IN BRIEF

UN WOMEN

PROGRAMMATIC NOTE: UN WOMEN COUNTERING TERRORISM[1] (CT) AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (PVE)[2] SUPPORT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

1. Background

In 2015, the UN Security Council resolution 2242 encouraged Member States and the United Nations to ensure greater integration of their agendas on women, peace and security (WPS), counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism.[3] Furthermore, UNSCR 2467 (2019) reaffirms the linkages between WPS, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism.[4] However, the risk of securitizing and instrumentalizing women's rights has been highlighted by civil society, among others.[5]

The sixth and seventh iterations of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (UNGCTS) underlined the importance of gender analysis and the role of women and civil society engagement in counter-terrorism[6].

In 2020 and 2021, UN Women initiated a series of expert discussions[7] on the centrality of the WPS agenda as a human rights framework in contexts impacted by terrorism, violent extremism and in situations of emergency. These discussions included UN actors, international non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations[8] and Member States. The substantive recommendations of these discussions informed UN Women's conceptual framework when providing policy, coordination and programmatic support at the global level. The programmatic note serves as a strategic tool outlining UN Women's global theory of change, including its strategic objective and strategies of implementation. The theory of change feeds into output 3 of UN Women's WPS Signature Intervention[9] and is in line with the Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

As a communication tool, the programmatic note increases partners' grasp of UN Women's niche and comparative advantage in supporting the realization of girls' and women's rights in contexts impacted by terrorism, violent extremism, and counter-terrorism.

1   The term counter-terrorism is used to refer to military operations as well as the adoption of legislative and policing frameworks to control, repress and track terrorist activities; training, equipping and reorganizing national security forces and intelligence services; and enhancing border surveillance and checkpoints. , Mahmoud (2016)

2   PVE is focused on preventing the further spread of violent extremism. It primarily refers to advocacy, policy and programmatic support at all levels to address different areas of engagement as outlined in the UN Plan of Action, see: UN Plan of Action (2015).

3   See Para. 11, UN SCR 2242, available at: https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12076.doc.htm

4   Available at: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/women-peace-and-security/

5   For example, see: https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1256-a-fourth-pillar-for-the-united-nations-the-rise-of-counter-terrorism; https://www.peacewomen.org/resource/war-terrorism-%E2%80%93-attack-womens-rights

6   Available at: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/175/70/PDF/N2117570.pdf?OpenElement

7   First event held on Oct 2020 and second event on May 2021, with the participation of UNOCT, CTED, EU, Safer world, Amnesty International, and civil society partners to UN Women in country. For additional details contact UN Women, at iman.sayedtaha@unwomen.org

8   For more information see: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/11/gendered-dimensions-of-violent-extremism-and-counterterrorism-responses

9   Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures

2. Objective of the Programmatic Note[10]

The programmatic note outlines UN Women's theory of change and strategies of implementation in supporting women's rights in the context of Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism.

3. Risks and Threats to Women's rights in the context of CT and PVE

The Global Study on 1325 published in 2015[11], outlined the risks and threats to women's rights within the framework of counter-terrorism and PVE. In addition, several studies and reports prepared by UN mandate holders and civil society cautioned against the risks and threats to women's rights. In 2022, UN Women, on behalf of the Global Compact on Counter-Terrorism, organized a Global Digital Consultation[12], during which risks and threats to women's rights were reiterated as follows:

I. THE RISK OF INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF WOMEN AND CIVIL SOCIETY:

UN Women seeks to address this risk by:

- Increasing women's effective participation and improving women's agency[13] in CT and PVE institutions, mechanisms and decision-making platforms as political actors. Participation of women in the counter-terrorism institutions and processes is a human right issue and a State obligation enshrined in the international human rights framework, most notably the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

- Support gender mainstreaming in CT and PVE frameworks and mechanisms to ensure the consideration of different needs and experiences of women and girls in all their diversity.
- Support gender-responsive security services provision at all levels through representative and accessible institutions.
- Support increasing gender-responsive service delivery within community-based security programmes, social cohesion, and PVE.
- Support increase the evidence base and knowledge generation on gender and CT/PVE to deepen the understanding of gender power dynamics in contexts impacted by terrorism and counter-terrorism.

II. TO ADDRESS RISKS PRESENTED BY BROAD AND VAGUE COUNTER-TERRORISM AND PVE FRAMEWORKS:

- Identify discriminatory laws and policies, including laws restricting civic engagement and pose a risk to women's human rights defenders. Such discriminatory laws are identified through a desk review of existing laws/policies, advocacy and support to ensure the alignment of national counter-terrorism and PVE policies with international standards and its harmonization.

III. THE CHALLENGE OF STRATEGIES DEVELOPED BASED ON STEREOTYPES RELATED TO THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM:

- UN Women seek to address this challenge by ensuring a feminist approach when developing analysis, underscoring the intersectionality of gender issues within a given context.

4. Theory of Change

UN Women at the global level is committed to making a meaningful contribution to promoting the rights of girls and women and to gender equality in the context of the UN agenda on counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism by leveraging its comparative advantages pegged on the following theory of change:

IF (1) women are effectively leading, represented and included in counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism mechanisms and processes (2) national security institutions and mechanisms are inclusive, gender responsive, and accountable, (3) national human rights

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10 This note should be read jointly with the policy brief on UN Women engagement in Counter Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism,

11 Available at: https://wps.unwomen.org/

12 https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/11/gendered-dimensions-of-violent-extremism-and-counterterrorism-responses

13 The programmatic note defines agency following Kabeer (1999) as the "ability to define one's goals and act on them". Following this definition, the World Bank Voice and Agency (2014) report is available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/publication/voice-and-agency-empowering-women-and-girls-for-shared-prosperity and stating "agency is the capacity to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve the desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear";

institutions are enabled to hold national security institutions accountable, (4) broad CT and PVE laws that don't meet the threshold of proportionality, necessary and legality are harmonized with international standards or repealed, (5) If civil society and women organizations meaningfully participate and influence decision-making processes related to PVE and peace building, (6) and if by gathering evidence and knowledge to inform policies and strategies ; **THEN,** women and girls, living in contexts impacted by violent extremism, terrorism, and counter terrorism will be protected and their human rights promoted and fulfilled, they will exercise their rights as political agents and equal citizens in all aspects of life including in CT and PVE decision making platforms, their needs will be met through gender responsive institutions, violations committed against them will be effectively prosecuted, and they will be able to live in a just and peaceful society.

THEREFORE, SOCIETIES will be more resilient to the impacts of violent extremism, including push and pull factors, because evidence shows that gender equality and inclusivity are drivers of peace and security and that women and youth play a crucial role in the establishment of sustainable, stable and cohesive societies[14].

The barriers and challenges hindering the full realization of women's rights within counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism must be outlined and taken into account. This is imperative to identify strategic engagement accompanying programmatic interventions or measures of implementation.

THE MAIN BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES against the full realization of women's rights in the context of CT and PVE include but not limited to, the volatile security situation in most impacted areas, dynamic political situation and compounded socioeconomic factors that all contribute to the vulnerability of girls and women. Programmatically, such challenges include the lack of political will of stakeholders to increase women's participation in security sector institutions and processes; prevailing culture in security institutions and lack of gender-responsive security services; risks and threats of reprisals against girls and women leaders engaged in CT and PVE dialogues;

ack of adequate funding to meet gender mainstreaming commitments and to support increasing women's participation in relevant processes; and limited evidence establishing co-relation between gender inequality and security threats emanating from terrorist organizations are among the main barriers against the full realization of women's rights in the context of CT and PVE.

TO OVERCOME THESE BARRIERS, UN Women will continue to engage in systematic advocacy across all levels; and deliver on gender mainstreaming commitments in CT and PVE by working across teams, in particular, benefiting from its work on the rule of law, peacebuilding, civil society support, and combating conflict-related sexual violence; ensure joint initiatives with UN mandate holders; provide technical advisory services in support of relevant intergovernmental processes, and strengthen organizational efficiency to increase coordination and risk management.

5. Measures of Implementation

Based on the global theory of change, by which UN Women leverages its mandate, capacities, and partnerships in support of the UN system, national and international partners in developing and implementing gender-responsive prevention of violent extremism interventions through providing the following services:

a. Normative support to increase gender-responsive approaches: UN policies and mechanisms, national and regional policies, strategies and frameworks.
b. In-country Institutional capacity building and community-based programming: (informed by evidence based research on in-country needs and existing gaps)
c. Promote women's rights at all levels through effective participation and representation in security sector discussions, processes and mechanisms.
d. Strengthened women's capacity to effectively engage in policy dialogues and in the promotion of social cohesion to prevent and respond to VE.
e. Support critical service provision to communities and returnees at the national level.

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14 United Nations and World Bank Study, Pathways for Peace, 2018, p. 161. available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337

6. Reporting Against UN Women Strategic Plan 2021- 2025

UN Women practitioners are required to report against the Global Strategic Plan. The table below provides a list of indicators relevant to reporting support provided through policy and programme support:

Strategic Plan Result	Indicator - Rationale	Areas of Intervention/Description
Outcome 1: Global normative frameworks and gender-responsive laws, policies and institutions	0.1.4. Number of laws that were adopted, revised or repealed to advance gender equality and women's empowerment 0.1.d. Number of partners that have increased capacities to promote/ influence gender-responsive legislation	• Mainstreaming of gender in CT and PVE policies, strategies, and frameworks. • Efforts to repeal harmful laws (usually CT related) • Prioritizing PVE/CT agenda within the Regional and National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325
Outcome 5: More women and girls exercise their voice, agency and leadership, including through an enabling environment that supports women's and youth organizations Changes attributed to UN-Women in skills or abilities and capacities of individuals or institutions and/or the availability of new products and services contributing to Women's voice, leadership & agency	0.5.4. level of influence of civil society organizations working on gender equality and women's empowerment, including women's organizations, in key normative, policy and peace processes	• Capacity-building support of civil society on relevant thematic topics. • Support increased participation of civil society in security sector processes and counter-terrorism/ prevention of violent extremism • Advocacy to promote civil society engagement in relevant dialogues and mechanisms at all levels.
Outcome 7: UN Coordination for gender equality The UN system coherently and systematically contributes to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls	Output 0.7.b. Number of UN system coordination mechanisms in which UN-Women has actively engaged that drive progress on gender mainstreaming mandates and commitments at global, regional, and country levels	• UNW engagement in different inter-agency and UN-led coordination mechanisms to promote gender equality in the context of CT/PVE • UN Women part of UN joint Programmes on PVE/CT/Peace and Security
	0.7.c. Number of interagency products or services with a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment developed and made available	• UNW engagement in different inter-agency and UN-led coordination mechanisms to promote gender equality in the context of CT