



Women and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Interventions

FULL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research and practice on the gender dimensions of efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE) are limited. Comparatively little P/CVE work takes account of women’s experiences and needs, and most programmes are designed with men in mind. However, there is a growing recognition of the need to take account of the gender dynamics of violent extremism, including in relation to preventative work. Programmes are beginning to be designed for women and research is starting to more systematically examine how to understand the gender dynamics implicated in violent extremism and efforts to respond to it.

This report reviews research on P/CVE interventions that explicitly focus on women. It is organised by the three tiers of intervention commonly used to describe P/CVE work: primary interventions which work at the community level to prevent involvement in extremism; secondary interventions that engage with those identified as being at risk of involvement; and tertiary interventions designed for those convicted of terrorism offences or believed to be directly engaged in violent extremism. It identifies key learning by looking at a series of international case studies and reflects on the next steps for this research agenda.

KEY FINDINGS

GENERAL

- ‘Gender blind’ programmes remain the norm. Relatively few initiatives take gender into account when designing and delivering interventions, and there are comparatively few P/CVE intervention programmes tailored to women.
- There is very little research relating to interventions specifically designed for girls.
- Those P/CVE programmes for women that do exist mainly focus on Islamist-related terrorism.

- Embedding gender into the development of P/CVE programming – for example, by ensuring women contribute to both the development and delivery of interventions – has the potential to support positive outcomes.
- Interventions should avoid instrumentalising women’s roles in P/CVE and instead seek to engage with women meaningfully, constructively, and over the long term.
- Interventions are varied in their target and approach. They range from programmes targeting broad societal-level issues such as gender inequality, to community-level initiatives enacted in the context of women’s civil society groups, programmes directed at state institutions such as the police or government departments, as well as projects that work with small groups or individual women.
- Participatory approaches which engage with grassroots actors have the potential to provide sustainable, independent ways of diverting and supporting women away from violent extremism.
- The field will benefit from more experienced practitioners able to work with women involved in extremism.
- The evidence base on what works to divert women and girls away from violent extremism is weak.
- There is a need for more methodologically robust and empirically informed research to inform assessments about the effectiveness of interventions in general, and in particular in the context of P/CVE programmes designed for women.

PRIMARY INTERVENTIONS

- The aims of primary interventions focused on women and girls are diverse and include enhancing trust in statutory authorities; mitigating

the influence of extremist groups, developing more resilient communities; improving the treatment of women in society; and creating educational and employment opportunities.

- Initiatives that are responsive to local needs and which take a pluralistic approach, delivering different kinds of activities – including supporting women’s economic situation; providing training and education; and increasing opportunities for women to engage in political and community life – seem to provide the greatest chance of success.
- Training and education initiatives have the potential to develop women’s confidence about engaging in P/CVE work when they are targeted appropriately and developed in gender-sensitive ways.

SECONDARY INTERVENTIONS

- Secondary interventions that work with those at risk of radicalisation are often overseen by statutory agencies in the context of case-managed interventions offering tailored support based on an individual assessment of needs.
- Engaging with hard-to-reach women is enabled through long-term programmes able to draw on pre-existing networks which can access those who are disengaged from the community.
- Some of the factors influencing the likely success of online interventions include the perceived credibility of the interlocutor; how committed the person is to extremism (the more committed, the less likely they are to be persuaded); and the extent to which the messages resonate with the target audience.
- Online interventions benefit from being tailored based on gender-sensitive research into the target audience’s preferred communication style, subject (e.g. political, community, personal), platform (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp), and forum (e.g. closed or open groups).

TERTIARY INTERVENTIONS

- Tertiary interventions are rarely tailored to address women’s needs and experiences.
- Very limited research exists on tertiary interventions designed for women, including those returning from conflict zones.
- Disengaging from extremist groups can be a long-term process, which is most helpfully supported through multiple interventions, targeting different issues in a way that is sequenced appropriately and tailored to an individual’s specific needs.
- Women with children require tailored support to address the complex needs of families with women who have been involved in extremism.
- Women face particular barriers to reintegration due to the stigma associated with their involvement in extremism and because they have transgressed gendered norms.

MULTI-AGENCY APPROACHES

- Although evidence remains limited, current good practice suggests that community-focused interventions benefit from being inclusive and collaborative, engaging with multiple stakeholders including women, young people, and civil society organisations.
- Co-designing programmes can foster inter-agency cooperation and understanding as well as helping P/CVE initiatives respond meaningfully to local contexts.
- Intervention providers benefit from being able to develop positive relationships with the individual and their family to provide tailored support in the context of multi-agency working.
- Civil society organisations and non-government organisations can engage with at-risk women in online and offline settings and are important partners in P/CVE work.

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

- Several stereotypes are highlighted in the literature which belie the complex and individualised nature of women's experience of violent extremism. In general, women are considered more peaceful and less of a security threat; thought of as victims rather than active agents in extremism; and believed to have different kinds of motivations to men. Most of these assumptions are contested.
- Women's roles within the family are often assumed to provide opportunities for early intervention. However, the evidence for this is unclear.
- Programmes working with women in their role as mothers should avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes and explore the role of fathers and masculinity in P/CVE.

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

- Efforts to encourage women's economic empowerment in the context of the P/CVE agenda will benefit from acknowledging the barriers created by the burden of domestic work that women carry and the gender norms and discriminatory attitudes that limit women's opportunities to engage in P/CVE work.
- Trust in authorities is a key factor in women's willingness to refer friends and family members they are concerned about. Interventions able to increase women's confidence and trust in statutory bodies are therefore important.
- Violent extremist organisations and ideologies often reflect specific types of gender norms that need to be considered in intervention work, as these can influence women's motivation to engage in extremism, and the barriers to reintegration.

INTRODUCTION

Research on women and girls and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) programmes is growing (Chowdhury Fink et al., 2013; Giscard d'Estaing, 2017; Henty and Eggleston, 2018). However, although a small number of studies have empirically examined interventions that address the gender dimensions of P/CVE, the evidence base remains weak. Despite the need to understand the impact and effectiveness, and the security and societal implications of such programmes, data is limited and there is a reliance on anecdotal rather than empirical evidence. Currently, the evidence base is best characterised as uneven in scope and quality.

The literature highlights that stereotypes about women continue to prevail, including assumptions that women are less inclined to violence, are less of a security threat, or are suited to particular forms of P/CVE intervention (Winterbotham, 2018; Henty and Eggleston, 2018). These issues pose challenges to academics and policymakers attempting to better understand and develop interventions to improve gender-sensitive P/CVE programming.

This report provides an overview of the range of interventions that have been carried out with women. These include programmes designed for women, as well as those carried out by women aimed at the general community, which include men and boys. The report sets out the evidence drawing on contemporary research while identifying gaps that need attention.

The report focuses primarily on research published from 2018 to 2021, although relevant sources from before this period are included where appropriate. Most of the literature in this area is theoretical rather than empirical, looking at the contexts for gender-focused CVE interventions and making recommendations for improvement, rather than empirically exploring interventions. Studies that draw on empirical data, or

which have details of evaluations were prioritised for inclusion. From the initial search, a smaller number of studies that reviewed specific interventions were selected for a more detailed review.

The research is international in scope and includes literature on programmes in Europe, North America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. It is dominated by desk-based research, although some studies involved interviews and fieldwork which provided further detail about how interventions were carried out. While at times quantitative data was provided on programme outputs, such as the number of individuals reached or impacted by the intervention, the evidence underpinning the outcomes of studies was limited.

The vast majority of research is focused on violent Islamism or is concerned with broader issues relating to women and P/CVE, rather than specific ideologies. A very small number of studies focused on extreme right-wing groups and typically concentrated on misogyny and the treatment of women rather than interventions (Rouass, 2021). Some limited research has also been carried out looking at women in the Northern Ireland context (OSCE, 2019).

Where relevant, research that offers broader contextual information about women and girls' involvement in violent extremism is included to provide insights into the issues that interventions seek to address (see Box 1). For example, several studies identified push and pull factors for women's engagement in violent extremism or terrorist activity. While these factors can contribute to the development of interventions, and some of the authors make such recommendations, these studies are not discussed in detail as the emphasis for this report is on intervention practice rather than the broader question of radicalisation and deradicalisation processes.

BOX 1

Push and pull factors for women and girls travelling to join Islamic State

“The motivations for women to travel were diverse and generally referred to as drivers or ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors – factors in their individual lives that ‘pushed’ them out of their society and ‘pulled’ them toward IS.” (Cook and Vale 2018, 26)

Push factors

- Economic issues
- To join family, particularly husbands, who had left to join Islamic State
- Engaging with a social group that was involved with the organisation
- Opportunity to address grievances arising from Western countries’ foreign policies

Pull factors

- Seeking adventure
- Opportunity to be involved in state-building
- A sense of religious obligation to live under Sharia law
- Perceived economic opportunities and apparent independence and empowerment

Implications for interventions seeking to address these issues:

- Benefits of providing an alternative social network away from extremist groups
- Relevance of gaining employment or financial support in home country
- Potential utility of exposure to alternate religious or ideological views
- Disillusionment with the extremist organisation as a driver of disengagement

The report is organised in line with the three types of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention typically used to describe P/CVE policy and practice (Marsden, Knott, and Lewis, 2017) (see Box 2). Structuring the report in this way highlights where the evidence on intervention efforts is strongest and where more research is needed across different areas of P/CVE programming.

BOX 2

Public health model of P/CVE interventions

Primary Interventions

Working at the community level to try and prevent people becoming engaged in extremism.

Secondary Interventions

Targeting those considered at risk of involvement in extremism.

Tertiary Interventions

Engaging with people already involved in violent extremism, or convicted of a terrorist offence.

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN P/CVE RESEARCH

KEY POINTS

- There are comparatively few P/CVE intervention programmes tailored to women.
- The evidence base on what works to divert women and girls away from violent extremism is weak.
- ‘Gender blind’ programmes remain the norm. Comparatively few initiatives take gender into account when designing and delivering interventions.
- There is a need to develop ethical, gender-sensitive interventions which incorporate ongoing monitoring and evaluation able to support programme adaptation and understand what informs outcomes.
- Interventions should avoid instrumentalising women’s roles in P/CVE and instead seek to engage with women meaningfully, constructively and over the long term.
- Several stereotypes are highlighted in the literature which belie the complex and individualised nature of women’s experience of violent extremism. In general, women are considered more peaceful and less of a security threat; thought of as victims rather than active agents in extremism; believed to have different kinds of motivations to men; and their roles, for example as mothers, are believed to equip them to carry out particular types of P/CVE work. Most of these assumptions are contested.
- There is very little research relating to interventions specifically tailored to girls.
- Most P/CVE programmes for women focus on Islamist-related terrorism.

“Solid empirical work on the involvement of women in violent extremism and how this can be addressed is lacking”

(Ahmadi and Lakhani 2016)

In contrast to work on conflict prevention and resolution, little attention has been paid to the gender dynamics of P/CVE interventions (Bhulai, Peters, and Nemr, 2016). Despite recognising the need to understand how gender is relevant to P/CVE, practitioners and researchers have been slow to consider the needs and experiences of women and girls. This neglect reaches across research, policy, and practice.

Ahmadi and Lakhani noted that up until at least 2012, “no international or domestic US government counterterrorism program had mandated collection and reporting on sex-disaggregated indicators in its outputs and outcomes” (p.13). Things have improved little in the intervening period, with more recent research arguing that ‘gender-blind’ programmes still appear to be the norm (Winterbotham, 2020, p.5).

This neglect of gender represents a missed opportunity to develop research that can inform practical applications and pursue the benefits of developing this knowledge base, including:

- Opening up new, gender-sensitive avenues for policy and practice (Myers, 2018).
- Improving the outcomes of CVE interventions (Myers, 2018).
- Enabling women and girls to provide insight into the dynamics of violent extremism with the potential to inform policy and practice (Bhulai, Peters, and Nemr, 2016).

BOX 3

Global Counterterrorism Forum:

Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism (2019). Selected recommendations

1. Incorporate gender mainstreaming across CVE work
2. Ensure CVE does not stereotype or instrumentalise women and girls and protects their human rights
3. Enable and empower women and girls to act as critical stakeholders in CVE, through localised and inclusive approaches
4. Improve the evidence base on women and girls' radicalisation and include gender-sensitive approaches to monitoring and evaluation
5. Develop gender-sensitive disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes
6. Build the capacity of women and girls to contribute to CVE work
7. Increase women's participation in the security sector and in public authorities tasked with CVE programming
8. Mainstream gender in community engagement CVE work

Despite the limited empirical evidence, there has been a commitment from international policymakers to embed gender in security through gender mainstreaming (Pearson et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2019). The UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda requires gender to be considered in counterterrorism and P/CVE programming, which has led to greater visibility of gender within policy and practice (Asante et al., 2021). This has been picked up by a range of actors including the Global Counterterrorism Forum which has developed a range of recommendations for working with women in P/CVE (see Box 3).

With these gender mainstreaming efforts has come the critique that gender has been instrumentalised to fulfil the requirements of funders and international organisations, rather than reflecting a genuine effort to take account of the needs and potential contribution of women in the context of P/CVE (White, 2020; Giscard d'Estaing, 2017).

Work on CVE has drawn attention to the stereotypes and assumptions about women and girls relating both to women's role in violence and their potential involvement in the delivery of P/CVE interventions. These assumptions are informed by wider attitudes

towards women and violence which are inflected through research and practice. They are also shaped by the application of knowledge from the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, which has commonly focused on the empowerment of women and girls and addressing gender inequality as a means of promoting peace (Couture, 2014). Assumptions that have been identified in the literature include:

1. Women engaged in violent extremism are often considered either victims or deviant because they transgress gendered expectations (Grossman et al., 2018).
2. Women's motivations are more likely to be personal than political (Hutchison and Bleiker, 2012).
3. Women are more likely to have been coerced into joining an extremist group rather than acting of their own free will (Henshaw, 2016).
4. Women are less violent than men and are therefore better placed to support the aim of countering or preventing violent extremism (Winterbotham, 2020).
5. Gender inequality, including gender-based violence, and the way gender roles are

constructed, play a role in violent extremism and are relevant to national security issues (Winterbotham, 2020; Ahmadi and Lakani, 2016).

6. Mothers are well placed to identify and intervene in the radicalisation process (Winterbotham, 2018; 2020).

Almost all of these assumptions are contested within the academic literature. There is limited consensus as to whether, for example, women's motivations differ significantly from men's. Some research on women involved with IS suggests that women's motivations are comparable to men's in that they are individualised, multi-causal, and dynamic (Saltman and Smith, 2015). Others argue that personal factors like revenge, redemption, relationships, respect, and rape are relevant to interpreting women's motivations to engage in terrorism compared to their male counterparts (Bloom, 2011). Women have also been involved in a wide range of roles within extremist movements, including the commission of violence, which belies the idea that women are necessarily more peaceable than men (Alexander, 2016).

The link between gender inequality and violent extremism also requires further analysis across country contexts to determine any causal relationship and to understand how this might be relevant to P/CVE (Winterbotham, 2020). It is also far from certain that mothers can spot whether their child is becoming more involved in extremism (Winterbotham, 2018). While the stereotype of women as 'good mothers' risks reducing women to a homogenous group overlooking their diversity and their potential involvement in violence (Schmidt, 2020a).

As this report will show, there is a lack of empirical evidence across most areas of work relevant to gender and P/CVE. More research is needed on interventions' processes and outcomes; the most appropriate means of taking account of women and girls' experiences in the context of P/CVE work; and how to most effectively engage women in P/CVE programming.

However, there is not a complete absence of research. What follows presents a selection of the most up-to-date research on primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions. Each section identifies key points, introduces the kinds of initiatives reflected across the different tiers of intervention, and goes on to provide more detail on a small number of international case studies. These studies were selected as they had received some form of internal or external evaluation, reflected different approaches to gender-sensitive P/CVE programming, and/or provided different lessons about how to understand and develop programmes to engage with women.

PRIMARY INTERVENTIONS

KEY POINTS

- Interventions are varied in their target and approach. They range from programmes targeting broad societal level issues such as gender inequality, to community-level initiatives enacted in the context of women’s civil society groups, programmes directed at state institutions such as the police or government departments, as well as projects that work with small groups or individual women.
- The aims of primary interventions focused on women and girls are diverse and include enhancing trust in the authorities, mitigating the influence of extremist groups, developing more resilient communities, improving the treatment of women in society, and creating educational and employment opportunities.
- There is a need for more methodologically robust and empirically supported research to inform assessments about the effectiveness of primary intervention and the extent to which they reduce the risk of radicalisation.
- Although evidence is limited, current good practice suggests that community-focused interventions benefit from being inclusive and collaborative, engaging with multiple stakeholders including women, young people, and civil society organisations.
- Co-designing programmes can foster inter-agency cooperation and understanding as well as helping P/CVE initiatives respond meaningfully to the local context.
- Women’s roles within the family are often assumed to provide opportunities for early intervention. However, the evidence for this is unclear.
- Programmes working with women in their role as mothers should avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes and explore the role of fathers and masculinity in P/CVE.
- Efforts to encourage women’s economic empowerment in the context of the P/CVE agenda will benefit from acknowledging the barriers posed by the burden of domestic work that women carry and the discriminatory attitudes that limit women’s opportunities.
- Engaging with hard-to-reach women is enabled through long-term programmes able to draw on pre-existing networks to access those who are disengaged from the community.
- Women’s willingness to refer people about whom they have concerns to the authorities is mediated by the amount of trust they have in statutory bodies.
- Training and education initiatives have the potential to develop women’s confidence about engaging in P/CVE work when they are targeted appropriately and developed in gender-sensitive ways.

OVERVIEW

Primary interventions are designed to prevent people from becoming involved in violent extremism. They typically aim to tackle the ‘root causes’ of extremism, seeking to indirectly prevent radicalisation. They generally target groups of people and can be enacted in the context of educational initiatives, through community-based activities such as community cohesion work, or training and empowerment programmes (see Box 4).

A significant amount of literature has been produced on primary interventions, and they are the most commonly researched type of programme (Pistone et al., 2019). However, because primary interventions are enacted at the ‘pre-risk’ stage (Elshimi, 2020) it is difficult to

BOX 4

Examples of primary interventions involving women and girls

1. Developing confidence and knowledge in mothers so they are better able to identify and intervene in the radicalisation process
2. Addressing gender inequality and empowering women economically and socially so they are more confident about engaging in P/CVE work
3. Educational initiatives aiming to make women and girls more resilient to the risk of radicalisation
4. Activities that provide access to social networks and engagement activities that provide an alternative to extremist organisations
5. Developing positive relationships between women and girls and authorities, particularly the police, to enable trust and confidence

demonstrate empirically that an intervention has played a causal role in intervening in someone's radicalisation as the link between an intervention and non/involvement in extremism is difficult to trace. Outcomes are therefore often assessed according to their impact on factors believed to decrease the risk of radicalisation.

Although not focused on women, a recent review of research on P/CVE identified four themes that characterise this work (Stephans et al., 2021):

1. **The resilient individual:** activities aiming to develop individual cognitive, normative, or character strengths to make people more resilient to extremist groups or ideologies.
2. **Identity:** providing opportunities for people to explore their identities and strengthen their sense of self to avoid experiencing a threat to their identity which may make them vulnerable to extremism.
3. **Dialogue and action:** creating safe spaces for people to voice their concerns and discuss controversial ideas, alongside the opportunity to direct their energies towards social or political action to raise issues in legal, pro-social ways.
4. **Connected or resilient communities:** engaging with communities, for example through community policing, and fostering more resilient

communities characterised by strong social connections, to reduce the risk of its members engaging in extremism.

There are opportunities across these four areas to increase the focus on women and girls. A 2018 report from the Mayor of London's office on P/CVE set out four (from a total of 70) recommendations that referred to women which reflect this potential, suggesting that:

- More opportunities should be available for women and young people to engage in dialogue and debate on topics relevant to extremism, including the provision of education and knowledge on these subjects.
- Opportunities should be provided for communities and marginalised groups, including disempowered women, to engage with local government to express their concerns and have their needs addressed.
- Support for adult education, including English as a Second Language provision, should be increased, in particular for women with childcare responsibilities who face challenges accessing education.
- Research is needed into the relationship between misogyny, including gender-based violence, and involvement in violent extremism.

BOX 5

UN Women's programming approach in Asia and the Pacific

This approach informs PVE programming in high-risk areas and prioritises:

- **Empowerment:** Promote women's leadership and economic empowerment to promote peaceful coexistence, build social cohesion, and strengthen resilience at the community level.
- **Participation:** Increase women's participation and leadership in efforts to prevent and respond to terrorism and violent extremism.
- **Research:** Expand and deepen a data-driven evidence base on the drivers of extremist violence by sex and its impact on women and girls.
- **Policy influence:** Ensure national and regional counterterrorism frameworks integrate gender and are informed by experiences of women.

UN Women, 2018, p.6

There are no systematic assessments of women-focused, primary P/CVE interventions, which makes it difficult to provide an overall assessment of the process and outcome of this type of programme. Given the scope of work on primary interventions, what follows therefore focuses on two types of programme which reflect common forms of primary intervention and that try and address the perceived causes of violent extremism by working with women and girls: leadership, empowerment, and engagement and community development and resilience.

LEADERSHIP, EMPOWERMENT, AND ENGAGEMENT

Women's empowerment has become a central feature of gender-sensitive security programming. The UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism places women's empowerment at the heart of P/CVE work (United Nations, 2016). Underpinning this commitment is the belief that when women are enabled to fill leadership roles and actively participate in political and civic life, including in relation to

counterterrorism and CVE, there is likely to be a positive impact on security.

This approach is informed by research on women and conflict which typically sees a positive correlation between gender equality, the involvement of women in peace initiatives, and positive outcomes in conflict settings (Hudson et al., 2012). Although some have challenged the premise underpinning this line of work, questioning whether women can be assumed to be consistently peaceful and moderate, this remains a feature of P/CVE work (Schmidt, 2020a).

Empowering women is also seen as a way of addressing some of the push and pull factors relevant to the recruitment of women and girls, for example where militancy is presented as a means of enhancing agency or addressing gender-based victimisation. Efforts to support women's empowerment can take different forms, including work to develop self-confidence, improve women's economic prospects, enhance gender equality, encourage women to engage more in community and political life, and improve access and achievement in education.

EMPOWERED WOMEN, PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES: BANGLADESH AND INDONESIA

The UN's Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme is based on the premise that by empowering women to improve their economic circumstances, developing their confidence, and enabling them to participate and lead local decision-making, they are better able to sustain cohesive communities that are more resilient to extremism. (See Box 5 for an overview of UN Women's approach to P/CVE programming in Asia and the Pacific.)

Delivered across six sites in Bangladesh and Indonesia identified as at risk of extremism, the programme involved a series of activities including knowledge-sharing workshops, regional dialogues, and carrying out counternarrative work. Alongside this, national-level activities were initiated to support women's empowerment, including by helping women suggest means of preventing radicalisation (UN Women, 2018).

Working with local partners in Bangladesh, the UN helped support 600 women to develop their own businesses and funded community theatre shows which highlighted the importance of social cohesion and PVE, reaching over 90,000 people. In Indonesia, the UN collaborated with local actors to research the perceived threat from radicalisation and supported the development of a gender-sensitive P/CVE National Action Plan as well as carrying out wider awareness-raising work about women's empowerment regarding P/CVE.

A multi-method evaluation involving a survey of all sites, participant observation, key informant interviews, and community focus groups made it possible to compare outcomes between sites that had received programme support against those which had not (True et al., 2019). The evaluation indicated that the project had successfully developed women's confidence and enabled them to contribute to PVE in four ways:

1. **Greater individual empowerment** gave women more confidence to engage in P/CVE initiatives and

better knowledge about how to report and counter-extremism. This was mediated by the amount of trust that women had in state actors: the more they trusted public institutions, the more confident they felt about reporting concerns about extremism.

2. **Increased awareness** about violent extremism and how women might play a role in combating it was linked to greater confidence in engaging in P/CVE activities. However, men's attitudes informed whether women could participate in community and economic empowerment activities. This highlights the importance of raising men's awareness about the value of women's empowerment and community participation.
3. **Economic empowerment** was argued to support community resilience by relieving economic stressors and decreasing reported community and family tension. Greater economic independence had the capacity to reduce people's vulnerability to extremist organisations offering financial incentives. However, women's greater domestic burden limited opportunities to engage in external economic activities.
4. **Community engagement** was believed to be important to P/CVE work, as were families. Mothers (significantly more than fathers) were described as well-placed to identify signs of radicalisation. To avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes, the evaluators suggested future work should examine the role of fathers and masculinity in P/CVE.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND RESILIENCE

Increasing attention is being paid to the social-ecological factors that inform radicalisation (Dawson, 2017; Bouhana, 2019). This recognises that wider social and community-level issues are relevant to interpreting how and why people become engaged in extremism (Ozer and Bertelsen, 2019). Alongside this, there has been a long-standing argument that communities are important sites for P/CVE initiatives and are crucial stakeholders in this work.

PRIMARY INTERVENTIONS

Women and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Interventions

Community engagement can include efforts to improve relations between state agencies and the communities they serve (Stephans et al., 2021), for example through work to improve community-police relations (Mazerolle et al., 2020) or supporting community-based actors to address P/CVE-relevant issues. It can also incorporate efforts to foster social connections, both within communities and between them and state authorities (Ellis and Abdi, 2017).

These activities seek to develop more resilient communities by fostering contexts able to ‘reject the “social legitimacy of violent extremism” (Weine and Ahmed, 2012) based on strong family, peer, cultural, religious and community networks and resources that can serve as protections against violent extremist narratives’ (Grossman et al., 2020, p.3).

WOMEN INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION: NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland’s Fresh Start Agreement included a section on community engagement and the prevention of paramilitarism. This incorporated a commitment to a ‘programme to increase the participation and influence of women in community development’ (Northern Ireland Executive, 2015, p.17). The Women Involved in Community Transformation (WICT) initiative was designed with these aims in mind.

WICT sought to enable women to engage in transformative community development; improve cooperation between communities and statutory agencies; increase women’s involvement in political life; and provide alternative means of resolving community issues without resorting to paramilitary groups (CENI, 2017). Together this was believed to support transition and help those wishing to move away from paramilitarism.

Recognising the need for a long-term programme, the first stage of the work involved a co-design process with relevant stakeholders, one outcome of which was the Women’s Early Intervention Programme (WEIP).

This aimed to support women who might otherwise be disengaged from community work to become involved in the wider WICT programme. It sought to do this through support for personal development, connecting marginalised women and fostering a supportive environment, and providing help to those who wanted to move away from paramilitarism (CENI, 2017).

The WEIP was presented to 24 communities, reaching 263 women, and went on to develop a training programme that covered issues such as self-esteem, assertiveness, and capacity-building as well as providing one-to-one support where needed (CENI, 2017). The evaluation found the programme:

- Helped participants see the changes they wanted in their communities.
- Fostered an interest in being involved in community development work.
- Increased participants’ interest in engaging in similar activities: 80% of those involved in WEIP expressed a desire to work with WICT (OSCE, 2019).

As well as the impact on the women, the multi-stakeholder, co-design process increased inter-sector understanding and created a context for knowledge exchange. The WICT has continued through a series of phases delivering training to women in subjects including women in the justice system, and leadership and mentoring, graduates of which can select one of three Community Change pathways which include completing certificated courses on Asset-based Community Development, Mediation, and Facilitation or Mentoring.

Some of the transferable lessons from this programme include:

- **Using pre-existing networks** can help overcome the barriers marginalised women face to engaging in community development work, such as a lack of community infrastructure, sceptical gatekeepers, and norms about community engagement.

- **A phased programme incorporating ongoing monitoring and evaluation** helped to identify good practice and barriers to help the programme adapt to the local setting, events, and women's needs.
- **Co-designing programmes** with multiple stakeholders can help to foster inter-agency cooperation and understanding.
- **Long-term commitment** is necessary to engage with hard-to-reach women. Providing ongoing support and a phased approach that focuses on personal development and community engagement helps provide the context for ongoing involvement working towards community transformation.

SECONDARY INTERVENTIONS

KEY POINTS

- Secondary interventions that work with those at risk of radicalisation are often overseen by statutory agencies in the context of case-managed interventions offering tailored support based on an individual assessment of needs.
- Civil society organisations and non-government organisations can engage with at-risk women in online and offline settings and are important partners in P/CVE work.
- Participatory approaches which engage with grassroots actors have the potential to provide sustainable, independent ways of diverting and supporting women away from violent extremism.
- Initiatives that are responsive to local needs and which take a pluralistic approach, delivering different kinds of activities – including supporting women’s economic situation; providing training and education; and increasing opportunities for women to engage in political and community life – seem to provide the greatest chance of success.
- Embedding gender into the development of P/CVE programming, for example, by ensuring women contribute to both the development and delivery of interventions has the potential to support positive outcomes.
- Gender norms and discriminatory attitudes towards women can create barriers for women interested in engaging in P/CVE work.
- Trust in authorities is a key factor in women’s willingness to refer friends and family members they are concerned about. Interventions able to increase women’s confidence about trust in statutory bodies are therefore important.
- Although more research is needed, directing gender-focused material to mixed audiences may carry risks including the potential for lower levels of engagement from men, and of reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- Some of the factors influencing the likely success of online interventions include the perceived credibility of the interlocutor; how committed the person is to extremism (the more committed, the less likely they are to be persuaded); and the extent to which the messages resonate with the target audience.
- Online interventions benefit from being tailored based on gender-sensitive research into the target audience’s preferred communication style, subject, (e.g. political, community, personal), platform (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp), and forum (e.g. closed or open groups).

OVERVIEW

Secondary interventions focus on individuals considered to be at risk of radicalisation. Examples of this kind of work include formal government initiatives such as the UK’s Channel programme or Australia’s Countering Violent Extremism Early Intervention Programme. These typically take a case-managed approach to identifying, assessing, and providing support for those considered at risk of engaging in violent extremism.

Community-based programmes can also engage with those believed to be at risk, working with an individual to address their needs, or diverting them away from extremist groups. Activities within secondary interventions are therefore varied and can include support around education or employment, mentoring,

BOX 6**Examples of secondary interventions involving women and girls**

1. Case-managed interventions for women and girls assessed to be at risk of radicalisation involving the delivery of a tailored package of support which could include theological guidance, psycho-social support, help with education, training, or employment, and working with a mentor.
2. Bespoke online communication programmes able to reach, divert, and support women and girls at risk of radicalisation.
3. Developing positive relationships between women and girls at risk and the authorities, particularly the police, to foster trust and confidence.
4. Establishing youth mentors for women and girls to provide guidance and offer an alternative support system to extremist groups.

or theological or ideological guidance in both offline and online settings (see Box 6 for examples).

GENDER-SENSITIVE COMMUNITY POLICING AND P/CVE REFERRAL MECHANISMS

One of the challenges associated with secondary interventions is identifying those at risk of radicalisation and finding a means of diverting them towards appropriate support. One of the elements of this is the capacity of the police to act as trustworthy and credible interlocutors, alongside the need for

appropriate forms of case management to help those who have been referred for support.

Although not focused on gender, research in the UK and USA suggest that people are willing to report friends and family members when they trust the authorities understand how to report, and believe that it will benefit the individual concerned (Thomas et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020). Interventions have therefore been developed that seek to build trust between communities and the police to increase the opportunities to identify and support those who may be at risk of radicalisation.

THE JENDOUBA MODEL: TUNISIA

In Tunisia, work to embed gender into the development of P/CVE programming began by drawing on international expertise and national bodies to develop a community partnership model. Described by OSCE (2019) as the first initiative in North Africa to develop a multi-stakeholder approach to P/CVE, the outcome was The Jendouba Model, an overview of which is set out in Figure 1.

Designed as an early intervention programme to identify and support those at risk of radicalisation, it also seeks to develop local capacity to address violent

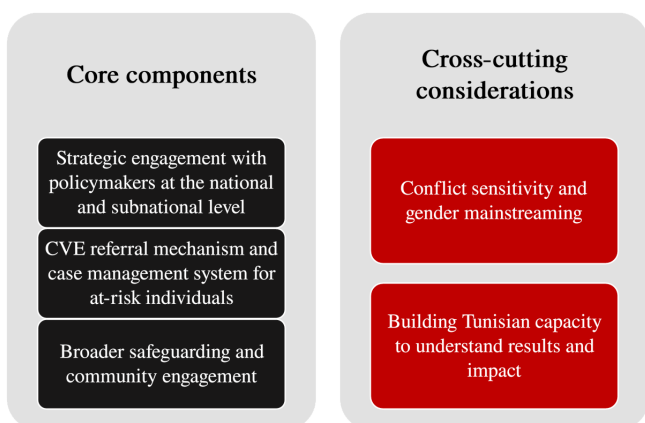


Figure 1. The Jendouba Model

BOX 7

Women-centric secondary interventions: A review of the evidence (Winterbotham, 2020)

Of the research on secondary interventions, only a modest amount focuses on women and girls. This means there is relatively little understanding of what works, or what helps to divert women considered at risk of radicalisation away from extremism. The most comprehensive research on this topic was carried out by Emily Winterbotham (2020).

This study reviewed 42 papers that reported on secondary interventions. The papers were assessed across a range of measures to determine the quality of the evidence. 13 papers were assessed to be high quality, 19 moderate, and 10 low quality. None of the studies provided evidence of an intervention's success; 10 were found to be potentially effective (5 of which were high-quality studies), 6 produced mixed outcomes (2 high quality); 12 were considered ineffective (3 high quality); and 14 were inconclusive (3 high quality). The study concluded:

- There is a need for more P/CVE intervention programmes tailored to women.
- A lack of robust research means it is not yet possible to determine what may stop women from engaging in violent extremism.
- The evidence for interventions working with mothers is mixed. Interventions can develop women's confidence in engaging in P/CVE, however, the assumption that women are better placed to identify radicalisation is less well supported.
- Contextual factors such as discriminatory attitudes towards women, a lack of trust in authorities, and the perception that P/CVE is used to spy on communities have the potential to undermine women's involvement.
- Providing the opportunity for women to engage in security-related policies and programmes can produce positive outcomes.
- Interventions that improve women's confidence about engaging in P/CVE programmes can have a positive effect both on the level of trust they have in public institutions and their willingness to report their concerns to the authorities.
- Greater success is likely from programmes that take a pluralistic and integrated approach, combining efforts to improve women's economic circumstances, provide training and education on P/CVE issues, and create opportunities for women to engage in civic life.

extremism by carrying out activities that aim to develop trust between the community and the police.

Set up in two urban areas – Jendouba and Tabarka – the programme involves a range of actors, including CVE-specialist police officers, youth mentors, and community-based experts such as doctors and child

protection workers. This range of support aims to address the different stressors relevant to violent extremism as well as broader experiences of violence and abuse that participants may have experienced.

In common with other secondary interventions, the programme involved a referral process and a case

management system to support those assessed to be at risk. Alongside this, the ‘youth mentor team’ provided direct support to safeguard individuals considered at risk, or brought in experts to address specific medical, social, or family-based issues, and met mothers to discuss the issue of children staying in school. Gender was considered throughout the intervention in several ways:

- Women were encouraged to lead and shape institutional processes as the programme was developed and delivered.
- Youth mentor teams had a gender balance.
- The programme specifically targeted women-led civil society organisations and other women stakeholders.
- The police were provided with support to enable them to include gender analysis in their community security analyses, for example encouraging them to consider the perspectives of women and girls as well as men and boys, and finding ways for women to engage with them.

Assessments of the programme suggested it had managed to sustain a gender-sensitive approach which brought various benefits (OSCE, 2019):

- All genders profited from the programme’s referral and case management approach.
- Women youth mentors seemed more engaged and influential than male youth mentors.
- Community liaison officers of both genders are equally engaged in the programme, with women contributing and leading to the same extent as men.
- Local-level prevention plans developed by the community liaison officers and youth mentoring teams are beginning to incorporate women’s experiences and views.
- Women and women-led civil society organisations involved in broader preventative work are more involved with youth mentoring teams.

ONLINE INTERVENTIONS

P/CVE interventions using the online space are diverse. They range from programmes that seek to reduce the availability of extremist material on the internet, to efforts to persuade those involved in extremism to disengage from radical networks. Increasingly, practitioners used to working in the offline space are using online methods to reach people considered at risk of radicalisation.

There are several advantages to online interventions: They provide opportunities for practitioners to engage directly with those at risk, their anonymity brings the potential to reduce the risks both for intervention providers and those they seek to engage with, and they are comparatively inexpensive (Davey et al., 2020).

Relatively little is available in the public domain about the effectiveness of different kinds of online interventions. One approach that has received more systematic attention is that of counternarratives or programmes that seek to challenge extremist justifications for violence by providing an alternative perspective. Although it does not take account of gender, Carthy et al.’s (2020) review of counternarrative interventions found insufficient evidence to suggest they prevented violence but concluded there was some, limited evidence that they could effectively target some of the risk factors associated with violent extremism.

Carthy et al.’s (2020) study also suggested there was a risk that online interventions targeting those with a firm commitment to violent extremism may cause a ‘boomerang effect’, further entrenching extremist ideas rather than softening them, and may therefore be better directed at those who were more open to alternative perspectives. Other research has found that counternarratives delivered by credible agents and delivering messages which resonate with the target audience have better outcomes (Bélanger et al., 2020).

SECONDARY INTERVENTIONS

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

To examine the potential of targeted online communications to connect with women considered vulnerable to extremism, The Stabilisation Network (TSN) designed a strategic communications intervention for women living in Syria and Iraq. Recognising that a tailored approach was needed, the project began by researching Arabic-speaking women's approach to online communications which suggested that:

- Women favour networked forms of communication, with a preference to engage first with people they know, and second, with women who share similar social, ideological, or contextual characteristics.
- Compared to men, women use a less formal type of Arabic in online communications.
- Women considered vulnerable to violent extremist narratives seem more likely to discuss personal topics in group contexts, whereas men will debate issues such as war or security.
- Closed, structured groups are more likely to facilitate women's discussion of taboo subjects. This is likely to be because it reduces the risk of harassment.
- Women's access to social media varies throughout the conflict. Those able to access social media are comparatively privileged as it implies they are literate, have a smartphone, and may have a man's permission to access online content. They are more likely to engage in public life early on in a conflict.
- Facebook and WhatsApp are women's preferred social media platforms in the region.

Informed by this research, online safe spaces were developed by TSN's local female partners. Focused on the Levant region, multiple communication interventions were carried out by members of the team in closed group settings. These included

providing curated content, encouraging audience members to create new material, and engaging in one-to-one mentoring with those deemed particularly at risk through WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Counternarratives were also shared regarding women's roles and portrayal throughout Islamic history and by violent extremist organisations.

The project was evaluated over time through observing members' interactions. The outcome of the intervention was described as 'a highly active digital community, with up to 1000+ user-generated pieces of content per month' (Harris, 2021, p.261). Findings suggest that the women were more confident about engaging in decision-making and felt better able to 'protect their children from violent extremist influences' (Harris, 2021). TSN believed the most significant indicator of the intervention's success was that it was still operating independently over 12 months after the official project ended.

Although no independent evaluation is publicly available, the project's own assessment suggests there is promise in enabling women to engage in online settings with vulnerable women, and that providing them with gender- and context-sensitive information and support can foster resilience and agency. Given the project's findings regarding the relative privilege of women able to participate in online settings, it remains important to find ways of engaging with women without this access. However, the project has lessons for wider intervention efforts, including that:

- Programmes benefit from being developed based on a gender-sensitive conflict analysis that takes account of the cultural, linguistic, and socio-political context.
- Closed online groups can provide a platform for women to discuss sensitive topics and offer a means of identifying and diverting those who are particularly at risk towards one-to-one support.
- Risks associated with directing gender-focused online material to public platforms with a mixed, or majority male audience include lower levels of

engagement, negative responses, and reinforcing harmful stereotypes about women and men (Birchall, 2018).

- Where appropriate support is available, participatory approaches to developing and delivering counternarrative interventions can successfully engage with women considered vulnerable to extremism and can maintain this provision once external support has withdrawn.

TERTIARY INTERVENTIONS

KEY POINTS

- Very limited research exists on tertiary interventions designed for women, including those returning from conflict zones.
- Publicly available evaluations of tertiary interventions for men are rare, and none were identified that focused on provision for women.
- Tertiary interventions are rarely tailored to address women's needs and experiences.
- The field will benefit from more experienced practitioners able to work with women involved in extremism.
- Disengaging from extremist groups can be a long-term process, which is most helpfully supported through multiple interventions, targeting different issues in a way that is sequenced appropriately and tailored to an individual's specific needs.
- Multi-agency working, including with civil society organisations, provides an appropriate structure to support tertiary interventions and benefits from a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- Women with children require tailored support to address the complex needs of families with women who have engaged in extremism.
- Civil society organisations have demonstrated the potential to effectively engage with women who have been involved in extremism, including the capacity to broker relationships between women and the authorities through trust-building activities.
- Intervention providers benefit from being able to develop positive relationships with the individual and their family to provide tailored support in the context of multi-agency working.
- Women face particular barriers to reintegration due to the stigma associated with their involvement in extremism and because they have transgressed gendered norms.
- Violent extremist organisations and ideologies often reflect specific types of gender norms that need to be considered in intervention work, as these can influence women's motivation to engage in extremism, and the barriers to reintegration.

OVERVIEW

Tertiary interventions aim to rehabilitate, reintegrate, or deradicalise those who have been convicted of a terrorist offence or are engaged in extremist or terrorist activities. Deradicalisation programmes are typically run by state actors in the context of the criminal justice system and involve tailored interventions aiming to reduce an individual's risk of re-engaging in terrorism. Tertiary interventions can include one-to-one mentoring, including by former members of extremist groups, ideological or theological guidance, psychological or social support, and help with education, training, and employment (see Box 8).

The impact of tertiary interventions is perhaps the least understood across work on P/CVE. Few programmes make information about their work publicly available, and independent evaluations are rare. The gap in the evidence base is particularly acute with respect to women. There is an acute need to understand the gender dimensions of tertiary interventions, not least because of the number of women and girls caught up in the collapse of IS.

Women involved in extremism have been described as transgressing twice, 'violating gender norms ... and social norms on the prohibition of violence' (Pearson et al., 2020, p.313). This makes it especially

BOX 8**Examples of types of tertiary interventions involving women and girls**

1. Reintegration programmes designed for women who have returned from conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq or who have been convicted of a terrorism offence. These can include one-to-one support, help with education or vocational training, psychological interventions, and direct financial support.
2. Programmes aimed at communities and families to support the reintegration of women and girls who have been involved in extremism. These aim to provide a support structure to reduce the risk of re-engagement and may include training on signs of radicalisation, and religious and political education and hence can overlap with primary interventions.

challenging for women to reintegrate back into society due to the stigma, isolation, and marginalisation they can face. These issues are compounded by the lack of gender-sensitive reintegration programmes, and the small number of practitioners with experience of the gender dimensions of extremism (Schmidt, 2020b).

As well as acknowledging the needs of women as they transition away from extremist groups, it is also important to take account of the gender dimensions of different ideologies, which typically encapsulate certain gender norms. This matters as it shapes the opportunities and barriers facing women in the move away from extremism. For example, gender-conservative movements can create contexts where women are reliant on men for financial and practical support, leaving women with few resources should they seek to disengage (Eggert, 2020). These issues are especially acute for women with children, who may face community stigma if a parent is perceived to be involved in extremism.

Equally, women who joined violent groups as a means of attaining greater political agency, equality, or economic opportunities can be reluctant to rejoin mainstream society where these freedoms may be curtailed (Turkington and Christien, 2018). As Jennifer Eggert argues, given how central ‘gender in general and harmful masculinities and femininities in particular are to many violent and/or extremist movements ... it is hard

to conceive how extremist ideologies can be countered without also addressing gender.’ (Eggert, 2020, p.72).

POST-CONFLICT REINTEGRATION

A significant number of women and girls have travelled overseas to support IS and its affiliates in recent years (Cook and Vale, 2018). Although far fewer women than men travelled to Syria and Iraq, they now represent the majority of people in detention in the region (March, 2021). However, a significant number of these women have now returned to their home countries, prompting some to set up initiatives to manage their return.

Little is made public about the process and outcome of post-conflict reintegration initiatives in general, and those which are described rarely refer to the provision for women and girls as most programmes are designed for men (Turkington and Christien, 2018). Two exceptions include an initiative in Malaysia that works with women returning from overseas conflicts and a programme for women involved in extremist groups in Kenya.

REHABILITATION THROUGH SKILLS TRAINING AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: MALAYSIA

Southeast Asia reportedly experienced the highest percentage of women returning from Syria and Iraq in the year following the collapse of the Islamic State

TERTIARY INTERVENTIONS

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in 2017 (Cook and Vale, 2018). In response, Malaysia set up a programme to engage with women, which according to recent research, has so far worked with 43 individuals who were detained for their involvement with Islamic State and Abu Sayyaf (Khalid et al., 2021).

The programme's aims are described as rehabilitation and deradicalisation. Efforts to support rehabilitation involve training and therapy during the women's time in prison, while deradicalisation work focuses on the individual's religious beliefs. The police-led intervention involves up to 30 modules focused on civil order, ideological and psychological change, a family engagement programme, and skills training, alongside ongoing assessment which evolves into life-long monitoring. Interestingly, the programme treats both genders in much the same way, other than using women officers to work with female prisoners.

No evaluation is yet available for the programme, however, researchers have identified areas for development, including the need to pay attention to extremists from other religions and ideologies than just that of jihadist terrorism, and the need to improve collaboration with NGOs and civil society groups (Khalid et al., 2021).

ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY AFRICA (AWAPSA): KENYA

Advocacy for Women in Peace and Security Africa (AWAPSA) was established as a national civil society organisation in 2016. It aims to “empower women politically, economically, and socially, and advocate for women in leadership positions so that they can work on crucial issues like security” (Idris, 2020, p.22).

AWAPSA delivers a range of activities to develop trust between the police, security agencies, and communities, and to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of those who have been involved in extremist groups, most notably Al-Shabaab, with an emphasis on women and girls. They are unusual as

most reintegration efforts are led by state rather than civil society actors.

AWAPSA takes a multi-agency approach involving primary stakeholders such as community leaders, university students, survivors of terrorism, and women leaders, and secondary stakeholders including anti-terrorism police, local police, and the Ministry of Gender. AWAPSA's work recognises the gender dimensions that inform the process by which women become involved in extremism, for example, the use of coercion, and gendered recruitment messages. The particular challenges facing women and girls returning to their communities are also recognised, including the effects of physical and psychological harm, concern over community stigma, and fear of arrest and mistreatment by the police.

AWAPSA works with women and girls, and their families, delivering informal peer support counselling groups, helping them return to school, or providing vocational training and support to set up their own business. To develop trust in the police AWAPSA set up ‘Walking with the Police Forums’ which provide the opportunity for women to express their concerns and discuss issues relevant to violent extremism. One of the outcomes of this has been the opportunity for returnees to explain what happened to them, share their experiences, and act as role models.

Although no formal independent evaluation is available, reporting on the programme (ICAN and UNDP, 2019) suggests that AWAPSA has assisted more than 100 women and girls who returned from extremist organisations between 2016 and 2020; 268 women have shared their stories with police through the Police Forums; other police stations have requested their training; 40 women and 10 men have engaged in peer mentoring sessions; and 30 people have started businesses as a result of AWAPSA's support. The transferable lessons from this programme include:

- The potential of civil society organisations to support rehabilitation and reintegration work as a result of their relationship to the community.
- The need to identify and mitigate the impact of barriers to reintegration, such as community stigma and gender dynamics that impact women's economic and educational prospects and increase the risk they may re-engage with extremist groups.
- The importance of trust-building activities and formal arrangements, such as Memorandums of Understanding, to improve relations and increase trust between the police and the community, and enhance the opportunities for data sharing.
- The benefits of multi-agency working to provide a range of support for returnees.
- The need to address the risk that civil society groups are prosecuted due to their work with returnees.
- The relevance of religious knowledge to help practitioners and police in this work.

EVALUATING REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES: REALISTIC EVALUATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

Very few tertiary intervention programmes have publicly available evaluations, and there are significant challenges facing efforts to interpret the impact and outcome of this work (Lewis, Copeland, and Marsden, 2019). However, the challenge of how to evaluate tertiary interventions for women has been addressed by Amy-Jane Gielen (2018) who argues for a realistic evaluation approach in her study of municipal exit programmes in the Netherlands.

Against a backdrop of one of the highest proportions of female jihadists in Europe, the Netherlands has developed a multi-agency approach to support the deradicalisation of women who have tried or succeeded in travelling overseas to join ISIS.

The Dutch approach is organised at the local level, where each municipality is responsible for CVE programming. Individual case management is coordinated through a multi-agency framework involving the police, probation, healthcare, public prosecution office, and child protection, who together decide on the most appropriate intervention for each individual. Interventions can include providing help with practical issues such as housing or employment, psychological support, ideological counselling, or help to disengage from extremist networks.

Gielen (2018) argues a realistic approach to evaluation makes it possible to determine 'what works, for whom, how and in what circumstances in exit programmes for female jihadists' (p.456). This method involves identifying the contexts, mechanisms, and outcomes implicated in interventions through a series of steps:

1. Drawing on existing literature and knowledge about the intervention programme, develop a theoretical model about the radicalisation process and what might counter it by identifying:
 - Contextual factors e.g. whether the intervention is delivered in a prison or the community.
 - Mechanisms or the 'causal assumptions that implicitly or explicitly underlie a programme or intervention' (Gielen, 2018, p.462), for example, that help with housing may foster stability and support reintegration.
 - Outcomes, e.g. reoffending / re-engaging with the extremist group, or rejection of extremist ideology.
2. Gather data from multiple sources and analyse it to identify context-mechanism-outcome patterns. For example, the prison environment (context), makes it possible for a mentor (mechanism) to work with an individual without influence from the extremist forces to reduce her commitment to the radical network (outcome).

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3. Develop a refined programme theory based on the analysis of multiple cases which makes it possible to understand ‘what works for whom, how, under what circumstances’.

Although Gielen’s (2018) study does not report on the outcomes of Dutch intervention work, based on her research, her own experience as an intervention provider, and knowledge of the existing academic literature, she draws several conclusions about women’s reintegration:

- Supporting women’s exit from extremist groups is a long-term process. It requires an understanding of push and pull factors and the use of multiple interventions able to activate relevant mechanisms.
- Interventions should be sequenced appropriately and tailored to an individual’s needs and circumstances.
- Providing the opportunity for women to develop new social networks helps to address feelings of social isolation caused by the loss of the radical network.
- Programmes benefit from a holistic approach that can address practical, emotional, and normative issues.
- Intervention providers need to be able to develop a good relationship with the individual and their family as well as work effectively in a multi-agency context.
- If managed appropriately and sensitively, mandated conditions, such as banning contact with previous associates, can help with the disengagement process.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the review of available literature on P/CVE interventions designed for women, the following are important avenues for future research:

- Studies that interrogate the stereotypes and assumptions that have been identified in the literature including more work to:
 - Understand women's motivations for involvement in violent extremism and consider the implications for P/CVE practice.
 - Examine the complex dynamics between women's agency and experiences of victimisation within violent extremist settings.
 - More systematically explore the different roles women might be able to play in P/CVE.
- Research that focuses on evaluating the process and outcome of P/CVE programmes developed for women.
- Assessments of the needs of girls in relation to P/CVE work.
- More applied research that uses participatory approaches to involve women in the process of co-designing and interpreting the impact of P/CVE interventions.
- Comparative research that considers the role of different ideologies in women's pathways into and out of violent extremism.
- Methodological research that a) draws on the wider evidence base about how to design programmes that build gender considerations into the fabric of P/CVE interventions and b) identifies relevant learning to support participatory and co-design processes into the development of P/CVE programming.
- Further work to identify the barriers and opportunities of engaging with civil society organisations in genuine partnership.
- Studies to understand the gender dimensions of online communications and the implications for interventions in this space.
- Research that examines the nature and scope of the challenge developing trust between women and statutory authorities.
- More systematic assessments of the impact that gender-based discrimination has on women's capacity to engage in P/CVE work.
- Research that takes an intersectional approach to understand the multiple dimensions of power and disadvantage that influence women's engagement with violent extremism, and efforts to counter it.
- Work that examines the particular barriers women face reintegrating into society after a conviction for a terrorism offence or on their return from a conflict zone.
- More generally, it will be important to develop a wider evidence base on gender, which considers not only the particular circumstances of women and girls but also how gender norms influence men. With the rise in concern over incels and the increased visibility of misogyny and hyper-masculinities in extremism, there is much research to be done to understand the varied ways gender is implicated in extremism and terrorism (Rouass, 2021).

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