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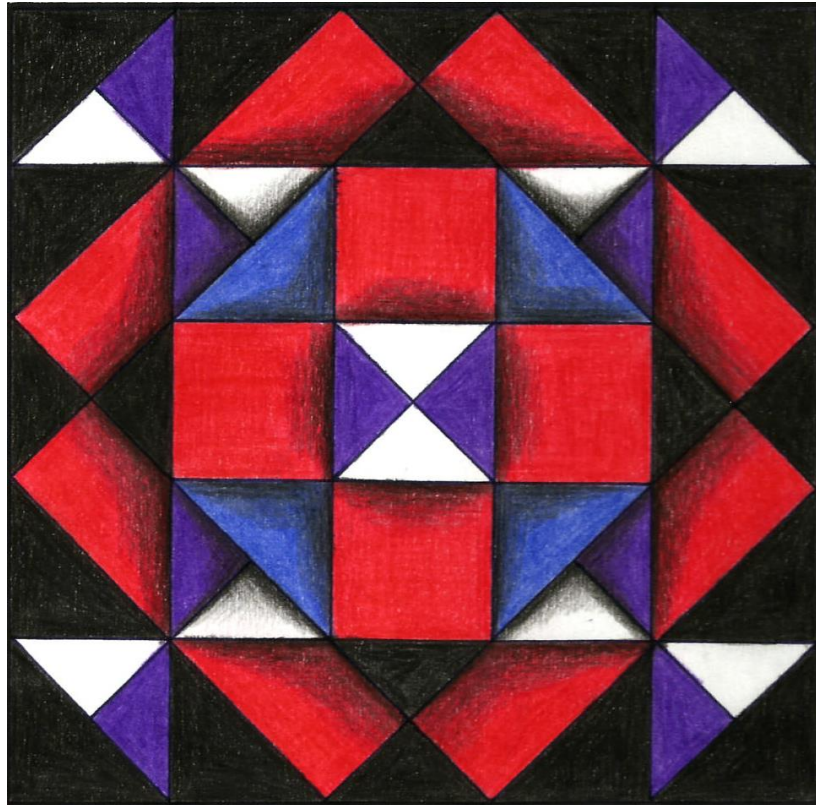


Image: Estefania Quintero

Report

## **Gender dynamics in violent extremism**

Sunday 25 – Wednesday 28 November 2018 | WP1630

In association with:

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## Report

# Gender dynamics in violent extremism

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### Introduction

Wilton Park, the UK Foreign Office and UN Women hosted an experts group meeting in November 2018 to explore gender dynamics in violent extremism. The meeting recognised the need for integrating a nuanced gender analysis into global, regional and national work to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE). In calling for this, experts acknowledged the progress made in integrating gender considerations into the discourse on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism over the last 10 years; as one gender and CT practitioner put it, ‘many say this [gender in violent extremism] is a box-ticking exercise, but this box wasn’t there 5 years ago; now there is a gender expert in security agencies and the discussions are becoming more frequent and more sophisticated.’ The meeting provided a space to debate tensions in the field of gender and PVE, and to develop concrete ways of addressing this agenda – to both ensure greater effectiveness in PVE interventions, and to protect the space and actions of women’s rights actors.

This report summarizes the key arguments, challenges and at times, tensions, shared by participants during the meeting. It begins by presenting an overview of the gender dimensions of violent extremism. It then sets out the issues debated during the experts group meeting, highlighting points of tension. The report concludes with recommendations from the participants on how to better integrate a gender perspective into the work of practitioners and policy makers engaged to prevent violent extremism.

### Gender and violent extremism: an overview

1. Violent extremism has had a significant impact on individuals, communities and institutions around the world, with more than 18,814, deaths caused by violent extremist groups in 2018.<sup>1</sup> While this marks a 27% decrease from 2017<sup>2</sup>, largely due to successful operations against ISIL in Iraq and Syria, the challenges posed by these groups remain of serious collective concern. As a result, counter terrorism financing continues to increase, alongside increased surveillance, policies and programmes. While often overlooked, women and girls are affected by the phenomenon in unique and differential ways impacted by context – through specific forms of physical violence (for example, sexual slavery), limited opportunities for socio-economic development and restricted participation in political and public life as a result of

<sup>1</sup> Global Terrorism Index 2018. <http://economicsandpeace.org/reports/>

<sup>2</sup> ibid

increasing conservatism in communities affected by violent extremism. Moreover, women's rights groups and defenders are increasingly finding themselves subject to counter-terrorism measures and laws, resulting in a shrinking space for action on key gender equality objectives.

2. National governments and the international community are struggling to adequately address the challenges posed by the rise and proliferation of violent extremist groups. Part of the challenge is the knowledge gap in what drives people to join or support these groups, including in understanding the interlinkages between gender, masculinities, insecurity, terrorism and violent extremism, given the powerful and evocative roles that women's rights and gender equality play in politics and social dynamics globally. Moreover, the positive causal relationship between women's engagement in conflict prevention and lasting peace also makes it important to better understand their current and potential roles in preventing and addressing terrorism and violent extremism.<sup>3</sup>
3. While violent extremism continues to be marked by individual and isolated terrorist acts, increasingly groups are seeking to ground their violence on an ability to govern, deliver services and control territory. Despite the diminished threat of ISIL in Iraq and Syria, militant groups continue to lure fighters and supporters, including women and girls, both domestically and globally with sophisticated social media campaigns, and promises of meaningful employment as well as religious fulfilment. This has been facilitated by weak governance institutions, ongoing conflicts, cross border ethnic and cultural ties, globalized financial and commercial networks, and new communication and information technology platforms.
4. Within this context, the use of sexual and gender-based violence has been and continues to be an explicit tactic of extremist militant groups – both as a recruitment tool, a tool of governance, and a tool to break down cultural and social groups or communities.<sup>4</sup> In the MENA region, Yezidi, Christian and Sunni women and girls living under ISIL occupation also endured forced and coerced marriages, in which rape was used as a weapon of punishment for disobeying ISIL rules.<sup>5</sup> The liberation of Mosul, Tall Afar and other areas from the control of ISIL in 2017 marked a major milestone for Iraq and the region. According to the UN 2018 report on Conflict-related Sexual Violence, 'overall, as at November 2017, 3,202 civilians (1,135 women, 903 girls, 335 men and 829 boys) had been released from ISIL captivity, while a further 3,215 (1,510 women and girls and 1,705 men and boys) remain missing'.<sup>6</sup> The 2018 report of the International Commission of Inquiry in Syria detailed conflict-related sexual violence committed by armed groups, including terrorist groups such as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and reiterates that women and girls are the most impacted by terrorist groups.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in Northern Nigeria, Boko Haram have used sexual violence as a

<sup>3</sup> UN Women, 2016, Global Study on the Implementation UN SCr 1325, <http://wps.unwomen.org/~media/files/un%20women/wps/highlights/unw-global-study-1325-2015.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> UN Women, 2018, Empowerment or Subjugation: An Analysis of ISIL's Gender Messaging. Available at: <http://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/6/empowerment-or-subjugation>

<sup>5</sup> UN Secretary General Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, 2018. Available at : <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/report/s-2018-250/SG-REPORT-2017-CRSV-SPREAD.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syria Arab Republic A/HRC/39/65. Available at : <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IICI/Syria/Pages/IndependentInternationalCommission.aspx>

tactic to control women, and as a recruitment and retention tool.<sup>8</sup>

5. At the same time, societies tend to view women and children formerly associated with violent extremist groups as 'affiliates' rather than victims, and, in some cases, actions by the authorities have reinforced those suspicions. Local-level officials in Iraq have reportedly designated children as 'Da'esh terrorists' on their birth certificates, and, in Libya, Nigeria and Somalia, returning women and girls have been detained as 'accomplices'. Fear of reprisals has driven renewed displacement, with some women survivors relocating to escape abuse by their own family and community.<sup>9</sup>
6. This targeted violence against the rights of women and girls – physical, social and structural - is receiving increasing global attention. The Secretary General's 2015 report on conflict-related sexual violence highlighted the use of sexual violence as integrally linked with the strategic objectives, ideology and funding of terrorist groups.<sup>10</sup> In 2016, UN Security Council Resolution 2331 recognized the potential linkages between sexual violence in conflict, human trafficking and financing of terrorism. A link which was further highlighted by the UN 2018 report on Conflict-related Sexual Violence, noting that: 'armed, terrorist and transnational criminal groups directly profit from trafficking, with victims being either abducted or deceived by false promises of lucrative job offers, their dreams of finding safety and opportunity becoming nightmares of sexual slavery and forced prostitution'.<sup>11</sup>
7. Follow up reports have documented such violations, and have called for Member States, donors, regional and intergovernmental organizations to ensure that victims of sexual violence perpetrated by terrorist groups are recognized as legitimate victims of conflict and/or terrorism, in order to benefit from reparations and redress.
8. At the same time, there is a growing understanding of the impact of violent masculinities on men's willingness and drive to join violent extremist groups. While factors such as economics are often identified as drivers of recruitment,<sup>12</sup> a growing body of work<sup>13</sup> suggests that the appeal of these groups is in part derived from a desire of men to demonstrate their 'manhood' – that joining is seen as a social duty – brought upon them by the fact that they are 'men'. Violent extremist groups exploit these gender stereotypes and play on grievances related to unmet expectations, and social and cultural expectations on men to fulfil certain roles, in their appeals to men to join. Moreover, they exploit women's willingness to join and support them as a means of shaming men into joining.

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch, 2014. *Those Weeks in their Terrible Camp, Boko Harm Violence Against Women and Girls in Northern Nigeria*.

<sup>9</sup> UN Secretary General Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, 2018. Available at : <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/report/s-2018-250/SG-REPORT-2017-CRSV-SPREAD.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, Security Council, *Conflict related sexual violence: report of the Secretary-General, S/2015/203* (23 March 2015), para 83. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/081/36/PDF/N1508136.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/report/s-2018-250/SG-REPORT-2017-CRSV-SPREAD.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> The World Bank, 2016, *Economic and Social Inclusion Helps Prevent Violent Extremism and Contribute to Growth in the Middle East and North Africa*, available at

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/10/05/economic-and-social-inclusion-helps-prevent-violent-extremism-and-contribute-to-growth-in-mena>

<sup>13</sup> For example, <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Gender-Analysis-Women-Leadership/Features/Seminar-on-Transforming-Violent-Masculinities>

9. This past year has seen a significant shift in the way ISIS sees the role of women. Since its creation, ISIS has prohibited women from fighting on the battlefield, encouraging them to marry fighters, spread propaganda and bear and indoctrinate children to populate the Caliphate. Female jihad could only occur in cases of self-defence. However, in the October 2017 issue of its online propaganda magazine Rumiayah, ISIS called on women to take up arms, claiming it was an 'obligation' for women to wage militant jihad. The damage caused by ISIS was always expected to last longer than the caliphate itself, and in Asia, the group's impact already seems to have been to expand and transform local extremist movements. In Indonesia, for example, local Islamist extremists still go after the same targets: religious minorities and law enforcement. But their tactics have shifted: now women and children are participating in suicide attacks.<sup>14</sup> The Surabaya attacks in May were the first time that the world has seen parents taking their children on the pretence of a family outing with the intent of carrying out an attack. Other families have attempted to carry out similar attacks.<sup>15</sup> The alleged involvement of an Indonesian couple in the January 2019 suicide bombings at Jolo Cathedral, in Mindanao, southern Philippines<sup>16</sup> which killed at least 23 people and saw ISIS claim responsibility, has confirmed a number of worrying trends - firstly, that ISIS's reach and involvement in southern Philippines remains. The attacks show the direct linkages between ISIS and the local insurgency, supporting its strategic aim of establishing a more substantial base in the Philippines. Despite the loss of territory in the Middle East, it is clear that the 'ISIS brand' still holds strong in the region. Secondly, that foreign terrorist fighters are still present and travelling to the area, bringing new attack capabilities and tactics. And lastly, that ISIS's use of female suicide bombers to thwart security protocols – first used in Iraq and most recently Indonesia – has spread to Asia.

## **The discussion: summarising the debate**

### **Operational effectiveness and human rights: balancing priorities**

10. As experts presented evidence around the relationship between gender issues and violent extremism, there was broad-based consensus as to the importance of a gender lens in efforts to address violent extremism. However, tension arose around a perceived trade-off between short term strategies to counter-terrorism and longer-term strategies that aim to prevent violent extremism. Debate between the 'hard' and 'soft' ends of combatting radicalisation is not new and manifested itself throughout the meeting. Gender issues were cited by some as secondary to operational effectiveness. Examples of potential backlash effects when ensuring gender equality in programming were given, from communities punishing women for acting 'inappropriately', to a perceived lack of authority of female judges presiding over legal cases against alleged terrorists. It was felt by some that gender equality cannot and should not always be prioritised.
11. This was countered by evidence around a growing recognition that addressing gender issues in PVE work has the potential to increase operational effectiveness, making the perceived tension between balancing gender considerations and operational effectiveness a false dichotomy. As one example of this recognition, the UK

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/surabaya-bombings-islamic-state-sidney-jones-10238872>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.radarbanten.co.id/densus-88-antiteror-amankan-satu-keluarga-di-lebak/>;  
<http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2018/07/06/mabes-polri-sebut-pemilik-bom-bondet-di-pasuruan-berbaiat-ke-isis>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/222063-islamic-state-group-claims-suicide-bombing-of-jolo-cathedral-site>

government's counter terrorism strategy, PREVENT,<sup>17</sup> aims to 'maximize operational effectiveness by paying attention to different gender roles'. Many speakers noted that the failure to respect and promote human rights, including gender equality, in PVE approaches increases the risks of radicalisation in the long-term by exacerbating governance related grievances.

12. A discussion centred around tensions between short and the long-term approaches. The question, 'When is the promotion of gender equality not appropriate?' – was asked: to which actors emphasised that there is no such thing as 'gender neutral' and therefore saying 'promoting gender equality is not appropriate' is equivalent to saying, 'gender discrimination is acceptable.'
13. These tensions uncovered the need for better preparation for understanding between sectors in order to minimise the misunderstandings which obscured the debate. One participant commented: 'The CT space came about as a very isolated space shielded from peace-building and broader conflict analysis. It is seen as an isolated issue, militarized.' As someone noted in a break-out session: 'It is not about disengaging on CT but engaging better and through different channels.' Others found the emphasis on CT over PVE, jarring.

### **Correlation between 'personal' violence and violent extremist groups**

14. 'One common factor across attacks is violence against women'; experts discussed evidence around women joining violent extremist groups to escape from bad marriages. 'Gender-based violence is one of the factors behind women joining violent extremist groups.' Research presented from Indonesia demonstrated a link between violence against women and those participating in violent extremist groups. That is, for both males (as perpetrators) and females (as victims of gender-based violence), there is a link between this violence and engagement in violent extremism. To this end, it was noted that the women, peace and security agenda provides a critical framework for understanding and responding to terrorism and violent extremism. Founded on the principle that peace is inextricably linked to equality between men and women, the agenda highlights how violence, including extremist violence, is underpinned by gender inequality. If stakeholders do not recognize or engage with the gendered underpinnings of extremist violence, their ability to respond effectively will also be hampered.
15. Another valuable point was provided by youth surveyed in the 2018 Youth, Peace and Security report. It was noted that by prioritising violent extremism, governments were marginalising other violence in in society such as domestic, gang-based, criminal, or perpetrated by the state in one form or another, all of which have a far-reaching impact on the lives of people and can exacerbate recruitment into violent extremist groups. This leads directly to a familiar criticism of P/CVE which is stigmatisation of the target populations of programming; participants report being seen as somewhere on the spectrum of 'terrorist' with a focus on young men as potential spoilers. For these youth, P/CVE programmes that focus on young men are both stigmatising and reinforcing gender inequality and stereotypes. These approaches frame youth as a risk rather than resources for peace.

### **Gender specific impacts of CT and PVE policies and programmes**

16. The group agreed that counter-terrorism measures have gendered collateral effects that are often neither acknowledged nor compensated. As examples, counter terrorism financing laws often result in restricted operating space for women's rights actors and their organisations. Surveys with women peacebuilders document a range of negative impacts of these laws, including difficulties in making money transfers to

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-announces-new-counter-terrorism-strategy>

partners.<sup>18</sup> Instead, women use riskier means such as carrying money by hand to conflict areas or using underground banking. Moreover, forced disappearances of male detainees in the name of countering terrorism negatively impact female family members who bear the burden of harassment, social exclusion and economic hardship caused by the loss of the breadwinner in contexts of pre-existing gender inequalities. This includes an inability to access bank accounts that were in their husband's name, obtaining identification documents, and claiming inheritance including land. Similar effects ensue from the prolonged detention without trial, and forced deportation and disappearance of male family members, and the practice of extraordinary rendition. Women and children are also unlawfully detained and ill-treated to either gain information about male family members or to compel male terrorism suspects to provide information or confessions.<sup>19</sup>

17. The risks related to integrating women into security-based counter terrorism solutions and interventions were highlighted. Lessons from contexts in which counter terrorism efforts have sought to explicitly engage women indicate that this strategy can heighten their insecurity and re-entrench gender stereotypes.<sup>20</sup> The example of prioritising women's role as mothers in monitoring the behaviour of family members was highlighted as a practice that both prioritises women's roles as mothers and calls on women to serve as informants – potentially damaging family relations and putting them at risk due to association with a government's counter terrorism strategy.<sup>21</sup> As many experts put forward, the risk of instrumentalization of women exists. Ensuring women are in the driver's seat in the design and implementation of programmes is essential to limit these risks. Transparency between the donor and implementing partners is also necessary to ensure women's rights are not securitized and the impact of the programme enhances women's rights, rather than it being a means to an end.

## Language and definitional challenges

18. As with other forums that focus on issues of PVE, there was an ongoing debate throughout the meeting on definitions of 'terrorism' and 'violent extremism'. This lack of a consensus definition has contributed in part to negative human rights impacts. For example, there is concern that states are using the label of 'counter terrorism' to quell legitimate dissent and delegitimize opponents.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, privileging counter terrorism outcomes can lead some states to deprioritize efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights, or other human rights. For these reasons, it was emphasised that women on the ground tend to prefer terms to do with social cohesion, tolerance and resilience when approaching issues of violent extremism.

<sup>18</sup> See Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017)

<sup>19</sup> See UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, *General Comment on Women*, at 2

<sup>20</sup> Jayne Huckerby, 'Women and Preventing Violent Extremism: The U.S. and U.K. Experiences,' Briefing Paper (NYU Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, 2012), 13. See Vasuki Nesiha, 'Feminism as Counter-Terrorism: The Seduction of Power,' in *Gender, National Security, and Counter-Terrorism: Human Rights Perspectives*, ed. Margaret L. Satterthwaite and Jane Huckerby, Human Rights Perspectives (Routledge, 2013), 127–51.

<sup>21</sup> Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, 'Jihad, Counter-Terrorism and Mothers', 4 March 2015, available at <https://www.justsecurity.org/20407/jihad-counter-terrorism-mothers/>

<sup>22</sup> See Report of the Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism, 6 August 2002, A/57/273-S/2002/875, para 14; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism, September 18, 2015.

19. Another term discussed was that of Foreign Terrorist Fighter: in this characterisation, given the predominance of men in combat roles, women tend to be cast in the role of 'family', reinforcing gender stereotyping, denying the agency and influence of women. This minimises the ability to understand different roles and motivations and subsequently hampers the design and effectiveness of programmes.
20. Despite inspiring stories of strategic counter-narratives and communication tools shared at the conference, from pro-social behaviour programmes for children to the use of comedy and comedians to combat radicalisation, there was a general agreement that counter-narratives are not sufficient on their own: 'People aren't radicalised because they hear bad things but because they experience bad things, therefore counter narratives alone can't work'; or 'often those who have experienced violence and trauma go on to perpetrate it; counter-narratives struggle to address these experiences.'
21. It was noted that masculinity remains under-discussed in this space despite the fact that traditional masculine (and feminine) norms are often utilised in recruitment narratives of violent extremism, from Islamism to the far right. This is an example where there is tension within terms such as gender: if an understanding of how 'masculinity' is used is lacking, or a discussion of traditional femininities, or uncovering the power dynamics, we will be using the term at odds with each other. Even in official documents with clear definitions of gender (as dynamic relationships between all genders) the terminology can and does slip to 'women'.
22. All the above speaks to the requirement of research and knowledge at the very local level within communities, to understand how terms are being used and understood, what the perception of programming and programmers are, and how participants feel they are being seen, along with grievances connected with all these perceptions. A familiar criticism from the group was the expansion of successful programming from one part of the world to another without due consideration for local specifics; it was also noted that when research is commissioned to understand the local context it can be superficial, a box-ticking exercise designed to support programmes which are already prepared. It was agreed that there can be great success with national and regional approaches, and it is important to be able to distil lessons learnt in one place in order to develop action in another, but there should be space for subsequent programming to be localised.

## Recommendations

One of the key takeaways from the meeting was the request to develop principles to guide country engagement to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective into all efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, in a similar vein to the Secretary General's seven-point action plan on gender responsive peacebuilding. Specific recommendations noted below should inform the drafting of these principles.

### **I. The integration of gender into PVE policy and programming requires integrating gender into the work of CT bodies and frameworks (they should not be viewed separately)**

One of the recurring conversations during the meeting was around the fact that PVE policy and programming is developed by national level ministries and bodies that are mandated to deal with counter terrorism. As such, if counter terrorism units and policies are gender blind, and fail to adequately take into account gender dynamics, we cannot expect PVE policies to perform gendered miracles. Another key concern is equating gender with women and failing to engage with the gender dynamics that shape – or fail to shape – policies and programmes. In order to address this gap, a number of recommendations were made that attempt to breakdown silos of those working in CT, C/PVE and WPS.



- Engage in security sector reform with counter terrorism units to increase gender and human rights awareness. These trainings can serve as tools to educate forces on the impact of human rights violations in driving terrorism and violent extremism. They can also sensitize male dominated institutions on the necessity of attention to gender and women's inclusion for the effectiveness of their operations.
- Training for the CT/intelligence community on how to integrate gender into risk analysis.
- Increase the number of gender advisors in CT as well as CVE/PVE spaces.
- Set specific targets and implement policies for the improved recruitment, retention and promotion of women in security institutions, including counter terrorism units and policing, and at senior levels.
- Ensure a minimum of 15 percent of all funds to counter violent extremism are allocated for projects whose principal objective is to address women's needs or empower women, in line with the Secretary General's 2015 report on women, peace and security.
- Ensure that measures to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism do no harm to women and girls' rights and that all programming is preceded by a gender-sensitive security risk assessment. This includes consultations with women and women's civil society groups and the application of UN human rights norms and standards.
- Facilitate regional government and CSO dialogues on topics including rehabilitation and reintegration and intelligence gathering to build trust and develop operational guidelines on how to work together. Regional spaces may provide more neutral forums for governments reticent to work with CSOs.
- Facilitate research dialogues between traditional C/PVE and WPS practitioners, intelligence and security actors, security focused think tanks (e.g. RAND group) and CSOs to expand the reach of gender sensitive research and ensure gender issues are brought before the security and intelligence communities.
- A gender lens needs to be applied to PVE/CVE programming targeting youth as both young men and young women can respectively promote VE or prevent VE, as gender blind programming for youth risks deepening gender inequalities if young men or young women are depicted and engaged through gender stereotypical roles (for example: young women seen as peaceful and naïve, young men seen as potential spoilers ; or, employment programmes focused on young men and not including young women equally).
- Ensure that measures to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism do no harm to women and girls' rights and that all programming is preceded by a gender-sensitive security risk assessment. This includes consultations with women and women's civil society groups and the application of UN human rights norms and standards.

## **II. Developing Effective Counter/ Alternative Narratives**

Violent extremist groups are using gender stereotypes to recruit both women and men to their causes. They offer up idealized visions of masculinity premised on power, violence and control - and of femininity, premised on their roles as caretakers and secondary sources of support. Initiatives to provide alternative messages, to challenge and delegitimize extremist narratives have also included an important gender dimension. Stories of grief, loss, courage, and love shared by and about women challenge the message of these groups. In particular, they challenge the idea that these groups seek to provide protection, safety, and support by exposing the very different reality. Indeed, in the same way violent extremists have made effective use of media to advance their aims, media channels can be used to promote messages on gender equality, respect for human rights and the rule of law, good governance and the value of peace. It is critical that we develop a narrative for what we are for – not just for what we are against. The urgency of our efforts to invest in these narratives and their broad dissemination, building secure lives and communities could not be clearer.

- Need for sharing of good practices and lessons learnt regarding the impact of strategic communications in countering violent extremist narratives.
- Need for a global media approach and a digital strategy of engagement to tackle this challenge.
- Engage successful business leaders/ businesses on how they are reaching young men and women and their marketing strategies to see if/how it can be applied to strategic communications.
- Facilitate/ create more spaces for exchange and discussions between the private sector and technology companies (including social media), CSOs and researchers to address gender-specific language, messaging and communication mediums.

## **III. Strengthening Civil Society Participation**

Integrating a gender perspective requires promoting the participation and leadership of women and women's civil society organizations in processes that design and implement strategies to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism. This is a human right, which is indispensable to the operational effectiveness of prevention and response efforts. Excluding women and women's civil society organizations from the processes where relevant policies are discussed and developed leads to gaps on how such policies affect their rights.

- Ensure women's civil society organizations working to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism and provide essential services receive sufficient, long term and flexible funding and technical support, including on grant management and monitoring and evaluation.
- Increase dialogue initiatives with CSOs to understand structural problems in funding and how/ whether it impacts on implementation effectiveness.
- Engage CSOs in intergovernmental bodies to ensure their work on gender is fully integrated

## **IV. Gender Sensitive Repatriation and Reintegration**

The issue of how to integrate a gender perspective in the area of repatriation and reintegration of foreign fighters was highlighted as one of urgency, particularly in light of the recent reports that up to 13% of foreign fighters are women.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-Daesh-to-%E2%80%98Diaspora%E2%80%99-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-of-Islamic-State.pdf>

- Increased transparency by governments on repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Very little information is available on what programming exists and what impact it is having.
- Facilitation of regional/ national dialogues with CT, C/PVE and WPS stakeholders focusing specifically on this issue to share knowledge and discuss good practices.

## V. Addressing Key Research Gaps

Participants highlighted the need for further research to ensure more local and tailored responses, including exploring the following questions:

- How do gender issues differentially affect recruitment of youth? How do youth differentially perceive and combat problems in their communities including violent extremism?
- How do gender norms vary across VE groups, and how are they utilized differently (especially looking at power dynamics and how these groups manipulate masculinity and femininity to radicalize and recruit)? Where are there similarities and when does the language obscure differences (such as 'toxic masculinity' employed to cover very different realities)?
- What is the difference between women who join VE movements and those from similar or indeed identical backgrounds who don't?
- How does society perceive rehabilitation and integration? How does a gender lens influence this type of research?
- Developing models for better and more transparent M&E; how do we manage sharing of best and worst practice without implications for implementers? How do we develop and disseminate robust evaluation tools?
- What is the role of religion in promoting gender norms and how do governments deal in general with spirituality or specific religions as part of a PVE strategy?

### Lydia Wilson

Wilton Park | March 2019

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