

Gender, Preventing Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism

This Policy Brief explains the importance of integrating a gender perspective in efforts to prevent violent extremism and to counter terrorism, with a particular focus on the security and justice sector.

Military, police, judicial, penitentiary and other security and justice sector institutions have a legal obligation to protect and promote human rights, including gender equality. Derived from international human rights law, this obligation applies even when addressing and preventing violent extremism and terrorism. Security and justice institutions also have a practical imperative to focus on gender roles and gender equality. The drivers to perpetrate violent extremist acts (whether within or outside terrorist groups), the roles performed within terrorist groups, the impacts of violent extremism and terrorism, and state responses to them vary between men, women, boys and girls and across time, region and ideology. Accordingly, integrating a gender perspective is a prerequisite for successfully preventing violent extremism and countering violent extremism (PVE and CVE respectively) and for counter terrorism (CT) measures that do not violate fundamental human rights. Moreover, these efforts can be designed and implemented to reinforce the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda: to amplify women's voices, participation and leadership and strengthen their protection, to better prevent conflict.

This Policy Brief:

- ◆ explains how integrating a gender perspective enhances understanding of violent extremism and terrorism
- ◆ identifies why states need to integrate a gender perspective to ensure that their PVE and CT initiatives are effective, do not violate human rights and do not have unintended adverse consequences
- ◆ outlines a range of strategies to integrate a gender perspective in approaches to PVE and CT, with particular emphasis on the security and justice sector.

This Policy Brief does not purport to be a comprehensive analysis of the entire field of research and policy discourse concerning violent extremism, terrorism and gender; rather, it is an accessible overview, aimed at audiences particularly interested in security and justice sector responses.

Box 1 explains how key terms are used within this Policy Brief. This Policy Brief generally refers to PVE and not to CVE to underline the importance of a holistic and community-based approach focusing on *root causes* and not only on reacting to problems.*

Box 1: Preventing violent extremism, countering violent extremism and counterterrorism

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) are contested concepts with no internationally agreed definitions. Broadly speaking, PVE involves taking preventive steps based on an understanding of underlying drivers that incentivize engagement in violent extremism. PVE complements counterterrorism (CT) measures, which are primarily driven by law enforcement, intelligence agencies and, sometimes, the military. In contrast, CVE is, like CT, a *response* to violent extremism that may or may not lead to acts of terrorism.

Radicalization to violence describes the process through which an individual adopts an increasingly violent extremist set of beliefs and aspirations. PVE seeks to enhance individual and community resilience to violent extremism and its recruitment tactics.

How does a gender perspective enhance our understanding of violent extremism and terrorism?

The many and often interrelated drivers of violent extremism can be broadly categorized as push and pull factors. Structural “push” factors include socio-economic and political marginalization, discrimination and exclusion; prolonged unresolved conflicts; poor governance; and violations of rights and rule of law. Individual “pull” factors, which are often exploited in recruitment tactics, include immediate and future prospects for stable employment; social, ideological and political appeal; and socio-economic gains or rewards.¹

“Gender” refers to the socially constructed and conditioned roles, attributes, opportunities and norms that a given society at a given time considers appropriate based on biological sex. Gender affects the relations and power dynamics between people, which are reflected in access to and control over resources, responsibilities assigned and decision-making opportunities. Gender relates not only to women and structural gender inequality, but also to men and concepts of masculinity.[^]

Gender mediates violent extremism’s push and pull factors and influences the specific characteristics of individuals who are particularly susceptible to extremism. For instance, young men who are alienated and marginalized within a given society may struggle to meet traditional expectations of masculinity, such as being the breadwinner, attaining wealth and status, and enjoying access to sexual partners of choice. Research demonstrates that this may incentivize them to pursue violent paths to “validate” their masculinity.² This is why violent extremist groups often use hypermasculine stereotypes to exploit dissatisfaction and grievances when recruiting men. Box 2 highlights how ISIS exploited frustrated gender expectations in recruiting both men and women.

* The definitions used in this Policy Brief are drawn from UNDP (2018) *Improving the Impact of Preventing Violent Extremism Programming: A Toolkit for Design, Monitoring and Evaluation*, p. 16; Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (2016) “Switzerland’s foreign policy action plan on preventing violent extremism”, p. 6.

The OSCE uses the acronym “VERLT” to denote violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism. See OSCE (2018) *The Role of Civil Society in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe*; OSCE (2019) *Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: Good Practices for Law Enforcement*; and OSCE (2019) *Understanding Referral Mechanisms in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Guidebook for South-Eastern Europe*.

[^] Gender terminology is discussed in more detail in Tool 1, “Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and Gender” of the *Gender and Security Toolkit*.

Box 2: How did ISIS play on gender roles in recruitment campaigns?

Unemployed, educated young men whose future expectations have been undermined are the demographic that has historically been most susceptible to recruitment into violent extremist groups. However, ISIS (variously referred to also as so-called “Islamic State”, ISIL or Daesh) successfully appealed to young urban men by portraying its fighters as honourable “real” men and protectors of the community. They promised recruits a monthly income, a wife and a home – traditional markers of the passage to adulthood that many young men were struggling to achieve.

Female recruits were attracted by perceived “liberation” from the immoral “beauty salon culture” of the West and the freedom to practise their religion without discrimination. ISIS portrays women as complementary but not equal to men, and morally and socially superior to Western women. This proved appealing for women disillusioned by the gendered expectations they felt were imposed on them by Western society.

Sources: N. Chowdhury Fink and A. Davidian (2018) “Complementarity and convergence? Women, peace and security and counterterrorism”, in F. Ní Aoláin, N. Cahn, D. Francesca Haynes and N. Valji (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 158–159; E. Pearson (2018) “Wilayat Shahidat: Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the question of the female suicide bomber”, in J. Zenn (ed.), Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines: Analyses of Africa’s Enduring Insurgency, New York: West Point Combating Terrorism Center, p. 47.

The majority of acts of extremist violence have been and continue to be committed by men. Women and girls are understood as more likely to be enablers or supporters of extremist violence, or else preventers, dissuaders and/or victims. However, women and girls are increasingly also perpetrators of extremist violence.³ For example, in the Lake Chad region three-quarters of all child suicide bombers are girls. A gender analysis attributes this to the exploitation of deeply entrenched structural gender inequality that both deprives girls of any prospect of autonomy or independence and renders them particularly vulnerable to coercion. A gender perspective, moreover, encompasses people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, including persons who are LGBTI.* LGBTI people have been targets of extremist violence – a recent example being the murders by ISIS of men and women suspected of engaging in homosexual acts.⁴

Understanding why and how gender norms affect decisions and behaviour can be critical to neutralizing influences leading to violent radicalization and creating communities resilient to such influences.

Why should states integrate a gender perspective in PVE and CT efforts?

To uphold state obligations with respect to human rights

States are legally obliged to respect human rights when responding to violent extremism and terrorism, even when using emergency or temporary legislation. If states derogate from and limit fundamental rights in the name of CT, they might violate both domestic legislation and international human rights obligations.⁵ Moreover, doing so risks compounding discrimination and abuses perpetrated against already marginalized communities.

Derogating from and limiting fundamental rights in the context of violent extremism and terrorism may also violate international human rights obligations to promote *gender equality*, as well as commitments to women’s advancement, participation and empowerment under the WPS Agenda (see Box 3). For example, a range of measures to “combat Islamic extremism” in the Maldives, which included outlawing women being covered from head to toe, significantly infringed women’s religious and cultural rights; and to avoid alienating conservative forces, the Somali Government chose not to enact measures to protect women’s rights better.⁶ A gender perspective on CT measures is required to ensure that all human rights are upheld on the basis of equality between women and men, and without discrimination.

* LGBTI stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex. This terminology is discussed in more detail in Tool 1, “Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and Gender”.

⁶ See UN General Assembly (2009) “A gender perspective in countering terrorism”, report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 3 August, UN Doc. A/64/211, section III.

Box 3: How the Women, Peace and Security Agenda addresses PVE and CT

Building on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Security Council Resolution 2242 (adopted in October 2015) recognizes the need to engage with women on PVE. It urges states and the United Nations to “ensure the participation and leadership of women and women’s organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism ... including through countering incitement to commit terrorist acts, creating counter narratives and other appropriate interventions” (para. 13). The resolution emphasizes empowering women to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda more broadly sets parameters for conflict prevention and conflict management which can be applied to PVE and CT to avoid instrumentalizing and securitizing women’s rights. For further discussion of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, see this Toolkit’s Policy Brief on “A Security Sector Governance Approach to Women, Peace and Security”.

To identify accurately (potential) perpetrators of violent extremism and terrorism*

Traditionally assumed to be the primary perpetrators of terrorism, men and boys have been targeted, detained without evidence and, in certain cases, tortured and killed by security forces. Conversely, women are often characterized as passive victims, without agency, but guilty through their association with males.⁶ PVE and CT efforts founded merely on assumptions such as these are deficient. In all cases gender stereotypes should be examined and questioned, to understand how women, men, girls and boys are actually involved with violent extremism and terrorism. Moreover, assumptions about women’s passivity have been exploited by terrorist groups. For example, in Afghanistan male suicide bombers gained access to restricted areas by dressing as women (partly because there were insufficient female body searchers in the Afghan security forces to stop them).⁷

Mothers and wives have been typically held responsible and punished if their sons or husbands are recruited, but overlooked as actors with the ability to commit, support or oppose violent extremism out of personal conviction. And yet women are increasingly front-line activists, propagandists, recruiters and fundraisers, including when they join violent extremist and terrorist groups, for example as so-called “foreign terrorist fighters”.⁸ At the same time, women convicted of violent extremism or terrorist offences are likely to receive more lenient sentences because their criminal intent is considered tempered by emotional drivers, psychological instability and/or misguided belief in “false pretences”.⁹ Paradoxically, the perception that women pose less of a threat means they may not receive adequate rehabilitation and reintegration support: this in turn increases their risk of recidivism.¹⁰ The risk of underestimating the threat women may pose is significant: for example, when Canadian authorities stopped a woman from travelling to join ISIS in 2016, they failed to investigate or rehabilitate her. One year later she was arrested for an attempted terrorist attack.¹¹

To identify accurately (potential) victims of violent extremism and terrorism

Women and girls may be targeted as victims, and in other ways experience violent extremism and terrorism differently than do men and boys. For example, alt-right[^] violent extremist groups that strictly adhere to “traditional” gender roles are likely to target non-conforming women and girls, as well as to advocate and use sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to oppress and punish them. In Mali, Ansar Dine’s creation of an “Islamic court” and an “Islamic police” to punish women for violations of its ideological code has been characterized by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court as gender-based persecution.¹² Indeed, violent extremist ideologies often target women’s rights and physical integrity first.

SGBV is frequently incorporated as part of the strategic objectives and ideology of terrorist groups, including as a tool to destroy communities and boost recruitment and finances. For example, as part of its genocidal campaign against the Yazidis, ISIS killed men and boys over the age of 12 who refused to convert to Islam (because religion is inherited through males in Yazidi culture) and created slave markets where thousands of women and girls were bought and sold for sexual slavery.¹³

* See Box 2 in Tool 14, “Intelligence and Gender”, for further examples of how a gender perspective helps to understand violent extremism.

[^] “Alt-right”, or “alternative right”, is a contemporary description of white supremacism and white nationalism, which is connected to the notion of preserving and protecting the so-called white race in Europe and North America. See OSCE (2019) *Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: Good Practices for Law Enforcement*, p. 9.

Men and boys are also forced to comply with certain gender roles within violent extremist and terrorist organizations. Those who are not perceived as “manly” or strong may be ostracized, used as human shields or subjected to sexualized violence. Men have been beaten for an inability to grow a beard, for shaving their beards or for wearing “skinny” jeans. Husbands have been punished for failing to make their wives wear a veil at home, and thus being perceived as failing as men to enforce religious practices.¹⁴

There are distinct gendered differences among victims of forced recruitment to violent extremist and terrorist organizations. These are linked to broader gender inequalities. For instance, a survey of members of violent extremist groups spanning Cameroon, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan found disproportionately high rates of coercion to join among female members.¹⁵ Such coercion and force must be recognized to avoid treating female victims rescued from terrorist organizations as criminals in need of “deradicalization” programmes.¹⁶ Indeed, the UN Security Council has recognized the need for a specific focus on women “when developing tailored prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, and ... the importance of assisting women and children associated with foreign terrorist fighters who may have been victims of terrorism, and to do so taking into account gender and age sensitivities”.¹⁷

To achieve evidence-based and effective approaches to PVE

Efforts to target marginalized communities as the most “at risk” of radicalization to terrorism/violence risk validating violent extremist narratives instead. CVE and CT activities that reinforce stereotypes and discrimination and fail to respect human rights may “push” groups and individuals towards violent extremism – inadvertently aiding violent extremist recruitment. PVE efforts that, rather, *engage* communities, including diverse groups of women, men, girls and boys, are more likely to reach marginalized and vulnerable populations effectively, and to address root causes of violent extremist influences and threats. An inclusive approach is also necessary to identify and collaborate with gender experts in communities and academia – those who have gender-based insights, experience and evidence upon which to draw when designing effective PVE programmes.

Promoting gender equality can directly contribute to PVE. UN research in Bangladesh and Indonesia found that women’s economic empowerment decreased family and community tensions, thereby increasing resilience to violent extremism.¹⁸ Moreover, women engaged as agents of social change have been effective in PVE. At an individual level, women’s central roles in families and communities mean that they are well placed to recognize signs of radicalization and mobilization to terrorism and violence: this is reflected in the UN’s acknowledgement of the importance of “engaging women” in PVE (outlined in Box 3). Local women-led NGOs and community-based organizations all over the world have developed innovative, context-specific tactics to prevent recruitment to violent extremist groups. Often their understanding of violent extremist dynamics and trends is more nuanced than that of formal authorities, and they have more local credibility in conceiving and implementing tailored solutions. Their provision of alternative pathways for reintegrating and rehabilitating returnees and challenging the root causes of radicalization to violence in their communities are key components of effective PVE.¹⁹

At the same time, PVE should not overlook the role that fathers can play in preventing radicalization to terrorism/violence. In contexts where masculinity is in crisis or young men are otherwise susceptible to recruitment into violent extremist organizations, male elders, community leaders and other role models can be determinative in dissuading radicalization to violence. For example, a research-driven project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on reducing violence-supportive norms and promoting gender-equitable attitudes among young men challenged traditional perceptions of masculinity, with the result that young men were less drawn to violent extremist groups as a way of proving their manhood. More holistically, a campaign in South Africa to engage men as care-givers and fathers reinforced research that this promotes better cognitive development, school achievement and mental health for both boys and girls, and lower rates of delinquency in sons.²⁰

The recognition that engaging with communities is central to providing effective security led to the development of community policing approaches. Trusted policing at the community level has proven to be an important element of PVE.*

* For a more in-depth discussion see OSCE (2014) *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach*.

In terms of how community policing can integrate a gender perspective see Tool 2, “Policing and Gender”.

As first responders to violence in a community, police are often seen as the “face of the state”. Violent extremist messages often leverage grievances against security actors. Community policing must not be equated to mere intelligence gathering, lest it be perceived as “spying” on communities. Rather, effective community policing is a strong partnership between police and communities based upon shared values, with joint programme design, implementation and monitoring. Collaboration between police and independent and credible civil society organizations (CSOs) both builds trust by “humanizing” the police and increases the relevance and authenticity of PVE programmes.

Female police officers, in particular, are essential to reach out to marginalized communities and to build partnerships and trust. In Kosovo, after participating in a series of PVE workshops, female police officers proactively engaged with religious leaders on preventive interventions in individual cases.²¹ In a number of contexts, female officers have been shown to de-escalate tense situations and avoid excessive force more successfully than their male colleagues. Because a more representative police force is more trusted, increasing the numbers, presence and authority of female police officers, as well as of other groups that are underrepresented in police services, can be expected to increase the potential for early detection of violent behaviour.*

Female members of citizen advisory councils and informal community representative bodies can also play important roles, working with police. In Norway “minority community police officers” have regularly brought minority women together to discuss various issues, not only violent extremism, but also gender equality and civic rights. Building trust in this way is credited with successfully stopping several young men from further radicalization to terrorism and joining ISIL/Daesh in Syria in 2015.²²

To avoid adverse gendered consequences of PVE and CT activities

Efforts to engage individual women, women’s organizations and CSOs in PVE and CT carry risks of essentializing and instrumentalizing women, and of compromising individuals’ and organizations’ reputation and, critically, their safety. In communities that have been subjected to state abuses during CT operations, perceived alliances with the state may be viewed as a betrayal of the local community. Women may be at a higher risk of retaliation if they are perceived to be challenging gender expectations by taking on more public roles. The risk is higher still when CSOs are caught between repressive governments and violent extremist groups in a shrinking civil society space.²³

To guard against such “adverse gendered consequences” of PVE and CT, women must be free to engage in PVE efforts in diverse and self-determined ways. Moreover, female members of the community or women’s CSOs should be part of the design and implementation of PVE policies and programmes, and their perspectives, experiences and community knowledge should be incorporated at every level (discussed further on pages 7 and 8). These are also important considerations at the level of international policy concerning PVE and CT. When the US government described CT measures in Afghanistan as fighting for “women’s rights”, this undermined progress towards gender equality previously made by Afghani Muslim feminists. Framing gender equality as part of the “West’s war on terror” has led Muslim feminists to be portrayed as “pro-West”, and therefore anti-Muslim.²⁴ It is critical to engage with and listen to the voices of diverse local and national women’s organizations when shaping policy concerning their country and communities.

Other “adverse gendered consequences” of CT are violations of human rights perpetrated through criminal justice responses to terrorism. For example, broadly worded legislation criminalizing preparation and support roles in terrorist groups can have unintended consequences that disproportionately affect women. Women have been prosecuted for joining a terrorist group or committing an act of terrorism when they acted under duress. Likewise, laws concerning financing of terrorism have produced a range of problematic consequences. Women have been prosecuted for financing terrorist organizations when they were not aware of the intended purpose of the funds given to male family members.²⁵ The freezing of welfare and security benefits of the wife of an individual designated under Security Council Resolution 1267 (regarding ISIS and Al-Qaida) was found by the UK House of Lords and the European Court of Justice to be disproportionate and oppressive, amounting to an “extraordinary” invasion of her privacy.²⁶ Overly broad measures to counter financing of terrorism also disproportionately affect women’s organizations, because they are particularly likely to be grass-roots, with less formal

* For further discussion on the benefits of diversity in police services see Tool 2, “Policing and Gender”.

organization and structures, and more reliant on smaller short-term grants. All these features are likely to deter risk-averse donors from supporting women's organizations in a context affected by violent extremism and terrorism²⁷ – despite the fact, as discussed above, that their engagement is critical to effective PVE.

Strategies to incorporate a gender perspective in security and justice sector PVE and CT initiatives*

This section presents strategies to integrate a gender perspective actively within the security and justice sector, with a focus on PVE and CT initiatives.

Integrate a gender perspective in criminal law and processes concerning violent extremist and terrorist offences

- ◆ Criminal laws defining violent extremist and terrorist offences are attentive to gendered power dynamics, including structures of domination and oppression of women and marginalized men. They recognize that proscribed acts might be done without intent to support terrorist or violent extremist organizations, and/or because of control, coercion or duress.²⁸ Family members of those who engage in terrorist offences are not culpable merely by association.
- ◆ Victim and witness support services and protection measures are attentive to the different needs of women, girls, men and boys. They are available in relation to proceedings against CT and violent extremist activities, regardless of a person's citizenship status.
- ◆ Criminal and civil law procedures and institutions actively strive to ensure access to justice for women and girls, as well as men and boys, who are victims of violent extremist acts and terrorist organizations.
- ◆ Security sector actors who violate the law, in CT activities and more generally, are effectively held to account. Steps are taken to address any problems in the institutional culture within security sector institutions as concerns investigation or handling of cases related to violent extremist acts and terrorist organizations.

Embed collaboration with and respect for civil society in national PVE policies and strategies

- ◆ National policies, strategies and action plans concerning PVE are developed in consultation and collaboration with a diverse range of CSOs, including women's organizations and networks, gender experts in communities and academia, and representatives of LGBTI communities. Such processes are designed – again, in consultation – to avoid increasing the risks to individuals' and CSOs' safety, and to respect their work and position within their communities.[^]
- ◆ Participation of diverse civil society actors in PVE is facilitated by a legal and regulatory environment that respects the independence of NGOs from government and the security sector, and facilitates their access to local and foreign funding. Rights to freedom of speech, freedom of the press and peaceful assembly, including challenges to government policies and actions, are protected and promoted.
- ◆ Policies, strategies and action plans are attentive to seeing women as equal citizens and potential political actors – not merely as wives and mothers of males.
- ◆ Diverse civil society actors are involved in shaping PVE communications. Attention is given to challenging stereotypes of femininity and masculinity that feed violent narratives.

* These draw upon relatively new and rapidly developing practices. They should be continually monitored and adapted in a context-specific manner to improve their relevance and efficacy. Gender-responsive monitoring of projects and programmes is outlined in Tool 15, "Integrating Gender in Project Design and Monitoring for the Security and Justice Sector".

Readers with a broader interest in strategies to integrate a gender perspective in policing, justice, places of deprivation of liberty, intelligence, defence, border management and parliamentary oversight can find more detailed guidance in the related Tools in the *Gender and Security Toolkit*.

[^] Consultation with civil society is discussed in more detail in Tool 1, "Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and Gender", and Tool 4, "Justice and Gender".

Increase the capacity of security sector actors working on PVE and CT to apply a gender perspective

- ◆ Comprehensive gender analysis underpins identification of drivers and impact of violent extremist acts, as well as programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in PVE and CT. Data collected in relation to PVE and CT are disaggregated by sex, age and other diversity markers.*
- ◆ Comprehensive measures exist to strengthen staff capacity to do these analysis tasks, and more holistically to integrate a gender perspective in PVE and CT. Capacity building addresses both values (including gender equality, freedom of religion and the rights of LGBTI persons) and skills (including gender analysis and skills for community engagement). Women's groups, other CSOs and academic experts can be invited to offer community perspectives and technical expertise.^
- ◆ Teams working on PVE and CT within the security sector are diverse. They include, for example, female and male police officers, officers who are LGBTI and officers from ethnic and religious minorities, with a view to being representative of the communities they serve.
- ◆ There is a clear and visible commitment by security sector leadership to protecting and promoting human rights, including gender equality, in PVE and CT. Leaders promote an ethos wherein institutions recognize their duty to serve the communities in their full diversity, to build trust and foster dialogue.

Initiate and maintain gender-sensitive engagement with local communities on PVE

- ◆ Community policing approaches are applied to ensure that PVE is grounded in partnership and trust between police and communities.
- ◆ Active and trusted mechanisms are in place to ensure a constant exchange and feedback loop between policy-makers, security sector actors, CSOs and other community members at all stages of PVE design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Specific mechanisms exist to ensure the meaningful participation of women as well as men, female and male youth, and specific targeted groups (such as LGBTI communities, fathers and faith leaders) in this ongoing engagement. In engaging men and boys, lessons can be applied from other domains, such as work on gang violence and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.
- ◆ Independent mechanisms to monitor and oversee PVE engage closely with communities targeted for PVE and listen to the voices of diverse representatives.**

Conclusion

This Policy Brief, which draws on evidence-based research, has highlighted the legal and practical reasons for security and justice sector actors to incorporate a gender perspective at all stages of PVE and CT. The broadening approach to terrorism and violent extremism over the last decade has brought greater risk of human rights violations: a gender perspective is required to understand and forestall certain of such violations. At the same time, in recent years it has been recognized that gender is important both to understand and to prevent violent extremism and terrorism.

By suggesting strategies to integrate a gender perspective into criminal law and processes, policy-making, collaboration with civil society, capacity building for the security sector and community engagement, this Policy Brief sets out a range of concrete steps that state actors can take to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism more effectively.

* Doing gender analysis and disaggregating data by sex and age are explained in Tool 15, "Integrating Gender in Project Design and Monitoring for the Security and Justice Sector".

^ Good practice in gender training is also discussed in Tool 1, "Security Sector Governance, Security Sector Reform and Gender", Tool 2, "Policing and Gender", Tool 3, "Defence and Gender", and Tool 6, "Border Management and Gender".

** Integrating a gender perspective in external oversight is discussed in more depth in Tool 2, "Policing and Gender", Tool 3, "Defence and Gender", Tool 5, "Places of Deprivation of Liberty and Gender", and Tool 7, "Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector and Gender".

References

1. E. Harper (2018) "Reconceptualizing the drivers of violent extremism: An agenda for child and youth resilience", Lausanne: Terre des hommes and WANA Institute, pp. 14–15; G. Holmer (2013) "Countering violent extremism: A peacebuilding perspective", US Institute for Peace Special Report 336, Washington, DC: USIP, pp. 2–3; P. R. Neumann (2017) "Countering violent extremism and radicalisation that lead to terrorism: Ideas, recommendations, and good practices from the OSCE region", Vienna: OSCE, pp. 24–28; K. Von Hippel (2010) "The role of poverty in radicalization and terrorism", in S. Gottlieb (ed.), *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts and Responses*, Washington, DC: CQ Press.
2. F. Ní Aoláin (2018) "The complexity and challenges of addressing conditions conducive to terrorism", in M. Nowak and A. Charbord (eds), *Using Human Rights to Counter Terrorism*, Cheltenham, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, p. 187.
3. C. de Jonge Oudraat and M. E. Brown (2016) "Women, gender, and terrorism: The missing links", policy brief, 1 August, Washington, DC: Women in International Security.
4. L. Davis (2018) "Reimagining justice for gender-based crimes at the margins: New legal strategies for prosecuting ISIS crimes against women and LGBTIQ persons", *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 24(3), pp. 513–558.
5. See, for example, European Union (2018) Handbook on European Non-Discrimination Law, Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe; OHCHR (2020) "Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism", <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/terrorism/pages/srterrorismindex.aspx>.
6. OSCE (2019) "Understanding the role of gender in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism: Good practices for law enforcement", gender report, Vienna: OSCE, p. 45; E. Pearson (2018) "Why men fight and women don't: Masculinity and extremist violence", London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.
7. M. Barsa (2015) "U.S. approaches to countering violent extremism must prioritize women", *New America*, 12 March, <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/edition-72/us-approaches-countering-violent-extremism-must-prioritize-women>.
8. OSCE, note 6 above, pp. 41, 45. For a discussion on the term "foreign terrorist fighter" see OSCE (2018) "Guidelines for addressing the threats and challenges of 'foreign terrorist fighters' within a human rights framework", Vienna: OSCE.
9. A. Alexander and R. Turkington (2018) "Treatment of terrorists: How does gender affect justice?" *CTC Sentinel* 11(8), September.
10. CTED (2019) "Gender dimensions of the response to returning foreign terrorist fighters: Research perspectives", New York: United Nations, p. 17.
11. US Department of State (2017) "Country reports on terrorism 2017 – Canada", 19 September, Washington, DC: US Department of State.
12. R. Grey (2019) "Gender-based crimes: A monumental day for the ICC", 8 July, <https://ilg2.org/2019/07/08/gender-based-crimes-a-monumental-day-for-the-icc>.
13. UN Human Rights Council (2016) "'They came to destroy': ISIS crimes against the Yazidis", 15 June, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/CRP.2.
14. OSCE, note 6 above, p. 49; Davis, note 4 above, pp. 528–529.
15. UNDP (2017) "Journey to extremism in Africa: Drivers, incentives and the tipping point for recruitment", New York: United Nations.
16. International Alert and UNICEF (2016) "'Bad blood': Perceptions of children born of conflict-related sexual violence and women and girls associated with Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria", London and Abuja: International Alert/UNICEF Nigeria.
17. UN Security Council (2017) Resolution 2396, para. 31; OSCE, note 6 above, pp. 64–72.
18. Monash University Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018) "Empowering women for peaceful communities: Evidence from Indonesia and Bangladesh", research brief, New York: UN Women.
19. Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (2016) "Uncomfortable truths, unconventional wisdoms. women's perspectives on violent extremism and security interventions", March, Washington, DC: ICAN – International Civil Society Action Network, p. 7; Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (2016) "Global survey of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 by Member States", UN Doc. S/2016/49, New York: United Nations; UN Women (2015) "Preventing conflict, transforming justice, securing the peace: A global study on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325", New York: UN Women, [https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf).
20. OSCE, note 6 above, pp. 77–78.
21. Ibid., pp. 97–98.
22. Ibid., pp. 85–88.
23. UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (2009) "A gender perspective in countering terrorism", analysis of counterterrorism measures from a gender perspective, UN Doc. A/64/211, para. 35; Women's Alliance for Security Leadership, note 19 above, p. 17; S. Giscard d'Estaing (2017) "Engaging women in countering violent extremism: Avoiding instrumentalization and furthering agency", *Gender & Development* 25(1), pp. 103–118.
24. UN Special Rapporteur, *ibid.*, para. 34.
25. UNODC (2018) *Handbook on Gender Dimensions of Criminal Justice Responses to Terrorism*, Vienna: UNODC, pp. 40–42.
26. *R(M) v. HM Treasury* [2008] 2 All ER 1097, paras 15, 61; European Court of Justice, *M and Others v. HM Treasury*, Case No. C-340/08, Judgment of the Court (Fourth Chamber) of 29 April 2010, paras 60–61.
27. UNODC, note 25 above, p. 57; Duke International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program (2017) "Tightening the purse strings: What countering terrorism financing costs gender equality and security", March, Durham, NC: Duke Law School.
28. UNODC, note 25 above, pp. 40–42.

Written by Amrita Kapur, with contributions from Callum Watson and Anna-Lena Schluchter.

Edited by: Megan Bastick

Acknowledgements

DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR and UN Women would like to thank Fauziya Abdi Ali and Fatima Sadiqi for their advice in developing this Policy Brief. The authors moreover are grateful for the input of Léa Lehouck, Lorraine Serrano, Anne Bennett, Daniel de Torres, Ayman Ayoub and Heiner Hänggi (DCAF); Graziella Pavone, Johannes Heiler and colleagues at OSCE/ODIHR; and Brad Orchard, Iman Sayed Taha and colleagues at UN Women.

DCAF acknowledges the support of Switzerland, Sweden and UK DfID in the production of this Policy Brief.

ISBN: 92-9222-482-4

© DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, 2019

Use, translation and dissemination of this publication are encouraged. We do, however, ask that you acknowledge and cite materials and do not alter the content.

Cite as: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR and UN Women (2019) "Gender, Preventing Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism", in *Gender and Security Toolkit*, Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women.

This Toolkit was published with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). Its content does not necessarily reflect the policy and position of OSCE/ODIHR.

