

Conflicting Identities: The Nexus between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia



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**Conflicting Identities:
The Nexus between
Masculinities, Femininities
and Violent Extremism in Asia**

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UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with the Governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards.

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Foreword

Violent extremism has emerged as one of the leading challenges to the realization of sustainable peace globally. Across South and South-East Asia, violent extremism poses a direct threat to inclusive development by fuelling intolerance, forcibly displacing communities, exacerbating cycles of insecurity and armed conflict, exploiting existing inequalities, and obstructing the enjoyment of human rights and the rule of law. Underpinning this violence are gender stereotypes that are used to radicalize and recruit men and women, as well as girls and boys, to violent extremist groups.

The United Nations Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism calls for a comprehensive approach to preventing and countering violent extremism, including through addressing the gendered and structural conditions which allow it to flourish. This is echoed in UN Security Council resolution 2242, which highlights the necessity of women's inclusion and participation in approaches to prevent violent extremism and urges Member States and UN entities to integrate a gender analysis of the drivers of radicalization in research, policies, and programming responses.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women have been working to ensure that efforts to prevent violent extremism are inclusive and based on the promotion and protection of human rights, including women's rights. This research is the result of a joint effort between both agencies to better understand the relationship between violent extremism and gender power relations in South and South-East Asia, specifically as it relates to radicalization and recruitment, in order to inform programming and policy responses.

Mohammad Naciri

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This publication includes expert analyses through case studies to highlight how unequal gender power structures fuel and shape violent extremism around the region. It pays specific attention to how constructions of masculinity influence radicalization and the perpetration of violent extremism, offering much-needed insights into how men and boys are implicated in these processes.

This research emphasises how structures of patriarchy and harmful performances of masculinity are deeply embedded in the modus operandi of violent extremist groups. The researchers found that such groups often manipulate or build on existing gender stereotypes to incite men and women to commit violence and to find refuge and support within extremist communities. Much greater efforts are needed to ensure policies address harmful constructions of masculinity and femininity promoted by violent extremist groups. Programmes must work with local communities to respond to the unequal gender power dynamics that shape and fuel extremist violence, including through empowering women and girls to be agents of peace.

This volume offers policy makers and practitioners a unique insight into the gender dynamics that underpin violent extremism in South and South-East Asia. We hope it will benefit stakeholders working in this area to ensure that holistic understandings of gender identity are integrated into policy and programming approaches to prevent violent extremism.

Valerie Cliff

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