Mechanism for Preventing Violent Extremism in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
Pakistan

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Early Warning Mechanism for PVE in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Objectives:

Proactively address social, political/governance, and religious factors contributing to violent extremism in Mardan.

Geographic Scope:

Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Key Stakeholders:

Media, Civil Society, Government.

Additional Stakeholders:

NACTA, PEMRA, FIA, Religious Leaders (including minorities), Local Government, Information Department, Aman Jirga, DRC Mardan, Political Parties, Influencers, Chamber of Commerce.

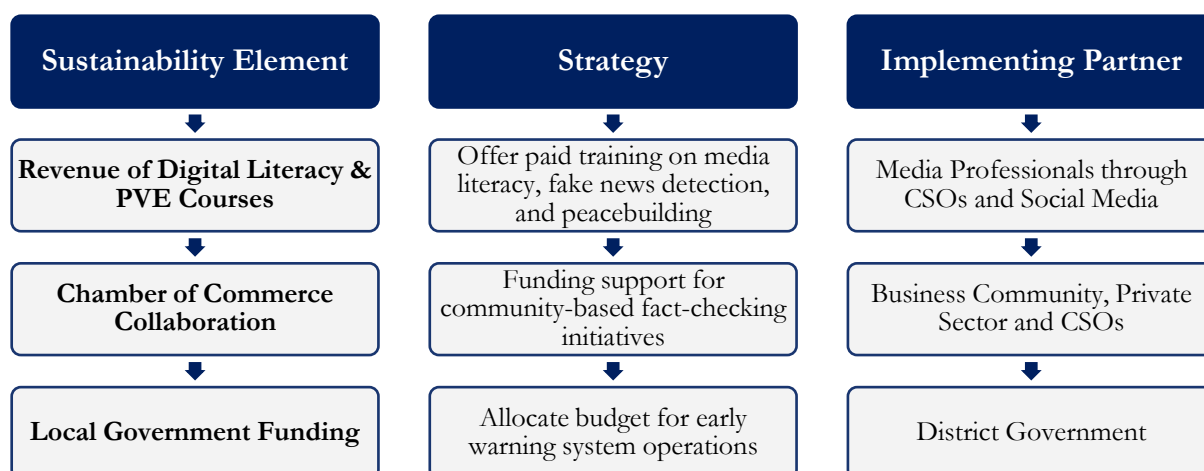| Sector	Number of Members	Responsibilities
• Media	• 7	• Fact-checking, Counter-narrative campaigns, Reporting misinformation , Portraying , Propagating healthy activities, Heros Creation, Good news sharing, Coordination, Flagging false information.
• Civil Society	• 7	• Advocacy, Behavioral change programs, Government engagement, Identification of VE cases, Resolution of issues, Coordination, Events organizing, Getting feedback from community.
• Government	• 6	• Education Dept, Local Govt, Help the Civil society as needed
• Mental Health Specialists	• To be nominated by local gov as per requirement	• Provide psychosocial support, counselling, and early identification of individuals at risk of radicalization due to trauma or mental health vulnerabilities.
• Local Judiciary	• To be assisted by Local Government/Administration (in case there is no elected gov)	• Ensure legal follow-up on verified VE cases, support fair trials, and uphold rule of law within the early warning response framework.

1. System Structure

Component	Description	Responsible Entity
• WhatsApp Channel	• Dedicated group/channel for early warning alerts	• Local Government, Media
• Radio Integration	• Broadcast alerts and fact-checks in case of network failure	• FM Radio, Local Media
• Admin Panel	• Trained moderators to verify and share credible updates. All Misinformation sources investigated for fair trial.	• Media Committee, Govt Officials
• Community Reporting	• The public can report extremist content, rumors, or threats, Maintain a hot line 24/7	• Civil Society, Local Govt, Media
• Verification Mechanism	• Cross-checking reported information with credible sources, Reporting all misinformation and holding them accountable.	• Media, Fact-Checkers
• Response Coordination	• Timely intervention and dissemination of counter-narratives, Identifying the misinformation sources with loss of credibility.	• Entire PVE Committee

2. Key Activities & Responsibilities

Activity	Objective	Platform/Medium	Responsible Stakeholder
• **Daily Alerts & Fact-Checks**	• Counter misinformation and violent narratives	• WhatsApp, FM Radio	• Media, Civil Society
• **Monitoring Social Media**	• Identify emerging threats and hate speech, Blocking sensitive posts and narratives immediately	• Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	• Media Analysts
• **Community Engagement**	• Encourage public reporting of threats	• WhatsApp Groups, Awareness Drives	• Local Govt through CSOs
• **Radio Bulletins**	• Broadcast critical alerts when the internet is down	• FM Radio	• Radio Stations, Govt
• **Coordination with Law Enforcement**	• Address extremist threats promptly	• WhatsApp, Direct Liaison	• District Administration

3. Sustainability Strategy

Sustainability Element	Strategy	Implementing Partner
Revenue of Digital Literacy & PVE Courses	Offer paid training on media literacy, fake news detection, and peacebuilding	Media Professionals through CSOs and Social Media
Chamber of Commerce Collaboration	Funding support for community-based fact-checking initiatives	Business Community, Private Sector and CSOs
Local Government Funding	Allocate budget for early warning system operations	District Government

4. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

Indicator	Target	Data Collection Method	Responsible Entity
☐	☐	☐	☐
☐ WhatsApp Channel Engagement	☐ 2000+ subscribers	☐ WhatsApp Analytics	☐ Media, Govt
☐ Number of Fact-Checks Published Weekly	☐ At least 10 per week	☐ WhatsApp, Radio Logs	☐ Media Committee
☐ Reported vs. Verified Fake News Cases	☐ 80% accuracy in verification	☐ Internal Audits	☐ Fact-Checking Teams
☐ Radio Broadcast Effectiveness	☐ Timely updates during internet shutdowns	☐ Listener Feedback, Surveys	☐ FM Radio

Comprehensive Plan

Context and Background

Mardan District, situated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), holds significant socio-political importance due to its population density, strategic location, and historical exposure to violent extremism (VE). The region has faced various forms of radicalization, often driven by socio-economic disparities, ideological manipulation, lack of youth engagement, and weak community-based early warning systems.

Youth Demographics and Vulnerability

According to the 2023 census, Mardan District has a total population of 2,744,898. While specific age distribution data for Mardan is not readily available, provincial data indicates that approximately 43% of KP's population is under the age of 15. [i] This suggests a significant youth demographic in Mardan, highlighting the importance of proactive interventions to engage young people and prevent radicalization.

Incidents Highlighting the Need for Intervention

The tragic lynching of Mashal Khan, a 23-year-old student at Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan, on April 13, 2017, underscores the urgency of addressing VE in the region. Accused of blasphemy, Mashal was beaten and shot to death by a mob on campus. A Joint Investigation Team later found that the allegations were unfounded and that the murder was premeditated. [ii]

A more recent incident in May 2023, showcases more need as well as, a local cleric, Nigar Alam, was tragically killed by a mob during a political rally in the Sawaldher area of Mardan. His remarks were perceived as blasphemous by some attendees, leading to his lynching despite police efforts to protect him. [iii]

Furthermore, in March 2025, Pakistani security forces conducted a military operation in Katlang Tehsil of Mardan District targeting suspected Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants. The

operation reportedly resulted in the deaths of 17 militants, according to military sources. [iv] However, it also caused civilian casualties, with reports indicating that nine civilians, including members of a shepherd family, were killed. The incident triggered protests and prompted a government inquiry into the conduct and consequences of the operation.

Media Proliferation and Misinformation

The widespread use of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook has facilitated the rapid spread of extremist ideologies and misinformation. This environment necessitates a robust Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) to detect early signs of radicalization, verify threats, and respond promptly and effectively.

Objectives of the Proposed EWM in Mardan

The proposed EWM aims to:

• To identify VE threats & to monitor them	• End gaps betweenvarious institutions	• Empower youth for peacebuilding
Pre-Empt	Bridge Gaps	Empower

The goal is to, **pre-emptively** identify and respond to VE threats through community reporting and digital monitoring. Moreover, to **bridge the gap** between state institutions and local communities, including media, civil society, and religious actors. Lastly, to **empower youth and marginalized groups** to contribute to peacebuilding and counter-narrative efforts.

Alignment with Project Activities

This Early Warning Mechanism is directly complemented by 30 trained media campaigners who serve as frontline digital responders, promoting peace narratives and countering misinformation in real-time. Additionally, the 10 community awareness sessions under the project will feed into the mechanism by educating the public on how to report potential VE threats, improving grassroots-level vigilance and responsiveness.

Guiding Principles

Community Ownership
•Local led approaches

Human Rights
•Frameworks upholds Rule of Law

Diversity & Inclusion
•Women, youth & minorities

Transparancy
•Accountability & credibility

Preventive Approach
•Early detection & peaceful resolution

The PVE Early Warning Mechanism in Mardan is anchored in the following **core principles** to ensure that all interventions are ethical, inclusive, and effective:

Community Ownership and Participation

Interventions are locally led and rooted in community dynamics. Community stakeholders — including media, religious leaders, youth, and civil society — play a central role in identifying risks, designing responses, and sustaining outcomes.

Human Rights and Rule of Law

All actions under the PVE framework must uphold fundamental human rights, particularly freedom of expression, religion, and association. The verification and response process must be transparent and respect legal due process. This aligns with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which places human rights at the center of VE responses. [v]

Inclusivity and Diversity

The mechanism ensures representation from marginalized groups, including women, youth, and religious minorities. Their perspectives are integral to understanding the local VE landscape and co-creating effective counter-narratives. UN Women emphasize the need to incorporate gender and diversity in PVE initiatives. [vi]

Transparency and Accountability

Verification mechanisms must be impartial and credible, with checks to prevent misuse of the system for personal or political gain. Regular monitoring and public reporting will help build trust in the process.
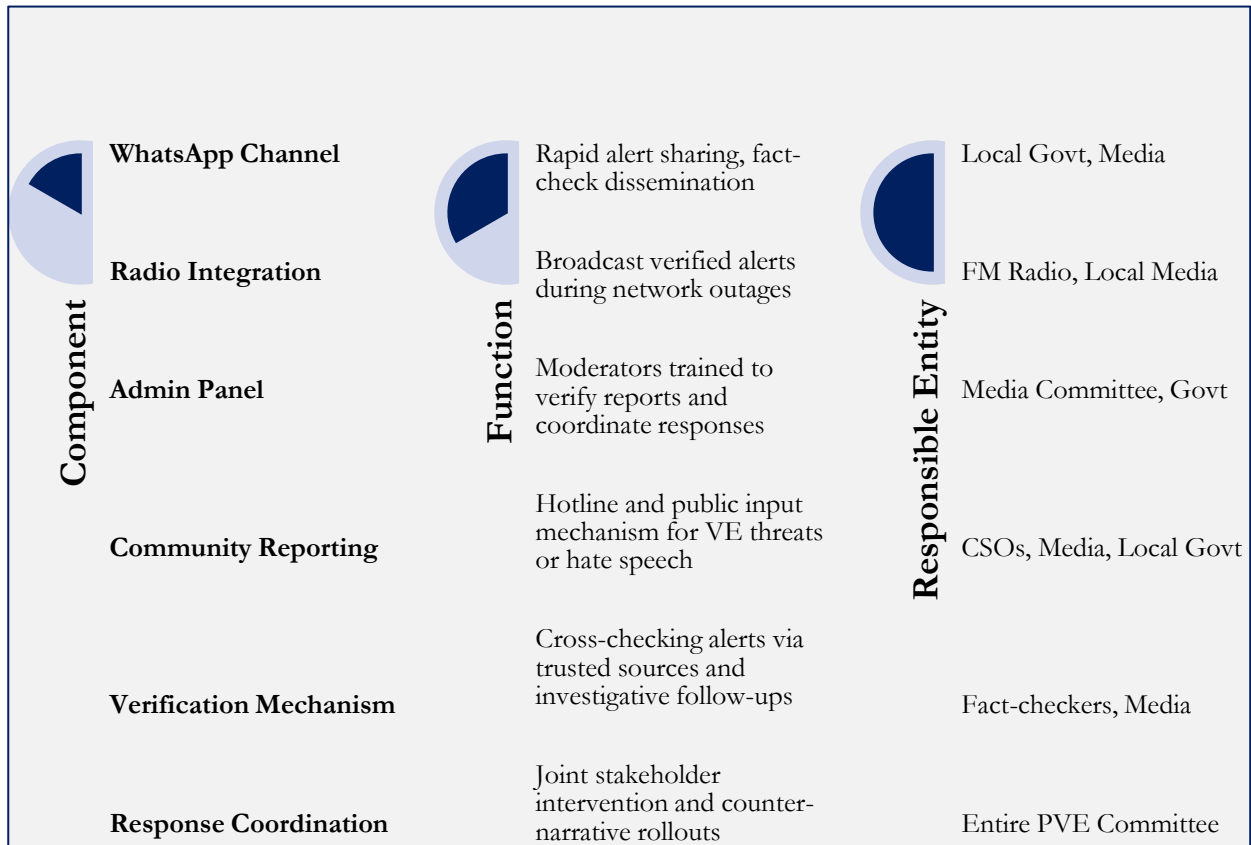
Preventive and Non-Coercive Approach

The mechanism focuses on early detection and peaceful resolution of tensions, rather than punitive action. Misinformation, hate speech, and emerging threats will be addressed through dialogue, awareness, and education.

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Operationalization of the Early Warning Mechanism

The PVE Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) in Mardan will function as a decentralized, tech-enabled system that empowers local stakeholders to identify, verify, and respond to VE risks in real time.
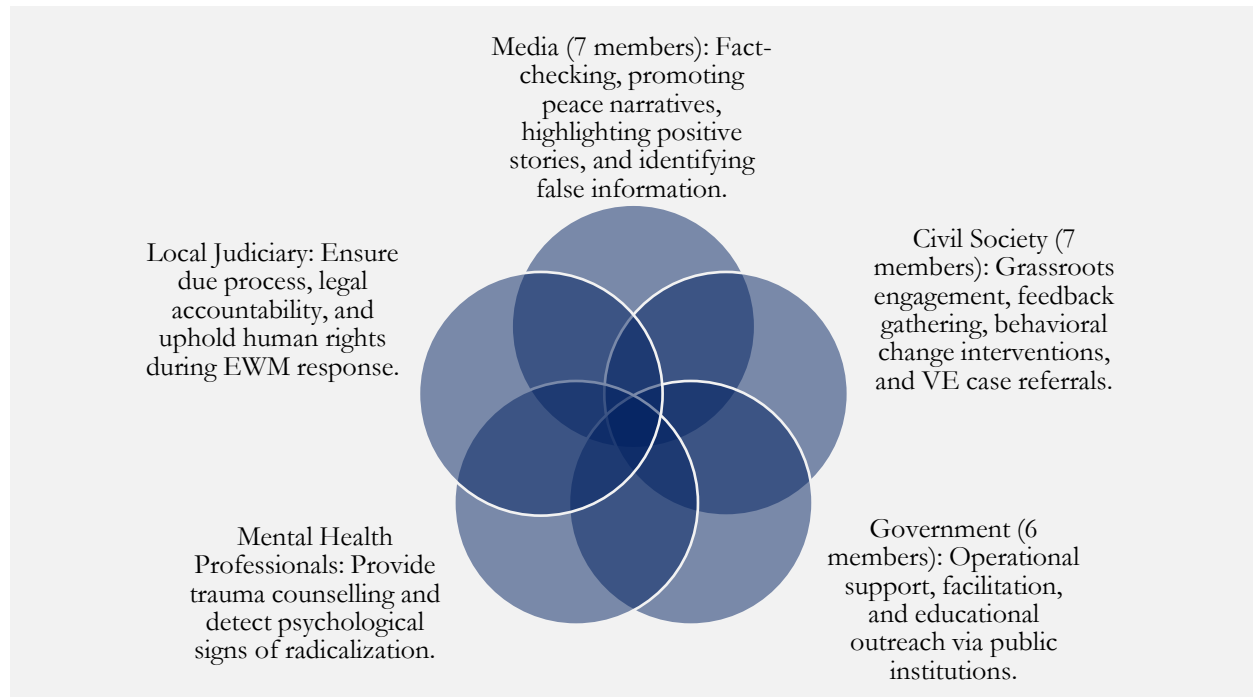
System Structure and Components
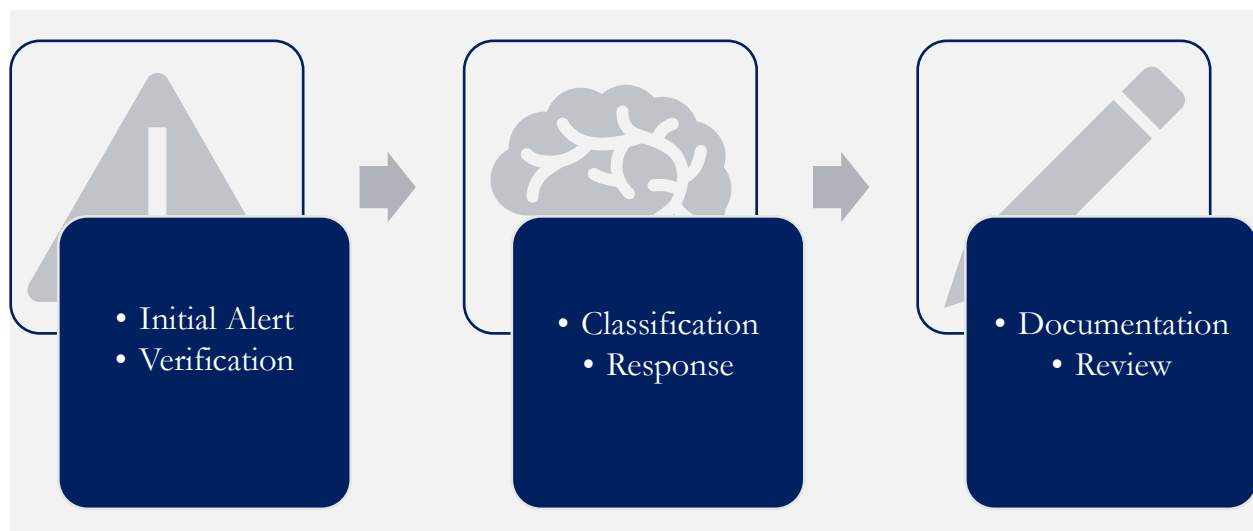
Component	Function	Responsible Entity
WhatsApp Channel	Rapid alert sharing, fact-check dissemination	Local Govt, Media
Radio Integration	Broadcast verified alerts during network outages	FM Radio, Local Media
Admin Panel	Moderators trained to verify reports and coordinate responses	Media Committee, Govt
Community Reporting	Hotline and public input mechanism for VE threats or hate speech	CSOs, Media, Local Govt
Verification Mechanism	Cross-checking alerts via trusted sources and investigative follow-ups	Fact-checkers, Media
Response Coordination	Joint stakeholder intervention and counter-narrative rollouts	Entire PVE Committee

Key Activities and Responsibilities

Activity	Objective	Platform	Lead Stakeholders
Daily Alerts & Fact-Checks	Debunk false narratives and misinformation	WhatsApp, FM Radio	Media, CSOs
Monitoring Social Media	Identify and report hate speech and threats	Facebook, X, Instagram	Media Analysts
Community Engagement	Encourage grassroots vigilance and reporting	Awareness drives, WhatsApp	CSOs, Local Govt
Radio Bulletins	Ensure access during internet shutdowns	FM Radio	Govt, Local Radio
Law Enforcement Coordination	Fast-track verified threats to LEAs	Direct liaison	District Administration

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Stakeholder Roles and Distribution

All members of the Early Warning Mechanism working group, including media representatives, civil society actors, and government officials, have undergone targeted training and sensitization on peacebuilding, digital safety, countering violent extremism, and misinformation management. This foundational capacity-building ensures that all contributors are well-equipped to carry out their roles effectively and ethically.

Media (7 members): Fact-checking, promoting peace narratives, highlighting positive stories, and identifying false information.

Civil Society (7 members): Grassroots engagement, feedback gathering, behavioral change interventions, and VE case referrals.

Local Judiciary: Ensure due process, legal accountability, and uphold human rights during EWM response.

Government (6 members): Operational support, facilitation, and educational outreach via public institutions.

Mental Health Professionals: Provide trauma counselling and detect psychological signs of radicalization.

Coordination and Escalation Process

- • Initial Alert
- • Verification

- • Classification
- • Response

- • Documentation
- • Review

The Early Warning Mechanism begins with the **initial alert**, which may be triggered by a community member or detected through social media monitoring. This is followed by a **verification** phase, where the information is cross-checked by a dedicated fact-checking team

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using credible sources. Once verified, the alert undergoes **classification** to determine whether it constitutes misinformation, a violent extremism (VE) risk, or a general rumor. Based on this assessment, an appropriate **response** is initiated, which may include disseminating counter-narratives, engaging law enforcement agencies (LEAs), or referring individuals for psychosocial support. All such incidents are systematically **documented** and reviewed during monthly PVE committee meetings to ensure accountability and learning.

Way Forward

To ensure the long-term impact and scalability of the Early Warning Mechanism (EWM) in Mardan, the following strategic actions are recommended:

Institutionalization
- Embed the EWM framework into local governance structures, including educational institutions and municipal policy planning, to ensure continuity beyond donor-supported cycles.

Capacity Building
- Conduct regular training programmed for media professionals, civil society actors, and local officials on digital/media literacy, fake news detection, and peacebuilding communication skills.
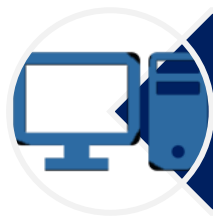
Resource Mobilization
- Develop partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, private tech companies, and international development agencies to fund and support EWM expansion and innovations.

Policy Advocacy
Engage national and provincial authorities such as NACTA, the Information Department, and KP's Home Department to formalize and endorse the model as a scalable PVE intervention.
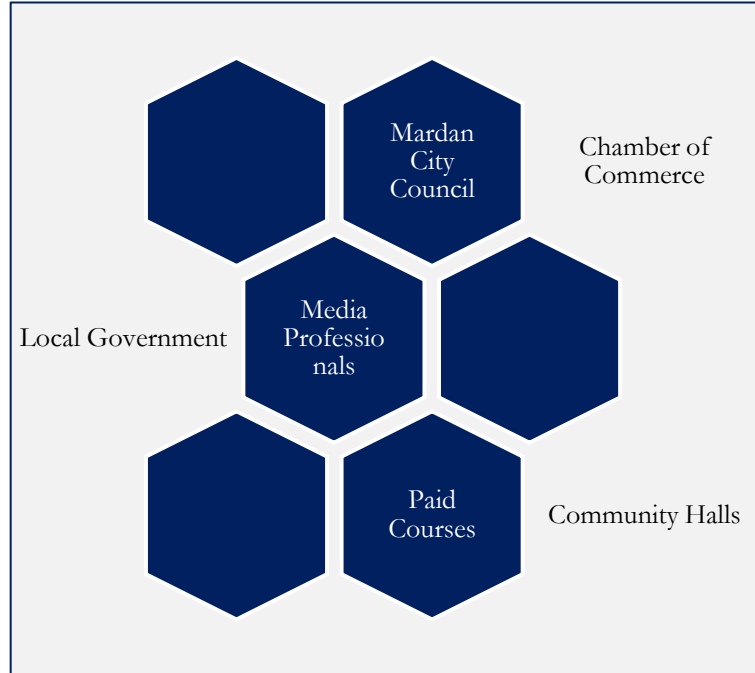
Technology Upgrades
Invest in user-friendly mobile applications, dashboards, and digital reporting tools that enhance real-time monitoring and community accessibility to the system.

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Sustainability Strategy

A key pillar of the mechanism's sustainability is the active ownership by the Mardan City Council and local administration. Their institutional endorsement not only ensures policy continuity and resource allocation but also embeds accountability within existing governance structures. This local ownership guarantees long-term relevance, contextual adaptation, and responsiveness.

Moreover, as part of the sustainability strategy, media professional committee members will develop and deliver paid training courses focused on topics such as fake news detection, fact-checking, cybersecurity, and responsible media use. These trainings will be hosted in local government community halls, which can be provided free of cost as an in-kind contribution. The beneficiaries—mainly

students and youth—will pay a minimal fee to attend, generating revenue to support the ongoing operations of the Early Warning Mechanism.

In addition, the Chamber of Commerce will help mobilize support from the business community to sponsor and fund community-based media literacy initiatives. The local government will also play a critical role by integrating the mechanism into its annual planning and allocating budgetary support. Together, these efforts will ensure the financial viability and long-term impact of the initiative.

Contributors
Drafted and Written by:

Dr. Anika Ahmed, Aresha Shah, Khoso Saifullah, Mushoud Ali

Designed by:

Azmat Kakar

About Individualland

Individualland Pakistan is an Islamabad-based development sector organization dedicated to strengthening democratic values, promoting media development, and building community resilience. We work across Pakistan with a focus on peacebuilding, governance, and the empowerment of youth and women, collaborating with national and international partners to create sustainable

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[vi] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/Preventing-violent-extremism-Integrating-gender-perspectives-en.pdf