;

6) Resilience factors in countries and areas directly and visibly affected by the nexus, to be compared with those identified in neighboring areas where the nexus is more nuanced in its emergence. This would allow a better understanding of the individual country risk and protective factors, taking into consideration specific local conditions;

7) Factors that encourage disengagement and de-radicalization, specifically within the context of organized crime groups as well as terrorist groups;

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8) New partnerships between national entities and civil society could be explored to enlarge the sources of information, ensuring diversification. Victims and survivors could be important sources of information, as well as former members of terrorist and organized crime groups, foreign terrorist fighters, families of victims, partners in crime (such as services providers and transporters), and local media;

9) Efforts to understand and respond to the crime-terrorism nexus should include robust gender-based analysis and apply gender-informed practices to address root causes with long-term solutions as both terrorist and organized crime networks may exploit gender in their recruitment efforts, and inflict gender and sexual based violence on women in their communities.

In furthering research, diverse data collection tools and analysis could be embraced to reveal as much information as possible relevant to identifying and explaining the nexus. Examples include, hot spot mapping exercises, social network analyses and ethnographic studies. Where possible, new technologies capable of highlighting the strength of any nexus and examining it could be adopted.

**Good Practice 4: Standardize and strengthen research and analytical capabilities for more effective information sharing.**

Entities that research and monitor crimes that facilitate the nexus, including countries, academic institutions, and non-government research organizations may want to strengthen their analytical capabilities. This includes developing globally standardized methodological approaches. Standardization facilitates information comparison and sharing, and would help to overcome the lack of universally agreed definitions of key phenomena, such as ‘violent extremism’, ‘radicalization’, and ‘terrorism’.

The entities involved in the field, particularly in cases of multiple state agencies with similar missions and tasks, could establish clearly what data is collected and where it should be collated. Importantly, it should be noted that due to the evolving nature of the nexus, the timing of data collection is a factor of relevance. Although trend analysis can be static and reflective, forecasting must be ongoing and should constantly consider the evolving environment in which transnational organized crime and terrorism operate as this will directly impact the variations in which the nexus will most likely emerge.

**Good Practice 5: Establish effective communication channels with the aim of encouraging and improving, where possible, information sharing and cooperation between government and non-government actors, including academics and private sector researchers that operate at a local, national and regional level.**

Where possible and appropriate, States could encourage the sharing of information between governments and academia, and also with private sector analysts. This is because academics and private sector analysts both possess valuable sources of different types of information which when collated provide a more comprehensive picture of how transnational organized crime and terrorism interact. States could engage numerous experts on the nexus in their region in knowledge sharing exercises to increase understanding of the phenomenon. For this reason, universities, and where possible, private sector analysts could also be included in the development of state and regionally based initiatives, designed to increase local and regional capacity to counter the nexus. Government agencies are also a valuable source of information for academics, and sharing government information where possible and appropriate, will further develop research on the nexus.

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7 See also GCTF, Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism, Good Practice 2. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).
States may choose to provide researchers, with information and data on investigations. Government agencies, such as the intelligence services, could be encouraged to publish open source reports and analyses on their work for the public, which can be used by others such as academia, judges, civil society organizations for further research.

Interactions and exchange of information between the academic and private research community, and the operational field, could be facilitated. To improve information sharing between these actors, their relationship must be cultivated to build trust.

**Good Practice 6: Encourage information sharing through the increased involvement of regional and international institutions.**

Capacity could be built through information sharing between States, and through the involvement of regional and international institutions, including the African Union, ASEAN, European Union, EUROPOL, INTERPOL, United Nations, and other relevant actors. Information sharing should adhere to all relevant data protection rules and can be understood in a broad sense, including: data from law enforcement investigations/arrests/charges, judicial decisions, government policy decisions, changes in law, on-going projects, and initiatives. The coordination and collation of this information should be a priority. These information-sharing networks could facilitate the cross-border exchange of ideas, which may be done through the organization of meetings and workshops. In addition, inter-regional fusion centres that analyze the nexus phenomenon may be established. These could provide possible policy recommendations and operational responses as to how best to counteract the nexus in the region.²

Of equal importance is the need to re-evaluate how government agencies involved in anti-crime and counterterrorism efforts recruit and train their analysts. Ensuring that the right types of analysts are hired, and placed through a vigorous training program that rewards innovative and creative thinking can be prioritized. This will increase internal efficacy in the detection of trends related to the nexus, including identifying peripheral crimes that feed overall insecurity.

**Good Practice 7: Acknowledge and consult Non-Governmental Organizations or Civil Society Organizations as a relevant source of knowledge and on-the ground expertise.**

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can be a reliable source of information, particularly when exploring the root causes of the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism. By offering training, they can become effective implementation partners. States could acknowledge the contribution such organizations can provide and encourage NGOs to share their information and field observations. States may also encourage NGO research through cooperating with civil society organizations in collecting and collating data originating from national government agencies. Care must be taken to ensure NGOs are not perceived to be acting as agents of the government, as this would damage the relationships they have developed with various local/community stakeholders.

**Good Practice 8: Intelligence sharing should be prioritized, encouraged and facilitated among national governmental agencies.**

At the domestic level, a comprehensive approach that facilitates interagency cooperation needs to be encouraged to enhance States’ operational capabilities in identifying vulnerabilities of transnational organized crime and terrorism to anti-crime and counterterrorism efforts that emanate from their

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² See also GCTF, *Recommendations for Using and Protecting Intelligence Information In Rule of Law-Based, Criminal Justice Sector-Led Investigations and Prosecutions*, Recommendation 2. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).
entanglement. Efforts could also be made at the regional and international level. Law enforcement agencies and intelligence services should work together to efficiently combat these threats.9

States can encourage information sharing between various relevant national agencies through ensuring that relevant personnel understand the elusive and clandestine nature of both terrorism and organized crime and the challenges this poses to law enforcement. Information sharing and collaboration can be further encouraged between national agencies. Measures such as the creation of joint task forces, composed of members from various agencies, with different capacities and backgrounds, could include regular meetings where they share operational information to ensure timely responses.

**Good Practice Number 9: Address issues of sharing of information within and between agencies as this could be beneficial in tackling the nexus at national level.**

Issues that inhibit information sharing between agencies and entities working on the facilitating factors of the nexus need to be addressed to maximize the success of counter operations. This includes organizational matters, such as ‘stove-piping’10, both within and between organizations. Treating information in isolation runs the risk of missing important linkages. In this regard, it is of utmost importance to identify and facilitate the sharing of any information that could help identify possible linkages between criminal activity and terrorism, between agencies and entities concerned with the nexus. Considering the growing nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism, organizations need to avoid issues of ‘stove-piping’ and focus more on information exchange. Relevant agencies may wish to incentivize norms and behaviours that encourage enhanced information sharing whilst maintaining the necessary security protocols. It is of utmost importance to promote and implement effective communication strategies, which facilitate the building of trust and the establishment of synergies between agencies. Special care should however be taken to ensure that a new culture of openness does not compromise national security.

**Good Practice 10: Encourage the creation, maintenance and use of regional and international databases.**

Academics and government officials may consider adopting a common methodology (as mentioned in Good Practice 4) to help develop a statistical regional database that relevant government agencies and bona fide researchers can access. It is advisable that, where appropriate, researchers and relevant practitioners also endeavour to improve the operational capability of research that they produce.

Regional and international databases on transnational organized crime and terrorism should be easily accessible and regularly updated to enable agencies to counter the challenges posed by the transnational nature of both organized crime and terrorism. Regional institutions can consider taking steps to further encourage the use and maintenance of international databases related to crime and terrorism issues, and where possible, develop their own databases to promote information sharing within the region. A good example is the lost and stolen passports database, maintained by INTERPOL.

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9 See also GCTF, *Rabat Memorandum on Good Practices for Effective Counterterrorism Practice in the Criminal Justice Sector*, Good Practice 2; GCTF *Recommendations for Using and Protecting Intelligence Information In Rule of Law-Based, Criminal Justice Sector-Led Investigations and Prosecution*, Recommendations 2, 3, 6, 7; and The Hague-Marrakech *Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon*, Good Practice 10. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).

10 Circulating intelligence only within a single agency or department.
Good Practice 11: Encourage the use of information from peripheral sources and new methods of information collection, including prison- and financial intelligence.

To maximize States’ data collection and analytical capabilities and, as consequence, enhance intelligence and expertize, the use of developing alternative sources of information and avenues of investigation, including prison intelligence and financial intelligence, should be encouraged. Prison intelligence can be particularly helpful in combatting the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism, as prisons can be places of recruitment, radicalization and knowledge transfer for both terrorist groups and organized crime groups. It is well known that cooperation agreements between transnational organized crime groups and terrorist groups have been established in prisons. Monitoring the interactions between members of these groups in prisons and incorporating prison intelligence into risk assessments can give States more insights into the nexus.

Financial intelligence could also be a large source of information, particularly in relation to the nexus, as both organized crime and terrorist groups rely to varying degrees on funds to carry out their activities. As such, financial intelligence is often an important tool that can be used to target financial flows used for illicit purposes. Financial intelligence, however, is often best used retrospectively – in the context of specific investigations. Parallel to this, governments may consider looking to develop a greater understanding of how unregulated financial flows are used in their country. This includes how transnational organized crime and terrorism leverage the shadow or informal economy, and the extent to which traditional money transfer systems are used by, or shared between, groups.

Governments may consider investing in specialist financial investigation teams focussing on identifying vulnerabilities in the regulated financial system, whilst also isolating trends in the unregulated financial system to understand how these are used as vehicles of terrorist financing and money laundering.

Good Practice 12: Support the further development of private and public-sector partnerships to assist in combatting the nexus, including, but not limited to, the field of financial investigation.

Private sector companies can provide a wealth of information and be strong advisory partners when it comes to making reforms for governments. States may endeavour to capitalize on this by increasing the involvement of the private sector in its efforts to counter the nexus. Private sector partners could include banks, accountants, lawyers, virtual currency exchanges or any other entity that may notice suspicious transactions or that may come across illicit activities and actors. Such partnerships could be reinforced through the creation of joint public-private task forces.

C. Local Engagement

Good Practice 13: Effective dialogue and cooperation between State and non-State actors need to be established, based on mutual trust and understanding. 11

Local communities can provide valuable sources of information, and channels of communication between local communities and law enforcement agencies should be improved. Interventions on behalf of the governments should reflect a deep knowledge of the local context and traditions. The various iterations of the nexus are often shaped by the local environment. For example, in Africa and

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11 See also GCTF, Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism, Good Practice 10, 18; Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon, Good Practice 1; Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as tools to Counter Violent Extremism, Good Practices 1, 2. www.theGCTF.org.
Asia, local groups have commonly extorted or taxed local civilian and business populations; this has often been identified as a source of revenue for both terrorist and criminal groups.

Engagement could be conducted in a way that ensures that local communities feel safe passing information on suspicious activities or other relevant information to the authorities. It is advisable that governments therefore ensure whistle-blower and witness protection. Improving relationships between the local community and law enforcement agencies should be fostered to build trust and encourage successful partnerships, from which both sides can benefit. Most importantly, authorities should adopt the ‘do no harm’ principle\(^\text{12}\) as a primary consideration and soft approaches such as implementing local community oriented policing, should also be considered. Thus, the government could ensure that frontline workers are well trained to engage with all local communities. Moreover, for trust-building, the government can consider guaranteeing transparency and accountability in its actions.

**Good Practice 14: Empower local communities to build resilience against transnational organized crime and terrorism.**\(^\text{13}\)

Empowerment schemes should have a long-term focus and be based on studies of community resilience to ensure sustainability. A strong focus should be placed on raising community awareness of how transnational organized crime and terrorism disrupt their development potential and their overall security; but focus should also be placed on the important role that the local community can play in circumventing recruitment of their youth into criminal and/or terrorist groups. In most regions of the world, the available recruitment pool for organized crime and terrorism are the same, thereby presenting an opportunity to isolate future generations of illicit actors. This may include the provision of courses or workshops about the manifestation of illegal practices in the area and the danger it poses, and open dialogue as to how it may be combated on a local community level, what can be done to increase awareness and facilitate referrals to relevant actors. Furthermore, governments are encouraged to engage with a range of local actors and institutions, such as NGOs, educational institutions, religious leaders, prison administrations, the judiciary, etc. to benefit from a multi-pronged and comprehensive approach.

**Good Practice 15: Ensure that inputs from all sectors of society are considered when designing policies/initiatives, and ensure that these policies are context-specific.**\(^\text{14}\)

Local partners need to be included in the design and implementation of initiatives to ensure ownership of these efforts, and that their views and priorities are accounted for. Inputs should be received from all members of society and key actors of the local community, including, but not limited to youth, women, marginalized local communities, and religious leaders. Inclusion of universities could also contribute to the development of effective national and region-based initiatives. Remotely located communities should also be included in the dialogue, and every effort should be made to ensure that

\(^{12}\) The principle of “do no harm” requires organisations to integrate conflict-sensitivity wherever it is relevant. The principle is now used widely by many aid organisations, including governments and multilateral organisations. World Vision International, [https://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding-and-conflict-sensitivity/do-no-harm](https://www.wvi.org/peacebuilding-and-conflict-sensitivity/do-no-harm).

\(^{13}\) See also GCTF, *The Hague – Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon*, Good Practice 6; and *Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism*, Good Practices 13, 15. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).

government agencies do not discriminate and remain neutral towards such local communities at all times. Perceptions by community members of unequal treatment by the authorities will serve to further marginalize communities, ultimately undermining efforts to combat threats emanating from the nexus. It is of great importance that equal treatment should be ensured such as, gender and age, in designing and implementing policies to combat the nexus. Local conditions, life circumstances, interactions and dynamics vary within local communities, and such context-specific conditions should be incorporated into the design of engagement efforts. Moreover, effective feedback mechanisms are important tools when it comes to implementation.

**Good Practice 16: Make sure that local communities have access to basic services, and bolster employment and development through launching economic initiatives.**

A significant feature of organized crime or terrorism are its ties with the informal economy of countries, economies that by definition are largely unregulated. Terrorist groups are making use of informal and shadow economies when cooperating with organized crime groups. A particularly strong link can be seen with drug trafficking (especially in the Southeast and South Asia region). Members of local communities are often implicated in such informal economies as a source of livelihood. However they do not consider themselves criminals, even when they acknowledge their activities are outside the law. In view of this, governments are encouraged to collaborate with local actors to find viable and sustainable alternative sources of income, and focus on attempts to formalize some aspects of the informal economy, wherever possible. Employment opportunities and small businesses could thus be heavily invested in to provide such alternatives. The government may consider also ensuring that local communities have sufficient access to basic services and infrastructure (such as healthcare and education). The support of the private sector should also be sought in this regard.

**Good Practice 17: Support and enhance rehabilitation and reintegration programs.**

The important role played by families and local communities in reintegration efforts, and the identification of other relevant actors to be involved in the process (such as religious leaders, psychologists etc.) should be acknowledged and supported. A referral mechanism may be created at a local level that enables individuals vulnerable to radicalization to access support systems in place. This support may include education, counselling, skills development, vocational training and other programs. Any preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) programs, or similar programs aimed at countering recruitment to criminal groups, that are implemented should be carried out in a non-discriminatory manner. It is imperative to apply gender-based analyses and evidence-based practices to P/CVE policies and programs including disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts to promote efficacy and sustainability. Moreover, it is crucial that programs are designed with a nexus specific approach; they should not focus solely on radicalization to violence or on those who are members of organized crime groups. Nexus-specific vulnerabilities should be examined, and particularly those links relevant in the context of a region. These programs could also include training for frontline staff and increased financial and logistical support for rehabilitation and reintegration programs to achieve optimal outcomes should also be considered.

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15 See also GCTF, *Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism*, Good Practice 16, [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).

16 See also GCTF, *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders; Rabat Memorandum on Good Practices for Effective Counterterrorism Practice in the Criminal Justice Sector*, Good Practice 11; and *Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism*, Good Practice 10. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).
**Good Practice 18: Acknowledge the role of the media as a target group and a facilitator by promoting greater awareness among journalists of the interface between transnational organized crime and terrorism.**

It is advisable that media be a key target and key partner in promoting education and awareness of the nexus among journalists, and as a result to the public. This can include a variety of activities, including workshops, awareness campaigns, joint projects, etc. The media can be involved in investigative research, as a collector and source of information that could be subsequently analyzed by academics and governments. The media may also be used as a platform, such as the use of locally-run radio stations whereby members of the local community may voice their concerns. National and local media can also be used to publicize information about positive initiatives and projects, as well as successful investigations, prosecutions and convictions of members of terrorist and organized criminal groups.

**Good Practice 19: Coordinate with donors to maximize outcomes and avoid duplication of activities/interventions.**

It is important that government agencies and organizations receiving funds coordinate and collaborate to ensure that funds are used effectively to identify vulnerabilities. Dialogue and transparency should be encouraged on behalf of all parties, including beneficiaries, through conducting regular assessments into the status of the programs on the ground and of monitoring mechanisms. Inter-donor collaboration and cooperation is also encouraged to ensure that priority areas are covered, efforts are not duplicated and resources are used in the most effective and sustainable way possible. Interventions should be complementary and on-the-ground needs assessments could be made with the involvement of beneficiaries to ensure that only necessary and requested interventions are carried out. This may be encouraged through the creation and implementation of donor round-table meetings and platforms for regular information exchange. When building strong partnerships between governments, implementing agencies and key beneficiaries, importance should be given to ensuring durability and sustainability of projects to outlast institutional changes.

### D. Capacity Building and Law Enforcement

**Good Practice 20: Increase the awareness and capacity of relevant security practitioners about the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism.**

It is recommended that efforts be made to increase the ability of practitioners to identify and report nexus links through the provision of training, and the creation of a network to share relevant information. This training should be specific to countering the nexus, and can include areas of conflict resolution and prevention, risk-awareness training, cultural-sensitivity training and border security and management, delivered in the form of relevant case studies, workshops and classes among other forms of knowledge transfer. It is strongly suggested that training incorporate the identification of differences between transnational organized crime, terrorism and petty crime, and the respective responses. Relevant practitioners are those that may come in contact with different aspects of the

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17 See also GCTF, *Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as tools to Counter Violent Extremism*, Good Practice 8. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).

18 See also GCTF, *Zurich-London Recommendations on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online*, Good Practice 4. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).

nexus; they may include the police, intelligence agencies, border guards, as well as, in some cases, the military, among others. Capacity building and policy development pertaining to the nexus should reflect the increased level of understanding needed and the importance of tackling the issue holistically. It is important to ensure that strategies already in place elsewhere can be operationalized at the ground level, and that, therefore, inter-service cooperation and training is developed at all levels. It is also important that capacity building efforts are supported by research and identified needs, and that agencies understand conflict dynamics and power relations in the region. It is advised that an integrated strategy be adopted, whereby capacity building is offered simultaneously across regional components, to increase overall efficacy. An example of this could include joint operations and border controls, aimed at reducing the porosity of borders.

Whilst developing more specialized capacities, the command of basic police skills should still be addressed where necessary, as to identify a potential nexus, the comparison of biodata remains essential. Specific training when it comes to the collection of identifiers (pictures, fingerprints, etc.) should be delivered as a crucial enabler for criminal intelligence, analysis and cooperation, specifically with the aim of an efficient contribution to police cooperation and INTERPOL notes.

**Good Practice 21: Increase financial investigative capacities.**

Practitioners should be trained to carry out financial investigations to deprive transnational organized crime and terrorist groups of the various resources used to pursue their criminal activities. This includes the identification of illicit financial flows, application of provisional measures, and the confiscation of proceeds of crime. National legislation could also ensure that sufficient powers are bestowed on relevant authorities to perform such investigations. Facilitating crimes of the nexus (e.g. extortion) should be monitored as a watchpoint for the emergence of a nexus. Financial intelligence units (FIUs) could be created or reinforced by national authorities within States to stop terrorists and organized crime members misusing the financial systems for money laundering activities. Where applicable, based on the bespoke legal provisions, specific training should also be offered to the banking establishment to be able to detect and draw the attention of the specialized police services on suspicious money flows. In order to be efficient, public/private sector capacity building should also provide for common training.

**Good Practice 22: Increase capacities to monitor the cyber space.**

More specifically, practitioners should be trained to disrupt nexus activities that can be facilitated via networks on the Internet. They should be taught how to trace and eradicate the illicit digital methods that are used for terrorist financing (fraud, ID theft, etc.), and enable to carry out data forensics. Cyber currencies, and cyber trade, have also emerged as a significant enabler of nexus related activities, and practitioners could be trained on how to trace, seize and investigate these virtual currencies. Terrorist groups and transnational organized crime groups often make use of the Dark Web to purchase weaponry, facilitate financial transactions and plan operations. In view of this, governments could have trained analysts to identify, analyze and operationalize this information into intelligence, with the capacity to process large amounts of data. To combat radicalization and recruitment processes, it is advised that States have expertise in conducting risk assessments on social media. Cyber capacity could also be expanded through increasing Internet monitoring capabilities, hosting workshops and implementing 24/7 monitoring systems as well as cyber patrols. Where needed, the improvement of the IT infrastructure, inclusive of Internet accessibility and speed, is paramount to enable effective


21 See also GCTF, *Zurich-London Recommendations on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online*, Good Practices 5, 9, [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).
monitoring of the cyber space. In the field of cybercrime, cooperation between states is also essential; in part because it enables the authorities to freeze and access digital evidence that facilitates criminal investigations. In this respect, accession to the Council of Europe’s Convention on Cybercrime and its 24/7 network is encouraged.

**Good Practice 23: Strengthen the capacity of the judicial systems to combat the nexus, and ensure that legal professionals are trained to recognize links between transnational organized crime and terrorism.**

It is recommended that prosecutors and the judiciary be engaged and educated on the topic of the nexus, and it is important to ensure that the links between transnational organized crime and terrorist groups are recognised. Moreover, it is advised that the judiciary has a clear understanding on how to prosecute those who have committed illegal activities related to organized crime and terrorism (i.e. not simply prosecuting them for terrorist offences or only for charges relating to organized crime). This may be facilitated through the creation of a regional forum of legal experts where expertise, discussion surrounding challenges of the nexus, and experiences can be shared across borders. This dialogue and exchange of knowledge on the topic should not be limited to countries that have experience with the nexus, but should also involve those which may not yet have dealt with nexus cases from a legal perspective.

**Good Practice 24: Work with prisons and probation services to impede cooperation and transfer of skills and knowledge between transnational organized crime and terrorism.**

The nexus can be exacerbated in prison settings, as this context can provide opportunities for organized crime groups and terrorist groups to interact, cooperate and facilitate the transfer of knowledge, skills and contacts. To discourage the collaboration of these groups and the formation of the nexus in prisons, bespoke programs to manage violent extremist prisoners and support them in the rehabilitation and reintegration process are required. It is advisable that approaches taken be context-specific, taking into consideration the current strengths, challenges, and the human and material resources of the country. Steps could be taken for example to provide separate facilities for different groups. Given the increased possibility of exchanges between organized crime and terrorism in prisons, prison wardens should receive awareness and basic information collection training, whilst a penitentiary intelligence service could be trained and set up where it has not yet been developed. Probation services can support the criminal justice system by detecting and sharing intelligence information.

**Good Practice 25: Prioritize and reinforce border security.**

Organized crime and terrorist groups frequently take advantage of existing routes, human flows and networks in regions with under-policed and porous borders to carry out their activities. At the regional and international levels, cooperation, coordination, and intelligence sharing between cross-border agencies (such as customs, border police, security agencies, etc.) is crucial in identifying overlaps between organized crime and terrorism and can also be promoted through the creation of regional/international bodies and joint operational task forces. In addition, the digitalization of border systems and the use of information such as advance passenger information (API) and passenger name

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22 See also GCTF, *The Hague Memorandum on Good Practices for the Judiciary in Adjudicating Terrorism Offenses*, Good Practice 1. [www.theGCTF.org](http://www.theGCTF.org).

records (PNR) can contribute to stopping members of organized crime or terrorist groups at the border.

**Conclusion**

These non-binding good practices are intended to provide GCTF Members and other interested stakeholders with a non-exhaustive list of non-binding recommendations to assist them, as appropriate, in developing policies and strategies to counter the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism.

The non-binding good practices outlined in this document can serve as a basis for international engagement, assistance and training. They intend to inform and guide countries as they develop programs designed to prevent and counter the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism or to address more general issues relating to these phenomena. Similarly, the good practices can be used to shape any bilateral or multilateral, technical or other, capacity-building assistance that might be envisaged in this area. The GCTF can serve as a facilitation platform for continuing the dialogue between States on the nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime.