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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN ASIA

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ACRONYMS

ADS	Automated Directives System
AIDA	Indonesia Peace Alliance
ALIMAT	Indonesian Family Movement for Equality and Justice
AMAN	Asian Muslims Action Network
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWID	Association for Women in Development
BNPT	National Agency for Combating Terrorism
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DI	Darul Islam
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoI	Government of Indonesia
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IIPB	Institute for International Peacebuilding
IPAC	Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
JAD	Jamaah Ansharut Daulah
JAK	Jemaah Ansharul Khilafah
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
KCD	Koperasi Cinta Damai
KUPI	International Forum of Women Ulama
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex
LSI	Lembaga Survei Indonesia
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MIT	Mujahidin Indonesia Timur
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAIMAN	Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Newborns
P/CVE	Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
PRIK	University of Indonesia's Police Research Center
SAVE	Sisters Against Violent Extremism
SCRA	State Commission on Religious Affairs
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution(s)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
VAW	Violence Against Women
VE	Violent Extremism
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
WWB	Women Without Borders

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, the United States made a commitment to join countries around the world in accelerating the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), the first resolution adopted by the Security Council to recognize the crucial role of women in promoting peace and security. In 2015, the United States supported UN Security Resolution 2422, the first resolution to make an explicit link between women and countering violent extremism (CVE), and called on the UN and member states to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue across counterterrorism and CVE initiatives. Most recently, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Act of 2017 was signed into U.S. law, formally recognizing the importance of U.S. leadership in promoting women's participation in conflict prevention, conflict mitigation, security, and sustaining democracy in fragile environments.

These U.S. commitments form part of a growing international consensus on the importance of recognizing the role of gender in shaping violent extremism (VE), the impact of VE on women and girls, and the important contributions women can make to CVE efforts. Over the past decade, scholars, CVE practitioners, government actors and international organizations have highlighted the specific gendered push and pull factors that drive women's participation in VE groups, which may be distinct from the dynamics that drive men's recruitment. Research has also demonstrated women's capacity to serve as powerful bulwarks against radicalization, and to play key roles in prevention efforts at the family, community and national levels. This attention to the roles of women in VE has been complemented by increased attention to the broader gender dynamics that shape VE, including gendered social norms and cultural narratives of masculinity and femininity. Yet much more remains to be understood. Knowledge of the complex factors that drive women's support for VE is thin, as well as our understanding of how gender ideologies, social norms, GBV, and gendered political narratives affect women's involvement in both VE and CVE efforts. A primary emphasis on women's roles within families and local communities has often overshadowed attempts to understand women's positions within broader VE networks, despite indications that women are playing a part in strengthening transnational links among VE groups. In addition, comprehensive understanding of diverse local and national efforts to address gender and VE, including what works, what does not, and what challenges these efforts face, remains lacking. Finally, while there is enthusiasm in the CVE community for increasing women's participation in VE prevention, the evidence needed to evaluate the impacts of such efforts, including the extent to which taking on more active CVE roles might elevate risks to women's well-being, remains deficient.

As part of its commitment to mainstream gender into CVE efforts, USAID commissioned this study to provide analysis of the role of women in supporting and combating violent extremism in Asia. The Asia region has received relatively little analytic attention in the CVE field compared to other areas of the world, despite growing investments by national governments and the international donor community. In addition, CVE projects within Asia have often been framed with minimal attention to gender as a key dynamic shaping VE, limiting the available knowledge base on the role of women in VE in Asia.[1] This study was designed to address these gaps in our understanding and inform USAID policy and programming related to women and violent extremism in selected countries in Asia, across the Asia region, and globally. The study also serves as an opportunity to inform broader USG policy and programming via the WPS Act and forthcoming Strategy.

Focusing on the gender dynamics of women's engagement with VE and CVE in the USAID Asia region, the study covers several key areas. First, it analyzes women's support for and involvement in VE groups, include the push and pull factors that impact women, the gender-specific roles they play in promoting

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[1] See The Asia Foundation 2017 for an overview of international donor CVE funding, including investments in CVE-focused projects in key development sectors including women's empowerment and inclusion.

VE, and how women's roles are shaped by the gender narratives of VE recruitment as well as local gender norms. Second, it analyzes the roles and potential roles women play in CVE efforts, including the broader gendered contexts that shape women's agency. Third, it considers the protection and safety of women and girls from VE, including the use and impact of GBV, gender inequalities, early and forced child marriage, and other human rights violations by extremist groups. Fourth, it addresses how social and cultural contexts shape both VE and responses to it, attending to how gendered cultural narratives about masculinity and femininity, as well as gendered social, political, and economic structures, shape women's agency. Finally, the study looks at analysis and evidence on the effectiveness and challenges of global, regional and local efforts to address gender and VE, providing recommendations for future USAID policy, programming and innovation. The study emphasizes the importance of an intersectional approach to gender and VE, recognizing the multiple factors, including nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status and education level, that impact women's lives and their potential to effectively promote alternatives to violence and extremism.

In addition to providing an overview of global and regional issues of gender and VE, this study offers in-depth analyses of two country cases, Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, to better understand how gender and VE dynamics play out in given contexts. Both countries have faced the challenge of addressing women's support for VE, as well as mitigating the impact of VE messaging and recruiting on women and girls. At the same time, each of these contexts offers lessons for policy and programming. Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan have both seen efforts expand to address the gender dynamics of VE, and learning from the successes and challenges of these endeavors can strengthen regional policy and programming. With their overlapping yet distinct gender dynamics, these two case studies demonstrate the importance of context-specific analysis and programming and are provided to illustrate more general points made in this report.

Key findings and recommendation of the study include:

1. Across the Asia region, including in the case study countries of Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, insufficient attention has been paid to the complex dynamics of women's support for VE. Frequently, the frameworks that are used to explain women's participation in VE **fail to acknowledge women's agency**, describing them as naive victims of manipulative recruiters or unwitting followers of powerful husbands and religious leaders. While it is essential to understand the exploitation and inequality that women participants in VE organizations experience, it is also critical to gain a deeper understanding of **the range of push factors** that motivate them to join, including the intersection of gender with other forms of identity, such as ethnicity, religion, education, and socio-economic status. Women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization are more receptive to VE messaging, and indeed may actively choose to join VE groups in pursuit of economic well-being, as a means of combating social or political inequality, or in response to perceived injustice. The stereotype of the impoverished, uneducated, disempowered woman victim continues to shape many programmatic responses to VE, undercutting the effectiveness of CVE work.
2. Understanding women's roles in supporting VE requires broad attention to the development context. As USAID has long recognized, conflict-affected and fragile environments, as well as those rife with discrimination, inequality, corruption, repression and poor governance, provide the **enabling conditions for extremism and violence** to flourish. More recently, research has demonstrated that contexts with elevated levels of gender inequality are more prone to intrastate conflicts (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2011), which generate the grievances and operating space that help VE groups thrive. The overall level of violence against women (VAW) has been found to be a better predictor of state peacefulness than the levels of democracy and wealth; democracies with elevated levels of VAW are in fact more insecure and

unstable than non-democracies with lower levels of VAW (Hudson 2017). Addressing these development challenges, including the specific impacts they have on women, is crucial. In addition, efforts to combat VE can be strengthened by **mainstreaming a robust emphasis on gender equality into CVE work**, and increasing collaboration between CVE and gender equality and women's empowerment programs. In both Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, the messaging of VE groups draws upon long-standing local social norms that limit women's rights and roles in both families and public life, while at the same time promising women new opportunities to gain respect and protect themselves from GBV. While ensuring that women receive education and economic opportunities, that their rights are respected, and that GBV is effectively addressed is not a guarantee against VE, addressing these gendered drivers, based on analysis of how they impact the experiences of women from different socioeconomic and identity groups, is a core aspect of minimizing the appeal of VE recruiting.

3. Much more needs to be done to support women as key actors in CVE work, and to understand and address the challenges they face. **The Asia region provides powerful examples of successful CVE efforts** led by women's groups and directed towards women's capacities to provide early warning of the rise of VE in families and communities, to spread messages of peace and tolerance, and to promote resilience to extremist ideologies. However, **these efforts face several challenges**. Groups that focus on gender issues are often poorly funded or ignored by state and CSO actors working on CVE. Divides also persist between secular women's rights groups and those working with religious women due to mutual suspicion and widespread social misunderstanding of the distinction between extremism and religiosity. In both Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, women's organizations have expressed concern that participating in VE work means collaborating with state security actors with a poor track record of respecting women's rights and lacking a clear commitment to gender issues. Even when women's CVE efforts receive respect and assistance, they are often limited by assumptions about women as "natural peacemakers" whose proper social role is as mothers or wives tasked with mitigating the risk of family radicalization. In addition, as Asian women's rights activists have highlighted, including women in CVE efforts without analysis of the risks they may face when standing up to VE in insecure environments marked by elevated levels of GBV can violate principles of Do No Harm (Sølna 2017, UN Women 2015). Addressing these challenges, while opening **new spaces for women to contribute their knowledge to policy and program design**, can help accelerate the effectiveness of gender and VE efforts.
4. More clarity is needed at the analytic and programmatic levels about the relationship between **VE and gender dynamics and how to ensure that CVE programming is gender-sensitive**. Often, discussions of gender in the VE/CVE field remain focused primarily on women's roles as participants in and mitigators of VE. While clearly these are critical issues, what is often missing from the conversation is a focus on gender as a set of social and cultural norms and narratives shaping what masculinity and femininity means in a given context. In both Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, hyper-masculinity – a social emphasis on male aggression, violence and power over women – helps drive VE, while stereotypical ideas of femininity as limited to home and family are strengthened and manipulated by VE narratives. **Efforts to address the cultural aspects of gender dynamics** by, for example, promoting "positive masculinity" or providing alternate religious or media narratives of femininity have demonstrated success in both the Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan contexts. Likewise, a focus on women's empowerment and inclusion in CVE efforts does not necessarily **ensure that projects and activities are fully gender-sensitive**. More work is needed to ensure that the concerns and experiences of men and women, and boys and girls, are addressed in programming, and that the risks of backlash against women's participation is minimized through attention to the broader gender context.
5. To fully capture the gender dynamics of VE, **comprehensive gender analysis** is necessary. As the Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan cases demonstrate, programming is frequently implemented

without thorough consideration of gender, or the specific needs, experiences and capacities of women. USAID is well positioned to take a leadership role in developing and disseminating frameworks for gender and VE analysis, and to ensure such tools are integrated into development strategy, project planning, and monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts. Gender and VE analytic frameworks should include not only an attention to women's roles and capacities, but an understanding of local, national and regional gender dynamics, as well as the impacts of current and past CVE programming on women, men, and cultural values of masculinity and femininity.

1. OVERVIEW OF VE AND GENDER

1.1 STUDY RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

Efforts to understand and counter violent extremism (CVE)[2] continue to expand in response to the dynamic and evolving threats posed by violent extremist (VE) ideology globally. As a field, CVE has developed out of widespread recognition that effectively addressing the spread of VE will require attention to root causes and drivers that create the conditions and vulnerabilities easily exploited by violent extremist groups. Though there is little consensus on a singular definition of CVE, broadly these efforts are seen to be preventative in nature, differing from traditional counterterrorism tactics which have largely been responsive.

Although women's participation in VE, and in efforts to combat it, is far from new, the first wave of increased attention to CVE in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States paid little attention to gender (USAID 2015). VE was assumed to be the work of men, and when women were considered, it was primarily as brainwashed pawns of manipulative men who lured them into supporting agendas they did not fully understand (Sjoberg and Gentry 2016; Huckerby 2015a). Efforts to combat VE were directed primarily at men, or were at best framed as "gender neutral," failing to recognize the distinct experiences, concerns, and motivations of women, as well as the gendered narratives in which both male and female extremists were embedded. However, over the past decade, sparked in large part by the unprecedented efforts of ISIS to recruit women into its ranks, as well as the extreme gendered violence and inequality that marked life in ISIS-held territories, scholars, CVE practitioners, government actors and international organizations have increasingly come to recognize the crucial roles women play in promoting, preventing, and mitigating VE, as well as the gendered ideologies that undergird VE.

At a policy level, attention to the role of women in CVE has also increased. For example, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, first developed in 2004, recognized the specific role of women in counter-terrorism efforts in the General Assembly's 2014 review (Fink, Zeigler and Bhulai 2016). That same year, the UN Security Council also began drawing a closer link between CVE and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, first with the adoption of UNSCR 2178 focused on addressing foreign terrorist fighters, which calls for the need to include women in these efforts, followed by UNSCR 2422 in 2015 which drew an explicit link between the UN WPS Agenda and the role of women in CVE (D'Estaing 2015). CVE policy in the United States has demonstrated similar trends, with the release of the 2016 Department of State and USAID Joint Strategy on CVE which highlighted the role of women and grassroots organizations in preventing and countering VE (U.S. Department of State and USAID 2016), and the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 which will incorporate gender and CVE into a forthcoming national strategy.

Currently, there is a strong global consensus among scholars and practitioners in the CVE field that attention to the gender dynamics of VE is urgent. Research has highlighted the specific gendered push and pull factors that drive women's participation in VE groups, which may be quite distinct from the dynamics that drive men's recruitment. For example, while both women and men may be motivated by ideological factors, women are also subject to gender-specific calls to use their roles as mothers to encourage husbands and sons to fight, or are promised a community where women are revered and safe from GBV. Meanwhile, recruitment propaganda directed towards men may emphasize the shame and

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[2] Here the CVE acronym is used to refer to both PVE (preventing violent extremism) and countering violent extremism.

humiliation of not acting according to stereotypical notions of masculine strength and pride (Beutel and Perez 2016). Women and men may serve distinct roles within VE organizations, such as the early division of labor within ISIS where women took on primarily domestic, logistical and security roles within strictly gender-segregated spheres. At the same time, research has also demonstrated women's capacity to help prevent radicalization, both at the community and national levels. The CVE field has begun to recognize the capacity of women to provide early warning and first response to rising levels of extremism within families and neighborhoods, to participate in security forces to help gain local trust, and to promote community resilience through their roles as educators and formal or informal leaders.

Much more remains to be understood, however. Knowledge of the complex factors that drive women's support for VE remains thin, and a stereotypical image of the impoverished, uneducated, easily-manipulated woman victim of VE recruiting remains dominant. Analysis of gendered push factors frequently fails to take an intersectional approach, which requires that we view women's experiences as shaped not only by gender, but by other identity factors like religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational levels. Likewise, the field still has a weak grasp on how gender ideologies, social and cultural norms, GBV, and gendered political narratives impact women's involvement in both VE and CVE efforts. A primary emphasis on women's roles within families and local communities has often overshadowed attempts to understand women's positions within broader VE networks, despite indications that women are playing a part not only in planning and executing attacks outside of their communities, but in strengthening transnational links among VE groups through both kinship ties and women's work as propagandists, logisticians, fund-raisers and recruiters. In addition, a thorough understanding of diverse local and national efforts to address gender and VE, including what works, what does not, and what challenges these efforts face, remains lacking. Comprehensive frameworks for gathering much-needed data on gender and VE are also missing from the field's analytic toolkit. While USAID has pioneered tools for gender analysis, as well as gender-sensitive conflict analysis, there are no established methodologies for conducting gender and VE analyses and assessments, which means that data collection is often piecemeal and of varying quality, with crucial elements of the complex gendered landscape of VE often left out, raising the risk that programs are poorly designed to benefit women and address the gender dynamics of VE.

Focusing on the gender dynamics of women's engagement with VE and CVE in the USAID Asia region, the study covers several key areas. First, it analyzes women's support for and involvement in VE groups, include the push and pull factors that impact women, the gender-specific roles they play in promoting VE, and how women's roles are shaped by the gender narratives of VE recruitment as well as local gender norms. Second, it considers the protection and safety of women and girls from VE, including the use and impact of GBV, gender inequalities, and other human rights violations by extremist groups. Third, it addresses how broader social and cultural contexts shape both VE and responses to it, attending to how gendered cultural narratives about masculinity and femininity, as well as gendered social, political, and economic structures, impact women's relationships to VE. Fourth, it analyzes the roles and potential roles women play in CVE efforts, including the broader gendered contexts that shape women's agency. Finally, the study looks at analysis and evidence on the effectiveness and challenges of global, regional and local efforts to address gender and VE, providing recommendations for future USAID policy, programming and innovation.

In addition to providing an overview of global and regional issues of gender and VE, this study offers in-depth analyses of two country cases: Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan. Both countries have faced the challenge of addressing women's support for VE, as well as mitigating the impact of VE messaging and recruiting on women and girls. At the same time, each of these contexts offers powerful lessons for CVE practitioners. Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan have both seen efforts expand to address the gender dynamics

of VE, and learning from the successes and challenges of these endeavors can strengthen regional policy and programming.

1.2 STUDY METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This study relies primarily on publicly available data, including published reports from donors, think tanks, scholars, international organizations and NGOs, governments, and civil society actors. In addition, the Kyrgyzstan and Indonesian case studies draw upon Russian and Indonesian language materials produced by CSOs, scholars and the media, as well as select interviews with key analysts, academics, CSO representatives and policymakers.

1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVIDENCE BASE

This study draws upon the emergent knowledge base on gender and VE to provide analysis of the role of women in supporting and combating violent extremism in Asia. The Asia region has received relatively little analytic attention in the CVE field compared to other regions of the world, despite growing investments by national governments and the international donor community, as well as rising concerns that regions traditionally considered peaceful or tolerant of difference are at increased risk for VE. In addition, CVE projects within Asia have often been framed with minimal attention to gender as a key dynamic shaping VE, limiting understanding of the role of women in supporting and preventing VE.[3] The quality of available evidence is not consistent across countries, with more attention paid to gender and VE in Muslim-majority countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Central Asian countries, and very little research done on countries with significant Muslim minorities, including Thailand, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka, making it difficult to draw consistent regional conclusions. Much of the reporting on gender and VE in Asia draws upon anecdotal information, including journalistic accounts that often tend towards sensationalist portrayals of the "women of ISIS" or stereotypical assumptions about women's lack of agency.

A majority of the existing evidence also fails to look at gender with an attention to its intersections with other forms of identity. This makes it very difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of how gender identity intersects in complex and context-dependent ways with age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, race, education levels, socio-economic status, or rural/urban location. This lack of consistent and reliable evidence means that gender and VE programming in Asia is often designed based on models used elsewhere in the world, or based on assumptions about women's roles and effectiveness that have not been validated by comprehensive gender analysis. As emphasized in the "Conclusions and Recommendations" section of this study, much more research is needed to provide a dependable basis from which to design effective, inclusive, gender-sensitive CVE interventions in Asia.

1.4 AN INTERSECTIONAL GENDER LENS ON VE

This study advocates for turning a more focused gender lens on the challenges of VE as well as the opportunities for increased women's participation in CVE efforts. A gender lens allows for a more robust and inclusive analysis of how gender shapes the drivers of VE, as well as how to ensure the meaningful participation of both women and men in prevention efforts, including policymaking and local-level programming. Such an approach has become increasingly urgent given the ways that VE organizations (VEOs) have used gender to target potential recruits and supporters by acknowledging

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[3] See The Asia Foundation 2017 for an overview of international donor CVE funding, including investments in CVE-focused projects in key development sectors including women's empowerment and inclusion.

and exploiting gendered grievances and using gendered logics to radicalize both men and women to their cause. Beyond understanding the specific factors which lead men and women to engage in VE, a gender lens can reveal the gender-specific impacts of VE, including the promotion of gender inequality, GBV, early and forced marriage, and the curtailment of women's rights by VEOs. Rising support for the implementation of *shari'a* law, when *shari'a* is defined as application of the hudood ordinances (e.g., stoning for adultery) and restrictions on women in the public sphere, hold the potential to erode gains made by women in Muslim majority countries in Asia.

Much existing analysis of gender and VE focuses primarily on women's roles, investigating the actions they have taken to support or mitigate VE. However, using a gender lens for analysis means understanding not only what women and men do, but how the socio-cultural contexts they inhabit shape possibilities for their agency. As USAID notes in its Automated Directives System Chapter 205 on Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle, effective programming requires attention to the cultural norms and beliefs that shape gender. The ADS states that: "Every society has cultural norms and beliefs (often expressed as gender stereotypes) about what are appropriate qualities, life goals, and aspirations for males and females. Gender norms and beliefs are influenced by perceptions of gender identity and expression and are often supported by and embedded in laws, policies, and institutional practices. They influence how females and males behave in different domains and should be explicitly identified in the gender analysis at the country level and especially in project design because they affect potential participation of males and females in project activities" (USAID 2017). The USAID gender analysis framework combines an attention to these cultural norms and beliefs with analysis of gendered social roles, gendered patterns of power and decision-making, gendered restrictions on the access to and control over assets and resources, and the laws, policies, regulations and institutions that influence women and men's agency and decision-making.

In addition, USAID emphasizes the importance of an intersectional approach to gender, requiring that gender analysis "not treat women and men as monolithic categories but should reflect the intersection of sex with other characteristics in order to capture the extent to which intersecting identities may heighten marginalization or exclusion" (USAID 2018). An intersectional gender lens is a crucial element of a comprehensive analysis, allowing policies and programs to respond to the specific needs of diverse women and men.

This study follows USAID guidance in analyzing the gender dynamics of VE and CVE in Asia, attending to the gender roles of women and men, as well as the gender dynamics of the contexts in which they enact these roles. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how cultural narratives of femininity and masculinity shape both the actions of women and men and the possibilities they envision for social change. In addition, the study emphasizes the importance of understanding the gender-specific impacts of both VE and CVE programming, advocating for greater attention to the Do No Harm principles embedded in USAID's approach to conflict more generally.

2. GENDER AND VE IN ASIA

Across Asia, women have served as key actors and combatants in conflicts from Aceh to Nepal to Sri Lanka, and have been targeted for recruitment into terrorist groups, including ISIS. While precise figures are difficult to obtain, it is estimated that several hundred women from Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia travelled to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria, with many more supporting extremist ideologies in their home countries. Recent high-profile incidents of women planning and participating in terror attacks in Indonesia and the Philippines have drawn increased attention to Asian women's involvement in VE, increasing the urgency of calls to better understand women's roles in VE. However, compared to what is known about gender and VE in the MENA region, there is comparably little data or analysis attempting to synthesize the gender dynamics of VE in Asia. This is a problem for generating effective CVE

responses, especially given the 2017 Global Terrorism Index ranking of South Asia as second globally in numbers of terrorist attacks and deaths, with Asia-Pacific at fifth place (above Russia/Eurasia, North America, South America and Central America/the Caribbean) (Institute for Economics and Peace 2017).

In Asia, it is important to understand the context-specific push/pull factors that lead women to join or support violent extremist organizations, as well as how gender inequalities, pervasive throughout the region, also affect the use of violence by extremist groups. A stronger understanding of the intersections of conflict, including both armed conflict and localized violence, with VE and its impacts on women is also crucial, given its widespread prevalence.[4] Little is known, for example, about gender and refugee vulnerability to VE in the Asia region, especially in contexts like Burma, Bangladesh and the Philippines where many women and men displaced by armed conflict hold grievances against state actors. Asia is also facing the challenges of returning foreign fighters, both male and female, considering the dissolution of a physical Islamic State Caliphate. One estimate places the total number of Southeast Asians who have joined ISIS at over 1,500, and the number of Central Asians at over 4,000.[5] As the 2017 armed conflict in Marawi city, Philippines illustrated, there is some indication that fighters not originally from the region are choosing to travel to Southeast Asia due to fewer restrictions on their operating space than in other parts of the world (The Soufan Center 2017). While many analysts have stated that the "returnee challenge" has not proven as overwhelming as first anticipated, there is still little consensus on how to address the specific situation of women returnees,[6] as well as those women who were either prevented by authorities from traveling to Syria or who have maintained allegiance to the ISIS's aims. In addition, while much of the attention to VE in Asia has focused on Islamist extremism, Asia's religious and ethnic diversity calls for a wider focus and in some countries the intersection of competing religious extremisms. In India, communal violence and attacks by Hindu and Muslim extremists have targeted women for sexual assaults, and have been marked by the use of heavily gendered language glorifying violent masculinity and justifying violence as a defense of honor and a protection of idealized mothers and daughters (Minority Rights Group International 2017). Defense of women is also present in the discourse of Myanmar's Buddhist extremists, including monks, who have instigated anti-Muslim speech and riots across the country since 2012 (Beech 2013). The majority of the outbreaks of violence from 2012-2014 began after alleged violent threats or actions by Muslim men towards Buddhist women (except for in Okkan which involved a Muslim girl bumping into a Buddhist monk[7]) (BBC 2014). Frequently, the triggers for Buddhist extremist anti-Muslim riots have been allegations of rape of a Buddhist woman or girl by a Muslim man (BBC 2014; Radio Free Asia 2014).

2.1 GENDER IDEOLOGIES AND GBV IN ASIAN VE

Throughout the Asia region, patriarchal gender norms and ideologies pose a threat to women's well-being and safety. While it is important to recognize local and regional variations in Asian women's empowerment, as well as the region's long history of women's activism, the big picture remains grim. GBV is responsible for more Asian women's deaths than armed conflict and communal violence

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[4] See The Asia Foundation 2017. The Asia Foundation's overview of conflict in Asia highlights the links between conflict and VE, emphasizing both the impact of conflict on creating the push factors for VE recruitment by generating grievances and undermining institutional legitimacy and effectiveness, while at the same time shaping spaces of weak governance in which VE groups may thrive.

[5] See The Soufan Center, 2017. The Soufan Center cautions that these numbers are estimates due to challenges with collecting accurate data and the reluctance of many governments to share precise numbers.

[6] The Soufan Center estimates that close to 350 women have returned to Asian countries, with the majority coming from Indonesia (~113) and Kazakhstan (~200). Again, these numbers are estimates, and are most likely on the conservative side since some governments have not released sex-disaggregated data.

[7] See Tha 2013.

combined (The Asia Foundation 2018). The percentage of women who believe that husbands are justified in beating wives under certain circumstances ranges from a low of 13.1% in Thailand to a high of 59.6% in Tajikistan.[8] Women's participation in public life also remains limited, with the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments standing at 19.4% in both the East Asia-Pacific and South Asia regions.[9] Women in many Asian countries lack access to and control over resources, with only 21.5% of Cambodian women, 35.8% of Bangladeshi women, 36% of Uzbek women holding accounts at financial institutions or with mobile money service providers.[10] Women in many Asian countries also lack control over their own bodies, with the percentage of wives reporting that they are the main decision-makers about their own health care ranking at 14.1% in Bangladesh, 14.5% in Tajikistan, 25.7% in Nepal and 31.2% in Kyrgyzstan.[11]

This context of gendered inequality and harm has a complex relationship to VE in Asia. Unlike the case of Syria and Iraq, where ISIS used sexual violence against local populations as part of their strategy to gain a territorial hold, their recruitment strategy in Asia focused on persuading women from Muslim populations in the region[12] that the caliphate offered an ideal community of protection and safety for women and girls, as well as the opportunity for them to make meaningful social contributions often inaccessible in their own local environments. These VE narratives have cast GBV, including sexual violence and sexual harassment, and a perceived lack of respect for women in both traditional pre-Islamic and Westernized Asian societies as grievances to exploit, portraying the defilement of Muslim women as motive for them to live under *sharia* law, as well as encouragement for men to defend women's honor by engaging in jihad. This illustrates how gender inequality, GBV, and restrictive gender ideologies in Asia may serve as a push factor for the recruitment of women, and even men, to VE organizations. At the same time, however, VEOs, through their spread of messages espousing an essential division between women and men, as well as their glorification of violent masculinity, have been responsible for exacerbating gendered inequalities and advocating GBV as a legitimate strategy of war, both in the territories where they hold sway and in the online sphere where their influence on Asia is far greater. UN Women research notes that some of the most popular searches on well-known online sites for violent *jihadist* content are "rape and ISIS," and that these sites contain not only videos and images of executions, beheadings and battles, but rapes, forced prostitution, human trafficking and other forms of GBV (UN Women 2018c). UN Women warns that these graphic representations of GBV accessible online via VE Internet channels risks a more general social "normalization" of sexual violence and violence against women, girls, and LGBTI people (UN Women 2018a).

The competition for influence over gender ideologies in Asia also has turned women's bodies into sites of struggle for power (UN Women 2015; AWID 2015). New restrictions on women's freedom of movement, decreased access to public spaces and education, changes in socially acceptable clothing for women, and subjection increases in GBV can all signal a rise in intolerant religious ideologies often linked with violent extremism. For example, in the southern Philippines, Marawi women report having witnessed increased pressure for women and girls to dress conservatively before fighting broke out between government forces and ISIS-affiliated fighters (UN Women 2018b). At the same time, failures to distinguish between women's religiosity and their support for VE has led to restrictions on women's bodily integrity and religious freedom. For example, in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, state

[8] World Bank Gender Data Portal.

[9] Ibid., data for 2016.

[10] World Bank Gender Data Portal.

[11] Ibid.

[12] The USAID Asia Region includes countries with both Muslim majorities (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and significant Muslim minorities (Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand).

officials have called for bans on women wearing hijab head coverings or black niqab robes, with the president of Kazakhstan stating that black is "only for funerals" (Radio Free Europe 2017) and the president of Kyrgyzstan opining that "women in miniskirts don't become suicide bombers" (BBC 2016).

2.2 GENDERED RECRUITMENT AND ROLES

In the Asian context, the participation of women in perpetrating organized violence is not new. Women comprised up to 30% of LTTE fighters in Sri Lanka (Stack-O'Connor 2007), 30-50% of Maoist soldiers in Nepal (Pettigrew and Shneiderman 2004), and large numbers of Naxalite cadres in India (BBC News 2013). Analysis of women's roles in these combatant forces focused primarily on understanding their motivations, which encompassed ideological commitments to their movements' aims, personal suffering at the hands of opposition forces, and the desire for opportunities unavailable to women in traditional social contexts. However, in recent years, as groups like ISIS demonstrated an unnerving capacity to understand and exploit gendered vulnerabilities to recruit followers to their cause (Pearson 2016 & 2017; Winter 2015; Haynie and Gaudry 2016), attention has turned not only to the push factors driving women towards VE, but to gendered pull factors, especially the messages embedded in VE recruitment narratives directed at both women and men. Such attention is crucial given research showing that in some Asian countries, almost as many women as men are attempting to access extremist content on the Internet.[13]

While much media attention has focused on the control male ISIS fighters have claimed over women's bodies through sexual slavery and polygamy, or on stereotypical images of passive "*jihadi* brides" (Carter Center 2017), the Asia context demonstrates that the gender of VE messaging is often far more complex. For example, ISIS has leveraged cultural notions of masculinity that are prevalent across Asia to call upon men to join the caliphate or commit acts of terror at home. Some of these messages play on the intersection of masculinity and shame by promising men living in poverty the opportunity to live up to socially valued male roles as family providers, framing participation in VE as a viable pathway to restore men's honor (Bloom 2011). ISIS has also used hyper-masculine messaging in its propaganda, glorifying violence as linked to masculine pride and blaming Western notions of feminism and gender equality for emasculating men, claiming that "if women would be women, then men could be men" (Winter 2015; Mehmet 2016).

Recruitment of women has differed dramatically, and in the case of ISIS, has typically been carried out by other women, both through face-to-face contacts and social media. Just as has been found for the MENA region, ISIS recruitment messaging targeted at Asian women has focused less on the thrill of violence or promise of material rewards[14] than on the honor of supporting jihad and the significant role of women in establishing and growing the caliphate through their work as wives, mothers, and guardians of morality (Haynie and Gaudry 2016). Much of this propaganda emphasizes the separate and distinct roles of men and women, with women urged to adhere to a strict and narrow definition of femininity that links them to the domestic sphere. It would be oversimplifying, however, to see ISIS messaging as advertising the disempowerment of women. Gendered messaging directed at women in Asian contexts where gender inequality and GBV are prevalent has promised an ideal way of life in which women are revered and safe from gendered harm, and where women have opportunities to pursue meaningful

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[13] See UN Women 2018a. UN Women's research shows women's share of Internet users attempting to access extremist content at 10.9% for Bangladesh, 33.9% for Indonesia, 33.8% for the Philippines, and a high of 48.8% for Malaysia.

[14] For information on gender-specific recruiting messages in the MENA region, see USAID, 2015. "Research Brief: People, Not Pawns: Women's Participation in Violent Extremism Across Mena." Available at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CVE_RESEARCHBRIEF_PEOPLENOTPAWNS.pdf

livelihoods and social roles. As research from The Carter Center notes, "Women are offered an alternate vision of freedom and empowerment and a perceived chance to become part of a community where they can practice their faith unapologetically and feel a sense of belonging and sisterhood" (Carter Center 2017). ISIS propaganda also emphasizes the detrimental impacts of poor governance, corruption, and poverty on women, promising a land where justice and family welfare are ensured. For example, the manifesto of the Al-Khanssaa Brigade, the ISIS women's police force, states that: "Women felt the effects of poverty more than men. It meant that they were not able to sustain themselves as easily as they should have been able to. This miserable situation [is] obliterated by the Zakat chamber [of ISIS], which [is] installed so women could take their rightful livelihood from it, which God guaranteed her and her children. Hence, all due respect and capability is given back to women and harm does not come to them" (The Quilliam Foundation 2015). ISIS has also targeted female migrant workers, women who are often subject to elevated levels of economic disempowerment, social alienation and isolation, and abuse.[15] In Singapore, at least nine radicalized domestic workers have been repatriated, while over 40 overseas Indonesian women have been reported to have been recruited by ISIS (Mahmood 2017). While the reality of what ISIS offered women was far from utopian, with women and girls subject to sexual violence, forced and early marriage, and the denial of their basic human rights, many Asian women who lacked awareness of the real conditions in ISIS territories were persuaded by the promise of a life of safety, meaning, honor and community.

As participants within VE groups, Asian women have played diverse roles. The active combat roles that women played in many of Asia's armed conflicts, including those in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Aceh, make it a mistake to discount Asian women as violent actors. However, more recent VE organizations, most notably ISIS, have assigned women recruits more gender-segregated roles. While the ISIS precursor Al-Qaeda in Iraq deployed women as fighters, in large part to "shame" potential male recruits into joining the organization (The Atlantic 2017), ISIS, as well as Asian regional VE organizations like the Southeast Asian Jemaah Islamiyah and Darul Islam, assigned women to "indirect" roles, including reproductive and sexual service to husbands, the care and education of the next generation of *jihadis*, logistical support and fundraising, and the moral policing and recruiting of other women (GCTF 2014; IPAC 2017a). An essay from ISIS's flagship magazine *Dabiq*, published in September 2015 entitled "A Jihad Without Fighting," explains this gender division, with the author emphasizing that "if the weapon of the men is the assault rifle and the explosive belt, then know that the weapon of the women is good behavior and knowledge" (The Atlantic 2017). In the name of an idealized gender-segregated community, these groups have prohibited women's engagement in acts of violence except for self-defense. However, there is some indication that this policy has changed with the dissolution of ISIS's territorial control and that individual women extremists have been inspired by images of women fighters and suicide bombers in Chechnya, Europe, and the Middle East (IPAC 2017a). This potential shift has important implications for Asia in the aftermath of ISIS. It is women's roles in networks of kinship that have perhaps the broadest implications for the post-caliphate landscape in Asia, however. Indonesia's Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) warns that widows of ISIS fighters who remarry help to build connections among Southeast, South and Central Asian *jihadi* networks. They have also detailed a lengthy history of women serving as links between VE actors in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, both through strategic marriages and women's courier services on behalf of imprisoned husbands (Ibid.). These findings affirm that effective analysis of women's roles requires a regional approach.

[15] As the Indonesia case study shows, ISIS and its affiliates have targeted female migrant workers primarily for cash contributions and assistance with money laundering and logistics (IPAC 2017a).

2.3 INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER AND VE IN ASIA

As noted above regarding the current evidence base on gender and VE in Asia, few analyses take a comprehensively intersectional approach to considering the gender dynamics of VE. Nevertheless, the evidence that does exist for Asia underscores the importance of attending to how gender intersects with other forms of identity, including religion, ethnicity, age, educational level, socio-economic status, and migrant status. It is evident that in settings where multiple forms of disempowerment and violence threaten women's well-being, vulnerability to VE recruitment, along with difficulties in engaging with CVE efforts, multiply for women. This is clearly visible in the case of women's labor migration, where women's isolation, powerlessness and susceptibility to abuse amplify their vulnerability to VE messaging that promises them respect, security and an economic safety net. For non-migrants as well, socio-economic factors intersect with gender to shape the dynamics of VE. Women, as well as men, who live in poverty with few options for sustainable livelihoods may fall prey to VE recruitment narratives that advertise material benefits for joining VEOs, or that hold out the promise of attaining respect for a man unable to provide for his family and thus unable to meet the threshold requirements for being an adult male, or a meaningful social role in establishing an idealized caliphate for a woman who feels trapped by socio-economic constraints. Likewise, these factors may also limit the ability of women to participate effectively and safely in CVE efforts. For women living in conditions of poverty, or those who are required to work long hours and care for families, participating in program activities may be difficult. Young, unmarried women, or those who live in communities where social norms discourage women's activities outside the home, may also find it challenging to safely engage in CVE efforts without facing a backlash. In the latter case, where norms discourage women interacting in public spaces with men, the potential to engage with VE via social media opens new avenues of participation for women. Such opportunities will be more available in many cases to more affluent, better educated women with access to smart phones, a computer and Internet. Without a context-specific intersectional analysis, CVE programming focused on the inclusion of women may end up involving primarily elite women, or could risk placing participants in danger.

Given the prevalence of VE groups espousing religious ideologies in Asia, attention to women's religious identity is also important. At the same time, intersectional analysis demonstrates that stereotypes such as "Muslim women" or "Buddhist women" are insufficient grounds on which to base effective programming. Across the region, there are intense debates over religion and how to define the roles of women and men within it, with women's religious interpretations often differing on issues of gender equality, appropriate women's dress, support for VE principles and actors, and the religious permissibility of violence.[16] In many Islamic contexts, CVE practitioners argue that it is in fact those with a stronger knowledge of Islamic doctrine who are less prone to engage in VE; in some settings, secular or public secondary schools and universities provide common pathways to VE recruitment. The diversity

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[16] Results vary by country, VE organization and survey. Using Pew's World Muslims Data Set from 2011-2 for 20 countries (including countries in but going beyond the Asia region), C. Christine Fair and Parina Patel found that women were statistically more likely to support Islamist terrorism than men (personal email communication, C. Christine Fair to Lynn Carter, June 1, 2018, publication forthcoming). In other examples, regressions carried out on USIP-funded survey data collected in Bangladesh in 2017 showed that women were more likely to support the goals and means of three well-known VE organizations using violence than were men. Women were also more likely to believe that it was women's right to choose whether to wear a hijab or not. In Pakistan, in survey data analysis conducted by Fair, Goldstein and Hamza 2016, women gave more support to the anti-Shi'a VE organization Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan than men, while men were more likely to support the Taliban. In a USAID-funded survey in Indonesia in 2017, women's views on VE and democracy did not differ significantly from those of men. Like the women in Bangladesh however, more Indonesian women than men felt it was their right to decide whether to wear a *hijab*, though a high percentage of men and women felt the *hijab* was compulsory for Muslim women.

of Asian religious contexts means that intersectional approaches to gender, VE and religious identity must be context-specific and based on comprehensive analysis.

2.4 GENDER AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN ASIA

Historically, counter-terrorism measures and efforts to combat VE have lacked the robust participation of women or attention to gender dynamics. Across Asia, women's participation in security forces is low, with the average percentage of women military and police members averaging less than 5%, despite global evidence that when women serve in a security role, they are more likely to gain the trust of communities, especially local women (UN Women 2015; UN Women n.d.). While data on the overall participation of women in Asian CVE efforts, or the gender sensitivity of Asian CVE programs, is lacking, research on bilateral and multilateral aid flows from 2006 to 2014 showed that out of 197 projects focusing on CVE in Asia, only two had a primary focus on women's equality or women's organizations. (The Asia Foundation 2017). While grassroots projects, including efforts by secular and religious women's groups to counter VE messaging, provide early warning of rising extremist threats, and reintegrate returnee or de-radicalized women and girls into communities, have proliferated across Asia, especially in Central, South and Southeast Asia, it is only recently that the mainstream CVE field has begun to take seriously the potential of women. There is still much to learn about the unique contributions women can, and do, make to CVE, and about what has been learned by efforts on the ground about how to ensure effective and sustainable programming. Specifically, there is a need to expand the understanding of women's capacities beyond their role as mothers and community organizers, to capture women's full sphere of influence and potential contributions to national and regional security and policymaking (UN Women 2016).

Efforts to promote women's participation in CVE efforts, in Asian contexts as well as globally, have cohered around several key frameworks. Recognizing the patriarchal values and structures that shape many Asian societies, CVE practitioners have tried to leverage women's traditional positions within the home and local community to strengthen the capacity of mothers to detect early warning signs of radicalization among family members and serve as "first responders," dissuading children or husbands from responding to VE propaganda. For example, Women Without Borders/SAVE has established a network of Mother's Schools, which has offered training for mothers in India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Tajikistan on the signs of radicalization to strengthen their capacity to safeguard their families and communities against VE.[17] Similarly, the PAIMAN Trust has worked with women and at-risk youth in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and has supported training of teachers, in an effort to promote tolerance and respect for human rights within communities and prevent children from embarking on a path of radicalization (UN Chronicle 2015). As the number of returnees to Asia from Syria and Iraq increases, women have also been brought into efforts to reintegrate women and children into families and communities, addressing social stigmas towards returnees as well as the challenges they face in securing livelihoods and resisting calls to return to extremism. However, these programs, including pioneering state-mandated deradicalization programs in Singapore and Indonesia, typically remain focused primarily on psychosocial intervention at the individual level rather than broadly engaged with community receptiveness and resilience, with the United States Institute of Peace suggesting that deradicalization efforts have much to learn from the post-conflict Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) field, which has evolved towards a broader view of the gendered social challenges faced by former combatants and their families (USIP 2017; cf. PRIO 2016). There is also little published evidence evaluating the effectiveness of programs focused on the potential of mothers to help prevent VE in Asia, or considering these programs from a Do No Harm perspective. Future research on the

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[17] For more information, see http://www.women-without-borders.org/projects/underway/42/.

impact of these programs, and how they might mitigate any risks that arise from placing women in positions of new public prominence as opponents of VE in insecure contexts, is warranted. It would also be helpful for future research to analyze whether programs that emphasize women's roles as mothers responsible for their children's behavior risk legitimizing gendered inequalities that confine women to a domestic sphere.

Recently, as CVE practitioners have become more attuned to the risks of women's recruitment to VE groups, more attention has been paid to the importance of understanding the gender-specific ways in which Asian women interact with VE messaging, and the need to develop effective counter-messaging that addresses their concerns. For example, data from UN Women on Asia-Pacific women's use of the Internet to engage with VE propaganda indicates that in some countries, including Malaysia, women were less likely than men to participate in VE social media forums, but equally likely to use more "private" search engines to seek out information on VE groups (Hurst 2018). Based on this data, UN Women and the Japanese government have collaborated on developing gender-targeted redirect methods for search engines, as well as online video content designed to counter the appeal of extremist messaging for women.[18] Such efforts to generate effective counter-messaging that resonate with young people and include attention to gender have begun to flourish in the region, with the UAE-based Hedayah and the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation hosting a 2016 meeting of representatives from across Southeast Asia to collaborate on compiling a library of best practices for creating counter-narratives to VE (Hedayah 2016).

Efforts by Asian women's groups to counter VE have also focused attention on the broader set of push factors considered to provide conducive environments for the expansion of VE groups. Research has demonstrated that levels of religiosity are poor predictors of the propensity to participate in VE, and that, in fact, those with stronger doctrinal knowledge may be more resistant to VE messaging.[19] Incorporating this insight into their theories of change, local religious actors, including women preachers, wives of imams, and religious scholars, have attempted to strengthen community knowledge of religion to counter extremist messaging. Some of these efforts have focused on promoting a greater understanding of and respect for women's rights among religious communities. For example, In the southern Philippines, the Canadian International Development Agency and The Asia Foundation supported local organizations to produce and disseminate religious sermons, or *khutbah*, that counter VEO's interpretations of Islam, including sermons focused on women's rights.[20] Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the Malaysian groups Sisters in Islam and Musawah, as well as the Indonesia-based International Forum of Women Ulama (KUPI), Rahima, and Rumah Kitab (among many others), work to advance interpretations of Islam that promote women's empowerment, interfaith tolerance, and alternatives to VE. In Bangladesh, The Asia Foundation has worked to advance social justice for women within an Islamic framework, collaborating with male religious leaders as well as wives of imams, supporting them to promote women's rights and counter violence (The Asia Foundation 2015). IFES has done similar

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[18] For an example from India, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlaQdacIljA

[19] See Mandaville, Peter and Melissa Nozell 2017. "United States Institute of Peace Special Report: Engaging Religion and Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism." https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR413-Engaging-Religion-and-Religious-Actors-in-Countering-Violent-Extremism.pdf. Mandaville and Nozell state that "there is now significant evidence to suggest that high levels of religious devotion or observance are poor predictors of support for or participation in violent extremism. Indeed, some leading analysts have suggested that a strong grounding in religion can actually reduce the likelihood of people accepting the narrative of violent extremist groups."

[20] For the English-language sermons, see: https://issuu.com/lgspa/docs/selected-khutba-english--revised-

work in India, advancing Muslim women's rights drawing on both Islamic tenets and the Indian constitution (Mohan and Tabassum, 2012).

Many Asian women's organizations have also coupled attention to the threat of VE with support for women's economic empowerment, considering this as a pathway to increase women's voice and decision-making power within families and communities, thus strengthen their capacity to effectively support CVE efforts (Idris and Abdelaziz 2017). For example, Bangladesh's "Polli Shomaj Women," or "Community Women's Groups," combine a focus on women's economic empowerment activities with training on women's rights and preventing the spread of VE in families and communities (UN Women 2018a). In addition, given the large number of female labor migrants from many areas of Asia, especially from southeast, central and south Asia, a number of programs have been implemented that combine safe migration and anti-trafficking training with CVE awareness. In July of 2017, Singapore announced that its "Settling in Program" for migrant workers to the country would include an emphasis on the threat of radicalization (The Straits Times 2017), while in Indonesia, local NGOs have made efforts to connect female religious leaders with women working abroad using online platforms (Sølna 2017). Such efforts demonstrate the possibilities to integrate a CVE focus into broader sectoral development work, both as a means of mitigating push factors for VE recruiting and as a way of addressing the concern that when women are disempowered economically and politically, or threatened by discrimination or GBV, their ability to serve as effective participants in CVE efforts is diminished.

Other efforts have targeted issues of policy and governance, promoting legislation and institutional capacity-building to ensure the protection of women and girls from GBV, to increase girls' access to education, and to counter the spread of discriminatory laws and regulations, many of which reflect growing extremist influence over mainstream conceptions of gender. For example, in Bangladesh, UN Women supported civil society to provide input into the country's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, helping to ensure their experiences with CVE and their concerns with security will be integrated into policy (UN Women 2018a). At the regional level, following the 2017 ASEAN Joint Statement on Women, Peace, and Security, civil society groups from across Southeast Asia participated in the ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue on women's roles in CVE in December 2017 in Kuala Lumpur (Association of Southeast Asian Nations 2017).

As CVE and gender efforts expand across Asia, however, it has become clearer that involving women in CVE efforts is not without its challenges. One important risk that must be considered is that of violence and threats against those who stand up to extremist messaging within their communities. The case of Bangladesh, where VE actors have targeted bloggers and activists speaking in support of the rights of women and LGBTI communities for murder and rape, is an important cautionary example.[21] In addition to the risk of physical violence, many Asian women's groups have expressed concern about what has been termed the "securitization" of women by CVE efforts, in which efforts to promote women's rights are seen as meaningful only to the extent that they serve national security agendas, or women's groups are brought into closer collaboration with security actors who may have a poor track record on supporting women's rights.[22] Such concerns have been observed in context as diverse as the Philippines,

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[21] See for example, Hashem, Rumana 2018. "Has Rape Become a Weapon to Silence Atheists in Bangladesh?" OpenDemocracy.Net, January 5, 2018; The Guardian, 2016. "Inside Bangladesh's Killing Fields: Bloggers and Outsiders Targeted by Fanatics." June 11, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/11/bangladesh-murders-bloggers-foreigners-religion

[22] See for example, UN Women 2015; Anderlini, de Jonge Oudraat and Milani 2017. For a strongly critical take on incorporating women into CVE efforts, see Saferworld, 2017, "The Countering Violent Extremism Agenda Risks Undermining Women Who Need Greater Support." April 26, 2017.
https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/221-the-countering-violent-extremism-agenda-

where President Duterte has notoriously deployed sexually violent language to characterize anti-terrorism activities (BBC 2017), and Tajikistan, where authoritarian government crackdowns on human rights advocates, information access, and religious freedoms, including the wearing of the hijab by Muslim women and beards by Muslim men, have undercut possibilities for state and civil society collaboration on CVE (Human Rights Watch 2018). In addition to mistrust between state actors and women's rights groups, there have also been tensions between secular women's rights groups and those women's groups working on CVE from within religious communities. For example, across Asia there have been women's rights groups which have been reluctant to collaborate with programs that focus on strengthening women's understanding of Islamic law and doctrine, despite evidence that it is women with little formal Islamic education who have been most susceptible to extremist messaging. Religious women may also be suspicious of the aims of secular women's groups, or wary of working with those who fail to distinguish between signs of women's religiosity (for example, wearing a hijab or participating in Qur'anic study groups) and extremism, stereotyping all religious women as potential terrorists, as has taken place in countries as diverse as Tajikistan, Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar.

In sum, the Asia experience demonstrates that engaging women in CVE efforts at all levels, from grassroots and civil society projects to policy and program design, has the potential to bolster the success of CVE policy and intervention. At the same time, it also shows that women's meaningful participation in designing and implementing CVE policy and programming must be supported to ensure interventions are locally-relevant and do not put women at greater risk within their communities.

3. CASE STUDY: INDONESIA

Indonesia, the fourth-largest country in the world, is a Muslim-majority secular state that is home to the world's largest Muslim population. As a case study, Indonesia mirrors recent developments across Asia, including women's involvement in VE, the exploitation of gender ideology by VE networks, the impact of VE on gender norms, and concerns about returning foreign fighters from the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Estimates put the number of Indonesians departing to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq between 2013 and 2017 at 800 (Schulze and Liow 2018) with an estimated 500 Indonesians remaining in Syria and Iraq as of January 2017, 300 of these dependents (McBeth 2017).[23] Indonesia is number two (behind Russia) in numbers of nationals arrested in Turkey trying to join ISIS, with a total of 435 through July 2017 (Wockner 2017). While these numbers represent a very tiny minority for a country with over 260 million people, Indonesians have comprised the largest Southeast Asian group fighting with ISIS.

Jakarta's first major terrorist attack since 2009 occurred in January 2016 and was officially claimed by ISIS but organized by the local pro-ISIS group Jemaah Ansharul Khilafah (JAK) (Schulze and Liow 2018: 1). Most recently, in May 2018, a series of deadly attacks in East Java, West Java and Riau were carried out by the ISIS-affiliated Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD). These attacks, which included the bombings of Christian churches and a police station in Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, were notable for the role of women in executing violence, with three entire families, including husbands, wives and children, involved in detonating bombs at Christian churches, a police station, and inside an apartment complex. These attacks heightened Indonesians' attention to the role of women in VE, as well as the potential for

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risks-undermining-women-who-need-greater-support. As The Asia Foundation (The Asia Foundation 2017) notes, debates over the "securitization" of aid are not new, however, the global CVE agenda has renewed them.

[23] An earlier study published in 2017 found that approximately 600 Indonesians were fighting with ISIS in Syria and Iraq with 384 remaining with ISIS in Syria, based on media sources (see Barret, 2017). The 2018 study is based on interviews with Indonesian counterterrorism officials in July 2017 and puts 700-800 Indonesians remaining in Syria as GoI sources noted that Indonesians continued to travel to Syria in 2017, apparently due to poor information about conditions there.

ISIS-linked groups to carry out attacks, and gave new urgency to fears of what will become of deportees and fighters returning to Indonesia from Syria and Iraq or from arrests en route.

Some Indonesians returning from ISIS-held territories go through brief under-specified de-radicalization programs in shelters run by BNPT or the Ministry of Social Affairs, but returnees are not automatically detained (unless they are believed to have violated Indonesian law, which requires illicit acts on Indonesian soil) and monitoring depends on police resources (Wockner 2017; McBeth 2017; IPAC 2017a). Recent reports suggest some returnees, including women (who along with children make up most of the returnees at this writing) are leaving the shelter program early. De-radicalization efforts amongst convicted terrorists have long been thwarted by the Counter Terrorism Act of 2003 (*UU No. 15/2003 Tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Terorisme*) which does not provide a legal framework for mandatory de-radicalization programming. Thus, more than 400 released terrorism convicts have not gone through de-radicalization programs, while as of early 2017, 184 ex-convicts had joined government programs (Affan 2017). However, following the May 2018 attacks, in which the prominent role of women shocked the nation, the Indonesian Parliament fast-tracked approval of amendments to the law which included lengthening detention periods for suspected terrorists to more than two years from arrest to trial; giving the military a newly expanded role in domestic counter-terrorism; strengthening the ability for the state to prosecute radical clerics who inspire terror acts and those who traveled abroad to join ISIS; and expanding the definition of terrorism to include disruptions to security.[24]

While overall support for ISIS and for VE violence remain low in the country (a 2015 Pew study estimated a 4% favorability rating among the general population), the sheer size of the population, as well as a political climate increasingly favorable to Islamist movements, makes Indonesia of real concern for regional security. In addition, Indonesia's social media-saturated landscape, as well as a new openness to women's participation on the part of *jihadi* groups, indicates that traditional limitations on Indonesian women's recruitment into VE are diminishing. Indonesia's Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) recently warned that "the need to know more about Indonesian extremist women suddenly has become urgent" (IPAC 2017a: 24).

As a case study, Indonesia also offers a compelling window into the cross-border nature of VE. IPAC (2017a) research found that Indonesian widows of ISIS fighters who remarry help to build connections among European, North African, Middle Eastern and Southeast, South and Central Asian *jihadi* networks. In addition, there is evidence that Indonesian female migrant laborers in East Asia have become involved in VE networks, indicating that research into VE and gender should take a geographically broad analytic lens. Data on Indonesians living in and attempting to travel to ISIS-controlled territory shows that many Indonesians have traveled to join ISIS with their families. IPAC reports that since 2013 over 100 Indonesian women and children have entered ISIS territory (2017a). There are many more who have been arrested en route; women and children made up 60 percent of Indonesians arrested in Turkey trying to cross into ISIS controlled territory between 2014 and 2016 (McBeth 2016). By early 2017, the percentage of women and children among those Indonesians deported from Turkey for attempting to join ISIS had increased to 79.2 percent (Wocker 2017).

These developments have had substantial impact on women and girls linked to VE networks. Those who have traveled to join ISIS as family units, where they may have been married, widowed, remarried, and subject to sexual or psychological abuse, typically return to Indonesia needing economic, social and

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[24] Human rights advocates have been highly critical of the amended law, arguing most forcefully against lengthy pre-trial detention periods and the re-involvement of the Indonesian military in domestic affairs, citing the limitations on the military's role in civil affairs after the downfall of the dictatorship of former President Suharto in 1998 as one of Indonesia's key democratic victories. See Amnesty International 2018.

psychosocial assistance (McBeth 2016). In addition to its impact on women and girls involved in VE networks, VE has had significant impacts on Indonesian social norms of masculinity and femininity and gender roles. This includes the exploitation of Indonesian and Islamic gender norms in recruitment and radicalization, as well as cultural struggles over family size and women and men's proper gender expression and behavior.

At the same time, Indonesia is notable for the level of work that is being done on CVE locally, including efforts by government ministries, local and international non-governmental organizations, and Islamic organizations. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), a moderate Islamic organization that claims 60 million members within Indonesia, has been most prominent in developing media and programming to combat VE, and its women leaders have taken a role in developing gender-focused messaging and working with women's groups. Several other smaller civil society organizations have played key roles in working with *jihadi* and de-radicalized families and promoting community-level CVE efforts.

3.1 INDONESIAN GENDER ROLES: STATE MOTHERHOOD AND "WOMEN'S NATURE"

Despite frequent stereotypes of Southeast Asian women as lacking in agency, gender norms and ideologies in Indonesia have been historically complex. In the 1950s and 1960s, Indonesia was home to a vibrant array of women's movements, which advocated for issues as diverse as an end to polygamy and increased education for women. In many regions of Indonesia, including the most heavily populated central island of Java, women have traditionally held the family purse strings and participated actively in agricultural and commercial activities (cf. Geertz 1961; Brenner 1995). However, this economic role did not necessarily afford women social status or prestige, as Javanese cosmology saw concern with money to be less "refined" than the otherworldly pursuits traditionally seen as the domain of men (Anderson 1990; Brenner 1998). There is some debate over whether women traditionally took responsibility for finances and market trading because they had less spiritual power, or because they were seen as more capable of resisting the desire to gamble, drink or otherwise spend away the family income (Brenner 1998).

Women's political and economic activity was constrained following the 1965-66 anti-communist mass killings that led to the rise of President Soeharto. Former President Soeharto, whose New Order regime ruled Indonesia from 1966-1998, promoted a conservative national gender ideology that Julia Suryakusuma has dubbed "state motherhood," which promoted women's confinement to the domestic sphere, viewing women as "appendages and companions to their husbands, procreators of the nation, mothers and educators of children, [and] housekeepers" (Suryakusuma 1996: 101). Women's activism was curtailed, and women who advocating for issues that challenged state doctrine risked being stigmatized as anti-national "communists."

With the fall of Soeharto's government in 1998, new democratic space opened for women's groups to address gender inequality. Yet nation-wide, men are still viewed as heads of the household, a role that remains legally enshrined in the 1974 Marriage Act. Fifty-seven percent of respondents in the 2010 National Socioeconomic Survey reporting that in their families, husbands were the earners and wives the homemakers (Utomo 2015). The same survey showed dual-earner families as 33 percent of total respondents, with rates rising to 62 percent among tertiary-educated couples (women's tertiary education rates outpace men's in the country) (Utomo 2015). Women who do work are often positioned socially as secondary earners in the family unit, in accordance with state-disseminated ideologies that women may contribute to family incomes as long as they maintain their "women's nature (*kodrat wanita*) or God-ordained role as the primary care giver in the family" (Utomo 2015).

3.2 INDONESIAN WOMEN'S ROLES IN VE

Historically, Indonesian VE networks Darul Islam (DI) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) emphasized women's roles as mothers in raising the next generation of mujahidin, and women were prohibited from engaging in jihad (IPAC 2017a: 5-7).[25] But the convergence of the declaration of the caliphate in Syria by ISIS and the expansion of social media has allowed for women's involvement in VE and CVE to evolve rapidly, leading analysts to claim that "ISIS has brought about a fundamental shift in how extremists, male and female, view women" (IPAC 2017a: 14). While patriarchal Indonesian society tends to view women as secondary earners with primarily reproductive role as obedient wives and mothers, involvement in ISIS allows pious women to feel a sense of equality with men. ISIS messaging directed at Indonesian women includes "an ideological recognition of their [women's] unique role in building an ideal state" (Marcoes 2015). This is not to say that *jihadist* movements are not highly patriarchal, but rather to highlight how the framing of women's spousal and reproductive contributions as "soft jihad" or "small jihad" gives these traditional patriarchal gender roles an appealing ideological value, casting them as crucial to the future of the movement (Marcoes 2015; KSI 2016).

At the same time, the fact that Indonesian women have taken on new operational roles within VE networks points to their desire for increased acceptance and respect in highly patriarchal VE communities and a drive to elevate their status. Researchers have argued that Indonesian women's increased operational activity in VE in recent years can be framed at least in part as a response to both highly patriarchal VE networks and the broader gender inequality in Indonesian society which contributed to their motivations for joining (Marcoes 2015; KSI 2016). Indeed, recent research has cautioned that Indonesian engagements with ISIS may be influenced more by these kinds of local dynamics than ISIS propaganda and recruitment (Schulze and Liow 2018: 2).[26]

Indonesian women's roles in VE include financial and logistical support; bookkeeping; connecting extremist networks through marriage; domestic roles in running the household, bearing, raising and educating children; proselytizing and propagandizing; administering financial support in VE networks and liaising with beneficiaries; running online media, blogs, chatrooms and social media groups; hiding known terrorists in their homes; and even volunteering to be bomb-makers, suicide bombers, and combatants (IPAC 2016; Arianti and Yasin 2016). Indonesian women have engaged in these roles in Indonesia, in ISIS territories, and in third countries where they work as overseas workers. Contrary to prevalent assumptions that women extremists are radicalized by men, there have been a number of cases where Indonesian women were responsible for radicalizing their husbands or children (IPAC 2016: 11; Jones 2018).

While in the 1980s and 1990s, radicalization and recruitment to *jihadi* groups was accomplished through face-to-face contact in university groups, Qur'anic study groups (*pengajian*), or family indoctrination, since 2009, increasing access to social media and online blogs and websites has dramatically changed both VE recruitment and women's roles in VE organizing, proselytizing and propagandizing (Mostarom and Yasin 2010; Arianti and Yasin 2016: 10). Previously, women were prohibited from recruiting men due to religious restrictions in *jihadi* communities against fraternizing with men who are not one's

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[25] IPAC notes: "JI forbade women to take an active role in fighting except under extreme emergency conditions. No Indonesian women went to Afghanistan unlike the many who have gone to Syria" (2017a: 6).

[26] While ISIS propaganda may have a broader appeal, it is also important to remember that ISIS has built upon pre-existing VEOs and *jihadi* family networks in Indonesia, including Darul Islam and Jema'ah Islamiyah (IPAC 2015a). ISIS messaging is still disseminated initially through family and friends already linked to VE activity online before it reaches a wider audience over social media. The face-to-face recruitment through friends, family and religious study groups is still very important (IPAC 2015b).

husband or close family member. Internet access has provided a loophole around this prohibition, allowing women to set up and lead online groups without male permission and to have increased engagement and even debate within broader *jihadi* communities not segregated by sex (IPAC 2017a: 16-17; 2017b; Arianti and Yasin 2016). Women have become active as bloggers, writers and active chat room or social media group participants, as well as participants in VE actions that begin online and continue offline, such as recruiting fighters for ISIS, providing guidance on migration to ISIS territory, and organizing and fundraising for *jihadi* causes, including supporting detainees and their families (Arianti and Yasin 2016: 12-13; IPAC 2017a; 2017b).

Women both within Indonesia and working as overseas migrant workers have been key players in fundraising and supporting ISIS-linked charities, particularly those that serve families of convicted or "martyred" terrorists (IPAC 2017a: 18). The most well-known is Gerakan Sehari Seribu (Gashibu or the 'one-thousand rupiah a day movement'). Other charities have been set up by women to aid other women, like the Dapur Ummahat Aseer (Kitchen of Prisoners' Wives), or monthly rotating savings group (*arisan*) that transfer money to a pool of beneficiaries (IPAC 2017a: 19-20). While these economic activities by women VE supporters are extensions of traditional Indonesian women's activities, what is novel is their express intention to support those involved in VE networks who are struggling financially, creating a sense of community and support within VE networks mimicking those typically found in a village, clan or extended family community.

In addition to supporting families in *jihadi* networks, women also play an active role in terrorism financing or "money jihad" (IPAC 2017a: 18). Through these activities, traditional Indonesian gender roles that place women in charge of finances are replicated in *jihadi* networks. These actions may be as simple as running money transfers through women's bank accounts and using the funds for combatant supplies, as was the case of a woman arrested in January 2015 for aiding the VE group MIT[27] (IPAC 2017a: 13). In other cases, Indonesian women have actively supported terror plots and bomb making through contributions (IPAC 2017a: 20), and funded fighters looking to emigrate to Syria (IPAC 2017b: 14).

IPAC has identified four main subsets of Indonesian women extremists: overseas migrant workers; women who have joined ISIS in Syria with their families; women deportees who were unsuccessful in crossing into Syria from Turkey and were arrested and deported; and women combatants from the conflict in Central Sulawesi (IPAC 2017a: 2).[28] Interestingly, while Indonesian extremist groups have their own genealogies and trajectories, as Santoso, the now deceased leader of the insurgency in Sulawesi pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2014, the recent subsets of Indonesian women involved in VE activity identified by IPAC are all linked to ISIS.

3.3 INDONESIAN WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS COMBATANTS OR TERRORISTS

Prior to 2016, Indonesia saw very few arrests of women on terrorism-related charges (IPAC 2017a).[29] By 2016, however, these numbers began to increase. Of the 120 terrorism suspects arrested in 2016,

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[27] Mujahidin Indonesia Timur an armed group active in eastern Indonesia which later retreated to Central Sulawesi where their leader Santoso was killed by Indonesian law enforcement in 2016.

[28] IPAC recognizes that while the extremist networks involved in the Central Sulawesi conflict have been mostly dormant since the death of their leader in July 2016, they could re-emerge and the involvement of the wives of three leaders could signal "a greater willingness of extremist groups under certain circumstances to include women in training in the future" (IPAC 2017a: 2).

[29] IPAC notes that those who were arrested prior to 2016 were often charged with "failing to report their husband's activities" (2017: 7).

eight were women, including three combatants captured in Central Sulawesi, two would-be suicide bombers, the founder of a pro-ISIS charity, and a woman who assisted her husband in making a bomb (McBeth 2017; IPAC 2017a). This rise reflects the warning by IPAC that "chatter on social media… as well as evidence from the small number of women arrested, has shown that the Indonesian women themselves are looking for a more active role" (2017a: 24).

Dian Yulia Novi, a returned overseas domestic worker, radicalized online while working in Taiwan, was arrested in December 2016, the day before a planned attack on the presidential palace that would have made her Indonesia's first female suicide bomber (Campbell 2017). Dian was the second wife of Nur Solihan, a skilled bomb-maker and leader of a Bekasi terrorist cell whom she married online over Telegram from Taiwan (Campbell 2017; McBeth 2016; 2017). Dian was sentenced to 10 years in prison in August 2017, becoming the first Indonesian woman convicted for direct involvement as the perpetrator of terrorism rather than assisting in a terrorist act (Utama 2017). Dian was ordered to attack the presidential palace by Bahrun Naim, an Indonesian ISIS fighter in Syria and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) leader (Campbell 2017). A few days after Dian's sentencing, Ika Puspitasari, a former domestic worker in Hong Kong also supported by Bahrun Naim, was arrested for planning a suicide attack in Bali on New Year's Eve (Nuraniyah 2017; Campbell 2017; Lamb 2017). It was reported that she had previously engaged in "money jihad," but the loss of her job and her inability to continue these contributions provided one motivation for her to offer herself instead (Australian Broadcasting Company 2018).

The timeline of women's involvement in VE as potential terrorists suggests that it was heavily influenced by ISIS and the founding of the al-Khanssaa Brigade in Syria. Al-Khanssaa is an all-female police force that has been used as a recruitment tool by ISIS, using *jihadi* gender roles to shame men into joining jihad by showing that even women are brave enough to join the fight for the caliphate (Campbell 2017). Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), the *jihadi* group active in Central Sulawesi, used a similar method in photographs depicting Santoso's second wife Jumaitun alias Ummu Delima and other women with firearms to call for recruits to move from social media support to active fighting (IPAC 2017a). Yet, while women may see increased involvement in VE, men continue to call the shots – they make the plans, give the orders, and choose the targets (Campbell 2017).

3.4 INDONESIAN WOMEN EMIGRATING TO JOIN ISIS

Since the declaration of the caliphate in 2013, Indonesian women have been willing to travel abroad to join VE networks. As of January 2017, an estimated 500 Indonesians remained with ISIS in Iraq and Syria, 300 of these are suspected to be women and children (McBeth 2017)[30] IPAC reports that 60 percent of Indonesian deportees from Turkey – who never made it to Syria – are women and children (IPAC 2016: 13). Of those deported to Indonesia from Turkey in 2017, women and children under 15 years old comprised 79.2 percent of the first three batches of deportees, or 137 individuals (Wockner 2017).

Analyst Sidney Jones of IPAC has attributed this number of women and children trying to enter Syria to the pattern of traveling to Syria with families in order to bring them up in an Islamic state (Wockner 2017). In some cases, IPAC has found that it was the women who were encouraging families to leave for Syria in order to raise their children under Islamic law (IPAC 2017a: 2). Those leaving with their families intended to spend their lives in the Caliphate, and with no intention of returning to Indonesia, and typically sold all their possessions and depleted their savings to fund their trip as a family unit (IPAC 2015: 24). Many of these women who traveled to join the caliphate may now be widows and they and

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[30] This number may be slightly elevated. IPAC estimates that from 2013 onwards "well over 100 Indonesian women and children have successfully crossed into ISIS territory" (2017a: 15).

their daughters may be entering new marriages with foreign or local fighters in Syria. IPAC warns that this could further internationalize extremist networks (IPAC 2017a: 2).

3.5 OVERSEAS MIGRANT WORKERS

Indonesian women have also been recruited as members and supporters of extremist networks from third countries where they work as migrant laborers. The government of Indonesia estimates that there are 6.2 million Indonesians working overseas, approximately 69-75% of whom are women, with the clear majority serving as domestic workers (UNODC 2017: 16). There are reports of at least 45 domestic workers in Hong Kong actively supporting ISIS (Nuraniyah 2017) with a handful of others in Taiwan and Singapore (IPAC 2017b: 12). While there are about 1 million Indonesian domestic workers in the Gulf States (in contrast to the estimated 150,000 in Hong Kong), none have tried to join ISIS in Syria (while several have left from Hong Kong) and only about a dozen in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE are active on extremist social media groups (Nuraniyah 2017; IPAC 2017b: 2, 15). IPAC reports that overseas migrant workers thus far have focused on supporting ISIS in Syria and pro-ISIS attacks in Indonesia (2017b: 12).[31]

Labor protections in East Asia provide for days off which, when employers follow the law, permit domestic workers to congregate more easily than they can in the Middle East (Nuraniyah 2017). Female migrants often attend *dakwah* (Islamic propagation) groups on Sundays, which offer a source of community and support as well as religious teaching. However, some of these *dakwah* groups invite extremist preachers (IPAC 2017b). Yet, it seems that domestic workers' initial exposure to extremist ideology occurs through social media – which is different from previous modes of Indonesian exposure and recruitment to extremist ideology through face-to-face meetings.[32]

Due to Indonesian domestic migrant workers' international contacts, foreign language abilities and incomes, IPAC reports that they are "sought-after partners for *jihadi* men" (2017b: 12). Due to the perception that they have good salaries and international experience, overseas migrant workers have been called upon to give travel advice and arrange travel for those attempting to enter Syria, as well as for assistance in purchasing tickets either directly or through fundraising amongst fellow migrants or foreign contacts (IPAC 2017b: 14). There is a perception amongst radicalized overseas migrant workers that their fundraising and financial contributions are a form of *jihad* (IPAC 2017a: 18).

Several Hong Kong domestic workers have entered online marriages with ISIS fighters in Syria or ISIS supporters in Indonesia and at least one emigrated to Syria to join her husband (IPAC 2015: 22). Others have funded their would-be ISIS combatant husbands' honeymoon trips to visit them, so that these men have a record of international travel before departing for Syria (IPAC 2017a: 18). It has been suggested that mandatory government training for migrant workers before they go abroad should include lessons on religious extremism and recruitment tactics, as migrant workers are a vulnerable target by *jihadis* looking to extract money to finance their aims (Nuraniyah 2017; IPAC 2017a; 2017b). It has also been suggested that the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and the Foreign Ministry, along with civil society organizations, work to produce counter-messaging online that would be accessible to migrant workers (Susilo 2018).

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[31] While an attack by a rocket on the Marina Bay Sands casino in Singapore was foiled in 2016, the attack was planned by men arrested on the Indonesian island of Batam, rather than Singapore-based attackers (Arshad 2016).
[32] IPAC notes that many of those radicalized through social media and introduced to others later meet face-to-face (2017b: 13).

3.6 INDONESIAN GENDER ROLES, GENDER INEQUALITY AND EXPLOITATION BY VE

While there is a growing body of literature on the roles of women in VE in Indonesia and women's potential roles in preventing or countering VE, there has been less focus on the effects of gendered norms and identities used in recruitment and mobilizing VE. The focus of VE groups on gendered identities and gender norms can have broad repressive effects in addition to mobilizing VE (True and Eddyono 2017: 12-13). The use of gendered recruitment strategies, including GBV and gendered symbolism, have led recent researchers to argue that ISIS is "not merely an insurgency: it is a patriarchal counter-cultural movement" (True and Eddyono 2017: 20).

Saskia Wieringa has written about the recent movement in Indonesia to promote gender harmony and the "happy, peaceful family" (*keluarga sakinah*), arguing that the discourse of "obedient busy housewives of the New Order" active in state-run community organizations and in the later New Order work outside the home, has been replaced by an "emphasis on obedient and pious housewives" (2015: 28). This understanding of gender roles is even more restrictive than the New Order understanding, as the "pious wife in a *keluarga sakinah* should only leave the house to attend the mosque (and only after she has finished her domestic tasks)." The new understanding does not include the community and economic activities found during the later New Order (Wieringa 2015: 35).

It is not only women's gender roles that are changing. Masculinity is also undergoing change in contemporary Indonesia, reflecting what some scholars have referred to as a crisis (Wichelen 2009: 180). In Indonesia, hegemonic masculinity was conceived not as Islamic, but as shaped during the struggle against colonialism and during the New Order period as one of "Javanese fatherism" (bapakism) and "Indonesianness" (Wichelen 2009: 180). Yet, this is changing in post-New Order Indonesia as Islamic definitions of masculinity are gaining ground at the same time as women's emancipation and gender equality discourses circulating outside of Islamic contexts. The result is that Islamic discourses, while challenging hegemonic New Order Javanese ideas of masculinity, end up reaffirming hypermasculinity and Javanese paternalism in an Islamic framework – continuing long-held patriarchal definitions of Indonesian masculinity (Wichelen 2009: 181).

Lies Marcoes, founder of Rumah Kita Bersama (Rumah KitaB), a Jakarta-based think tank that has conducted research with women involved in extremist groups, writes that the allure of radical groups for Indonesian women "can be explained partly by the position of women in patriarchal society and the desire of these women to contribute to building 'an ideologically pure state' grounded in the laws of God" (Marcoes 2015). For women who are already living in a *keluarga sakinah* that limits their involvement outside of the home and their roles within it, joining a VE movement may feel like an expression of an emancipatory ideology, or at least one that gives women's roles greater meaning. Marcoes argues that the idea of the caliphate for Indonesian women is about "their mandatory duty according to sharia as an answer to social and economic disparity." Indonesian women care about injustice and inequality and are drawn to calls for a caliphate to answer these concerns, as the Indonesian state has not been able to (Marcoes 2015).

3.7 PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY INVOLVED IN VE

GBV takes many forms in Indonesia, although hard data on its prevalence or how it might be rising in conjunction with the dissemination of extremist gender ideologies is lacking.[33] One of the key domains

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[33] UNFPA, in conjunction with Indonesia's National Women's Commission, began carrying out the first nationwide prevalence survey on violence against women in 2016, with data expected in Fall 2018. UNFPA states: "In Indonesia, the scale of gender-based violence is still largely unknown. Service statistics are available, but this does

in which it operates in conjunction with VE is early and forced marriage. In Indonesia the age of consent for marriage for women is 16 years of age, while for men it is 19 (Marriage Law, No. 1/1974). Efforts to promote the ideal of the *keluarga sakinah* or harmonious family have taken forms including arranged, early (age 15-19) and mass marriage (Nisa 2011: 797). In communities who oppose Indonesia's Marriage Law for setting a minimum age for marriage which they argue is not specified in Islam, there is no ban on early marriage or child marriage (Nisa 2011: 809-810). Researchers have recently argued that advocacy of child marriage could be an early warning sign of violent extremism (True 2017).

In *jihadi* families, women are tasked with bearing, raising and educating *mujahidin* children; mentally preparing and supporting their husbands in jihad; and becoming breadwinners and caretakers for their families when *mujahid* husbands are fighting, incarcerated or on the run (IPAC 2017a: 5-6; Saputro 2010: 214). Girls who grow up in *jihadi* families are likely to be married to *mujahid* in their family networks, whether through encouragement by parents or due to the prestige *mujahidin* carry in *jihadist* circles. This creates strong kinship networks in and between extremist groups (IPAC 2017a: 5-6; Saputro 2010: 221-222). These kinship networks, created through marriage of women to male leaders, serve as a communication link and familial bond in extremist networks, in what Saputro terms the "reproduction of a 'terrorism dynasty'" (*reproduksi 'dinasti terrorisme'*) (Saputro 2010: 222). This familial link is evidenced by the high numbers of second-generation *mujahidin* who traveled to Syria (Jones 2018). Leaving an extremist group thus also means leaving behind one's family and support network (Woodward et. al 2010: 46).

With women and children making up most Indonesians deported from Turkey for attempting to cross into ISIS-controlled territory, VE places women deportees in the role of breadwinner and head of the family unit both in Turkey and upon return to Indonesia (McVey 2016, 2017; Wockner 2017). Indonesian women widowed in ISIS territory are remarried as soon as their period of waiting is over, during which time they must live in ISIS safe houses if they do not have a living male relative, which means rather than return home, they may become part of international terrorist networks through marriages to their new husbands (IPAC 2017a: 16). For those women who become combatants or actively involved in terrorism, they cannot work in a mix-gender team without a husband or close family member, thus, they are married to their contacts, often in polygamous marriages, as in Dian Yulia Novi's case (IPAC 2017a).

Jihadi families are isolated from the broader community due in part to choices of clothing, running their own *pengajian* (Qur'anic study group), and restrictions on movement without male relatives. Families of known terrorists deal with significant social stigma (Amindoni 2018). As *jihadi* families focus on women's roles in child-bearing, child rearing and educating, when a husband goes to jail or goes off to combat, women become the breadwinners with little background or training in business and often little to no work experience. Wives of terrorism convicts also experience discrimination at work (Amindoni 2018). This places women as the head of the family but without social support except from their VE network, further marginalizing these women and giving them little chance to leave VE.

3.8 EFFECTS OF VE ON GENDER ROLES

While women's roles in *jihadi* families focus on bearing many children and disseminating values to the next generation of *mujahidin*, fundamentalist Muslims in Indonesia have also linked a discourse of family values to having multiple children. While Indonesia was previously very successful in a coercive state-run family planning program (Dwyer 1999), the VE and fundamentalist focus on large families leads to

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not show the magnitude of the problem. This lack of credible data in Indonesia has been a consistent barrier to effective action against gender-based violence." (UNFPA 2016).

resistance to family planning not only amongst VE and fundamentalist networks, but in the broader society (Berkley Center 2013). Family planning is an example of just one of the areas where the Indonesia government has been reticent to get involved in the discussion, leaving the framing of whether or not family planning is acceptable and the make-up of the ideal Muslim family and women's reproductive role within Muslim families to VE and fundamentalist discourse (Berkley Center 2013).

A Female Apocalypse?

In an IRI-conducted Focus Group Discussion in urban Java in late 2017, members of Islamic political parties expressed views on the possibility of electing a woman president of the country. A member of one party said, "[T]he expansion of women has gone everywhere. Men's jobs are almost all taken away. So, if these are all taken and the president is taken, what do men get to be? Soon it will be the apocalypse." A member of a different Islamic party said women should create male leaders, rather than become leaders: "In my opinion…there is a special role of women that is so noble: to create leaders is the woman's main job."

In particular, Schulze and Liow (2018) argue that the Indonesian state's reticence to enter debates on Islamism, Islamic law, the definition of heresy, and Muslim identity created a space for ISIS ideology domestically, allowing it to fill ideological gaps where the state was reluctant to engage. The space available to VE ideology in Indonesian political discourse and debates around what it means to be a "good Muslim" or the "nature of Muslim identity" (Schulze and Liow 2018: 2) has in turn contributed to shifting everyday Indonesian discourses on gender and Islam towards a more conservative slant.

On the other hand, in Indonesia there is a tendency to perceive Wahhabism and VE as linked and interdependent (Woodward et. al. 2010). This tendency in Indonesian discourse, including calls by CVE practitioners to view changes in *hijab* use as an "everyday warning sign" and systematically monitor women's dress (True and Eddyono 2017: 14), has repercussions for women. An Indonesian stereotype that links wearing the *niqab* or *cadar* (face veil) with terrorism is one of the ways in which women are stigmatized in their fashion and religious choices by VE narratives. In some communities this has led women to drop out of university due to restrictions on wearing the cadar (Nisa 2012: 372-373). The State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta recently attempted to record cadar wearing students (they found 42) and make them attend up to nine counselling sessions, after which time if they still wore the cadar they would be asked not to come to campus (BBC Indonesia 2018). Shortly thereafter, the ban was withdrawn, under pressure.

Conversely, women who do not wear the *hijab*, or do not conform to changing notions of the "correct" way to cover their hair, may be accused of being "non-Muslim" (True and Eddyono 2017: 36). This leads to a situation where women are constantly judged by others as either "extremists" or "not-Muslim-enough" based on their choice of head covering, creating near constant debates over women's bodies as symbols of piety, morality, or threats to the nation (Izharuddin 2015). Some research has pointed towards an increased social perception in Indonesia that women's choice of head covering reflects on men's masculinity and piety. An unmarried woman without a *hijab* reflects poorly on her father, making it not solely her choice whether to cover, but a sin of her father if she does not. Likewise, it is sinful for husbands to have wives who do not wear *hijab* (True and Eddyono 2017: 38).

3.9 INDONESIAN CVE AND GENDER PROGRAMS

A recent national survey[34] by LSI (*Lembaga Survei Indonesia*), supported by UN Women and the Wahid Foundation, found that women were more unwilling to become radical (80.8%) than men (76.7%). It also

[34] The survey was conducted in October 2017 with 1500 male and female respondents (1:1 ratio) in 34 provinces in Indonesia.

showed that women respondents rated their autonomy to make decisions in their lives (53.3%) as less than male respondents (80.2%) (Wahid Foundation 2018).[35] Yet, the survey results showed that while women may be less likely to actively partake in radical activities, more women (1 in 10) than men (1 in 13) are likely to be ideologically supportive of VE groups like ISIS and JI (UN Women 2018a: 15). Many of the non-governmental CVE programs in Indonesia focus on the intersection of these issues highlighted in the survey results and work towards women's economic and social empowerment and women's leadership in peaceful and tolerant communities. This section will highlight general approaches to local CVE programming in Indonesia before turning specifically to CVE programming that specifically addresses gender.

3.10 *PESANTREN* AND *ISLAM NUSANTARA*

Islam Nusantara ("Islam of the archipelago") is a term used by many Indonesian Muslims to refer to long-standing practices of accommodating Islam to local contexts and traditions. The concept was revived and promoted in 2016 by Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, NU, as a counter-narrative to the spread of extremist ideologies. By emphasizing the "Indonesianness" of local Islamic practice, proponents of *Islam Nusantara* have hoped to cast VE discourses as foreign to the country, emphasizing instead a tolerance for local cultural practices. Indonesia's president Joko Widodo has lent his support to the Islam Nusantara concept as a counter-ideology to VE messaging, calling it a bulwark of support for Indonesia's constitution and its national motto of "unity in diversity."

Multiple scholars have noted the role that Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) play not in radicalization (with a few notable exceptions)[36] but in the prevention of violent extremism (Woodward et. al 2010). These boarding schools are led by respected religious leaders known as *Kyai*. As Woodward et. al (2010:35) note, "The respect with which *Kyai* are regarded has significant implications for understanding counter-radical discourse in Indonesia. A simple statement denouncing radicalism and violence by a prominent *Kyai* carries more weight among traditional Indonesian Muslims than elaborate educational programs designed by government ministries, NGOs and international donors." Some Islamic boarding schools have attempted to counter extremism through their curriculum, offering required courses on comparative religion (a subject that is not offered in compulsory religious education in Indonesia's state schools), or sports activities with local Catholic schools (Woodward et. al 2010: 42).

Scholars have associated students with secular backgrounds who attend secular schools and universities with vulnerability to radicalization, contrasted with students from pesantren who often attend Islamic universities (Woodward et. al 2010: 32, 42). This is due to the perception that secular schools, while mandated to teach religion, offer simplistic understandings and interpretations of Islam (Woodward et. al 2010: 34). Religious extra-curricular programs in state schools have been the site of radicalization of some of Indonesia's most militant extremists (Jones 2018).

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[35] This was based on indicators such as who made the choice of partner in marriage; who made the choice to work or not; party that has the most influence over religious views; and determining who to vote for in the general election. It was found that women had the least autonomy in religious views, with 49% of respondents reporting that religious views were determined by men rather than themselves, with 37.6% reporting that they chose their own religious views (Wahid Foundation, 2018).

[36] Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI) were known to have a network of pesantren based in Ngruki, Surakarta, Central Java (ICG 2002). Search for Common Ground (SFCG) had a program with 10 pesantren in Indonesia that were perceived as being involved in or sympathetic to local VE activity. The program included documentary filmmaking and student-run radio stations and creating a comic book series within the schools to enable discussions on identity, tolerance and diversity (SFCG 2017c: 31).

Indonesian religious organizations are also working towards gender equality in Indonesian society, with a focus on countering gender inequality in the home. NU organization ALIMAT (Indonesian Family Movement for Equality and Justice) is working to promote gender equality in the family, challenging the predominant cultural view of men as decision makers and head of the family. Through their research, ALIMAT found that family hierarchies have not caught up to demographic realities in many Indonesian families. For example, when women migrate and become breadwinners for the families, their symbolic or decision-making roles do not change even though they have become the primary provider (True and Eddyono 2017: 47).

The Wahid Foundation,[37] the University of Indonesia's Police Research Center (PRIK), the Aliansi Indonesia Damai (AIDA – Indonesia Peace Alliance), Muhammadiyah's Maarif Institute, and the INGO Search for Common Ground (SFCG) all have programs working to engage youth in the prevention of violent extremism. Some programs, like those of the Wahid Foundation and SFCG, focus on broader issues of multiculturalism, pluralism, conflict management, leadership, peace and tolerance, while PRIK and AIDA bring former extremists and/or victims of terrorism to speak with schools and universities across the country (Sumpter 2017: 122-123). Maarif Institute runs a week-long youth camp targeting schools with a reputation of extremist leanings or schools affected by radicalism/extremism, focusing on character building and experiential learning, including an interfaith component through meeting with people from other religions (Sumpter 2017: 124). Some students from the camp are invited to a three-day Peace Journalism Workshop to improve media literacy and social media skills for counter-messaging on social media (Sumpter 2017: 124-125). However, challenges remain for these programs with ensuring the continuing support of participants and measuring their long-term impact, with programs tending to consider only short-term outputs rather than medium and longer-term outcomes. More investments in the evaluation of programs to recruit youth to CVE efforts, and how young men and women may experience specific challenges in this arena, are clearly needed.

With NU's 60 million members and the modernist Muslim organization Muhammadiyah's 30 million members, their involvement in the promotion of public celebrations of local Islamic traditions like the *Takbir Keliling* processions on the eve of *Idul Fitri*, or celebrations of the Prophet's birthday, can contribute to feelings of community and "fun" that is considered haram by extremist interpretations of Islam (Woodward 2010: 43-44). Encouraging and participating in these sorts of festivals may serve as a form of "counter-radical action" (Woodward et. al 2010: 44). This demonstrates that there are multiple avenues to CVE in Indonesia, including simply strengthening existing cultural and Islamic practices such as festivals, pesantren and *Islam Nusantara*. Community-based interventions and initiatives serve two purposes: to provide an alternative community and interpretation of Islam to that of *jihadi* communities and to approach *jihadi* families and those at-risk of radicalization on a community level rather than from the state security apparatus.

While these programs are laudable in engaging with youth of all genders and the broader community, programs that specifically address gendered components of VE may be needed in greater number now that Indonesian women have not only emigrated to join ISIS but have attempted terrorist attacks in their home country. To address these challenges, some Indonesian CSOs have been working on women's economic empowerment and involving women in the promotion of peaceful and tolerant communities, while others have approached at-risk families, particularly wives of incarcerated or recently released terrorists.

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[37] The Wahid Institute is run by Yenny Wahid, daughter of former Indonesian President and former leader of NU Abdurrahman Wahid ("Gus Dur").

3.11 CIVIL SOCIETY CVE EFFORTS

The trust between CSOs and communities often makes CSOs better suited than state institutions to engage in prevention and de-radicalization efforts with communities and individuals at risk for VE (Sumpter 2017: 120). Yet states should not exclusively rely on civil society and donor-led initiatives for CVE and need to continue to be actively involved in CVE programming (True and Eddyono 2017: 65). Sumpter (2017: 120) notes that many CSOs in Indonesia try to distance themselves from CVE and de-radicalization language. As Sumpter explains, civil society practitioners think that "if audiences or individuals identified as being vulnerable to adopting extremist convictions believe interventions are premised on a perceived security threat, they will be less likely to participate actively" (2017: 120). In civil society-led efforts to prevent or counter VE, economic empowerment programs, particularly microfinance and savings groups, are popular ways to approach communities, while some recent efforts have included community libraries and human trafficking prevention to build rapport with target communities (interview, Yogyakarta CSO, January 2018).

Since 2009, the University of Indonesia's Police Research Center has applied a personal approach to incarcerated terrorists, released terrorism convicts and their families. Wives of incarcerated terrorists receive three visits coordinated by the center, from a policewoman, an *ustadh* (Islamic scholar or teacher), and a psychologist. To counter to the livelihood funding from *jihadi* networks, women receive entrepreneurship training (Varagur 2017). The Institute for International Peacebuilding (IIPB; known by the Indonesian name Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian or YPP in it English acronym) gives small business loans to women whose husbands are out of prison. Both programs are small-scale and must rely on non-governmental funding as convicted terrorists do not trust the government and particularly do not trust the counterterrorism agency (BNPT), but private donors are hard to come by due to fears of possibly financing terrorism by supporting terrorism convicts or their families (Varagur 2017).

While these programs are laudable, the interventions are still framed as enabling the wife in supporting the husband to keep him from returning to VE. The underpinning of these programs is that while the husband gets access to de-radicalization programming in prison there is not similar programming for his wife who needs to support him when he finishes his sentence. Thus, there is a need to support the wife so she can support her released husband. Yet, what if the wife is more radical? What if the couple became involved in VE due to her ideology, or they both came to it separately and met in a VE network, like Indonesia's recent would-be female suicide bombers? While Indonesia is a patriarchal society, and women's autonomy is more limited than men's, as evidenced by the 2017 Wahid Foundation, UN Women and LSI survey, CVE programming should also respond to the possibility that some women may be involved in VE of their own volition, perhaps even encouraging their husbands to join VE networks.

Local organizations have realized that women play considerable roles in not only the support and propagation of VE networks but also increasingly in operational roles, which signifies the need to address women's involvement in VE directly. These organizations believe that women look to operational roles in VE networks as a way to be active on a par with men, rather than serving subservient roles or reproduction focused-roles (Borpujari 2017). Asian Muslims Action Network (AMAN) and Rumah Kita Bersama are two organizations harnessing the experience and knowledge of Indonesia's women ulama to reach out to women involved in VE networks. The idea is that "women have an advantage that their male counterparts don't: the experience of being a woman, trying to establish herself in a patriarchal world", and this can be used as a catalyst in countering extremist views (Borpujari 2017). Rumah Kita Bersama is developing a curriculum for women ulama from areas where there have been arrests of extremists. The idea, like other Indonesian groups, is to work with the families of jailed extremists, but the difference is the involvement of women ulama and acknowledgement of women's active operational roles in VE.

Several Indonesian organizations, particularly those aligned with NU, such as ALIMAT, Fatayat, Fahmina, Rahima, and the Wahid Foundation, have focused on broader programs promoting gender equality and women's rights in Islam as a means of countering the gendered ideologies spread by VE supporters. Many of these efforts focus on economic empowerment, while others focus on redefining the role of women within Muslim families, Islam and women's rights, and empowering women as religious and community leaders. One example of Muslim women's leadership is the recent congress of Indonesian women *ulama* (now called KUPI) held in Cirebon in 2017, where *fatwa* were issued against child marriage, sexual violence and environmental degradation (Wardah 2017).

Wahid Foundation's savings group *Koperasi Cinta Damai* (KCD) launched in 2013 in West Java and has reached 2,000 women in through business units and small capital loans. The aim of the program is both economic empowerment and "building a sense of respect for differences… reinforcing religious tolerance in the society" (Wahid Foundation n.d.). The KCD facilitated by the Wahid Foundation meet weekly and learn about small business development and financial management with women of various social and religious backgrounds. For the past year, UN Women has supported the groups with capital for loans (Demolis 2017). The KCD also started a laundry business called One Laundry to increase women's economic empowerment in Bojongsari. Women involved in the laundry project play roles from washing to serving as marketing executives (Wahid Foundation 2017).

Wahid Foundation and the UN Women "Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities"[38] program have launched *Kampung Damai*, funded by the Government of Japan, to create 30 model peace villages. The villages are spread throughout Central, East and West Java. The theory of change is that empowering women will lead to social cohesion and peaceful communities which will lead to preventing violent extremism. The idea is to encourage women's roles in inclusive social and economic activities beginning with peace within the family and then collectively deciding guidelines for the community, as an inclusive, interfaith endeavor. Women Without Borders (WWB), a Vienna-based INGO, began promoting Mothers' Schools in Indonesia in 2013 (BBC Indonesia 2016). Indonesian women's activists have adapted the model to local conditions, and in 2016 inaugurated a "Parenting for Peace-Mother School Indonesia program in Jember, East Java, a region chosen for its large migrant worker population, with the aim of encouraging participants to spread its teachings and attend to the issue of children left behind by migrating parents. Program participants, who include women police, members of Islamic women's groups, and women migrant workers, are taught how to strengthen their bonds with their adolescent children but also how to identify and respond to early signs of youth radicalization (Jatim Times 2016).

These civil society programs acknowledge that the drivers leading women to participate in VE are not purely ideological, social, or economic in nature but are instead multi-dimensional. Programs that work to promote women's equality, economic empowerment, and interfaith tolerance, as many of the Indonesian civil society-led interventions do, focus on the interconnected push and pull factors involved in women's engagement with VE.

Indonesia has also seen an increase in the number of independent filmmakers addressing the issue of VE as a central or sub-plot, including *3 Doa, 3 Cinta* (Three Prayers, Three Loves) starring major Indonesian film stars Dian Sastrowardoyo and Nicholas Saputra, the documentary *Jihad Selfie*, and *Mata Tertutup* starring Jajang C. Noer and directed by the well-known Garin Nugroho. In Mata Tertutup (The Blindfold) Nugroho used research from Muhammadiyah's Maarif Institute to create the vignettes in the

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[38] UN Women's Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities program is supported by the Government of Japan, and includes research on VE and gender in Indonesia, technical support to the National Agency for Combating Terrorism to create a gender-sensitive National Action Plan to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism (UN Women 2018a).

film. Two of the three vignettes in the film are told from the vantage point of women involved in VE, one whose daughter was abducted by a VE group while she was in the process of going through a divorce, and one who was trying to discover her own identity and ended up joining an Indonesian VE group as a recruiter. She later became disillusioned by the roles offered to women (Lehmann 2012). Films like these show real and fictional stories that depict women's roles in VE as complex and contextualized by issues such as motherhood, divorce, identity and Indonesian gender roles. They provide powerful examples of the role of popular media in countering the narratives that help drive VE.

3.12 CONCLUSION

While the past few years have seen an increase in Indonesian women playing active roles as combatants and terrorist plotters, there has also been an increase in CVE efforts targeted at women and focusing on broader understandings of gender equality in Islam and Indonesian society. These efforts acknowledge the role women play in society and work to further empower women to be effective agents in preventing radical extremism at the village and household level. Yet CVE efforts in Indonesia need to also realize the role of women as active agents of extremism and work to prevent women's radicalization as well as support women in preventing radicalization of their families and communities.

More attention needs to be paid to men's experience of gender roles and pressures to fulfil such roles as an entry point for VE recruitment. Further research on the intersection of Indonesian normative gender roles and recruitment to VE networks would allow for more targeted P/CVE programming aimed at not only general improvement in gender equality but specifically at the gendered dynamics that can become causative pathways to VE.

4. CASE STUDY: KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan is an important case study to examine issues of gender and VE in a post-Soviet, majority Muslim, Central Asian republic. While it is the most democratic of the Central Asian republics, Kyrgyzstan also has the distinction of having the largest number of nationals in the region travelling to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS. With a reported 863 people emigrating from Kyrgyzstan to become foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq from 2011 to June 2016, Kyrgyzstan is the largest contributor to the Syrian conflict in the region, both per capita and in total numbers.[39] As of the end of 2016, over 20% or 188 of those who travelled to join ISIS were women (Speckhard et al. 2017: 4). When travel from Kyrgyzstan to Syria was at its highest point, one in four Kyrgyz leaving for Syria were women (UN Women 2017b).

Kyrgyzstan has witnessed domestic attacks by VE actors and Kyrgyz citizens have committed violent attacks abroad. The terrorists involved in the 2017 St. Petersburg Metro attack, the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, and the 2016 Istanbul airport attack all had links to Kyrgyzstan (Yeginsu and Callimachi 2016; Nechepurenko and MacFarquhar 2017). Domestic attacks by violent extremists including a 2016 suicide bomb attack on the Chinese embassy in Bishkek. Local data shows over 400 people in prison for terrorist and extremist crimes,[40] a five-fold increase from 2010 (UNODC 2018). It is no surprise that VE in this Central Asian republic has become a concern for donors, the Kyrgyzstan government, religious and civil society organizations, neighboring countries and ordinary Kyrgyz citizens.

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[39] MSI interview with an official from the State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA) put the number of Kyrgyz citizens who traveled to Syria and Iraq at over 1,000 (interview, April 4 2018).

[40] This does not necessarily mean violent extremism, as holding Hizb ut-Tahrir pamphlets can be enough to trigger a conviction in Kyrgyzstan under article 299 of the Criminal Code ('inciting national, racial, sectarian, or interfaith strife'). Hizb ut-Tahrir has been banned in Kyrgyzstan since 2003.

Kyrgyzstan is home to multiple groups who may be ripe for recruitment by VE networks, including the under- and unemployed (particularly youth), the ethnic Uzbek minority in the south of the country, and migrant workers in Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey. Coupled with low literacy levels and low levels of educational attainment, perceptions of the lack of opportunity in these communities may lead to the positive reception of ISIS messaging and propaganda (SFCG 2015: 5; Speckhard et al. 2017). Corruption is also a major issue in Kyrgyzstan, which ranks 154th out of 176 countries on Transparency International's 2012 corruption perceptions index (Martini 2013).

A considerable number of the Kyrgyz foreign fighters in Syria are from the Uzbek minority community. The Kyrgyzstan government estimates that 70 percent of Kyrgyz in Syria are ethnic Uzbeks (State Department 2016). The overthrow of President Bakiyev in 2010 was accompanied by inter-ethnic violence targeted primarily at ethnic Uzbek communities in southern Kyrgyzstan. The violence displaced 400,000 ethnic Uzbeks, 111,000 of whom fled across the border into Uzbekistan. It also destroyed more than 2,800 homes and led to the deaths of 470, three quarters of whom were ethnic Uzbeks. More than three quarters of those detained were also ethnic Uzbeks (Zenn and Kuehnast 2014: 3; ICG 2016: 8; Equal Rights Trust 2016: IX, 135). Although Uzbeks accounted for most of the deaths and victims of violence, 24 of the 27 individuals accused of murder were Uzbek (Equal Rights Trust 2016: 136). There are credible accusations of torture and ill-treatment of ethnic Uzbeks during detention following the 2010 violence (Equal Rights Trust 2016: 138).[41] The unresolved grievances of this conflict, along with perceptions of ongoing social inequality and discrimination among ethnic Uzbek citizens of Kyrgyzstan may be one push factor leading to their disproportionate recruitment by violent extremist groups (Zenn and Kuehnast 2014: 4; Speckhard et al. 2017: 18).[42] There is also a state narrative that frames those attracted to VE as Uzbeks and vice versa, which has been adopted by the general public (Mercy Corps 2016: 16), further increasing their marginalization.

Ethnic divisions are one of many major social fault lines in Kyrgyzstan. After almost 30 years of transitioning from 70 years of Soviet rule, Kyrgyzstan remains divided between those upholding Soviet-style secularism and those who view Islam as increasingly important to personal and national identity (Zenn and Kuehnast 2014: 1, 11). This divide leads to perceptions that outward expressions of piety are linked to extremist views on the one hand, and that religious people are targeted by the state because of their religiosity on the other. Official rhetoric and actions by security forces lump violent, non-violent, and political and apolitical groups together as a threat to the nation and as 'bad Islam' (McBrien 2006: 55, 62; Tromble 2014). This is also present in policy and academic work, as definitions of extremism are unclear and distinctions are not made between violent and non-violent actions and rhetoric (cf. ICG 2009; SFCG 2016: 12; Speckhard et al. 2017; Zenn and Kuehnast 2014).

4.1 WOMEN AND VE

Extremist groups have recruited and involved women in a variety of roles, including as companions of male fighters, replacements for their incarcerated or labor migrant husbands, as mothers in jihadi families, and as militants who draw less suspicion from authorities. Both ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek women experience similar types of recruitment into VE networks, including social media, and face-to-face methods through prayer groups, family ties and migration (ICG 2016: 7; Speckhard et al. 2017a: 8).

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[41] Human Rights Watch reports that some ethnic Kyrgyz also made allegations of torture and ill-treatment (2011: 1).

[42] The tendency to recruit and promote Kyrgyz-speaking imams over other ethnic groups and the state's reliance on Kyrgyz as the official language but also as the language of the *fatwas* and official instructions of the Muftiate (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan) may be part of this dynamic as well, as Uzbek speakers will have to look to non-Muftiate imams (SFCG n.d.: 25, 31).

Women's reasons for joining VE networks are diverse, but the Kyrgyzstan case study shows a strong degree of perceived marginalization amongst women interested in VE. Lack of economic and educational opportunities, lack of mobility, widespread domestic violence, and desire to live in the caliphate are some of the push and pull factors influencing Kyrgyz women (ICG 2016: 11).

Following the 2010 violence in the south, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)[43] began to more actively recruit women. While initially women were recruited as companions for IMU Central Asian fighters in Afghanistan, they later began to feature women in recruitment videos (Zenn and Kuehnast 2014: 6-7). Through IMU, and later ISIS, propaganda the idea of a caliphate that would include all Muslims resonated with ethnic Uzbeks who expressed feelings of marginalization and injustice in Kyrgyzstan (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 8). Ideological motivations and desires for inclusion and belonging seem to have been compounded by economic incentives to travel to Syria, particularly for poor and rural women (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 11). Rumors of "signing bonuses" for recruiting family members to ISIS may have led to multiple extended families traveling to Syria, led by women (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 10-11). However, available data on men and women from Kyrgyzstan who have traveled to Syria shows that for the majority, their socio-economic situation was not the key factor in the decision to leave for Syria (Esengul 2016).

As in other countries, social media and websites have become not only key tools in recruitment but have allowed women to engage as recruiters without leaving the home or interacting directly with men. Social media sites popular for recruitment include Youtube, Facebook, WhatsApp and Russian social networks Odnoklassniki and VKontakte, popular among migrant workers. Two Kyrgyz women in Jalal-Abad were sentenced in 2016 to prison terms of six and seven years for attempted recruitment of another Kyrgyz woman to travel to Syria to join ISIS (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2016). Social media communication over WhatsApp has also been cited as a method of recruiting young women to come to Syria as brides (Speckhard et al. 2017: 10).

But ISIS did not only target fighters and brides through online recruitment campaigns in Kyrgyzstan. SFCG staffers found that ISIS targeted women in medicine. Women studying in medical school must spend more years in school and often remained unmarried after 25 – by which time marriage is expected. These women are marginalized by Kyrgyz society and their own families, but they are welcomed by ISIS (Seldin 2015). Several young women have been apprehended at Osh airport in southern Kyrgyzstan, en route to Syria. According to SFCG, those detained gave explanations for wanting to travel to ISIS territory such as "access to 'halal husbands' and 'free diapers,' as well as the opportunity to play empowering functions like 'medical nurses and snipers'" (SFCG 2017).

Kyrgyzstani security officials believe that almost all women traveling to Syria were either part of a family unit or following their spouses to Syria, rather than leaving for Syria to become brides (Speckhard et al. 2017: 10). Law enforcement officials and government authorities in Kyrgyzstan tend to view women involved in extremist networks as duped or seduced into a life of VE by their husbands or families (Speckhard et al. 2017: 10). As extremists' views of gender roles are seen in opposition to Soviet ideals of gender equality and the emancipated woman, explanations of women's involvement in VE groups often center on coercion (McBrien and Pelkmans 2008: 93). The dominant stereotype used by government officials is that of the traditional obedient wife who travels to Syria with her husband rather than of her own volition (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 10). Due to this prevailing view, although involvement in foreign conflicts is a criminal offense in Kyrgyzstan, women returnees from Syria are often not judged as harshly as their husbands and may not be imprisoned. Of the three known women who have

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[43] The IMU is declared a terrorist organization by the US government and has carried out attacks in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Zeen and Kuehast 2014: 6).

returned from ISIS, only one is in prison (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 6). For women returnees, a return to the community where they face stigma and the potentially inability to remarry or find acceptance into their parents' or in-laws' homes could lead to re-recruitment by VEOs (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 11, 14).

4.2 LABOR MIGRATION

Labor migration is a major source of income for Kyrgyzstan, with remittances accounting for 30% of GDP in 2014 (ICG 2016). This puts Kyrgyzstan in third place globally for the percentage of GDP derived from remittances (Beishenaly 2016). Labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan travel primarily to Russia, followed by Kazakhstan and Turkey. In 2015, there were officially 500,000 Kyrgyzstani migrants in Russia (Beishenaly 2016). While official statistics are unreliable, recent estimates have put labor migrants at 10 to 20% of the entire population (not just of the labor force), with 50,000 leaving the country annually for work abroad and up to 1,000,000 involved in labor migration (FIDH 2016: 4).

Labor migration is gendered, with men constituting a majority of Kyrgyzstan's labor migrants. This significantly alters rural and town dynamics, as women, children and the elderly are left behind while men migrate domestically or abroad for work (Ismailbekova 2014: 375). Women left behind in agricultural areas take on considerable roles in caregiving and domestic tasks as well as in livestock tending and agricultural work traditionally performed by men (Muldoon and Casabonne 2017: 5). In addition to their household and farm work, women left behind by migrating spouses handle finances and make family decisions that would otherwise fall to men (Muldoon and Casabonne 2017: vii).

While abroad, men may take a second wife or divorce their wife at home in Kyrgyzstan (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 8). Many women are involved in Islamic marriages (*nikah*) that are religious marriages but are not state-sanctioned or registered. Thus, when they divorce, they can be expelled from their in-laws' house without any rights over property, alimony or child support (IWPR 2017; FIDH 2016: 40-41). The combination of Islamic marriages and migration creates an additional vulnerability for women when only one spouse is involved in migration, as their husbands may easily divorce them while abroad leaving them with no financial or social support (FIDH 2016: 40-41; ICG 2016: 11). Women in this situation may be particularly vulnerable to exploitation; children left behind by migrating parents are also vulnerable (FIDH 2016: 49). This can make those left behind by migration easy targets for VE recruiters (ICG 2016: 11).

While labor migration from Kyrgyzstan has traditionally involved male laborers, the feminization of migration has increased in recent years. Official Russian figures from 2016 show that 223,073 Kyrgyz citizens in Russia are women, accounting for 40% of Russia's official Kyrgyz migrant community (FIDH 2016: 4). Some reports claim that married women may be forced into migrant work by the in-laws, some with their husbands remaining at home unemployed (Speckhard, et al. 2017a: 10). While abroad, unaccompanied female migrants may be victims of sexual violence. They may also be involved in premarital or extra-marital relationships due to their relative social freedom as migrants, which may leave them vulnerable to terrorist recruitment through coercion and blackmail or emotional and financial distress (Speckhard et al. 2017b: 26). When female migrants return to Kyrgyzstan, unmarried women may choose to remain in cities rather than returning to their native villages, afraid of losing their independence or being stereotyped as 'easy' or other negative stereotypes of migrant women (UN Women 2017a: 59). They may also be vulnerable to recruitment by VE networks as they remain outside of their family homes but are also limited in access to finance and jobs in the Kyrgyz economy, making it difficult to deploy skills and capital gained abroad once they return to Kyrgyzstan (UN Women 2017a: 59).

While women are affected by men's labor migration, taking on agricultural or wage labor at home, the recent feminization of migration from Kyrgyzstan has challenged traditional gender norms that view

women's roles as primarily in the domestic sphere and men's roles as breadwinners for the family. Men left behind by their migrant wives may be more active in childcare – seen as traditionally a woman's duty – while living in a social milieu that has expectations of the performance of masculinity (Muldoon and Casabonne 2017: vii). Men left behind may also be easily recruited by VE groups using local conceptions of masculinity, drawing gender ideologies of men as breadwinners and offering socio-economic incentives.

Both male and female migrant laborers experience mistreatment, low wages and job insecurity, as an estimated 65% of all migrants are working in Russia illegally (ICG 2010: 5).[44] Estranged from social networks, migrants may be easy targets for extremist recruiters (State Department 2016). In fact, the Kyrgyz government has stated its belief that most Kyrgyzstani violent extremists are radicalized abroad (State Department 2016), although evidence confirming this is thin. For those experiencing mistreatment and danger in their host country, VE recruiters' offers of housing and financial assistance may seem competitive with remaining in a tough situation abroad (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 8).

4.3 RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR EDUCATION

After 70 years of Soviet rule and official policies of atheism, Kyrgyzstan's Muslim communities have comparatively weak religious knowledge. However, weak religious knowledge is not only a problem amongst Kyrgyzstan's practicing Muslims. A 2015 SFCG survey found that a lack of religious education amongst Kyrgyzstan's secular communities led to stereotypes "causing radical sentiments towards religious representatives…some respondents noted that 'extremism is the very religion of Islam'" (SFCG 2015: 5).

The secular education system has experienced significant decline since independence from the Soviet Union. Corruption occurs on the part of students and educators, where educators are underqualified and have gained their positions through bribes or personal connections and students are able to pay for grades and degrees. This leaves an education system where the degrees are not equal to the level and quality of education received, and the available jobs in the country do not match the educational qualifications, which contributes greatly to labor migration and unemployment (Beishenaly 2016). In ethnic Uzbek areas, education is provided in Uzbek language through secondary school. However, while previously offered in Uzbek, state exams necessary to enter university are only available in Russian and Kyrgyz since 2014, significantly diminishing opportunities for Uzbek speakers who are not fluent in Kyrgyz or Russian (Equal Rights Trust 2016: 2).

Religious youth, the most visible of whom are women who wear modest clothing and head coverings, face discrimination even when they are university graduates (ICG 2016: 3). This is particularly the case in accessing education for post-pubescent girls. There is a "verbal" headscarf prohibition in secondary schools, but it is inconsistently enforced, and after advocacy in 2011 there was another "verbal" agreement permitting the *hijab* (ICG 2016: 6; IWPR 2009; Commercio 2015: 544). As *hijab*-wearing young women face discrimination in school many families choose to withdraw their children altogether (ICG 2016: 6).

Leaving school early contributes to early marriage, as women have few employment options outside of the home without education. Likewise, parents may be less willing to invest in educating their daughters

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[44] Central Asians can enter Russia and Kazakhstan without a visa. They are required to register upon entering the country and receive a temporary registration card which does not grant the bearer any employment rights. However, there are national and municipal quotas for migrant labor in Kazakhstan and Russia that can enable a percentage of Kyrgyz migrants to work legally (ICG 2010: 5).

as they will join their husbands' families and contribute to their household and family line after marriage (Saferworld, n.d.). Nationwide, in 2006 12.2% of women aged 20-49 were married before their 18th birthday, increasing to 28.4% of women without a secondary school education, with much higher rates of underage marriage in some parts of the country (World Bank 2012: 11-12).

Once young women are married, they join their husband's families, as Kyrgyzstan is highly patriarchal society which follows patrilineal descent and is patrilocal, with women moving into their husband's family home after marriage and living with their in-laws (Ismailbekova 2014). If a new bride wants to continue her education or work outside the home, she requires approval and support not only by her husband, but also her in-laws. Yet, childcare services, highly accessible under the Soviet system, have declined greatly since independence and most kindergarten programs have been closed. Data from 2009 shows that less than 20 percent of pre-school age children are enrolled in childcare programs (World Bank 2012: 17). This further constricts women's mobility to the domestic sphere as they are re-entrenched in childcare duties.

However, as a pious and modest woman is seen as a good daughter-in-law (ICG 2009: 7), women are often permitted to attend prayer groups or Quranic study groups outside of the home. However, since the Muftiate, the highest Islamic body in Kyrgyzstan, no longer has a women's department (it was closed in 2014), women interested in learning more about Islam often turn to prayer groups from banned organizations or groups with VE ideologies (ICG 2016: 12, 15). While men can pursue religious knowledge in madrassas and mosques, women may be limited to the Internet (Toktonaliev 2018). While Islamic NGOs and NGOs that work with religious women are growing, they are underfunded and under-supported by the Spiritual Directorate of Kyrgyzstan's Muslims (ICG 2016: 12). As women do outreach to other women, state religious organizations need to increase women's leadership and numbers of women staff to provide services to religious women.

4.4 PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women in Kyrgyzstan is normalized, with high rates of domestic violence, underage and forced marriages, and the lack of protection from violence by the Kyrgyz state continues even when women leave the country as migrant workers (cf. HRW 2015). Recent research found that there is a link between lack of protection and radicalization. The International Crisis Group reported that the "oppression and violence some women face at home is a significant reason why they seek religious outlets, which sometimes lead to radical and extremist groups" (ICG 2016).

Since 2012, Internet shaming of Kyrgyz women migrant workers by abducting them abroad, videotaping them naked and/or beating them, and posting the videos online has been perpetrated by Kyrgyz men who call themselves "patriots." These men attack and Internet-shame Kyrgyz women for violating the norms of Kyrgyz womanhood by liaising with non-Kyrgyz men (FIDH 2016: 38). In 2016, when three of these so-called "patriots" were arrested in Russia - the first arrests for this sort of behavior - a high ranking government official from the same ministry that arrested the patriots posted about the incident on their Facebook page. He wrote: "The view of knives and stun guns should scare anybody who has seen these videos. But naturally, as a brother and future father, I cannot support the lifestyle that some of our young women lead, which provokes a strong reaction amongst Kyrgyz countrymen" (FIDH 2016: 38).

Bride-kidnapping, while formally outlawed in Kyrgyzstan, has been revived since independence as a 'national tradition', with consensual and non-consensual kidnapping accounting for up to half of ethnic Kyrgyz marriages in the early 2000s (Ismailbekova 2014: 380; Kleinbach, Ablezova, and Aitieva 2005). In 2013, the sentence for bride kidnapping increased from three years to ten years (UN Women 2013). More recent data from a UNFPA nationwide survey in 2016 showed that the practice continues, with

one-fifth of marriages in Kyrgyzstan the result of bride kidnapping (consensual and non-consensual). In some areas, non-consensual kidnapping of brides accounts for up to 21 percent of marriages (Muldoon and Casabonne 2017: 8). UN Women uses figures obtained from local NGO Women Support Centre that puts rates of non-consensual bride-kidnapping at 11,800 per year before the increased sentence in 2013, with 2,000 women reporting rape during the kidnapping (UN Women 2013).

In recent years there has also been a revival of the custom of widows remarrying their husband's next-of-kin (Handrahan 2004: 212). In families involved in VE networks, this means that women may not be able to leave when their husbands are killed, leaving little economic or social space to break away from VE networks.

4.5 GENDER NORMS AND VE

Much of the social restrictions placed on unmarried women come from ideas about a woman's "value" on the "marriage market" relative to the expense to the family of educating a woman or caring for her as a dependent if she remains unmarried (UN Women 2017a). This creates a gender dichotomy where standards for women's behavior to be a "good wife" and "good daughter-in-law" are high, but the expectation of a good husband is significantly lower, as the husband's family dictates the terms of what constitutes a good wife. A good husband, on the other hand, is described in recent UN Women research as someone who "does not drink, does not smoke and does not beat" (UN Women 2017a: 28).

Gender roles for men place strong emphasis on marriage and the continuation of patrilineal families. In 1990, only 0.1 percent of men over 50 (0.2 percent of women) had never been married (Ibraeva et al. 2011: 5-6). Some scholars have argued that bride-kidnapping has become strongly associated with Kyrgyz masculinity in the post-Soviet era (Handrahan 2004). Men who may be afraid of rejection of their marriage offer or who have little socialization with women may instead choose to kidnap a bride (Skoch 2010). However, others note the socio-economic motives for the practice, particularly the lowering of the bride price paid to the bride's family due to the kidnapping placing the groom's family in a better bargaining position (cf. Muldoon and Casabonne 2017: 8-9).

The power struggle between secularism and public expressions of piety in Kyrgyzstan often involves women's bodies, clothing and behavior as a key battleground. During the Soviet era the state condemned outward, formal trappings of religious expression, promoting atheism over Islam. Yet, expressions of Muslim identity through life-cycle rituals and festivals were seen as central to national identity, and to be Kyrgyz became synonymous with being Muslim, but not necessarily religious (McBrien and Pelkmans 2008: 90; McBrien 2006: 69). Under Soviet rule, "Muslimness" became another ethno-national identity (McBrien and Pelkmans 2008: 88). Forms of dress such as the *hijab* and other outward expressions of piety such as regular prayer challenged local understandings of being Muslim that equated it to ethno-national identity (McBrien and Pelkmans 2008: 92).

There is thus a tendency on the part of the state and secular society to link all forms of non-Hanafi Islam to potential radicalization and extremism. This is epitomized in practices such as billboards in Bishkek depicting women wearing the *niqab* in a negative light (ICG 2016: 14; BBC 2016), or commonly held assumptions that "certain styles of clothing and bodily appearance indicated membership in certain 'radical groups'" (McBrien 2006: 64). The Equal Rights Trust reported that this is the case for Muslim men with beards or wearing non-Kyrgyz types of Islamic dress who may be arbitrarily detained or harassed by police and experience significant employment discrimination (2016: 124, 127). Women who wear the *hijab* also have difficulties in retaining employment that allows them to wear religious dress (2016: 127).

Women's share of the workforce according to 2015 data is approximately 40%, which has dropped from 44% in 2005 (Equal Rights Trust 2016: 175). This could be explained by the feminization of migration expanding during this time, or discrimination towards women in religious dress at a time when it is increasingly practiced by Kyrgyzstani women. Without knowing the exact cause, it is indicative of a downward trend of women's participation in the Kyrgyz workforce.

Local gender norms affect men's trajectories in extremist ideology and extremist networks as well. Normative gender roles that place emphasis on men as the family breadwinner provide an excellent entry point for ISIS recruiters amongst Kyrgyzstan's unemployed or underemployed men (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 9; SFCG 2015: 5). While Kyrgyzstan's unemployment rate is officially 8%, the true rate is likely much higher but is masked by labor migration and seasonal employment in agriculture and other sectors (ICG 2016: 4). Amongst young people, the employment rate is officially 14.7% in 2015 (Beishenaly 2016). Particularly for ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan who felt disenfranchised after the 2010 violence, Zenn and Kuehnast found that "the prospect of becoming a mentor in a militant group and therefore 'being a somebody'" was appealing to those who felt deprived of other prospects (2014: 4).

In addition to men joining extremist groups due to a combination of economic and gender role pressures, a 2017 UN Women study found that: "Women left behind by their husbands can face dire economic, social and legal consequences and may follow them into ISIS for that reason as well" (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 10). Women's labor force participation rate was 48.3% in 2016 compared with men's at 75.4% (ILO 2016). This was down significantly from its recorded peak in 1995 at 55.7% (World Bank 2017). Which means that unmarried women may be in financial situations which may leave them more vulnerable to recruitment by VE networks. It also means that societal shifts in gender norms from the fall of the Soviet Union may have been responsible for the decline in women's labor force participation rates over the same period. Thus, gender roles of both men and women allow for VE groups to capitalize on the cultural idea of the male breadwinner, (and perhaps also the precarious social and legal situation of unregistered Islamic marriages), in winning over Kyrgyzstani recruits of both genders.

While ethnic Uzbeks may have experienced disenfranchisement in Kyrgyzstan, their resentment towards ethnic Kyrgyz includes religious and gender framing. Zenn and Kuehnast note that "they publicly questioned the Islamic credentials of the Kyrgyz and noted that many Kyrgyz women do not wear an Islamic headscarf (*hijab*) or pray five times a day" (2014: 4). The linking of religious expression to ethnicity further complicates the CVE landscape in Kyrgyzstan, as Kyrgyz may be seen by the state and other CVE actors as less in need of programming, or Uzbek areas may be militarized or under increased surveillance due to perceptions that ethnicity and religious expression are linked to extremism.

4.6 CVE AND GENDER

Following independence, in the 1990s and 2000s, local women's rights organizations had little if any engagement with "religious" women. While donors were active in supporting gender equality work, this often did not include addressing women's interest in Islam and the day-to-day lives of poor, rural, religious women (ICG 2009). Gender equality and women's political participation were perceived by many to be programming for elite women, run by elite women. At the same time, state officials and the Muftiate also were not responsive to the needs of religious women. Childcare and early childhood education were drastically cut, and the Muftiate eliminated its staffed Department for Women and Youth during reforms in 2014, while more than doubling its total staff (Hoare 2014: 8; ICG 2016: 15; SFCG n.d.: 25). The government continues to hold meetings on VE and CVE that are not inclusive of women, and does not engage with women religious leaders (Speckhard et al. 2017a: 14). The government's official religious policy, the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere, was adopted in

2014, and does not include language about women's involvement (Toktonaliev 2018). Islamic organizations and faith-based NGOs tried to fill this gap in services and outreach to religious women, but there were diverse ideologies motivating these groups. There are signs in recent years, however, that donor agencies and faith-based organizations are starting to realize the need to engage religious women in a wide range of programs, including CVE.

As key issues in CVE in Kyrgyzstan are lack of secular and religious education, lack of employment opportunities which leads to out-migration, patriarchal gender roles with often dominant or violent depictions of masculinity and submissive depictions of femininity, state corruption and lack of services, socio-economic constraints, and disenfranchisement of ethnic minority communities, CVE programming in Kyrgyzstan is most often focusing on one of these issues, often combined with a peacebuilding, tolerance promoting, or moderate Islam component. Below are a few examples of recent CVE programming in Kyrgyzstan.

A recent government initiative is a collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the State Committee for Religious Affairs (SCRA) to develop a high school curriculum on 'moderate' Islam. The curriculum will also include a module on how to identify terrorist recruitment tactics (State Department 2016).

From 2013-2016 SFCG implemented a program funded by the UK Government on "Reducing Violent Religious Extremism and Promoting Peace in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia." It sought particularly to provide a level playing field amongst stakeholders and thus involve women and youth (SFCG 2016: 7). Key successes included the formation of a Consultative Working Group linking security agencies, and religious leaders, including women religious leaders; a Central Asia Forum for Religious Women Leaders; as well as community level programming to discuss Islamic teachings and dynamics of radicalization, particularly focusing on women and youth (SFCG 2016: 8, 16). The Ramadan Drive is a SFCG program that focuses specifically on women and youth. The Drive involved law enforcement and government officials holding discussions on extremism, CVE methods, and religious themes (Abakirov and Menon 2015).

The Women's Progressive Public Association "Mutakallim" is a faith-based NGO working on rights of Muslim women. Mutakallim combines community level education on recruitment tactics of VE networks with women's rights, inter-ethnic community peacebuilding and women's economic empowerment. Mutakallim also works in a mentoring capacity with women identified as vulnerable to VE (Speckhard et al. 2017: 15). Mutakallim ran successful advocacy campaigns calling for women to be allowed to wear the *hijab* in passport photos and in school (Commercio 2015: 550). The organization has also worked closely with women inmates and released convicts who often have considerable trouble re-integrating in society and finding employment, which leads to reoffending (IWPR 2017), and could lead to recruitment by VE networks.

The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office began a program in 2017 through four UN agencies (UNODC, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA) to promote women's and girls' roles in P/CVE, in addition to community policing (UN 2017). The OSCE office is also working on a platform for improving coordination between state agencies and international NGOs working in Kyrgyzstan on programming broadly in the religious sphere, including CVE (OSCE 2018).

Umma, Kyrgyzstan's only Islamic lifestyle magazine, was founded in 2015 by a woman editor-in-chief. *Umma* advocates for women's rights and challenges traditional views of submissive Muslim women, while trying to educate the Kyrgyzstani public about women's rights in Islam and the differences between traditional forms of Islam and extremism (Toktonaliev 2017). The magazine educates both young Muslim women about women's rights and educates the broader society about Islam as a modern religion that

favors education, progress and peace (Toktonaliev 2017). While not specifically addressing CVE, *Umma* addresses multiple intersecting issues shown by this study to be important drivers of VE and linked to women's participation in both VE and CVE.

4.7 CONCLUSION

Discussions of women's involvement in VE and CVE programming in Kyrgyzstan cannot be separated from broader discussions of widespread violence against women and patriarchal gender norms that permeate everyday life. The ideological vacuum left by the break-up of the Soviet Union after 70 years of Soviet rule has pitted secularists against Islam and there are now multiple competing ideologies for how leaders should act, how society should be organized and the roles that women should play in the domestic and public spheres.

Kyrgyzstan's poverty and lack of employment opportunities for women and youth, widespread government corruption, as well as the disenfranchisement of ethnic and linguistic minorities are also key components of the VE and CVE landscape. These issues can serve to present involvement in VE networks as a rational choice for women, at the same time, creating a national climate where women can be brought into VE networks against their will with impunity for actors involved in GBV. More research needs to be done on how these various issues intersect and whether certain parts of the country or certain population groups experience different push and pull factors leading into VE.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Asia region offers important lessons for understanding gender and VE as well as powerful examples of efforts to integrate gender more fully into CVE efforts. This study indicates several key areas for analytic and programmatic attention to strengthen the knowledge base on gender and VE in Asia and to ensure the effectiveness of gender and VE programming.

- **Local context matters**. As the diversity of Asian contexts demonstrates, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to CVE. Despite widespread stereotypes about the nature of VE threats or the motivations of women supporters, national and local contexts have distinct characteristics that must be assessed and understood before designing programming. For efforts to be effective, they must be locally relevant and tailored to meet the specific vulnerabilities and challenges of women and men, including attention to the gender dynamics of VE groups and the socio-cultural contexts in which they operate. While there are globally-recognized defined drivers of VE, including conflict and fragility, understanding how local gender dynamics shape grievances and the likelihood of individuals joining or resisting VE organizations is central to the development of long-term prevention efforts.
- **Regional dynamics also matter**. Often, gender and VE/CVE issues are viewed solely through local or country-level lenses. However, both the Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan cases demonstrate clearly that women are deeply embedded in regional dynamics, including cross-border VE networks and labor migration. The widespread use of online platforms for disseminating VE messaging also requires attention to the transnational nature of information flows. Broadening our gendered analytic lens to account for women's regional and global engagements is vital.
- **Collaboration is crucial**. The most effective gender and CVE efforts are those that are targeted and multi-dimensional, addressing both the immediate pull factors for VE and long-term alleviation of grievances that push women toward VE. This requires a comprehensive analytic approach to gender dynamics, as well as multi-sectoral approaches to intervention. More collaboration among CVE efforts and human rights, development, and Women, Peace, and Security efforts are needed. Research has demonstrated a connection between frequency of terror attacks and degree of human rights violations (Green and Proctor 2016), and there is

staunch support for approaching CVE efforts through a human rights lens (GCTF 2014; Huckerby 2015a; 2015b). Development is also a logical ally in the fight to prevent VE, with conflict, fragility, gender inequality, corruption and lack of access to resources and livelihoods widely agreed upon as drivers of VE for both women and men (Ladbury 2015; Anderlini, Oudraat and Milani 2017). Increased integration between CVE efforts and Women, Peace, and Security efforts are also promising, given the close relationship between VE and conflict and the WPS experience of convening women to address security challenges in their communities and countries. The WPS agenda argues for women's meaningful participation in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution, and calls for sustained attention to the unique ways in which men, women, boys, and girls are affected by conflict, including their risks and experiences of GBV.

- **Our knowledge base is lacking**. Currently, our understanding of VE and gender in Asian contexts is fragmented, and lacks established, effective methods of identifying and addressing the gender dynamics of VE through assessment, analysis, and monitoring and evaluation. Current analytic frameworks, including USAID frameworks for gender analysis and conflict assessment, do not include a robust focus on the intersection of gender and VE. To fully capture the gender dynamics of VE, comprehensive gender analysis is necessary. As the Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan cases demonstrate, programming is frequently implemented without thorough consideration of gender, or the specific needs, experiences and capacities of women, and programs working on push factors with the aim of influencing the enabling environment for VE face challenges with measuring the impact of their work on VE mitigation. USAID is well positioned to take a leadership role in developing and disseminating new frameworks for gender and VE analysis, and to ensure such tools are integrated into development strategy, project planning, and monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts. Gender and VE analytic frameworks should include not only an attention to women's roles and capacities, but an understanding of local, national and regional gender dynamics, as well as the impacts of current and past CVE programming on women, men, and cultural values of masculinity and femininity. There is also a clear need to mainstream an attention to gender into the monitoring and evaluation of purportedly "gender neutral" CVE programs, allowing for a greater understanding of their intended and unintended effects on women and for the ability to mitigate potential backlash.
- **Stereotypes of women hamper effectiveness**. Across the Asia region, including in the case study countries of Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, insufficient attention has been paid to the complex dynamics of women's support for VE. Frequently, the frameworks that are used to explain women's participation in VE fail to acknowledge women's agency, describing them as naive victims of manipulative recruiters or unthinking followers of powerful husbands and religious leaders. While it is of course necessary to understand the exploitation and inequality that women participants in VE groups experience, it is also important to gain a deeper understanding of the range of push factors that motivate them to join, including the intersection of gender with other forms of identity, such as ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status. Women who experience multiple forms of marginalization are more receptive to VE messaging, and indeed may actively choose to join VE groups in pursuit of economic well-being, as a means of combatting social or political inequality, or in response to perceived injustice. The stereotype of the impoverished, uneducated, disempowered woman victim continues to shape programmatic responses to VE, undercutting the effectiveness of CVE work.
- **An intersectional focus on diverse women's experiences and needs is lacking**. A majority of the existing knowledge base on gender and VE in Asia either fails to account for the diverse identity factors that intersect with gender, or considers these without sufficient analytic rigor, for example, by promoting homogenous images of "Muslim women" or "uneducated women." This makes it very difficult to gain a thorough understanding of how gender identity intersects in complex and context-dependent ways with age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, race, education levels, socio-economic status, or rural/urban location. We do have anecdotal data

from specific country contexts that indicates how women's experiences differ: for example, we know that ethnic Uzbek women in Kyrgyzstan are subject to discrimination not only based on gender but on ethnic identity, and we know that educated Indonesian women are more likely to be recruited to VEOs through high school and university religious groups whereas impoverished rural Indonesian women are more likely to be recruited through networks of women migrant laborers. However, we do not have robust data demonstrating how these intersectional factors shape women's support for VE, or their ability to safely and meaningfully participate in CVE programming. Intersectional analysis is needed both in given contexts, and on a regional level, to inform programming and ensure that its benefits are equitably distributed and its risks mitigated.

- **The development context is key**. Understanding women's roles in supporting VE requires attention to the development context. As USAID has long recognized, conflict-affected and fragile environments, as well as those rife with discrimination, inequality, corruption, repression and poor governance, provide the enabling conditions for extremism and violence to flourish. More recently, research has demonstrated that contexts with elevated levels of gender inequality are more prone to intrastate conflicts, which generate the grievances and operating space that help VE groups thrive. Addressing these development challenges, including the specific impacts they have on women, is crucial.
- **A gender equality focus is essential**. Efforts to combat VE can be strengthened by mainstreaming a robust emphasis on gender equality into CVE work, and increasing collaboration between CVE and gender equality and women's empowerment programs. In both Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, the messaging of VE groups draws upon long-standing local social norms that limit women's rights and roles, while at the same time promising women new opportunities to gain respect and protect themselves from GBV. While ensuring that women receive education and economic opportunities, that their rights are enhanced and respected (drawing on both Islam and democratic constitutions, where the latter exist), and that GBV is effectively addressed are not guarantees against VE, addressing these gendered drivers is a core aspect of minimizing the appeal of VE recruiting.
- **Attention to protecting women and girls is crucial**. A core pillar of the WPS agenda is the protection of women and girls, with the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 mandating that the USG "promote the physical safety, economic security, and dignity of women and girls" in contexts affected by conflict and VE. As this study has illustrated, women in Asian contexts marked by gender inequalities and high GBV prevalence are subject to increased risks of violence, insecurity, and degradation when they are recruited into VEOs. VE also endangers women by disseminating hyper-masculine messaging that attempts to legitimize restrictions on women's dress and behavior as well as violence against women to potential male recruits. More research is needed to understand what causal links may exist between gendered VE narratives and the vulnerabilities of women and girls in regions where such messaging has been broadly circulated. Increased collaboration between CVE programs and efforts to monitor and address GBV are important, as are efforts to incorporate a focus on positive masculinities into community-level and school- or youth-based CVE work. In addition, more analysis is needed to account for and mitigate the potential risks – including risks of violent backlash – that women face when participating in CVE efforts. Efforts to increase women's role in CVE activities should be accompanied by efforts to improve their status within the family and community, as one means of enhancing their safety.
- **Gender and CVE work faces challenges**. Much more needs to be done to support women as key actors in CVE work, and to address the challenges they face. The Asia region provides powerful examples of successful CVE efforts led by women's groups and directed towards women's capacities to provide early warning of the rise of VE in families and communities, to spread messages of peace and tolerance, and to promote resilience to extremist ideologies. However, these efforts face several challenges. Groups that focus on gender issues are often

poorly funded or ignored by state and CSO actors working on CVE. Divides also persist between secular women's rights groups and those working with religious women due to mutual suspicion and widespread social misunderstanding of the distinction between extremism and religiosity. In both Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, women's organizations have expressed concern that participating in VE work means collaborating with state security actors with a poor track record of respecting women's rights. Even when women's CVE efforts receive respect and assistance, they are often limited by assumptions about women as "natural peacemakers" whose proper social role is as mothers or wives tasked with mitigating the risk of family radicalization. Addressing these challenges, and opening new spaces for women to contribute their knowledge to policy and program design, can help accelerate the effectiveness of gender and VE efforts.

- **A stronger focus on broad social gender dynamics is promising**. More clarity is needed at the analytic and programmatic levels about the relationship between VE and gender dynamics. Often, discussions of gender in the VE/CVE field remain focused primarily on women's roles as participants in and mitigators of VE. While clearly these are critical issues, **what is often missing from the conversation is a focus on gender as a set of social and cultural norms and narratives shaping what masculinity and femininity means in a given context**. In both Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, hyper-masculinity – a social emphasis on male aggression, violence and power over women – helps drive VE, while stereotypical ideas of femininity as limited to home and family are strengthened and manipulated by VE narratives. Efforts to address the cultural aspects of gender dynamics by, for example, promoting "positive masculinity" or providing alternate religious or media narratives of femininity have demonstrated success in both the Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan contexts.
- Both the Indonesian and Kyrgyzstan cases point to **the importance of a deeper understanding of the dynamics of women's organizing around CVE**. In both cases, tensions between organizations working with religious women and secular women's rights groups, as well as the concerns of women's rights activists that CVE work involves collaborating with state actors with a poor track record of respecting women's rights, has undercut the potential effectiveness of gender and CVE efforts. Both countries also demonstrate the importance of opening religious and state institutions to women, and encouraging state and civil society actors to move away from the self-fulfilling prophecy of marginalizing women based on a failure to distinguish between their religiosity and VE support.

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