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# WOMEN IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM





A TRAINING MANUAL

WOMEN IN PREVENTING

AND COUNTERING

VIOLENT EXTREMISM



**UN WOMEN**

IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



# FOREWORDS

In recent years, violent extremist activities have escalated dramatically. Around the world, such groups increasingly target women and women's rights. Using sexual and gender-based violence, they terrorize communities and destroy the social fabric.

Governance deficiencies and structural gender inequalities feed the root causes of violent extremism – and exacerbate vulnerability to it. Different UN Security Council resolutions have recognized that violent extremism has gendered dimensions. These lead to varying consequences for women and girls, men and boys.

Women are frequently seen only as victims of violent extremism. But in reality, women play multiple roles, they are on the frontlines of prevention and response. They lead civil society organizations and bolster community resilience. Promoting women as agents of peace recognizes their contributions to peacebuilding and prevention of violence and upholds respect for the human rights of everyone in areas afflicted by violent extremism.

Gender-responsive approaches to preventing violent extremism address the different needs and experiences of women and men. Such efforts can help States realize their international human rights commitments and provide effective services to citizens. Reducing gender inequality overall underpins greater community resilience, and the prevention of conflict and violent extremism.

UN Women's work shows that supporting women's empowerment, including economically and in post-conflict recovery planning and development, delivers positive results for women and communities. Yet women's participation in decision-making and security-related processes remain limited or absent. UN Women strives to ensure that measures to prevent violent extremism are more inclusive, and better reflect women's needs, agency, and leadership.

This training manual is designed for all local stakeholders working to prevent violence and violent extremism in their communities. It aims to strengthen understanding of the gender dimensions of violent extremist narratives, activity and mobilization, and may be helpful for local authorities and government officials, civil society, staff of UN agencies, and international and regional organizations. By advancing gender-responsive initiatives tailored to local needs, it seeks to restore societies that are just and peaceful for all.

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# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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This publication serves as guidance for actors involved in the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) in Europe and Central Asia including state officials, members of non-governmental organizations, community activists, staff of UN agencies, international and regional organizations to help them understand violent extremism's gender dimensions. It is designed as a training guide, for staff and trainers who are working with different counterparts engaged in P/CVE, and want to help create more effective and gender-sensitive responses. Participants may for example include civil society activists, women leaders, teachers, journalists, lawyers, social workers, religious authorities, youth, police, local and national governmental officials.

The five modules in this guide include learning objectives, explanatory text, warm-up activities, practical exercises, references for further reading and empirical experiences from the region of Europe and Central Asia. Modules may be used all together or one-by-one. The ideal timeframe for delivering the training using all the modules is at least two and a half days (half day per unit). The training is suitable for groups of five

to twenty-five people. When organizing the workshop consider gender, age and diversity factors to have the richest learning experience possible. Participants should feel that they are in a safe space where they can openly share their ideas and experiences. Needed materials are indicated for the different exercises.

As the guide is aimed at increasing the awareness of persons with different levels of sensitivity and knowledge on violent extremism and gender equality, across Europe and Central Asia, it is an introduction which readers should complement with other resources for deeper and more technical insights. The training should also be tailored to the participants' interests and needs and to the local context.

# GLOSSARY

Counter-radicalisation:	Preventative measures with a focus on prevention, deradicalisation, and disengagement from engaging in violent extremism and terrorism. <sup>1</sup> Such measures extend to communities targeted by terrorists and violent extremists for recruitment. <sup>2</sup>
Counter-terrorism:	Safety and security measures aimed at targeting terrorists directly. <sup>3</sup>
Countering Violent Extremism (CVE):	Laws, policies, programmes, and interventions designed to counter the threat posed by groups or individuals, such as IS or al Qaeda, from engaging in ideologically motivated violence. CVE primarily employs preventative methods such as counter-messaging, rehabilitation of former violent extremists, and providing incentives or mentoring for radicalised individuals not to join violent extremist groups. Targeting these areas should be given priority over intelligence, law enforcement, and military means. <sup>4</sup>
Deradicalisation:	Safety and security measures aimed at changing the mindset and ideological beliefs of those already radicalised and thereby disengaging them from potentially engaging in violent behaviors. <sup>5</sup>
Disengagement:	Safety and security measures aimed at altering the behavior of those already radicalised to exit from violent extremist groups and individuals and refrain from violent extremist behaviors without necessarily addressing or changing their core beliefs. <sup>6</sup>
Extremism:	A strict adherence to a set of narratives or belief systems, usually political or religious, that constitute assaults on mainstream values, orientations and principles of the dominant society.
Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF):	“Individuals who travel to a state other than their state of residence...for the purpose of the perpetration, planning or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.” <sup>7</sup>
Gender Based Violence (GBV):	Any act of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or institutional violence that is directed at an individual or group of individuals based on their biological sex or gender identity. It generally involves unequal power relationships.
The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE):	ICSVE is a non-profit organisation focused on research and creating counter narrative materials from in-depth interviews of actual terrorist members denouncing their extremist Islamic groups, brutal and corrupt. These materials, including video clips are used by ICSVE to disrupt, prevent and intervene in face-to-face and online recruitment into militant jihadi terrorism.
The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)	Is a violent militant jihadi group that formed an unrecognized proto-state after taking over large parts of Syria and Iraq. Other terms that are used to describe this group include Islamic State (IS), ISIL and Daesh.
Islamism:	Islamism is a complex phenomenon with multiple definitions and is sometimes seen as totalitarian in its aim. “Like other political doctrines, Islamism, in its contemporary shape, is an ‘ideology’, a ‘movement-organisation’ and a ‘form of government’” often with the goals of creating a shariah-law-governed society and of restoring Islamic might in pursuance of which violence is not always rejected. <sup>8</sup> Political and religious Islamists have existed since the early seventeenth century. <sup>9</sup>

1 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

2 Neumann et al., 2011

3 Neumann et al., 2011

4 United Nations Office of Counter-terrorism (UNOCT) Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF)

5 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

6 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

7 U.N. Security Council, Counter Terrorism Committee, 2017

8 Mozaffari (2007)

9 Lechner, 2009, p. 183

Jihad:	“Struggle” in Arabic. It is divided into the lesser jihad (physical struggle) and greater jihad (spiritual struggle). The term has been misinterpreted by some to mean only war.
National Action Plans (NAPs):	A country-specific set of priorities that the national leaders and decision-makers identify as plans or strategies to develop and implement national policies.
Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE):	A comprehensive approach encompassing not only essential security-based counter-terrorism measures but also systematic preventive steps (PVE) to address the factors that support individuals to join violent extremist groups by addressing possible structural causes of acceptance and advocacy of extremist ideologies including political, social, or economic marginalisation, etc. and delegitimization of terrorist groups, their ideologies and their violent tactics. Targeting these soft-power areas should be given equal priority to intelligence, law enforcement, and military means. <sup>10</sup>
Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE):	Employing both a PVE approach (a comprehensive, whole of society approach that targets underlying drivers of marginalisation that may eventually lead to violent extremism over the long term) and a CVE approach (a more targeted, shorter-term approach that responds to radicalised extremist individuals who may or may not have already committed violence. This concept allows stakeholders to strategically use soft power interventions to prevent and counter violent extremism at different points along an individual's trajectory.
Radicalisation:	A process by which individuals or groups deviate from moderate mainstream beliefs and adopt extreme views. While radicalisation sometimes leads to violence, it cannot be equated with terrorism and many radicals are not violent or dangerous and simply want to address what they view as societal ills.
Radicalisation v. Extremism:	The terms are often used interchangeably, despite differences between the two. Some refer to radicals as “open-minded” and extremists as “close-minded”. <sup>12</sup> Similarly, “non-violent” extremism is sometimes referred to as a “cognitive” form of radicalisation. <sup>13</sup>
Radicalism:	A deviation from the mainstream political or religious thinking. Those with radical ideas do not necessarily harbour a desire to force others to accept their views nor a desire to use violence and may never engage in violence.
Radicalisation leading to Violent Extremism:	A stage in the radicalisation process where an individual comes to embrace violence as a legitimate course of action to accomplish their ideological goals. It should be noted that individuals may reach the most radical point in the radicalisation process and never move to supporting or engaging in violence. Violent extremism is a possible path within radicalisation that some individuals take.
Radicalisation Prevention:	Safety and security measures aimed at preventing radicalisation from occurring in the first place. <sup>14</sup>
Salafism:	An ideology within Sunni Islam. Its main hallmark is a call to all modern Muslims to revert to the practices and lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad's generation and the two generations that followed him. Salafism emphasizes Islam as an ultimate system of belief and governance. It also preaches God's oneness, while condemning polytheism (shirk) and unbelief (kufr). Some Salafists do not agree with any governance that does not follow shariah law and discourage any involvement in democratic institutions including voting. <sup>15</sup>

10 United Nations Office of Counter-terrorism (UNOCT) Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF)

11 Schmid, 2013, pp. 10

12 Schmid, 2013; Vidino, 2010

13 Vidino and Brandon, 2012

14 Moussalli, 2009, p. 4

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):	The 17 sustainable development goals defined by the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and adopted by all the United Nations Member States in 2015, provide shared goals and responsibilities to work towards peace and prosperity for people and the planet. They include ending poverty, improving health and education, achieving gender equality and tackling climate change.
Terrorism v. Violent Extremism:	Whereas terrorism is defined as the practice of intimidation through violence (e.g. killing, property destruction, etc.) in the furtherance of a specific political objective, violent extremism refers to a broader political ideology that stands against moderate and mainstream societal values and beliefs. Violent extremists strive to change such values and beliefs by any means, including through the use of violence. Violent extremists also resort to terrorism and other forms of politically motivated violence.
Terrorism and Terrorist Acts:	The UN does not have an official definition of terrorism. An unequivocal definition of terrorism would remove the political distinction that some make between the actions of so-called freedom fighters and terrorists. The U.S. Department of Defense (2010) defined terrorism as the “unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that are usually political”. <sup>15</sup> Some see terrorist violence as an illegitimate and irrational act whereas others as a religious duty and justified reaction to oppression. <sup>16</sup> Since WWII, the term has been associated with a revolutionary overtone. <sup>17</sup>
UNSCR:	United Nations Security Council Resolution
Violent Extremism:	The phenomenon of extremists resorting to acts of violence in an attempt to coerce others to adopt their social, political, economic, etc., objectives.
Wahhabism:	A revivalist movement founded by Muhammad ibn’ Abd al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century that drew largely from Salafi ideology. Wahhabism and Salafism began to attract considerable attention following the events of 9/11. Salafism/Wahhabism is often currently understood as a global movement with a complex relationship promoting Islamism, politics, and in exceptional cases, violence. <sup>18</sup>
WPS:	UNSCR resolutions on Women, Peace and Security

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