

GUIDANCE NOTE

# GENDER MAINSTREAMING PRINCIPLES, DIMENSIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR PVE



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PRINCIPLES, DIMENSIONS  
AND PRIORITIES FOR PVE**



**UN WOMEN**

KATHERINE BROWN

New York, September 2019



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# FOREWORD



Terrorists and violent extremists are increasingly targeting women and women's rights as an explicit tactic. In my visits to affected areas, I have seen first-hand how sophisticated these groups are in exploiting existing gender inequalities and ideas

around traditional or 'ideal' roles for women and men in their recruitment materials and propaganda. Our response as the United Nations to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) must correspond to that sophistication, tactically integrating gender and women's rights in P/CVE design, implementation and evaluation.

This means ensuring that our programming and support appropriately reflect the different needs of women, men, girls and boys. It means addressing the systemic vulnerabilities that women face. At the same time it is vital to recognize how the intersection of multiple facets of women's identities – including their age, ethnicity, education level, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability – can increase vulnerability for some, but also provide women with valuable insights into preventing violent extremism in their communities. It also means working to eliminate harmful masculinities and promote positive behaviours, and removing the barriers to women's participation and leadership in prevention and reintegration work.

This Guidance Note aims to ensure that gender equality goals and principles are both respected and implemented when delivering UN actions to prevent violent extremism. It is the result of

extensive in-country consultations with policy-makers and practitioners and provides practical recommendations, based on lessons learnt, that align with the women, peace and security agenda. It aims to support efforts such as ensuring programmatic engagement in-country to reach their objectives while maintaining the principles of do-no-harm and conflict sensitivity. It guides P/CVE programming to complement the broader mission of attaining gender equality and women's empowerment.

This approach is in line with UN Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) that urges Member States and the UN system to ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and the violent extremism that can be conducive to terrorism. This has resulted in UN entities becoming more involved in directly supporting stakeholders, such as women-led civil society organizations, alongside government institutions.

This guidance note highlights emerging good practices and transferrable principles and approaches. It is my hope that these ensure that gender mainstreaming efforts to prevent violent extremism are localized, context-specific and grounded in human rights.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka  
*United Nations Under-Secretary-General and  
Executive Director of UN Women*

# INTRODUCTION

Given the global reach, scale and scope of terrorism, and UN Member States' international legal obligations to uphold and protect the security and human rights of all, it has become increasingly necessary for Member States to engage in efforts to prevent and/or counter violent extremism (VE). Measures to do so directly address the drivers of VE as laid out in the UN Plan of Action.<sup>1</sup> The UN is committed to supporting member states in their efforts to apply human rights, including a gender perspective, in the design, implementation and evaluation of preventing and/or countering violent extremism (P/CVE).

**The significance of a gender-mainstreamed approach to P/CVE stems from recognition of the gendered drivers and impacts of VE, and UN Member States' obligations to protect and seek women's equality and security.** As UN Under-Secretary-General and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stated in 2018: "Terrorists and violent extremists have increasingly targeted women and women's rights as a tactic of terrorism."<sup>2</sup>

Terrorist and violent extremist groups also mobilize particular violent masculinities often in response to real, or perceived, violations of women's rights and women's security by state actors. Additionally, there is "deep concern that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups and are used as an instrument to increase their power through supporting financing and recruitment and through the destruction of communities."<sup>3</sup> This further justifies the need for full consideration of gender and women's rights in P/CVE design, implementation and evaluation.

Gender mainstreaming in PVE is grounded in international human rights obligations, and takes place within the context of a set of legal and policy commitments of States both individually, and through UN architecture and activities on countering terrorism and PVE. Gender mainstreaming incorporates women and girls and men and boys equally in gender-planning initiatives, modifies existing programmes to eliminate harmful masculinities and promote positive ones, and supports alliances between men and women in promoting and achieving gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming in PVE, within the context of human rights and other commitments that bind PVE, is needed in order to:

- accurately identify root causes, potential recruits, targets, and victims of violent extremism;
- leverage diverse actors as part of a comprehensive and holistic approach to PVE;
- prevent adverse gendered impacts, and to counter those effects that do occur.

Gender mainstreaming requires three main practical commitments:

- *Integration* of gender equality in interventions in general.
- *Targeting* specific groups or issues through special interventions.
- *Dialogue* with partners on gender-sensitive issues and aspects.

Previous research highlights<sup>4</sup> that efforts to include a gender perspective in PVE—including by engaging women and women's organizations—have thus far been *ad hoc* and silo-ed; they are often seen as 'women-centered', one-off, discrete activities and commitments that are secondary to, and separate from, mainstream PVE efforts. The bulk of PVE efforts are often gender blind, meaning there is little

consideration of the role of gendered norms and impacts in PVE for either women or men, and rendering such efforts unreflectively focused on men's security needs and priorities. Furthermore, because many PVE initiatives are insufficiently grounded in a gender and human rights-based framework, they can exacerbate adverse gendered dynamics, including gendered inequalities and forms of discrimination. This leads to contradictory policies, securitizes gender equality, and instrumentalizes women's human rights, which in turn means that local grassroots PVE work is put at greater risk and potentially undermined.<sup>5</sup>

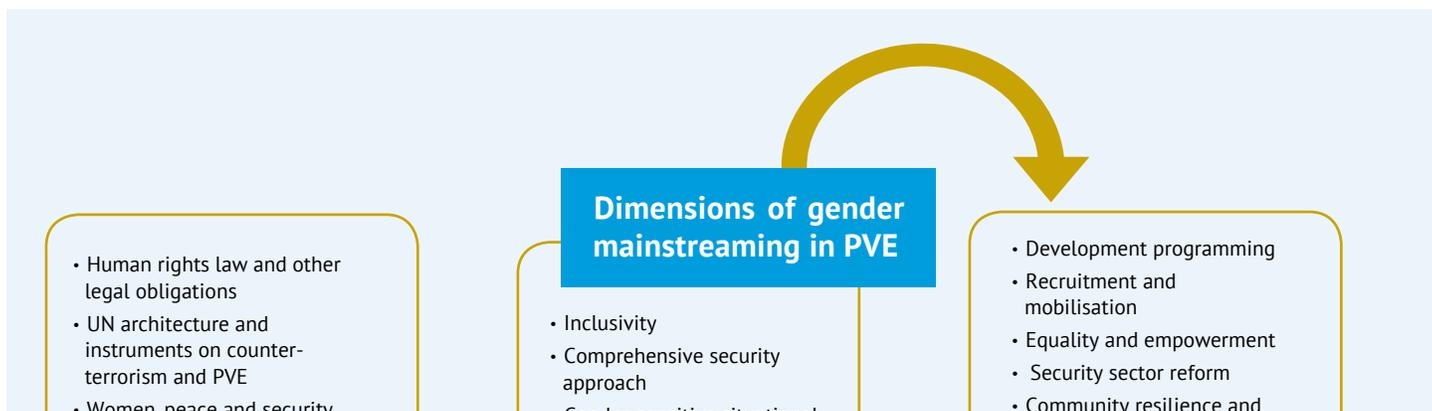
## Purpose of this Report and Target Audience

This report offers guidelines and guidance for the UN in supporting Member States in their P/CVE efforts – with a primary focus on PVE. A model is proposed for gender mainstreaming across PVE efforts that is human rights-compliant. The objective of this document is not to provide a single template or one-size-fits-all approach for PVE – in part because a wide range of activities potentially falls under PVE – but more significantly because, to be successful, each context requires a human rights-compliant, gender-responsive, bespoke, and locally-derived set of practices and policies.

*Gender mainstreaming is outlined in more detail in Appendix C.*

## Gender Mainstreaming Model: Frameworks, Dimensions and Priorities

**FIGURE 1:**  
Three Components of Gender Mainstreaming in PVE: Frameworks, Dimensions and Priorities



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