



UiO : C-REX – Center for Research on Extremism
University of Oslo



WOMEN'S ALLIANCE FOR SECURITY LEADERSHIP
Preventing Extremism by Promoting Rights, Peace & Pluralism



PRIO Centre on
Gender, Peace
and Security

Women and Girls in Violent Extremism as Perpetrators, Survivors and Peacebuilders: Responding to the Gendered Dimensions of Disengagement, Rehabilitation and Reintegration

A Global Solutions Exchange (GSX) Workshop

26-27 April 2018
University of Oslo, Norway

Concept Note

Summary: Building on ongoing conversations and events of the past year, this high-level workshop will examine responses to the return, rehabilitation and reintegration of perpetrators and supporters of violent extremism¹ from a gendered perspective. This workshop is part of a broader research initiative the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are conducting on the rehabilitation and reintegration of women who have joined violent extremist movements. Workshop participants will include key policymakers, researchers, practitioners, psychologists, journalist, victims, and former extremists to facilitate a comprehensive discussion exploring the role of the state, civil society, and other important sectors such as the media, education, and economic development. The workshop will highlight the experience and innovations of women civil society actors in addressing the gendered dynamics and impacts of violent extremism and terrorism—from security profiling to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV)— and will focus specifically on practical recommendations for dealing with female perpetrators and “returnees”. A gendered approach reveals nuances of category that complicate practical solutions, such as women abducted and forced to join extremist groups, blurring the lines

¹ A note on defining extremism: the UN Secretary General, in his [Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism](#), states that “violent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition.” He has also called to avoid “sweeping definitions of violent extremism (...) often used to criminalize the legitimate actions of opposition groups, civil society organizations and human rights defenders.” As a result, UN agencies, including UNDP, do not employ a specific definition of extremism.

between victim and perpetrator. For the purposes of this study female returnees are to include those disengaging from extremist groups they had joined both voluntarily and involuntarily, within and outside of their home countries, and across both developed and developing contexts. Through this study ICAN and UNDP aim to strength the knowledge base on the fate of female returnees and inform a new generation of policy and programming interventions at the local, regional and global levels with this study.

Context: Managing the return of the many individuals who have traveled to conflict zones and the growing number defecting from terrorist groups is a priority for many countries. Effective and sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration programs are essential to addressing this challenge and preventing violent extremism over the long term. Governments cannot do this work alone and should work with civil society and other local actors. Effective rehabilitation and reintegration requires attention and action at the state, community, public discourse, family, and individual levels. Because rehabilitation and reintegration is an individual, psychosocial process that requires the sustained engagement and involvement of local communities, families, and other supportive social networks, civil society has a unique contribution to make. Civil society organizations (CSOs) often have the trust of and access to the affected individuals and communities in ways that government officials do not.²

Furthermore, global recognition has steadily demonstrated that successful peacebuilding efforts require the positive engagement and participation of women, rehabilitation and reintegration are no exception. UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015), the latest resolution on women, peace and security, highlighted the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and its differential impact on the rights of women and girls, calling for actors “to conduct and gather gender-sensitive research and data collection on the drivers of radicalization for women, and the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women’s human rights and women’s organizations, in order to develop targeted and evidence-based policy and programming responses.” In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the UN Secretary General’s Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism have paved the way for this approach. They provide critical policy frameworks for increased collaboration and more integrated approaches. However, the voices and innovations of women, youth and other local civil society actors are still underrepresented in government and multilateral policy and practice arenas. To help address this gap, the Global Solutions Exchange (GSX)³ was launched in 2016 as a civil society led mechanism for structured and sustained

² Excerpt from “10 Steps to Strengthening Rehabilitation and Reintegration Efforts for Terrorism Offenders, Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters, and Victims of Violent Extremism” published in December 2017 by the steering group of the Global Solutions Exchange (GSX). For more see: www.gsxpve.org/improving-pve-practice/.

³ The GSX seeks to systematically bring policy makers and practitioners from different sectors and perspectives together to share knowledge and solutions on critical topics related to preventing violent extremism. While we welcome this diversity of opinions as a means of reaching better outcomes, the views expressed at GSX events, by steering group members or other partners do not necessarily reflect the views of all such members and partners. For more information see: www.gsxpve.org.

engagement with governments on critical topics related to the prevention and countering of violent extremism and the promotion of sustainable, inclusive and positive peace.

UNDP's Inclusive Political Processes team with the support of the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre are launching a multi-country research initiative led by ICAN in collaboration with the Women's Alliance for Security Leadership (WASL) to provide insights into an under-researched area: the prospects of female returnees who have joined violent extremist groups voluntarily or involuntarily. Gender-sensitive research on women returning to their communities and their experiences with disengagement, rehabilitation and/or reintegration processes remains limited, despite evidence of targeted recruitment and/or abduction of women and girls by violent extremist groups. Often, data on returnees is not gender-disaggregated, obscuring the unique experiences of women in these processes. In addition, women's organizations are at the forefront of supporting returnees and reintegration in their communities, and their efforts and strategies should be fully documented to enable them to inform policy making and ensure they receive the support needed to continue their work.

Workshop Format: In partnership with the Center for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), ICAN and UNDP will convene a wide range of state, multilateral, academic and civil society stakeholders actively engaged in this area of work to share past and current case examples, findings and recommendations based on their experience and knowledge. The two-day workshop will serve to validate a preliminary mapping of current policies and programming for dealing with women and girls who have been affiliated with violent extremist groups and identify good practices and gaps that will inform guidance. Acknowledging the complex and multidimensional nature of the topic, the workshop will consider the following components of disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration: legal and justice, security, economic, education, ideological transformation, psychological and emotional care, community engagement, family support, public awareness and the media.

Practitioners, researchers, and policymakers from among the following countries will be invited: Albania, Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sweden, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, United Kingdom, United States. Stakeholders from relevant international agencies and organizations will be invited to participate, including the Carter Center, Commonwealth of Nations, European Union, ICCT, International Alert, IOM, IRC, Global Center on Cooperative Security, Mercy Corps, Prevention Project, RUSI, Search for Common Ground, UNFPA, UN CTED and Office of Counter-Terrorism, UN Women, UNIDIR, UN Inter-agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration, and the World Bank.