Developing Awareness of Radicalisation to Violent Extremism in Prison:
The Prison Radicalisation Awareness Guide (PRAG)
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Setting the Scene

- Prisons are routinely identified as "breeding grounds" for violent extremism

- Prison services are increasingly housing individuals suspected of, or sentenced for, involvement in terrorist acts or have associations with known violent extremist networks

- It is said that due to their past offending behaviour and criminal associations, prisoners may present particular vulnerabilities to becoming radicalised to violent extremism (i.e. the 'crime-terror nexus')

- There are significant concerns that a subset of those convicted for such offences (including Foreign Terrorist Fighters) will actively seek to exploit the perceived vulnerabilities of their fellow prisoners

- The debate about the extent to which radicalisation to violent extremism occurs in prisons is accompanied by a growing interest in supporting services to address and manage these issues

Radicalisation to violent extremism

'The process of coming to support and/or commit violence on behalf of a group, cause or ideology advocating political or social change'

The Need for Guidance

- A significant challenge that has been identified by countries is the extent to which frontline prison staff are able to recognise and respond to prisoners becoming or have become radicalised to violent extremism in prison

- Frontline staff are perceived as the "eyes and ears" of the prisons but many lack basic structured guidance for how to identify and respond to concerning behaviour (and often this guidance is anecdotal or based on personal biases)

- They may therefore overlook apparent signs of radicalisation and recruitment to violent extremism in their daily interactions with prisoners

- They might also assign disproportionate significance to certain behaviours or assume their observations 'prove' prisoners are radicalised, resulting in inappropriate or disproportionate responses, potentially reinforcing grievances etc

- There is an absence of data-driven, evidence-informed approaches which does not reflect the evolution of formal risk assessment guidelines in this field

Issues & Challenges

- Slippery concepts & definitions

- Demarcating radicalisation from radicalisation to violent extremism

- Lack of empirical evidence (emphasis on anecdotal evidence)

- Potential for misapplication for political ends (ethical issues)

- Managing disproportionate responses

- Lack of comparative standard (to observational data)

- The risk of doing more harm than good

- Dependency on observational data (reinforcing assumptions)

The Response: PRAG

- In response, the Global Center on Cooperative Security (Global Center) developed the Prison Radicalisation Awareness Guide (PRAG)

- The PRAG has been developed through the Global Center's Countering Violent Extremism in Prisons (CVE-P) Program, an international capacity-building and technical assistance initiative established in partnership with the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)

- The program is supported by the governments of Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, The Netherlands and Norway.

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The Response: PRAG

- The PRAG has been designed and developed to inform and educate front-line prison staff about prisoner behaviours which are consistent with possible or ongoing radicalisation to violent extremism specifically in prisons, based on available research

- It directs attention to (domains or areas) of a prisoner's daily functioning (such as their relationships, activities and communications) which staff should be vigilant about

- For each domain, the PRAG outlines a number of key behavioural indicators and examples of how these may manifest in daily prison life

- The PRAG also includes indicators identified from literature which suggest when a prisoner may be resilient to radicalisation to violent extremism

- It directs staff to investigate further where behaviour may raise concerns

The Response: PRAG

Distinct Features

- Internationally Focussed and Informed
- Explicit in Its Intended Use
- Tailored for Local Context
- Developed from Prison Staff Contributions
- Accessible and Practical
- Evidence-based and Systematic

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Development: 1.Data Collection

1. Data Collection

- In 2015, a multidisciplinary team from the Global Center on Cooperative Security collated data and information related to the issue at hand

- University databases were consulted using appropriate search terms to identify suitable academic publications

- Through the Global Center's engagement with a range of international forums and initiatives (e.g. the United Nation and the Global Counterterrorism Forum etc) further documents were gathered and existing data verified

- Primary research was also conducted with prison officers in 3 different prison services

- 21 data sources were identified that focused on the issue of (radicalisation to) violent extremism in prisons, including how those detained for terrorist-related offences behave

- These sources referenced prisoner behaviour in many different countries and continents over the last century, including prisoners affiliated with a variety of different groups e.g. the Irish Republican Army, Red Army Faction, Boko Haram

1. Data Collection

- Front-line prison staff from 3 jurisdictions working directly with prisoners who have committed terrorist-related offences in Africa and South East Asia

- Risk Assesment Protocols associated with assessing violent extremism *e.g. Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG 22+) and Violence Extremism Risk Assessment (VERA)*

- Other tools/frameworks designed to identify radicalisation in prison settings *e.g. Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons (RRAP) R2Pris Consortium.*

- Academic publications directly focussed on the issue of radicalisation in prisons *e.g. Kruglanski et al (2016) Patterns of Radicalisation in a Philippine Jail*

- Academic publications focussed on the behaviour of prisoners who have committed terrorist-related offences *e.g. Yehoshua (2014) The Israeli Experience of Terrorist Leaders in Prison*

- Other reports and research (some restricted) *e.g. UNODC – Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalisation to Violence in Prisons (2016)*

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Development: 2.Content Analysis & Coding

1. Data Collection

2. Content Analysis & Coding

3. Cluster Analysis

4. Peer Review

5. Testing

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2. Content Analysis

- A content analysis was conducted, systematically recording all behaviours identified as indicative of potential (radicalisation to) violent extremism in prisons

- This included recording behaviours explicitly linked to radicalisation to violent extremism within the sources themselves

- This also included recording behaviours implicitly linked to radicalisation to violent extremism contained in sources

- In this initial phase, efforts were made to include as many behaviours as possible so no formal exclusion criteria were applied

- Each listed behaviour across all of the 21 data sources was recorded – using the exact wording whenever possible - and coded based on the data source they were identified in

- This included recording behaviours that may indicate resilience to or protection from radicalisation to violent extremism in prisons

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Development: 3.Cluster Analysis

1. Data Collection

2. Content Analysis & Coding

3. Cluster Analysis

4. Peer Review

5. Testing

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3. Cluster Analysis

- Individual behaviours were clustered based on: 1) Identical wording 2) Similar wording (e.g. 'grievance'/'expressed grievance') & 3) Conceptual similarity (e.g. expressed desire for revenge against prison authorities/expresses extreme anger towards an out-group)

- Several clear clusters of behaviours emerged for which initial labels were created to capture these as 'indicators'

- Remaining behaviours were then added to these indicators if identified across more than one source, the labels of which were adjusted to accommodate these

- Additional indicators were created if remaining behaviours were identified across more than one source that couldn't be accommodated within existing indicators without losing their distinctive features

- Remaining behaviours were excluded if they only occurred in one source, lacked face validity and/or they were just too generic e.g. prisoners being identified as 'fearless'

PRAG Domains
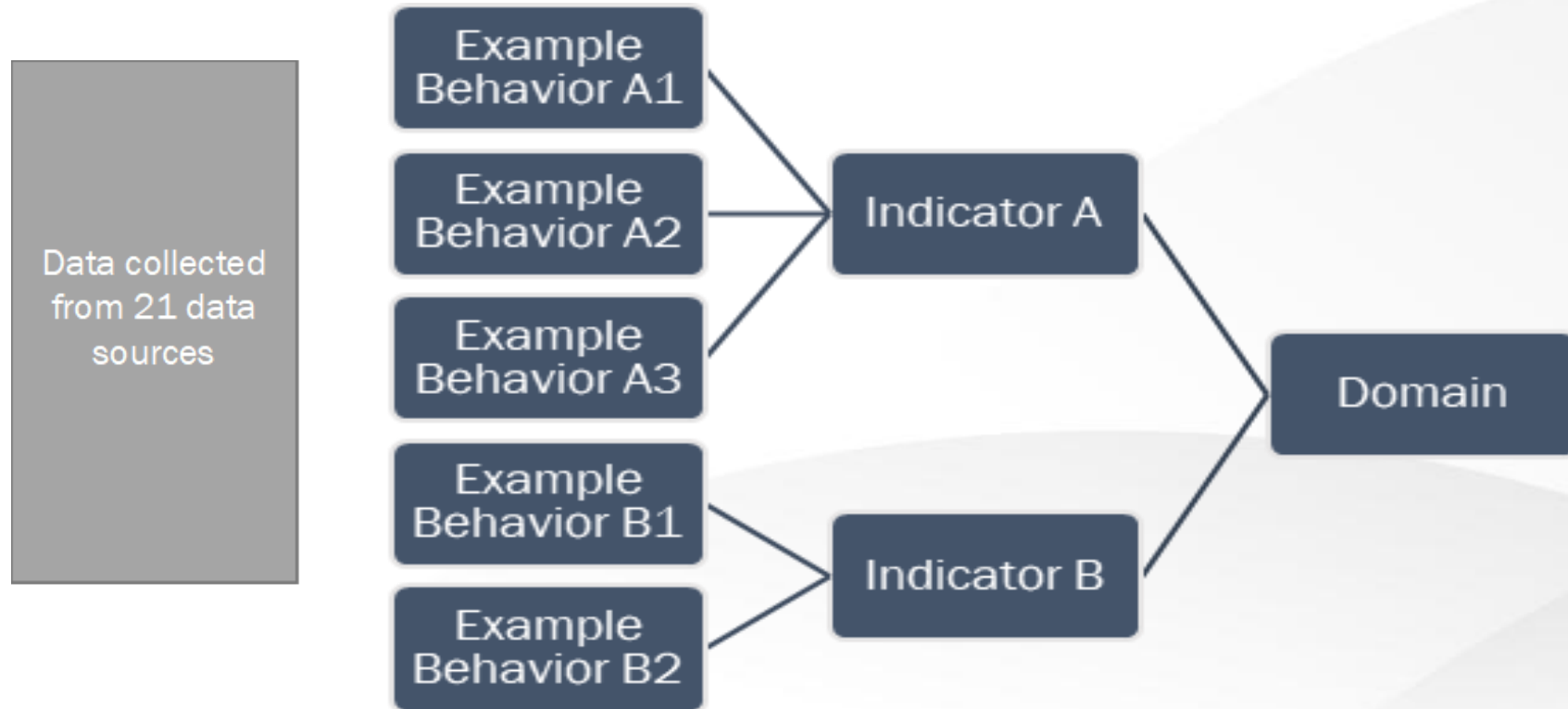
Domains

Activities: The acts and actions of a prisoner and how s/he responds to prison activities

Emotions: The types of feelings a prisoner expresses, how s/he expresses these, and who these feelings are towards

Appearance: How a prisoner looks and presents him/herself in his/her day-to-day lives

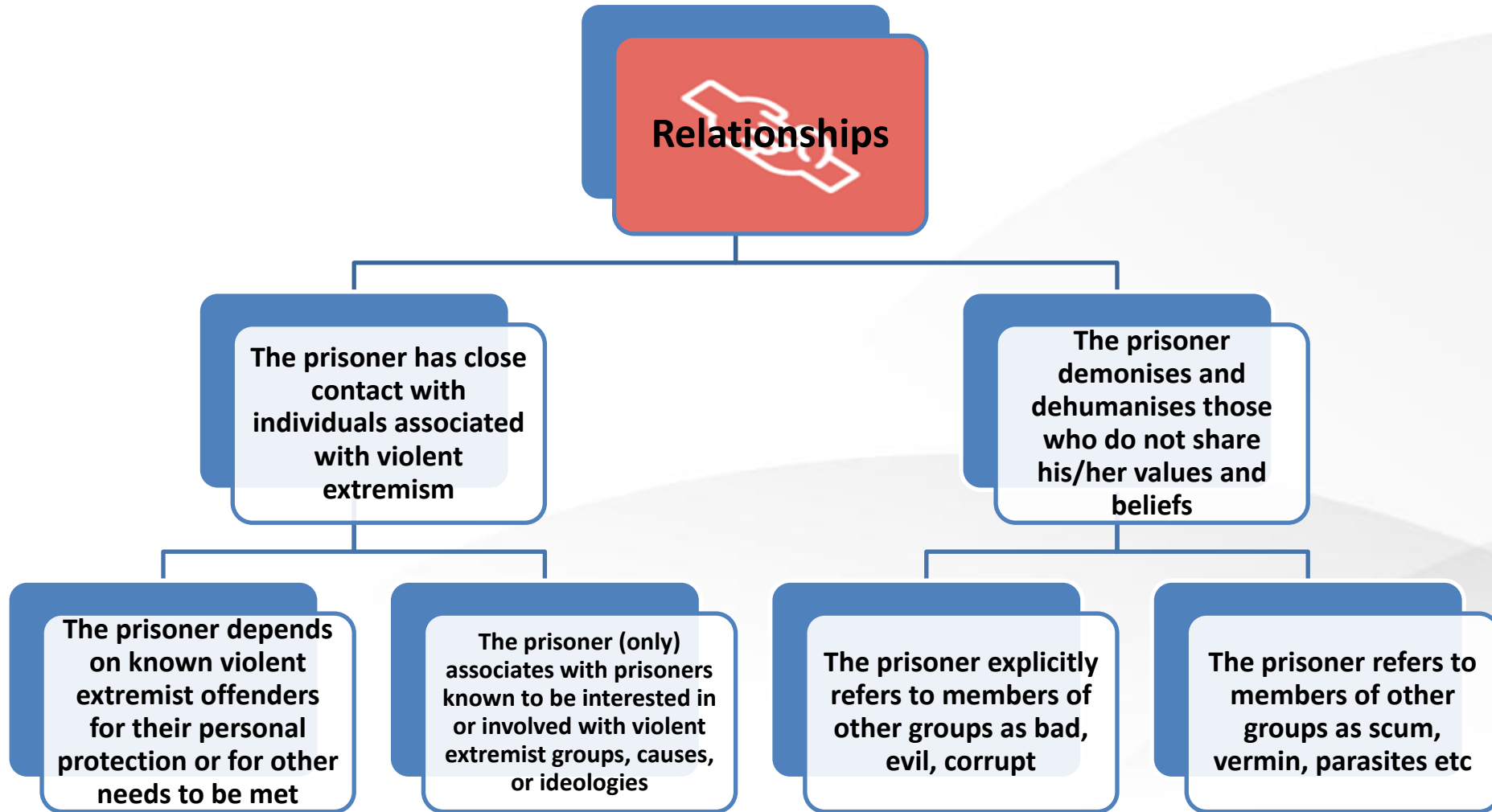**Attitudes**: The type of attitudes and beliefs a prisoner expresses, including those that support violent extremism

Relationships: Who a prisoner has relationships with and how s/he relates to others

Communications: What is a prisoner communicating, how is s/he communicating, and with whom

Example Indicators and Behavioural Manifestations

Relationships

The prisoner has close contact with individuals associated with violent extremism

The prisoner demonises and dehumanises those who do not share his/her values and beliefs

The prisoner depends on known violent extremist offenders for their personal protection or for other needs to be met

The prisoner (only) associates with prisoners known to be interested in or involved with violent extremist groups, causes, or ideologies

The prisoner explicitly refers to members of other groups as bad, evil, corrupt

The prisoner refers to members of other groups as scum, vermin, parasites etc

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4. Peer Review

- The first version consisted of 54 indicators in 11 different domains

- This iteration was peer-reviewed by 2 independent, external subject matter experts – a psychologist and corrections professional

- They were asked to comment on several specific components, including possible re-wording of indicators (to better capture their essence) and whether indicators should be placed in alternative domains

- In addition they considered optimising the number of clusters/indicators to ensure all distinctive and significant indicators were included while keeping the number of indicators manageable for prison staff

- PRAG Version 2 included 34 indicators across 7 different domains

Development: 5. Testing

1. Data Collection
2. Content Analysis & Coding
3. Cluster Analysis
4. Peer Review
5. Testing

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5. Testing

- The tool was also presented to frontline prison staff (the end users of the research) in Southeast Asia and North Africa.

- Feedback received to improve the PRAG therefore also came from frontline prison staff themselves.

- This also contributed to the editing of the guide to ensure that it was usable and practical to frontline staff.

- Following this, the PRAG was further refined in-light of: 1) an additional literature search and 2) Additional data sources made available to the Global Center

- The latest PRAG (Version 3) includes 25 indicators across 6 domains – not including 5 resilience indicators - developed from 33 data sources

5. Testing

- PRAG has been well received by front-line staff and prison managers in African and Asian prison services

- It has been seen as accessible and valid within these cultures and appropriate regardless of the groups, causes or ideologies associated with violent extremism

- PRAG at the level of domains and indicators can be used as a framework to identify and accommodate locally relevant behavioural manifestations

- Particularly helpful in raising awareness about domains that staff may neglect through personal biases

- It has helped to strengthen staff confidence in factors they were already vigilant of as well as raise awareness of those they may not have considered but see as significant

- It has been apparent how many overlaps are identified in indicators across cultures and jurisdictions, suggesting there are far more similarities than differences in factors

Methodological Limitations

- Lack of empirical research in the field of radicalisation studies and CVE (emphasis on anecdotal evidence)

- Sources differed in terms of how they define and conceptualize radicalisation, extremism, violent extremism, terrorism etc

- Academic sources are primarily based on Western prison services

- Many sources and indicators cited are recycled in publications: certain indicators may appear more prominent/significant than they actually are

- Sophisticated criteria were not applied to decide whether behaviours were included or excluded or to weight the significance of behaviours identified in data sources

- Potential for bias in how information was selected, analysed, and interpreted to translate source information into an accessible, practical aid.

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Mitigating Limitations and Challenges

- Embedded in training packages (will not be provided as a standalone product)

- Emphasis placed on not neglecting behaviour in domains rather than on the detail of specific behavioural manifestations

- Recognition of resilience factors

- PRAG exclusively focuses on behaviour which may indicate potential radicalisation to *violent extremism*

- No weighting of indicators or example behaviours

- Clear communication of caveats

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Example Caveats

- Not intended to be used as a **risk assessment, screening tool, or tick-list**

- Indicators **do not prove** that someone is radicalised to violent extremism and should be treated cautiously

- Indicators **may occur for different reasons**; it cannot be assumed that they are always indicators of radicalisation to violent extremism

- Some indicators and example behaviours **may not be relevant** in some prisons services, and staff must consider their local environment carefully

Future Directions

- By its very nature, PRAG is an evolving, collaborative effort with both strengths and limitations in both its methodology and practical application

- The goal is to review and update the PRAG in light of new evidence

- We intend to publish a paper on the PRAG in May 2018 on the Global Center on Cooperative Security's website.

- In future, we will 1) invite feedback and involve more experts in peer-reviewing the PRAG and 2) continue to test out the utility, validity, and credibility of this tool in more prison services

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Questions & Contact Information

Any Questions?

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