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Anne Speckhard, Ph.D.

WOMEN IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM



A TRAINING MANUAL

WOMEN IN PREVENTING

AND COUNTERING

VIOLENT EXTREMISM



UN WOMEN

IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



FOREWORDS

In recent years, violent extremist activities have escalated dramatically. Around the world, such groups increasingly target women and women's rights. Using sexual and gender-based violence, they terrorize communities and destroy the social fabric.

Governance deficiencies and structural gender inequalities feed the root causes of violent extremism – and exacerbate vulnerability to it. Different UN Security Council resolutions have recognized that violent extremism has gendered dimensions. These lead to varying consequences for women and girls, men and boys.

Women are frequently seen only as victims of violent extremism. But in reality, women play multiple roles, they are on the frontlines of prevention and response. They lead civil society organizations and bolster community resilience. Promoting women as agents of peace recognizes their contributions to peacebuilding and prevention of violence and upholds respect for the human rights of everyone in areas afflicted by violent extremism.

Gender-responsive approaches to preventing violent extremism address the different needs and experiences of women and men. Such efforts can help States realize their international human rights commitments and provide effective services to citizens. Reducing gender inequality overall underpins greater community resilience, and the prevention of conflict and violent extremism.

UN Women's work shows that supporting women's empowerment, including economically and in post-conflict recovery planning and development, delivers positive results for women and communities. Yet women's participation in decision-making and security-related processes remain limited or absent. UN Women strives to ensure that measures to prevent violent extremism are more inclusive, and better reflect women's needs, agency, and leadership.

This training manual is designed for all local stakeholders working to prevent violence and violent extremism in their communities. It aims to strengthen understanding of the gender dimensions of violent extremist narratives, activity and mobilization, and may be helpful for local authorities and government officials, civil society, staff of UN agencies, and international and regional organizations. By advancing gender-responsive initiatives tailored to local needs, it seeks to restore societies that are just and peaceful for all.

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This publication serves as guidance for actors involved in the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) in Europe and Central Asia including state officials, members of non-governmental organizations, community activists, staff of UN agencies, international and regional organizations to help them understand violent extremism's gender dimensions. It is designed as a training guide, for staff and trainers who are working with different counterparts engaged in P/CVE, and want to help create more effective and gender-sensitive responses. Participants may for example include civil society activists, women leaders, teachers, journalists, lawyers, social workers, religious authorities, youth, police, local and national governmental officials.

The five modules in this guide include learning objectives, explanatory text, warm-up activities, practical exercises, references for further reading and empirical experiences from the region of Europe and Central Asia. Modules may be used all together or one-by-one. The ideal timeframe for delivering the training using all the modules is at least two and a half days (half day per unit). The training is suitable for groups of five

to twenty-five people. When organizing the workshop consider gender, age and diversity factors to have the richest learning experience possible. Participants should feel that they are in a safe space where they can openly share their ideas and experiences. Needed materials are indicated for the different exercises.

As the guide is aimed at increasing the awareness of persons with different levels of sensitivity and knowledge on violent extremism and gender equality, across Europe and Central Asia, it is an introduction which readers should complement with other resources for deeper and more technical insights. The training should also be tailored to the participants' interests and needs and to the local context.

GLOSSARY

Counter-radicalisation:	Preventative measures with a focus on prevention, deradicalisation, and disengagement from engaging in violent extremism and terrorism. ¹ Such measures extend to communities targeted by terrorists and violent extremists for recruitment. ²
Counter-terrorism:	Safety and security measures aimed at targeting terrorists directly. ³
Countering Violent Extremism (CVE):	Laws, policies, programmes, and interventions designed to counter the threat posed by groups or individuals, such as IS or al Qaeda, from engaging in ideologically motivated violence. CVE primarily employs preventative methods such as counter-messaging, rehabilitation of former violent extremists, and providing incentives or mentoring for radicalised individuals not to join violent extremist groups. Targeting these areas should be given priority over intelligence, law enforcement, and military means. ⁴
Deradicalisation:	Safety and security measures aimed at changing the mindset and ideological beliefs of those already radicalised and thereby disengaging them from potentially engaging in violent behaviors. ⁵
Disengagement:	Safety and security measures aimed at altering the behavior of those already radicalised to exit from violent extremist groups and individuals and refrain from violent extremist behaviors without necessarily addressing or changing their core beliefs. ⁶
Extremism:	A strict adherence to a set of narratives or belief systems, usually political or religious, that constitute assaults on mainstream values, orientations and principles of the dominant society.
Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF):	“Individuals who travel to a state other than their state of residence...for the purpose of the perpetration, planning or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.” ⁷
Gender Based Violence (GBV):	Any act of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or institutional violence that is directed at an individual or group of individuals based on their biological sex or gender identity. It generally involves unequal power relationships.
The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE):	ICSVE is a non-profit organisation focused on research and creating counter narrative materials from in-depth interviews of actual terrorist members denouncing their extremist Islamic groups, brutal and corrupt. These materials, including video clips are used by ICSVE to disrupt, prevent and intervene in face-to-face and online recruitment into militant jihadi terrorism.
The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)	Is a violent militant jihadi group that formed an unrecognized proto-state after taking over large parts of Syria and Iraq. Other terms that are used to describe this group include Islamic State (IS), ISIL and Daesh.
Islamism:	Islamism is a complex phenomenon with multiple definitions and is sometimes seen as totalitarian in its aim. “Like other political doctrines, Islamism, in its contemporary shape, is an ‘ideology’, a ‘movement-organisation’ and a ‘form of government’” often with the goals of creating a shariah-law-governed society and of restoring Islamic might in pursuance of which violence is not always rejected. ⁸ Political and religious Islamists have existed since the early seventeenth century. ⁹

1 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

2 Neumann et al., 2011

3 Neumann et al., 2011

4 United Nations Office of Counter-terrorism (UNOCT) Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF)

5 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

6 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

7 U.N. Security Council, Counter Terrorism Committee, 2017

8 Mozaffari (2007)

9 Lechner, 2009, p. 183

Jihad:	“Struggle” in Arabic. It is divided into the lesser jihad (physical struggle) and greater jihad (spiritual struggle). The term has been misinterpreted by some to mean only war.
National Action Plans (NAPs):	A country-specific set of priorities that the national leaders and decision-makers identify as plans or strategies to develop and implement national policies.
Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE):	A comprehensive approach encompassing not only essential security-based counter-terrorism measures but also systematic preventive steps (PVE) to address the factors that support individuals to join violent extremist groups by addressing possible structural causes of acceptance and advocacy of extremist ideologies including political, social, or economic marginalisation, etc. and delegitimization of terrorist groups, their ideologies and their violent tactics. Targeting these soft-power areas should be given equal priority to intelligence, law enforcement, and military means. ¹⁰
Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE):	Employing both a PVE approach (a comprehensive, whole of society approach that targets underlying drivers of marginalisation that may eventually lead to violent extremism over the long term) and a CVE approach (a more targeted, shorter-term approach that responds to radicalised extremist individuals who may or may not have already committed violence. This concept allows stakeholders to strategically use soft power interventions to prevent and counter violent extremism at different points along an individual's trajectory.
Radicalisation:	A process by which individuals or groups deviate from moderate mainstream beliefs and adopt extreme views. While radicalisation sometimes leads to violence, it cannot be equated with terrorism and many radicals are not violent or dangerous and simply want to address what they view as societal ills.
Radicalisation v. Extremism:	The terms are often used interchangeably, despite differences between the two. Some refer to radicals as “open-minded” and extremists as “close-minded”. ¹² Similarly, “non-violent” extremism is sometimes referred to as a “cognitive” form of radicalisation. ¹³
Radicalism:	A deviation from the mainstream political or religious thinking. Those with radical ideas do not necessarily harbour a desire to force others to accept their views nor a desire to use violence and may never engage in violence.
Radicalisation leading to Violent Extremism:	A stage in the radicalisation process where an individual comes to embrace violence as a legitimate course of action to accomplish their ideological goals. It should be noted that individuals may reach the most radical point in the radicalisation process and never move to supporting or engaging in violence. Violent extremism is a possible path within radicalisation that some individuals take.
Radicalisation Prevention:	Safety and security measures aimed at preventing radicalisation from occurring in the first place. ¹⁴
Salafism:	An ideology within Sunni Islam. Its main hallmark is a call to all modern Muslims to revert to the practices and lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad's generation and the two generations that followed him. Salafism emphasizes Islam as an ultimate system of belief and governance. It also preaches God's oneness, while condemning polytheism (shirk) and unbelief (kufr). Some Salafists do not agree with any governance that does not follow shariah law and discourage any involvement in democratic institutions including voting. ¹⁵

10 United Nations Office of Counter-terrorism (UNOCT) Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF)

11 Schmid, 2013, pp. 10

12 Schmid, 2013; Vidino, 2010

13 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

14 Moussalli, 2009, p. 4

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):	The 17 sustainable development goals defined by the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and adopted by all the United Nations Member States in 2015, provide shared goals and responsibilities to work towards peace and prosperity for people and the planet. They include ending poverty, improving health and education, achieving gender equality and tackling climate change.
Terrorism v. Violent Extremism:	Whereas terrorism is defined as the practice of intimidation through violence (e.g. killing, property destruction, etc.) in the furtherance of a specific political objective, violent extremism refers to a broader political ideology that stands against moderate and mainstream societal values and beliefs. Violent extremists strive to change such values and beliefs by any means, including through the use of violence. Violent extremists also resort to terrorism and other forms of politically motivated violence.
Terrorism and Terrorist Acts:	The UN does not have an official definition of terrorism. An unequivocal definition of terrorism would remove the political distinction that some make between the actions of so-called freedom fighters and terrorists. The U.S. Department of Defense (2010) defined terrorism as the “unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that are usually political”. ¹⁵ Some see terrorist violence as an illegitimate and irrational act whereas others as a religious duty and justified reaction to oppression. ¹⁶ Since WWII, the term has been associated with a revolutionary overtone. ¹⁷
UNSCR:	United Nations Security Council Resolution
Violent Extremism:	The phenomenon of extremists resorting to acts of violence in an attempt to coerce others to adopt their social, political, economic, etc., objectives.
Wahhabism:	A revivalist movement founded by Muhammad ibn’ Abd al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century that drew largely from Salafi ideology. Wahhabism and Salafism began to attract considerable attention following the events of 9/11. Salafism/Wahhabism is often currently understood as a global movement with a complex relationship promoting Islamism, politics, and in exceptional cases, violence. ¹⁸
WPS:	UNSCR resolutions on Women, Peace and Security

15 US Department of Defense, 2010, p. 19

16 Chaliand and Blin, 2007, pp.100-116

17 Hoffman, 2006

18 Meijer, 2013, pp. 28-29

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INTRODUCTION

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is more effective, sustainable and meaningful if it includes the participation and perspectives of women. This training manual and toolkit is intended to build the capacity of actors working primarily in Europe and Central Asia, enabling them to incorporate gender perspectives into programming and policies. It is also complementary to the UN Women global guidance note on gender mainstreaming principles, dimensions and priorities for PVE that offers comprehensive background information and resources, along with guidelines and guidance for the UN system, in supporting Member States in their efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism.¹⁹

Violent extremism is a threat to security and social cohesion for states and societies in the Western Balkans and Central Asia which requires an **all-of-society and international response to be prevented and countered effectively**. Terrorism-related incidents have been on the rise since 1970, hitting a peak of 16,820 incidents worldwide in 2014, up from just 933 incidents in 1998.²⁰ Additionally, since 2012, upwards of 6,000 individuals have travelled to Syria and Iraq from the Western Balkans and Central Asia.²¹ Some 15% of all those were women.²² Since the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) lost control of significant

territory in 2018-2019, the issue of how to disengage, prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate men, women and children has become increasingly relevant. A more tangible and concerted global effort has developed in recent years to combat violent extremism and acts of terrorism but best practices that include women are still few and rarely publicized.

Too often, **female perpetrators of violent extremism are perceived as “followers” of their husbands into violent extremism**. State officials rarely consider women’s possible roles as proactive supporters or recruiters, or the specific push and pull factors that influence women to join violent groups. Women have nevertheless been a key part of violent extremist organisations, in particular the state-building project of the so-called Islamic State (IS), with the organisation’s establishment of an aggressive online and offline recruitment drive to attract women.

The design or implementation of state policies and programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism **are only beginning to integrate a gender dimension and there is little information available regarding counter-terrorism policies’ impact on women and women’s organisations**.²³ The effect of violent extremism on the protection of women’s rights has rarely been studied in Central Asia and the Western Balkans, and little is known of the situation of women who refused to follow their family members into violent extremism.

There is a **long-standing international normative precedent** for fully incorporating women into peace and security efforts. Multiple UN Security Council resolutions, beginning with resolution 1325 in 2000, advocate for the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and the full consideration of women’s varied roles in conflict contexts. Most notable for P/CVE are the 2016 UN Secretary-General’s “Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism” and UN Security Council resolution 2242 (2015). Both explicitly call for advancing gender perspectives and gender equality when framing P/CVE and terrorism

19 UNWomen, 2019.

20 Global Terrorism Database (GTD), Terrorism Incidents, University of Maryland, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

21 Lynch et.al, 2016; Azinovic, 2018

22 Based on field research on Women and Violent Extremism in Europe and Central Asia that UN Women consultants carried out in Kosovo, parts of Serbia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Fall 2016 See: *Speckhard, Shajkovci & Esengul (August 4, 2017) Analysis of the Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan, including the Roles of Kyrgyz Women in Supporting, Joining, Intervening in, and Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan. ICSVE Research Reports.* <https://www.icsve.org/analysis-of-the-drivers-of-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-in-kyrgyzstan-including-the-roles-of-kyrgyz-women-in-supporting-joining-intervening-in-and-preventing-violent-extremism-in-kyrgyzstan/> and Speckhard, Anne & Shajkovci, Ardian (April 14, 2017) Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo: Women’s Roles in Supporting, Preventing & Fighting Violent Extremism. ICSVE Research Reports <https://www.icsve.org/drivers-of-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-in-kosovo-womens-roles-in-supporting-preventing-fighting-violent-extremism/>

23 A rare publication on this topic is Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Programme, *Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security* (2017).

prevention responses. Women's roles and involvement in P/CVE has also been highlighted during the sixth review of the UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy in 2018.

While progress has been made to mainstream gender and fully incorporate women in research, policy, and initiatives at all levels, this training manual seeks to further **increase the capacity of P/CVE actors to mainstream gender and incorporate women into initiatives** in their varied roles as preventers, supporters, perpetrators, and survivors of violent extremism in order to further align their initiatives with international gender norms on women, peace and security.

While there is a great deal of discussion over the definitions of PVE (preventing violent extremism) and CVE (countering violent extremism), academics and practitioners alike struggle to come to a consensus on the difference between the two concepts. Counter-terrorism, a stronger term than CVE and PVE, refers to what are often kinetic, police, or military security measures taken to combat terrorism directly, usually after a violent act has already occurred (Neumann et al., 2011). In this manual, CVE is understood as initiatives, actions and policies that target violent extremism more directly than PVE, but not as directly as counter-terrorism. CVE can occur before a violent act has occurred and employs softer methods than counter-terrorism such as producing counter-narratives, working to address vulnerabilities, delegitimize terrorist groups, tactics and ideologies, mentoring radicalised individuals, or offering incentives not to join armed groups. CVE specifically targets individuals who may be leaning towards or have already committed violent acts. Finally, for this manual PVE is understood as the softest of all three approaches, aiming to address the drivers that push individuals towards violent extremism before vulnerable individuals may even be leaning towards violent acts. We have chosen to talk about both PVE and CVE (P/CVE) in this training manual because both types of approaches bring important soft-power strategies to the effort against violent extremism. According to Macdonald and Waggoner, "traditional counter-terrorism and CVE approaches are essential to detecting, averting, and addressing violent extremism and terrorist plots, but PVE-focused programmes provide a way to potentially

reduce the threat of violent extremism in the long-term." Stakeholders working on the issue of violent extremism, then, may wish to consider how their initiatives can leverage both softer, more driver-focused long-term PVE approaches and harder, more phenomenon-focused shorter-term CVE approaches to be most effective.

Women's roles in violent extremism are many and varied, including those of survivors, supporters, perpetrators, family members of perpetrators of violent extremism, and preventers, peacebuilders, policy makers and security actors in prevention efforts as explained throughout the manual.

Not only is reaffirming the international normative precedent, mainstreaming gender perspectives and fully incorporating women in P/CVE efforts is likely to **increase the effectiveness and sustainability** of those efforts.²⁴ It also places sufficient focus on all types of actors in the space of violent extremism and ensures women's equal participation in and access to programmes and rehabilitation. With the marked increase in terrorism-related incidents at almost 20 times higher in 2014 than in 1998, and up to 16,000 individuals from the European and Central Asian regions joining violent extremist groups in Syria and Iraq, P/CVE actors cannot afford ineffective and unsustainable initiatives.

While it is of critical importance to combat all forms of violent extremism, this training manual focusses on combating **militant jihadist violent extremism in the Europe and Central Asia** region, with a particular focus on groups like the so-called Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and other similar groups. As evidenced, among others, in the recent Christchurch mosque mass shooting in New Zealand, violent extremism is by no means a sole preserve of militant jihadist-driven groups or ideologies, nor does this manual serve to magnify the perception that violence is the exclusive domain of militant jihadist-driven violent extremists.²⁵ In fact, the obligation is on governments, civil society organisations, and researchers to address all forms of violent extremism. Given their expertise in the field, the authors of this manual are uniquely positioned to

²⁴ See for example Futures Without Violence, 2017; UNDP, 2017; Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai, 2016; Dharmapuri, 2016; Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2016

²⁵ NBC News, 2019

discuss militant jihadist-driven extremism, particularly in the context of the so-called Islamic State and the group's underlying causes and consequences that are likely to endure in the future. However, this is not to say that discussions, lessons and recommendations contained here cannot be applied to other forms of violent extremism or violent extremism phenomenon in general.

By the end of this training, participants, namely educators, social workers, and other P/CVE professionals, should be able to analyse their local context with a gender perspective, identify specific ways that women experience extremism - from radicalisation, to prevention, to becoming survivors - and create a more gender mainstreamed P/CVE initiative in their community that is likely to be both more effective and better aligned with international norms.

Vulnerabilities to radicalisation for men and women alike include: the search for identity and meaning; perceptions of injustice and discrimination; frustrated aspirations; unemployment and the search for economic opportunities; dignity and purpose; and exposure to violent extremist narratives and groups that seem to offer solutions and an alternative world order. While knowledge of the drivers has increased, in the Western Balkans and Central Asia, states often prioritise security responses to violent extremism. **Law enforcement, correctional and judicial institutions are developing the skills, resources and capacities to engage in P/CVE at the community level with a rights-based and gender-responsive approach, and to rehabilitate former fighters and their families.** Trust between communities and the law enforcement agencies working on P/CVE is crucial for effective prevention of violent extremism. For example, UN Women research found that women rarely turn to the police when they have a problem with violent extremism, and police have limited gender sensitive data collection, consolidation, analysis and reporting

capacities.²⁶ These remain critical gaps in P/CVE efforts that need to be filled to ensure the ultimate success of preventing violent extremism in the Western Balkans and Central Asia.

This manual intends to work towards filling those gaps, serving **as a resource guide for experienced facilitators and trainers interested in gender-responsive P/CVE.** Whether you are a government official, NGO programme manager, youth or community leader, an imam, psychologist, counsellor, teacher, police officer, prison worker, or otherwise interested in P/CVE, this training manual will help you, not only to expand your knowledge base on the role of women in P/CVE, but also to build the necessary skills for research, advocacy, planning and partnership-building on gender-responsive P/CVE.

The toolkit is organized into five modules which focus on key topics. Module 1 introduces violent extremism and why it is important to incorporate a gender perspective into P/CVE. Module 2 explains why the process of radicalization and how women may be affected victims and participants in it. Modules 3, 4, 5 provide specific ways to identify signs of radical extremism and how women can counter them in various roles. Module 4 also focusses on returnees and reintegration issues and Module 5 offers a range of examples of effective gender-responsive P/CVE programs from different parts of the world. Each module includes the module objectives and expected learning outcomes for participants, notes for trainers, participatory activities and exercises, and links to relevant resources.

²⁶ Based on field research on Women and Violent Extremism in Europe and Central Asia that UN Women consultants carried out in Kosovo, parts of Serbia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Fall 2016. See: *Speckhard, Shajkovci & Esengul (August 4, 2017) Analysis of the Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan, including the Roles of Kyrgyz Women in Supporting, Joining, Intervening in, and Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan. ICSVE Research Reports.* <https://www.icsve.org/analysis-of-the-drivers-of-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-in-kyrgyzstan-including-the-roles-of-kyrgyz-women-in-supporting-joining-intervening-in-and-preventing-violent-extremism-in-kyrgyzstan/> and *Speckhard, Anne & Shajkovci, Ardian (April 14, 2017) Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo: Women's Roles in Supporting, Preventing & Fighting Violent Extremism. ICSVE Research Reports* <https://www.icsve.org/drivers-of-radicalization-and-violent-extremism-in-kosovo-womens-roles-in-supporting-preventing-fighting-violent-extremism/>

MODULE 1: GENDER AND P/CVE

Learning Objectives for Module 1

After going through this module, participants should be able to:

- Explain *Extremism, Violent Extremism, and Radicalisation* in their own words
- Know the difference between *radical views and Violent Extremism*; can identify cases of both
- Explain *practical and normative reasons* to incorporate a gender perspective into P/CVE initiatives
- Spot non-disaggregated data; *disaggregate data by gender* and other demographic categories
- Consider *female-specific factors* in a context analysis

UNIT 1: WHAT IS EXTREMISM?

Warm-Up Activity

POST-IT WALL

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Post-It Notes/sticky note paper OR small pieces of paper and tape or sticky tack
- Writing utensils
- A wall or board on which to stick the notes

Instructions:

- Participants are provided with a question or prompt for which they need to generate ideas.
- Give each participant a few Post-Its and give them 1-2 minutes to write out 1 idea or answer per Post-It. They can give multiple answers for each question, or just one answer per question.
- While participants are writing, divide the wall or board into two sections for the two questions.
- When participants have finished, they should walk to the front of the room and add the Post-Its to the board or wall in the correct section.
- Once all the participants have posted their responses on the boards, encourage participants to get up, walk around, and read all the responses and then return to their seats.
- Once seated, ask participants what they thought about their responses. Have them raise their hands and offer their opinions, questions, insights, or comments. To get the conversation started, questions you might want to ask the group include:
 - o Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - o What was your favourite response? Why?
 - o What was your least favourite response? Why?

Prompts:

1. What is extremism to you?
2. Why might it be bad?

Violent extremism is not a new phenomenon. Individuals and groups holding radical views and being willing to use violence in pursuit of their goals have existed throughout history. However, violent extremism has become of **increasing global concern** recently, partly due to increasing globalization, the effects of the Internet and social media, and the impact of recent conflicts in Iraq and Syria. With two-thirds of all countries in the world experiencing a terrorist attack in 2016, terrorism has become an unprecedented **threat to international peace, security and development**, feeding off violent conflict. As conflicts have grown in intensity and number over the past decade, terrorist attacks have also increased and spread.²⁷

As a result, a more tangible global effort has developed to combat violent extremism.

What is Violent Extremism?

In this manual *extremism* is defined as a **strict adherence to a set of narratives or belief systems (whether political or religious) that constitute assaults on the mainstream values, orientations, and principles of the dominant society**. Even this definition can be problematic when one considers faith, political, and social groups that do not agree with the values of the dominant society. For example, in many countries minority religious groups may insist on narrowly defined narratives, principles, and values that reject the mainstream values of the dominant society. In societies that value freedom of religious practices, these differing beliefs are not problematic. It is only when extremists resort to acts of **physical force in the**

²⁷ UNDP and International Alert, 2018

pursuit of their beliefs and objectives that their actions become violent extremism.

Broadly speaking, contemporary extremism can be grouped into **four basic categories**:

- 1) Right wing-ultra Nationalist extremism
- 2) Politico-Religious extremism
- 3) Left-wing extremism
- 4) Single-Issue extremism ²⁸

In Europe and Central Asia, all four categories of extremism are active today, even though they may not all be relevant in every country context. All of the aforementioned extremist categories include and impact women, thus efforts to counter extremism require gender-sensitive approaches. It is important to note, however, that not all members of these extremist groups promote, believe in, or take part in violence. Therefore, they may not all be violent extremists.

When we consider *violent extremism*, it is possible to think about it in terms of **a progression from radical and extremist views to attempts to use violence to coerce others into accepting these extremist beliefs, and to use violence when others reject these beliefs**. Violent extremists employ violent methods, which include using weapons and explosives, and promoting their use; promoting hate crimes; using force during riots; or calling for harm to or the physical destruction of those with opposing viewpoints.

Violent extremism may fit into the 4 basic categories of extremism mentioned above. As stated above, while it is of critical importance to combat all types of violent extremism, this training manual will focus on combating **militant jihadist violent extremism in the European and Central Asian region**, with a particular focus on ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other similar groups.

According to the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, violent extremism is an affront to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. It undermines peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. No country or region is immune from its impacts. Nothing can justify violent extremism, but we must also acknowledge that it does not arise in a vacuum. Narratives of grievance, actual or perceived injustice, promised

28 Kallis, Zeiger and Ozturk, 2018; Gunaratna and Kam, 2016

empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where **human rights are being violated, good governance is being ignored and aspirations are being crushed**.²⁹

Radicalisation

Radicalisation in itself is not necessarily problematic. It is important to remember that radicals—those desiring more extreme changes in the societal order—have existed in our societies for centuries, often bringing about valued changes. As are those who fought against slavery in the U.S., or those who fought against apartheid in South Africa. Similar fights against human rights injustices are continued by radicals to this day.³⁰

Conclusions about radicals are often drawn from focusing on the small number of extremists at the top of the “radicalisation pyramid”³¹ who are willing to use violence in pursuit of their cause while omitting from analysis the majority of radicals who refuse to use violence for the cause.³² Thus, it is important to keep in mind that being labelled a radical, or someone who stands against mainstream societal values, is not necessarily to be criminalised. The situation becomes problematic, however, **when radicalised individuals resort to violence**.

Regional context

The dismantlement of the long-established state apparatus and loss of faith in the Communist ideology in much of Eastern Europe and Central Asia since the 1990s alongside **weak governance and increasing economic inequality** has opened the way for spiritual yearnings that were suppressed and redirected under the atheist Soviet regime. Since the fall of the Soviet system, educational institutions have weakened, literacy rates have fallen and employment and the provision of basic services are no longer guaranteed. This, together with **decreasing levels of trust in government institutions and allegations of widespread corruption**, may have increased the legitimacy of

29 United Nations General Assembly, 2015

30 Hodgson, 2017

31 The term used to denote how the potential for violent behavior increases as an individual/group advances on the gradient of the pyramid model

32 Bartlett and Miller, 2011

religious groups and leaders in part of the population's eyes.³³

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine have all prepared at least one **action plan (NAPs) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325**, with varying degrees of investment, activities, and monitoring mechanisms, and the subsequent women, peace and security (WPS) resolutions.³⁴ The resolutions call for actions on all stakeholders to recognise the impact of armed conflicts on women and acknowledge their potential in contributing to and sustaining peace. However, there has been very limited thought to date on how to bring together P/CVE efforts and the WPS agenda on the ground, especially linking up national security actors, gender machineries and women peace activists.

Several countries in the region have also begun to adopt counter-terrorism policies and establish national institutional capacities to address the challenge of violent extremism including some that call attention to gender issues.

- The Kosovo Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalism Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020, for example, spells out specific P/CVE activities. These include the objectives and institutions tasked with increasing women's involvement in P/CVE efforts in awareness-raising campaigns, training, and dialogue across government institutions, communities, municipalities, women, youth and religious networks, law enforcement entities and with NGOs.
- Tajikistan has a National Strategy on Countering Extremism and Terrorism for 2016 to 2020 and an Action Plan which includes a section on strengthening the role of women, including through awareness raising and greater participation in P/CVE.
- Bosnia-Herzegovina's Strategy for Preventing and Combatting Terrorism 2015 to 2020 states that special emphasis will be placed on women's participation.

33 Speckhard, Shajkocvi, and Esengul, 2017

34 The United Nations Security Council efforts to promote and strengthen gender equality and women participation in peacekeeping efforts. The resolutions also promote and foster commitment to women's rights.

- In 2017, Kyrgyzstan adopted the State Programme for Combating Extremism and Terrorism for 2017-2022 and a National Plan on Implementation of State Programme, with the latter also containing activities to elicit women engagement and participation.³⁵

Nevertheless, there is a risk that these gender-responsive policies will never be translated into direct interventions in the field because of the lack of specialised gender-responsive analytical and operational expertise; sex-and-age-disaggregated data; institutional gender-responsive capacities in rule of law institutions; skills and inclusion of national gender institutions and women's organisations; and sharing of best practices in the region on involving women effectively in P/CVE. Furthermore, there is a tendency for states in the region to rely upon counter-terrorism measures, which can involve repressive security systems and curtailing principles and standards of rule of law. These responses risk exacerbating the marginalisation of certain groups, such as women.

In Western Europe most countries are well on track regarding enacting laws and developing P/CVE policies and action plans. The regional challenges in Western Europe have more to do with demographic challenges and the rise of militant jihadist actors and a mirrored rise in far-right extremists. Both of these movements threaten society with violence and both strongly recruit women, yet treat women poorly, often resorting to strong gender stereotypes and keeping women in subservient roles. First to third generation migrants of Muslim descent and Muslim converts in Western Europe often cite facing Islamophobic attitudes and actions, as well as discrimination and marginalization which they attribute as responses to their ethnicity and religion can be strong predictors of resonating to the call of violent extremist groups and ideologies. On the far-right side, anti-migration rhetoric particularly paired with high unemployment in some areas and occurrences of militant jihadi terrorism and violent extremism can fuel counter responses which are also violent in nature. Western European countries also struggle with integrating modernizing influences with new migrants who still strongly adhere to their traditional lifestyles and practices dictated from their faith lives.

35 United Nations, 2018; UNDP, 2018

Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism

P/CVE is focused on preventing violent extremism through **non-coercive means**, using awareness-raising, dialogue, education, psycho-social and socio-economic means, and addressing push and pull factors.

of former fighters and their families and how to prevent home-grown violent extremism have arisen, requiring informed consideration of women's roles.³⁷ This will be given specific attention in module 4.

KEY CONCEPT



PULL factors are positively perceived elements of extremist groups that **attract individuals TO the group**



PUSH factors are negatively perceived elements of an individual's situation that **drive them AWAY from the situation at home** and to an extremist group.

Too often, counter-extremism actors can shift immediately into counter-terrorism, which employs heavy-handed crackdowns on suspects and their families, incarceration, killings of suspected extremists, and the closing of religious or civil institutions with suspected links to extremism. These actions can often create new grievances in the targeted individuals and thus **exacerbate the drift towards violent extremism**. Furthermore, they may put women and women's organisations who work on P/CVE in regions where counter-terrorism operations are ongoing at risk of human rights violations and violence.³⁶

Instead, utilizing P/CVE, particularly PVE, to address possible structural causes of acceptance and advocacy of extremist ideologies such as political, social, or economic marginalisation, etc. can be a more **holistic and sustainable** method of countering extremist activity. Community engagement, economic development, socio-political development, education, countering extremist narratives, promoting interfaith dialogue, and public-private partnerships represent some of the P/CVE measures used to counter the appeal and support for extremist groups. Though both hard and soft security methods function well when used in partnership to combat violent extremism, it may be strategic to prioritise soft-power methods such as those used in PVE, as they entail **less inherent risk of aggravating grievances** and inadvertently exacerbating the drive towards violent extremism.

Finally, as the violent extremist threat appears to be shifting with ISIS rapidly losing ground in Syria and Iraq, new challenges regarding the **return and rehabilitation**

Practical Exercise

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers.

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely their answers to the questions below.
- Write participants' answers on the board in summarised form.
- For each question, after a few minutes, or after all responses, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:
 - Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?
- After a few minutes of discussion, move on to the next question.

Questions:

When categorising a violent extremist vs. someone with radical views...

1. Think of some positive radical views in history or in your community.

36 UN Women, 2017

37 UN Women, 2017

2. When do radical views “cross the line” into extremism or violent extremism?

3. Think of an example of someone who “benevolently radicalised”³⁸, or increasingly adopted extreme views that go against the mainstream, in your community, in a way that helped others or improved the community. What are the key indicators that such a situation is different than detrimental radicalisation leading to violence?

³⁸ Ken Reidy (August 2019) Benevolent Radicalization An Antidote to Terrorism Author(s) Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 1-13

UNIT 2: WHY GENDER?

Warm-Up Activity

OPPOSITE EXTREMES

Suggested Time: 20 minutes

Instructions:

- Have participants stand and gather in the centre of the room.
- Explain that you will be reading aloud several statements about women, violent extremism, and conflict. Point to one side of the room and tell them it represents complete agreement with the statement. The other side represents complete disagreement and the middle of the room represents neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
- After each statement, participants should move to the area of the room that they feel represents their views on that statement. For example, if they feel moderately strongly in favour of a statement, they should move fairly close to that side of the room. If they feel slightly against a statement, they should stand somewhere between the middle and the “against” side of the room.
- After participants have settled on a side, tell them whether the statement was true or false. If false, tell them the correct statement.
- When finished with all the statements, have participants return to their seats. Ask participants to talk about which statements surprised them, or which they had trouble believing and why.

Statements:

1. Women’s direct engagement in violent extremist acts has decreased over the past thirty years. **(False, it has increased)**
2. Women are more often victims of the actions of violent extremist groups. **(True)**
3. Some, but not all, women follow husbands or other male family members into terrorist groups, sometimes feeling little choice in the matter. **(True)**
4. Some women decide and join terrorist groups completely on their own without male coercion and for their own reasons. **(True)**
5. Women are more likely than men to agree that people belonging to different religions should be treated equally. **(True)**
6. Radicalised men are much less likely to use violence towards the women in their lives. **(False, they are much more likely to do so)**
7. There are 4 UN Security Council Resolutions that call for mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) in preventing violent extremism, peacebuilding, and counter-conflict efforts. **(False, there are 8 resolutions)**
8. Gender is never integrated in national P/CVE action plans. **(False)**

An Overview of Gender in P/CVE

Although counter-terrorism interventions, focused on hard security and primarily military style interventions, have tended to ignore gender perspectives, institutional and local actors in Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) have generally been more intentional about recognising women’s roles in all facets of extremism: as victims, supporters, preventers, and perpetrators. Recently, **women’s roles as fighters** and more **explicit advocates of extremist ideology** are increasingly understood and accepted. However, women’s motivations for such acts remains **less well understood** than men’s motivations for the same actions.

Women are also **more often victims** of the actions of violent extremist groups, suffering from sexual violence and rape, restrictive limitations to their freedom of movement, and in some cases essentially becoming slaves to the men in violent extremist groups. However, this reality **should not be overstated**, many women not only join violent extremists freely and of their own accord, but also willingly and voluntarily participate in violent extremism in varied and active ways, including as combatants, suicide bombers and

violent actors. Even in performing the softer duties of ‘female jihad’, raising the next generation of jihadi fighters, providing inspiration, emotional and psychological support to the male fighters, or overseeing nonviolent activities such as finance and group operations, **women play a critical role in sustaining violent extremist groups.**³⁹

With such a complex and crucial role in violent extremism and violent extremist groups, any P/CVE initiative needs to incorporate women both as actors to counter extremism and, according to the programme goals and local context, as target programme beneficiaries-victims or perpetrators of violent extremism. It should be noted that the difference between actors and victims is not binary; it is possible for individuals to be both victims and perform violent acts with agency at the same time. This nuanced understanding will be context specific, therefore programmes and policies on P/CVE need to take account of this complexity.

Why Gender? Practical Reasons

When women face marginalisation and discrimination, they may be more **susceptible to being recruited** by violent extremist groups or **seeking out a violent extremist group** as a pathway to pursue independence from the oppression in their lives. This underlines the need for gender-based societal measures to ensure that women can achieve economic self-sufficiency, which represents some measure of independence and achieving positive identities in a peaceful manner.

The following are just a few **practical examples** of how incorporating a gender perspective into a P/CVE programme is likely to result in a more **effective, holistic, and sustainable** programme. This toolkit is about engaging women, though in a policy context, a “gendered perspective” implies a strategy that considers both female and male perspectives and concerns in the design and implementation of P/CVE strategies.

There is clear evidence from the field that empowering and enabling women in development contexts often has a **larger and more sustainable impact** on the community than empowering and enabling men in the same context.⁴⁰ Fatima Nezza, a Mourchidate (female imam) in Rabat, Morocco, has seen the ripple effect of training women first-hand. She explains, “if you train

a man, you train one person. If you train a woman, **you train an entire community.**”⁴¹ (We will learn about the Mourchidate programme in Morocco, as an example of best practice for P/CVE, in a later module).

According to a recent UNDP study, women may have a more **socially cohesive tendency** than men. Through interviews with 718 people who voluntarily joined, were forced to join, or did not join extremist groups across Cameroon, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan, the study found that women were more likely than men to agree that people belonging to different religions **should be treated equally.**⁴²

P/CVE experts Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Sara Zeiger, and Rafia Bhulai find that “local women’s connections in their communities, understanding of culturally specific issues, and skill at mobilizing social capital positions may also position them as **strong interlocutors for peace.**”⁴³ They also advise that “women can be **powerful agents of change** and can play a crucial role in detecting early signs of radicalisation [in individuals in their community], intervening before individuals become violent, and delegitimising violent extremist narratives.”⁴⁴

Indeed, women do hold a significant role in the peace process and institutionalising female participation in such processes can increase the likelihood of peace lasting. With this in mind, it is important to stress that as “peacekeepers” women often face distinct burdens, due to both the gendered stereotypes it holds and the responsibility and danger that is put on them because of this expectation of them. This is not to say that men cannot be important actors in P/CVE, men and women both have unique contributions to make, therefore the equal participation of all is likely to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of P/CVE programmes. It should also be noted that women’s contributions are not all the same, different experiences and expertise will shape individuals’ contributions to P/CVE programmes. These experiences and expertise should therefore be understood and utilised.

Parents, in particular mothers, also have a critical role to play in P/CVE. Because mothers often have a keen understanding of their children’s motives and their

39 Carter, 2013

40 UN Women

41 Futures Without Violence, 2017

42 UNDP, 2017

43 UNDP, 2017

44 Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai, 2016

opinion often carries substantial weight for their children, involving them in P/CVE efforts presents significant potential.⁴⁵ There is also widespread evidence that **mothers have reduced violence** in the context of gang involvement, a form of organised violence that shares similarities with violent extremism.⁴⁶ Moreover, case studies of mothers' and sisters' contributions to P/CVE efforts in Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan suggest that involving female family members in P/CVE initiatives **increases their efficacy**.⁴⁷

Seamus Hughes, Deputy Director of the Programme on Extremism at George Washington University, also asserts that parents can play a powerful role in reaching individuals drawn to violent extremist ideology.⁴⁸ In engaging foreign fighters on Twitter, he gives an example of a conversation during which the fighter never showed any regret regarding his decision to join a violent extremist group until Hughes **brought up the man's mother**. In two months of engaging this foreign fighter on Twitter, **he never showed introspection until that moment**.⁴⁹

In a case study of a violent extremist rehabilitation prison programme in Turkey, involving mothers to influence their children to give up their commitment to violent extremism was one of the distinctive and effective features of the programme.⁵⁰ Likewise, in a sample of 94 ISIS cadres studied, ICSVE researchers documented that ISIS foreign fighters regularly kept in touch with their mothers, with many fighters calling and texting them weekly. As the sample grew to 220, ICSVE researchers continued to see the same trend: that ISIS men and women regularly called

home to talk with their mothers and kept in touch by text messaging. However, ICSVE researchers found that **Western security officials rarely made use of this connection in their P/CVE efforts by** contacting, working with, or coaching these mothers to try to influence their children to give up violence and return home.

That said, we must be careful not to assume that only women understand their children, as fathers can play equally important roles in P/CVE, or that women's only pathways to contribute to P/CVE efforts is through their roles as mothers. Still, in more traditional cultures, women often play a more predominant and emotional nurturing role in raising children than men. Likewise, violent extremist recruiters often disengage young men from their fathers and fill this role for their young recruits but find it harder to separate them from their mothers. Thus, in these contexts, it may be more strategic to work with mothers in P/CVE efforts than fathers. In either case, **P/CVE programme designers should always consider the local context before deciding how to structure their initiative and which actors to work with**.⁵¹ It must also be acknowledged that the narrative of mothers as influencers of their children places extraordinary expectations on mothers and may place them in danger themselves. This is something that should be given careful consideration in the planning of any programmes or interventions.

Gender blindness, ignoring rather than recognising distinctly gendered factors, also **misinforms policy-making and planning**.⁵² Any initiative, policy, or study which neglects to consider and understand half of the population's roles in any given situation will be partially accurate at best, and usually **less effective and responsive** to the situation on the ground than an initiative, policy or study that has mainstreamed gender throughout, giving focus and attention to the different positions and needs of all gender identities.

P/CVE initiatives are not peace processes, however these statistics from conflict zones are a testament to women's **ability to contribute to sustainable peace** when included in local, regional, and national-level decision-making processes.⁵³

45 Some researchers have raised concerns about the gendered and radicalised assumptions that women, particularly Muslim mothers, are better positioned to detect early signs of radicalisation in their children given they are more present in the home or around them. They also question the assumption that women are guided by maternal instinct, which also renders them more uniquely positioned to detect signs of radicalisation in their children. To avoid any potential concerns with the essentialism of women as mothers, where applicable, we will be referring to the term "parents" instead. For additional readings on the topic, please see Brown, 2013.

46 Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2016

47 Futures Without Violence, 2017

48 One must also not underestimate often parents' influence in introducing, encouraging or reinforcing ideas about violent extremism or violent extremist groups. See, for example, Speckhard and Shajkovi, 2019, Speckhard and Shajkovi, 2018, and Haula Noor, 2018

49 Seamus Hughes, in Futures Without Violence, 2017

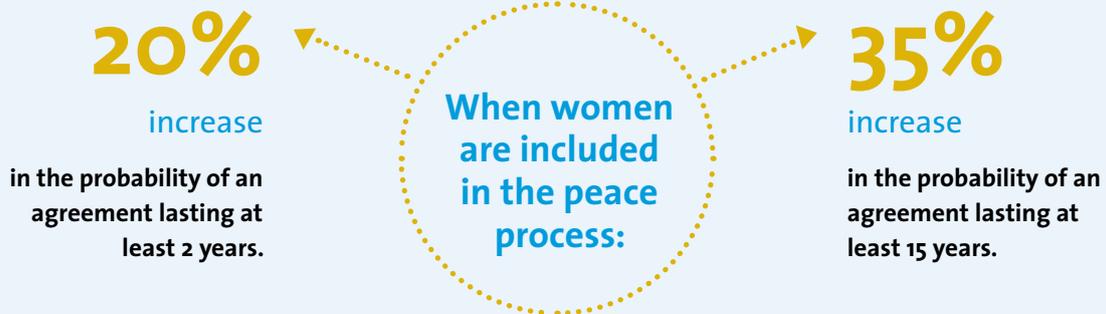
50 Speckhard, 2011

51 UN Women

52 Dharmapuri, 2016; Futures Without Violence, 2017

53 Here we refer to women's involvement in peacemaking and peacebuilding and as being instrumental in bringing about sustainable peace. See, for example, Stickland and Duvvury, 2003

WOMEN'S INCLUSION IN PEACE PROCESSES



UN WOMEN #UNSCR1325

Although there is less data on P/CVE efforts as the relative young age of the discipline means that there is not as much definitive data on the subject as, for instance, on WPS, incorporating women in P/CVE efforts is likely to have a similar effect as that of women in peace processes.

Another area of P/CVE efforts that requires a gender perspective is bringing children and their parents back to their home countries from conflict zones. Twenty-seven countries currently have legal provisions that prevent mothers from conferring their nationality to their children on an equal basis as fathers, which can lead to children being born stateless.⁵⁴ In the case of ISIS, many female survivors of their foreign fighter husbands have borne children that are not welcomed in either their mother's or father's home country and hundreds of ISIS mothers and children currently remain in legal limbo housed in detention camps in Syria and Iraq. **Stateless** children in the context of violent extremism will likely create new grievances for the relatives of these children, as well as the children themselves, thus **risking exacerbating already radicalised communities**. The author has often heard of terrorist recruiters in camps housing ISIS mothers and children trying to draw such vulnerable children into violent extremism and terrorist ideologies.

⁵⁴ UNHCR, 2017. Also note that UNHCR makes categorical distinction on the conferral of nationality by women. See, for example, de Groot and Vonk, 2018

In areas dealing with radicalisation, **there is also a link between radicalisation and gender-based violence (GBV)**. Studies suggest that men who radicalise to violent extremist groups are much more prone to using violence towards the women in their lives. The ideologies of groups such as ISIS not only allow GBV but also promote male dominance over women therefore often leading to GBV in domestic contexts. Many women living in ISIS told ICSVE researchers about being beaten by their husbands, but aware that they could do nothing about it and that divorce initiated by the woman would not be accepted within their judicial system. Likewise, ISIS men were free to buy slaves, bring them home and rape them in the context of the familial setting. ISIS women have often witnessed and been the victims of extensive GBV. In some cases, these women also participated in such violence—also abusing women forced into slavery, abusing other women, enforcing tough rules upon other women, etc.

In another recent study, ACTED and AWO found “a strong correlation between instances of or exposure to radicalisation and gender-based violence [in Jordan].⁵⁵ **Women who had been exposed to or experienced gender-based violence were also more likely to have been exposed to radicalisation.**”⁵⁶ These studies point

⁵⁵ 65 Pearson correlation coefficient

⁵⁶ see for example ACTED and AWO, 2016; Futures Without Violence, 2017; U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, 2016

to a linkage between the two phenomena; in that where GBV occurs, radicalisation may also be more likely to exist.

Finally, studies have shown that integrating women into **community efforts** to deal with social issues has been proven to be more effective than similar efforts without women involved. On the issue of gender-based violence, for example, the UN states that data from 40 countries shows **a positive correlation** between the proportion of **female police officers and reporting rates of sexual assault**.⁵⁷ Incorporating women into community responses to social issues is critical to combat those issues. The same could apply for P/CVE, for example, if more women served on local police forces or other security sector entities, it might be easier for women from the community to report their concerns about radicalisation to violent extremism happening in their families or communities. As with sexual assault, if women know they can report to another woman, they may be less deterred by fear, shame or stigma.

The preceding sections highlighted the importance of women's peace agencies as confined within their roles as mothers, wives, sisters and caregivers within family. To ensure their broader inclusion and participation in peacekeeping and P/CVE efforts, including in an effort to defy maternalistic and instrumentalist approach that purports to describe women's agency solely within family and through relations with their male relatives and counterparts, it is crucial to emphasise that P/CVE and women's participation in such efforts is also about protecting their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. As it will be discussed further in the chapter and through corresponding examples, this practical divergence of the female agenda, namely into participation vs. protection, is important, especially in the context of violent extremist groups like ISIS that treat women as property and objects of control for men and when thousands of women are being held in detention camps in Iraq and Syria, in many cases denied basic human rights and facing severe punishment on weak or mere links to the so-called Islamic State Caliphate.

⁵⁷ This should not be confused with rates of sexual assault rising. It is widely accepted that sexual assault is underreported globally. Therefore, a rise in reported sexual assaults suggests that women are more comfortable with law enforcement to bring these cases to them, rather than that the instances of sexual assault are actually increasing.

Why Gender? Normative perspectives

In addition to the many practical reasons to incorporate women and a gender perspective into P/CVE initiatives, international, national and local bodies from the United Nations to local communities have set out **strategies, action plans, and resolutions** that call upon nation states, cities, and local communities to **mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment** (GEWE) in their efforts to counter and prevent violent extremism. Women are increasingly being included in P/CVE efforts and elevated into decision-making powers within P/CVE structures.

The following are a few important normative guidelines from recent years on women in P/CVE:

- **UNSCR 2242 (2015)** focuses on violent extremism and terrorism.
- **UN Secretary General's 2016 Plan** of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism calls for women's protection and empowerment to be central to the development of effective strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism.
- **Global Counter Terrorism Forum** set of "Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism".
- **OSCE Ministerial Council Declaration** on preventing and countering VERT, adopted in Belgrade in December 2015.
- **Sustainable development goal** (SDG) 5 (gender equality) and 16 (building peaceful, just and inclusive societies).
- States developing **P/CVE Strategies and Action Plans**, as well as 1325 NAPs.

The United Nations Security Council has also recognised the importance of including women in P/CVE.

In October 2000, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The passage of UNSCR 1325 called for the **equal participation of women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security**. The resolution also called for the protection of women from human rights violations and called on Member States and UN entities to ensure that women be given equal access to justice. Moreover, in implementing the resolution, member states were called upon to develop national action plans on Women, Peace and Security, as well as further

integrate women, peace, and security agendas into their respective strategic documents, other national action plans, and planning frameworks.

Since the passage of UNSCR 1325 (2000), seven additional resolutions related to women's inclusion in peace and security have been passed (see below). The most recent resolution (UNSCR 2242), adopted in October 2015, encourages UN agencies and member states to:

- Conduct and **gather gender-sensitive research and data** collection on the drivers of radicalisation for women.
- Consider the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on **women's human rights and women's organisations**.
- Develop targeted and **evidence-based policy and programming** responses involving women.
- Ensure the participation and **leadership of women** and women's organisations in developing P/CVE strategies.
- **Integrate gender aspects** when addressing the drivers and impact of violent extremism.

Although relatively new in terms of promoting and encouraging the integration of gender aspects (women-specific) in P/CVE efforts, many government-led strategic documents, national actions plans, planning frameworks, and programmes and initiatives, as well as civil society driven initiatives, have arisen in response to UNSCR 2242. In the ensuing sections, we discuss the most relevant regional examples.

In December 2017, the U.N. Security Council adopted resolution 2395 (2017) and 2396 (2017) both of which contained **strong language on integrating gender and the roles of women**, in operative paragraphs. Resolution 2396 (2017) included specific considerations of the needs and roles of women in relation to returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters.

The same year, the General Assembly's 5th review resolution (A/RES/70/291) of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) called on Member States to highlight **the important counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism roles of women**. These provisions echo similar calls made under the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, adopted in 2016, which highlighted the need to promote women's participation and leadership across governments, the security sector, and civil society.

The Plan of Action, which called for women's protection and empowerment to be central to the development of effective strategies, has a dedicated section on gender equality and women's empowerment. Efforts to translate these policy documents into practice and to find practical ways of integrating gender as a cross-cutting issue in P/CVE are gaining traction. At the same time the **WPS agenda is an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, especially SDG 5 and SDG 16; as well as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Recommendation 30.

UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions:

The following table presents UN Security Council resolutions related to the importance of incorporating women in peace and security efforts.

UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security	Overview of the Resolutions
1325 (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; • Recognises the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building; • Stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.
1820 (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war; • Notes that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide; • Calls for the training of troops on preventing and responding to sexual violence; • Calls for more deployment of women in peace operations.
1888 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiterates that sexual violence exacerbates armed conflict and impedes international peace and security; • Calls for leadership to address conflict-related sexual violence; • Calls for deployment of a Team of Experts where cases of sexual violence occur.
1889 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on post-conflict peace-building and on women's participation in all stages of peace processes; • Calls for the development of indicators to measure the implementation of UNSCR1325 (2000).
1960 (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiterates the call for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict; • Sets up "naming and shaming" listing mechanism, sending a direct political message that there are consequences for sexual violence including: listing in Secretary-General's annual reports, referrals to UN Sanctions Committees and the ICC, international condemnation, and reparations.
2106 (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on operationalizing current obligations rather than on creating new structures/ initiatives; • Includes language on women's participation in combating sexual violence; • Supports recourse to avenues of justice.
2122 (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly affirms an "integrated approach" to sustainable peace; • Sets out concrete methods for combating women's participation deficit; • Recognises the need to address root causes of armed conflict and security risks faced by women; • Calls for the provision of multi-sectoral services to women affected by conflict; • Links disarmament and gender equality.
2242 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages assessment of strategies and resources regarding the implementation of the WPS Agenda; • Highlights the importance of collaboration with civil society; • Calls for increased funding for gender-responsive training, analysis and programmes; • Urges gender as a cross-cutting issue within the P/CVE/CT Agendas; • Recognises the importance of integrating WPS across all country situations.
2467 (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terrorism; • Sanctions those who command, condone or commit sexual violence during an armed conflict; • Emphasizes the responsibility to care for the survivors of conflict-related crimes (e.g. offer comprehensive healthcare, reproductive healthcare services, etc.); • Offers reparation and means to support livelihood to rebuild their lives and support families.

Regional examples of women's inclusion⁵⁸

The global normative framework and UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security serve as an important guide for national, regional, and local legislation and initiatives on the subject. Specifically, these global norms often guide and influence the development of National Action Plans on P/CVE. However, although global norms and multiple UN Security Council Resolutions emphasize the importance of gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of women in P/CVE agendas, **few P/CVE National Action Plans (NAPs) in the European and Central Asian region have specific recommendations that incorporate women.** Furthermore, many of the countries in the region who have gender mainstreamed NAPs and other high-level legislation on P/CVE have yet to successfully transition agreements into real programmes and initiatives on the ground.⁵⁹ There is a critical need for actors in the region to focus on translating the lofty goals of NAPs and related legislation into concrete actions on the ground regarding gender mainstreaming in local programmes and initiatives. This training manual is part of that effort.

Specific examples of national strategies and action plans from the region are as follows:

In November 2016, a **National Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism was introduced by the government of Tajikistan.** It included an Action Plan with specific recommendations and activities on how to engage women in P/CVE efforts. The focus was on activities that highlight dangers emanating from violent extremism as well as on how to increase women's participation in local councils and law enforcement. The country's National Action Plan contains three main objectives related to outputs with a gender dimension: "1) Strengthening of social activity and role of women; 2) Raising political, religious, cultural and legal awareness among women and prevention of their involvement into VE; and 3) Promotion of broad participation of women in P/CVE and terrorism".⁶⁰

In 2005, the government of **Kyrgyzstan enacted the Law on Countering Extremist Activity,** while in parallel, religious leaders developed a strategic document

entitled, *The Concept of State Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the Religious Sphere for 2014-2020.* In the context of the latter, an Action Plan containing a list of eighty-eight activities was passed in 2015. The concept and action plan can be considered partially as documents containing Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) measures; however, no separate government document called the P/CVE programme exists to date. The Action Plan calls for the design and implementation of mechanisms to improve the religious literacy and awareness of state policy in the religious sphere for vulnerable groups, specifically for women and youth, who reside in remote areas. This is, however, the only reference in the document to women highlighting the need to do more. Moreover, the Action Plan does not offer recommendations on how to include more effectively women and women's groups in the prevention of violent extremism.⁶¹

In 2015, the government of **Kosovo drafted The Kosovo Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalism Leading to Terrorism 2015-2020.** The Action Plan which is part of the Kosovo Strategy on Prevention of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism contains specific measures and activities regarding its implementation that call for a sustainable approach to combating the threat of radicalisation. It also outlines specific measures and the need for collective action on the part of international, governmental and non-governmental actors to disrupt the threat of extremism and radicalism leading to terrorism. It also spells out activities that foster employment, education of young people, economic development, and support for vulnerable and affected populations, although it says little about women specifically.

Gender analysis and data

Gender analysis is the critical starting point for gender mainstreaming. The first step in a mainstreaming strategy is the assessment of how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant to the subject under discussion. Without it gender mainstreaming is not possible.

- Gender analysis is a tool that brings to the surface gender disparities of a core problem. It reveals the connections **between gender relations and the development challenge to be solved,** it indicates exactly

⁵⁸ Peace Women, 2017

⁵⁹ Vrugtman, 2018

⁶⁰ Matveeva and Faizullaev, 2017

⁶¹ Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul, 2017

what that impact is likely to be and promotes alternative courses of action.

- Gender analysis is a systematic analytical process based on sex-disaggregated data. This process is used to **identify, understand, and describe gender differences** and the relevance of gender roles and power dynamics in a particular context.
- A gender analysis helps ensure **equitable participation of women and men in development processes** and projects. In some cases, gender issues may be significant to the process/project and play a determining role in outcomes. In other instances, they may be less significant, and constitute rather a set of factors to be weighed with others.
- It should show the linkages between inequalities at different societal levels. Do not forget that neither women nor men form a homogeneous group. **Gender relations intersect with many categories of social identities**, such as religious, political affiliation,

ethnicity, ability, social and economic status, age, and sexual orientation among others.

- If we do not make those intersecting linkages explicit, we run the risk of **reinforcing existing imbalances**.⁶²

Another important aspect of incorporating women in P/CVE programmes is having accurate, **sex-and-age disaggregated data**. Often, both secondary and primary data is not disaggregated by gender, age or other demographic categories. Non-disaggregated data hinders the ability of programme designers to design effective and responsive programmes for populations on the ground because they have only partial knowledge of the needs and realities of those populations.

Here is an example of some data you might collect for your P/CVE programme:

62 UNDP, 2016

P/CVE Data	Statistic	Questions
Percentage of population attending mosque X with extremist imam	10%	<p>This figure needs to be disaggregated by gender. What if 9% of these people are men and only 1% are women? What about age? Girls and boys... Then perhaps your P/CVE programme should incorporate more men than women as programme beneficiaries. However, if 9% of these are women and 1% are men, your P/CVE programme will likely be more effective if you focus on women beneficiaries. It might also dictate whether you use a male or female programmer.</p> <p>Other questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are women in your community socially allowed to go to this mosque? • If socially allowed, are they freely making their own decision to go to this mosque, or might they be coerced by male relatives? • Do men and women at this mosque mix, and if not, can male actors reach radicalised females and vice versa? • Even if women are not attending this mosque, does that tell us about radical views they may be cultivating at home, or in local women's social or study groups, or as a result of their male relatives' advocacy of extremist beliefs? • What percentage of those attending these protests under the age of 30? • How does socio-economic class affect this statistic? What percent of those attending this mosque are individuals living in poverty? • How does ethnicity affect this statistic? What percent of those attending this mosque are members of a minority ethnic group?

P/CVE Data	Statistic	Questions
<p>Percentage of minority ethnic group X attending protests against the government</p> <p>(This demonstrates a perceived grievance which can sometimes be a factor that drives an individual to violent extremism)</p>	50%	<p>This statistic is better, as it begins by talking about a particular group in society, minority ethnic group X, rather than “everyone”.</p> <p>However, this figure also needs to be disaggregated by gender. What if 45% of these people are men and only 5% are women? Then perhaps your P/CVE programme should incorporate more men as programme beneficiaries and think about which women as programme actors are most likely to be able to reach these men. However, if 45% of these are women and 5% are men, your P/CVE programme will likely be more effective if your focus remains on women beneficiaries. Likewise, while it may be only men protesting, women may share their grievances but not come out to the streets to protest and that is also important to know. In the case of women bearing grievances, it may also be necessary to engage women actors, as men may not be able to reach these women at all. In this case, we see a very clear reason for empowering women actors.</p> <p>Other questions to ask are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do women in your community attend protests? • Even if women are not attending protests, does that tell us about grievances they may have and their possible encouragement of male family members to attend? • How does age affect this statistic? What percentage of those attending these protests under the age of 30? • How does location affect this statistic? What percentage of those attending these protests urban dwellers, as opposed to rural?

Whether you are obtaining data from other sources (secondary data) or gathering the data yourself (primary data), it is critical to **disaggregate as much as possible** in order to better understand your target audience and its needs and design the most effective and responsive programme for the target population.

Gender aspects to consider in context analysis and programme design

DISAGGREGATED DATA:

- Is the data you are using for your context analysis disaggregated by:
- Gender? Age? Ethnicity? Nationality? Religion? Rural vs. Urban? Disability? Socio-economic class? Educational level?

DECISION-MAKING AGENCY WITHIN FAMILIES AND IN PERSONAL LIFE:

- How are women’s roles assigned within families in your community?

- Do women enjoy complete freedom of movement in your community? If not, how are they restricted?
- Are young girls protected against child marriage and/or FGM in your community?
- Do women in your community have a strong voice in their marriage and family lives?
- Is gender-based violence an issue in your community? Does it appear in particular subsets of your community?
- Is divorce a viable option for women in your community?

ECONOMIC AGENCY:

- Are women easily able to gain paid employment in your community?
- Are women easily able to access job markets in your community?
- Are women subject to sexual predation and harassment in the job market? Are there protections in place or are they vulnerable to such?

- Are women over- or under-represented in formal labour? In informal, or grey labour?
- Can women own land in your community?
- Can women secure business loans in your community?
- Can women significantly contribute to household finances, etc. in your community?
- Do women maintain control of their earnings, or do they turn them over to other relatives?
- Can women in your community be manipulated into extremism through compromising their sexual or through honour-based crimes?
- Are women in your community vulnerable to coercive methods to join extremism, including beating and rape?⁶⁴

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL AGENCY IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

- Can women openly participate in public political and social life?
- Do women have a voice in community-related decisions?
- Are women or men more likely to be influencers of youth?
- Are women or men more involved in the education of the youth?
- Are women in your community better positioned to detect early signs of radicalisation and serve as a source of preventative information within the community than men?⁶³

FEMALE-SPECIFIC CONTINUED VULNERABILITIES TO RADICALISATION AND RECRUITMENT INTO VIOLENT EXTREMISM BY RETURNING VIOLENT EXTREMISTS:

- Are women in your community dependent on men for protection?
- Are women in your community dependent on men for their livelihood?
- Are women in your community pressured to respect and follow male community leaders?
- Are women in your community particularly vulnerable to being victimized by Islamophobic or other violent extremist actors?
- Are women in your community socially isolated and vulnerable to online recruitment?

63 World Bank, 2011; UN OHCHR, 2014

64 This is not an exhaustive list

A gender-responsive approach does not/does do the following:⁶⁵

X	✓
Does not focus exclusively on women.	Does focus on inequalities and differences between, and among, men and women, boys and girls. If you decide to work with women because of the discrimination they face, or the perceived advantages of doing so, initiatives should be based on a thorough analysis of gender roles and relationships.
Does not target women as a “vulnerable or minority group.”	Does recognise that both women and men are agents of change and active participants in their communities. Do not label women solely as victims; recognise and acknowledge their tremendous capacities for positive influence and the roles they play in their communities.
Does not apply the same treatment for women and men in all situations regardless of context.	Does design interventions that take into account inequalities and differences between women and men. Structure resources so that programmes recognise inequalities and attempt to rectify them.
Does not attempt to achieve equal participation of men and women.	Does move beyond counting the number of participants to focus on the quality of participation and desired effects initiatives have on men and women and gender relations. Recognise that equal opportunities for women is only one aspect of gender equality.
Does not assume that all women and all men share the same interests	Does understand the differences among and between different groups of women and men based on criteria such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. Does move beyond, and does not reinforce, gender stereotypes, such as assuming that all mothers are more involved with their children than fathers, or that all women are passive actors in violent extremism versus active players, as many differences exist within gender groupings.
Does not identify existing roles and responsibilities for women and men.	Does encourage participation based on ability and interest, rather than existing socially determined gender roles.

Finally, **gender analysis should not stop at women.** The vast majority of violent extremists are men, which is also a gendered phenomenon. By conducting gender analysis for all P/CVE programmes, programme designers are better able to tailor the programmes to participant’s specific needs. **Men and boys should also be included** in efforts to empower and incorporate women into P/CVE initiatives. In addition, gender issues should be considered for initiatives focused on men as well as women and also recognize that women may be those who can most effectively reach and influence men and boys. Women should and can be empowered in P/CVE.

Conclusions

There are few P/CVE programmes/initiatives both globally and in the region that focus on promoting women in P/CVE. Also, few programmes have incorporated gender analysis into the initiative whether or

not the programme should be specifically focused on women.

- Few P/CVE programmes specifically focus on promoting women in P/CVE.
- More common programmes include both women and men as beneficiaries.
- Social, economic, political, etc. factors leading to radicalisation identified in P/CVE programmes are rarely gender disaggregated.
- Most programmes have a wide P/CVE focus, including female components (e.g. the EU’s Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism, STRIVE).
- There is a lack of women-centric (gendered) P/CVE programmes and initiatives. This may be due in part to the infancy of the P/CVE field, the fact that more men are violent extremists than women, and to the fact that violent extremism was traditionally addressed through counterterrorism and military efforts, which both remain male-dominated fields.

65 UN Women and UNDP, 2018

There is a need for actors on the ground to **incorporate women and a gender perspective into P/CVE programmes in a practical way** in order to move closer to international norms and standards on gender equality and women, peace and security, and to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of P/CVE programmes.

Practical Exercise

GENDER ANALYSIS

Suggested Time: 25 minutes

Materials:

- Paper and writing utensils for each participant.
- Access to the link below via the Internet, OR print-out of the documents found at the below link.

Instructions:

- Divide participants into smaller groups of 4-5 individuals.
- Provide each participant with a copy of some gender aspects to consider in context analysis and programme design in Annex 1 and either a print-out of the document from the link below OR access to the link via the Internet.

- Instruct participants to read through the programme documents (brief programme description) as a case study of the 2016 “Social Media for Deradicalisation in Kyrgyzstan: A Model for Central Asia” project implemented by Search for Common Ground and financed by the U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Counterterrorism.

- The project may have some weaknesses, particularly concerning gender mainstreaming. Instruct participants to spend around 5 minutes reading through the programme description, then 5-7 minutes in their groups discussing how they would conduct a gender analysis for this project. Encourage them to use the gender aspects to consider from Annex 1 and to ask some of the questions they learned in this Unit.

- Have each group write down the elements of their gender analysis on their paper. After several minutes, call on each small group to present their gender analysis ideas to the group as a whole. Allow participants to respond to each group’s presentation with comments and questions.

Programme Document:

- Brief programme description: <https://www.sfcg.org/social-media-kyrgyzstan/>

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MODULE 2:

THE PROCESS OF RADICALISATION TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Learning Objectives

After going through this module, participants should be able to:

- Cite various factors which contribute towards the *radicalisation* of an individual to a violent extremist ideology.
- Understand that violent extremist actions are *not always the end point* of a process of radicalisation. Radicalisation is a process that may never go as far as endorsing violent extremism.
- Understand that women have a *critical role to play* in P/CVE because they feature predominantly in these earlier stages of radicalisation to violent extremism, as sympathizers, supporters, recruiters, violent actors, activists and in their roles in community and the family.
- Identify *practical reasons* women and men may join violent extremist groups.
- Understand the particular ways that *Internet/social media recruiting* impacts women, and how they may function both as extremist recruiters and potential recruits.

UNIT 1: MODELS OF RADICALISATION TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Warm-Up Activity

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers.

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely answers to the questions below. Encourage participants to be as succinct as possible (1-2-word answers are perfect).
- Write participants' suggestions on the board.
- After a few minutes, or after responses end, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:
 - o Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - o Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?
- When 10 minutes is up, put the paper with all the responses aside or don't erase the whiteboard to use for an activity in the next unit.

Questions:

- What are some factors that drive individuals towards radicalisation and extremism, in your view? (Spend approximately 3 minutes).
- Are these factors different for men than for women, or the same?
- Do women engage in violent extremism freely of their own accord or are they always coerced into it? (Spend approximately 1 minute).
- Do women recruit other women? (Spend approximately 1 minute).

Models of Radicalisation to Violent Extremism

No one is born a violent extremist. But events in the lives of individuals or of others around them may make someone vulnerable to violent extremism. **Radicalisation** is often the process by which individuals eventually move towards violent extremism. Individuals and groups radicalise when they **deviate from moderate mainstream beliefs and adopt extreme views**. However, not all radicals become violent. Therefore, radicalisation does not necessarily predict violent behaviours, but **can only provide a clue that someone may be moving towards violent extremism**. Additionally, the process of moving into violent extremism often takes weeks or months, even years.

Before coming to any conclusions, P/CVE actors should gather as much evidence as possible and **evaluate each case in a holistic way** based on the individual and local context. Detaining, shunning, or otherwise punishing a person who espouses radical ideas on the assumption that he or she may one day turn violent is not only unjust, **it is counter-productive**, as it may create grievances that motivate that individual to turn to violent extremism in the future. It is also important to note that individuals may turn to violent extremism without going through an ideologically-based radicalisation process at all. Ideology is only one part of a complex process toward creating a violent extremist. Some individuals join violent extremist groups because they want to belong, they want a sense of purpose or significance, or they are angry.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Mevlid, originally from Novi Pazar, Serbia, is an example of a lone actor. In 2011, he opened fire with an automatic weapon on the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo, Bosnia, wounding a policeman in the process. There were no clear ties in his case to a terrorist group although some sources have suggested that the attacker had close ties with the radical Wahhabi movement in Bosnia, including living in a community of Islamists in Gornja Maoca, which has come under Bosnian law enforcement scrutiny over the years. However, there was no hard evidence suggesting Mevlid's ties to any extremist group or ideology. Yet, he carried out violent extremist acts⁶⁸.

Cases of violent extremism should be evaluated individually, as there are many motivations for participating in violent extremism and not all of them will follow a process of ideological radicalisation. However, below we will examine radicalisation models which can often be applied to assess whether an individual may be moving towards violent extremism.

Over the last few decades, many researchers have studied and made important contributions to understanding pathways into violent extremism and the factors that may contribute to radicalisation.⁶⁷ A drawback of many of these models, however, is that their use of empirical field data in the creation of the model was limited. Researchers have often relied predominantly on existing psychological and sociological theories to understand the radicalisation process. In this module we will focus on one specific radicalisation theory, which represents an attempt to tie together various other theories with empirical data from the field.⁶⁸

The author of this manual, Dr. Anne Speckhard created a **model of radicalisation which ties together the various models that preceded it to identify the necessary and sufficient factors usually present to move an individual into terrorism or violent extremism**. The model is based on two decades of in-depth interviews with over 700 terrorists and their families, close associates, and hostages. After studying their trajectories into terrorism and violent extremism, Speckhard identified four factors which are often present in the radicalisation process to violent extremism or terrorism:

66 Speckhard, personal interview, Belgium, 2012

67 For those who wish to learn more, a brief overview of existing radicalisation models is provided in Annex 4 at the end of the manual.

68 Anne Speckhard, 2016

• Group

o The individual is exposed to a **violent extremist group** that purports to represent a sector of society.

• Ideology

o The individual is exposed to **the group's ideology which justifies politically motivated violence against civilians**.

• Social Support

o The individual is recognised by members of the violent extremist group as a person of interest and **receives social support** from the group for endorsing and engaging in violence which makes it easier for him or her to join.

• Individual Vulnerabilities and Motivations

o The individual has **personal vulnerabilities and motivations** that resonate with the first three factors.⁶⁹

Speckhard labelled these four factors and her model of radicalisation as the **Lethal Cocktail of Terrorism**, although they also can be applied to violent extremism.⁷⁰ According to this particular model, these four factors operate at organisational, sociological, ideological and psycho-social levels and interact in a process that ultimately produces a violent extremist. Below are the four factors described in more detail.

Violent extremist groups usually arise in response to some social problem, which they purport to fix through politically motivated violence. There are many types of violent extremist groups, from far-right neo-Nazis to violent environmentalists to nationalistic separatist

69 Speckhard, 2016

70 Speckhard, 2012

groups to militant jihadi groups like ISIS, al Qaeda, and their many affiliate groups. Groups of these types provide many functions that are necessary for a violent extremist to emerge. At the individual level, they provide belonging, camaraderie, a sense of purpose, significance, and shared identity to those who join. At an operational level, they provide and equip their members for violent acts by choosing targets, providing bombs or bomb-making instructions or other methods of attack, and encouraging members onward. They also provide messaging, financing, and links to other group members. **Without the existence of such groups, we would likely see far less instances of violent extremism in the region,** as some lone actors are not psychologically or physically capable of carrying out violent acts without a group urging them onward and providing them logistical support.⁷¹ Perhaps most importantly, groups also provide ideological justification for carrying out violent acts on behalf of the group.

Extremist ideologies are usually necessary to convince members to enact politically motivated violence. While many may join a group out of wanting a sense of belonging or protection, most individuals will not easily move to violence unless they are somehow convinced that such violence is morally justified to advance their political aim.⁷² Terrorist ideologies generally argue that it is necessary to attack other ethnicities, innocent civilians, or destroy property for a specific “cause”. In the case of ISIS and al Qaeda, their argument is that Islam, Muslims, and Islamic lands are under attack, and that fighting back and defending is necessary. Often, groups make use of commonly accepted and well-known religious scriptures, thereby co-opting mainstream religion into violent extremist ideology. In the case of ISIS and al Qaeda, their ideologies twist scriptures from Islam in ways that convince their adherents that it is their duty to fight jihad and to defend the Islamic “ummah” (global nation), Islamic lands, and Islam itself and in the case of ISIS that taking “hijrah” (emigration), that is moving to live under shariah law is obligatory for Muslims. This manipulation by terrorist ideologues of already accepted scriptures from one’s religion can help to convince a believer of the righteousness of the extremist cause.

Violent extremists, however, do not need to adopt a violent ideology to act on behalf of a group. The

authors’ interviews with violent extremists worldwide as well as the literature on the topic highlights the need to also understand how individuals may decide to act violently without any reference to violent ideology.⁷³ For example, some of those interviewed joined ISIS in Syria and Iraq for criminal purposes (self-enrichment) and had very little or no attachment to the group’s violent ideology. Others joined out of familial attachments or were lured with the promise of access to land and property, wealth, marriage (for both men and women) and access to sex (for men). Many violent extremists join groups for a sense of belonging, purpose, significance, adventure, as a result of falling in love, or even because of existing relationships with group members, which later may be enough to motivate them to act violently on behalf of the group without necessarily taking on the group’s ideology.

Groups, however, generally work hard to **ideologically indoctrinate new members and isolate them from dissenting views, so that those who join usually do over time adopt the ideology of the group**—making it easier to motivate them into violent actions. ISIS, for instance, obviously believed ideological indoctrination was of utmost importance as it required new male recruits to take sharia training in which the new members were indoctrinated into ISIS’s takfir and “martyrdom” ideology and were given ISIS’s twisted scriptural justifications for brutal violence. Male members were expected to indoctrinate their female family members at home.⁷⁴

In other cases, the ideology is what attracts members to the group. Every case is unique, but ideology is generally highly important in making a violent extremist, namely because it is the set of arguments used to justify moving members into actions that involve attacking innocents—that is, overcoming a moral barrier that most cannot easily jump over without an ideology justifying it.

Social support facilitates a group’s ability to find recruits and more easily convince them of the righteousness of the group’s actions.⁷⁵ As social beings, humans naturally look to each other for signals as to what is, and is not, appropriate behaviour. When individuals start to gravitate toward an extremist group or its ideology, they may be instructed by its leaders to

71 Schuurman, 2019

72 Khatchadourian, 1988, Cohan, 2006

73 Crone, 2016

74 Speckhard and Yayla, 2015; 2016; Speckhard, Shajkocvi and Yayla, 2018

75 Said Aly, Feldman and Shikaki, 2013

narrow their attention to the group and its teachings. In the case of ISIS, their recruiters often told potential members to disbelieve mainline news, that it was fake, and only believe what they heard about the group from other ISIS members. Potential recruits often also receive a great deal of social support by group members for initial steps toward joining the group. Some women and girls, for instance, have been attracted to groups like ISIS when **members pay attention to them via social media, meeting their needs for attention, care, and nurture as they are slowly pulled into the group.** ISIS recruiters are very strategic in swarming in on a person that shows interest in their propaganda and “love bombing” that person with attention they might not otherwise be receiving, while trying to at least temporarily meet their needs as they draw them deeper into the group.

In the UK, for example, ISIS has strategically targeted young women who have difficult home or family lives, or have histories of problematic or criminal behaviour.⁷⁶ As an individual is pulled into the group’s internal support system, the individual usually begins to also adopt group norms that support the appropriateness of violent behaviour on behalf of the cause. This makes it much easier to espouse and act on behalf of a violent extremist group’s goals.

In the past, potential recruits needed to win the trust of other group members before they were admitted to the group because a new recruit could compromise the security of an entire cell. With contemporary groups like ISIS, **social support is often offered virtually as well as in person,** thus facilitating and increasing the speed of the recruitment process and allowing for much more intimacy via the Internet without recruiters necessarily sacrificing their own security. For instance, ISIS recruiters in Raqqa were able to contact youth around the world via the Internet and encourage them to travel to Syria or to mount “homegrown” attacks.⁷⁷ The ability of terrorist cells to coalesce virtually and provide social support without ever meeting face-to-face makes prevention all the more difficult and can greatly speed up the radicalisation process.

Social support for violent extremism is often shown through mass demonstrations, “martyrdom” videos, Internet-based propaganda, chat rooms, and group and one-to-one interactions between extremists and potential recruits. Research has shown that individuals

will often go to extremes and become violent more easily when they are in groups, particularly when they can hide their identity. Additionally, “being in a group makes some people lose touch with their personal moral beliefs.”⁷⁸ Internet-driven recruitment by terrorist groups often channels recruits into a process in which they begin to limit their exposure to other ideas, gain many new “friends” online and receive support from the group for moving ahead into the radicalisation process. Recruiters also work to isolate their recruits from their friends, families and existing social networks and sowing distrust towards other sources of information. Thus, **social support serves as an important function of the radicalisation process.**

As mentioned earlier, **social support provided via the Internet can be very important factor for women in particular,** as many young women in conservative societies and communities are prevented or discouraged from mixing in person with males and would find it difficult to join a male-organized violent extremist group if it were not reaching them via the Internet, a medium in which they can much more freely interact with male violent extremists. Likewise, women in ISIS have been very instrumental in reaching out via the Internet for recruitment purposes to other women, and men,⁷⁹ and encouraging them to travel to join terrorist groups.⁸⁰

Individual vulnerabilities and motivations are the push and pull factors that draw individuals to an extremist group. No one is born a violent extremist, but many people encounter difficulties in their lives that may make them vulnerable to the pull of violent extremism. Some experts refer to these vulnerabilities and motivations for joining as “push or pull factors”. Such factors, operating at an individual level, intersect with the group, ideology, and the social support factors explained above. It is important to note that individual vulnerabilities and motivations often exist in circumstances where there are no groups or terrorist ideologies in play. In these cases, vulnerable individuals are very unlikely to become violent extremists because there is no group recruiting them, no ideology convincing them to engage in political violence and justifying it as a solution and no social support for coming to those viewpoints. Similarly, if a group’s ideology does not resonate within the individual’s life

76 Prazl-Tabuchi, 2019

77 ICSVE, 2017

78 Science Daily, 2014, as cited in Chang, 2008

79 Audrey Alexander,

80 Bota Sot, 2017

experiences, needs and beliefs, he or she will be less likely to respond to it. **The lethal cocktail of terrorism requires that these four factors intersect in a manner that propels the individual forward towards embracing violent solutions, rather than seeking pro-social behaviour, to address contentious social, political, or economic problems.**

Individual vulnerabilities and motivations often differ depending on whether the individual resides in a conflict zone or outside it. Those inside conflict zones may experience vulnerabilities such as:

- Direct experience with the violent loss of lives, particularly of loved ones
- Injury, psychological trauma, torture, sexual violence
- Loss of resources and freedom of movement
- These individuals are then motivated by trauma personally experienced or witnesses as experienced by others, the desire for revenge, as well as frustrated aspirations

In non-conflict zones, the push and pull factors are more nuanced. They include factors such as:

• Political

- o perceived wrongs and oppression committed against one's ethnic, religious, political or national group
- o anger over geo-politics
- o state oppression, discrimination and marginalisation
- o identification with the political struggles of others, especially of "fictive kin," as in the case of the Muslim ummah

• Religious

- o desire to bring about an apocalyptic event, such as establishing a Caliphate
- o desire to spread one's religion via violent takeover
- o desire to purify and preserve one's religion or belief in an ideology that calls for violent struggle with other religions
- o desire for redemption through martyrdom
- o exhaustion from trying to practice one's religion in contentious social settings (i.e. such as a female

constantly being harassed by Islamophobes for wearing conservative Islamic dress).

• Socio-economic

- o frustrated aspirations
- o poverty and an inability to provide for one's family
- o under and unemployment
- o discrimination
- o marginalisation
- o social and other services better provided by terrorist groups (i.e. compared to governments)
- o hopelessness for the future

• Psychosocial

- o identity issues
- o desire for personal significance
- o desire to fulfil stereotypical gender roles
- o need for belonging
- o escape from abusive circumstances or personal problems
- o search for purity
- o frustrated sexual desires
- o desire for marriage
- o secondary traumatisation upon viewing the victimisation of others
- o desire for travel and adventure
- o feeling an obligation to a family member already in the group
- o falling in love with someone in the group

Case Study: Shannon Conley

Shannon Conley, an American Catholic girl is an example where we can see all **four factors of the lethal cocktail of terrorism at work**. Shannon converted to Islam at age 17 for reasons that are unclear. She began dressing in a black burqa and covering her face with a niqab and went in search of Islamic teachings on the Internet. While neither of these behaviours is necessarily alarming or indicative of radicalisation in itself, what followed was worrisome. In a short time,

she began following the terrorist ideologue, Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed by the U.S. forces in a drone attack for instigating various terrorist plots. The charismatic Awlaki, although already dead, was still very much **alive on the Internet** when Shannon Conley found his lectures. Awlaki taught that Muslims have a duty to migrate to Islamic lands and to fight jihad until the end times. Conley believed him and began downloading militant jihadi manuals that instructed her on various types of attacks.

When her case came to the attention of local police, the FBI became involved. Conley was repeatedly approached by FBI agents, with little positive effect. In one of those visits, Conley showed them how she had underlined various passages in her downloaded terrorist manuals and contemplated carrying out a VIP (Very Important Person) attack inside the U.S. She told the FBI that she gave up that idea because American VIPs are too well guarded, but she explained to the FBI agents that she considered the U.S. military and civilians on military bases as legitimate targets of attack.

Over time, she fell deeper under the influence of militant jihadi ideologies and participated in extremist chat rooms, where she undoubtedly began to find **belonging, significance and a sense of purpose**. Finally, she met a Tunisian ISIS fighter in Syria over the Internet, who she fell in love with via Skype conversations. He proposed marriage to her and invited Conley to join ISIS, telling her she would have important work as a battlefield medic. Ultimately, Conley attempted to board a plane after having taken U.S. military cadets training, to offer herself to ISIS as a wife and a supporting member bringing nurses aid and cadets training as skills she could provide the group. Conley's father understood that she was about to travel to marry her Tunisian Internet-lover and turned her in to the FBI. She was arrested and convicted of giving material support to a terrorist group.⁸¹

How did this young woman become a violent extremist?

1) **Exposure to a group** – After her conversion to Islam, interacting in chat rooms and making friends with other extremists exposed Shannon to a version of Islam very few Muslims would recognise as legitimate. Such sites gave her a sense of belonging, significance and purpose and deepened her Islamic beliefs. Likewise, they directed her to narrow her

views to those held by extremists. She took on a new identity, changing her name to an Islamic one and emulating what she thought was proper Islamic behaviour: dressing extremely conservatively (although this is not necessarily indicative of extremism), making friends with like-minded individuals, becoming concerned about conflicts in other parts of the world where Muslims are victims, and over time taking on her “friends” violent extremist views and behaviours. It is very common for new converts to adopt a change in dress, rhetoric and character and isolate themselves from existing friends and family members which is exactly what Shannon did, and then she became exposed to a terrorist group.⁸²

2) **Exposure to an extremist ideology** – Conley found Anwar al Awlaki and his violent teachings on the Internet and began to follow Islam according to his teachings. She began to believe it was her duty to fight Westerners, particularly the U.S. military, to defend downtrodden Muslims, and that attacks on civilian target were not forbidden by Islam. During the conversion stage, when exploring her new Muslim faith, Shannon was misled by extremists to believe that violence on behalf of her religion was called for and obligatory.

3) **Social support** – Conley found like-minded people who bolstered her new beliefs and encouraged her to deepen them as well as to withdraw from society and to enact violence. When she fell in love with an ISIS fighter over Skype, she found the ultimate in social support. He proposed marriage to her and encouraged her to travel to Syria to join ISIS where he assured her that she was needed and would play a significant role in the group.

4) **Individual vulnerabilities** – Shannon's mother was a professor and her father an IT professional. Her mother admitted that Shannon was lonely and isolated as a teen. Upon her conversion, Shannon immediately hid her body under a burka and appears to have related easily to violent teachings and expressions of profound anger on behalf of other victims.

81 Speckhard, 2015

82 Roald, 2012

Practical Exercise

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers.

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely their answers to the questions below.
- Write participants' answers on the board in summarised form.
- For each question, after a few minutes, or after responses end, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:
 - Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?
- After a few minutes of discussion, move to the next question.

Questions:

When categorising a violent extremist vs. someone with radical views.

- What are some of the macro-level trends in your community that might drive radicalisation? For example, high unemployment, or minority ethnic group tensions.
- Are there any violent extremist groups purporting to address these issues in your community? How (i.e. by providing support or services that the government is unable to? Providing jobs or access to income? Offering friendship and bonds of loyalty? Etc.)?
- What ideology do they use in their recruiting efforts and how might that ideology resonate with vulnerabilities in your community?
- How do you see violent extremist or terrorist groups offering a keen sense of social support for joining them? Do they recruit and offer support differently based on gender?
- Do any of the vulnerabilities to radicalisation you see in your community correspond to the radicalisation factors in this unit?

- What might make females particularly vulnerable to violent extremism in your community? Which aspects of the local violent extremist ideology might resonate most strongly with women and girls in your community, and why?
- What tips the balance in your community between someone who may be affected by some radicalising factors but DOES NOT radicalise towards violent extremism, and someone who is affected by these factors and DOES radicalise towards violent extremism?

UNIT 2: HOW RADICALISATION TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM HAPPENS

Warm-Up Activity

ANONYMOUS VOTE

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Responses from the previous warm-up activity, either on the large sheet of paper hung in the front of the room, or on the whiteboard.

Instructions:

- Instruct participants that they all have been give 5 “votes”. Out of the factor list that they came up with in the previous unit’s warm-up activity, tell them to consider which factors they think are most important or are more likely to contribute to radicalisation and violent extremism.
- Invite participants to come to the front of the room and write a check mark next to 5 of their favourite responses. Have students use a pen or marker if the list is on paper and a whiteboard marker if the list is on the whiteboard. When everyone has finished voting, invite participants to return to their seats.
- Tally up the votes and note on the white board or a page piece of paper the top 5 answers according to their number of votes.
- Invite students to respond to the results. If the conversation needs a push, ask things like:

- o Do any of the winning responses surprise you? Why?
- o Do you think there are any factors missing that should have been in the top 5?
- o Are any of these top 5 factors relevant in your community? How have you seen them have an effect?
- o What might be some creative ways to address them?

Specific Factors to Consider

Romance

Romance and marriage as a “pull factor” can be a significant motivation to join an extremist group for both men and women.⁸³ Men joining ISIS with the hope of finding a pure, Muslim wife, or to be offered local female prisoners as sex slaves is well documented. Similarly, many women joined ISIS in search of a pure, Muslim husband and for the excitement of marrying a jihadi fighter, alongside other motivating factors.⁸⁴

⁸³ Pull factors are positively perceived elements of extremist groups that attract individuals TO the group; push factors are negatively perceived elements of an individual’s situation drive her or him AWAY from the situation at home and into the arms of an extremist group.

⁸⁴ Speckhard, 2016.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

19-year-old Lejla from Novi Pazar, Serbia, was lured to join ISIS over the Internet. The jihadists who targeted young women in the Balkans, as in many parts of the world, portrayed themselves as brave and masculine. The lure of romance and marriage,

with marriage symbolizing a transition to adulthood, was especially attractive in the case of young Balkan women who were facing difficult economic problems at home and believed they were going off to prosperity as they would be following their faith and helping to build an Islamic Caliphate.⁸⁵

Migrant radicalisation

It is also important to stress **migrant vulnerabilities to violent extremism**. Historically, violent and terrorist groups have exploited population flows (i.e. migrants) for both resource generation and recruitment. A recent study on migrant vulnerabilities in Central Asia found a **positive relationship between migrants' vulnerabilities** (e.g. due to language barriers, alienation, repressive law enforcement measures in a host country, etc.) **and radicalisation**. More research is warranted to better understand the interplay of other factors, such as socioeconomic measures, exposure

to radical ideologies, etc.⁸⁶ Of course, vulnerabilities and integration opportunities for migrant workers are likely to depend on other resilience factors such as educational success, language competency, economic capital, communal, social and familial networks.⁸⁷ However, exposure to violent extremist group members, ideologies, and the prospect of receiving social and/or financial support from them during their difficult time as a migrant creates a dangerous opportunity for recruitment.⁸⁸

85 Speckhard, 2016

86 IOM, 2017.

87 IOM, 2017, p.26; IOM, 2016.

88 Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2016.

89 Speckhard and Shajkovci interviews in Kyrgyzstan, 2017.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

A Central Asian woman who worked in Turkey, for instance, told the author about how she was lonely and isolated from her protective family members and thus fell in with a group of Central Asians who were planning to join ISIS. Family members and friends of migrants also told the author about migrants receiving offers over the Internet from their friends and family members who had joined ISIS, telling them that their salaries and housing in ISIS would be much better than in the harsh migrant conditions they were working.⁹¹ These offers of friendship, support and financial incentives were all strong pull factors for recruitment into ISIS.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Zana, a native of Albania who left her country to pursue economic prosperity elsewhere in the Balkans after years of constant unemployment, found it difficult to overcome poverty. Not only did she lack networking opportunities in her new situation, she worked in isolated conditions, and experienced difficulties dealing with her boss. Because she worked in the informal job sector, she also lacked adequate social protection. With minimal opportunities to succeed in her current job, when one of

her patrons approached her and offered her the opportunity to travel to Syria, she was tempted. Despite months of grooming, she eventually turned her patron down and did not travel to Syria. After her recruiter left for Syria, she never heard from him again.⁹⁰ Luckily by finding some inner strength to preserve amidst hardships, she narrowly missed being pulled into a terrorist group.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

A young man from Sandjak, Serbia moved to Vienna, Austria, in search of work after the death of his father. In his lonely and vulnerable state as a migrant and having just lost a parent, he was approached by a recruiter. The recruiter offered him good pay for odd jobs and later invited him to move in with some other Balkan compatriots in Vienna, whom the young man's mother described as "extremists." He accepted, happy to have a place to stay and enough food to eat. No longer hungry, this young Balkan migrant man gladly listened to the militant teachings of their leader in exchange for belonging, hearty meals and material support. This young man worked out together and after "beefing up" would link arms and walk the streets of Vienna bearded and dressed in his long Islamic robes, pushing anyone who crossed his path out of his way. Later, this young man told his mother it was the first time in his life he felt respected and powerful. Over time, this young man fell under the extremists' influence and began to consider taking on some important mission for the group. When the young man visited his mother at home in Serbia, she was appalled to find her son drastically changed in his dress, demeanor and espousing violent extremist views. She quickly intervened and helped him to understand that the camaraderie he was receiving far from home, despite the material benefits of receiving food and shelter from them, and the respect he felt, would lead him down a dangerous path and that he must forsake it.⁹¹

Traumatic life events

Any P/CVE interventions should consider the likely cognitive openings that are occurring in the community. **Traumatic life events can be a force that drives an individual towards radicalisation.** This is especially important when people may be feeling a sense of hopelessness, anger, fear of security forces, etc. However, just as traumas may create the cognitive openings through which violent extremists reach out to vulnerable new recruits, trauma healing, too, may

be an important first step towards prevention and de-radicalisation. Just as violent extremists lure recruits in by meeting their needs, those who are trying to prevent entry to or draw individuals out of extremism can also do so by offering to meet their needs for healing and health.

⁹⁰ Speckhard and Shajkovci interview with a prosecutor in Kosovo, 2017.

⁹¹ Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2016

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Omar, a young Norwegian man, faced a crisis when his mother became deathly ill. In an effort to cope with the situation, he began exploring other religions and eventually converted to Islam. Omar noticed that his white Christian neighbors became angry when he started growing a long beard and wearing Islamic clothing. Confused and naïve about Islam, and trying to find Muslim brothers to worship with, Omar fell in with extremists. As a new convert, he was not able to understand that their violent interpretations of Islam were hardly mainstream and should be avoided. However, after recovering from her illness, Omar's mother confronted him when he began espousing violent views he had picked up from his new Muslim "brothers." His mother's illness was the crisis that led to his search for meaning about life and death and his ultimate movement into violent extremism. Yet, it was also his mother who was the force that pulled him back out of it.⁹² Omar is still today a Muslim but he no longer endorses violent views nor endorses violent actions on behalf of Islam.

Material gains

In Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Central Asia where securing adequately paying employment is a challenge, practical pull factors such as **a good salary and steady employment** are often part of the reason individuals join violent extremist groups. This was particularly true when ISIS was in its heyday offering paid positions and free housing. In the context of unemployment or underemployment, men and women who have few opportunities for finding a job may see violent extremist groups as a good practical option due to the promise of money and benefits they offer. Because of traditional gender norms that usually categorise a man as the bread winner, women in the region may be less likely to join violent extremist groups to earn a salary themselves, although mothers may urge their spouses to consider joining to support the family. Likewise, there are many cases of women taking up paid jobs in ISIS and filling positions of power in the ISIS hisbah (morality police) for instance, which suggests that material incentives and paid jobs are also important for women. There are also documented cases of **female relatives**, such as mothers, sisters, and wives, **encouraging male relatives** such as sons, brothers, and husbands to **join extremist groups to earn good salaries** that they can send back home

92 Anne Speckhard personal interview with former Norwegian violent extremist, 2016

to their family.⁹³ Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, there were two cases of grandmothers encouraging their entire families to migrate to ISIS to earn what they believed would be "signing bonuses" for coming to Syria.⁹⁴ Sadly, these women were disappointed by the realities of what indeed happened to their families.

Additionally, as women across the world often are **less economically advantaged than their male counterparts**, they too may also be lured into terrorist groups by the belief in material benefits accruing as a result.⁹⁵ In addition to paid jobs for women, ISIS offered free housing, and in some instances cars, food, fuel and other allowances or benefits to ISIS families, which both women and men found attractive. Moreover, extremist groups often offer services to their members and their children, a particularly attractive aspect to mothers who cannot otherwise provide for their children. Hezbollah and Hamas, for example, are known to provide social services and offer benefits, including "martyrdom" benefits to women whose sons or husbands "martyr" themselves on behalf of the group. Such benefits may make women acquiesce to the demands of terrorist groups,

93 Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2017; Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018

94 Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul, 2017

95 Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2017a; Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul, 2017

or even support or encourage family members to join such groups. Mothers in pursuit of social services that governments fail to provide, such as education, medical services, or financial assistance, may be **drawn to terrorist groups in order to acquire such services** and thereby expose their children to the group's ideology, recruitment and training activities. When a group begins to meet the needs of mothers or young girls, they may be more open to the group's ideology and more likely to comply with the demands made upon them by the group.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

In Kosovo, the police uncovered text messages from wives of men who traveled to Syria and Iraq to join terrorist groups, praising and encouraging their husbands for earning salaries there. In another case, a grandmother from Issy Kul, Kyrgyzstan, recruited a large portion of her extended family to travel to Syria to join ISIS, believing that each family member would earn a “joining” bonus and that their financial lot would be much improved. Tragically, only one of the grandsons escaped and returned home to his village with the message that the rest of the family was unable to escape from ISIS and would be unlikely to return alive.⁹⁶

96 Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2017; Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018

Female-specific push and pull factors



Financial dependence

In Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Central Asia, though women do not often join extremist groups themselves in search of a salary, they can face dire economic circumstances if their husbands move to another country either for work or to join violent extremist groups. In these parts of the region, due to restrictive gender norms that make it difficult for women to work, **if women refuse to follow their husbands, they will almost certainly be left to face poverty alone** with their children—unless they have other family members to support them. Many women thus accompany their husbands into violent extremist groups expressly for **practical material survival**. Crucially, women who live in poverty have fewer alternatives to joining extremist groups than do women who are more economically secure, and thus may be more susceptible to this being one among many motivating factors. As reflected in the story from Kosovo, some wives and mothers in the Balkans and in Central Asia have also encouraged their men to join and accompanied them hoping to improve the family's material circumstances, alongside other motivations.

not decide for themselves even in male-dominated societies. Though this assumption is likely overstated, **women in the region indeed often have less agency than men** when it comes to the choice to join a violent extremist group. Women are also the most targeted victims of extremist groups, especially those who are misogynist, and they may frequently be coerced into taking part in violent extremism. **Many are forced into marriages and sexually exploited.** Likewise, women may fall prey to husbands, brothers, and community members who trick, coerce, or even force, them into serving violent extremist groups. In cultures where women are discouraged from reading the news, inquiring about the state of international affairs, or participating in local community in public, some women's lack of or misinformation about the realities of conflicts in Syria and Iraq may also lead them to follow male relatives somewhat blindly into extremist groups. Additionally, violent extremist group's promises of adequate employment, large houses, and good quality social services are easier to believe without full access to other sources of information.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

21-year-old Aisha moved with her family to Vienna, Austria as a 12-year-old, fleeing the war in Chechnya. Although growing up in Western Europe, Aisha was raised according to the conservative Islamic practices of her Chechen family. As age 18 she was married to a German Chechen who took her back to Germany with him. Aisha's husband radicalized and decided to take her and their children to Syria to join ISIS. At the time of their travels, Aisha lived such a sheltered life that she had no idea about ISIS, or even really understood where Syria was. She simply knew she should obey her husband's wishes. Inside ISIS, however her husband was killed as a fighter after taking her into Mosul, Iraq and she was left to fend for herself. Aisha escaped bombs but lost both of her children during the bombardments. She now struggles to rebuild her life after being repatriated to Germany.

Lack of information/agency

There is a strong bias, particularly in male leaders, law enforcement, and security workers, to view women predominantly as victims and lacking personal agency when it comes to recruitment to violent extremist groups. The author likes to refer to this as “zombification” of women as it assumes that women lack agency and do

Other reasons women in the region might lack agency in their decision to join violent extremist groups are similar to the reasons **women may lack agency in all aspects of their lives:** under-age marriage, low levels of education, an expectation to bear children immediately after marriage, being encouraged or coerced to stay at home rather than work, separation from one's family to live with in-laws, domestic abuse,

being groomed one's entire life for subservience as a wife and mother, religious expectations to obey and follow one's husband, threats or polygamy and fear of potential abandonment, and financial dependence.⁹⁷ Women who live under several of these aforementioned compounding factors likely find it more difficult to exercise agency in decisions to join violent extremist groups. In some cases, it is a complicated combination of male dominance and female agency as the case study below illustrates.

extremist groups are much more nuanced than the harsh reality of victimization alone. **Many women also choose to take part in violent extremism of their own free will.**⁹⁹ These women join groups like ISIS because they want to take part in building the Caliphate, believe they can live an Islamic life there, fall in love with someone inside the group, want to enhance their financial circumstances, are angry over geopolitics and support ISIS's narrative about Muslims being under attack, or have other reasons to exit their current lives.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

The case of Abu Albani and his wife in Kosovo illustrates a case of a “good wife” follower as well as a woman who was herself radicalized. When Abu Albani went to Syria briefly to fight with the Free Syrian Army, he became enamored of ISIS and brought that enthusiasm home to Kosovo with him. When ISIS declared their Caliphate, Abu Albani decided to return. This time, his wife enthusiastically followed him to Syria and they both received his mother's blessing for going to join the ISIS Caliphate. Abu Albani's wife believed in her husband's mission in Syria and trusted him to make decisions for the family. Once in Syria serving ISIS however, they both became disappointed with ISIS's treatment of women. Abu Albani stated that ISIS widows were forced to remarry after the deaths of their husbands, which was re-enforced by ISIS laws limiting women's ability to go out shopping or seek medical help without their husbands. He also maintained that ISIS women did not receive good healthcare. The couple finally returned to Kosovo, where Abu Albani was prosecuted and imprisoned for support to a terrorist group and possession of illegal weapons. Although she appeared as radicalized as him, Abu Albani's wife was not subjected to any legal action and lived freely while he served time in prison. Likewise, Kosovar police were aware of her continued messaging to those back in ISIS territory. That she may have enacted violence back at home was a real risk. Abu Albani unfortunately emerged from prison as radicalized or more so after studying the teachings of al Qaeda ideologue Maqdisi in Albanian in Kosovo prison. While he spoke against ISIS during his first interview with the author, he later told her he had returned to his previous support for ISIS and he wished her to be beheaded on future trips into Syria. He also stated that he had taught his wife to use firearms. ICSVE made two Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative videos of Abu Albani. These two videos are also subtitled in many of the other languages in which ISIS recruits (See Annex 3)⁹⁸.

However, this phenomenon must not be exaggerated. Research in the Balkans and Central Asia demonstrates that the reasons for female participation in violent

Some women chose to join groups like ISIS as an escape from violence and oppression at home or in their personal lives. While recognising that some women

⁹⁷ Speckhard, Shajkovci, and Esengul, 2017

⁹⁸ Nurmatov, 2015

⁹⁹ Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2017; as cited in Fink, Zeiger & Bhulai, 2016; Speckhard, 2008

are indeed victims, viewing women solely as victims deprives them of their personal agency and repeats cultural stereotypes that limit women in the first place. It also reduces the likelihood that those women will receive services and support for de-radicalisation and integration on their capture or return, ignores that they may be dangerous or highly traumatized by their time spent in the group, and diminishes any possible role they could play in de-radicalising others. Furthermore, both extremist groups and women returning from violent extremist groups are often aware that as women, they are perceived as lacking agency and can exploit that perception to escape justice.¹⁰⁰ Ideally, as much evidence as possible should be gathered in each case to assess how much agency

the woman in question had regarding her decision to engage in violent extremism and what activities she took part in during her time in a violent group. Many women in ISIS took part in violence, from grooming their Yazidi slaves for rape, to taking part in the torture and harassment of other women, to carrying firearms and taking part in armed conflict. Finally, **rehabilitation** measures within P/CVE efforts for both male and female returning violent extremists should be **psychosocial and constructive** rather than purely punitive, legalistic or security-based in order to minimize negative long-term effects of punishments for women who may not have truly made the decision to join extremist groups themselves.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Meerim was 21-year-old medical student from Osh, Kyrgyzstan. While she did not follow her husband, she fell prey to ISIS' misinformation and ended up in Syria. Driven by her desire to help those suffering in the Syrian conflict, including being told there was a need for medical personnel, she traveled to Syria. In a statement describing her stay in Syria, she noted, "Where I was, I didn't get to see any wounded. I spent six months there... I realized I'd made a mistake and asked an acquaintance to get me back home"¹⁰¹.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Aisha, a woman from Issy Kul, Kyrgyzstan, was unhappily married, and then left behind to serve her in-laws while her husband worked in nearby Russia. She decided to escape her circumstances by traveling to Syria and joining ISIS. Similarly, Nora, a Kosovar woman, left her husband in Switzerland and returned to Kosovo in 2015. Upon her return, she met Tahir, a Kosovar, through social media. According to Nora, Tahir had two wives, one in Mitrovica, Kosovo, and one in Albania. At the time he also had two children, one with each wife. To avoid becoming Tahir's third wife in Kosovo and thus being sanctioned according to cultural norms in her society, the two decided to leave Kosovo and be wed in Syria in the so-called Islamic State, where she would have Tahir to herself. Nora's parents disagreed with her becoming Tahir's third wife, which, according to her, was the main reason for choosing to move with Tahir to marry inside ISIS territory. Her family was not aware of the planned marriage, and unbeknownst to them, she left for Syria with Tahir. Upon arrival to Istanbul, Turkey, however, they were discovered and sent back to Kosovo¹⁰².

100 Vrugtman, 2018

101 Nurmatov, 2015

102 Bajrami, 2015

Sexual abuse

There are many claims that terrorist recruiters themselves **sexually compromise or rape women** in order to coerce them to join, or worse yet to carry out suicide missions for the group.¹⁰³ A rumour regarding the rape

group where they will still have value as a woman, or at least as a violent operative, despite their social stigma. Women raped by the extremist group's enemy may also be highly motivated to join the group to enact revenge against the enemy group for what happened to them.¹⁰⁵

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Reem was a Palestinian woman who exploded herself at a Gaza checkpoint. Israeli officials reported that she was pregnant. In interviews with Hamas leaders, conducted by Yoram Schweitzer, she was reported as having been in a compromising affair with a Hamas leader, despite being married to someone else. When her pregnancy and the affair was discovered, the two men reportedly decided the best outcome for their difficult situation would be to send Reem as a suicide bomber, an action which she apparently agreed to carry out, perhaps under duress¹⁰⁷.

or sexual compromise of women in the community or society may also serve as a **motivating factor for men in particular to join a violent extremist group out of a sense of protection and defence of women in their community**. Conversely, women who have been sexually abused by members of their own community may turn to violent extremism as a response, as the anger over being raped can be channelled into taking part in violent extremism.¹⁰⁴ In conservative cultures, women who feel they have lost their “sexual purity,” and sometimes even those who cannot bear children, may be convinced that their best option is to join an extremist

Revenge

In some of the cultures of the region where revenge is commonly practiced or accepted, the duty to take revenge generally falls to men and it is unusual for women to participate in revenge killings. In the case of terrorism, however, particularly in conflict zones, **women can become angry over the deaths, injuries, imprisonment, rape and torture of loved ones**, including male family members upon whom the duty to revenge would normally fall. In these cases, some women may feel compelled to take up the mantle of revenge themselves.¹⁰⁶

STORIES FROM THE REGION

A famous Chechen case involved a woman, Elza Gazuyeva, whose husband and relatives had been abducted, tortured and killed by a well-known Russian commander, Gaidar Gadzhiyev. Gazuyeva requested that the Chechen terrorists equip her with a suicide belt, which she wore to Gadzhiyev's office, asking the question, “Do you remember me?” just seconds before she detonated the explosive belt¹⁰⁷. While Chechen women do not normally bear the burden of enacting revenge, and most Chechens did not support suicide terrorism, Elza's suicide was widely praised by Chechens who were tired of Russian human rights violations, and this commander in particular's abuse upon their population.

¹⁰³ The term “sexually compromise” refers to causing damage to someone's reputation, for instance, by making false or true claims that they have engaged in a [sexual] relationship with some considered unsuitable.

¹⁰⁴ Speckhard, 2012

¹⁰⁵ Anne Speckhard, personal communication with Yoram Schweitzer, 2003

¹⁰⁶ Speckhard, 2008; 2012; Speckhard & Akmedova, 2006a; 2006 b; 2007

¹⁰⁷ Anne Speckhard, personal communication with Yoram Schweitzer, 2003

Practical ways groups recruit and communicate

Radicalisation tools

Social media has played a significant role in expanding violent extremist networks and increasing the transmission speed of information to and from extremist groups. In addition to spreading propaganda, fundraising, and engaging in operational support, **social media platforms also ensure the long-term survival of extremist messages** by creating sustained extremist communities and the ability to store extremist content online. Constant access to violent material also helps speed up the recruitment process. Counter-terrorism expert Reuven Paz has referred to this Internet repository of extremist ideology and recruitment materials as the “open University for Jihad studies”.¹⁰⁸

Research also shows that in contrast to face-to-face interactions, Internet communication can lead to **more intimate interactions in a shorter time** as well as allow for information sharing amongst groups of individuals. These two aspects of Internet communication have dramatically changed the way violent extremist groups operate compared to the time before the Internet and social media was commonplace.

In regard to the Internet, it is important to understand that today’s social media tools and the possibility of instantaneous Internet-based chat, audio and video chat make the formation of intimate bonds between recruiters and their potential recruits possible to form in a very short time period. In the author’s 220 interviews of ISIS members, eight percent had been solely recruited via the Internet with no other influence from a family member, friend, face-to-face recruiter, preacher or other person. They had been radicalized and in the case of migrants, moved to the point of relocating to Syria solely via ISIS propaganda and Internet-based recruiters active on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Telegram, or some other Internet platform. The Internet played an important role for many of those interviewed. For example, looking at the entire sample of 220, 37.9% of men (n=69) and 28.9% of women (n=11) were influenced by the Internet as well as by other factors including face-to-face interactions. However excluding the 98 from Iraq

¹⁰⁸ as cited in Stevenson, 2008

and Syria and looking only at the migrants or travelers, the numbers went even higher with 63.4% of the men (n=59) and 35.7% of the women (n=10) saying they were influenced to travel and join ISIS via the Internet.

Another point that should be made about ISIS’s success in using the Internet as a recruiting tool is that at the time ISIS was rising, social media offered tools that allowed ISIS to send out its messaging to billions of social media users and then sit back and wait to see who responded. When an individual showed interest by sharing, retweeting, liking or otherwise endorsing ISIS propaganda, the ISIS Internet recruiters could swing into action and swarm in on that individual knowing that he was already responding to their materials. This made their task of identifying potential recruits much easier.

In that regard a French journalist pretending to be a young woman interested in ISIS created a fake Facebook profile in which she endorsed a French ISIS fighter’s jihadi video. The same day she shared his video he immediately contacted her. He cut right to the chase asking if she was interested in jihadi fighters, thought he was good looking, wanted to travel to Syria and perhaps get married (to him of course) and that if she was willing to come she would have riches, a house and many other rewards. He continued to seduce her by contacting her daily on text, Skyping with her and so on. The journalist concluded her month of interacting with him by noting that had she been that young girl she was pretending to be, she would have been devastated by the amount of attention he paid her.¹⁰⁹

Female-specific recruitment tools

Online communication as a way to engage with men outside the public eye

When violent extremist groups are operating in a conservative culture or subculture where gender mixing is not accepted or is discouraged, or the public movement of women is limited, the advent of online communications have made it much easier to reach

¹⁰⁹ Day, E. (2015). “ Anna Erelle: ‘In front of me was this man who killed women and children.’” Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/31/anna-erelle-interview-in-front-of-me-was-this-isis-killer>

women.¹¹⁰ **The Internet breaks through the limitations of conservative culture on women**, creating opportunities for clandestine mixed gender chatting and video messaging without the need to leave one's home and enter the public sphere. Groups like ISIS target vulnerable women—including in rural and otherwise disconnected environments—and exploit their vulnerabilities, such as youth, naivete, social isolation and longing for a fuller life.¹¹¹ Recruiters then market their extremist group as capable of meeting those needs. Though women are still less likely to have Internet access than men, as Internet penetration increases recruiters for violent extremist networks increasingly make contact with women, even in very remote areas.

In researching the role of women in al Qaeda, Reuven Paz has noted that despite al Qaeda being a typically traditional terrorist organisation with clearly delineated gender roles, women participated on an equal basis in the al-Qaeda affiliated Internet chatrooms, voicing their opinions as actively as men. Paz explained, **“Internet-jihad is now an accepted form of jihad. Women can equally participate, from their houses”**.¹¹² The creation of live chatrooms and other virtual interactions on social media platforms has made it much easier for women who might be stifled in their freedom of movement and their ability to make male friends in real life—to make contact with

male and female cadres of violent extremist groups via the Internet. **For women who do not have many interactions with males outside their family this can be very exciting**, while the reverse is also true when women act as terrorist recruiters.

Finally, Internet recruiting also makes it easier for female violent extremists to recruit other women or men back in their communities. There are documented cases of **female ISIS cadres serving as recruiters via the Internet from behind their computer screens**, outside of the public eye and away from the battleground. There are also reports of ISIS inviting many foreign female fighters to join a group of women who operated out of the safety of a home in Raqqa to seduce others into the group.¹¹³ Female ISIS bloggers such as Umm Layth and Bird of Paradise have seduced women to join the group through their writings glorifying the group and explaining how to join.¹¹⁴ The National Investigation Agency (NSA) in India also reported that most of their mainly male citizens who travelled to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria were recruited over the Internet by contacts with ISIS recruiters who claimed to be women and offered them marriage once they arrived.¹¹⁵ A lonely man is an easy target for a female Internet-based recruiter.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

In terms of marketing to women, al Qaeda ran an online magazine aimed directly at women. It was aptly named al Khansa, after a female Islamic poet. ISIS also marketed directly to women, devoting whole sections and issues of its two online magazines Dabiq and Rumiya, to the roles of women. Women are promised the possibility to fulfill their religious duty, become important state builders, experience deep and meaningful belonging and sisterhood, and to live an exciting adventure in which they can find true romance, as well as become increasingly influential. Seven promises made by ISIS to women who joined have been identified in its online magazine Dabiq, depicted below¹¹⁶.

110 Note that women who are communicating with men online do not necessarily go into knowing they are being recruited. In fact, they rarely do. That said, while they might not necessarily know they are being recruited, they do know they are talking with men outside the public eye.

111 Speckhard, Shajkovic and Esengul, 2017;

112 as cited in Tervooren, 2016, p. 25

113 Speckhard and Yayla, 2015; 2016

114 Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 2015

115 Anne Speckhard, personal communication with National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials, India, 2017

116 Tarras-Wahlberg, 2017

>>RELIGIOUS DUTY (HIJRA)
>>STATE BUILDING
>>BELONGING
>>ADVENTURE
>>SISTERHOOD
>>ROMANCE
>>INFLUENCE

- o What roles could women play in the activities and interventions identified?

Questions:

When categorising a violent extremist vs. someone with radical views.

- Keep in mind the top 5 radicalisation factors voted for in the warm-up activity for this unit and the macro-level trends that may contribute towards radicalisation in your community identified in the practical activity from the previous unit. What are some interventions, initiatives or types of activities that P/CVE actors in this community could do to combat or target both the top 5 community radicalisation factors and macro-level trends identified?

Practical Exercise

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers.

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely their answers to the question below. Encourage participants not to be afraid to get creative during a brainstorm session, the more creative and innovative the idea the better. Instruct them to think outside the box and come up with activities, initiatives and interventions not currently used by P/CVE actors, but that could work well in their community context.
- Write participants' answers on the board in summarised form.
- After a few minutes, or after responses end, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:
 - o Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - o Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?
 - o Which option do you think would work best in your community? Why?

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MODULE 3:

P/CVE: The Process

Learning Objectives

UNIT 1: IDENTIFYING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

- Identify possible *signs of radicalisation to violent extremism* and which ones are more and less concerning.
- Explain the *difficulties in identifying signs* of radicalisation to violent extremism

UNIT 2: PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

- Cite the different *roles* that *women* can and do *play in P/CVE*
- Identify ways in which women are crucial actors in P/CVE when *targeting both male and female* extremists
- Identify ways that women could play *P/CVE roles in their local community*

UNIT 1: IDENTIFYING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Warm-Up Activity

TALKING TURNS

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- None

Instructions:

- Instruct participants that they will each have exactly 1 minute to respond to a question you will ask to the entire group. (If there are more than 10 participants in the training, give everyone 30 seconds).
- After you ask the question, the first person in the front of the seating arrangement will stand up and respond.
- After 1 minute on the timer, the next person should stand and respond.
- Continue the process until everyone has responded.
- If there is still time left, ask participants questions such as:

o Do any of the responses surprise you? Why?

o What was your favourite response?

o Do you think any of the examples given might work well in your community?

Question:

What is the best example of successfully turning someone away from violent extremism, extremism, or radicalisation that you have experienced or heard of?

Identify signs

Difficulties identifying radicalisation leading to violence

There are many difficulties identifying radicalisation leading to violence. One is that the **process of radicalisation is often both subtle and covert** and can easily be confused with normal developmental behaviours found in adolescents and young adults. Extremist recruiters also generally **warn their targets to keep their radicalisation a secret** and often try to isolate them from family members or other concerned individuals who might intervene if they understand what is happening. The message told to recruits might be to separate themselves from family members and friends who have not yet found the “truth,” proclaiming that they will stand in their way of reaching their full potential within the group.

Identifying early signs of extremist behaviour is important to dissuade at-risk individuals from progressing further down a trajectory of violent extremism. We will soon discuss some traits that can serve as important indicators to look for in an individual at the pre-violence stage, when interventions can still occur, thereby potentially mitigating the threat of violent extremism. Keep in mind, however, the **traits we will discuss do not always indicate current or future involvement in violence.**

Many individuals express non-violent opinions and employ non-violent actions that seek serious changes in society and politics, but they may never transition into violent extremism. Holding radical or extreme views is entirely different from radicalisation leading to violence, or the process through which individuals start advocating for the use of violence in the furtherance of their social, economic, political or religious beliefs. It is critical to gather as much evidence as possible in each individual radicalisation case to ascertain their intentions and whether they intend to utilize violence against others in pursuit of their cause.

Radicalisation Indicators Table

The following table is based on a literature review and hundreds of interviews of violent extremists and their families. The table identifies potential indicators that an individual may be radicalising or moving towards violent extremism and whether the indicator may be of low, moderate, or high concern.

The table is not an exhaustive list of radicalisation indicators, nor is the level of concern suggested or potential responses prescribed definitive. As always, each case is unique, and any response should reflect the aspects of the individual case and local context. Rather, the indicators and response level listed can be used as a guide and supplemented with other evidence obtained from each case.

Low Concern: Possible Indicators of Individual Predisposition towards Radicalisation and Violence	Moderate Concern: Indicators of Individual Behaviour That May Require Attention, Counsel, or Action	High Concern: Actions that Might Indicate Move Towards Violent Extremism Activity
Espouses conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution to the point of paranoia.	Expresses strong adherence to an extremist group and growing hatred towards all who are different than themselves, perhaps on the basis of race, religion, gender or sexuality.	Makes friends with those already following violent extremism; starts organizing activities that cater to extremist ideology and/or on behalf of an extremist group.
Constantly critiques mainstream values and ideologies. Claims bias.	Becomes obsessed with injustices that extremist groups also frequently cite.	Becomes involved in criminal activity and becomes known to law enforcement; a move towards openly transgressive behaviour when absent in the past; frequently in trouble with law enforcement for minor issues.

Low Concern: Possible Indicators of Individual Predisposition towards Radicalisation and Violence	Moderate Concern: Indicators of Individual Behaviour That May Require Attention, Counsel, or Action	High Concern: Actions that Might Indicate Move Towards Violent Extremism Activity
Does not positively identify with the nation, family, etc.	Engages in more intense rhetoric and becomes argumentative, unwilling to listen to other people's points of view while expressing hateful opinions.	Starts studying how to organize attacks or acquires and stores weapons (e.g. mass weapon accumulation or accumulation of hazardous material). Starts inquiring about weapons with a large-scale effect (e.g. bombs, etc.).
A sudden shift in behaviour, characterized by a need for empowerment. Becomes socially withdrawn and reclusive.	Expresses sympathy or justification for a violent extremist group.	Starts exhibiting interest in potential targets (e.g. government or public institutions, institutions of symbolic value to the country, etc.).
Discusses violence beyond what one would consider normal.	Drastically changes friendships- particularly severing old relationships and finding new friends both on and offline who appear to demand isolation from all others; Isolating and cutting off family members and former friends; Rejecting activities the individual used to enjoy.	Openly expresses hatred and uses violent language against government, societal values, etc. Joins an extremist group.
Experiences a personal crisis, health-related issue or life trauma from which the individual does not fully recover.	Converts to a new religion or set of cult beliefs, while expressing extreme intolerance.	Becomes secretive. Vacillates from radical to normal behaviour easily to conceal radical intentions and behaviour.
Easily demonizes others with a different viewpoint.	Makes demands on family members and friends to adhere to religious or cult demands and refuses to spend time with those who do not comply.	Takes sudden (e.g. not reported to family, spouse, etc.) trips outside the country.
	Significantly changes appearance or clothing with outward signs of adherence to a faith, group or set of cult practices. (This also may not be of concern and simply reflect conversion).	Starts to condemn others who do not follow their practices, even saying they don't deserve to live.
	Frequently visits extremist websites and content online; creates websites and online content to express extremist views; joins or watches social networks on Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, WhatsApp etc., with extremist literature.	Openly expresses support for violence.
	Changes online identity, including changing one's social media name or profile image; having parallel online profiles – one of the former self, and another for the "new" extremist identity, often with another name or symbol signaling allegiance to a group; becomes secretive and hides one's activities on and offline.	Joins, attempts to travel to, or makes plans to travel to an extremist group.

Low Concern: Possible Indicators of Individual Predisposition towards Radicalisation and Violence	Moderate Concern: Indicators of Individual Behaviour That May Require Attention, Counsel, or Action	High Concern: Actions that Might Indicate Move Towards Violent Extremism Activity
	Explores how to join or seeks to join or travel to an extremist organisation.	Writes a last will and testament; sexually compromises oneself i.e. by entering into an informal marriage.
	Starts to develop obsessive patterns of behaviour (e.g. overly focuses on the idea of martyrdom, suicide bombing, beheadings, etc.).	Endorses the violent actions of an extremist group.
	Starts associating with extremist groups; rhetoric becomes more issue/ ideology specific; starts attending extremist group events; starts to recruit for an extremist group.	

Tread Carefully with P/CVE to Avoid the Risk of Further Alienation and Grievance

It can be very difficult to assess whether an individual is radicalising simply by identifying some of the signs in the table. For that reason, **any P/CVE effort should exercise extreme caution when assessing whether an individual is radicalising** to the point of violence and may need an intervention. Triangulation of information, obtaining the same information at least 3

times from several different sources, is generally good practice. For example, if the local imam, individual X's teacher, individual X's friend, and individual X's mother all say that individual X is expressing hate speech towards ethnic group Y.

Below is a case study relating to the negative consequences of jumping to conclusions regarding individuals radicalising.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Ibrahim, a young Somali immigrant teen in Aarhus, Denmark, described to the author how he was harmed by an overreaction to signs that he had radicalised.

As a teen, Ibrahim's family took him to Saudi Arabia to perform the Islamic hajj (pilgrimage trip to Mecca), one of the holy obligations of his religion. The hajj made a huge impression on Ibrahim, who returned to school proudly dressed in traditional Saudi Islamic clothing. Excited about his religion, he had also temporarily become more fanatical and began espousing Islamic rhetoric. When a discussion about terrorism broke out in his high school, Ibrahim felt Islam was being insulted and made remarks defending his religion. His fellow students however, felt he was threatening them with violence.

The students went to the school principal. The principal did not summon Ibrahim into her office to explore the matter; instead, she overreacted by calling the police. The police did not go and talk to Ibrahim, but instead went to his house when he was not present and

searched it from top to bottom, taking his computer and hard drives with them. His family felt deeply humiliated and angered at Ibrahim.

The school suspended Ibrahim until the police investigation was completed. When it was completed however, it showed no evidence of violent intent, except for his ill-thought out provocative comments in defense of Islam. When Ibrahim tried to reenroll in school, he was told it was too late to re-enroll and that he should enroll in another school the following fall.

As a result, Ibrahim lost an entire year of high school and his family experienced humiliation by having the police search their home. His father expressed deep disappointment in Ibrahim. On his part, Ibrahim was angry and disappointed and did not know where to turn.

Angered himself, Ibrahim found some angry Muslim “brothers” to hang out with, who pointed him in the direction of violence. Ibrahim nearly joined an al Qaeda affiliated group following this unfortunate series of incidents. However, another initiative carried out by the Aarhus police reached out to Ibrahim, asking him to come in for some talks. The policeman who reached out to Ibrahim was rejected repeatedly by Ibrahim who cursed at and blamed the police for ruining his life. The policeman, however, kept calling until Ibrahim, fearing arrest, agreed to come in and meet a mentor selected as an ethnic and religious match to himself.

This mentor, trained by the Aarhus police, was also a Muslim of immigrant descent and was succeeding in his life. He invited Ibrahim to take part in a series of meetings that sometimes involved outings for food, bowling, or other activities, all designed to help Ibrahim integrate well into Danish society and succeed. Ibrahim gradually began to forgive the police for having upset his life balance and also began to understand that violent extremist groups offered nothing more than an outlet for his anger and dead ends. The policing programme was successful and over time Ibrahim paid it back by also becoming a mentor in the programme, helping other young Muslim immigrants like himself who had become alienated from mainstream society and were vulnerable to violent extremist messaging.

The Aarhus programme reaches out to both males and females. It also reaches out to Muslims and non- Muslims who are attracted to militant jihadi or neo-Nazi groups and ideologies. It is a programme supported by the entire community incorporating teachers, social workers, police, and health care professionals in a united effort to reduce radicalisation leading to violent extremism and to reengage those who have been involved in violent extremism back into their communities¹¹⁷.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does this case study tell us about the difficulty identifying signs of radicalisation?
2. What can a teacher do when a student seems to be making violent threats? ¹¹⁷
3. What damage can over reaction do?
4. Who are different individuals in the P/CVE community one could consult to try to ascertain whether an individual is radicalising?
5. How could your community organize a coordinated approach across professions to reach out to a potentially radicalised young person?

¹¹⁷ Anne Speckhard, personal communication with Aarhus police officials; Ibrahim, 2015

6. How can police reduce the stigma to cases they investigate while also not giving away the surprise factor for raiding?

7. Which kind of mentors might be useful to the potential recruits to violent extremism who your group would like to address?

Practical Exercise

CREATE A VIOLENT EXTREMIST

Suggested Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

- 1 large sheet of paper for each group
- Writing utensils (preferably colourful markers)

Instructions:

- Break participants into smaller groups (at least 2, no more than 8) and instruct each group to design a fictitious female violent extremist from their local community. This woman can be at any point on the radicalisation process, or already committing acts of violent extremism. She can also be either an active agent of extremism, radicalising herself and making the decision to join a violent extremist group, or she can be a passive agent of extremism, perhaps following her husband or a male relative into a violent extremist group.

- Participants should assign their fictitious woman characteristics, a personal background, and life events. Groups can draw the woman on their paper or simply write down notes. Give each group around 10 minutes to complete the composite of their woman.

- Invite groups to the front of the room one by one to present their violent extremist to the training participants for around 3 minutes.

- When all groups have presented their violent extremist, instruct participants to switch violent extremists with another small group so that each group now holds a new violent extremist.

- Remembering the presentations, participants in each group should brainstorm how they might intervene with this woman in order to turn her away from her radicalised or violent extremist path, based on her specific characteristics and background.

- After 10 minutes, have small groups present how they would intervene to turn their violent extremist woman away from her path to the group as a whole for around 3 minutes. After a brief explanation, allow other groups and individuals to ask questions or make comments on the group's presentation of their violent extremist and intervention method.

- After all groups have presented, invite participants to comment on what they noticed from the exercise.

UNIT 2: PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Warm-Up Activity

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely different ways that women can be effective P/CVE actors. Encourage participants to suggest a role, like “police officer”, and then provide a brief explanation what women could bring to P/CVE efforts in that role.

- Write participants’ suggestions on the board.
- If any objections, questions, or discussions arise as a result of a participant’s suggestion, encourage it. Just don’t let the discussion go on too long so that it distracts from the activity.
- After a few minutes, or after responses die down, ask participants to process the roles they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:
 - Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?

Women’s Roles in P/CVE

STORIES FROM THE REGION

“Out of approximately one thousand women interviewed in a convenience sample of women interested in learning more about CVE throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, more than 80 percent said that what they needed most was education in how to detect warning signs and training in how to react appropriately. Culturally sensitive capacity-building efforts are vital to maximizing women’s potential in detecting and preventing violent extremism.”¹¹⁸

Women have many roles in preventing and countering violent extremism. For example, women are increasingly pursuing careers in security, law, and politics-investigating, policing and fighting terrorism through both soft and hard security measures. Women are also active in more informal roles in their families, local communities, religious communities, and educational institutions where they are often already integrally involved. **Despite this, women are**

currently underutilised in preventing and countering violent extremism in both their professional and personal roles. This underutilisation represents a grave loss for P/CVE efforts, as women can and should be instrumental in preventing recruitment to and involvement in violent extremism.

¹¹⁸ Futures Without Violence, 2017; Schlaffer and Kropiunigg, 2016

Institutional Roles

Military

Despite effective counter-terrorism capabilities, many militaries lack experience when it comes to countering and eliminating the drivers of radicalisation. In this regard, P/CVE actors may want to consider working with military bodies on more integrative (e.g. military/preventative locally informed initiatives forged with civil society organisations) P/CVE initiatives.¹¹⁹ **Women in the military have an important role to play in such joint P/CVE ventures**, thus their specific involvement should be prioritised by P/CVE actors.

effectiveness in community policing extremism prevention efforts.¹²¹ In many countries, female police officers are already being included in community policing initiatives.

The Association of Women in the Kosovo Police (AWKP), a membership association with well over 700 female police members, is a particularly successful example of strengthening women's roles in the police force. Female-led police associations and female offi-

BEST PRACTICE

Princess Aisha of Jordan took the initiative to train women for roles in the special military forces, recognising that women are needed in conservative societies to guard and search other women. Her initiative was a success and one of her trained operatives was later responsible for disarming a man who appeared to have been readying himself to attack the King of Jordan¹²⁰.

Police

Community policing is crucial for raising community awareness of the threat of violent extremism, empowering communities to prevent its emergence and spread, and helping the community meet the needs of those who are vulnerable to recruitment to redirect them to a more productive path. Inclusion of women police officers has been shown to **greatly increase**

cers who are representative of the population they are tasked to protect are well positioned to help with P/CVE efforts. The same voices could also provide guidance to male police officers and P/CVE actors on best practices, including how to engage and retain women in P/CVE efforts. As noted, women often have their hand on the pulse of their family members and also are aware of happenings in their communities and they may be most comfortable sharing what they are concerned about with other female police officers.

119 Powers, 2017

120 Futures Without Violence, 2017; Schlaffer and Kropiunigg, 2016

121 Speckhard, 2017

STORIES FROM THE REGION

In 2016, two teenage girls from Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan, struck up relationships over the social messaging app WhatsApp with ISIS recruiters. The ISIS Emni (ISIS security apparatus) obtained their numbers when downloading the contacts on the phones of other newly arrived ISIS recruits. Apparently, the two women's numbers had been in someone's contacts, as they were contacted out of nowhere by the recruiters who were on a recovery trip from ISIS in Turkey recuperating from wounds they had sustained in battles. The young men played upon the girls' naïveté and interest in Islam and the larger world. The women became increasingly religiously conservative as a

result of the men's encouragement and eventually accepted enough money from them to move out of their parents' homes. After exchanging messages and pictures for three months, they agreed to travel to Syria to join the ISIS men and marry them. To them, the plan sounded like a grand adventure.

In this case, a community police informant noticed that the two young women had begun dressing in black burkas, were isolating themselves from others, and had moved out of their family homes. While these were not necessarily signs of radicalisation, the police decided to summon the young women and their parents into the police station for an informal discussion. Upon their arrival, the police asked to see the young women's phones. As they had no prior warning about the police intercept, the WhatsApp recruitment conversations were on the young women's phones for the police to read in detail. The police allowed for the young women's naïveté but asked them to cooperate with the police by inviting their male recruiters to Jalal-Abad to perform the nikah (Islamic marriage ceremony) and then to travel together to Syria. The young women agreed, and their recruiters were ultimately arrested while the women were directed out of violent extremism, partially through this police intervention¹²². Without this policing intervention these women may have ended up trapped inside ISIS in Syria and eventually killed there.

Prosecutors/Judges

As many prosecutors and judges in the region may struggle to respond to women and children returnees from violent extremist groups, increasing the number of female judges and prosecutors could **contribute towards a more effective, nuanced, and understanding response to female returnees**.¹²³ Additionally, training on gender dynamics and radicalisation may benefit both male and female judges and prosecutors in the region. Judges and prosecutors dealing with female returnees need to further strengthen their understanding of the dynamics that motivated women to join violent extremist groups and the roles they may potentially have played. In cases when male coercion was present, for instance, there may be justification to be more lenient on the women, while still prioritising providing them with support and services for de-radicalisation and reintegration. Authorities must also be aware that some women willingly provided material support and services to ISIS and chose to enact violence and should not be released back into their communities unmonitored or without any type of intervention to rehabilitate and insure their peaceful reintegration into society.

122 Anne Speckhard, personal communication with Kyrgyz police officials, Kyrgyzstan, 2017

123 Speckhard, Shajkovci and Esengul, 2017

Professional exchanges with other judges, prosecutors, and P/CVE practitioners, particularly those who specialise in violent extremism, could also help non-expert judges to identify relevant gender-based legal and procedural challenges as well as best practices in the judicial response to violent extremism and terrorism. The author has been working with prosecutors throughout Europe, the Balkans, and in the United States and Australia to help them prepare for the repatriation and eventual prosecution of ISIS members she interviewed in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) territory. This is a win-win all around as politicians fear that ISIS members will be repatriated from Syria, and now also Turkey, with little warning, and that if prosecutors do not have their cases adequately prepared these former terrorists could go free on the streets. ISIS members trapped in SDF territory for the most part want to face justice at home and many are willing to cooperate but they need a mechanism to get home to face prosecution. Voluntarily sharing their research interviews with their home countries justice ministries assist in that process.

While many male ISIS fighters were killed or captured, **the issue of female returnees continues to remain challenging**. Currently, upwards of 12,000 foreign women and children, scattered across north-eastern Syria, remain in detention centres run by the Syrian

Democratic Forces (SDF), facing uncertain futures. This is in addition to close to 1,200 foreign fighters and upwards of 60,000 Syrians and Iraqis.¹²⁴ They remain in legal and political limbo, as SDF and Kurdish forces struggle to detain such a large number of foreigners and foreign governments' reluctance to take their citizens back. The handling of ISIS women and children has recently taken a new turn, with some governments showing a deeper commitment and responsibility to take their citizens back. For example, the Kosovo government recently brought back 110 of its citizens from Syria. Seventy-four were children and 32 women.¹²⁵ On June 8, 2019, two women and six minors were brought back to the United States.¹²⁶ Recently, the government of Uzbekistan repatriated 148 women and children linked to Islamic State from Syria.¹²⁷

In recent months and years, the perceptions of women's threat was influenced by cases involving women, like Shamima Begum in the UK and Hoda Muthana in the United States who both had made disturbing statements, leading to public fear of such women and toughening of measures towards women.¹²⁸ Yet, some countries, like the United States, have opted to try ISIS female returnees in domestic courts, even considering resettlement and release in some cases.¹²⁹

As some states refuse to confer citizenship via mothers, and others have begun to strip citizenship of some of those who travelled to join terrorist groups, we may begin to see more cases of stateless individuals, particularly widows and their children. In an effort to prevent and avoid violent extremism, keeping foreign fighters and their families from returning to their home country thus rendering individuals stateless may instead create new grievances for those, their extended families, and their communities, which could continue to fuel radicalisation towards violent extremism. Children are at risk growing up in dangerous camps where ISIS recruiters are active. Women in the SDF run camps in northern Syria told the author about ISIS enforcers who punished those who moved

away from and disavowed ISIS and ISIS women who tried to indoctrinate young children into the ISIS ideology.¹³⁰

Additionally, women and children fleeing extremist groups in Syria and Iraq who find shelter in camps and detention centres are **particularly vulnerable to both economic and social exclusion**. Migrant populations often have similar vulnerabilities. It is essential to not only prosecute abuses or exploitations against such vulnerable migrant populations, but also to ensure that individuals have access to essential services. Female attorneys or women with adequate legal training can play an important role on legal teams working to conduct awareness sessions with such individuals. Women also play a crucial role with women and child refugees in particular by increasing their trust and engagement, assisting with the reintegration process, and addressing potential grievances. Increasing women's representation in refugee camp management can also decrease instances of gender-based violence.¹³¹ Indeed in Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) camps the soldiers decided that only women should be guarding other women to decrease the likelihood of abuses.

Teachers

Teachers can play an important role in shaping their students' attitudes towards inter-cultural and inter-religious tolerance. At present, teachers in the region are disproportionately female, therefore **involving female teachers in the effort to counter violent extremist messages is very feasible and should be encouraged**.

In a more long-term, PVE approach, teachers can help their students to better **understand and appreciate differences in others (e.g. cultures, ethnicities, religions, etc.) and reject extremism and violent extremism** by shaping students' attitudes towards diversity and tolerance. As the leading UN agency mandated on education, UNESCO's Preventing Violent Extremism

124 Speckhard, Anne & Shajkovci, Ardian (October 7, 2019) Who Are the ISIS Fighters in Custody, and How Can They Be Repatriated? Homeland Security Today <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/who-are-the-isis-fighters-in-custody-and-how-can-they-be-repatriated/>

125 Bytyqi, 2019.

126 Sherlock, 2019

127 The Defense Post, 2019

128 Busby, 2019, Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2019b

129 Wright, 2019, Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018

130 Speckhard, Anne & Shajkovci, Ardian (October 2, 2019) SDF Needs Our Assistance Now as Another Woman in Camp Hol Killed by ISIS Enforcers. Homeland Security Today. <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/perspective-sdf-needs-our-help-now-as-another-woman-in-camp-hol-killed-by-isis-enforcers/> and Waiting for the return of the Islamic State Caliphate among ISIS enforcers in al Hol, Ain Issa and Roj Camps in Syria. September 3, 2019. <https://www.icsve.org/waiting-for-the-return-of-the-islamic-state-caliphate-among-isis-enforcers-in-al-hol-ain-issa-and-roj-camps-in-syria/>

131 Hassan, 2017; Unah, 2018

through Education (PVE-E) programme aims to provide young people with the cognitive (critical thinking, problem solving, etc.) and socio-emotional skills (creativity, empathy, compassion, sense of solidarity and responsibility, etc.) that will foster global citizens, resist violent extremism and counter its spread. As part of that initiative, UNESCO launched its Global Citizenship Education curriculum in 2015, the topics and objectives of which can be found here: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002329/232993e.pdf>. This resource may be of help to educational professionals in the region looking to incorporate the above skills into their curriculum in an effort to prevent violent extremism by fostering students with more tolerant attitudes and developed critical thinking skills.

The author and director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) recognized early on that al Qaeda and then ISIS were not using simple cognitive arguments to convince potential recruits, but were instead using highly emotional videos and graphic imagery to evoke emotions and sway potential recruits to follow a line of logic leading to endorsing violent extremism and terrorism. In a counter move, ICSVE researchers began producing short video clips of insider stories from actual ISIS members recorded on video in which these insiders denounce

groups and their false claims. The 160 ICSVE Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project video clips with accompanying study guides (in English) are available on the ICSVE YouTube channel in the 27 languages in which ISIS recruits and may be freely used by any teacher in their classrooms to foster lively discussions aimed at preventing radicalization and endorsement of violent extremism.

Where appropriate, teachers may directly address current violent extremist narratives in their classrooms in an effort to encourage students to use critical thinking skills to deconstruct violent extremist claims immediately before they are engaged by existing groups on an emotional level. As discussed above, ICSVE, for example, provides ISIS counter-narrative videos with accompanying study guides which discuss the story, highlight the main messages, and offer counter points to the ISIS arguments.¹³² Other teaching aids can be used to help students confront terrorist ideologies and actions and discuss them in a safe environment in which they can be guided to reject violent extremism. However, educators should ensure that any explicit CVE effort in the classroom is in line with national and local policies and has been approved by the school system and the students' parents before implementation.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

In Kosovo, a teacher showed two of the ICSVE Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative videos to her students. A lively discussion ensued in which the students discussed if it was ever appropriate to recruit children into suicide missions and if the ISIS practice of taking sex slaves could ever be justified. The videos gave the teacher an opportunity to discuss the claims that groups like ISIS make over the Internet and refute them. Teachers can use such tools to reach students and encourage their critical thinking skills. All of the ICSVE-produced videos now have study guides to accompany them, which discuss the story, highlight the main messages, and offer counter points to the ISIS arguments¹³³.

ISIS as highly corrupt, overly brutal and unIslamic in their practices. Also, highly emotionally evocative, these videos encourage youth to open up and discuss issues depicted and described in the video clip. In Denmark, teachers began using these short video clips to inoculate their students to understand how a group might emotionally manipulate them and to delegitimize groups like ISIS and their militant jihadi ideology, thereby helping their students to reject such

Religious Actors

Religious beliefs are often an important motivating factor for individuals in the region to join violent extremist groups. Likewise, leveraging and engaging with religious beliefs can be a powerful way to combat

¹³² www.icsve.org/isis-defectors-speak-videos/

¹³³ Anne Speckhard, personal communication with Kyrgyz police officials, Kyrgyzstan, 2017

radicalisation as well as contribute to reintegration. Notable efforts in the region to involve religious leaders in the fight against violent extremism include convening religious leaders for strategy meetings on government action plans and training imams to ensure they have sufficient and accurate knowledge of the basic practices of Islam to teach members of their community. However, **women are often missing from regional religious P/CVE initiatives.** This is particularly troubling when you consider the strong evidence from existing initiatives that recruit female religious leaders to combat violent extremism. A particularly noteworthy example of best practice example is the training of female imams in Morocco (see Annex 2 Case Study: Moroccan Mourchidates). The author also trained female religious activists in Kosovo to understand trajectories into violent extremism in order to equip them to fight against radicalisation in their communities.

family members, or in religious schools, are at a much **higher risk of believing the messages of militant jihadist violent extremism and being willing to accept their husbands and other male family members' belief** in and advocacy of extremist messages. Women lacking any religious education are less likely to have a solid basis from which to refute such claims. An example of a best practice to combat this trend is Kyrgyzstan NGO Mutakalim, which sees to the educational and religious needs of young girls in Kyrgyzstan by offering them a female madrassa (Islamic religious school) education. The organisation aims to give young women a quality Islamic education so that girls leave the school knowledgeable of the tenets of Islam and able to think critically and stand up for themselves to ensure that no one can manipulate them to embrace religiously inspired violent extremism. Understanding that young women were especially vulnerable to believing ISIS propaganda, the organisation began showing classrooms

STORIES FROM THE REGION

In Osh, Kyrgyzstan, the author showed approximately 65 young women ages 11 to 18 in a female madrassa an ICSVE Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative video and asked them afterward if they would unquestioningly follow their future husbands if they decided to join a violent extremist group. The young women had a lively discussion about how they would think critically and stand up to their men in the event they made such a decision. The discussion ended with their teacher commenting that although these girls were being taught each day to understand Islam, think critically, and stand up for themselves to ensure that no one could manipulate them into embracing religiously inspired violent extremism, still parents in their community frequently ask future husbands of their daughters, “You won’t take our daughter off to ISIS, will you?”¹³⁶

Another way that women can have an impact through religion is by being educated in the religious tenets themselves. There is a recent troubling trend in the region, particularly in Central Asian countries, to prevent women from participating in religious affairs.¹³⁴ In particular, Muslim women in the region who are kept from participating in religion, and have no formal religious education in mosques, from educated community and

of young women ICSVE violent extremism counter-narrative videos and hosting discussions with them to good effect as a part of their P/CVE efforts.¹³⁵

Informal Roles

Family

Women play important roles in their communities. They serve in leadership roles, as activists dedicated to advancing important causes in the community, and

¹³⁴ “Tajikistan has some of the most extreme initiatives, including arbitrarily shutting down dozens of mosques across the country, fining women for wearing the hijab, banning parents from giving their children Arabic names, [and in 2004 banning women from attending mosques]. According to recent estimates, police have forcibly shaved off the beards of some 13,000 men.” Swerdlow, 2016; Maksutova, 2017

¹³⁵ Speckhard, 2017; The videos shown were ICSVE Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative videos, referenced in Module 5, Unit 2.

¹³⁶ Speckhard, ICSVE, 2017

as family members—mothers, sisters, grandmothers, aunts and daughters. These roles, especially in conservative societies where women often play a more prominent role in the home, may allow women **unique opportunities to identify radicalisation in their family and community members** and put them in an ideal position to prevent and counter radicalisation in their community.

Both father and mothers can be especially uniquely positioned in their families to monitor the pulse of family members and are often the first to spot signs of extremism or become aware when a family member is struggling. More importantly, parents are the first educators of their children and often educate their children on topics that schools or religious institutions fail or are unable to cover. As mentioned in earlier modules, due to societal gender bias, the role of monitoring children's behaviour and educating them frequently falls to women. In their role as mothers, women can be critical in the effort to spot signs of radicalisation and to educate young people against messages of extremism, though fathers can also play an equally important role in the process. Parents should work together to spot and prevent radicalisation in their children.

Parents may feel nervous or ill-equipped to speak to their daughters and sons about violent extremism. Just like having difficult discussions about sexuality or abuse, initiating the conversation equipped with background knowledge can facilitate the experience for parents. In the case of violent extremism, it is helpful to come to the conversation with a basic knowledge of the groups active on the Internet, their recruitment methods, and the most persuasive elements in their ideologies. **Parents with materials and knowledge will likely have an easier time discussing the subject and thus protecting their children.** Parents frequently express shock and dismay when they learn about their children's involvement in violent extremism. Many fail to recognise that violent extremists can capture their children's attention in their own homes

often unbeknownst to them via the Internet. Most parenting surveys show that busy and overburdened parents spend very little time actually talking to their teens on a daily basis, whereas an ISIS recruiter may be willing to spend hours grooming a young recruit. Unable to recognise this threat, parents often fail to see the need to educate their children to understand terrorist recruitment tactics and debunk terrorist ideologies. Children may benefit from being shown that while extremist groups may at times accurately point out societal grievances, they do not have any useful solutions for societal problems. Training and equipping parents, and mothers especially, to educate their children in this way can be very effective for P/CVE efforts.

Additionally, the roles women play as **wives, sisters, grandmothers, aunts, and cousins can be strategic positions from which to identify signs of radicalisation leading to violence** and to devise the best way to intervene with one of their family members. It is all too common that family members admit to law enforcement after their loved one has been taken into custody or has joined an extremist group that they saw signs of radicalisation but did not know what to do, how to respond, or who to contact for help until it was too late. P/CVE programmes and strategies should fully consider how to incorporate, leverage and support women in all their roles within the family.

Finally, working more broadly towards women's empowerment is important for successful P/CVE initiatives. If wives and mothers are expected to silently submit to their husbands, sisters expected to silently submit to their brothers and father, these women may not be in a powerful and autonomous enough position to intervene when a family member is in danger of radicalisation towards violence, even if they can spot the signs. Therefore, the **furtherance of gender equality and women's empowerment goals greatly contributes to more impactful P/CVE initiatives** by empowering women to be effective P/CVE actors in their communities and their homes.

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Abbas, a young Belgian convinced of joining al Qaeda and traveling to join the Chechen jihad, would not leave without his mother's blessing. However, when he sought it, his mother had such a strong negative reaction that he reconsidered. Conversely, Abu Albani, a young Kosovar, only set out to join ISIS with his wife after his mother gave her

full blessing to them. Consider how different both stories could have been had their mothers responded differently. In interviews conducted with 220 ISIS foreign fighter cadres (and 16 al-Shabaab), most confessed that they regularly called home to speak to their mothers, and that this was a relationship they could not discontinue. Some were put in touch by their mothers with law enforcement or other service providers to escape the groups. Cases such as these demonstrate the power that mothers can have if equipped and supported to try to talk their sons and daughters into returning home, or never joining in the first place¹³⁷.

Targeting Returnees for P/CVE

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Laura was a young Belgian mother, abandoned with a young child by her partner. In response to being jilted, she created a Facebook profile in which she portrayed herself as a more devout Muslim and posted that she would like to find a dedicated Muslim man to marry. Local ISIS recruiters answered her post and quickly began to promise her that not only could they find her a “real” Muslim man to marry, but that if she moved to Syria and joined ISIS, she would receive nursing training, her son would attend good schools, and she would have many material riches. Laura naively believed their promises. She married a man she found through the ISIS recruiter and travelled to Syria to live in the Caliphate, where she became pregnant and gave birth to a second child. However, life in Syria was not at all as she had expected. Eventually, she and her husband managed to escape back to Belgium with their children. Laura faced charges and had her children temporarily removed from her when she returned. They remained in the care of her parents until it was determined that Laura was on a promising road to recovery and no longer under ISIS indoctrination. Laura’s story is a success story as she travels around lecturing Belgian high school students and other vulnerable populations about the dangers of joining violent extremist groups and warning against propaganda used by such groups to attract recruits. Her story as told to the author appears in the Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project series and is subtitled in many of the languages in which ISIS recruits. She is an example of a returnee from ISIS who was prosecuted but given a suspended sentence and is a success story in the efforts to reintegrate and rehabilitate female returnees from Iraq and Syria (See video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZknfoA-O2k&feature=youtu.be>)¹³⁸.

¹³⁷ Speckhard personal interview with Laura Passoni, Belgium, January 2017

¹³⁸ Speckhard personal interview with Laura Passoni, Belgium, January 2017

Targeting the Narrative

STORIES FROM THE REGION

In 2016, The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) and Nama Strategic Intelligence Solutions (NAMA) focus-tested the ICSVE Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project video clips with youth, ages 13-26, in Zarqa and Irbid, Jordan. These two areas are considered hotbeds of radicalisation in Jordan. In addition to serving as an invaluable platform for exchanging ideas related to ICSVE-produced counter narratives, the focus-testing conducted with 35 youth, proportionately representing both females and males, was also intended to identify conditions and circumstances that might leave Jordanian youth in Zarqa and Irbid vulnerable to paths to violent extremism, such as ISIS recruiters preying on vulnerable populations on the internet. The evocative nature of the counter-narratives engaged the youth in lively discussions, which allowed the facilitators to understand the P/CVE challenges present in their lives and what types of prevention interventions might be useful to implement.

The author has also tested these counter-narrative videos in face-to-face focus groups with vulnerable individuals around the world as well as on the internet to good effect. In one case, a thirteen-year-old UK national determined to travel to Raqqa was stopped by his counselor from doing so and turned away from ISIS by being shown one of the ICSVE Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Videos. The author also tested two of the videos with an imprisoned ISIS emir in Iraq. The results of the intervention indicated that the videos could effectively be used as an intervention tool to break through bravado and get to an honest discussion with imprisoned ISIS cadres¹³⁹.

Legal Challenges

Because of the nature of their work, P/CVE actors often face bureaucratic and legal hurdles. **Assisting, particularly financially assisting or providing any type of material support to, individuals who might be radicalising or returning from violent extremist groups may constitute a criminal act** if understood as giving material support to terrorists. P/CVE actors in the region must be well trained in their country's legal parameters regarding cooperation with potential violent extremists and returnees. Additionally, P/CVE actors may wish to establish relationships with legal and security entities both locally and nationally who can best advise permissible activities for P/CVE initiatives that will not place the organisation or individual in potential conflict with the law, while also avoiding the risk of securitizing their work. Finally, P/CVE actors should be as transparent as possible in their initiatives.

¹³⁹ICSVE, 2017

Being up front and transparent about activities will make it more difficult to argue that such activities are being done with harmful intent. However, local P/CVE programme designers are in the best position to consider how best to keep their P/CVE programme and organisation in good relation with the law in their respective country. Local context should always be assessed prior to programme design.

Initiatives in the Region

Kyrgyzstan

Established in 2000, Women's Progressive Social Union (WPSU, "Mutakalim") has been at the forefront of promoting women rights in Kyrgyzstan. Its stated goal is to use religion to unite the various ethnic groups in the country." The group has been working with law enforcement to intervene in the cases of

both those already exhibiting early signs of radicalisation and those identified as well on the extremist and terrorist trajectory. These **faith-based nongovernmental and governmental partnerships appear to be yielding positive results**. The organisation also aimed to protect and promote Muslim women’s rights. Female religious authorities were also paired with individuals active on social media and to run helplines and rapid intervention teams to counter propaganda and recruitment into extremist and terrorist groups. Mutakalim ran madrassas for girls in Kyrgyzstan, educating them to counter violent extremism. Mutakalim representatives also entered female prisons to work with violent extremists in attempts to move them out of radicalisation and their commitment to violent extremism.¹⁴⁰

Kosovo

Through the support of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), fifty-six Local Public Safety Committees (LPSC) have been formed in Kosovo. LPSCs are **local consultative bodies that serve as a crucial bridge between the police and the community**. LPSC committee members attend trainings organised by the Kosovo Police Academy on capacity building as well as on how to strengthen the relationship between the police and the community. Upon completion of their training, LPSC committee members return to their respective communities to, among other things, encourage their community members, including women, to become vigilant and to share and discuss concerns related to their communities.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan’s Committee on Women and Family Affairs, with 110 Information and Consultation Centres across the country, is a central executive body responsible for protecting the rights and interests of families and women. The committee is engaged in raising awareness against violent extremism in the country. In Dushanbe, it has trained women to detect signs of growing extremism within their families. Equally important, the Committee produced a P/CVE documentary depicting mothers whose children left to join IS. It is an emotional documentary in which mothers share their stories lived through the experiences of their children going to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS. The documentary was shown by local branches of

the Committee, and it represents an important step towards, **“engaging women directly in the development of their own counter narratives to convincingly amplify their voices**, as well as those of their family members and communities to prevent violent extremism”.¹⁴¹

Practical Exercise

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely their answers to the question below. Encourage participants not to be afraid to get creative—during a brainstorm session, the more creative and innovative the idea the better. Tell them to try to think outside the box and come up with activities, initiatives and interventions not currently used by P/CVE actors, but that would work well in their community context.
- Write participants’ answers on the board in summarized form.
- After a few minutes, or after responses die down, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:
 - o Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - o Do you disagree with any of the responses? Why?
 - o Which option do you think would work best in your community? Why?

Question:

1. In what capacity are women missing as P/CVE actors in your community? Judges? Police officers? Teachers? Religious leaders? Other creative roles identified during earlier brainstorming activities?
2. How could programmes or initiatives in your community help to counter that lack of women in P/CVE?

¹⁴⁰ Speckhard, Shajkovci, and Esengul, 2017

¹⁴¹ Matveeva and Faizullaev, 2017

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MODULE 4:

Violent Extremism

Learning Objectives

Unit 1: Violent Extremism

- Understand the scale of **women and children joining ISIS** from the region
- Explain **militant jihadi group rhetoric** in their own words
- Understand and identify the various **roles women play in modern militant jihadi groups** in the region and the **difficulties women may have leaving** violent extremist groups

Unit 2: Return and Reintegration

- Understand the scope of **female and child returnees** in the region
- Identify **return and reintegration** issues that are **specific to women**
- Learn and apply best practices on **engaging women in reintegration and rehabilitation** efforts

UNIT 1: VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Warm-Up Activity

OPPOSITE EXTREMES

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers

Instructions:

- Have participants stand up and gather in the centre of the room.
- Tell them that you will be reading aloud several roles from ISIS. The question is, do women play these roles in ISIS? One side of the room will represent women who DO play that role in ISIS and the other side of the room represents women DON'T play that role in ISIS.
- After you read each role, participants should move to the side of their room that represents their opinion. For example, if you read "suicide bomber", and they think that women DO NOT play the role of suicide bomber in ISIS, they should move to the "No" side, but if they think that women DO play that role, they should move to the "Yes" side.
- Do not tell participants the answers in this activity until the activity is completed. After participants have all settled on one side of the room, write the role and number of participants standing on the "Yes" and "No" side of the room on the whiteboard/ paper.
- When finished with all the roles, have participants return to their seats. Then inform participants that women play ALL of the roles you listed in IS.
- Ask participants to raise their hands and talk about which statements surprised them, or which ones they had trouble believing and why.

Roles to read:

- Snipers or grenade throwers
- Suicide bombers
- Law enforcers
- Spies
- Intelligence gatherers
- Torturers
- Couriers of money and messages
- Recruiters
- Propaganda creators
- Inciters, organizers, or leaders of activities
- Translators
- Doctors
- Wives
- Mothers
- Medics
- Teachers
- Nurses
- Cook

ISIS affiliates

The following tables include data compiled by Cook and Vale (2018), where various sources from 2014-2018 are used to provide information on affiliates.

Global totals:

Female ISIS joiners compared to the known total ISIS joiners¹⁴²

Region	Female ISIS joiners as % of total ISIS joiners from the region
Eastern Asia	35%
Eastern Europe	23%
Western Europe	17%
Americas, Australia & New Zealand	17%
Central Asia	13%
South-Eastern Asia	13%
Southern Asia	12%
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	6%
Sub-Saharan Africa	<1%

ISIS affiliates from the region:

Women, children and total affiliates¹⁴³

Country	ISIS Minor Affiliates	ISIS Female Affiliates	ISIS Male Affiliates	Total ISIS Affiliates (Men, Women and Children)	ISIS Female Affiliates as a percentage of total adults
Eastern Europe					
Albania	38	29-25	78	144-150	29
Azerbaijan	18	200	682	900	22
Bosnia	81	61	181	323	25
Bulgaria				10	
Croatia		4-5		7	
Georgia		3		41-200	
Kosovo	98	55	206	359	21
Latvia				2	
Macedonia		15		155	

¹⁴² Cook and Vale, 2018

¹⁴³ Only countries in the region with available data are included in the table

Country	ISIS Minor Affiliates	ISIS Female Affiliates	ISIS Male Affiliates	Total ISIS Affiliates (Men, Women and Children)	ISIS Female Affiliates as a percentage of total adults
Moldova				1	
Montenegro	4	5	18	27	21
Poland				20-40	
Romania				1	
Russia (incl. Chechnya, Dagestan)	350~1,000	512~1,000	3069 (avg) ~ 2000-4138	4,000-5,000	19
Serbia	15	12-15	30	59	31
Slovakia				6	
Slovenia				10	
Ukraine		2		2	
Region total	~605-1,255	~828-1,396	~3195-5333	6,067-7,252	
Women and minors as % of total	9-21%	12-23%			
Central Asia and Turkey					
Kazakhstan		150	10	500-600	93
Kyrgyzstan	130-140	188	540	863	25
Tajikistan	293390	279	930	1,502	23
Turkey				3000	
Turkmenistan				360-500 ¹⁴⁴	
Uzbekistan				1,500-2,500	
Region total	813-823	617		7,725-8,965	
Women and minors as % of total affiliates	14-17%	10-13%			
Total affiliates for Central Asia, Turkey, and Eastern Europe	~1,418-2,078	~1,445-2,013	~ 4675-6813	13,792-16,217	
Women and minors as % of total affiliates for Central Asia, Turkey, and Eastern Europe	9-15%	9-15%			

¹⁴⁴ Yayla, 2017

¹⁴⁵ Cook and Vale, 2018; further complemented by the authors in disaggregating the data.

Group Characteristics

Group rhetoric

Those who are moving into violent extremist groups often start taking on the group ideologies and espousing group rhetoric. Community members may not recognise this rhetoric as dangerous if they are not familiar with its connection to violent extremism. To prevent violent extremism, however, community leaders and institutional P/CVE actors must learn extremist group rhetoric and ideology, as it can be a sign indicating danger when repeated by impressionable youth or vulnerable adults.

The following are examples of violent extremist group rhetoric from militant jihadi groups such as IS and al Qaeda:

- Dividing people into “true” believers and disbelievers who can be killed.
- Demonising the opponent and promoting violence and/or terrorism in the service of their ideals.
- Denial of fault for their own, or the group’s violent actions (e.g. beheadings), instead placing the blame on the opponent, naming their actions as defensive.
- Promoting and glorifying violent actions, believing these actions can lead towards a better life now or in the afterlife (e.g. attaining Paradise, building a Caliphate, moving toward utopian life in the so-called Islamic State, etc.)
- Demanding complete allegiance to the group with no deviance. The “hear and obey” philosophy of IS, for instance, enables the group to exercise total control over its followers and punish any deviations.
- The words ‘Jihad’ and ‘Mujahedeen’ defined as paramount for all Muslims in the path of Allah, with jihad defined as militant and supporting terrorist and extremist violence and mujahedeen as the holy warriors that carry it out.
- Denying the rights of victims; in the case of ISIS, Westerners, local civilians considered to be “unbelievers”, Shia Muslims, targeted Sunni Muslims, and others are considered enemies of the “True” Islam who support “unjust” politics and measures against a “righteous” force (e.g. ISIS).
- Claims that it is necessary for Muslims to abandon nonbelieving (Kuffar) countries and move (make hijra) to Islamic lands.

- Attacking those who disagree with, disapprove of, or condemn their actions (e.g. by branding them as infidels who are deserving of death). This can be referred to as Takfir - naming the enemies of Islam and declaring that they can legitimately be killed.

- Referring to higher loyalties in life, such as promises of shared brotherhood/sisterhood (e.g. in the Muslim ummah and so-called Islamic State) and the gift of higher meaning in life. This is not itself worrisome, can be a radical narrative when applied narrowly to groups like ISIS and denying all others from belonging to the “true” Islam.¹⁴⁶

Roles of Women in Extremist Groups

Enforcers, Combatants, Informants or Intelligence Gatherers

- Assassins, suicide bombers.
- Fighters, snipers, drivers and delivery women for bombs, etc.
- Enforcers, spies, and intelligence gatherers (e.g. ISIS all-female hisbah police service in charge of enforcing women-specific tasks or socio-religious practices, such as dress code).
- Prison torturers and guards (e.g. ISIS women who flogged and bit prisoners with metal teeth or put severed heads into their prison cells).
- Couriers of money and messages.

Leaders, Recruiters & Fundraisers

- In charge of recruiting members (being the prize for recruiting males, and a familiar sister for recruiting females).
- Creating propaganda specifically geared towards female sympathizers.
- Advancing group agenda by inciting, organizing, or leading activities.
- Translators of extremist material and ideology.
- Authors of scholarly propaganda articles.

Other

- Wives and mothers.
- Support roles as medics, teachers, nurses, cooks, and safe house workers.

¹⁴⁶ Hendawi, 2017; Venard, 2016

Female jihad

The roles women take in terrorist groups vary, depending on the ethos of the group and the surrounding culture. In the extreme leftist groups functioning in the seventies and eighties, such as the Red Brigades, women were able to rise to leadership roles. However, in groups such as al Shabaab, ISIS, al Qaeda, Hamas, etc. that claim to represent orthodox Islam, the conservative culture of the groups often prevents such leadership participation for women. For example, Al Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri and his wife, Umayma al-Zawahiri strongly advised women to **stay at home in supportive roles as wives to their warrior husbands and as mothers whose job was to socialize their young sons in the art of warfare and the hateful ideology of the group.** On women's role in jihad, Umayma stated, "our principal role ... is to protect the jihadis [through] bringing up their children, [managing] their homes, and [keeping] their secrets... to bring up their children on the love of jihad in God's path".¹⁴⁷

One concept of female jihad is that women are confined to **supporting their male relatives, educating their children in the ideology, and facilitating terrorist operations.** Some experts claim that women are important for the survival of a terrorist organisation when they follow the female version of the ideology.¹⁴⁸ Because the men could get arrested, die in an attack, or get shot by security forces, the women sometimes **ensure the stability and continuation of the organisation** by procreating, educating their children in the 'right' belief, and training their sons to become fighters for the group.

In other cases, **active female members in groups such as Hezbollah and among Chechen jihadists were some of the first among violent extremist groups to be equally represented** in their groups of over one hundred suicide bombers.¹⁴⁹ While other groups like al Qaeda and ISIS may have wanted women to be in traditional roles, they still spoke directly to women in their recruiting efforts and deeply involved them in supportive roles performing important functions for the group, including raising finances, conducting web-based and face-to-face recruitment, and acting as enforcers, spies, or couriers for messages and money. ISIS also allowed women to be officers in the hisbah (morality police), teachers, medical staff, recruiters, etc., but generally required women to be segregated

from men and subservient to men and the group's male leadership while carrying out their duties. When ISIS came under heavy attack, the group even made a fatwa¹⁵⁰ that women could be directed by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi to become suicide bombers, even without asking permission of their husbands.

Indeed, though such violent extremist groups may recruit women with very traditional roles in mind, the reality is that **women in their ranks play multiple, varied roles,** and this should be considered when examining the question of justice for female returnees from extremist groups in conflict zones.

Physical roles

Combat roles

While violent extremist groups such as ISIS and al Qaeda usually prescribe strictly traditional gender roles for women in their ranks, as mentioned above, when the group in question begins losing battles and territory, they generally reform their gender prescriptions and **allow women to take up combat roles.**¹⁵¹ This occurred with Palestinian Hamas and Fatah when men could no longer cross the security borders into Israel, with al Qaeda in Iraq around 2008, and with ISIS in 2017.¹⁵² This has implications for both the types of women who may be drawn to join groups with combat roles suddenly open to them and the growing likelihood that women returning from extremist groups in conflict zones will be battle trained and ready for possible attacks back home.

Suicide bombers

Another role that modern-day jihadi extremist groups allow women, particularly when those groups are losing male members, is that of suicide bombers. As women do not play leadership roles in most militant jihadi groups, the leaders may consider women to be more expendable when the group is in need of candidates to sacrifice their life to kill others. This self-sacrifice is labelled in militant jihadist groups as "martyrdom" and women are told they will win

¹⁴⁷ Lahoud, 2010

¹⁴⁸ Von Knop, 2007; Bouvier and Martelet, 2018

¹⁴⁹ Speckhard and Akhmedova, 2006; 2007

¹⁵⁰ Fatwa, in Islam, a formal ruling or interpretation on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified legal scholar (known as a mufti). Fatwas are usually issued in response to questions from individuals or Islamic courts. Though considered authoritative, fatwas are generally not treated as binding judgments; a requester who finds a fatwa unconvincing is permitted to seek another opinion.

¹⁵¹ Speckhard 2006, 2009 and 2015; Bryson, 2017

¹⁵² Speckhard 2006, 2009 and 2015; Speckhard and Almohammad 2017

STORIES FROM THE REGION

Some groups in the region highly publicize the “martyrdom” of their members. Chechens, for instance, had a song glorifying their first suicide bomber, Khava Barayeva. Palestinians who supported the liberation cause routinely organized public celebrations and released “martyrdom” videos and posters glorifying those who sacrificed their lives to murder others. For instance, locals paraded through the streets with life size posters of Wafa Idris, the first Palestinian female suicide bomber, following her death. ISIS and al Qaeda also released “martyr” lists and created videos and other internet-based materials glorifying those who died on behalf of their cause¹⁵³.

the rewards of eternal life in paradise, including the ability to elect 72 family members to bypass the day of judgment and eternal beauty. The public glorification of martyrdom may encourage some women to volunteer themselves for such missions, in part to gain public admiration from their community and society. **Using women in suicide missions also serves extremist groups in multiple practical ways.** First, generally speaking, women are not as easily suspected as men and their female modesty is often respected. As a result, they are often less well searched and can pass security barriers more easily. Secondly, traditional-women’s clothing and the possibility of pregnancy may allow them to more easily conceal weapons or bombs. Finally, female terrorists garner more media attention than males when they take part in attacks, particularly suicide attacks. As media attention is the oxygen upon which terrorism thrives, using female suicide bombers can be good press for extremist groups.

Other roles

Terrorist instigators, recruiters, and inspiration

A significant role women play for modern day violent extremist groups is that of instigators to political violence, by inviting and inciting others to violence. In online conversations with male potential recruits, female ISIS recruiters would sometimes offer themselves to them as prize brides if the men agreed to travel to Iraq and Syria to join in the fight.¹⁵⁵ This was a particularly powerful motivation in countries such as Tunisia where economic challenges made it difficult for unemployed men to get married. As noted earlier, the National Investigation Agency (India), stated to the author that the majority of their mainly male foreign fighters in ISIS were recruited over the Internet by individuals claiming to be women who offered them marriage once they travelled to Syria and Iraq.¹⁵⁶ Whether or not these recruiters were really women,

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A deputy director at a middle school in Dagestan, Russia, Maryam Shariipova acted as a suicide bomber in Moscow, killing herself and 26 others in a metro station. According to news reports, Sharipova fits well into the profile of women radicalised in part online. Prior to her attack, she had barely ever traveled outside her mountainous village. However, one must not discount the fact that she also lived in Balakhani, an area dubbed as “militant nest,” and had family ties with terrorists, which likely also contributed to her mobilization as a suicide terrorist¹⁵⁴.

¹⁵³ Speckhard, 2012, Speckhard and Shajkovci, interviews with IS defectors and travelers to Iraq and Syria, 2016-2018

¹⁵⁴ Harding, 2010; Rozin, 2017

¹⁵⁵ Speckhard and Yayla 2016

¹⁵⁶ See also the NIA investigation into the case of Karen Aisha Hamidon, an IS recruiter and prime suspect in recruiting Indian men into IS, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/nia-to-interrogate-woman-isis-recruiter/vedioshow/61515278.cms>

however, remains unknown, as few physically appeared to those they were seducing via the Internet.

ISIS defectors have also reported that there was a contingent of women in Raqqa who spent their days on the Internet trying to recruit both men and women to the group.¹⁵⁷ Female ISIS bloggers like Umm Layth, Bird of Paradise, and others are known to have **seduced other women into the group through their writings** glorifying the group and explaining how to join.¹⁵⁸

generally killed, while the women were sent back to Raqqa and forced to remarry. This may account for the lower rates of female foreign fighters returning from ISIS compared to male foreign fighters in places like Kosovo.¹⁶² Women likely either **tried to escape but were caught and killed or remarried (forcefully or voluntarily), were prevented from escaping, did not wish to escape, or were too terrified and constricted to even try.**¹⁶³

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A 23-year-old from Mitrovica, Kosovo, Qamile traveled with her two children and husband to join ISIS. Considered one of the most radical known Kosovar women who have traveled to the conflict zone since the onset in 2011, she has been credited with housing women from the Balkans in Syria and acting as an online ISIS recruiter for ethnic Albanians. Although many women have followed their husbands to ISIS, Qamile's case highlights a more active role (e.g. recruitment, combat, etc.) for women in the so-called Islamic State Caliphate. Qamile left her native country of Kosovo believing that she should help Syrians under assault by the actions of Bashar al Assad and wanting to help establish the ISIS Caliphate. She is known to have worn a veil before her marriage; however, it was only after her marriage that she completely covered herself in a black niqab. Qamile lied to her extended family about her family's plans to join ISIS, telling them that her husband had decided to go to Egypt to pursue religious education, when in reality he had gone to Syria. Alone with two children, she claimed it was not allowed for women to stay without a spouse, as they would be considered widows. She later followed him to Syria and played an active role serving ISIS¹⁵⁹.

Women's disengagement

Women who join terrorist groups often have more difficulty exiting the groups than men do. For women that were lured or coerced into joining a violent group in the first place, then subjected to serious restrictions, such as only being allowed to appear in public with a chaperone or not having access to the family finances, **it can be very difficult to escape.**¹⁶⁰ Women also face risks while trying to escape that men do not, for instance, women who used smugglers to escape from ISIS have been sexually assaulted.¹⁶¹ Likewise, when couples were caught escaping, the males were

157 Speckhard and Yayla, 2015, 2016

158 Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 2015

159 Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2017; Xharra and Kadriu, 2015

160 ISIS did pay women who worked but made it difficult for them to move about.

161 Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2017.

162 In Kosovo, ICSVE researchers found a 32% difference (41% male and 9% female) in returnee rates. Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018

163 Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018

Practical Exercise

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers.

Instructions:

- Have participants raise their hands and say or just shout out freely their answers to the question below. Encourage participants not to be afraid to get creative during a brainstorm session, the more innovative the idea the better. Tell them to try to think outside the box and come up with activities, initiatives and interventions not currently used by P/CVE actors, but that would work well in their community context.

- Write participants' answers on the board in summarised form.

- After a few minutes, or after responses die down, ask participants to process the answers they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:

- o Which idea for an intervention or initiative did you like the best? Why?

- o Do you disagree with any of the ideas? Why?

- o Which option do you think would work best in your community? Why?

Questions:

1. How should P/CVE programmes targeting female returnees differ according to the woman's past role in extremist groups? What different sort of initiatives, interventions, or programmes might be called for in the case of a female past ISIS combatant vs. a female past ISIS teacher vs. a female past ISIS housewife?

2. How can you find out what roles a female returnee played in extremist groups? Should you just take her word for what she did or try to learn from others that knew her as well? Would checking her past social media give some clues?

3. Do you believe that female supporters of jihadi groups in Iraq and Syria are more likely than ever to engage in violence upon return?

4. Some women returnees from Syria and Iraq emphasise their own victimhood, namely the fact that

the ISIS recruitment campaign targeting women ran similar to child sexual exploitation and grooming (e.g. older men seeking younger women online). How important is to recognise that fact when creating programmes that target female returnees?

5. Despite claims of victimhood it is also important to address taking personal responsibility for any support given to a terrorist group. How can you address both—that an individual both supported and was tricked and harmed by the group he or she supported?

UNIT 2: RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Warm-Up Activity

VOTE

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers

Instructions:

- Tell participants that they are probably aware that given the so-called Islamic State's recent battle and territory losses in Iraq and Syria, many foreign fighters from the region are returning to their home countries.
- Ask participants what percentage of male ISIS joiners from the Europe and Central Asia region do they think have returned to their country? Write down all the suggestions on the board or paper.
- Ask participants what percentage of female ISIS joiners from the Europe and Central Asia region do they think have returned to their country? Write down all the suggestions on the board or paper.
- After several minutes or when suggestions die down, give participants the real figures.
- Invite students to respond to the real figures. If the conversation needs a push, ask things like:
 - o Do the real figures surprise you? Why?
 - o Why do you think there is such a large difference between the percent of men returning from ISIS and the percent of women returning?

Real figures, ECA region:

- Male ISIS returnees as % of male ISIS joiners: 13-16%
- Female ISIS returnees as % female ISIS joiners: 2-3%¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Cook and Vale, 2018

ISIS returnees as of 2018:

The following tables include data compiled by Cook and Vale (2018), where various sources from 2014-2018 are used to provide information on returnees.

Global totals:

Female ISIS returnees compared to the known total ISIS returnees¹⁶⁵

Region	Female ISIS returnees as % of total returnees
South-Eastern Asia	28%
Western Europe	8%
Sub-Saharan Africa	8%
Eastern Europe	5%
Americas, Australia & New Zealand	2%
Southern Asia	<1%
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	<1%
Eastern Asia	0
Central Asia	<1%

ISIS returnees from the region:

Women, children, men, and total returnees¹⁶⁶

Country	Minor ISIS Returnees	Female ISIS Returnees	Male ISIS Returnees	Total ISIS Returnees (Men, Women and Children)	ISIS Female Returnees as a percentage of total adult returnees
Eastern Europe					
Albania				44	
Azerbaijan	19			49	
Bosnia	4	6	46	56	11
Georgia				12-17	
Kosovo	77	39	127	243	23
Macedonia				72-86	
Montenegro	1	1	8	10	11
Russia (incl. Chechnya, Dagestan)	73	24	283		7

¹⁶⁵ Cook and Vale, 2018

¹⁶⁶ Countries in the region are only included in the table if there was data available

Country	Minor ISIS Returnees	Female ISIS Returnees	Male ISIS Returnees	Total ISIS Returnees (Men, Women and Children)	ISIS Female Returnees as a percentage of total adult returnees
Serbia					
Slovenia					
Region total	100	38	460	765-784 (11-13%)	52
Women and minors as % of total returnees	13%	5%			
Central Asia and Turkey					
Kazakhstan	63-113			113-128	
Kyrgyzstan				63	
Tajikistan	41	1	105	147	.009
Turkey				900	
Region total	104-154	1	105	1,423-1,438 (16-19% of joiners)	.009
Women and minors as % of total affiliates	7-11%	>1%			
Total returnees for Central Asia, Turkey, and Eastern Europe	204-254	39	565	2,188-2,222 (13-16% of joiners)	
Women and minor returnees as % of total returnees for Central Asia, Turkey, and Eastern Europe	9-12%	2%			
Women and minor returnees as % of women and minor joiners for Central Asia, Turkey, and Eastern Europe	10-18%	2-3%	168		

Issues

Rehabilitating and reintegrating both male and female violent extremist group returnees, may have positive long-term results and turn those individuals away from violent extremism. Both male and female returnees will likely be more visible in their communities than before they left. If stigmatised, whether in person or online, they may feel a strong sense of alienation. **The effects of social stigma, judgment, and alienation can be detrimental**, and some may draw parallels between their own experience of alienation and the supposed suffering of oppressed populations that violent extremist groups claim to serve.

Those who return to the same living conditions that led them to join violent extremist groups in the first place, such as real or perceived grievances over marginalisation or discrimination, are likely to continue to be vulnerable to extremist ideologies and may even revert to violent extremism.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, for those motivated by real or perceived grievances, the situation might become worse upon their return given the now added social stigma for having served in a violent extremist group. Such already indoctrinated individuals may be more open to continued radicalisation and a possible return to violent extremism, provided they cannot find a way to disengage, de-radicalise and reintegrate into their communities. **Thus, if an individual does not feel adequately re-integrated into their home community following their return from a violent extremist group, it can carry serious consequences.**

Foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq who manage to slip under government and law enforcement radar upon returning home and thus escape possible prosecution and imprisonment will likely need to hide their extremist past. They will also most likely face social stigma and a lack of security in their community. They and their families may also fall into a gap in public services and socio-economic support. This trend may be especially pronounced with women returnees, as they are less likely to be suspected of returning from an extremist group by national security actors. Thus, they may easily slip under the radar and face reintegration in their local community without any institutional guidance or assistance.

As mentioned earlier, states are now stripping some who joined terrorist groups of their citizenship and

¹⁶⁷ Speckhard, Shajkovci and Yayla, 2018

some states do not allow women to confer citizenship to their children.¹⁶⁸ This creates issues of statelessness and potential grievances as well, which will be covered in a subsequent section.

Many P/CVE actors are striving to serve ISIS returnees but face bureaucratic and legal hurdles. Might monetary contributions to returnees help resume their normal lives constitute a criminal act if understood as giving material support to terrorists? Is knowing about a returnee but failing to report her or him to the authorities a crime? **P/CVE actors in the region must be well trained in their country's legal parameters regarding returning fighters.** Additionally, as mentioned previously P/CVE actors may wish to establish relationships with legal and security entities both locally and nationally who can best advise permissible activities for recovery and reintegration initiatives that will not place the organisation or individual in potential conflict with the law. Finally, P/CVE actors should be as transparent as possible in their initiatives. Being up front and transparent about activities will make it more difficult to argue that such activities are being done with harmful intent.

Like all conflict, participation in violent extremism carries **serious mental health risks to both those who witness the violence and those who take part in it.** For anyone who lived under ISIS-control, it is almost impossible that they avoided experiencing ISIS' brutality in their everyday lives. Even women who may not have taken part in the physical fighting may experience post-traumatic responses to the brutal violence witnessed living under the extremist group.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, men and young boys who return home may be desensitised to violence if encouraged to rape, beat, behead, etc., and may experience strong post-traumatic symptoms making them feel angry and agitated and may be susceptible to re-enacting violence towards men and women domestically and in their community.

¹⁶⁸ Speckhard and Shajkovci, personal communication with ROJAVE region (Syria) officials, 2018

¹⁶⁹ Speckhard and Shajkovci, interviews with women detainees in Camp Roj, Syria, 2018

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When she realised her son was radicalising in his views and behaviour, Laila, a Belgian mother, went to the police to try to stop him from traveling to Syria. The police failed to stop him. Years later, she began receiving phone calls from her son saying he was tired of the war zone and wishes to come home. Laila desperately wants her son and his new-born child to return home, fully understanding that he will face prosecution and likely prison time, however she does not know how to help facilitate his return. She has lost trust in the police and communicates with her son using “burner” phones. According to a Belgian intelligence officer, however, Laila’s son may be lying to her about his true intent and by sending him money she may be seen as providing material support to a terrorist. In explanation, he cited another case where a Belgian male tried to return home from the war zone in Syria by stating he was disillusioned of the terrorist group, when in fact a careful intelligence probe of his phone and social media accounts revealed that he was trying to return home to carry out an attack¹⁷⁰.

Returnee punishment challenges: further radicalisation

Where commission of a crime can be proven, returnees may be convicted and imprisoned. If released, they may be robustly monitored. Working with such returnees is difficult given that the hard security measures being implemented may **exacerbate old grievances or create new ones, which may lead to continued radicalisation**. As P/CVE actors, soft security programmes and channels of delivery comprised of psychologists, imams, school teachers, vocational counsellors, etc., can be effective resources to guide and counsel those who might potentially be at risk both while they are in prison and upon their release. Care should be taken however as highly indoctrinated individuals may be dangerous even to those trying to help them exit the dangerous group and ideology they have taken on board.

It is helpful for the security of P/CVE actors and the local community to have an idea of what kind of risk returnees pose. As mentioned above, forming relationships with local, regional, and national security institutions who are already vetting returnees and may be willing to share with P/CVE actors for programming may be strategic. Additionally, proper vetting and preparations for rehabilitation are more effective with multi-agency and community cooperation, therefore try to seek ways that local and community

actors can work in partnership with security institutions to develop both a holistic and multi-dimensional evaluation of the risk posed by returnees and nuanced rehabilitation solutions tailored to individual circumstances and needs. Once you understand the risks returnees may pose to the community, **programmatic initiatives can be designed to support potential victims and prevent community harm, possibly also in conjunction with more hard security institutional actors**. This may also require the involvement of the individual’s family and community.

As referenced above we also need to be aware that ISIS cadres are going to be imprisoned, some will serve short sentences and while we can hope for rehabilitation, some like Abu Albani may emerge from prison even further radicalized. In these cases, careful programs must be put in place to address such individuals as they emerge from prison, who may in fact be dangerous to those who try to help them.

Issues Specific to Women

Many countries continue to struggle with the question of how to deal with women and children returning from ISIS and other violent extremist groups, in part because most countries initially only prepared for male returnees. In the absence of clear legal guidelines on how to deal with women and children, many countries deal with them on a case-by-case basis.

In the possible absence of an institutional policy on integrating women returnees from violent extremist

170 Speckhard and Yayla, 2016

groups, local P/CVE actors can have a significant impact on returnees' experience. In order to design effective initiatives to rehabilitate and reintegrate female returnees, it would benefit P/CVE actors to have a clear understanding of the roles played by the women returnees and their children in ISIS and other extremist groups, what kind of weapons and ideological training they have undergone, the reasons why they left the group, the reasons why they returned to their home country, and the nature of the threat they may pose upon return.

Many of those who will be repatriated in future years from ISIS territory are women and children. Particular care needs to be taken for the children to ensure that they are no longer subject to any ISIS indoctrination from their parents or community. Likewise, some ISIS mothers left abusive homes to go and join ISIS and their children should not be placed in these homes if their mothers are put in prison. Particular care needs to be taken for ISIS children who have suffered a great deal of trauma. In many cases it may serve the best interest of the children to have their mothers prosecuted but sentenced to community service, rehabilitation and so on in modes that allow them to continue to parent so the child doesn't undergo yet another trauma.

When female foreign fighters or the wives of fighters return to their home country, they will likely face issues of reintegration and require treatment. Due to heavy exposure to multiple traumas, violence and the rejection of anyone not adhering to their violent extremist beliefs may have become normalized for both female and male extremist group returnees. Whether in prison or not, women returnees would benefit from **special rehabilitation programmes designed with a gender perspective and knowledge of the particular issues that women in extremist groups have faced and women returnees will face in their home communities**. This effort is particularly important as violent extremist groups have repeatedly shown their willingness to recruit and use women for suicide missions, particularly when the women are angry, desperate, or have strong grievances, which may be the case for female returnees who can be reactivated to endorse or carry out violence under the right set of circumstances.¹⁷¹

171 Speckhard, Shajkovci, and Esengul, 2017

Child returnees

There are also **numerous difficulties dealing with returning children and children that perhaps should be returned home**. First, many of the children born in conflict zones in Iraq and Syria do not have the required paperwork to establish citizenship in their home country. Furthermore, sometimes only their deceased father is a foreign citizen. This makes proving their nationality difficult. Some mothers were married multiple times and have children born to different fathers, only some of whom were Western citizens. The UK authorities are reported to perform DNA testing on such children brought back to the UK to establish their identity and whether they have the right to live in the UK.¹⁷² Secondly, their return poses challenges for social services who lack adequate capacities and staff to deal with their return.

Children born to Western mothers often remain with their mothers in detention camps in Iraq and Syria and have not been extracted by their governments.¹⁷³ Some countries remain uncertain on how to proceed, while others leave it up to the child's parents to decide whether their children should stay with them while being tried in Iraq and Syria or be repatriated.¹⁷⁴

If children and their mothers or fathers return to their home country, in some cases children are taken away from their parents temporarily to determine if the parents are capable of providing an upbringing for the child free from continued radicalisation. Some have suggested that children of returnees should be taken away permanently from returnee parents. However, **determining a parent's abilities is often difficult**: Islamist beliefs are not evidence of radicalised views to sever parental ties, for instance, however taking a child into ISIS or other extremist groups where children were routinely subjected to abuse and to witnessing extreme brutality certainly shows a lack of good judgment for those who understood what they were doing.

As women in ISIS and other similar extremist groups in the region are often left responsible for the children, **the issue of child returnee treatment remains more relevant for female returnees than male returnees**. Hard security measures such as removing children from

172 Davenport and Hall, 2018

173 Speckhard and Shajkovci, interview with women in Camp Roj, Syria, 2018.

174 Chulov, 2017; Speckhard and Shajkovci, 2018; Speckhard, 2018

their parent or parents, or leaving children in camps for years at a time, risks aggravating grievances and could lead to increased radicalisation. Instead, softer measures are suggested within the framework of P/CVE initiatives. **Family counselling and other forms of social and psychological assistance to such families are proposed, as it can help returnees to deal with posttraumatic responses to the conflict zone and separate themselves from extremist groups operating there.**¹⁷⁵ However, prosecution and wise use of suspended sentencing can also be useful to compel individuals into rehabilitation to avoid spending time in prison.

Additionally, when parents and children captured and separated from each other by ISIS are reunited, both are likely to have undergone traumatic experiences, ideological indoctrination, and abuses that will require supportive counselling. Two traumatised individuals may not automatically support each other in healthy ways to move beyond radicalisation. This was particularly evident with Yazidi boys put in the Cubs of the Caliphate and indoctrinated into hateful violence who were returned to their rape survivor mothers. Both needed more support before being reunited. Both parents and children, therefore, may need help to constructively move together towards recovery.

Finally, it is imperative to **ascertain the threat level of children and their parents upon return to their community.** As mentioned in previous sections, a multi-actor approach involving local and national security institutions, local P/CVE actors, and the individuals' family and community is proposed for a more holistic and triangulated assessment of their threat level. Once their threat level is determined, more effective reintegration initiatives can be designed that do not simultaneously threaten the security of the returnee's local community.

Should women face justice?

While prosecution and long-term prison sentences are often sought for returning male foreign fighters, they can be difficult to achieve due to a lack of evidence. Contrarily, prosecution is not always sought for female returnees. Because of varying experiences and roles within ISIS, laws about what exactly constitutes membership in a terrorist group, the fact that most women did not swear allegiance to ISIS, and the inability to meet evidentiary threshold to secure

a conviction, female returnees are often dealt with by legal institutions on a case-by-case basis and many are not prosecuted. This is not to suggest, however, that governments should not be clear on what the females who travelled to Syria or Iraq to join or serve designated terrorist organisation should expect upon their return. Legally speaking, it is much easier to build a case against a woman who travelled to Syria of her own accord for the purpose of joining a designated terrorist organisation than it is against a woman who was forced to follow in the footsteps of her possibly abusive husband.

When prosecutors are thinking of how to prosecute females involved in ISIS it may be important to consider that while most did not swear allegiance to the group or have formal jobs, even as wives and mothers, most were provided with ISIS housing and their husband's salaries were doubled to cover for them, and ISIS itself considered them as integral members, refusing to let them leave the group.

The current approach towards female returnees can be simplistic, as many women either joined extremist groups of their own agency or were sufficiently radicalised within such groups that they may return to their home community ready to continue to serve the cause, whether in more supportive ways or in explicit acts of violent extremism.¹⁷⁶ When faced with women returnees who have escaped prosecution, local P/CVE actors should **prioritise risk assessments and then tailor reintegration initiatives to women returnees' specific context and needs.**

Another question is whether to hold men and women to justice in their country of origin or the country where they joined an extremist group. The French government, for instance, has indicated that it wants adults, including women, captured in Iraq and Syria to face justice there if they are provided access to justice and guaranteed a fair trial. On May 2019, seven French citizens were sentenced to death by hanging after having admitted to having served in the Islamic State.¹⁷⁷ However, such an approach can be problematic given the militia-run government and the politicized nature of courts operating in many parts of Syria. This also begs the question of what to do with the children of such women.

There are also differences in how evidence is gathered and sentences are handed down between courts

175 Reed and Pohl, 2017

176 Vrugtman, 2018; UN Women, 2017

177 Rubin, 2019

currently operating in Iraq and Syria and courts in foreign group members' home countries. For example, in some courts in Iraq and Syria specifically torture is an acceptable means to gain confessions and prosecutions can lead to extremely long sentencing, including death sentences. For a violent extremist from Europe, this **differs greatly from the justice system in their home country**. Human rights lawyers and organisations are currently wrangling with these issues, as women and their children languish in camps in Syria and Iraq.¹⁷⁸

In the absence of necessary evidence to prosecute, both female and male returnees often receive soft measures such as counselling referrals, travel restrictions, and other similar measures. Family members of fighters also often receive soft measures and rightly or wrongly are not usually viewed as security threats.

women returnees in this situation may find it more difficult to transition out of their old violent extremist lives and mindset.

Additionally, if women returnees feel alone and vulnerable, they may keep the connection to their violent extremist past by remaining in contact with individuals from their old network in extremist groups for support, or by continuing to raise their children in a radicalised way. If they were heavily indoctrinated to accept ISIS ideology, they may feel that they need to continue to live in a "pure" way, isolated from the wider community, and may be vulnerable as a result. This makes clear the **importance of providing psychosocial and practical support for women returnees as part of an effective P/CVE strategy.**

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Two German ISIS women together with three children were recently released from a Kurdish prison in Iraq. While the arrest warrant against the women could not be obtained, the women were searched and interrogated by respective authorities upon their arrival to the airport. The authorities cited insufficient evidence to detain the women for participating and supporting a terrorist organisation. Canadian authorities have been helping a woman who managed to escape from ISIS, with her infant daughters, several years after traveling to Syria. Yet, as of January 2018, she and her daughters remain under the custody of the SDF. It remains unknown whether she will face charges for joining ISIS upon return to Canada. The Russian government officials have reported to have already returned 26 women and 71 children from the conflict zones in Iraq and Syria. The United States recently repatriated an ISIS woman and mother of four children, two already bearing U.S. passports who had spent an entire year in Syrian custody¹⁷⁹. She has been successfully prosecuted. In Ireland, Lisa Smith was recently repatriated with her two-year-old child and charged for membership in a terrorist organization.

Traditional gender roles in reintegration

When impoverished women return alone from battle zones, they may return to the same dire economic circumstances as before they left, if not worse. Women returnees, due to traditional gender norms and an occasional lack of skills corresponding to the formal job market, may find themselves at home caring for children. If they are isolated or fall back into the same peer group in which they originally radicalised,

Moreover, perceptions of community members about the choice of clothing or withdrawal from normally experienced activities prior to joining a violent extremist group may not only lead to more fear and anxiety among family and community members, but also to wrongful perceptions in the community. Local community members may assume that families are responsible for any lack of reintegration of the returning family members. In any case, it is important to point out that the conservative clothing is not the issue, but rather the underlying attitudes that may have been picked up in the conflict zone about not

¹⁷⁸ Chulov, 2017; Speckhard and Shajkovi, 2018; Speckhard, 2018
¹⁷⁹ Alkhateeb, 2018; Shephard, 2018; Kramer, 2018

needing to live in harmony with others who have different religious, cultural, etc. orientations and beliefs. The aim should be that despite how one dresses they do not condemn others for having more liberal beliefs than one's own.

Furthermore, as cited in previous sections, the negative impact of returning male fighters on women is well documented.¹⁸¹ In many cases in the region, when violent extremist group members returned from conflict zones in Iraq and Syria, women in the commu-

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“People assume I am an ISIS woman, just because I am wearing a niqab,” Nur, a Kosovar female returnee from Syria shared. Her father even demanded she take off her niqab now that her husband was killed whereas she felt it was an expression of her devout commitment to Islam rather than any statement of support to ISIS. Nur claimed that she was tricked by her husband into traveling to ISIS territory with their two-year-old daughter. Once there, she had no idea how to return without his assistance. She only managed to return following her husband's death because his ISIS brothers ensured that his last wishes, to return his wife and child to Kosovo, were carried out. Referencing how she now tried to live under the radar in Kosovo and hide her time in ISIS, Nur admitted that she had not told her now six-year-old daughter about her father being a deceased foreign fighter for ISIS or that they had been in Syria fearing that the shame and social stigma would ruin her¹⁸⁰.

Women as victims

When violent extremists enter or re-enter a community, either by grassroots recruiting or returning from battlefields, they may create additional risks for everyone. However, **local women usually bear the brunt of those risks.** These groups often attempt to enforce their stringent gender norms on everyone in the community. This can limit the freedom of the entire community; however, it often has the most direct effect on women. This phenomenon has been borne out where militant jihadi extremist groups made significant inroads in many places including in: Mali, Jordan, Belgium, Kosovo, Bosnia, Serbia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

On the other hand, **returnees can be a key asset to P/CVE efforts in the community.** When women and men return from violent extremist groups disillusioned and are willing to speak out against the group, they can be a crucial element of breaking down existing community support for such groups. Belgian Laura, cited in earlier sections, is an example of such a case.

nity reported “a **rise in incidents of domestic abuse and instances of being banned from leaving the house, taking public transportation, or voicing their opinions**”.¹⁸²

Additionally, traumatised combatants with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including children, may re-enact the violence they witnessed in the conflict zone. Such post-traumatic responses may best be addressed within family contexts and through culturally acceptable channels. There can be a great deal of stigma in seeking psychological help, as well as shame and fear of violence that occurs in response to post-traumatic flashbacks. Wives and mothers may not open up about such incidents, whether the individual experiencing flashbacks is their husband, child, or themselves, unless they feel they are in an extremely safe and comfortable environment to do so. Likewise, they may need to be specifically asked about incidents of violence before they will admit to it on their own. Listening to other women's stories about their own similar experiences often helps diminish the shame they may feel in admitting that such incidents occur in their own lives although it can also trigger flashbacks which will require assistance to work through.

¹⁸⁰ Speckhard personal interview with a Kosovar female returnee, Kosovo, May 2018; Speckhard and Shajkocvi, Kosovo, May 2018

¹⁸¹ As cited in Shirlow, Tonge, McAuley and McGlyn, 2010

¹⁸² UN Women, 2017

The **absence of adequate community-level peace-keeping initiatives or lack of desire on the part of community to engage with violent extremists** can also exacerbate the risks of further radicalisation of returnees.¹⁸³ Women returnees usually wanted to hide that part of their past to avoid suffering social stigma and to be able to carry on with their lives. Referencing this stigma, Kosovo law enforcement officials stressed the difficulty of reintegrating female returnees who did not receive sentences for traveling to live under ISIS. Additionally, if a female returnee's husband is put in prison and she remains alone, it may cause her to continue to reach out to her former friends in the battle zone to keep some sense of camaraderie, which could be detrimental to de-radicalisation and reintegration.

Addressing the potential impact of returnees on their communities and of local communities on returnees remains crucial in countering the continuation of such individuals on the path of violent extremism and recruitment of others onto that path. **Both soft and hard power measures are necessary to monitor returnees and their communities and mitigate any negative impacts** of the return/reintegration of violent extremists on local women and women's group in their home community.

Reintegration programme recommendations

- Evaluate the extent to which returning violent extremists could be **partnered with mentors**, caring community members or family members in reintegration efforts (i.e. prior to their return, after their return, and during and after their release from prison, if applicable).
- Many of the returning individuals from violent extremist groups are likely to return to their homeland and find that **their needs are not being met** through the criminal justice system, government services, or their community. This can have a significant impact on the threat level they may pose, not only to themselves but also to others, including women and women's groups. Their path to rehabilitation may be improved by varied forms of support such as **psychological counselling, employment aid, and assistance**

¹⁸³ This was evidenced in certain cases in the Balkans by ISCVE researchers as well, specifically during their formal and informal interviews with citizens in the Balkan

with network and relationship building to prevent them from reverting back to violent extremism. Keep in mind that if support is not offered, terrorist groups are often more than willing to step in to fill the gap.

- Consider the extent to which reintegration responses for male violent extremists could be complemented with **specialised responses for female violent extremists**. While men and women may have engaged in different forms of violence (e.g. men engaged in physical battlefield violence versus women enforcing religious norms and practices, etc.), such an approach could help strengthen risk assessment and reintegration efforts. Likewise, it is important to consider how much women may have urged male family members to join violent extremist groups as it is not always the men who are the instigators of such decisions, even in cases where they carried out the violent acts.
- Ensure adequate risk assessment of **both male and female returnees**, as everyone who experienced the harsh realities of living under the rule of a violent extremist group are likely to feel confused, traumatised and disillusioned upon return and may be vulnerable to pressures to carrying out violent acts.
- Given that many returnees are likely to go into hiding, P/CVE actors may benefit from attempting to **enlist such individuals in amnesty programmes** (provided they are offered by the government in their country) to contribute towards successful reintegration of returnees into society.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Radicalisation Awareness Network, 2017; Ndung'u and Salifu, 2017

Practical Exercise

SMALL GROUP BRAINSTORMING

Suggested Time: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers
- Paper and writing utensils for all participants

Instructions:

- Divide participants into smaller groups of 4-5 people.
- Divide the questions according to the number of small groups and give each small group 1-3 of the questions below and tell them they will have 5-7 minutes to brainstorm and discuss responses to the question in their small group. It's alright if you don't use all the questions. Encourage them to think about the questions as they manifest themselves in their community. They should write down their ideas on their paper.
- After 5-7 minutes, have groups read aloud one by one the question they were given, and several of their best responses. If time remains, allow other participants to respond to each small group by raising their hands and asking questions or making comments.

Questions:

- Returnees from the conflict zone (e.g. Iraq and Syria) are perceived as a threat not only due to their potential capability to carry out attacks at home (e.g. due to their possible acquired military capability in the battlefield), but also due to their potential motivation to carry out attacks. What are these motivations? Particularly if they are political, could they be redirected to more effective nonviolent activities? How?
- Women are more likely to suffer the effects of militant jihadi-related radicalisation in their communities – how could that be mitigated?
- Many women openly express regrets for travelling to Iraq and Syria, yet others continue to embrace violent group ideology IS ideology and remain committed to violent causes. How can we tell the difference between them? How best could we use the women who regret their decision for counter-messaging? How can we intervene with those who do not regret their decision?

- Some female returnees may continue to work on behalf of the so-called Islamic State through indoctrination, recruitment, and upholding the legitimacy of IS and what it represents. How can we stop that from happening?
- Some female returnees are likely to follow female-specific interpretations of radical ideology (e.g. “female jihad”) upon return and actively indoctrinate their children. What are some indicative signs in children that they are being radicalised at home? What might a teacher notice in a child that is being taught extremist beliefs?
- Women, particularly mothers whose sons or daughters died for violent extremist groups such as ISIS, may inadvertently glorify the group by calling their child a “martyr” while grieving his or her death. Adequate counselling mechanisms to help such women cope with the psychological impact of losing their loved ones are needed. How can we offer support without glorifying “martyrdom”?
- Some male and female returnees from violent extremist groups (e.g. ISIS in Iraq and Syria) are likely to remain active with extremist ideologues and ideologies, including those acting at home, potentially recruiting and influencing more followers into the militant jihadi stream. How can we identify and stop them?
- Research on the experiences of female combatants upon their return show that women are often shunned and stigmatised by their home communities. What can we do about that?
- Integrating returnees, both male and female, should remain an imperative. Returnees who return to the same living conditions that led them to join violent extremist groups in the first place (due to real or perceived grievances), and who upon return see there is no help, are likely to remain or become even more vulnerable to extremist ideologies and may revert to them. How can we mitigate such prospects?
- Women from abusive and alcoholic homes may have embraced conservative Islam as a way of providing structure and safety in their lives. While they are ready to give up ISIS, they may still cling to the structure that Islam provides. How can one help guide them in relinquishing ISIS ideology while hanging on to the good inherent in moderate Islamic beliefs?

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MODULE 5:

Elements and Examples for Designing a P/CVE Programme

Learning Objectives

After going through this module, participants should be able to:

- Cite the basic *steps to design a P/CVE programme*
- Identify factors to consider both regarding *P/CVE issues and gender mainstreaming*
- Identify strengths and weaknesses of *existing P/CVE initiatives*
- Design a basic *P/CVE initiative for their local community*

UNIT 1:

PREPARATORY WORK

Warm-Up Activity

BRAINSTORM

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Whiteboard and board markers OR large pad of paper, stand, and markers

Instructions:

- In a previous warm-up activity, participants volunteered ways that women can contribute to P/CVE efforts in existing P/CVE roles, such as teachers, police officers, and mothers. However, are there roles that do not currently exist in P/CVE initiatives that women could play?
- Have participants raise their hands or just shout out roles that women could play in P/CVE that are not yet utilized. Encourage participants to be creative, if they think women can contribute to P/CVE efforts as a shoe salesperson, suggest it.
- Invite participants to explain how and why women could contribute to P/CVE in that role.
- Write participants' suggestions on the board.

- After a few minutes, or after all responses, ask participants to process the new roles they came up with. If participants are hesitant to volunteer, get the conversation going by asking questions like:

- o Did any of the roles surprise you? Why?
- o Do you disagree with any of the roles? Why?
- o Do you think that any of the roles would work well for P/CVE initiatives in your community?

Basic Things to Consider When Designing a P/CVE Programme:

1. Consider the local context
2. Consider how women's experiences are different
3. What are your assets? What entities, organisations, people are already doing things that could lend support to CVE efforts without re-inventing? What structures already function that might be able to provide support to your CVE efforts like schools, community centers, etc. so that you can benefit from existing structures?
4. Pay attention to legal boundaries
5. Pay attention to security risks, including from your beneficiaries

Constructing the framework

When your group begins to identify the ways that radicalisation to violent extremism is occurring in your community, you will likely want to put a good programme together to address it. A good way to begin is by **considering how radicalisation is actually occurring in your societies and what groups, ideologies, means of social support, and vulnerabilities are active there.**

First, you may want to consider:

- What radicalisation and extremism related variables are you hoping to impact?
- What will your theory of change be?
- How can you measure the impact?

Next, you may want to consider:

- How will you identify those at risk of or being radicalised to violent extremism?
- How will you target the intended vulnerable community?
- With whom will you build trust and relationships?
- How will you know you are reaching the right people?
- Who is already doing good work in your community that you may partner with rather than compete or re-invent?

- Who is reaching the target population who might agree to partner with your organisation?

The final two bullet points refer to the decision to either partner with existing initiatives or organisations or to create a new P/CVE programme. Partnering with existing initiatives or organisations has several benefits, such as making the most of limited resources, incorporating lessons learned and best practices from the outset, **potentially increasing the speed of programme delivery, and potentially increasing impact.** However, if there are no existing initiatives or organisations doing the kind of P/CVE work you envision, you will have to create your own. Even in this case, it may be strategic to consider if there are existing organisations and entities that can help increase your reach and impact.

Helpful resources:

The following resources may be helpful for anyone designing P/CVE programmes. They include guidance on how to conduct a context analysis, gather data, define goals, consider risks, measure impact and success, and ensure that the programme will accomplish its intended goals.

- **UNDP and International Alert, Improving the impact of preventing violent extremism programming, 2018**
http://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/Dem_Gov/improving-the-impact-of-preventing-violent-extremism-programming.html

- **European Commission, Operational Guidelines on the preparation and implementation of EU financed actions specific to countering terrorism and violent extremism in third countries, 2017**
https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eu-ct-cve-guidelines-20171213_en.pdf

- **Daniel Koehler, Understanding Deradicalisation: Methods, Tools and Programmes for Countering Violent Extremism, 2017**
<https://www.routledge.com/Understanding-Deradicalisation-Methods-Tools-and-Programmes-for-Countering/Koehler-Horgan/p/book/9781138122772>

- **Georgia Holmer, Peter Bauman, Taking Stock: Analytic Tools for Understanding and Designing P/CVE Programmes, 2018**
<https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/09/taking-stock-analytic-tools-understanding-and-designing-pcve-programmes>

• **Georgia Holmer, Peter Bauman, and Kateira Aryaeinejad, Measuring Up: Monitoring and Evaluating P/CVE Programmes, 2018**

<https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/preventing-counteracting-violent-extremism-measuringup.pdf>

• **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Focus on South-Eastern Europe, 2019**

<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/400241>

• **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism - Good Practices for Law Enforcement, 2019**

<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/420563>

• **UN Women: Gender Mainstreaming Principles, Dimensions and Priorities for PVE; Guidance Note**

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/gender-mainstreaming-principles-dimensions-and-priorities-for-pve-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5046>

Incorporating a gender perspective

Please review the gender aspects to consider in context analysis and programme design from Module 1 (pp 38-39) and ask yourself how we can incorporate this level of analysis into the design of a P/CVE programme.

The gender aspects to consider, which were detailed in Module 1, include:

- Disaggregated data
- Decision-making agency within families and in personal life
- Economic agency
- Political and social agency
- Female-specific continued vulnerabilities to radicalisation and recruitment into violent extremism by returning violent extremists

In addition to above, when planning and designing your programmatic approaches, also consider:

- How you are targeting and incorporating women as
 - o Victims
 - o Supporters
 - o Perpetrators
 - o Preventers
 - o Interveners
- What is needed for different groups of women (young women, women in poverty, educated women, unemployed women, minority ethnic group women, etc.)
- Whether you need to use female interveners to reach women
- Where vulnerable women can gather safely

General Programmatic Questions:

- What support do female returnees and women involved in violent extremism in your community need to walk away from extremism?
- What support is needed to effectively prevent recruitment of women in your community into violent extremism?
- Are there issues for which women in your community need professional help, i.e. legal issues, psycho-social issues, religious questions, policing issues, etc.?

It is also important to ask if your programmes are fostering any gender stereotypes. For example, while one may want to reach parents, it is important not to make gender-based assumptions about parents. Mothers are often cited as the most knowledgeable individuals on the subject of their children's radicalisation and as the best candidates to intervene. However, depending on how families are structured in your area, this may or may not be true in every case. **Always consider the local context and keep in mind that each case is individual and unique.** In addition, mothers may feel ill-equipped to address radicalisation but be very effective in doing so if equipped, for instance, as was demonstrated in the Mothers Without Borders "Mother's Schools", which will be discussed later in this module.¹⁸⁵ Finally,

¹⁸⁵ See a detailed description of the "Mother's Schools" in Module 5, Unit 2

it is also important not to leave fathers out of P/CVE efforts and involve them in P/CVE interventions.

Understanding typical family dynamics and gender issues in your communities as they relate to P/CVE will also contribute to designing effective interventions. It is also useful to consider who parents, and even siblings and cousins, trust for help regarding violent extremism prevention and intervention and who they would consider talking to, particularly regarding gender. For instance, **parents and other family members usually want to protect their children and loved ones, but in conservative areas may not want to talk across genders, may avoid going to law enforcement, and may need help learning how to most effectively protect their loved ones.**

Potential legal challenges

P/CVE actors dealing with returnees will have to carefully navigate to **avoid potential legal challenges to their work.** Situations will likely arise within the programme where requests made by returnees or their family members are in violation of local counter-terrorism or criminal laws. Your programme officers need to know what is legal and illegal for them to do in these situations.

As noted in earlier modules, it may be strategic to develop relationships with the local and national security and judicial sectors so that when challenges arise your organisation is prepared with established connections who can advise on the best course of action. However, it is also important to **safeguard the privacy of your programme beneficiaries and to not be seen as or actually become a tool for reporting to security officials on this vulnerable population,** as that would likely break trust and create alienation. It is also important not to overlook the need to educate local government administrators and security officers about your work and gain their support for it. In addition, it is good to work within and/or support establishing a national and local P/CVE action plan that ensures that all P/CVE actors in the country are working within the same framework for maximum impact.

Activate the community

When designing a programme, it is important to consider the power of networks, friends, family, gathering places, madrassas, and mosques and to ask who the positive and negative influencers are in the community. Crucially, consider how to use female networks,

female friends, female family, female gathering places, etc. in the community. Likewise, **use infrastructure that is already in place** that may be useful to help deliver programming, such as that found in schools, mosques, or other community organisations.

It may be helpful to also consider what kind of coordination and collaboration already exists between stakeholders and service providers and whether there are ways that you could incorporate the private sector to advance your work. It is also important to continually carry out risk assessments and analysis on extremist returnees' threat levels and the factors that are contributing to radicalisation. It is also important to measure effectiveness both in terms of how your efforts are being perceived by the recipients and in terms of whether they are producing the intended results. **Engaging in information sharing, both locally and regionally, to keep track of disengagement, reintegration and rehabilitation efforts** is a way to maximize resources (why spend time and money gathering the same data that someone else has already gathered) for more effective interventions.

Also be aware of detractors in your community. P/CVE has gotten a negative name in some communities and is seen as targeting and labelling Muslim communities as dangerous. Be aware of these pitfalls as you go about organizing your program and make sure you are explaining your goals and activities in ways that will be widely supported in the communities you are trying to reach and influence.

How to put it all together with a gender perspective

Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)

In 2014, GCTF and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) developed a "Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism" nonbinding document. This document recommended that gender-responsive programmes counter women and girls' involvement in violent extremism including identifying gender dynamics in radicalisation leading to terrorism.

Women and P/CVE Good Practices Example:

- Include women and girls in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of laws, procedures, programmes, and practices related to P/CVE

- Acknowledge and promote varying and significant roles for women and girls (e.g. families, communities, law enforcement, intelligence, etc.)
- Protect women and girls from human rights abuse, discrimination, and unequal participation. Avoid stereotyping and instrumentalizing women and girls.
- Recognise and address the direct and indirect impacts of violent extremism and terrorism on women and girls
- Include men and boys in advancing and promoting women and girls' participation in P/CVE and addressing the factors that create vulnerabilities for their radicalisation
- Include women and women's groups in the independent evaluation of P/CVE efforts
- Engage in empirical, locally-informed research to address factors that lead women and girls to joining violent extremism and terrorism and design interventions with ways to measure effectiveness integrated into the initiative
- Develop disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes that are gender specific (e.g. address pathways to radicalisation/terrorism and specific needs of women and girls)
- Strengthen women and girls' ability to contribute to P/CVE efforts by responding to local needs
- Ensure safety and security of women when partaking in P/CVE efforts
- Strengthen women's roles within their families
- Work closely with women in civil society organisations who are already engaged in advancing women rights.
- Train governments on how to take guidance from local women and assess their needs and priorities
- Support women who are victims of terrorism¹⁸⁶

Practical Exercise

SMALL GROUP BRAINSTORMING

Suggested Time: 20 minutes

Materials:

- Enough blank sheets of paper (large or small) for each small group to have several
- Writing utensils

Instructions:

- Break into small groups of 2-8 people.
- Instruct groups to identify a radicalisation or violent extremism issue in your community that you would like to work on or are already working on. Have groups construct a basic context analysis plan stating how they would gather data and how they might be able to target that issue through a programme in their community.
- Ask them to also explain:
 - o how they might engage or are already engaging women in their P/CVE programme on that issue, and
 - o how they might target or are already targeting women as perpetrators, victims, or supporters in their P/CVE programme on that issue.
 - o creative ways to measure effectiveness of such programmes
- After 10 minutes or so, ask each group to present their ideas to the whole group in 1-2 minute presentations.
- After each presentation, allow 3-5 minutes for questions, comments and suggestions on the group presenting's ideas from other groups and participants.

¹⁸⁶ Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2014

UNIT 2: PRACTICAL WORK

Warm-Up Activity

POST-IT WALL

Suggested Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Post-It notes/sticky note paper OR small pieces of paper and tape or sticky tack
- Writing utensils
- A wall or board on which to stick the notes

Instructions:

- Participants are provided with a question or prompt for which they need to generate ideas, solutions, etc.
- Give each participant a few Post-Its and 1-2 minutes to write 1 idea or answer per Post-It. They can give multiple answers for each question, or just one answer per question.
- While participants are writing, divide the wall or board into three sections for the three questions.
- When participants have finished, they should walk to the front of the room and place the Post-Its in the correct question section.
- Once all the participants have posted their responses on the boards, encourage them to walk around and read all the responses.
- When they have read everything and are seated, ask participants what they thought about their responses. Have them offer their opinions, questions, insights, or comments. To get the conversation started, questions you might want to ask the group include:
 - o Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - o Have you seen any of these elements in P/CVE initiatives in your community?
 - o Would any of these elements benefit P/CVE initiatives in your community? Would any of these elements not work well in P/CVE initiatives in your community?

Prompt:

1. What is the most important thing for a gender-responsive P/CVE initiative to consider in the planning stages?
2. What is the most important thing for a gender-responsive P/CVE initiative to do in its activities?
3. What is the most common mistake P/CVE initiatives make related to mainstreaming gender and incorporating women?

Steps to Programme Design (post context analysis)

1. Define the target audience and the problems you want to address
2. Design goals based on data and information gathered in context analysis
3. Consider how to meet those goals using the assets identified in previous research, prep work, or context analysis
4. Decide upon the process of actions that you believe will lead to accomplishing your goals. Define your theory of Change/ToC (what variables you think must be addressed to create change in the desired direction)
5. Consider risks to accomplishing your goals, make a plan to mitigate them
6. Design a monitoring and evaluation plan - how will you measure to see if your goals were achieved?
7. Plan for logistics to make the programme happen: funding, procurement, staffing, training, external support, programme sites, transport, etc.

P/CVE Programme Examples

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project to counter violent extremism in Africa

In 2016, UNDP began implementing an Africa-based P/CVE project to be carried out at both regional and country levels. Country levels encompass implementation of P/CVE in the Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia (considered hotbeds of violent extremism); Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Mauritania, and Niger (considered spill-over countries); and Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda (considered at risk countries). In addition to focusing on key intervention areas such as socio-economic factors, rule of law and security, disengagement, reintegration, community resilience, and media technology, the programme also includes gender-specific initiatives.

Women-specific activities included in the programme:

1. Detecting early-warning signs of radicalisation by developing early-warning systems and models. Community leaders, religious figures, business-women/men and key women leaders trained to identify early signs of radicalisation. Women empowered through training, mentorship, etc. Women identified at an early stage of the programme to

serve as models to engage in capacity building efforts as well as on how to serve as peer-to-peer leaders to assist other women who are either at risk for recruitment or victims of violent extremism. Women engaged in regional and national strategy development and dialogues, including community policing.

2. Psychosocial support extended, especially in the context of epicentre and spill-over countries, to those whose family members (e.g. spouses, friends, etc.) joined violent extremist groups. The support comes in the form of mentoring, counselling and peer-to-peer support. Support groups created to suit specific needs of the target audience. Capacity building and guidance for affected individuals to understand the importance of reporting cases of violent extremism, as well as to better understand judicial process and their rights in the process.

3. Women trained to serve as agents of peace (peace ambassadors) to combat violent extremism. Networking opportunities provided to operate at the regional level. Training provided to build capacities, mentoring, and coaching. Such skills are then used to train others in their own respective communities (trainer of trainers approach).

It is also important to mention that the UNDP programme envisioned a series of inter and intra-faith dialogues to help strengthen awareness of radicalisation and lower tensions related to violent extremism understandings. Under the programme, committees comprised of both women and men were used to aid the initiative.¹⁸⁷

Participant response:

1. What did this programme do well?
2. What could they have improved?
3. Was gender mainstreamed throughout? Did it incorporate women as: preventers, perpetrators, victims and/or supporters?

Women Without Borders: The Mother's School:

The Mother's School in Tajikistan grew out of the fears and concerns of local women in Khujand, Tajikistan, over the potential for spread of extremism in their families, specifically the fear that their children were being targeted by extremist recruiters. In response, Women Without Borders and Sisters Against Violent

¹⁸⁷ UNDP, 2016

Extremism (SAVE) carried out one of the best existing gender-focused P/CVE efforts in the region. Their stated objective is to strengthen P/CVE efforts by involving women. The organisation actively trained mothers to run what they call a “Mother’s School,” where they offered mothers training in personal, communication, and parenting skills, so they can recognise and react to early warning signs of possible radicalisation in their children. The programme entailed a number of workshops and forums conducted over a ten-week period, usually working with women in marginalised areas or where the status of women is undermined to train them to recognise signs of radicalisation to violent extremism in their own families and communities and to be equipped to work against it as well as to carry out proactive actions to prevent radicalisation in their own families and communities. Mothers in these schools learned to provide counter narratives and offer alternatives that foster positive youth development and resilience. This important approach to security provided mothers the skills and the tools for prevention and intervention right where they have the best access for action: in their homes and respective communities. Initially started in Tajikistan, the programme spread to several countries worldwide, including India, Nigeria, Belgium, England, Pakistan, and Indonesia.¹⁸⁸

Participant response:

1. What did this programme do well?
2. What could they have improved?
3. Was gender mainstreamed throughout? Did it incorporate women as: preventers, perpetrators, victims and/or supporters?

Al Hayat Centre, Jordan:

Al Hayat Centre, a Jordanian-based NGO, incorporated gender aspects into its P/CVE trainings. The centre has played an important role, through offering consultations, in assisting the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW), to develop the National Action Plan on UNSCR. In their research specifically addressing the role of women in P/CVE, they cite religious leaders as first sources of information, and they found them to be important in effective P/CVE efforts. Al Hayat Centre engaged 100 religious leaders with 100 community activists, both men and women, in a training programme aiming to build partnerships between

community activists and religious leaders. While the centre also independently trained religious leaders, the aim of the programme was to encourage partnerships between religious leaders and community activists. Trainers combined the mostly male religious leaders who normally don’t mix with women with female activists in the trainings with results being that the religious leaders who were at first shy to mix, later expressed appreciation of the opportunity to learn across genders. The training programme included capacity building, messaging, community outreach, and social media training among other things. Peer education sessions were also included, where both the religious leaders and community activists delivered trainings together. Trainings were also delivered in small group gatherings and at people’s homes, to accompany those who cannot travel to a training location and to encourage more women engaging in the programme (e.g. men often object to their wives, sisters, etc., to travel to receive or provide training). The Centre also reached out to police, imams, female professors, students and mothers to educate them on radicalisation, and to equip them to prevent it.¹⁸⁹ Of note, the al Hayat trainings all started by showing one or two of the ICSVE Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project video clips to introduce the topic and bring home the point of the importance of such work.

Participant response:

1. What did this programme do well?
2. What could they have improved?
3. Was gender mainstreamed throughout? Did it incorporate women as: preventers, perpetrators, victims and/or supporters?

PAIMAN Alumni Trust:

Started in 2008 by a Pakistani-based NGO, the goal of the “Let’s Live in Peace” programme is to empower mothers of extremist individuals and other women in the community to contribute to radicalisation prevention. It is primarily focused on the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces of Pakistan. The programme used the voices of women and young people to raise awareness of violent extremism and terrorism. To counter violent extremism and terrorism, PAIMAN also recognised the necessity to raise the status of women

¹⁸⁸ Ghosh et al., 2016; personal communication Edit Schlaffer

¹⁸⁹ Anne Speckhard, personal communication with al-Hayat leadership, 2017

within their respective communities. This was done through offering women the necessary knowledge and tools to fight radicalisation within their respective families and communities. Mothers were particularly targeted given their power to shape the morals and values of their children and families and forge strong bonds with their respective communities.¹⁹⁰

Participant response:

1. What did this programme do well?
2. What could they have improved?
3. Was gender mainstreamed throughout? Did it incorporate women as: preventers, perpetrators, victims and/or supporters?

The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE):

ICSVE is a non-profit organisation focused on research and creating counter narrative materials based on insider stories to disrupt ISIS's on line and face-to-face recruitment and to prevent and intervene in militant jihadi terrorism¹⁹¹. With the Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narratives Project, the author video recorded her in-depth interviews with ISIS and al-Shabaab returnees, prisoners, and defectors telling about their reasons for joining, their experiences inside the group and denouncing it as unIslamic, corrupt and overly brutal. The short video clips made from these longer interviews are constructed to look like ISIS and al Shabaab videos, illustrated with ISIS video material depicting what is being described and named with pro-ISIS names to entice those already consuming ISIS's online material to also view the ICSVE videos for a very different message. The video clips are subtitled in the 27 languages in which ISIS recruits, and have been promoted on over 140 Facebook campaigns globally, dropped into ISIS Telegram channels and promoted on other social media platforms to ISIS endorsers and distributors with success, sometimes resulting in ISIS cadres actually mistakenly distributing or endorsing the counter narrative clips as well. The videos which feature ISIS insiders—both males and females—have been used with good reach to not only these endorsers, but also to the circles they influence, including women. In some Facebook campaigns they have reached over a million viewers. Analysis of

the comments made by both males and females serve as evidence that they can be successful to reaching those who are grappling with issues of violent extremism.

Counsellors, teachers, law enforcement, and other P/ CVE practitioners across five continents have also used the ICSVE videos to disrupt ISIS's face-to-face and online recruitment as well as for radicalisation prevention and interventions. In Kosovo, female teachers used the videos to start prevention of radicalisation discussions in their school. In Denmark, the videos with their accompanying study guides, have been used by both male and female teachers to initiate countering violent extremism discussions. In Jordan, young men and women were gathered in an Islamic community centre and the videos were used to spark a lively discussion. In London, a counsellor used one of the videos to turn a young boy away from his plans to travel to Raqqa (Syria) to join ISIS. UK Prevent counsellors—male and female—use these videos in prevention efforts.

The author also used two of the Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative video clips with an imprisoned ISIS emir and was gratified to see that he responded by moving from bravado to hanging his head in shame and admitting that they had been wrong in ISIS. Clearly, the videos can also be used in treatment settings.¹⁹²

ICSVE staff have also trained law enforcement agents, imams, prison workers and rehabilitation workers to use the video clips in their de-radicalisation programmes and initiatives. The videos have been focus tested in the Middle East, the Balkans, Europe, Africa, and Central Asia, to positive effect. All the ICSVE products are free for anyone to use. Similarly, these videos can be used to mount your face-to-face and online P/ CVE campaigns in your community.

See Annex 3 for ICSVE-produced counter narratives video clips about and by ISIS women, with actual ISIS insiders denouncing ISIS.

¹⁹⁰ UN Chronicle, 2017

¹⁹¹ Anne Speckhard, the author of this training manual, is the Director of ICSVE global operations

¹⁹² ICSVE, 2017

STORIES FROM THE REGION

In 2016, The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) and Nama Strategic Intelligence Solutions (NAMA) focus-tested ISIS defector videos with youth, ages 13-26, in Zarqa and Irbid, Jordan. The two areas are considered hotbeds of radicalisation in Jordan. In addition to serving as an invaluable platform for exchanging ideas related to ICSVE-produced counter narratives, the focusing-testing conducted with 35 youth, proportionately representing both females and males, was also intended to identify conditions and circumstances that might leave Jordanian youth in Zarqa and Irbid vulnerable to paths to violent extremism, such as ISIS recruiters preying on vulnerable populations on the Internet. The evocative nature of the counter-narratives engaged the youth in lively discussions, which allowed the facilitators to understand the P/CVE challenges present in their lives and what types of prevention interventions might be useful to implement.

ICSVE researchers have also tested these counter-narrative videos in face-to-face focus groups with vulnerable individuals around the world as well as on the Internet to good effect. In one case, a thirteen-year-old UK national determined to travel to Raqqa was stopped by his counselor from doing so and turned away from ISIS by being shown one of the ICSVE *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative* videos. ICSVE researchers also tested two of the videos with an imprisoned ISIS emir in Iraq. The results of the intervention indicated that the videos could effectively be used as an intervention tool to break through bravado and get to an honest discussion with imprisoned ISIS cadres¹⁹³.

Participant response:

1. What did this programme do well?
2. What could they have improved?
3. Was gender mainstreamed throughout? Did it incorporate women as: preventers, perpetrators, victims and/or supporters?

Extremist Prisoner Rehabilitation in Kazakhstan:

As of 2014, the government of Kazakhstan has introduced a number of prison-based programmes and rehabilitation centres to directly deal with their general prison population. The primary goal of the programmes/centres was to “detect cases of radicalisation, create resilience among the general prison population, and offer radicalised individuals opportunity to turn away from extremism”. One of the centres was also tasked with working with women, namely with female returnees from the conflict zones in Iraq and Syria, with those whose husbands have been

killed while participating in violent extremist group, and with those whose husbands are currently serving prison times for participating in violent extremist groups. In addition to offering mentoring and other specialised care to such women, the programme aimed to keep recidivism rates low. Given their background and experience with violent extremism, the programme also served as an early intervention attempt to mitigate the potential for reengaging in violent extremism and strengthen their resilience and vulnerability against violent extremism.

Participant response:

1. What did this programme do well?
2. What could they have improved?
3. Was gender mainstreamed throughout? Did it incorporate women as: preventers, perpetrators, victims and/or supporters?

¹⁹³ UN Chronicle, 2017

Support to families of jihadists:

The Entrepreneurship Proselytization and Empowerment Programme, created by a psychologist at the University of Indonesia's Policy Research Centre, has offered business training and psychological counselling to wives of jailed jihadists. The programme offered a series of workshops to the wives of imprisoned jihadists. As of June 2017, The Centre reported success with 18 participants. Similarly, the Institute for International Peace Building has offered loans and business incentives for jihadists upon their release from prison. In Singapore, as part of a prisoner post-release support programme, the Interagency-After Care Group (ACG) was created to provide support for families of imprisoned violent extremists. Families were provided female counsellors to work with the spouses of ex-prisoners, specifically providing them with financial assistance, networking opportunities for employment, and assisting with education and school tuition of their children.¹⁹⁴

Participant response:

1. What did this programme do well?
2. What could they have improved?
3. Was gender mainstreamed throughout? Did it incorporate women as: preventers, perpetrators, victims and/or supporters?

Practical Exercise

INDIVIDUAL BRAINSTORMING

Suggested Time: 30 minutes

Materials:

- Enough blank sheets of paper (large or small) for each participant to have several
- Writing utensils

Instructions:

- This activity will be done individually. Building on the practical activity for the last unit, this time participants will design their own individual P/CVE programme.
- Have each participant take some time alone to come up with a very basic framework for a gender-mainstreamed P/CVE initiative in their community. Emphasize that it does not have to be perfect,

complete, long, or anything else—creative ideas are welcome.

- Give participants 10-15 minutes to write down their programme plan on their sheet of paper. Illustrations are also welcome.
- Ask them to also explain:
 - o how they might engage or are already engaging women in their P/CVE programme on that issue, and
 - o how they might target or are already targeting women as perpetrators, victims, or supporters in their P/CVE programme on that issue.
- When 15 minutes is up, call participants back together and have each individual present their plan for 1-2 minutes. Afterwards, give everyone else a chance to make comments, ask questions, or offer constructive criticism. After 4-5 minutes, move on to the next person's presentation.
- When everyone has presented, take 3-5 minutes and ask participants to share their opinions on which they think are the best ideas, or most important things they learned from that exercise. Write the ideas volunteers on a large sheet of paper where everyone can see.

¹⁹⁴ UNODC, 2016; Varagur, 2017

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Conclusion

Peace and peacebuilding are inseparably linked with gender equality and female active participation in prevention and protection of such efforts. The recent conflicts in Iraq and Syria, in particular, have highlighted the complex roles of women in violent extremism and violent extremist groups. Women are seen both as perpetuating extremism due to voluntarily joining a violent extremist group as well as victims coerced into joining violent extremist groups. They are also associated as mothers, wives, daughters of male fighters serving in violent extremist groups and have often been victimized in these roles—forced into marriages, beaten, raped, etc. It is now more than crucial to promote an adequate narrative on how to critically analyse their role inside violent extremist groups, discern the particulars of their complex roles and needs in the prevention of violent extremism, and fill knowledge gaps when it comes to designing women-focused P/CVE initiatives and programmes.

Module one offered insights into women's unique and invaluable contribution to counter-terrorism and P/CVE. It specifically highlighted practical and normative reasons to incorporate a gender perspective into P/CVE initiatives. Module two discussed what drives radicalisation in general, including radicalisation leading to violence, while also identifying practical reasons that both men and women join violent extremist groups. Some of the cases studies and examples used helped to understand the particular ways that the Internet and social media recruiting impacts women, both as extremist recruiters and potential recruits. Module two also stressed the need for greater female participation in online P/CVE campaigns.

Module three discussed and listed a set of behavioural traits that could help identify possible early signs of radicalisation as well as identified the ways and roles that women can and do play in P/CVE, both at the individual and community levels. Module four presented a discussion on challenges related to return and reintegration of women and their children from the conflict zones in Iraq and Syria. The toolkit ended with a series of recommendations on how to design a P/CVE programme and identify relevant factors for both P/CVE issues and gender mainstreaming. It also offered a set of reading recommendations on indicators, standards, and criteria against which P/CVE initiative outcomes should be measured.

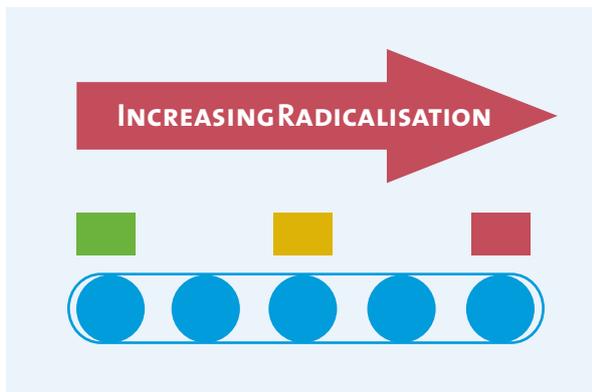
As stressed earlier, while this training manual focused on combating militant jihadist-driven violent extremism in Europe and Central Asia, it is essential to acknowledge the need to combat all forms of violent extremism. The mass shooting in New Zealand, as well as many other incidents like it, serve as evidence that violence and violent extremism is not an exclusive domain of militant jihadist-driven violent extremist groups. A useful set of guidelines, case studies and methods contained in this manual should serve to strengthen P/CVE professionals' competencies to better analyse their local context with a gender perspective and create more gender mainstreamed P/CVE initiatives in their respective communities.

ANNEX 1

Radicalisation Models: Other Models

Some researchers have created visuals of their models of the radicalisation process, for instance Moghaddam's theory uses the metaphor of a "narrow staircase," with violent actions being the final step on the staircase.¹⁹⁵

Conveyor Belt Theory



The New York Police Department (NYPD) has developed a "conveyor belt theory" (adapted from the NYPD city police research), which implies four stages or paths to terrorism with a fixed trajectory. According to the theory, as explained in their 2007 "Radicalisation

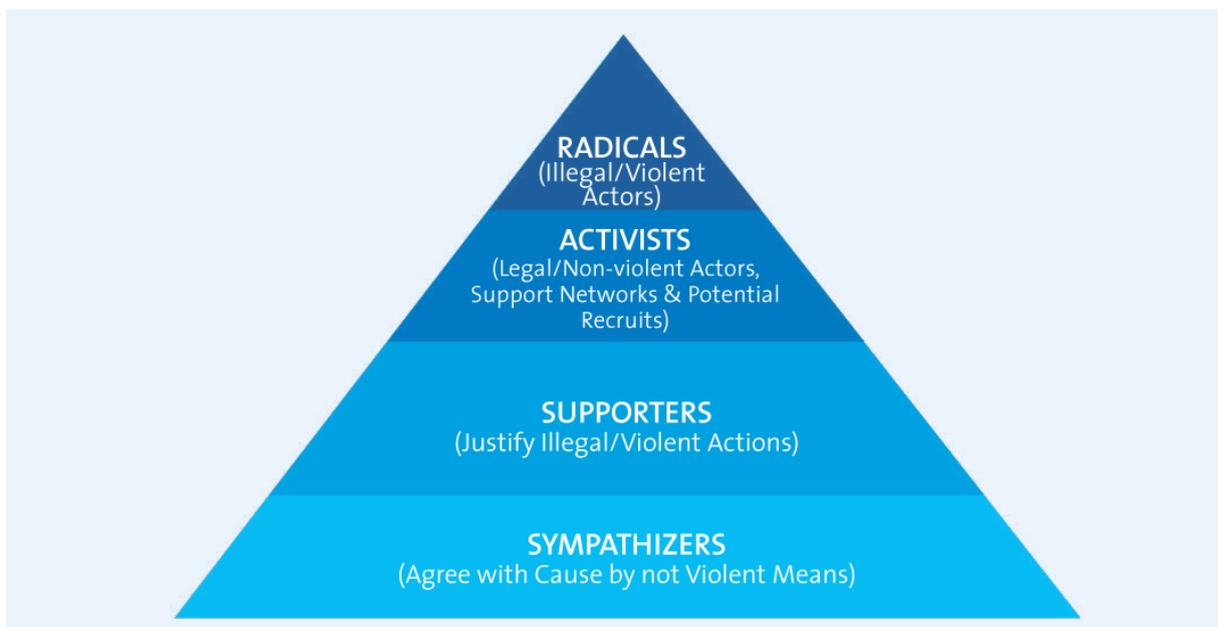
in the West: The homegrown threat," a trajectory of "radicalisation" could be explained as a progression from religion to political/personal grievances to violence.

This theory has been criticized for failing to understand that progression on the belt is unlikely to be uniform without any possibility of either getting off or alternatively traveling to the left and becoming less radicalised. According to its authors, at the end of the conveyor, a person emerges as a violent extremist or terrorist.¹⁹⁶ Stages in the conveyor belt model included:

- Exposure to a militant jihadi ideology.
- Self-identification (shift in personal identity and moving towards extremist viewpoints).
- Indoctrination (experience becomes intensified and the individual adopts an extremist ideology and start believing in violent action).
- Self-designation as a terrorist (accepts a duty to support or participate in violent action).

Pyramid Model of Radicalisation

According to these models of radicalisation, there may be a large group of individuals who share beliefs and feelings with violent extremists (agree with the



¹⁹⁵ Moghaddam, 2005

¹⁹⁶ Silber and Bhatt, 2007; as cited in Patel 2011

cause) at the bottom of the pyramid, with fewer actually becoming supporters and even fewer activists, and finally only a small number of people who resort to violent actions to advocate for their beliefs at the culmination of the radicalisation process¹⁹⁷.

These models are thus especially pertinent when considering gender differences because **women are statistically less likely to be involved in actual violence but may be highly represented on the lower levels of the pyramid as supporters**, e.g. through financial support, positive communication, and proselytizing-while men are more likely to also move up into the higher levels of the pyramid through explicit public activities and possibly eventual violence.¹⁹⁸

P/CVE actors must do better to **identify individuals and groups at lower levels of this pyramid** if they have any hope of preventing violent extremism and terrorism before it occurs (at the highest level of the pyramid or staircase). Neglecting women in P/CVE weakens P/CVE efforts because doing so ignores a large portion of the population most active on the bottom levels of this pyramid, and effectively neglects the groups of vulnerable individuals who may be most in need of P/CVE intervention.

Collective Process

Other models of the radicalisation process consider radicalisation as a collective, versus an individual process, in which friends, acquaintances, and larger social networks play an important role. In other words, radicalisation in one individual might more logically be viewed within the larger social processes that are occurring via social networks, friends, etc. Marc Sageman's model, for instance, has often been referred to as a "bunch of guys" phenomenon.¹⁹⁹ Sageman, as an experienced forensic psychiatrist, in fact, based his model on actual data and social network analysis of those who joined violent extremist groups.

Fictive Kin

Anthropologist Scott Atran has taken another tact and emphasized the role of "fictive kin" and the need to protect sacred values as being strong motivators for joining militant jihadi groups.²⁰⁰ For example, violent extremist groups trigger a natural predisposition in their potential recruits to protect and advance kin

altruism when they promote the ideas of the Muslim ummah rooted in "brotherhood and sisterhood." In addition, when groups like ISIS argue that Islam is under attack and that all Muslims (the Muslim 'Ummah', 'Community') have a duty to protect each-other, this ideation facilitates the process of manipulation and indoctrination among potential recruits. According to Atran, identity fusion occurs when an individual begins to fuse his or her own identity with that of the violent group, thus becoming much more easily manipulated into sacrificing him or herself in behalf of it.

Life Crises

Applying social movement theory to violent extremism, Wiktorowicz argued that certain life crises, such as economic (e.g. losing a job), social (e.g. discrimination, humiliation), or personal (e.g. family feuds, divorce, death in family, etc.) could lead to "cognitive openings," whereby individuals become more receptive to alternative viewpoints including those propagated by violent extremists.²⁰¹ Likewise, Wiktorowicz argued that rational choice theory applied to believers who chose suicide bombing as an option because their beliefs dictated that such a choice would lead to rewards in the next life.²⁰²

Individual Factors

Others have looked at the specific recurring factors and dynamics that may lead an individual to violent extremism. Peter Neumann has identified a number of these as follows:

- **Grievance:**
 - All forms of radicalisation are based on **societal tensions, conflicts, and fault lines**, which may cause thwarted expectations, conflicts of identity, or feelings of injustice, marginalisation and exclusion.
- **Needs:**
 - Being part of an extremist group satisfies followers' **emotional needs**, such as the desire for belonging, community, adventure, power, significance, or glory. In some cases, this involves taking advantage of psychological vulnerabilities.
- **Ideas:**
 - For discontent to be turned into a political project, it requires **ideas that "make sense" of the grievance**, identify a scapegoat, and offer solutions.

197 McCauley and Moskalenko, 2011

198 Muro, 2016

199 Sageman, 2008.

200 Atran, 2004; 2016

201 Wiktorowicz, 2004a

202 Wiktorowicz, 2004b

When those ideas amount to a (seemingly) coherent worldview, they are called ideology.

- **People:**

- o With rare exceptions, **radicalisation is a social process** in which authority figures, charismatic leaders or tightly knit peer groups are key to generating trust, commitment, loyalty, and (peer) pressure.

- **Violence:**

- o Becoming involved in violence is often the result of being **exposed to violence**, causing individuals to seek revenge or become brutalized. This frequently happens in the context of violent conflicts”.²⁰³

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203 Neumann, 2017

ANNEX 2

CASE STUDY: MOROCCAN MOURCHIDATES

In 2005, Morocco's Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs embarked on a programme to develop a group of female preachers known as *mourchidates* ('guides' in English). These spiritual guides are charged with **promoting religious moderation and tolerance to 'counter extremist ideology within Quranic schools and mosques'**.²⁰⁴ In 2005, fifty female *mourchidates* were certified by the Moroccan Government. By 2014, the number of certified female *mourchidates* reached over 500.²⁰⁵ The *mourchidates* work in mosques, communities, and prisons in Rabat and Casablanca.

Female *mourchidates* are tasked with the same responsibilities as male *mourchidates* with the exception of leading prayer because doing so is mostly forbidden. All mosques in Morocco require imams and *mourchidates* be certified in order to work. The Moroccan Government's certification process for female *mourchidates* consists of 12 months of training. This course's prerequisite for aspiring female *mourchidates* is a Bachelor's degree. Their coursework—computer skills, psychology, religious training, etc.—is the same as that of their male counterparts. Certification mandates that they receive regularly scheduled rigorous, continuing education and training every two weeks. The salary of female *mourchidates* is also the same as that of their male colleagues. These women are empowered politically as they enter into the religious sphere and are given the necessary focus and training to spread, teach, interpret, and promote Maliki Islam.²⁰⁶

Interviews with two female *mourchidates* in Rabat made it apparent that **their roles were similar to that of social workers**. These women had authentic authority, power, and resources to support their country's

vision and their efforts. In their own words, their job is to 'correct any misconceptions on the Quran through a new way of teaching. We try to explain the information without any misunderstanding to make it clear.'²⁰⁷ This translates into programmes that focus mainly on women and youth. The work takes place in mosques, communities, and prisons. The ability to deliver social services and outreach to at-risk communities by the *mourchidates* is unprecedented and is a key component of Morocco's P/CVE programme.

The *mourchidates*' work in the community focuses on teaching women about the Quran, specifically the Maliki interpretation, which emphasizes messages of peace, tolerance, and moderation in Islam. Female *mourchidate* Fatima Nezza noted that one of the programme's goals is to 'teach principles of Islam and apply those to society at large. We want women to understand their roles as women and others in relation to others as well.' Another element of the female *mourchidates*' work is to guide and educate women in good parenting techniques. The old adage of "peace starts at home" is the foundation of this initiative. The *mourchidates* arrange field trips with women and youth to places such as hospitals, prisons and youth centres for enhanced exposure. The women's programmes always focus on **what the women in the community feel they need to make themselves successful mothers and members of their communities**. The *mourchidates* then arrange appropriate training to achieve this goal.

Instruction provided by the female *mourchidates* includes working with youth (ages 8-22) after school, teaching women to read and write, hosting doctors to speak to women about health issues, and coordinating training through local vocational schools to

204 U.S. Department of State, 2006

205 Kouture, 2014

206 The Maliki school is one of the four major madhhab (schools) of Sunni Islam. Many modern-day Maliki Muslims reside in the countries of Northern Africa.

207 Mourchidates interview with Krista London Couture, Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Habous, Rabat, Morocco, 2014

provide skills to women so they are able to best provide for their families.

In addition to their work with women and youth, the female *mourchidates* also work in the prison system with female inmates in Rabat and Casablanca. Their duties there include presenting female prisoners with an awareness of social issues, religion, culture, and health. They invite doctors to come and speak about the dangers of AIDS and cigarette smoking. They also teach the prisoners to read and write and provide vocational training for when they are released. Though the original intent of the *mourchidate* programme was to spread tolerant Islam, the programme has reached much deeper into Moroccan communities. Washington Post columnist Robin Shulman wrote about the reach of the *mourchidates*: **‘People want to talk about marital problems, AIDS, rape, teen pregnancy. They come to them [the *mourchidates*] in crisis...’**²⁰⁸ This is particularly important as in some societies talking to a psychologist or psychiatrist can be so stigmatising that it will be avoided at all costs—particularly for young men and women who could be labelled as mentally ill or unsuitable for marriage as a result. Pairing this social work outreach with Islamic teaching creates an acceptable way to request and receive much needed psychological assistance.

*‘Mourchidates also work as **counsellors in the prison systems, helping on issues ranging from psychological concerns to health (sexually-transmitted diseases and breast cancer)**. Nassi—a *mourchidate* who works with prisoners—said she focuses on ‘integrating them into society to get them jobs and an education.’*²⁰⁹

The *mourchidates* have also increasingly hosted fairs in the prisons that teach about culture, art, and Sufism. During religious festivals and national feasts, they bring in musicians and performers and buy presents for the inmates’ children, providing a semblance of normalcy through acts of kindness that they hope will set a positive example. The Moroccan *mourchidates’* influence and power, driven by their optimism and tireless efforts, greatly impact their ability to positively affect drivers of radicalism. By educating women and mothers, providing a safe and productive outlet and activity for youth, and providing positive

alternatives and choices for prison inmates, female *mourchidates* are changing the tide of terrorism by blunting potential catalysts.

The *mourchidates* have had an incredible impact through their newfound political and religious empowerment in the fight against extremism. Mothers, wives, and sisters with questions, and who are perhaps “in need,” are now able to turn to other trained women with authority who can help and offer guidance. For example, **if a woman feels a family member is becoming radicalised, it is now a real possibility that such a concern can be conveyed to a *mourchidate* when that avenue for action never existed before.**

While there are some who question the success of the programme given the lack of empirical data, researchers familiar with P/CVE are quick to point out that measuring success in this arena is very difficult and takes years longitudinally and horizontally to determine the impact on curbing violence. Ellie Hearne highlighted Morocco’s initiative to ‘feminise the face of Islam’ for the purpose of ‘recruiting [women] as messengers to present the moderate mainstream Islam as a counterweight to fundamentalist ideology,’ which had been measured with some success in 2009.²¹⁰ Curbing violence can essentially be boiled down to a change in ideology, which can take an entire generation of teaching moderate Islam and tolerance through education and communication within a community.

In Morocco, **women are the gatekeepers to their families, children, and communities.** Providing an education, fulfilling basic needs, and affording opportunities to women are what Morocco has deemed necessary to counter violent extremism effectively. In an interview with two female *mourchidates* in Morocco, they explained the way that women are viewed in Morocco. They recounted the roles of Muhammed’s wives: ‘Hadija was a wife and businesswoman; Aisha was a wife and a doctor and scholar; and Hafsa was a wife and politician.’ Women have played and will continue to play a pivotal role in families in Morocco.

The *mourchidate* initiative has been **hailed as a success both within and beyond Morocco.** There has been discussion about replicating this programme in other parts of the world. The *mourchidates* have taken the opportunity in their leadership positions to

208 Robin Shulman, Morocco’s New Guiding Force, The Washington Post, May 30, 2009, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2009-05-30/news/36882265_1_women-s-islamic-initiative-status-of-muslim-women-faiths

209 Fielder and Townsend, 2010

210 Hearne, 2009

collaborate with other religious figures, which is an indicator of the initiative's success. When asked about where she envisioned her role in the community as a religious figure evolving next, female *mourchidate* Madam Nezha Nassi responded, "to the moon!"²¹¹

211 Couture, 2014.

ANNEX 3

Female-Focused ICSVE-produced Counter-Narratives

1. Marriage in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwDofHQTmo&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo

2. The Islamic State Hisbah:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtShqJuzx_8&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=2

3. Dreams of the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7UYUkZzqYE&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=3

4. The Promises of ad-Dawlah to Women:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZknfoA-O2k&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=5

5. A Sex Slave as a Gift for You from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=monCg7GczMo&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=7

6. Today is the Female Slave Market Day in ad-Dawlah:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoYzcnqqtuo&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=10

7. My Journey Towards Jihad:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WUWplVy9_c&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=21

8. A Child of the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYIUyr1-hQU&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=22

9. Justice in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeVmDEJX6wM&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=24

10. A Sister Walking in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SY55Owufllw&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=25

11. The Sabayah of the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dqz9eY5Sd9c&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=31

12. Justice for Our Sisters in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zysA3GAusy4&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=33

13. Sex in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNzz6v6W4jc&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=34

14. Haram in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PozyzizuoS8&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=37

15. Marriage Proposals in the Caliphate:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa_mTkrIZtl&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=47

16. You Must Join the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gh9eaFwasms&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=51

17. A Belgian family in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phZsHwBzcbE&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=57

18. The Sabayah of the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phZsHwBzcbE&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=57

19. The Lioness and the Lion—Travelling to Jannah Together:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phZsHwBzcbE&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dKo1K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=57

20. Women in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdegWc3niok&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=77

21. The Sunni and Yazidi Sex Slaves of the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWmJTgISPJc&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=82

22. Following my Father in the Islamic State Caliphate:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWmJTgISPJc&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=82

23. From Belgian Prison to Islamic State Caliphate:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kF4v5MFG9V4&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=91

24. Making Hijrah to the Islamic State Caliphate:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRv6RrvmCR8&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=94

25. It's Easy to go with a Suicide Belt for the Islamic State: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-6DolbEoco&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=104

26. Rewards from the White Widow of al-Shabaab:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2Ms7HN-wKo&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=106

27. Marriage in al-Shabaab:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLq_2pEu14A&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=107

28. Marrying over the Internet into the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ElfwoRcAnTo&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=108

29. American-born Hoda Muthana: Sacrificing Your Life to Allah in the Islamic State:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLedyZLAN64&list=PLqpy96DXqN-dK01K_FikteDoSxScG_OTo&index=110

For additional, ICSVE-produced videos, please visit

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCumpEsozixbl-PyKw12hmnw>

The author:

Anne Speckhard, Ph.D., is Director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE) and serves as an Adjunct Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine. She has interviewed over 700 terrorists, their family members and supporters in various parts of the world including in Western Europe, the Balkans, Central Asia, the Former Soviet Union and the Middle East. In the past four years, she and ICSVE staff have been collecting interviews with ISIS defectors, returnees and prisoners as well as al Shabaab cadres and their family members as well as ideologues, studying their trajectories into and out of terrorism, their experiences inside ISIS (and al Shabaab), as well as developing the Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project materials from these interviews.

She has also been training key stakeholders in law enforcement, intelligence, educators, and other countering violent extremism professionals on the use of counter-narrative messaging materials produced by ICSVE both locally and internationally as well as studying the use of children as violent actors by groups such as ISIS and consulting on how to rehabilitate them. In 2007, she was responsible for designing the psychological and Islamic challenge aspects of the Detainee Rehabilitation Program in Iraq to be applied to 20,000 + detainees and 800 juveniles.

She is a sought after counterterrorism experts and has consulted to NATO, OSCE, UNODC, UN Women, UNDP, foreign governments and to the U.S. Senate & House, Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, Health & Human Services, CIA and FBI and CNN, BBC, NPR, Fox News, MSNBC, CTV, and in Time, The New York Times, The Washington Post, London Times and many other publications. She regularly speaks and publishes on the topics of the psychology of radicalization and terrorism and is the author of several books, including Talking to Terrorists, Bride of ISIS, Undercover Jihadi and ISIS Defectors: Inside Stories of the Terrorist Caliphate.

Her publications are found here: <https://georgetown.academia.edu/AnneSpeckhardWebsite>; and on the ICSVE website <http://www.icsve.org>

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