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Gendered Dimensions of Return, Rehabilitation and Reintegration from Violent Extremism: *The State of Programming and Policies for Women and Girls*

62nd Commission on the Status of Women – Side Event

Monday, March 19th, 2018 at 1:15-2:30 PM

Ex-Press Bar, UN General Assembly Building

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 a growing number of countries. Among these individuals are female perpetrators and returnees, disengaging from extremist groups they joined both voluntarily and involuntarily, and women and girls associated with male fighters. Sustained engagement with local communities and families is critical in disengagement, and rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) processes and necessitates working with women as family and community members. Civil society organizations, including women's organizations, play a key role in supporting disengagement, R&R of violent extremist actors, since they often have the trust of and access to the affected individuals and communities in ways that official bodies do not.

The complexity of these issues is noted in "[10 Steps to Strengthening Rehabilitation and Reintegration Efforts for Terrorism Offenders, Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters, and Victims of Violent Extremism](#)" a [Global Solutions Exchange \(GSX\)](#) publication. This event will provide an opportunity for policy makers and practitioners to address these issues in depth and with particular attention to the realities facing women and girls. A gendered approach helps to reveal the many roles women play in contexts affected by violent extremism, and the complexities of their experiences, yet limited gender-sensitive evidence is available on the fate of female returnees, women's experiences with disengagement and deradicalization, judicial and rehabilitation processes, and the potential of women to act as peacebuilders and contribute to reintegration in their communities.

Objective of the Side Event

For the 62nd Session of the Commission of the Status on Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations, and the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) will host a side event highlighting the importance of a gendered approach to the return, rehabilitation and reintegration of perpetrators and supporters of violent extremism with attention to the policy, legal and implementation challenges and opportunities.

The side event will also focus on the potential for collaboration between national actors and civil society on holistic, gender-sensitive disengagement, R&R, and the strategies the international community might use to support them.

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Expected Outcomes

- 1) Providing a clear framework and priorities for action to enable effective gendered R&R;
- 2) Forging collaboration between member states, international actors and civil society on R&R;
- 3) Highlighting what the integration of a gender dimension in R&R looks like in practice, drawing on experience of DDR in post-conflict contexts; and
- 4) Identifying gaps of knowledge informing the research initiative on women returnees currently being conducted by UNDP and ICAN.

Format

This plenary session will be a dialogue between the participants and a moderator. Following welcome remarks by the hosts, in “Davos-style”, each speaker will make a brief introduction followed by discussions within the panel and with the audience. No power point presentations or formal speeches will be used, to foster an open debate and lively interaction. The dialogue will be followed by a Q&A.

Hosts

- Dr. Alexander Avanesov, Global Programme Manager, Special Advisor on Prevention of Violent Extremism, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP;
- Minister Counsellor Joakim Vaverka, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN; and,
- Ms. Melinda Holmes, Senior Adviser and Program Manager with ICAN, will moderate.

Speakers

- Ambassador May-Elin Stener, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN, will discuss government responses to women and girl returnees;
- Ms. Nika Saaedi, Policy Specialist, Gender, Political Processes, Peacebuilding, BPPS, UNDP, will share details of a joint ICAN and UNDP research initiative to inform relevant programming;
- Ms. Mira Kusumarini, Executive Director, Civil Society Against Violent Extremism (C-SAVE) in Indonesia, will share her experiences as a practitioner working with female returnees; and,
- Ms. Visaka Dharmadasa, Founder and Chair of Association of War Affected Women (AWAW) in Sri Lanka, will draw relevant lessons from of the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of women and girls in post-conflict contexts.

Guiding questions

1. What is the current state of play in addressing women and girls associated with violent extremist movements?
2. What are the gaps in policy and legislation? Are there good practices?
3. What lessons can be drawn from current policing and security sector practices?
4. How are PVE National Action Plan processes tackling the gendered aspects of disengagement, R&R?
5. What experiences, good practices exist regarding community and CSO engagement?
6. What are the key elements of effective and sustainable reintegration and rehabilitation?
 - a. Economic livelihoods
 - b. Social integration
7. How can the media be better engaged to inform the public?

For more information or to register for access to the UN building please contact Melinda Holmes at melinda.holmes@icanpeacework.org.