



The Roles of Women in Terrorism, Conflict, and Violent Extremism

Lessons for the United Nations
and International Actors

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Lessons for the United Nations and International Actors

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Abstract

The roles of women in international peace and security efforts have been underscored by the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 and subsequent thematic resolutions on women, peace, and security issues. The roles of women as they relate to terrorism and counterterrorism issues, however, have remained less explored by policymakers and international counterterrorism actors. As the international community shifts from a reactive to a more preventive approach regarding terrorism and violent extremism, the need for a more comprehensive multistakeholder approach to addressing these challenges has become apparent. Yet, little attention has been paid to integrating a gender dimension into UN and many national efforts to address the problems of terrorism and violent extremism. This policy brief explores the conceptual and operational challenges in integrating a gender dimension into counterterrorism policy and programming and offers a set of recommendations for the United Nations and other actors to consider when developing effective and sustainable counterterrorism efforts.

The impact of conflict on women and the roles of women in international peace and security efforts, including conflict prevention and peace-building, have been underscored by the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent thematic resolutions on women, peace, and security issues.¹ The establishment of UN Women in 2010 to promote gender equality and empowerment also provided an important multilateral platform for highlighting issues relating to armed conflict and insecurity and

their effect on women.² The roles of women as they relate to terrorism and counterterrorism issues, however, have remained less explored by policymakers and international counterterrorism actors. Too often, their roles are ascribed simply as “preventers” without a more nuanced consideration of when, how, and why women may also play the roles of “supporter” or “perpetrator” or even as security actors in counterterrorism efforts. Practitioners working on terrorism prevention or countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts need to better understand the multiple roles

¹ Subsequent resolutions include 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960, passed during 2008–2010. For more on these resolutions, see PeaceWomen, “About Women, Peace and Security,” n.d., <http://www.peacewomen.org/pages/about-1325>.

² For more information about UN Women, see <http://www.unwomen.org>.

women may play in preventing or perpetuating terrorism and violent extremism. Women may be partners in prevention or entry points for CVE engagement, but they may also be supporters of violent extremist ideologies or groups, or even operatives carrying out acts of terrorism.

Moreover, although international actors have increasingly focused on the roles of women in relation to armed conflict, there has been little discussion on integrating terrorism prevention efforts into broader conflict prevention efforts, or vice versa, and considering the roles of women in these activities. Consequently, few opportunities exist for practitioners in conflict prevention, counterterrorism, or gender issues to interact and inform the development of more-nuanced, -tailored, and -effective prevention strategies that draw on the broad range of expertise and experience available to organizations such as the United Nations.

As the international community shifts from a reactive to a more preventive approach regarding terrorism and violent extremism, the need for a more comprehensive multistakeholder approach to addressing this challenge has become apparent. In line with the 2006 United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, member states have been urged to address not only the more tactical and law enforcement-centric aspects of counterterrorism efforts, but also to consider the “conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.” The UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), responsible for supporting member states in Strategy implementation, has among its constituent entities those working on development, education, and peace operations.

Yet, little attention has been paid to integrating a gender dimension into UN and many national counterterrorism efforts.³

³ “Gender” is a social construct not necessarily synonymous with “women,” but for the purpose of this brief, “gender” and “women” are used interchangeably.

Practitioners need not start from scratch. The United Nations and many states have invested in the implementation of Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions and on strengthening efforts to engage women in peace and security efforts. Counterterrorism actors may draw on these experiences and consider how lessons learned can inform the development of more-nuanced, -targeted, and -effective terrorism prevention efforts.

To explore these issues, in July and September 2012 the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (CGCC) hosted roundtable discussions to explore the dynamic roles that women play with regard to terrorism and counterterrorism matters. The roundtable also presented an opportunity to exchange lessons learned and insights from related fields that have engaged women, such as conflict resolution, peace-building, development, and human rights promotion. Speakers and participants included representatives from UN member states, civil society organizations, and relevant UN entities, including UN Women, the CTITF, and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). This policy brief offers some highlights from the discussions, which elicited debate regarding the conceptual and operational challenges of integrating a gender dimension in multilateral counterterrorism programming, and outlines some key principles for incorporating gender considerations into international terrorism prevention strategies.

For an in-depth analysis of the gender impact on counterterrorism, see Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ), “A Decade Lost: Locating Gender in U.S. Counter-Terrorism,” New York University School of Law, 2011, <http://chrj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/locatinggender.pdf>.

Women in Terrorism and Counterterrorism Efforts

Although often viewed as passive vessels, women can play multiple roles in terrorism and counterterrorism efforts.⁴ How drivers of violent extremism affect or are affected by women remains a knowledge gap for many policymakers.⁵ Women may play the role of supporter or participant in terrorist groups for a variety of reasons, some of which may have little to do with their gender. Although the role of women as terrorist actors remains relatively unexplored, studies suggest that most of the same factors that prompt men to become terrorists drive women in the same way: grievance about sociopolitical conditions; grief about the death of a loved one; real or perceived humiliation on a physical, psychological, or political level; a fanatical commitment to religious or ideological beliefs; an intention to derive economic benefits; or a desire to effect radical societal change.⁶

In many instances, women can be more vulnerable than men to being drugged, raped, physically coerced, and emotionally and socially blackmailed, especially in traditionally patriarchal societies where they have little recourse to alternative mechanisms of empowerment or independence. Like some of their male counterparts, women can also be influenced or coerced to participate in terrorism by male family members, to avenge a sense of personal or familial dishonor, or to transform their status from victims of sexual violence into ideological icons.⁷ Although men can do the same, it is often more difficult or unusual for women to do so

in societies where they are not encouraged to take on public or combat roles.

Ascribing women's participation in terrorism to others, however, risks denying them their voice or agency. Women's support for terrorist causes and groups may be a deliberate result of their personal convictions and experiences. In terrorist organizations where women are not in a position to play dominant roles or gain leadership positions, they can play the role of terrorist sympathizers and mobilizers.⁸

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Peter Romaniuk, Senior Non-Resident Fellow (left), and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Senior Analyst, CGCC (September 2012). Photo by Elliot Moscowitz.

⁴ Lori Poloni-Staudinger and Candice D. Ortals, *Terrorism and Violent Conflict: Women's Agency, Leadership, and Responses* (New York: Springer, 2013).

⁵ In a 2011 report, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) specifically acknowledged gaps in understanding violent extremism and insurgency, including the role of gender, and noted the need for further research. See USAID, "The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles into Practice," September 2011, http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/policy_planning_and_learning/documents/VEI_Policy_Final.pdf.

⁶ For a description of these motivations and an extensive list of studies on the roles of women in terrorism, see Maj. Marne L. Suttan, "The Rising Importance of Women in Terrorism and the Need to Reform Counterterrorism Strategy," United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2009, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA506225>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.



Jayne Huckerby (September 2012).
Photo by Elliot Moscowitz.

The traditional roles ascribed to women in many societies—wife, mother, and nurturer—empower them in some instances to become the custodians of cultural, social, and religious values. Uniquely positioned to transmit these ideals to the next generation, women can glorify and encourage family members and children to aspire to martyrdom and keep terrorist organizations viable through their propaganda, recruitment, fundraising, and other support activities.

Alternatively, women can be powerful preventers and participate in innovative efforts to inform, shape, and implement policies and programs to mitigate the effects of conflict and violent radicalization. Within families, their traditional roles allow them to shape familial and social norms and promote increased tolerance and nonviolent

political and civic engagement. Even in societies where it may appear that women are not empowered, they may wield emotive influence within families and communities, and their voices may be especially compelling when they speak out as victims or survivors of terrorist attacks.

As partners or family members of terrorists and fighters, women are also well positioned to dispel the notion that fighting is “cool” and speak of the hardships such a life can impose on families and communities. In societies where men are the primary breadwinners, women are particularly vulnerable to poverty and deprivation when partners are killed or detained. At the same time, however, such a position can enhance their status as ideologues and supporters of violent extremist groups.

Women clearly play multiple roles in the terrorism realm: sympathizer, mobilizer, preventer, and perpetrator.⁹ Such a diversity of roles should be reflected in the development of effective policies and programs to address violent extremism. These efforts need to be informed by a more nuanced understanding of the grievances and pathways that move women toward terrorism and violent extremism and support those dynamics that strengthen their resilience against them.¹⁰ The following sections highlight some conceptual and operational challenges in integrating gender perspectives into CVE efforts.¹¹ The discussion draws on the experiences of practitioners working on conflict mitigation, gender issues, and counterterrorism efforts at the policymaking level and in the field and with the United Nations, governments, or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Definitional Challenges

The lack of a universally accepted definition of terrorism poses a complex challenge for practitioners whose work requires them to engage with parties to conflict that may be designated by some states as terrorists. Decisions such as the 2011 U.S. Supreme Court ruling

⁹ Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists* (Toronto: Penguin, 2011).

¹⁰ This statement does not assume that women join terrorist organizations for different or similar reasons than men, especially because radicalization has no single identifiable path, but that question is beyond the scope of this policy brief.

¹¹ A gender perspective involves applying a range of methodologies to gather information on gender differences to develop, implement, and assess activities. See CHRJ, “Decade Lost.”

Holder vs. Humanitarian Law Project, which criminalizes “material support” to designated terrorist groups, have contributed to concerns that counterterrorism activities can be counterproductive to preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention efforts. This ruling is problematic for its broad definition of “material support,” which includes training, legal advice, or advocacy, even by private individuals and even if the support is directed at persuading violent groups to adopt nonviolent means or appeal to the United Nations. It has raised concerns that an act as simple as providing a party to armed conflict with literature on international human rights protocols may constitute a criminal act.

Consequently, practitioners engaging in gender issues relating to conflict prevention, peace-building, or humanitarian assistance, for example, are reluctant to engage in activities labeled as counterterrorism. This skepticism contributes to the continuation of silos at the bureaucratic level, insulating counterterrorism efforts from those addressing women, peace, and security issues. As a result, gender specialists have had little opportunity to engage in a sustained discourse with UN counterterrorism practitioners.

On the ground, the lack of a definition of terrorism has generated concerns that the playing field is constantly being redefined to fit short-term political agendas at the cost of local communities. Such uncertainty about the agendas, commitments, or priorities of international actors has been raised as one of the main reasons local groups are hesitant to work with international actors. The *Holder* ruling and this trust deficit pose a fundamental challenge to counterterrorism practitioners who want to engage more closely with civil society organizations, women’s groups, and local interlocutors.

The lack of definitional clarity also impedes cooperation and coordination among UN entities and key stakeholders wary of the potential negative effects of association with counterterrorism efforts. UN officials have expressed concern that associating field staff might compromise their security and jeopardize their programming or relationships with key constituencies and host governments.



Sarah Taylor, Executive Coordinator, NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security (September 2012). Photo by Elliot Moscovitz.

Adverse Effects on Women and Women’s Groups

Narrowly conceptualized counterterrorism policies may lead to negative and unintended consequences for women and women’s groups. In some instances, women’s groups are “squeezed” between terrorism and counterterrorism, especially where counterterrorism efforts have resulted in cuts to their resources or operating space.¹² In particular, small NGOs with

¹² Ibid.

Policy coordination and programming to integrate gender into peace and security issues within international organizations, such as the United Nations, remains a challenge in large part because efforts to address armed conflict are insulated from those relating to counterterrorism.

informal administrative structures find it difficult to comply with the requirements imposed by Anti-Terrorist Financing (ATF) regulations.¹³ Operationally, these ATF regimes are geared more toward formalized institutions rather than small informal associations, such as Somali women’s *hagbads*. These groups collect funds (e.g., from savings or microfinance organizations) to cosponsor community goals such as *hajj* (pilgrimage) travel, educational investments, or weddings.¹⁴ Many of these types of informal groups simply do not have the administrative capabilities and resources to meet the anti-terrorism financing rules and regulations.

Women’s groups are also concerned about having their issues co-opted by national security agendas. Governments may deliberately or inadvertently securitize issues championed by



Liat Shetret, Senior Analyst, CGCC
 (September 2012). Photo by Elliot Moscovitz.

women’s groups, for example, by supporting women’s rights as a counterweight to extremist agendas rather than as a policy priority in its own right.¹⁵ As a result, relationships of trust between women’s groups and local communities may be compromised if their programming is believed to be serving an externally imposed security agenda. Such perceptions may also cause women to become uneasy about providing and receiving social services under the purview of counterterrorism efforts because they may be targeted by extremist groups.

Moreover, the lack of clarity on a definition of terrorism has generated concerns that the “shifting sands” of counterterrorism efforts may marginalize women’s groups or increase their physical and political insecurity. The potential for such adverse effects further contributes to the reluctance of local actors and gender specialists or policymakers to engage in counterterrorism discussions and policymaking.

Narrowly conceptualized counterterrorism policies may lead to negative and unintended consequences for women and women’s groups.

Limited Law Enforcement Capacities to Deal with Gender Issues

An illustrative example of the practical and operational challenges to inclusion of a gender perspective in counterterrorism programming lies within the law enforcement sector. Law enforcement officials are usually under heavy pressure, often from superiors, to produce actionable intelligence and quick results. As such, the need for confessions drives interrogation approaches sometimes rather than information collection. Additionally, despite a broad understanding of the need to adhere to international human rights norms, law enforcement officials often remain uncertain about performing within these standards.

Low numbers of female practitioners involved in law enforcement presents an additional challenge. For example, as of 2011, approximately 4 percent of peacekeeping personnel overall

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See also James Cockayne with Liat Shetret, “Capitalizing on Trust: Harnessing Somali Remittances for Counterterrorism, Human Rights and State Building,” Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (CGCC), March 2012, http://www.globalct.org/resources_publications_CapitalizingonTrust.php.

¹⁵ Jayne Huckerby, conversation with authors, New York, August 2012.

were women, including 10 percent of all police and 3 percent of military personnel.¹⁶ Female law enforcement personnel are particularly important because they understand gender sensitivities and may be better suited to elicit intelligence and achieve information-driven results. For female detainees, traditional confession-driven interrogation techniques combined with a lack of gender sensitivity can result in coerced and false confessions or human rights abuses. In dealing with female victims, a lack of sensitivity by law enforcement officials to issues prevalent among women, such as gender-based violence, can lead to a breakdown of trust and communication and compromise investigations and criminal justice processes.



Anne Wu, UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (September 2012). Photo by Elliot Moscovitz

Bureaucratic Silos and Duplication of Efforts

Policy coordination and programming to integrate gender into peace and security issues within international organizations, such as the United Nations, remains a challenge in large part because efforts to address armed conflict are insulated from those relating to counterterrorism. As a result, practitioners working on issues associated with Resolution 1325 or gender and armed conflict have few opportunities to interact with counterterrorism officials. At the policy planning and program-design level, this runs risks of being duplicative or making programs counterproductive, saturating beneficiary communities and repeating mistakes that could have been avoided through the exchange of lessons learned. For example, experts working on the implementation of Resolution 1325, on the protection of civilians, including women and children, or child soldiers, are unlikely to engage with those working on drivers of violent extremism, terrorism support and recruitment issues, or countering extremist narratives, even though there may be overlap between the two programming areas. Although bureaucratic challenges contribute to this division, practitioners are also divided because of political realities on the ground that inhibit collaboration.

¹⁶ Kristen A. Cordell, "Women in International Peacekeeping," in *U.S. Engagement in International Peacekeeping: From Aspiration to Implementation*, ed. Don Kraus et al., October 2011, p. 43, http://effectivepeacekeeping.org/sites/effectivepeacekeeping.org/files/11/PEP_U.S.-Engagement-in-International-Peacekeeping%2010.19.11.pdf.

... although the UN agenda on women, peace, and security issues is distinct from its counterterrorism efforts, some overlaps affect the success of either, and lessons learned from the women, peace, and security field can be extrapolated to CVE issues.

Principles for Shaping a More Integrated Approach to Gender and Terrorism Prevention

Although terrorism is not a topic of Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions, its negative effects on women can be seen in militants' efforts to limit girls' access to education, curtail access to health care and services, and perpetrate acts of violence, as well as other actions to marginalize women and limit their participation in the public sphere. Therefore, although the UN agenda on women, peace, and security issues is distinct from its counterterrorism efforts, some overlaps affect the success of either, and lessons learned from



Elizabeth Joyce, UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (September 2012). Photo by Elliot Moscowitz

the women, peace, and security field can be extrapolated to CVE issues. For example, the impact of violence and armed conflict on women may be exacerbated by terrorist organizations operating in conflict areas. Therefore, efforts to address terrorism may support initiatives to mitigate the impact of armed conflict on women and align with the objectives of women, peace, and security initiatives. Alternately, ATF regulations may reduce the space available for civil society organizations or women's groups to engage in peace-building and conflict mitigation efforts, as per Resolution 1325. The potential conflicts or synergies between these programs, although they will not always overlap, warrant closer engagement among experts at the policymaking and program-design level.

A number of potential indicators being developed by the UN to monitor implementation of Resolution 1325 relate to efforts that could also contribute to the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism, thereby mitigating their impact on women and girls.¹⁷ For example, indicator 5B refers to the extent to which measures to protect women's and girls' human rights are included in national security policy frameworks. Indicators 2, 3a, 3b, 8, and 14 are also possible means of assessing the impact of violent extremism on women or ensuring them a space to address it.¹⁸

Civil society can play an invaluable role in supporting implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and in integrating a gender dimension to related policies and programs. Pillar I of the Strategy calls for the United Nations and member states to take measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. These conditions include (but are not limited to) prolonged unresolved armed conflicts, dehumanization of victims of terrorism, lack of rule of law and violations of human rights, discrimination, political

¹⁷ PeaceWomen, "Implementation of SCR 1325: Indicators on Women, Peace and Security," n.d., http://www.peacewomen.org/security_council_monitor/indicators.

¹⁸ For a full list of the indicators suggested to monitor implementation of Resolution 1325, see UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary General*, S/2010/173, 6 April 2010.

The inclusion of a gender dimension in multilateral terrorism prevention efforts requires a clear and consistent message from the United Nations and its members. At the policy development and design level, the participation of women in these efforts and the impact of these efforts on women should be enhanced.

and socioeconomic marginalization, and lack of good governance.¹⁹ The strong presence and relationships of trust that many civil society organizations enjoy with communities, as well as their access to people and areas that may be beyond the reach of formal state actors, make them a key partner in efforts to mitigate these conditions. Moreover, the Strategy provides an important platform for engagement with a range of security actors so that counterterrorism efforts can be informed by the concerns of women's groups and civil society actors regarding unintended negative consequences.



United Nations member state diplomats (September 2012). Photo by Elliot Moscowitz.

At the United Nations, the CTITF, established to support Strategy implementation, is well placed to draw on the experiences of its constituent entities and support the integration of a gender perspective into multilateral counterterrorism efforts. To that end, although many of its entities address issues relating to women, development, and armed conflict, the participation of UN Women in the CTITF, as an observer or member, could ensure that gender considerations are addressed as part of counterterrorism and CVE efforts.

Furthermore, Security Council Resolution 1624 provides another important vehicle to support increased interaction and engagement among governments, the United Nations, and civil society. The resolution calls on member states to take measures to counter incitement to commit terrorism and extremism and urged CTED to engage with civil society organizations and relevant nongovernmental actors in this regard. A series of regional workshops being carried out by CTED on implementation of Resolution 1624 has created space for civil society organizations to engage with UN counterterrorism officials and shape the discourse on incitement and human rights issues.

As international actors focus increasingly on terrorism prevention and on addressing violent extremism and the insecurity it generates, the development of tailored and effective programming will require a comprehensive approach that brings together practitioners working on counterterrorism, gender, conflict, and development issues. The recommendations below suggest ways of integrating a gender component into current counterterrorism efforts at the United Nations and vice versa. Although these focus on the United Nations, they may have broader application for states or organizations similarly confronting the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism, such as the European Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF).

Integrate a Gender Perspective into Policy Design

According to a 2009 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, "It is important to appreciate that women have a role in the design and implementation of counter-terrorism

¹⁹ UN General Assembly, A/RES/60/288, 20 September 2006.

measures, as well as to recognize their contributions in combating terrorism.²⁰ It is therefore necessary to ensure that women are able to participate and be represented in policy development discussions and that gender expertise is included at the very outset of program design.

The inclusion of a gender dimension in multilateral terrorism prevention efforts requires a clear and consistent message from the United Nations and its members. At the policy development and design level, the participation of women in these efforts and the impact of these efforts on women should be enhanced. Where appropriate, a counterterrorism component can be added to the existing mandates of gender advisers and supported by the requisite resources, training, and political backing.

For example, nine gender advisers in peacekeeping operations around the world are currently responsible for supporting local women's participation in peace processes, protecting women and girls from sexual violence, and engaging women's voices in legal and judicial procedures.²¹ The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for example, has gender advisers and female soldiers on the ground in places such as Afghanistan and Kosovo, as well as in headquarters, which helps to ensure a gender perspective is included in operational planning and all along the chain of command.²² These advisers may be brought into counterterrorism discussions to ensure that counterterrorism and CVE efforts do not adversely impact existing conflict mitigation strategies and that experiences on the ground can shape more effective, sensitive, and sustainable counterterrorism and CVE efforts.

Likewise, UN counterterrorism bodies, such as CTED and the CTITF, would benefit from having dedicated gender advisers with the responsibility, among others, of coordinating efforts around women in peace and security, including counterterrorism. These advisers should be empowered and encouraged to take a proactive role in interacting with entities such as UN Women, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in the development of projects and initiatives where terrorism and violent extremism are relevant considerations. Member states might consider acknowledging the language of Resolution 1325 in the mandates of these bodies and bringing greater coordination to international conflict prevention efforts.

Include a Gender Perspective in Evaluations

A gender perspective should be integrated into evaluations of counterterrorism and CVE programming to assess their differential impact on men and women.²³ Evaluations of UN-organized training workshops, for example, should add a gender dimension, noting the participation, leadership, and impact of and on women. Follow-up events can then be designed to address gender gaps and ensure that women are included in capacity-building efforts. Initiatives to address violent extremism, for example, if undertaken through published material, should consider the literacy levels among men and women in the target demographic and adapt the products to suit the medium most accessible to men and women, which may not be the same for each group. Events being planned to promote youth engagement should be made

²⁰ UN General Assembly, *Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism: Note by the Secretary-General, A/64/211*, 17 March 2010 (*Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism*).

²¹ UN Peacekeeping, "Gender and Peacekeeping," n.d., <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/>.

²² NATO, "Women, Peace and Security: NATO's Implementation of UNSCR 1325," 19 November 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-17030325-8C204871/natolive/topics_91091.htm.

²³ CHRJJ, "Decade Lost." For more on evaluating terrorism prevention programs, see Peter Romaniuk and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, "From Input to Impact: Evaluating Terrorism Prevention Programs," CGCC, 2012, http://www.globalct.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/CGCC_EvaluatingTerrorismPrevention.pdf.

appropriate for the participation of women or girls, or parallel programming should be developed in areas where gendered segregation is the social norm.

Notably, at the outset of crafting prevention policies and programs, an analytical assessment is required to explore the drivers of violent radicalization in the area and if or how gender is factored into this analysis. There may be different sets of grievances among men and women or different roles that women can play in supporting the development or implementation of CVE policies.

Facilitate Interagency Dialogue and Coordination Among Key Stakeholders

Increased dialogue among civil society, UN Women, the CTITF, CTED, and all relevant entities to share information when appropriate can help create synergies in programming and avoid duplication. In particular, deepened interaction with UN Women can offer UN peace and security actors, including counterterrorism entities, valuable insights drawn from its experiences in engaging women in efforts to prevent and mitigate conflict and on how these might inform multilateral efforts to prevent violent extremism and terrorism.

The United Nations can draw on its convening capacity to offer a platform for its entities, member states, and civil society to engage in dialogue, information sharing, and the exchange of lessons learned among counterterrorism, gender, and conflict practitioners. Training sessions or workshops can help raise the awareness of experts and officials regarding the possible areas of overlap between these policy domains and the tools available through the multilateral system to adopt a more comprehensive approach to addressing these issues. For example, experts working with CTED or CTITF members may be less familiar with Resolution 1325 or the extensive list of civil society organizations working to address armed conflict in many regions where terrorism may also be a challenge. Additionally, few women's groups or even women's advocacy groups appear to be familiar with the Strategy and the opportunities it allows for addressing many of their concerns regarding women and armed conflict.

The CTITF might work with its members to map existing counterterrorism programming and offer guidelines for including a gender dimension within them. Building on this exercise, the CTITF can develop a tool kit to assist its entities and member states in integrating gender into future policy and program design. Likewise, CTED, through the opening created by the passage of Resolution 1624, could engage with relevant UN entities and civil society organizations, particularly those working on the women, peace, and security agenda. CTED could convene regional meetings to bring together grassroots organizations and NGOs, regional practitioners, and experts whose work involves CVE issues directly or indirectly in an effort to create an informal network and to exchange ideas and share insights and experiences.

To provide a platform for dialogue and cooperation on these issues, the CTITF should consider creating a working group on women in terrorism and counterterrorism. The engagement of UN Women as a CTITF observer or member would further strengthen such a working group.

Enhance Gender Expertise Among Law Enforcement Officials

Counterterrorism capacity-building efforts should promote the recruitment, training, and retention of female law enforcement officials, including police officers, investigators, and interrogators. In doing so, the United Nations can draw on the experiences of women in peace

operations, such as that of the Indian all-female unit sent to Liberia in 2007;²⁴ all-female units in military operations;²⁵ or gender advisers in NATO operations.²⁶ Experience suggests that women could not only access and engage with women in a more culturally sensitive manner, but in some instances also transform the nature of the interaction with male interlocutors who may be bound by cultural mores to be more aggressive when interacting with males, particularly foreign soldiers.²⁷

Capacity-building programs can train law enforcement officials in effectively handling cases with female victims or suspects. These officials should incorporate standard operating procedures that strictly adhere to international human rights norms and accommodate the unique status of women at the community level in developed and developing law enforcement institutions alike. Gender-sensitive techniques can be adopted to correct the gender imbalance through the recruitment, retention, and promotion of females in law enforcement agencies. Specialized female units are necessary to handle victim protection, special victims, interrogation, investigations of female suspects, and psychological profiling of women and children. Specialized training modules should be offered to interrogation units with this gender-sensitivity component as a way to streamline treatment.

Build Local Partnerships and Ownership

Practitioners working on development, armed conflict, and peace-building have underscored that local ownership is key to the implementation of effective programming.²⁸ It is important to understand the challenges that women face from their perspectives and try to address these within local cultural contexts. Partnerships with local women's groups and NGOs will be crucial in reaching women who would not generally participate in international or state-run outreach programs for personal or cultural reasons.

Organizations such as the United Nations and the GCTF may work with civil society partners to support community outreach programs that raise awareness and inform women on identifying and responding to violent extremism or terrorism. These need to be carefully tailored to local concerns and contexts, and it is essential to work with credible interlocutors to build relationships of trust with communities.

Use Strategic Communication to Counter the Appeal of Terrorism

Strategic communication differs from more-traditional public diplomacy or messaging in that it focuses more on the audience and crafts the message from their perspective. Therefore, CVE and counterterrorism communications must be closely informed by a deeper understanding of the roles of women in relation to terrorism. A gender perspective should be incorporated in the development and dissemination of strategic communication materials, and evaluations of

²⁴ Doreen Carvajal, "A Female Approach to Peacekeeping," *New York Times*, 5 March 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/06/world/africa/06iht-ffpeace.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

²⁵ Regional Command Southwest Press Room, "Female Engagement Team (USMC)," n.d., <http://regionalcommandswest.wordpress.com/about/female-engagement-team-usmc>.

²⁶ NATO, "Women, Peace and Security."

²⁷ Various participants, Women in International Security and U.S. Department of State roundtable on the role of women in counterterrorism, Washington D.C., May 2012.

²⁸ Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, conversations with authors, New York, July and September 2012; PeaceWomen, conversations with authors, New York, July and September 2012; Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, conversations with authors, New York, July and September 2012.

messaging efforts should be explicit in studying the different impact on men, women, and youths (girls and boys).

The Internet and social media can facilitate a process of radicalization. For example, al-Qaida and other extremist groups have published online magazines that call on women to support male jihadists and to raise their children to believe in an extremist ideology.²⁹ Digital media can also be used for more-effective strategic communication and as a mechanism for reaching women as well as men in more-remote areas or with more-limited access to mainstream communications. Efforts should be directed to counter the targeted online communication (“narrow-cast”) of terrorist organizations by reaching out to women and strategically tailoring communications and actions with that audience in mind through a street-smart and locally developed and communicated counternarrative. Rather than censoring or banning online content put forth by terrorist organizations, government agencies can instead capitalize on the anonymity of the Internet by releasing information to websites and chat rooms that “paints terrorist ideologies in a negative light.”³⁰

In addition to using the Internet and media outreach as strategic communication tools, they can be utilized to “dispel the glory of the ‘terrorist lifestyle’” in a way specifically targeted at vulnerable women.³¹ This can be done, for example, by highlighting the extended separation of terrorists from their families or by publishing graphic imagery of grieving mothers whose children died while carrying out terrorist attacks. It may also be effective to use the Internet as a platform for the voices of victims of terrorist activities, emphasizing the effects they have on the innocent as a way to discredit the activities of terrorist organizations.³²

Digital outreach may not be suitable to all contexts. In areas that are difficult to reach or have high illiteracy rates, other media may be more suitable for tailored communications efforts. Plays, television dramas, radio stations, and graphic brochures can be used to educate and sensitize women who may not otherwise access media messages. Part of this “localization” strategy should include making greater use of local credible voices and conduits for strategic messaging, such as women leaders in the community.³³

Facilitate the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Female Detainees or Former Combatants

Programs to support detainees in deradicalization or disengagement from violent extremist groups should integrate a gender component. Female detainees may require some specialized assistance for reintroduction into mainstream society. Female family members of detainees should be engaged in these processes as they may be supporters or sympathizers of violent extremist groups as well, either prior to or following the detention of male family members. For situations in which men are the primary breadwinners, their detention may inflict hardships on their families that may be exploited by terrorist groups.

²⁹ “Al-Shamikha, Al Qaeda Women’s Magazine, Launches: Report,” *Huffington Post*, 14 March 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/14/al-shamikha-al-qaeda-womens-magazine_n_835572.html.

³⁰ Liat Shetret, “Use of the Internet for Counter-Terrorist Purposes,” *CGCC Policy Brief*, February 2011, http://www.globalct.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/LS_policybrief_119.pdf.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Jack Barclay, “Mastering the Narrative: Counterterrorism Strategic Communication and the United Nations,” CGCC, February 2013, http://www.globalct.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Feb2013_CT_StratComm.pdf.

Some deradicalization programs, particularly in Saudi Arabia and Southeast Asia, have offered assistance to family members, but few programs are specifically directed at women. Yet, at the Religious Rehabilitation Group in Singapore, for example, *ustazas* (female religious scholars) provide an important link to women in the communities.³⁴ In Morocco, female imams perform all but one function (leading prayers) of their male counterparts and can engage women in religious discussions and debates.³⁵ In Indonesia, a small number of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) are run by women, who provide religious and practical education to Muslim girls.³⁶ Women religious leaders, teachers, and community elders could provide counseling, education, and training for women detainees or partners of detainees and help further their reintegration into mainstream society, especially following their release. The United Nations, GCTF, and other international partners could work with member states to support prison and family programs to help female detainees reintegrate into society and support social services to prevent women from becoming first-time offenders.

Conclusion

The adoption of Resolution 1325 was groundbreaking in acknowledging the impact of armed conflict on women and the important roles of women in addressing peace and security issues and encouraging their participation in all levels of decision-making in the conflict prevention, armed conflict, and postconflict phases. Subsequently, significant investments in addressing women, peace, and security issues have been made by the United Nations, particularly UN Women and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations; governments; and civil society organizations, such as the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict; and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders.

The multiple roles played by women in terrorism and counterterrorism call for a more nuanced approach to integrating a gender perspective in addressing armed conflict and terrorism issues. Building on the women, peace, and security agenda, the United Nations and stakeholders can draw on significant accumulated experiences in addressing gender and armed conflict topics at the local, regional, and international levels to inform more-tailored, -effective, and -sustainable counterterrorism and CVE efforts. Moreover, civil society and other actors on the ground have a responsibility to assist counterterrorism practitioners in developing policies and programs that do no harm, as they are often better placed to understand the local impact on communities. Moving beyond a simplistic conceptualization of women as passive vessels will ensure that efforts to address violence and conflict are more closely informed by and responsive to realities.

Building on the women, peace, and security agenda, the United Nations and stakeholders can draw on significant accumulated experiences in addressing gender and armed conflict topics at the local, regional, and international levels to inform more-tailored, -effective, and -sustainable counterterrorism and CVE efforts.

³⁴ Senior member of the Religious Rehabilitation Group, conversation with Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Brussels, November 2012.

³⁵ Richard Hamilton, "Islam's Pioneering Women Preachers," BBC News, 25 February 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6392531.stm>.

³⁶ Frank Van Lierde, "Looking for That Other Face: Women Muslim Leaders and Violent Extremism in Indonesia," Cordaid, 2013, http://www.cordaid.org/media/publications/Cordaid_Other_Face_-LRtotaal_voor_web.pdf.

CGCC works to improve counterterrorism cooperation and capacity through collaborative research and policy analysis and by providing practical advice. CGCC develops innovative counterterrorism programming and training and assists key stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions to preventing terrorism. CGCC is working to improve intergovernmental cooperation at the global, regional, and subregional levels; support community-led efforts to counter violent extremism; ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law; and empower civil society and victims of terrorism to speak out. As transnational threats evolve, CGCC is also working to foster a new generation of holistic, rule of law-based responses to organized crime and other forms of transnational violence.

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