

EMPOWERED WOMEN, PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES

Regional office for Asia and the Pacific

2017-2018

UPDATED JUNE 2018



**“Empowered women
and empowered
communities are the
best defense against
radicalization
and further violence.”**

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Executive Director, UN Women

Statement by Executive Director on Boko Haram, *UN Women*, October 2, 2015.

OUR PROGRAMME

With the generous support of the Government of Japan, UN Women is implementing the programme “Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities” aimed at preventing violent extremism and building resilient societies in Asia.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH

In April 2017, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific began implementing one of UN Women's largest programmes on preventing violent extremism “Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities”, with a focus on Indonesia and Bangladesh. The programme is engaging in pioneering work by building understanding of women's diverse roles in violent extremism, including as promoters or preventers. Through the programme, UN Women is working with women at the community level to support their empowerment as a key strategy for building social cohesion.

Independent research has found that the programme has directly contributed to increasing women's understanding of the problem of violent extremism and their confidence to participate in initiatives to prevent it. Similar results were found in the wider communities in which the programme was implemented. Both men and women in the programme sites recognized that the economic empowerment of women decreased tensions within the family and community and thereby contributed to more peaceful and resilient societies (see page 6).

Under this programme, UN Women has also developed new and innovative research on the gender specific dynamics of violent extremism as well as novel tools to collect sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data. For example, the first gender sensitive survey about the threat of radicalism and intolerance among Indonesians was commissioned. In addition, the first sex-disaggregated analysis of social media in Asia that examines where online appetite for extremist materials is greatest in the region was conducted. Further, this research analyses any potential or inferred association between support for violent extremist groups and violence against women (see page 28).

UN Women has advocated for the integration of gender considerations in national, regional and intergovernmental peace and security processes. This includes providing dedicated gender expertise to Indonesia's Counter Terrorism body as they develop their National Action Plan on Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism, and supporting ASEAN on Women, Peace and Security issues. In late 2017, ASEAN adopted its first Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security, and convened the first ASEAN-UN discussion focused on the role of women in preventing violent extremism.

Through this programme, UN Women is contributing to the implementation of the Secretary General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism and to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 goals, particularly SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, and Goal 5 on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.



UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka meets with Deloara and her family at her shop in Ukhiya January 31, 2018 in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong district, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/ Allison Joyce.

UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka meets with Deloara, a beneficiary of the Programme, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Deloara utilized the financial package from UN Women to expand her grocery store by stocking it with a wider variety of items. Deloara's husband has an injury-induced disability that makes movement

difficult. The grocery store enables Deloara to make money for their family while not requiring to go too far afield so that she may also care for her family. With an expanded array of items, Deloara's store will hopefully become a location frequented by community members. Ukhiya, Chittagong district, Bangladesh. UN Women/Allison Joyce.

WHY FOCUS ON WOMEN?

Currently, approaches to countering terrorism and violent extremism are going beyond military and security strategies to focus on prevention. Attention is increasingly turning to the role women play in prevention and response efforts including their role in promoting social cohesion at the community level.

Terrorist and violent extremist groups manipulate gender stereotypes to recruit men and women to their ranks, promoting violent notions of masculinity and using women to convey these messages. Women and girls are differentially

affected by violent extremism. Increasingly, they are themselves being recruited, forcibly or willingly, to these groups. But women are not just victims or perpetrators of this phenomenon. Many have been and continue to be on the frontlines of prevention efforts, including shaping community and family values, influencing decision making of potential recruits, identifying and intervening at early signs of radicalization that lead to terrorism, female imams preaching religious tolerance, women using different forms of media to promote counter narratives, and female police officers engaging with local communities to collect information.

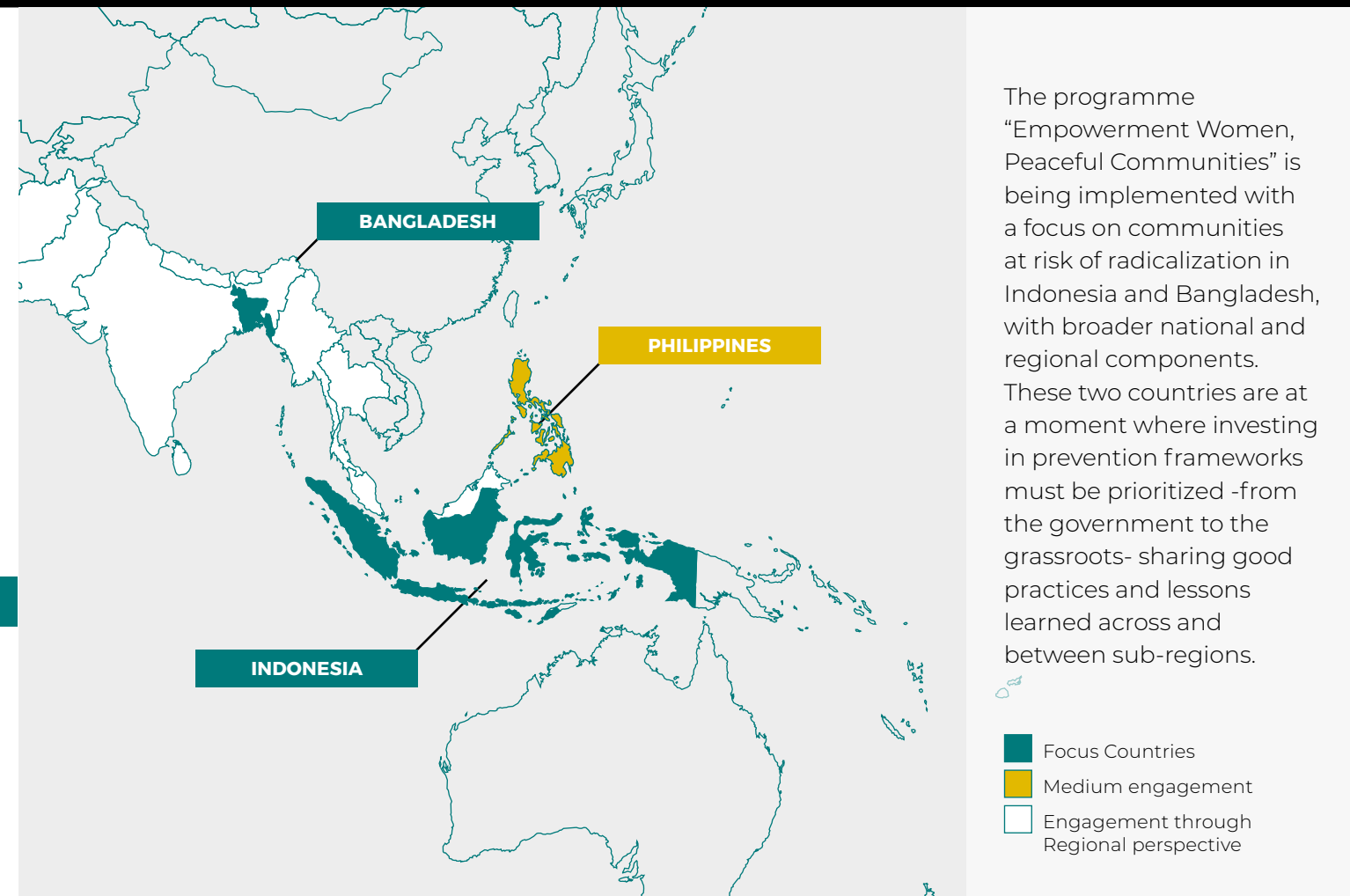
WOMEN PLAY KEY ROLES IN VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND ITS PREVENTION:



Given the gendered underpinnings of this agenda and the gendered approach used by violent extremist groups in their recruitment, the very promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is in itself a counter-measure to the spread of radicalization. In order to effectively

engage with the gendered dynamics of violent extremism and reverse its growing trend, it is critical that prevention and response efforts prioritize women's rights, empowerment, participation and leadership— both at the community level as well as in national decision-making.

WHERE WE WORK



The programme "Empowerment Women, Peaceful Communities" is being implemented with a focus on communities at risk of radicalization in Indonesia and Bangladesh, with broader national and regional components. These two countries are at a moment where investing in prevention frameworks must be prioritized -from the government to the grassroots- sharing good practices and lessons learned across and between sub-regions.

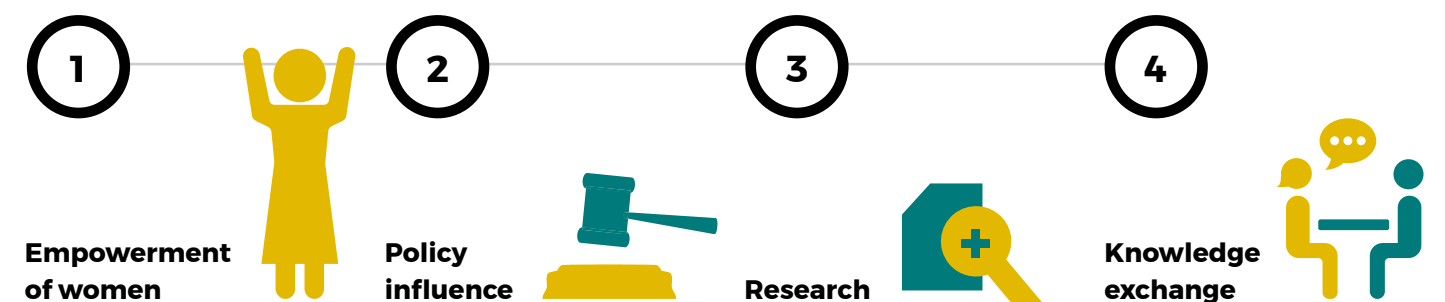
The programme has four mutually reinforcing areas of prevention: (1) promote women's leadership and economic empowerment as strategies for strengthening social cohesion at the community level; (2) influence policy, including through strengthening women's groups and

networks working on social cohesion and the prevention of violent extremism; (3) enhance the evidence base and social understanding linked to the roles women play in preventing violent extremism; and (4) promote south-south cooperation and knowledge exchange.

THEORY OF CHANGE:



WE ARE WORKING IN FOUR KEY AREAS:



Monash University's Gender, Peace and Security Centre conducted innovative research in conjunction with UN Women's "Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities" programme. The research examined how the programme has impacted social cohesion, women's empowerment, community empowerment, and preventing and countering fundamentalist or extremist ideologies in the programme communities in Indonesia and Bangladesh.

To do this, an in-depth qualitative and quantitative study across six communities, three each in Bangladesh and Indonesia, was conducted. Two of the sites in each country are areas where UN Women programming had been implemented ("programme sites") and one site in each country had no such intervention ("non-programme sites"). Research revealed that the UN Women programmes contributed directly to women's confidence and their subsequent contribution to PVE in three distinct ways:

- 1. Women and men are more aware and empowered to join and lead PVE initiatives:** Women and men in the four programme sites in both Bangladesh and Indonesia were much more aware than women and men in non-programme sites of the problem of violent extremism and how their roles in the family and in community could contribute to PVE. In addition, people in programme sites demonstrated greater empowerment with respect to both confidence in joining PVE initiatives or reporting violent extremism and knowledge of what to do to counter or prevent violent extremism. Women and men were more confident in engaging in PVE initiatives and aware of the positive impact they had.
- 2. Women are engaging their communities in PVE initiatives:** Women and men underscored

the important role of communities and families in PVE, especially mothers. Related to this was general agreement that increased awareness within families and communities of violent extremism and how it can be prevented was critical to the success of PVE efforts. In addition, the research found a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy—or the confidence to join a PVE initiative—and reporting concerns about violent extremism, and having greater trust in public institutions, such as the police, law courts, government, media and political parties. This suggests the need to enhance women's knowledge and skills with respect to community actions they may be able to take outside the family.

- 3. Economic empowerment:** The regional programme included economic empowerment activities for women as an entry point. While these activities were not specifically intended to address poverty as a potential root cause of violent extremism, both women and men in the programme sites recognized that these economic empowerment activities decreased tensions within the family and community and thereby contributed to more peaceful and resilient societies.

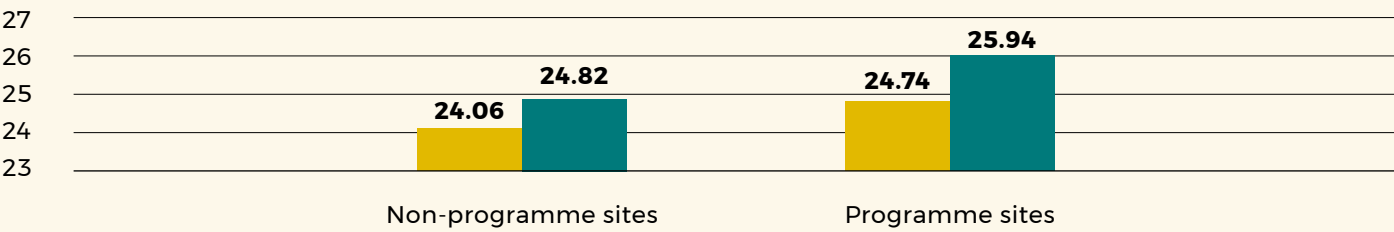
"We were unaware before, now we are aware. We didn't know what to do, we were backdated, and our husbands didn't allow us to go out of our house and forbid us to do many things. In the meetings, now we can discuss many things and exchange ideas. Now we think if others from the other villages can do something, then we can also do it. We are women, but we can do it. We are becoming aware."

Female respondent in a UN Women Programme site, Dinajpur, Bangladesh

WOMEN AND MEN IN PROGRAMME SITES HAVE HIGHER LEVELS OF SELF-EFFICACY TO JOIN A C/PVE INITIATIVE (AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

One of the key findings of the research relates to the greater level of self-efficacy and confidence on the part of both women and men in joining community P/CVE initiatives in programme sites.

Confidence self-efficacy (mean group scores)*



Note: The confidence self-efficacy scale is a 6-item scale that assesses people's agreement (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) with statements such as "I am confident that my community would support me if I reported concerns about people involved in violent extremism." Higher scores indicate greater self-efficacy (empowerment) regarding reporting violent extremism, with a sample size of n=686. Cronbach's alpha test for reliability of the scale indicated that reliability was good ($\alpha = .78$), and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed a single factor solution (eigenvalue = 1.54).

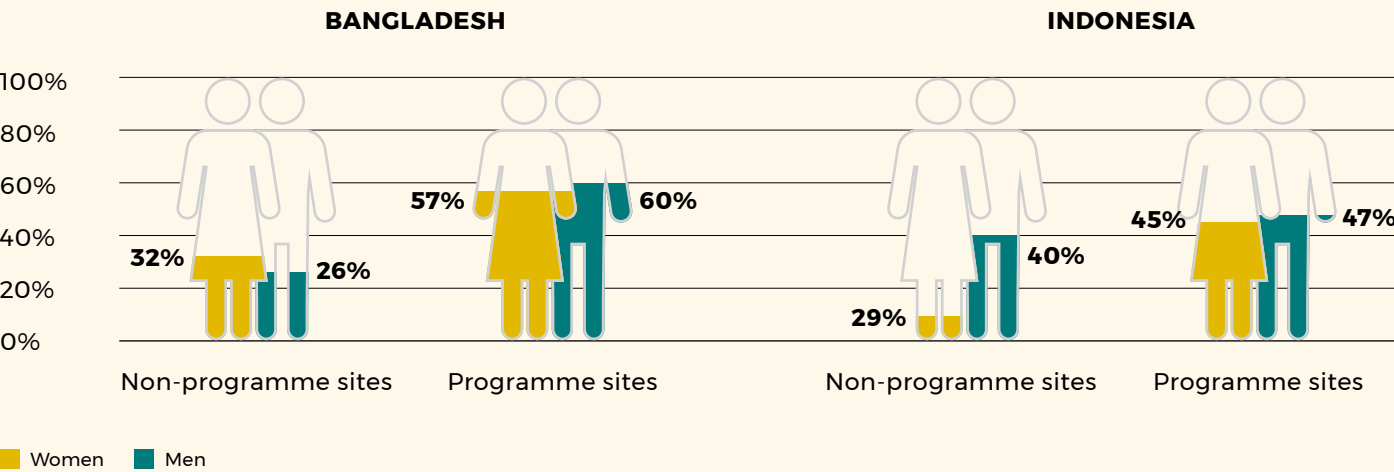
Women Men

Source: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018).

WOMEN AND MEN IN UN WOMEN PROGRAMME SITES STRONGLY AGREE THEY KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT TO DO TO PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE FAMILY (AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

More than half of all women in the programme sites strongly agree that they know what to do in order to prevent violent extremism in their families (49 per cent of women), compared with just under a third (31 per cent) of women in non-programme sites. In Bangladesh, 57 per cent of women in the programme sites said they knew what to do, compared with 32 per cent of women in the non-programme sites. In Indonesia, 45 per cent of women said they knew what to do, compared with 29 per cent of women in non-programme sites.

Strongly agree with knowing what to do in order to prevent violent extremism in their family, by sex, country and type of site



Source: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018).

FOCUS ON INDONESIA

EMPOWERMENT

In Indonesia, 2000 women have increased their business and leadership skills, with 60 local products developed including branded packaging. In addition, 1500 women are enrolled in saving and loan schemes through women's

cooperative groups (Koperasi Cinta Damai / Peace Love Cooperative). Through these groups, UN Women's partner Wahid Foundation promotes a spirit of tolerance among the community.



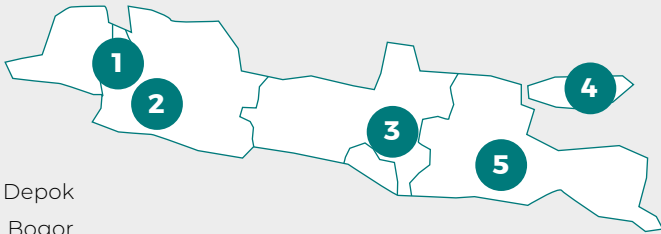
Women beneficiaries of economic empowerment initiatives implemented by UN Women's partner in Indonesia, the Wahid Foundation. Depok and Bogor, Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/Adrianus Mulya.



Women develop their knitting business after receiving business development support and discussing what makes a peaceful village at Pondok Rangga Village, Depok City, West Java. In Indonesia, UN Women's programme brings together women from diverse backgrounds and faiths, who work together on projects and get to know one another as people and neighbours. Photo: UN Women/ Roni Bintang.

Communities are encouraged to have constructive dialogues aimed at building their own model of "Kampung Damai" (Peace Village) to promote social cohesion. So far, nine villages have been declared "Kampung Damai".

IMPLEMENTATION SITES Java Island



1. Depok
2. Bogor
3. Solo
4. Sumenep
5. Malang

**BUILDING PEACE WHILE EMPOWERING WOMEN
ON INDONESIA’S JAVA ISLAND**

The group of 20 women from the farming community of Nglinggi in Klaten, Central Java gathered on a stage and pledged before their neighbors and friends: “We, Indonesian women, are determined to live in love and peace with all elements of society regardless of one’s ethnicity, religion, and faith.” With this pledge on November 1st 2017, and the signing of a peaceful village inscription by the Regent of Klaten, Nglinggi became the first community in Indonesia to be declared a model Kampung Damai, or “peace village”.

As a “Kampung Damai”, the community holds discussions on what it takes to become a peaceful village and encourages resolutions of conflicts that arise. Community members agree on guidelines for

conflict resolution, such as that people of various faiths should cooperate to solve problems and set community policies, neighbours should jointly maintain the community such as by cleaning and fixing common buildings, and women must be economically and socially empowered.

“We see women as potential bearers of peace in the community,” says Yenny Wahid, Director of the Wahid Foundation. “So we want to empower them to find their voice. We hope that by empowering them, it will change the dynamics in their communities.” The idea is that empowering women creates stronger, more peaceful communities that in turn help prevent violent extremism.



Nani, in Pondok Cina village on 31 October 2017. Photo: UN Women/Roni Bintang



Meyli Aryani, a small business owner in Pondok Cina village in West Java province. Photo: UN Women/Roni Bintang

In Java, the Wahid Foundation facilitates women’s microfinance groups that meet weekly to learn about financial management and how to develop their small businesses. UN Women provides the groups with capital for loans. Through these groups, women of diverse religious and social backgrounds learn to support each other.

Members of the microfinance group in Pondak Cina village in West Java point to the benefits for their own businesses as well as for the community. “The Wahid Foundation programme developed this idea of peace and tolerance among the village community,” says Meyli Aryani, a teacher and shop owner. “Before they came, everyone was thinking that their religion was the only truth. Now we count on each other, we appreciate each other, and there is solidarity among the village members” she

explains. “The village is an example of tolerance and mutual respect. Muslims join Christians for Christmas. During the Chinese New Year, we go to our Confucian neighbour’s house. We all communicate well with each other. It is the key to having a peaceful village.”

Nani, a 27-year-old owner of a lamp business, received training from the project on conflict mediation as well as financial management. She applies the concepts at home, in her relationships with her husband and her two children – “the programme is very useful for my business. With peace in the village, we can expand our businesses, get wider recognition and get to know more people. Through this group we are getting to know each other better and build trust among the different religions and communities in the village.”



A women's group discusses how to create a peaceful village in Pondok Cina, West Java province on 31 October 2017. Photo: UN Women/Roni Bintang.



Sabine Machl, UN Women Indonesia Country Representative discussing initiating a Peace Village at Candirenggo Village, Malang East Java, Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/ Roni Bintang.

RESEARCH

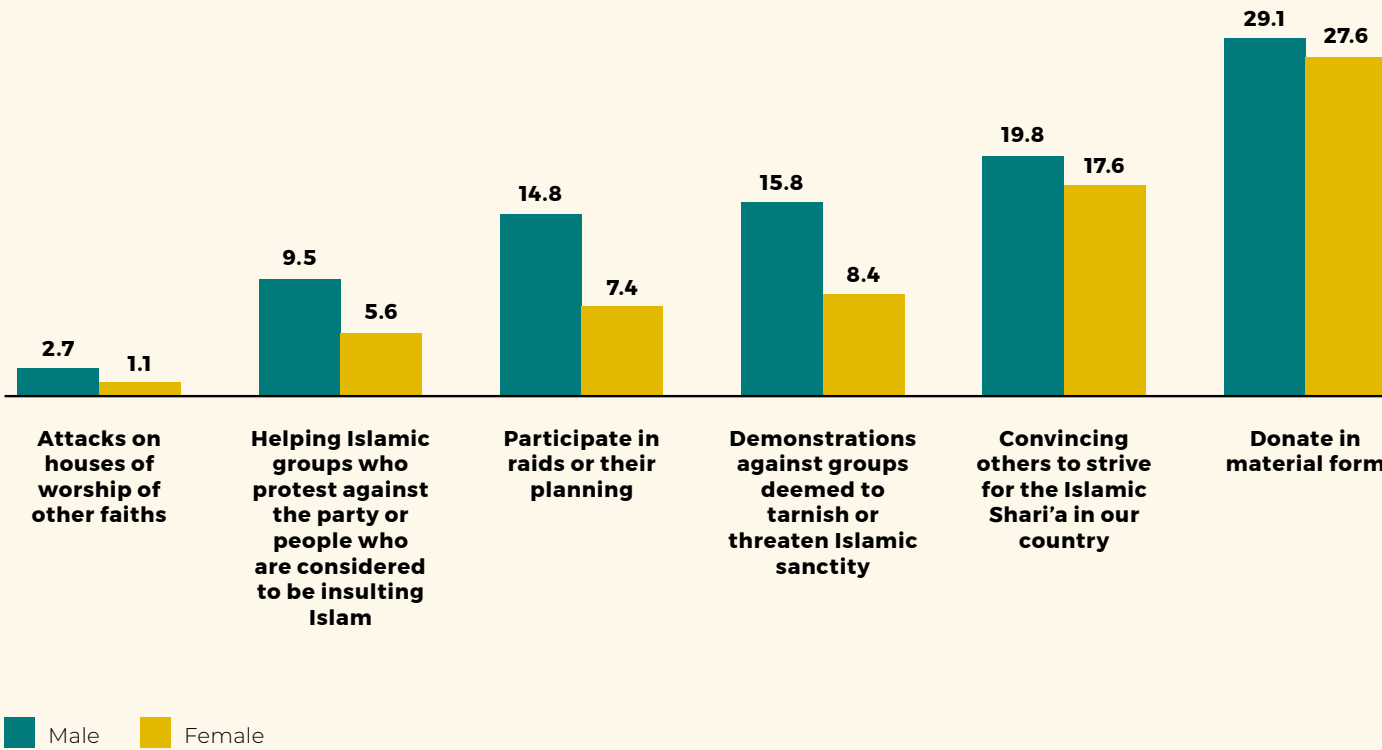
The threat of radicalization among Muslim women and men in Indonesia

Results of the 2017 National Survey on the Threat of Radicalization Among Muslim Women and Men by the Wahid Foundation in Indonesia show that Muslim women are less willing to participate in radical activities than men. However, it is significant that the difference between men and women's willingness to participate in radical activities is much larger when referring to public activities (attacks, demonstrations, protests, raids) compared to

more private activities (convincing persons, contributing in material form).

In contrast, the survey shows that Muslim women are ideologically more supportive of violent extremist groups than men. On average 1 out of 10 women are supportive of groups known to have perpetrated violent extremist acts (including ISIS and Jamaah Islamiyah), compared to 1 in 13 Muslim men.

WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN RADICAL ACTIVITIES (BY SEX)



Notes: This graph shows data on whether respondents are willing or have actually participated in radical activities.

IN THE WORDS OF HIKMAH BAFAGIH: “OUR VISION IS TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ISLAM, HAVING PEOPLE OPPOSE ME IS VERY COMMON”

I am a lecturer in the State Islamic University in Malang, a mother of four children, and I am also head of the Fatayat (women’s wing) of NU. We do a lot of programmes to prevent radicalization and intolerance. We try to develop preachers who can advocate for anti-radicalism in all districts of East Java. We handle the people from our region who were deported due to being affiliated with ISIS or ISIL. Our vision is to create an inclusive Islam. As a counsellor at the Centre for Women and Child Protection, I also handle cases of violence against women and children.

Yes, I do face a lot of opposition, as we take on various cases. This year, I handled cases of some male Islamic leaders who impregnated their students, and cases of a priest who molested some kids in Sunday school. When we tried to bring them to justice, people thought we were dishonoring those religious leaders. Well, once they committed the crime, for us they become people who should no longer be respected as religious leaders. We face opposition because we also work with LGBT and transgender people. I am known as the mother of the gays and the transgender people. They don’t have identity cards, and face problems getting health insurance and treatment at local clinics.

On Sundays, I convert my house into a centre for skills training for women who were terminated

from their work, and different groups of people that need support such as gay and transgender people and people living with HIV. My children are okay with this, and my husband is the most supportive because we think that if we help as many people as we can, us and the next generation will be helped, wherever they are.

Women are discriminated against, suffer from stigma, suffer injustice because of improper religious interpretation, and suffer from the patriarchal culture. This often disrupts their potential to build solidarity. What is most important is to empower women and to ensure that they are not experiencing violence, so that women can return to being solidarity makers.

When I grow old, I want to have a house—a house with psychologists and psychiatrists, which can accommodate people who feel unwanted. For example, victims of violence, babies born out of wedlock, poor people who suffer from diseases such as HIV, and transgender and gay people for whom others may not care – people who just wait until they die. That’s the dream, that one day we will have a rehabilitation house.

But of course, we can’t just expect that to happen, we must do something today. ”



Hikmah Bafagih. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.

Hikmah Bafagih

University professor, community organizer, peace-builder, counsellor, mother, wife – Hikmah Bafagih from Malang in East Java, Indonesia, has many roles . She is also a religious leader, steering the women’s wing in her region of Nahdlatul Ulama (commonly known as NU), a traditionalist Sunni Islam

movement which is considered to be the biggest Muslim organization in Indonesia. She guided community discussions in the lead up to the International Peace Day commemoration in Madura island, East Java, with the President of Indonesia, co-hosted by UN Women and Wahid Foundation.



Towards a gender sensitive National Action Plan to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism in Indonesia

Currently, approaches to countering terrorism and violent extremism are going beyond military and security strategies to focus on prevention. Indonesia, among other countries, is currently developing a National Action Plan to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism, led by BNPT, the National Agency for Combatting Terrorism. This plan is expected to promote a holistic approach to C/PVE, integrating diverse sectors such as education, employment, and media and communications.

Through the “Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities” programme, UN Women has been providing technical support to incorporate a gender sensitive approach to this National Action Plan. A dedicated gender advisor has supported the drafting process, including identifying opportunities to promote the participation and leadership of women in C/PVE programmes in Indonesia.



President of Indonesia Joko Widodo, Wahid Foundation Executive Director Yenny Wahid and UN Women Regional Director Miwa Kato, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace Celebration, Sumenep, Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/ Fuli Handoko.

Working with champions

A key strategy for successful policy influence is working with champions and role models supportive of women’s empowerment and the role of women in preventing violent extremism. In Indonesia, these champions have included President of Indonesia Joko Widodo and Ms. Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia who was awarded the “UN Agent of Change” award at the UN General Assembly in 2017.



From left to right: Sabine Machl, UN Women Country Representative, Yenny Wahid, Director of Wahid Foundation, Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director Asia Pacific. Photo: UN Women/ Iwan Kurniawan.

“From my experience as Minister of Foreign Affairs, with vision and hard work, women can become an agent of peace” - Retno Marsudi, during the event “Agents of Change, Builders of Peace, a conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs” in Jakarta on 30 November 2017.

**PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA AND COMMUNITY LEADERS SPOTLIGHT
ROLE OF WOMEN IN BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

A landmark community festival led by Indonesian President Joko Widodo in Sumenep, Indonesia, to commemorate the International Day of Peace, brought together 8,000 people to celebrate women's empowerment and their role in creating people societies.

President Widodo, who in 2015 announced his support to UN Women's HeForShe global initiative to advance gender equality, joined with UN Women and the Wahid Foundation, with the support of the Government of Japan, to celebrate the contribution of women entrepreneurs in local development and

to emphasize women's roles in promoting peaceful co-existence and resilient communities.

The massive gathering in Pesantren Annuqqayah on Madura island, East Java, under the theme "Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All", brought together religious leaders, santri and santriwati, and women's economic groups to take part in a range of dynamic events including a panel discussion on how Madura women contribute to peace, a community-led collective peace oath, cultural performances, and a bazaar hosted by women's entrepreneurs showcasing their products.



President Joko Widodo speaks of the importance of women's empowerment to build peace. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.



From left to right: Yenny Wahid, Director of Wahid Foundation, Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, President Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.

On women's role in building peace:

Indonesian President **Joko Widodo:**

"Women are the key to sustainable peace, from family, to country, to the world. Peace cannot be forced, but cultivated. I congratulate this partnership with UN Women and Wahid Foundation, "Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities", which will build peaceful societies. Let's build and spread the value of peace to the country and to the world."

Miwa Kato, Regional Director of UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific:

"Women have a unique position to positively influence their families, communities, and society as a whole to build peace and tolerance. By investing in women and girls, by ensuring they can participate in the economic, political and social life of their communities, and by valuing their contributions their societies will be stronger, more inclusive and more peaceful".

Yenny Wahid, head of the Wahid Foundation:

"By empowering women we know that it will strengthen the dynamics of their communities to be peaceful and tolerant. This is good for women, good for communities, and good for Indonesia".

FOCUS ON BANGLADESH

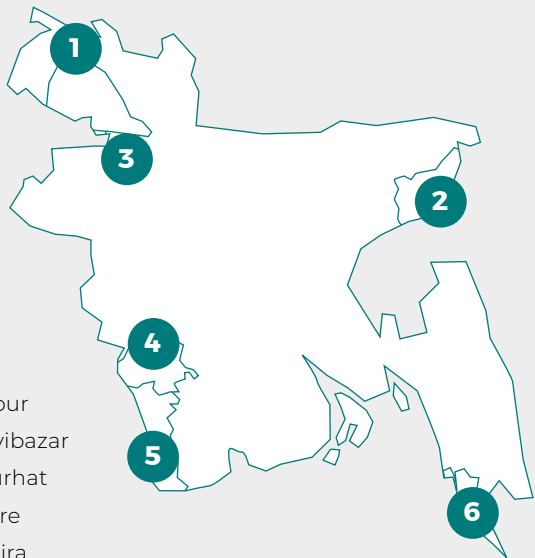
EMPOWERMENT

Through the programme “Women for Peace and Social Cohesion”, and in partnership with BRAC, the the largest non-governmental development organisation in the world about 1,200 “Polli Shomaj Women” (women-only community groups) have increased their business and leadership skills. In addition, they are building their capacity to identify the early signs of radicalization of adults and children in their own communities and find solutions

for prevention. In total, 600 women have also received funding to start up or expand their businesses.

Over 90,000 individuals have attended 226 community theatre shows, which promote messages of women's empowerment and community harmony. This “Popular Theatre” builds awareness of the importance of social cohesion and preventing violent extremism.

IMPLEMENTATION SITES



- 1. Dinajpur
- 2. Maulvibazar
- 3. Joypurhat
- 4. Jessore
- 5. Sathkira
- 6. Cox's Bazar



Pori Banu (center) is the recipient of a loan through this programme. She hopes to use the loan to work in cattle rearing with her husband. She is also the president of her community group, in which she assists the community with requests for help on various issues and disputes that arise. In meetings with the UN Women programme, she has learned how to help if someone comes to her with concerns of violent extremism. Akkelpur, Joypurhat, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Snigdha Zaman.

WOMEN IN BANGLADESH BOLSTER EFFORTS TO TURN THE TIDE ON RISING EXTREMISM

The idea is simple, and makes perfect sense—when women are empowered economically and are part of decision-making in their communities, societies are more cohesive and more peaceful.

It's Wednesday morning in Dinajpur, a rural district in the northern part of Bangladesh. A group of women sit in a circle sipping tea, their children playing at their feet, as they prepare for a meeting. They are known in the community as "Polli Shomaj Women" [community-based women's group], and they come from all walks of life—teachers, mothers, students, local elites and members of the local government —convened by UN Women's programme.

Md. Munjur, a member of the Dinajpur Community Action group says, "A year ago, a young man from the village joined a violent extremist group. The boy was a good student, but he was very religious. When he moved for higher studies, he got involved with some bad people who turned him to extremism, and he was killed in a standoff with the police. The family needed support, so they came to our group. We had never encountered this issue before, so we weren't sure how to help."

Hosne Ara Baby from Nawabgonj in Dinajpur district has been involved with the Community Action Group for the last two years. "We thought that the community should come together and help people solve problems. So BRAC helped us form this group," she says. Tying women's economic empowerment to preventing violent extremism is a new idea for many, but to Baby, it's common sense. She explains: "Women can play very strong roles in ensuring social cohesion, but first they need to be aware of their rights and to be included in the local economy. That will help them get involved with a wider network of people, improve their level of understanding regarding the society and people they live around, and most importantly, this will increase their confidence, which will make them feel empowered."

After receiving trainings through the programme, Baby worked with her group to lobby schools to include information in their curriculum on how to identify and prevent violent extremism. "We mothers are now more aware because we have attended the trainings. Women can work together and raise awareness within the communities."



Mosammat Kamrunnahr used the financial package from UN Women's programme to supplement her cattle business. She plans to use her new knowledge on peace and social cohesion to ensure her son stays away from violence and leads a peaceful life. Photo: UN Women/Snigdha Zaman



Polli Shomaj women at a UN Women training in Nowabgonj, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Snigdha Zaman.

Talking about the programme, Shoko Ishikawa, UN Women Bangladesh Country Representative says: "We want to empower women in the community with the knowledge and skills to address instances of violent extremism and to see the warning signs before it happens. We also want to support women to have a greater say in their community when things are going wrong, and economically empowered women are better able to claim that space."

Mosammat Kamrunnahr, one of the Polli Shomaj Women in Dinajpur is a case in point. She has developed her business skills and increased her understanding about the importance of cultivating a spirit of peace and tolerance in her community.

"Mothers can play a strong role in ensuring cohesion within their families as well as in the society," she elaborates that mothers often know

more about what their family members are doing and maintain friendly relations with others in a community. "So, they are well placed to help themselves and also others to avoid any possible extremism." While preventing violent extremism takes awareness and effort from all parts of the society, the programme is among the first ones to specifically target and empower women.

In less than a year since the programme started, the communities are already experiencing a difference: "Before, no one knew much about violent extremism or considered the actions they could take to prevent it in their communities," says Shuvashis Chandra Mahanta, Manager-Capacity Building and Communication, BRAC. "Now we see that women are very outspoken about this issue, and they are talking to others about what they can do to prevent radicalization."

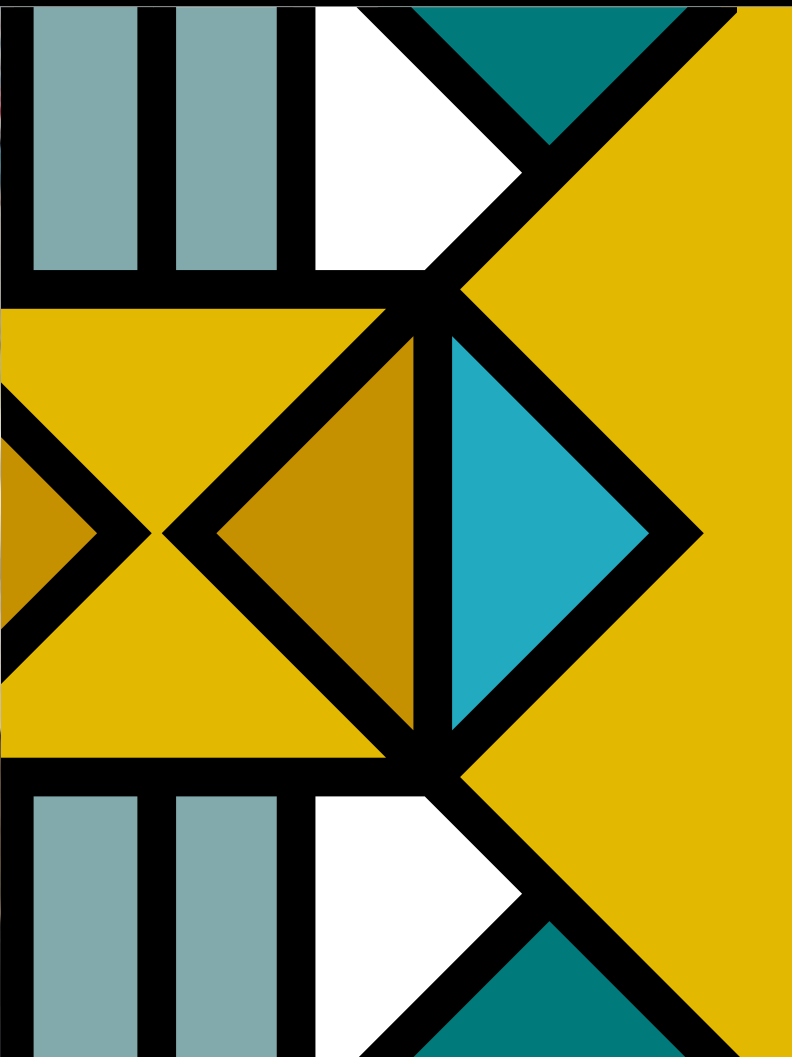
FOCUS ON BANGLADESH



Women, known in the community as “Polli Shomaj Women” (community-based women’s group), are convened by the programme supported by UN Women to increase their leadership skills. Teknaf Sadra, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/ Snigdha Zaman



Ms. Asia Khanom Shompa, Vice Chairperson of Women Development Forum provides support to Polli Shomaj Women in finding pragmatic solutions to prevent violent extremism at the local level. “I am now elected Vice Chairperson, but I was a simple Polli Shomaj Woman, so I understand their concerns and I know I can help the women. My family, specially my husband feels very proud of me for how I’ve been working for other women of our society.”—Asia Khanom Shompa, Vice Chairperson of Women Development Forum Photo: UN Women/ Snigdha Zaman



POLICY INFLUENCE

The Government of Bangladesh, with the support of UN Women, has embarked on a process, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to develop a National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security. The National Action Plan reinforces Bangladesh’s continued efforts in establishing peace and security within and beyond its borders by ensuring women’s greater role in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, disaster management, and preventing violent extremism. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UN Women have been conducting inclusive consultations with civil society and representatives from government ministries and agencies to produce a National Action Plan that will focus on the ways of enhancing women’s participation and meaningful contribution in these significant areas.

To support civil society to contribute to this National Action Plan development process, UN Women and partner Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) built the capacities of civil society groups across 21 districts, 7 divisions and at the national level.



Participants in the National Action Plan consultation in February 2018 presented priorities and recommendations on Women, Peace and Security. Photo: UN Women/Saikat Mojumder

BANGLADESH COMMITS TO ENSURE WOMEN'S MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN PEACE & SECURITY EFFORTS

Dhaka, Bangladesh — Pursuing joint efforts to enhance gender equality to build inclusive and sustainable peace, the Government of Bangladesh and UN Women held a National Symposium on 29-30 January 2018, to further the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The NAP will be a blueprint for the country's efforts to ensure women's meaningful participation in the prevention of conflict and violent extremism, and the protection and advancement of women's rights to promote resilience during crises.

"Women must be at the centre of Bangladesh's work to prevent conflict, build peace, and respond to emergencies," said Bangladesh's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali. "Our National Action Plan will demonstrate our continued leadership and commitment put this principle into action," he told delegates at the closing of the Symposium. The NAP, which will include time-bound goals for the advancement of women's participation and rights, with indicators to measure success, is being developed by a working group of eight Government ministries and divisions led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Globally, 73 countries have adopted national action plans on women, peace and security.

"Today, Bangladesh is taking an important step, by identifying national priorities to ensure that the objectives of Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent Women, Peace and Security resolutions

are translated into results," said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka applauded the Government's inclusive approach to developing the NAP in partnership with civil society, and recommended that this collaboration continue in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages.

"For Bangladesh's NAP to be effective, civil society actors must continue to play an integral role going forward, sharing their invaluable expertise and vision for a more peaceful and equal society."

As part of the process, UN Women, supported activist women's organization Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha, to hold community consultations throughout the country in order to hear the women, peace and security priorities of communities for the NAP. The consultations were attended by local community members, including teachers, academics, students, NGO workers, journalists, local government officials and others.

Meghna Guhathakurta, a member of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh and lead consultant supporting the Government working group to develop the NAP, summarized: "Bangladesh's National Action Plan will be stronger because of its inclusive design process, incorporating the outcomes of community consultations into commitments to change."



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN Women expresses her support for the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 30 January 2018. Photo: UN Women/Saikat Mojumder.



Fouzia Begom laughs as she shows off her sewing skills. As a beneficiary of the UN Women programme, she will be able to expand her small business. Dinajpur, Bangladesh Photo: UN Women/Snigdha Zaman.

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

Gender and violent extremism in the online space

UN Women commissioned Moonshot CVE to generate the first sex-disaggregated survey of support for violent extremism in the online space in Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Malaysia. This research also aims to highlight any potential associations between rates of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) and support for violent extremism across these countries.

Preliminary findings on the sex of those attempting to access extremist material

For the first time, this research has gathered data on a large scale of the sex of those attempting to access extremist content online in South and South East Asia. The difference in the breakdown by sex country-by-country is striking, with almost half of Malaysian searches being carried out by females. This has serious implications for how CVE and PVE programmes are planned and implemented, and

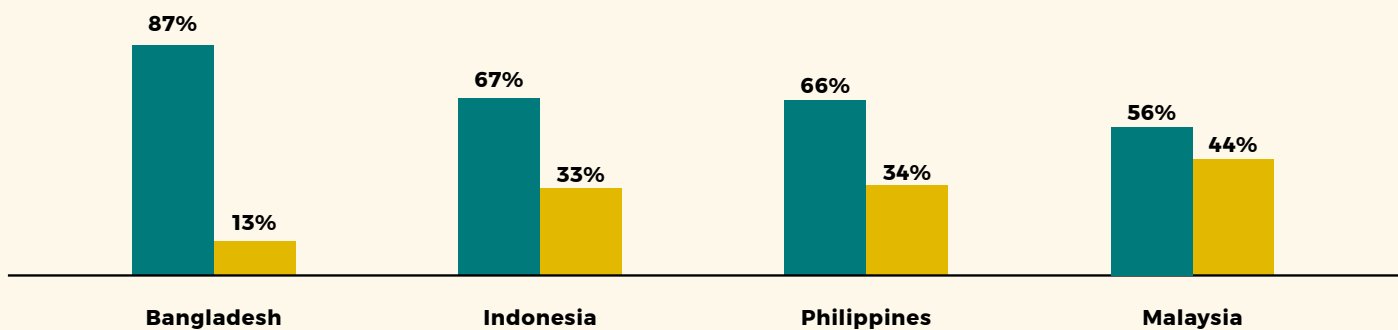
highlights the crucial role that an understanding of gender dynamics plays in effectively reducing extremism.

Violence against women and violent extremism: links in the online world

Spaces in which perpetrators consume sexually violent and violent extremist content also host videos and images related to forced prostitution, organised crime and human trafficking, as well as content displaying violence against children and LGBT people.

This demonstrates the potential role of the normalisation of violence in the radicalisation process. Individuals normalised to extreme sexual violence may be less likely to be put off by the extreme violence displayed in the media content of groups such as ISIS. Equally, people for whom violent extremist content has become normalised are less likely to be put off by content that includes violence against women.

SEX BREAKDOWN OF SEARCH ENGINE USERS ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS VIOLENT EXTREMIST CONTENT*



Note: The total sample size was 918,592 searches. Of those, 93,613 were in Bangladesh, 629,660 were in Indonesia, 131,326 were in the Philippines, and 63,993 were in Malaysia. The sex of the user was indeterminable in 27% of total searches.

Male Female

POLICY INFLUENCE

There is growing attention to the important role that women play in the maintenance of peace and security and prevention of violent extremism among intergovernmental organisations in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2017, ASEAN adopted its first ever Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security – highlighting its commitment to advancing women’s role in conflict prevention efforts. Collaborating with ASEAN and regional partners, UN Women’s regional policy engagement in 2017-2018 has included:

- Supporting the ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue on women’s role in the prevention of violent extremism, together with UN partners;
- Co-convening with UNDP, UNOCT, UNV and Global Centre of Cooperative Security (GCCS) the “Regional Workshop on the Prevention of Violent Extremism: Innovative Approaches for National Strategies”, which provided an opportunity for representatives from countries in the region to exchange knowledge on the development and implementation of national plans of action to prevent violent extremism, and how to ensure these are gender sensitive.



Leaders embrace in the ‘ASEAN way’ at the Sixth ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue on Political-Security Cooperation (AURED IV) on the topic ‘ASEAN-UN Cooperation on Women, Peace and Security – The Role of Women in the Prevention of Violent Extremism’ (5-7 December 2017, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia). Photo: UNDPA.



South Asian participants at the Regional Forum. Photo: UN Women/Pairach Homtong.

To share experiences and best practices towards building peaceful communities in South and Southeast Asia, women activists, civil society representatives, experts and governments came together in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25-29 September in a forum hosted by UN Women and the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), with the support of the Government of Japan under this programme.

The Forum, titled “Engaging communities in approaches to countering violent extremism and incitement”, drew upon partnerships and experiences from UN Women’s programme: Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities.

In a series of workshops during the Forum, experts shared successful community-based approaches and good practices in supporting women as leaders to countering terrorist narratives in both on-line and off-line spaces. Forum participants also highlighted the

need for improved mechanisms to enable dialogue between governments and civil society actors for addressing early warning signs of extremism.

Other issues that were discussed included responding to the needs of returned foreign fighters, integrating youth in prevention activities, countering terrorist narratives in online and offline spaces and the diverse roles of women across the spectrum of prevention and response efforts.

Yenny Wahid, head of the Wahid Foundation in Indonesia, shared how law enforcement and governments often focus on responding only to the terrorist acts, and fail to address intolerance as a root cause of radicalism. The Wahid Foundation works as UN Women’s implementing partner in Indonesia to provide micro-finance support to women and brings women of diverse religions and beliefs together to build dialogue and strengthen tolerance within communities.

Participants at the Forum also agreed that using new forms of media and adopting creative approaches are essential to countering extremist ideology in the online space. Extremist organizations promote damaging gender stereotypes in recruiting young men and women—glamorizing men’s engagement in violent activity and encouraging young women to join their cause through marrying fighters and bearing children. Therefore, innovative and dynamic initiatives are essential in promoting messages that counter these harmful narratives.

A high-impact success story shared at the Forum was “Burka Avenger”—the first-ever animated superhero TV series made in Pakistan, which has

claimed numerous international awards, including a Peabody, and was nominated for an Emmy. Forum participant and creator Aaron Haroon shared his experience of making the show, and the importance of having a female superhero who fights for “Peace, Justice and Education for All” and who reaches children and adults alike across Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Indonesia. Speaking of his motivations in creating the character, which is watched by 85 per cent of children in urban areas of Afghanistan, Haroon said: “I read about girls’ schools being shut down by extremist elements in Pakistan...I imagined this superhero character, where she puts on a Burka costume disguise to fight back. I felt it was very important to try and change hearts and minds.”



Yenny Wahid, head of the Wahid Foundation in Indonesia at the “Engaging communities in approaches to countering violent extremism and incitement,” Forum in Bangkok. Photo: UN Women/Stuart Mannion.

Ms. Sue Takasu, Senior Legal Officer, CTED engaging in discussions with participants from South Asia and Southeast Asia during the Regional Workshop on “Engaging Communities in Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Incitement in Asia” Photo: UN Women/Yoomi Jun.



AFTER THE MARAWI SIEGE: WOMEN'S RECOVERY AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE PHILIPPINES

Philippines — Women internally displaced by conflict and violent extremism often face multiple hardships. Loss of livelihoods, insecure housing, and a lack of access to services reduces women's ability to lead recovery efforts and rebuild their homes and communities. Women displaced by the 2017 siege in Marawi City in the Philippine's southern island of Mindanao told UN Women that finding income generating opportunities to restore their livelihoods is their top priority.

Marawi is the first and only city in the Philippines that has been completely destroyed in conflict. On May 23 2017, the city came under siege from violent extremist groups aligned with local and regional affiliates of ISIS. The battle raged for five months, claiming over 1,000 lives and displacing 77,000 families (nearly 400,000 residents). As of the end of 2017, only 26,400 families had returned to their homes leaving the rest to take shelter with family

members in neighbouring areas, or to reside in evacuation centers.¹

The predominantly Muslim population of Moro people has fought for the right to self-governance for decades. In 2014 a peace agreement was signed between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (one of the key rebel groups) and the national government to establish an autonomous region to be called the "Bangsamoro". But the slow pace of implementation of the peace agreement, growing alienation especially among the youth, violent local conflicts over land, and the growing international influence of radical religious discourses in social media, mosques, and educational institutions have all given rise to unprecedented levels of violent extremism, which fueled the battle in Marawi. In 2017, the weakening of ISIS control in Syria lead to many fearing that Mindanao could become the potential site of an Asian caliphate.



UN Women's Regional Director with women displaced by the Marawi siege in Balo-i. They are eager to build their economic empowerment and rebuild secure lives for their families. Photo: UN Women/Carla Silbert.



With courageous women leaders from Mindanao who are at the frontlines of helping Moro women in need, preventing violent extremism within their communities. Photo: UN Women/Malberry Suites

To better understand the experiences of the women who suffered in and fled Marawi City and their priorities for recovery, UN Women, working with partner civil society organizations, started a Listening Process in September 2017, to document the experiences of the women, gather their narratives of how the conflict began, and enable them to voice their needs for recovery and rehabilitation.

At a shelter in Balo-i, women survivors shared that they hold little hope of being able to return to their homes in Marawi City in the near future. While families are slowly being resettled in the outlying areas of Marawi, those whose homes were at 'Ground Zero' are unable to return while the security situation remains fragile. Up to 95 per cent of Marawi IDPs are 'home-based' and residing with family or friends therefore placing burdens on their new households - with many now caring for up to 20 family members - creating financial hardships in providing food and basic necessities, with humanitarian relief delivered only intermittently and focusing instead on those in evacuation centers.

¹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Philippines: 2017 Key Displacements and Responses', 2 February 2018

Discussions with women also revealed that recruitment of young men by violent extremist groups in the region is rapidly growing, with many offered money and arms to join extremist forces. In addition, young women are also increasingly becoming perpetrators of extremist violence, with some reported to have been snipers in the Marawi combat. The women also reflected that the displacement and lack of income is enhancing the vulnerability of young women to trafficking.

Despite the government and aid organizations' efforts to deliver practical support and services to improve the conditions faced by the IDPs, there is still much more needed to be done, especially that which focuses on the needs of women. Listening to the priorities of the women, UN Women is working to support their income generating opportunities as they work to rebuild peace in their communities and prevent the recurrence of violent extremism.

The use of comedy to counter violent extremism: fighting terrorism one laugh at a time

Violent extremist groups use the online space to promote radical messages, which glamorize terrorism in an effort to recruit young men and women to their ranks. Comedy and satire are a powerful force to counter these harmful messages and prevent violent extremist activity. Numerous studies document how young people are most likely to share content on social media that is funny and least likely to share content that is political. Comedians and social influencers have legions of online fans and can engage their followers in topics

such as preventing violent extremism. Female comedians in particular are proving to be a major driving force for change in the region and the way Asian society sees women.

UN Women has partnered with Mythos Lab to produce two videos to counter the narratives of terrorist groups. Working with female comedians in South Asia and South East Asia, these sketches challenge the narratives used by violent extremist groups and counter extremist ideology in the online space.

VIDEOS AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE

Southeast Asia: “HI-SIS Female Ad Campaign”

Desperate to attract more female recruits, the Marketing Department of a terrorist group thinks it will be a good idea to film a series of online video testimonials featuring current female members talking about how much they love it here.

South Asia: “Brainwash”

A satirical TV commercial for the ultimate women’s product – not face-wash or body-wash, but “brainwash.”



Participants in the Comedy and Comics event, left to right: Yenny Wahid, Wahid Foundation Director, Indonesia; Aaron Haroon, Burka Avenger Project Manager, Unicorn Black, Pakistan; Priyank Mathur Chief Executive Officer, Mythos International, LLC, India; Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. Photo: UN Women/Gökhan Süsler.



Participants discussing the use of comedy as counter messaging. Bangkok, Thailand. Photo: UN Women/Gökhan Süsler

Transforming gender social norms through comedy

Japanese pop sensation PIKOTARO debuted his new song, "Gender Equal Peaceful World", at a dynamic event in Tokyo on 1 March, organized by UN Women and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. His song, "I have a man, I have a woman...Gender Equal Peaceful World!" with signature dance moves brought a smile to all who gathered at the event, titled, "Transforming Gender Social Norms through Comedy: Fighting Terrorism One Laugh at a Time", at the prestigious Sophia University.

Through social media and online platforms, PIKOTARO's new song reached over 2.2 million people within the first five days of its release. The song, written in partnership with UN Women, connects the concepts of "gender equality" to a "peaceful world", highlighting the links between Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality, and Goal 16 on peace and justice.



Japanese singer and YouTube star PIKOTARO performs his new song "Gender Equal Peaceful World". Photo: UN Women/STORY CO.,LTD



The performers and audience hold up five fingers - representing SDG 5 for Gender Equality. Photo: UN Women/STORY CO.,LTD



Performers and producers from "HI-SIS" and "Brainwash" share the stage for a panel discussion on the power of the arts to change gender social norms. Photo: UN Women/STORY CO.,LTD

Many other prominent artists gave performances or spoke about their work, including a live painting by calligrapher Yuuna Okanishi and accompanied by Takashi Matsunaga on the piano.

Speaking at the event, Mitsunari Okamoto, Parliamentary Vice-Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, said, "Through community engagement at the grassroots level, we will challenge intolerance by fostering dialogue and the power to oppose terrorist messaging."



Mitsunari Okamoto, Parliamentary Vice-Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, delivers opening remarks at the evening event. Photo: UN Women/STORY CO.,LTD



Sharing new approaches for promoting gender equality and peace

The regional conference “Women and their Role in Creating Peaceful Societies and in Preventing Violent Extremism”, which took place in Tokyo on 1 March 2018, brought together grassroots practitioners and representatives from the government, academia, media and the private sector across Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines, to share their perspectives.

Women from Bangladesh and Indonesia who have been a part of the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme in their villages shared their experiences of how it has improved their economic empowerment and built their capacity to be leaders for peace.

Hasbiyah shared her story of transformative change through the programme in her village in Indonesia: “After we joined, we learned how to implement the values of pluralism and tolerance, including equality, and trained to deal with issues that arise in our village, and to become more empowered women.”

The conference marked the successful conclusion of one year of the programme, launched innovative research and knowledge products carried out under the project, and showcased results to a public audience.

The conference launched three unique pieces of research commissioned under the programme,



Teresita Quintos Deles from the Philippines emphasizes the need to address root causes of conflict such as harmful gender social norms. Photo: UN Women/STORY CO.,LTD



Experts from government, civil society, academia and the media shared their learnings from the 'Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities' project. Photo: UN Women/STORY CO.,LTD

including the first ever sex-disaggregated national survey in Indonesia on the threat of violent extremism among Muslim men and women, conducted with the Wahid Foundation.

Moonshot CVE launched the first ever sex-disaggregated data across the region tracking where appetite for extremist material is greatest online. Preliminary findings show that women who are prone to engage in violent extremism will do so more often in private spaces rather than public ones.

With the successes of the project on full display, Masato Otaka, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan pledged to his government's continued support of this work: “Japan places emphasis on women's point of view, the empowerment of women in measures against violent extremism, and we will continue to actively support UN Women's activities”.



Hasbiyah is working with the UN Women programme in Indonesia. Of the impact the project has made on her community, she says “We want this programme to be sustainable, so we approached figures in our community who were intimidated to be involved, but they have now found the courage to be involved in the programme and to declare their village a peace village.” Photo: UN Women/STORY CO.,LTD



“Empowerment is the best way to prevent protection challenges that arise from violent extremism, human rights violations, xenophobia and other threats. We need you more than ever before.”

UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** at the Commission on the Status of Women, 2017

#WomenEmpower4Peace

