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INVISIBLE WOMEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings and Programming Guidance on the Gendered Dimensions of Return, Rehabilitation and Reintegration from Violent Extremism

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Front cover images (clockwise from top): A Bring Back Our Girls campaigner during a protest in Lagos, Nigeria (REUTERS/Akintunde Akinleye - stock.adobe.com); Yazidi woman and children outside her tent in Kanke refugee camp, Iraq (answer5/Shutterstock.com); Young woman practices embroidery in northeast Nigeria © European Union 2018 (Samuel Ochai); German woman at right-wing protest in Berlin, Germany (Paul Velasco/Shutterstock.com); View of war damage from Serekaniye, Syria (fpolat69/Shutterstock.com).

Back cover images (clockwise from top left): Woman holding her face in her hands; Pakistani women shelter under truck after flood (Hira Hashmey/UNDP Photo); Syrian women protest in the refugee camp of Idomeni, at the Greek border (Giannis Papanikos/Shutterstock.com).

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INVISIBLE WOMEN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings and Programming Guidance from the Report

2019

The full report including 7 chapters of sector-specific analysis and 7 examples of good practice can be accessed through UNDP's online publications library at undp.org and ICAN's website at icanpeacework.org.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report shows that women and girls are associated with violent extremism in complex and diverse ways. For disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to be effective, the counter-terrorism and PVE community must recognize their existence and adapt existing policies and practices to be gender-responsive for both men and women.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As 2019 dawns, the spectre of violent extremism remains at the forefront of the global peace and security discourse and practice. As the number of deaths due to terrorism continues to fall, decreasing by 27 percent from 2016 to 2017, a new set of challenges emerges: that of the disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration of men, women, boys and girls associated with violent extremist (VE) groups.[1] Meanwhile, with some 67 countries recording at least one death from terrorism in 2017, terrorism and violent extremism continue to be global issues demanding international coordination, policy and legal approaches.[2]

Often invisible in the eyes of international policy and law are the women and children associated with violent extremist groups. Reports have indicated that in northern Syria, Kurdish authorities are holding some 2,000 foreign women and children who were associated with ISIL.[3] In Northern Nigeria, thousands of women and girls associated with Boko Haram—some who joined voluntarily, others who were among those abducted—are housed in military camps for the displaced, at risk of sexual abuse and stigmatized by the communities from which they originally came.[4] Meanwhile in Kenya, Indonesia, Lebanon, Tunisia, across Western Europe and beyond, men and women affiliated with internationally designated terror organizations or other violent extremist (VE) groups seek to cross international borders as they attempt to return home, in some cases with children in tow.[5]

The joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) publication, Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Reintegration and Rehabilitation, is an effort to map the gaps and challenges pertaining to the reintegration and rehabilitation of women and girls associated with violent extremist movements and establish a preliminary evidence-base of good practices and approaches. The report and its methodology centralize the experiences of local civil society, in particular women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) who contributed to the report through interviews, dialogues, and case study profiles. The research emphasizes the necessity of integrated, multi-stakeholder approaches that enable state and civil society to work in tandem, based on the comparative advantages of each.

In every context, the research finds, gender dynamics play a critical role. Returning women and girls who are victims of sexual violence face additional stigma from their communities and have distinct psychosocial and health needs. Returning women suffer economic consequences, too: the widows of men who joined the ranks of Daesh in Iraq or Syria have assumed the burden of heading households, needing to earn incomes while singlehandedly caring for their children.[6] The absence of coherent, gender-sensitive policies may carry mortal implications, such as in Iraq, where the foreign widows of former Daesh fighters may face the death penalty regardless of their role in the movements.[7] The status of many children and orphans remains unknown.[8] Research shows that in Nigeria and elsewhere, if women return to their communities and face the lack of opportunity alongside the stigma of being affiliated with violent extremists, the risk of re-radicalization and re-recruitment increases.[9]

[1] The Institute for Economics and Peace. (2018), Global Terrorism Index 2018: measuring and understanding the impact of terrorism (available at: http://globalterrorismindex.org/).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ben Hubbard (2018), Wives and Children of ISIS: Warehoused in Syria, Unwanted Back Home (available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/04/world/middleeast/islamic-state-families-syria.html).
[4] UNICEF, 2016, In Nigeria's restive northeast, fate of thousands of abducted women remains unknown (available at: https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/04/526752-nigerias-restive-northeast-fate-thousands-abducted-women-remains-unknown-un and https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/more-1000-children-northeastern-nigeria-abducted-boko-haram-2013).
[5] European Parliament (2018), The Return of Foreign Fighters to EU Soil: Ex-Post Evaluation, (available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/621811/EPRS_STU(2018)621811_EN.pdf).
[6] Mujahid Abu al-Joud (2018, February 21), "Wives of 'muhajirin': who's your husband?". Open Democracy.
[7] Mina Aldroubi, M. (2018, February 9), "). Iraq sentences Turkish ISIL widow to death Court also issued life imprisonment to 10 women guilty of participating in acts of terror." Mina Aldroubi. The National, pp. 1–17.
[8] Trew, B. (2018, September 25). What becomes of the jihadi orphans?. The Independent (available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/isis-children-orphans-islamic-state-jihadis-mosul-zahour-a8550276.html).
[9] UNICEF, & International Alert. (2016),). "Bad blood": Perceptions of children born of conflict-related sexual violence and women and girls associated with Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria.

The report finds that there is still a lack of coherent national and international policies pertaining to the treatment of those returning from transnational violent extremist and terrorist groups.[10] Where the fate of women and children is concerned, there is an even wider chasm between on-the-ground realities and global policies. For years, women and children have been nearly absent from the literature on foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) as much of the information gathering and scholarship has lacked a gendered analysis.[11] The question of returning women and children brings additional challenges. For instance, determining whether they joined voluntarily or were forced to join, and the extent to which they perpetrated violence or acted as supporters and enablers.

Figure 1: Terminology referring to return, rehabilitation and reintegration varies widely

The absence of coherence in international policy is reflected in the lack of agreed terminology and priorities among the policy, academic and practitioner communities active in the fields of counter-terrorism, countering or preventing violent extremism (PVE) and peacebuilding. For some, the process is primarily legal and judicial and thus is framed as prosecution, sentencing, reintegration and rehabilitation (PRR).[12] For practitioners with experience from past demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) processes, the issues are better framed as disengagement from the group; rehabilitation of the individual, family and community; and reintegration into society. Meanwhile, frontline practitioners often point to the importance of deradicalization from the ideology of the movements as a key component in the process.[13]

The research makes clear that as the policy debates continue in the global arena, in communities across the world, the lives of ordinary people are in the balance. While many states and international entities continue to approach the issue of violent extremism, FTF and reintegration in a gender-blind manner, CSOs, particularly those rooted locally and led by women, have been the first to see and respond to the issues facing women who are associated with VE groups. From Indonesia to Nigeria, Pakistan to the Philippines, at the national and community levels, women-led CSOs are forging new practices and approaches to enable the safe and effective reintegration of women and girls into society. Although cultural and political contexts vary, the initiatives that CSOs have developed have similar holistic approaches tailored to the conditions of the people implicated.

The expertise of women-led CSOs is essential for ensuring national legislation and policies are effective and address the unique needs of women and girls in disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes. The importance of their participation in rehabilitation and reintegration processes, and in PVE more broadly, has been reiterated across global policy frameworks. For example, the Madrid Guiding Principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters clearly articulate the importance of working with civil society.[14] The UN Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism and UN Security Council Resolution 2242 also emphasize the need for partnership with women-led CSOs in efforts to prevent violent extremism.[15] However, the report finds that the perception among CSOs is that in the majority of cases these principles have not been translated into national

[10] Shephard, M. (2018, February). At least two Canadian women are among 800 foreign 'ISIS families' being held in legal limbo by Kurdish forces. The Toronto Star.
[11] Vidino, L. (2014, March). Foreign Fighters: An Overview of Responses in Eleven Countries. Center for Security Studies (CSS) ETH Zurich: 19; The Gendering of Counter-Terrorism. (2011). University of Oslo.
[12] UN Security Council. FACT SHEET: Resolution 2396 (2017) on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (Returnees and Relocators).
[13] Holmes, G., & Shtuni, A. (2010),). Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative. USIP Special Report. Stern, J. (2010). Deradicalization or Disengagement? Future Challenges in National Security and Law, II(4), 20.

policies, laws or practices. Instead of being seen as allies and contributors to the resolution of this complex challenge, CSOs experience a closing of civic space and face heightened financial, reputational and operational risk.[16]

Public attitudes, stigma and fear emerged in the research as central challenges to be considered in reintegration and rehabilitation efforts. In both domestic and international settings, return of women, girls, boys and men associated with VE groups is frequently paired with heightened levels of fear, anger and mistrust from communities. States are grappling with a difficult dilemma: on the one hand, they are responsible for protecting their citizens from the potential risk of violence and seeking justice for the victims of terror, while on the other they must guarantee effective due process and adherence to human rights laws, including the protection of the rights of children. To make matters more complicated, governments and international institutions also have to ensure that members of local communities do not perceive that returnees and those associated with VE groups are receiving preferential treatment or services. In other words, programming for the reintegration of women and children associated with VE groups must be anchored, owned and beneficial to the wider community. Striking the right balance is extraordinarily complex and challenging but must be thoroughly considered in the design of reintegration and rehabilitation processes, law and policies.

The research underscores the need for a holistic, gender-sensitive approach to reintegration and rehabilitation that addresses not only those returning, but also the stigma, threats and vulnerabilities experienced by family and community members associated with violent extremism. The report critically analyses existing policy frameworks and legal processes and presents a preliminary mapping of key elements of a holistic approach to reintegration, including security, public awareness, ideological, psychosocial and economic components.

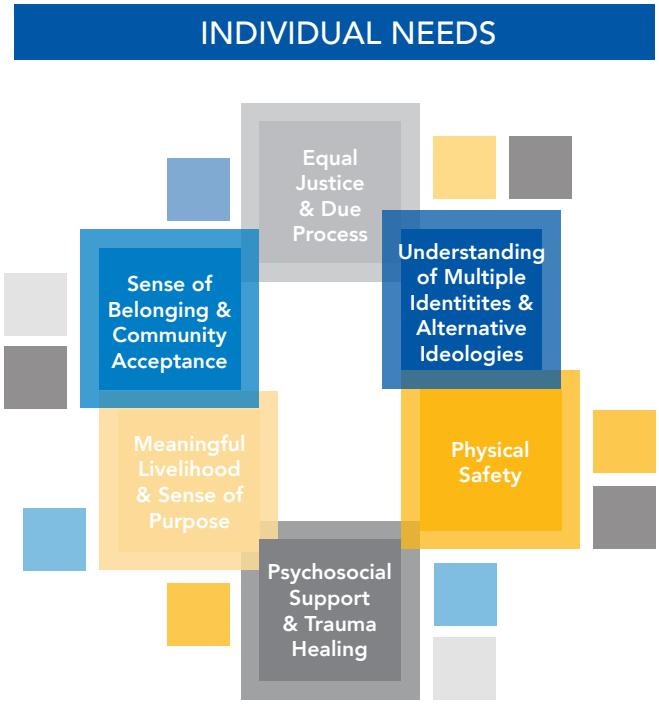

Figure 2: Individuals returning from association with VE groups have multiple and interrelated needs

Figure 3: Effective national policy for rehabilitation and reintegration should be holistic and engage all sectors of society

[14] S/2015/939 (2015), Madrid Guiding Principles (available at: https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Madrid-Guiding-Principles_EN.pdf).
[15] A/70/674 (2015), Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General; S/RES/2242 (2015) (available at: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2242.pdf).
[16] Duke Law, Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security (available at: https://law.duke.edu/sites/default/files/humanrights/tighteningpursestrings.pdf)

KEY FINDINGS

1 Most countries do not have consistent policies or laws pertaining to the treatment of returnees associated with terrorist and VE groups. This is particularly true in the case of women, girls and boys associated with such groups. As a result, programmes for their rehabilitation and reintegration are inconsistent, which leaves them prone to abuse by state and community actors and increases their vulnerability to re-radicalization and re-recruitment. Rhetoric demanding harsh punishment for returnees has gained traction, but these demands may contravene rule of law, exacerbate stigma, and serve as a grievance fomenting future cycles of radicalization to violence.

2 Current policies and programming tend to either ignore women and girls associated with VE groups or oversimplify the issues. They frame women and girls in binary terms, either as victims or perpetrators of violence. Yet in most instances, women and girls' association with VE groups is complex. It can be due to a mix of factors including coercion, co-option, enslavement or kidnapping, or subjugation in their own communities and unfilled aspirations for belonging, purpose, adventure and empowerment. In order to design effective responses for this cohort, we must understand and address the initial drivers, conditions and motivations of their association with VE groups. It is also imperative that state responses do not perpetuate or contribute to further victimization of those who have already experienced profound violence and trauma.

3 In drawing attention to women, it is essential that women and children who have been victims of the violence perpetrated by VE groups are not forgotten. There are widows and female-headed households on all sides. They are often becoming breadwinners for the first time because their husbands and sons are either incarcerated or killed. Enabling them to have independent livelihoods can help them heal from trauma and restore their identities, providing them and their children with the resilience that is essential for preventing re-recruitment. If rehabilitation support is only provided to the families of former fighters, then it can fuel injustice, anger and retribution among women and other community members who were innocent targets but have received no support.

4 Locally rooted women-led CSOs are often the first to be alerted to these issues and are at the front lines of responding to the complex challenges faced by women and girl returnees. They have pioneered effective, holistic response programmes that tackle the mix of issues including the psychosocial, economic and ideological needs. National policies and programming should draw on their expertise. However, due to the lack of policy and legal coherence, the CSOs face profound legal and security risks. They continue to be insufficiently included in national and local planning efforts for PVE.

KEY FINDINGS

5 Lack of transparency about the actions of security actors when engaging with returnees and perceived impunity for abuse by security actors, including sexual violence against women associated with extremist movements, fuel mistrust within communities.

6 The ratio of women to men returning to their countries of origin varies significantly by country. We infer that in many cases women are not returning because they are unable to attain citizenship status and custody of their children who were born during their time in Syria, Iraq or elsewhere.

7 The women and girls who do return face tremendous anger, fear and stigma from communities. This isolates them and inhibits their ability to rehabilitate and reintegrate. It also heightens their vulnerability to re-recruitment into VE groups that co-opt them with offers of support and belonging.

8 Many violent extremist groups have co-opted the message of women's empowerment, in addition to promising better socioeconomic conditions to recruit women and girls. They tap into ideology and identity to offer a sense of purpose, meaning and belonging that vulnerable women and girls are missing in their lives. National and international entities involved in reintegration programming must take these tactics into account when designing PVE programming. Disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration should not be reduced to only material subsistence—it needs to address the "push factors" of misogyny, injustice and deficit in dignity that women experience in their own societies. If these root causes are not addressed, the risk of women being drawn to the messages of VE groups continues.

9 Women and girls lack access to women religious scholars and counsellors who espouse a moderate interpretation of religious teachings. This is an obstacle to the ideological transformation of women and girls. Too often, the women offering guidance are those using social networks to informally promote intolerant and exclusionary messages.

10 To reduce stigma, community exclusion, and the potential of violent backlash against returning women and girls, and to enable their reintegration into their communities and the broader society, it is essential to engage national and local media as well as influential community leaders to deliver balanced messaging that enables dialogue and social cohesion.

PROGRAMMING GUIDANCE

If reintegration efforts are not inclusive and holistic, the risk of a resurgence of violent extremism and its impact on development and peace in already fragile contexts cannot be underestimated.

PROGRAMMING GUIDANCE

Figure 4: The seven elements of a holistic and gendered approach to disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration.

This research finds that a holistic multisectoral approach is essential for successful disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for women and girls associated with violent extremism. This is demonstrated by the approaches of women peacebuilders who are on the front lines of responding to the gendered dimensions of return. Each of the examples of good practice profiled in Part II of this report address several of the critical themes and areas of intervention identified and elaborated in Part I. Policymakers and practitioners can ensure disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration programming is holistic by:

- Assessing the relevance of and designing interventions that target all applicable sectors including: policy, legal, justice, security, media, religion, education, economic, health (medical, psychological, and emotional);
- Engaging on all levels: individual, family, community, and society; and,
- Identifying and collaborating with diverse stakeholders: civil society organizations, government agencies, security actors, religious and traditional leaders, businesses, journalists, etc.

1. The Policy Gaps and Challenges

Recommendations	Guiding Questions
1.1 Take a Holistic Approach Widen the focus of disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts beyond the individual terrorism offender to include all those affected by violent extremism, including children who were kidnapped by violent extremists or conceived in captivity, female abductees, internally displaced persons, and vigilante groups that fight violent extremists. **1.2 Conduct Gender Analysis** Conduct gendered reviews and analyses of policy and practice across all relevant sectors, recognizing that women and men, boys and girls may face different circumstances and have different needs in the processes of return and reintegration. **1.3 Consider Lessons Learned** Ensure that initiatives draw on the best practices and lessons learned from the failures of previous relevant initiatives, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs, and rehabilitation programs developed for general prisoners and gang members. ■ Include a literature and best practices review in the program design or inception phase. ■ Conduct a mapping of past and existing initiatives in the program context. **1.4 Coordinate with women-led organizations and other non-governmental stakeholders** Design and implement programmes in coordination with a wide range of governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders, and articulate clear roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder group. Women-led organizations are key partners based on their topical knowledge and local access. ■ Consult UN and local partners to identify women's organizations active in your country setting. ■ Involve women CSOs from the outset based on their comparative strengths. ■ Enable safe interactions between CSOs and security actors. ■ Build trust through regular round tables among national/local governments, CSOs, youth organizations, religious institutions, traditional leaders, and communities.	» Do the existing policy and programming efforts recognize and address women and men's different experiences? » Does the state have procedures for dealing with women and girls (and boys) associated with violent extremists, to assess their engagement in violence and to ensure that victims are not further abused or subject to violations such as sexual assault? » Does the State have sufficient numbers of women who can conduct assessments, verification and registration of women and girls associated with violent extremists? » Where are the women-led organizations already active in the area of DR&R, and what are opportunities for coordination ?

2. Law, Redress and Reconciliation

Recommendations	Guiding Questions
2.1 Establish legal frameworks Ensure that coherent, transparent legal frameworks and guidelines are in place.	» How do national laws governing returning violent extremists account for gender differences, including recognizing the diverse roles of associated women and girls? » What responsibility does the state have to repatriate and bring to justice its citizens who may have perpetrated crimes abroad? » Does possessing dual nationality allow for revocation of a returnee's citizenship? » How is citizenship passed to a child when the conferring parent is missing or deceased? » In cases of international marriage, are women and men equally eligible to pass their citizenship to their child? » How can a child born outside of the parents' country be conferred citizenship? » How can a child's identity and right to citizenship be established without valid documents?
2.2 Evaluate current legal approaches Assess how courts, prisons, and other state institutions are currently addressing issues of the returnees, particularly with regard to the treatment of women and children.	
2.3 Articulate clear policies for returnees Articulate a clear policy, including zero tolerance for sexual abuse and other misconduct, regarding the treatment of returnees and those associated with them (e.g. family members) with a gendered/child-appropriate approach.	» What evidence informs prosecution and determines sentencing? » What are the range of sentences for those convicted? » Are there restorative justice mechanisms which complement or serve as alternatives to the criminal justice system? » Have amnesty and other transitional justice mechanisms been discussed or implemented?
2.4 Ensure legal clarity on returnee status Ensure legal clarity on the status of returnees and those associated with them, and implement human rights-compliant monitoring frameworks and support services.	» What legal aid support programs exist for returnees, and women and girls specifically? » How do counter-terrorism laws affect CSO's ability to receive funding and respond to the needs of returnees, especially women and girls, and receiving communities?
2.5 Broaden legal space for civil society Provide CSOs with the legal protections and policy guidance to engage in rehabilitation and reintegration interventions.	» Do these laws disproportionally affect women's organizations, youth associations or other civic groups?

3. Security for and from Women and Girl Returnees

Recommendations	Guiding Questions
3.1 Implement guidelines for security actors Develop, implement, and monitor stringent guidelines for the front-line security actors (including border guards and correctional officers) in their treatment of returnees and their families. Promote adherence to human rights protections and accountability for violations as essential for effective PVE efforts, as abuse by security actors can be a catalyst for radicalization.	» What is the security process for returnees, especially women and girls? Are they placed in detention centers, camps, or directly reintegrated into local communities? » Are returnees held separately by gender and age within prisons, detention rehabilitation centers? » If not detained, or held in separate facilities, do women and girls have equal access to services, resources and rehabilitation and reintegration programming? » If held in the same facilities, how are women and girls protected from violence by male inmates? » Are their women security officers and staff working in detention and rehabilitation centers, and other points of contact with women and girl returnees? » What policies, trainings, and protection mechanisms exist to prevent abuse of detainees by security actors, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)? » Do detained women and girls have access to justice in cases of abuse and human rights violations? » How can the public access information about their relatives who are in custody of security agencies or are missing? » What policies exist to ensure the human rights compliance of security actors?
3.2 Develop gender-responsive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Support collaborative development, implementation and monitoring of gendered Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all actors involved in the disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration process, including zero tolerance for sexual and other forms of violence.	
3.3 Build relationships between civil society and security actors Develop information sharing and joint research protocols, in combination with relevant safety training, between civil society and the security sector.	» What is the relationship between the police and local communities? » What programs exist to build trust and transparency between security actors, the public, and returnees? » What mechanisms exist to identify the security needs of local communities? » How is information shared between security actors and civil society?

4. Addressing Public Attitudes of Stigma and Fear

Recommendations	Guiding Questions
4.1 Build public engagement and dialogue mechanisms Initiate public dialogue through the media and education sectors, including on religious and other relevant ideologies. Because the issues are sensitive, there is a need for responsible public engagement on the rationale for policies and approaches being developed. **4.2 Strengthen balanced reporting** Engage the media directly to encourage balanced reporting so that public fear, anger, and potential violence are not fueled through inaccurate reporting. **4.3 Encourage CSO-led media campaigns** Encourage CSO-led media campaigns to engage religious scholars to convey accurate non-violent narratives and to debunk violent ones. **4.4 Address rehabilitation and reintegration/PVE issues in the education system** Develop teacher training and support mechanisms and curricula to address rehabilitation and reintegration and broader PVE issues in schools. **4.5 Engage local communities in stigma reduction** Engage local communities including the CSOs already active in PVE, and work with these CSOs to determine the most relevant means of socializing local communities to the need to reintegrate successfully and reduce the stigma of those associated with and affected by violent extremism, in particular women and girls. ■ Consult with all community sectors to determine the specific challenges they face and solutions they offer for addressing reintegration, as well as to identify their needs and ensure that no inadvertent harm is done by state and international actors. ■ Encourage male community leaders to be role models and engage in public discussions about accepting returning women and girls—particularly survivors of rape or sex trafficking—which can help reduce the stigma they face and foster their acceptance within the community at large. ■ Ensure direct engagement with and support for the families of those who are detained, incarcerated, or participating in a disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration program, to provide their family members with support and facilitate their eventual successful reintegration.	» What are the attitudes and behavior of receiving communities and the public towards returnees, and women and girls in particular? » How does media coverage treat the issue of returnees and issues related to perpetrators and others associated with violent extremism? » Does media analysis and portrayal of the issue vary with gender and age of returnees? » Does coverage balance between perpetual one-off "extraordinary" success stories, and those of injustice and struggles of the "ordinary" that bear results, so that people are inspired to become agents of their own future? » Are innovative media formats being used to convey these complex issues and promote peace, rights, and pluralism? » Are artists and other cultural producers engaged as messengers? » What training materials and resources are available to practitioners and the media? » What are the cultural, religious, and social norms regarding treatment of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)? » What attitudes and positions do community leaders—men and women—hold regarding returning women and girls? » Which community leaders have a media platform to speak about these issues? Do they address gendered dimensions? » Which media formats and messages reach whom? Is this information disaggregated by gender, age, socioeconomic status, etc.? » What indicators are used by practitioners and the media to measure stigma and public attitudes towards reintegration?

5. Transforming Ideology and Restoring Identity

Recommendations	Guiding Questions
5.1 Implement PVE programming that restores identity and belonging Encourage programming to help women and girl returnees rediscover different and positive aspects of their identity. Facilitate opportunities for women and girl returnees to pursue pro-social activities and discover alternative ways to fulfill their sense of purpose. ■ Ensure elements that target identity, aspirations and belonging are part of PVE programming, avoiding a simplistic focus on socioeconomic methods. ■ Embed alternative narratives (of peace, tolerance, respect for pluralism) in PVE programming to guide interventions and communication strategies. ■ Support spiritual identity as a much bigger universe than any individual's affiliations with a particular religious persuasion. **5.2 Uplift women mentors and role models** Highlight and engage women role models and mentors with diverse beliefs and roles in society. **5.3 Engage female religious authorities** Engage women religious scholars and counselors to provide education and mentoring of women and girl returnees when necessary.	» What factors contributed to the radicalization of or reasons for women and girls joining violent extremist groups? » How are these drivers gendered? » How does gender does play a role in marginalization, disempowerment and frustration that may have contributed to women and girls' vulnerability to violent extremist recruitment? » What do returning women and girls need to feel a sense of belonging and purpose in their lives? » How are women religious leaders and other women mentors engaged in rehabilitation and reintegration interventions? » How can programming involve socioeconomic status, trauma, or sense of belonging and purpose to facilitate ideological transformation? » What do rehabilitation and reintegration practitioners use as indicators to measure the progress of ideological disengagement?

6. Socioeconomic Empowerment and Sense of Purpose

Recommendations

6.1 Implement sustainable development solutions

Initiate sustainable economic and employment development, including by working with the private sector, to determine critical needs and potentials for new sectoral development and vocational training for men and women.

This should include, where appropriate, offering remedial education programs and schools to enable those returnees who require it to enter the education system.

6.2 Initiate multi-stakeholder reintegration programs

Engage all stakeholders, including employers, educators, and communities, to facilitate successful reintegration through programs to enhance access to education, job placement, and entrepreneurship.

6.3 Ensure context-sensitivity of livelihood programs

Tailor livelihoods programs to the context and individual interests.

- Take into consideration the average income and affluence of the receiving community and seek to provide comparable services and support, to avoid fostering resentment.
- Avoid gendered or cultural assumptions about what kind of work women (and men) can or should do.
- Conduct labor market assessments to inform job training and skills development.

6.4 Address workplace stigma

Assess and address attitudes about returnees with attention to hiring and workplace safety, including to prevent discrimination that could run counter to rehabilitation.

Guiding Questions

- Do socioeconomic support and livelihoods initiatives for the general population, including education and training programs, exclude returning women and girls?
- Does economic disempowerment of women, including hiring and workplace discrimination, contribute to the motivations of women and girls to join violent extremist groups?
- Are returning women and girls heads of household and/or breadwinners for their families?
- What subjects, skills, and professions are returning women and girls interested in pursuing?
- What economic and livelihood opportunities are there for women and girls in receiving communities?
- What is the average level of affluence of women and girls in the community?
- Do existing rehabilitation and reintegration programs include women and girls in socioeconomic support and livelihoods interventions?
- How do programs account for gendered obstacles (i.e. conflicting domestic and caretaking obligations, inability to pay school fees, and insecurity at and on the way to schools including sexual harassment and assault)?
- How do public attitudes about returnees shape the views and behavior of potential employers and co-workers with regard to fair hiring and workplace safety, including to prevent discrimination that could run counter to rehabilitation?
- Are educators and school administrators trained to understand, support and manage the children of returnees who face stigma in the classroom, in ways that contribute to long term reintegration?
- Do socioeconomic interventions foster self-dignity, meaning and sense of purpose for returning women and girls?

7. Coping with Trauma

Recommendations	Guiding Questions
7.1 Provide comprehensive, confidential psychosocial support Address the full range of returnees' experience through psychosocial support, which may include symptoms of trauma, coping with difficult family relationships, dealing with community stigma, past abuse by security actors, and caring for children affected by violent extremism. Ensure safe space for, access to and confidentiality in psychosocial therapy. **7.2 Build on local practices and customs** Build upon healthy traditional and indigenous practices to create stronger mechanisms for psychosocial support. **7.3 Engage psychosocial service providers in case work** Engage trusted service providers with relevant expertise and knowledge of the context and of the nature of returnees' cases. **7.4 Connect psychosocial support to reproductive health and socioeconomic support** Integrate reproductive health and family planning, as well as vocational training, with psychosocial support to enable recovery and overall health.	» What mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS) exist within the community, including referral mechanisms, and do returning women and girls have access? » Do MHPSS providers have capacity and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to ensure gender-responsive intervention, including in addressing trauma from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)? » Do MHPSS providers have knowledge and understanding of the local context and the situation of returning women and girls? » Have MHPSS interventions been tailored to the context by considering healthy indigenous practices for trauma healing? » How are returning women and girls informed of the MHPSS services available to them? » How is privacy and confidentiality guaranteed for returning women and girls seeking treatment? » Do frontline responders, including civil society, humanitarian, and security actors, have access to MHPSS care? » What MHPSS services and public education have been provided to communities with regard to addressing stigma against and fears about returning women and girls? » What do rehabilitation and reintegration practitioners and MHPSS providers use as indicators to measure progress of healing from trauma and mental health in general?

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