Thank you for that introduction.

I'm happy to be here today to speak with you about supporting community-centered approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism, where I will focus my remarks on the ongoing development of guidelines and best practices for working with local partners, as the international community seeks to increasingly localize P/CVE programming for more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Implicit within the topics of today's panels—focused on building resiliency at the community level and taking a whole of society approach to address the problem of terrorism—is the need for external funders and implementers to partner with local actors to accomplish their goals. However, there exist many barriers to doing so effectively.

This presentation features selected insights from a current research initiative undertaken by the RESOLVE Network to develop a framework for practitioners to localize both peacebuilding and P/CVE programming.

The RESOLVE Network is a global consortium of researchers and organizations committed to the development of empirically-driven, locally-informed research on violent extremism. Established in 2016, the RESOLVE Network Secretariat is housed within the Program on Violence and Extremism at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an institution founded by the U.S. Congress to prevent and resolve violent conflict. This project is also supported by the Africa Bureau at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

All views expressed here today are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of these institutions or any entity of the United States government.

In recent years, the localization of foreign assistance programs has become a core component of much of U.S. and multilateral development and peacebuilding efforts. So far, development and peacebuilding have made greater strides in this arena than P/CVE, however, the field has already begun to recognize and elevate the importance of local actors and partnerships, and is well-positioned to build upon the lessons learned from similar programs in these related fields.

It is already widely recognized by experts, policymakers, and practitioners that centering local stakeholders, valuing local knowledge, and ultimately transferring ownership of programs to local actors are key components to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of violence prevention and reduction efforts. When it comes to violent extremism specifically, this is, in part, due to a recognition that stopping the spread and entrenchment of violent extremist movements requires addressing community-level grievances—such as those pertaining to gaps in governance and security—that these groups are able to exploit.

Local actors are likely best positioned to identify and respond to these concerns, however, we also expect that in any conflict system multiple actors will be required to work at different levels to address the root causes of violence.

In a perhaps oversimplified fashion, we often categorize these as International, National, and Sub-national actors. Situating localness within this more geographic framing, however, can cause us to miss the heterogeneity, interconnectedness, and complexity of actors within a conflict system.

To address this problem, we have begun to think of "local" in terms of proximity to violent extremism or violent conflict. In practice, this means that the work of localizing programming to prevent or reduce violence is rooted in partnership with those who have knowledge or experience of conflict dynamics due to their situation within the conflict system. This conceptualization helps us to focus more narrowly on the aspects of "localness" that are relevant for programming.

However, for donors, stakeholders, and implementers who are less proximate and more external to the problem of violent extremism, being able to work effectively with local partners requires us to rethink the ways in which we have historically approached initiatives to address violent extremism in a top-down, state-centric fashion.

Many of the systems that we have created for designing, funding, implementing, and evaluating programs are centered on the needs, priorities, and resources of external, often international, actors such that it is difficult to

transfer not only funding but decision-making power directly to local partners. Further, it is not always clear *how* doing so will result in the outcomes desired.

What this means in practice is that, while it is easy to agree on the value of local knowledge and support for preventing and countering violent extremism initiatives, it is much harder to operationalize localization.

For this reason, RESOLVE is developing a framework and embedded toolkit for localization in peacebuilding and P/CVE meant to support practitioners in exactly that effort.

While it is not possible for us to capture every nuance of localization given its inherent contextual nature, we can provide guidelines and tools to help orient, support, and offer considerations for localizing new and existing P/CVE programs.

One of the core components of this framework will be to help us understand what the programmatic objectives of localization are. In other words, what does success look like? We can agree that localization is key to successful P/CVE efforts, but we are missing a couple of steps. First, is defining what successful localization should look like within the context of programming. The second is then describing how that successful localization contributes to the P/CVE objectives of the program. Without addressing these two key components of localization, we end up with a theory of change that looks something like this diagram.

We refer to this as the black box problem in localization. Without defining what goes in that box, it is difficult to know whether the approach to and implementation of localization in a program aligns with the desired outcomes.

Instead, by relying on an incomplete theory of change, we potentially find ourselves in a scenario where localization becomes a box-checking exercise of transferring funds to local partners and/or attempting to build their capacity, without first doing the work to understand if our objectives can reasonably be accomplished by the program and partnerships that we design.

It is with this set of operational challenges in mind that the framework will provide considerations, recommendations, and adaptable tools for localizing both new and existing P/CVE programs. These will address key decision-

making points in the program cycle, including the selection of local partners, risk assessment and management, as well as ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

It is our hope that the development of a localization framework will not only support the work of P/CVE practitioners, but also continue to push the evolution of our thinking in what works and what doesn't in the broader field of practice as we collectively explore what the next generation of CVE programming looks like.

Thank you for your attention today, and I look forward to future engagement on this topic.