3. Security From and Security For Women and Girl Returnees

The security sector—ranging from the police to intelligence, military and prison services—dominates counter-terrorism and PVE efforts. As the challenge of returnees has come to light, they have remained at the forefront of determining practices, despite the ambiguities in policy or existing laws. While governments are legitimately entitled to act for the protection of the rights of the persons under their jurisdiction, they should also respect the human rights of the returnees, including their rights to life and personal freedom.

Practices have varied across countries. In some instances, transgressions by the sector are due to the tensions that arise between the states' commitments to human rights versus the demands and priorities vis-à-vis national security and the needs of the public, which they are tasked to protect and serve. It has led to cases where countries have violated their own commitments to existing human rights laws and standards in the name of national security.

There has been overreach as state security forces have used heavy-handed approaches against people, resulting in extensive abuse and violence. All stakeholders engaged in PVE face the central challenge of acknowledging the role of poor governance. Bad governance, manifested through corruption at local levels, absent or abusive security sector actors, creates fertile ground for the rise of radicalization and recruitment into non-state groups. This, as noted in UNDP's 2017 Journeys to Extremism report, has been a key driver of further radicalization.[123] While their specific roles and responsibilities may vary, a gendered approach to PVE and reintegration and rehabilitation is essential for all branches of the security sector, and is still largely absent in many cases.

Gender in intelligence and analysis

The absence of gendered information and analysis from intelligence gathering and reports is a key gap within national and global intelligence services. In Kenya, the authorities were unaware of the extent to which young women were being recruited and trafficked into Al-Shabaab.[124] Women in local communities also have knowledge of developments and would be willing to share it, but often do not have the access to the authorities, says Sureya Roble of Advocacy for Women, Peace and Security Africa (AWAPSA), whose local organization is bridging the divisions between the security sector and communities.

The security sector—local police as well as specialized terrorism units—know that much of the recruitment and radicalization occurs deep within communities, and they have no access to it. Roble says that her group initially met with resistance when they reached out and engaged women and other members.

Similarly, there is significant mistrust from community members, particularly women, about reaching out to security actors. The women and girls returning from Somalia or involvement in Al-Shabaab are especially fearful of how they will be treated by the state and their communities. "Some girls are returning with HIV or with children," says Roble. "They relocate because of the stigma they feel in their former communities. Because of the lack of legislation and their fear of the state's reactions, they do not come forward." But she says that whether it is concerning trends in recruitment or return, "If you want to know anything, you have to talk to the women."

Building confidence between communities and the security sector is a concern in many contexts. In one incident in Pakistan, locals sought to warn the police of an impending terror attack, but the tip was not followed up. The

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[123] UNDP (2017). Journey to Extremism in Africa (available at: http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf).
[124] Remarks by Sureya Roble, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018.

attack took place. A Pakistani community PVE practitioner shared, "Building trust between the community and security actors is essential. If the police don't respond, confidence in them recedes."[125]

Around the world, local communities can become caught between the violence of the armed groups and that of the state. In the Philippines, the imposition of martial law and military interventions as in the Marawi case have fuelled greater mistrust between local communities and national state authorities.[126] Under the guise of martial law and national security, civilians have been apprehended, but their families have no knowledge of where their loved ones are held, by which branch of the state. Within communities, at times locals have difficulty discerning rebel groups from government-sponsored fighters. Similarly, in Nigeria, local communities have long stated that alleged violence and corruption by the military have been key factors of recruitment into Boko Haram.

A gendered approach to information-gathering and analysis sheds light on the experiences of local communities with the state, as well as the strategies and tactics that violent extremist groups use to recruit and radicalize both women and men. Since most intelligence has focused on male recruitment, the ways in which women have been targeted and co-opted have often been overlooked in the information gathering and analysis. In the Western Balkans, for example, there is significant variance across countries in the average age of the women who joined ISIL. Those from Kosovo were significantly younger than their counterparts from Albania and elsewhere.[127] "The question is why were these young women travelling?" asks Adrian Shtuni, a PVE analyst specializing in the region.[128]

The answers vary across countries, but in each instance, there is evidence that local recruiters are tapping not only into issues that are prevalent in the local context, but also the specific vulnerabilities of men and women. In Kenya, some young women were promised jobs and education, so they left their homes willingly. They were trafficked into Al-Shabaab.[129] In many settings, recruiters tap into women's and girls' faith but lack of religious literacy to push their ideology. There is also clear indication that women themselves are becoming recruiters. In contexts where women traditionally have no power or voice, their adherence to religion and role as recruiters is empowering. This in itself is a motivation for becoming attracted to the groups. As Mossarat Qadeem of PAIMAN Alumni Trust in Pakistan notes, local mothers have been the first to be recruited, and they are the most effective recruiters of their own sons.[130] Designing effective interventions to prevent them from recruiting youth, and to rehabilitate them into community life with effective economic and social benefits, requires understanding their motivations and the benefits they get from radicalization.

In essence, across the board there is clearly still a paucity of gendered information and analysis. This leaves many gaps in the effective implementation of prevention or countering programmes. It also impacts the efficacy of reintegration efforts. As Shtuni notes, "To do effective reintegration and rehabilitation, we need to understand their motivations."[131]

Women's and girls' experiences in detention and rehabilitation

Since women and girls are typically perceived as low-risk, even if they are integral to the operations of a violent extremist group, most have often fallen below the radar of state authorities, and circumvented detention. But the implications for women and girls caught in the nexus of violent extremism and state security apparatus

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[125] Remarks by Mossarat Qadeem, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018.
[126] ICAN (2017, June 2). WASL report from Mindanao amid Marawi Crisis (available at: https://www.icanpeacework.org/2017/06/02/wasl-report-mindanao-amid-marawi-crisis/).
[127] Remarks by Adrian Shtuni, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018; Holmes, G., & Shtuni, A. (2010),). Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative. USIP Special Report.
[128] Remarks by Adrian Shtuni, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018.
[129] Evewoman. (2018),). How innocent girls are lured into sex slavery by militants through Social Media. Evewoman.
[130] Remarks by Mossarat Qadeem, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018.
[131] Remarks by Adrian Shtuni, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018.

are stark. Culturally, they are seen as transgressing societal norms and expectations. Many are often labelled sexually promiscuous. Added to the implicit patriarchal attitudes is the fear and hatred towards the violent extremist groups with whom the women and girls may be affiliated. Even those who were unknowingly trafficked or followed husbands and brothers into violent extremist groups have been subjected to repeated sexual assault in state detention centres once they are captured.[132] In effect, they are doubly "punished" for breaking societal rules and for their affiliation with violent extremist groups. They have little or no recourse for justice or protection, in part because of the lack of policies and laws.

From Europe to Africa, despite the state's oversight and control, prisons and detention centres have been key environments for radicalization, particularly for men. This issue must also be addressed in the case of women. If women and girl returnees are being detained, could they become recruiters within prisons? Additionally, where they are abused in detention centres, what are the risks of further radicalization?

There are lessons to be learned and adapted from past disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes where women were among the fighters and members of armed groups. In many instances, women feared and were subjected to sexual assault in the camps.[133] For this reason, it is best practice in DDR to segregate women and men, particularly in terms of shelter and accessibility of sanitation facilities. But this also causes challenges for those who come in as families, or women who have teenage boys. Moreover, the separation of the women can result in their exclusion from reintegration programmes, when facilities and resources are limited. This is true in Somalia, for example, where there is no dedicated government facility devoted to the care and rehabilitation of women and girls who have returned from Al-Shabaab.[134]

A woman police officer addresses an AWAPSA community dialogue session in Kenya

Security sector and civil society cooperation; the added value of working with women

Precisely because of the limits of state security interactions with communities, local civil society organizations become pivotal actors, to bridge the divide and find issues of mutual concern around which to build trust and communication. The experiences range from cooperation in community policing to working in prisons and accompanying state-run reintegration processes. In many of the cases, gender dynamics have led to unexpected but positive outcomes resulting from the interaction of women-led CSOs engaging with male-dominated security structures.

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[132] Searcey, D. (2017, December 8). "They Fled Boko Haram, Only to Be Raped by Nigeria's Security Forces." The New York Times (available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/08/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria-security-forces-rape.html?smid=fb-share).

[133] Amnesty International (2008). Liberia: A flawed process discriminates against women and girls (available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/AFR34/004/2008/en/).

[134] Interview with Somali woman civil society actor, March 2018.

■ ***Community police engagement:*** As noted above, local security actors are often present in the community, but a lack of trust means limited interactions and information sharing. But as Sureya Roble of Kenya's AWAPSA emphasizes, to be effective in the community in addressing violent extremism, "working with police, public administration, the national centre for countering terrorism, and national intelligence had to be prioritized to bring cohesion among stakeholders. Connections to police help to inform us of new cases, but some women do not want to say whether they are widows or keep holding out hope, most of them want to hold out hope that their husbands will come back."[135] Initial outreach to the security sector was difficult in part because of the sensitive nature of the issues, and the police's own need for training. A key lesson drawn from the AWAPSA experience was that the police themselves are new to the issues and do not know everything. AWAPSA trained them on signs and symptoms of radicalization that surprised police officers. The police are also wary as they do not know if returnees are still a risk or genuinely seeking reintegration. With an unclear policy and legal framework, it is essential to have safe spaces and trust. AWPSA also created a new programme called the Police Canteen. Since they cannot leave the stations, the women go to the canteens to drink tea and discuss concerns.

As AWAPSA was able to demonstrate the importance of their gendered work and knowledge—notably with regard to the scale of women and girl returnees from Al-Shabaab—it has become a trusted interlocuter for all stakeholders. "You need to work under the assumption that people only change their behaviour if they're treated like human beings and if it's good for them, and they are about to find issues of commonality. If you make things less appetizing, there might be a reduction, but there also has to be a positive incentive," says Roble.[136]

Others such as Women Against Violent Extremism (WAVE) work with traumatized women who lost husbands and sons to Al-Shabaab, providing them with counselling support. The police and the families need civil society's participation as interlocuter. In some instances, the police learn of new cases but the families are often in denial of the death or disappearance of their relatives.

■ ***Working with violent extremists in prisons:*** In Lebanon, Rescue Me, a CSO led by two social workers, has led cutting-edge research and engagement in prisons among former ISIL fighters. The founders first approached the Ministry of Justice seeking permission to conduct research in prisons with a view to better understanding the motivations of the fighters. They were granted permission on condition that their study's findings would be shared.

"Building trust was the most important factor," recalls Yammout. The prisoners tested the social workers to determine if they were representing the intelligence services. Once the trust was established—a slow two-year process—many welcomed the chance to talk and share their experiences. Over a nine-year period, the social workers have documented more than 200 cases in a prison bloc housing some 680 extremist fighters from various militias. The relationships that enabled them to reach out to prisoners' families, gaining insight into the different reactions of their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters in terms of their involvement with the violent extremist groups. Being a non-governmental entity was crucial to their ability to gain the trust, says Yammout.[137]

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135 Key informant interview, ICAN Annual forum, Sri Lanka, November 2017.
136 Ibid.
137 Remarks by Nancy Yammout, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018.

INVISIBLE WOMEN

Similarly, the tactics and approaches used were key to opening the dialogue. For example, any talk of religious affiliation or ideology was too sensitive. Instead the two women drew on techniques of social work to tap into humanitarian aspects including the prisoners' needs and emotions. Gender dynamics were also critical to their ability to reach and engage the prisoners. As men, the prisoners were more willing to speak openly to women about their childhood traumas or other experiences and fears.

- *Reintegrating women into the community, CSO support to social workers:* Indonesia was one of the first countries to reclaim its citizens who had travelled to Iraq and Syria to join ISIL.[138] By 2017 over 400 people were repatriated.[139] Among them a reported 74 percent were women and children.[140] While some were sent to detention centres, the majority were put into rehabilitation centres run by the Ministry of Social Affairs. But similar to other countries, personnel in Social Affairs or other government bodies had limited experience in addressing this population. Civil Society Against Violent Extremism (C-SAVE), a coalition led by Mira Kusumarini, plays a central role in assisting ministry staff to better understand the phenomenon of violent extremism. In doing so, they aim to manage the returnees better, and prevent future recruitment. C-SAVE has worked with the police and a range of national and 20 local government entities to develop cross-sectoral Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), including legislation to improve practices. For example, in assessing the women's experiences of deportation and return, they discovered sexual abuse by police during transit. Ensuring safe passage and protection is essential not only for the individuals involved, but also to avoid fuelling anger and further radicalization.

They are also seeking to better understand the level of women's involvement in violent extremist groups. In some instances, men forced their wives and children to travel to Syria. These returnees face community stigma and fear when they come back home, but they are not ideologically radicalized, so re-entry can be smoother. Kusumarini works with communities and local authorities to widen acceptance of the returnees and provide services such as skills training to enable them to reintegrate. But as with former DDR programmes, there is a fine balance to strike: In communities where many people may have needs, providing opportunities to returnees alone can cause backlash, so a key goal has been to ensure that training and other services are also available to all community members.

One unexpected challenge was that many of the women returnees were strong adherents to their groups' ideology, and effective communicators—so much so that the social workers interacting with them were at times attracted to their messages and religious discourse, and vulnerable to becoming sympathizers. As the May 2018 family suicide attack on a church in East Java revealed, the risks of community reintegration remain high. In its aftermath, many noted that men are often imprisoned and targeted with deradicalization programmes, but it is also important to tailor such programmes for women and children.[141] It is anticipated that more women will face legal proceedings, but the need for restorative justice and rehabilitation centres also remains.

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[138] Shephard, M. (2018). "At least two Canadian women are among 800 foreign 'ISIS families' being held in legal limbo by Kurdish forces." The Toronto Star.

[139] Richart Barrett (2017), Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and Returnees (available at: http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v3.pdf).[140] Comments by Mira Kusumarini, GSX Oslo Workshop, April 2018.

[141] NPR (2018), Family Suicide Attacks: Indonesia Must Deradicalize Mothers And Kids Too (available at: https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/05/24/613383263/family-suicide-attacks-indonesia-must-deradicalize-mothers-and-kids-too).)

Engaging the security sector to address lack of trust

There is little doubt that a gendered lens is necessary for PVE efforts, including reintegration and rehabilitation. It is also evident that partnerships with CSOs are essential. But the challenges are clear, particularly given the complexity and fast-changing nature of the issues. This is compounded by long-term structural and cultural obstacles, notably:

- The security sector can be defensive about the existence of key problems, notably issues related to police brutality, specifically sexual violence. This lack of transparency about the actions of security actors and perceived impunity is a critical source of mistrust within communities and can fuel radicalization.

- The reluctance of government agencies, particularly security actors, to share information with civil society poses a significant challenge to understanding the returnee phenomenon and thus the design of effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. Sharing of information and development of research protocols, in combination with relevant safety training, should be undertaken as a collaboration between civil society and the security sector.

- Misunderstanding and mistrust persist between sectors, so defining and developing parameters for collaboration can be a slow process, hampered by lack of political will, and factors such as high turnover in some institutions. A key strategy is to demonstrate the added value of collaboration, particularly in terms of the contributions and services that CSOs bring, and to establish relationships of trust with communities that demonstrate shared humanity and concerns. Cultural activities can be an effective way of deepening community-based policing.

- Individuals who are active or associated with sensitive security issues, notably working with returning fighters, or challenging corruption, extremism, violence and other endemic problems that implicate powerful stakeholders, are often at high risk, and have limited means of expressing their concerns.

Young Iraqi women and men discuss ways to contribute to society other than joining armed groups

Ultimately, we need a mutual understanding of security needs and priorities. Too often, the state or even international actors determine security priorities, allocating resources and even providing the training. But they are removed from the reality of citizens' daily lives and their security concerns. Initiatives that can build confidence between the police and local communities, particularly among the most stigmatized and marginalized sectors, can be key ways of preventing and countering the cycle of violent extremism.

If you want to know anything, you have to talk to the women.