

Issue Brief

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Cohort 3: Gender Responsive Peacebuilding

What does gender-responsive peacebuilding look like?

A case study of mainstreaming gender into a Preventing Violent Extremism programme in South and Southeast Asia

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Introduction

This issue brief provides a case study of approaches and steps taken to mainstream gender into the Preventing Violent Extremism through Prompting Tolerance and Respect for Diversity Programme (Aug 2018 – Jan 2020) which was rolled out by UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub to “reduce the vulnerabilities of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand to violent extremism, reduce the dangers of radicalization and increase resilience of local communities and societies as whole towards terrorist attacks.”

While the project was officially signed on Aug 2018, work began in late 2016 in conceptualizing and developing the programme and leveraging partnerships.

This study will underline the vital importance of integrating gender into the heart of any peacebuilding programme from the onset rather than introducing standalone gender targeted projects. It is written for development practitioners who are working on peacebuilding projects and programmes, especially those focusing on violent extremism.

Background

Fifteen years after the adoption of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security (WPS) in October 2000, a review conducted in 2015 noted that while progress had been made in the implementation of the Resolution, much of it “continues to be measured

in ‘firsts,’ rather than as standard practice¹.” The three UN Secretary Generals that have served since 1997, have repeatedly called on the UN system and its agencies to make greater efforts to implement the WPS agenda². A decade after the landmark Resolution 1325 on women peace and security, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, in his report to the General Assembly in 2010, expressed deep concern about the limited implementation of the resolution and introduced a series of measures to be taken to accelerate implementation of the agenda. These included a commitment to allocate 15 percent of funding for promoting women’s participation in peacebuilding programmes.³

While agencies have certainly made progress, it is important to note that even where UN entities have been successful in ensuring allocation of resources to gender activities, spending has by and large been allocated to standalone WPS projects. Less focus has been directed towards rolling out gender responsive⁴ peacebuilding programmes, in which women shape and influence peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. This is an important opportunity missed. Government entities that lead on peacebuilding projects often lack the training and knowledge to truly mainstream gender into all phases of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Those who have gender capacity, including Ministries of Gender and agencies with a gender agenda, are often left out of the peace process and/or have marginal involvement.

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¹ ‘A Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325’, UN Women, (2015)

² In 2010, The SG introduced the 7 Point Action Plan to fulfill the provisions of the resolution. The 7 points included, conflict resolution, post conflict planning, post conflict financing, gender responsive civilian capacity, women’s representation in post conflict governance, rule of law, economic recovery; and has provided the main framework for agencies to ensure a gender responsive peacebuilding programme.

³ The Peacebuilding Fund is the first agency that reached the 15 percent, primarily by introducing standalone targeted programmes on gender and peacebuilding.

⁴ See UNDP Concept Note on Gender Responsive Peacebuilding for Peace and Development Advisors Fellowship Programme: Cohort 3, (Pages 2-3), <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/norway/undp-ogc/documents/Fellowship3-ConceptNote-GenderResponsivePeacebuilding.pdf>

With little research in the area, it is difficult to gauge why mainstreaming gender into peacebuilding projects remains a challenge. It could be due to lack of political will and difficulty in engaging national counterparts on gender issues, or it could be due to lack of capacity of staff who are leading peacebuilding projects. Or a combination of both. Further, many peacebuilding projects have been ongoing for a number of years, especially in countries with protracted conflicts. If gender was not mainstreamed into these projects at the onset it may be challenging to retrofit it into subsequent phases of the project – especially as it would require bringing new partners onboard. Given the abundance of toolkits and handbooks available on the subject, it is clearly not for lack of guidance available for practitioners that gender is not an integral part of these programmes. It is more likely because there has been no documentation of practical examples of how this has been done.

The gendered dimensions of violent extremism

Although there is no clear consensus on what has led to the escalation of violent extremism across the globe, it is clear that certain structural issues contribute to it. These include complex political, economic and social exclusions of certain groups, weak governance systems, disregard for human rights, and gender inequality.

What is very clear is that there is a gendered dimension to violent extremism. Extremists across the world, regardless of their affiliations, seek to curb the role of women, especially in the public sphere, and to undermine gender equality, so much so that some researchers argue that this should be seen as an early warning sign of radicalization and extremism within communities.⁵ Research also demonstrates that this goes alongside a hyper-masculine narrative that glorifies the role of men as fighters and aggressors, a specific social construction of what it means to be a man that has helped to produce terrorists. Men, especially the youth, are often drawn into extremist groups less because of their beliefs or religion, than because of a desire to satisfy their identities as men and ‘validate’ their manhood.⁶

There is widespread acknowledgment that a security approach that solely focuses on physically preventing attacks and punishing perpetrators does not prevent violent extremism. Approaches that look at the root causes of violent extremism in all its complexities are paramount. The UN Secretary-General (SG), Ban Ki-moon, in 2016 presented a [Plan of Action for Preventing Violent Extremism](#).⁷ In anticipation of this upcoming plan in 2015 the Security Council passed Resolution 2242, which stipulated that the plan integrate women’s participation, leadership and empowerment and ensure that gender is integrated as a cross-cutting issue. In response to the call by the SG, in 2015 UNDP issued a global framework on Preventing

Violent Extremism.⁸ The paper identifies 11 building blocks to guide the design and rollout of UNDP’s programmes and projects on PVE at the global, regional and country level. It includes promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment and engaging young women and men in preventing violent extremism.

The case study: mainstreaming gender into PVE programming

Concerted efforts were made to develop the Preventing Violent Extremism through Prompting Tolerance and Respect for Diversity Programme through a gender lens. As a first step, two research pieces were commissioned by UNDP that examined violent extremism and its gendered dimensions in South Asia and South East Asia.

UNDP also partnered with the Institute for Economics and Peace to understand the gendered narrative of extremism in social media. Reviewing big data, 8 million tweets from Bangladesh for the last six months of 2015, discovered a hyper-masculine narrative in Bangladesh that glorified men as ‘aggressors’ and ‘fighters’. Based on discussions with stakeholders, it was agreed that addressing the nexus between ideologies of masculinity and violent extremism was a critical area that UNDP should take the lead on. It complemented work done by UN Women, which focused primarily on the impact and role of extremism on women, and less on the gendered reasons why men are pulled and pushed to extremist acts.

In 2016 UNDP also supported a regional workshop on National Action Plans (NAPs) on PVE. The meeting brought together government representatives (mostly from the security sector) and civil society representatives, including women’s CSOs working on PVE. At the meeting, specific panels, led by UN Women, recommended firstly that NAPs on PVE address the gendered dimensions of PVE and secondly that these should be linked to the NAPs on women, peace and security.

Coordinating UNDP’s work with other agencies and stakeholders

UNDP partnered with UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) under the UN Development Group umbrella to commission an analytical paper on the impact of extremism on women. Based on desk work and extensive consultation with the UN country teams in the region, the paper noted that there was a clear gendered dimension to extremism in the region that restricted and undermined the role of women, especially in the public space, and which at times made them the target of violence.

The Bangkok Regional Hub partnered with global research think tank Hedayah to host the Global Meeting on

⁵ See, for example, Sanam Anderlini & Madeline Koch, “Extremism in the Mainstream: Implications for and Actions by Women,” UN Women (Jan 2015).

⁶ See for example Fionnuala D. Ni Aolain, “Gender, Masculinities and Transition in Conflicted Societies”, George Washington University Law School (2010).

⁷ The Plan of Action outlines seven key areas of action that includes: (1) dialogue and conflict prevention; (2) strengthening good governance, rule of law and human rights; (3) engaging communities; (4) empowering youth; (5) empowering women; (6) education skill development and employment generation; and (7) strategic communications and media.

⁸ *Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity*, UNDP, (2016)

Extremism, which took place in Jakarta, Indonesia, in November 2016. Extensive efforts were made to ensure that the research conferences addressed the different impacts extremism has on men and women, the different roles men and women play in extremism and the different reasons why men and women are pulled and pushed to join extremist groups. Discussions and presentations during the meeting demonstrated that not only were women severely affected by extremism, but in many instances they played a key role in extremist groups, including as recruiters and as influencers of male family members (in their positions as mothers, wives and sisters).

These insights helped to lay the grounds for an Association of Southeast Asian Nations⁹ (ASEAN)-UN regional dialogue on the impact of violent extremism on women. The meeting was led by the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), supported by UN Women and UNDP, and brought together civil society organisations (especially women's CSOs), and the ASEAN member states to discuss this sensitive issue. The outcome document of the meeting outlined the ASEAN's needs and commitments on the issue, and emphasized that interventions needed to be inclusive and implemented within a human rights and gender equality framework, paying close attention to the empowerment of women.

Supporting governments to build their capacity on gender issues

The studies and meetings demonstrated that what is labeled as 'violent extremism' by most countries are often terrorist attacks (hence the focus on 'fighters'). However, countries in the region challenged by violent extremism, were not willing to recognize attacks on women – whether they be attacks on girls for attending schools or honour killings – as extremist acts, even though they were perpetrated by individuals belonging to extremist groups.

Further, while countries recognized women (especially in their role as mothers and wives) and women's networks could and should play a central part in preventing extremism, policy makers were not sufficiently aware of the impact of extremism on women.

Evidence gathered through the different studies, meetings and conferences supported by UNDP was used to build the security sectors –institutions whose duty is to protect the society from crime, disorder and violence- awareness of the gendered dimensions of violent extremism. Further, United Nations Resident Coordinators (RCs) and senior management teams in the countries in the region challenged with extremism played a key role in supporting the government to include these dimensions in programming to prevent violent extremism.

Recognizing that additional gender expertise may be needed

The papers commissioned by UNDP to analyse the rise of extremism in the region, did not produce a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the impact and role of women in violent extremism that could be used as building blocks for gender sensitive programming on PVE. It was also clear that while the consultants were world leading experts on extremism and conflict analysis, they were not experts in the gendered dimensions of extremism. Looking at conflict through a gendered lens is often considered a separate academic practice. Agencies need to invest in recruiting consultants who have specific gender knowledge and experience.

Ensuring budgeting on gender is adequate

The overall budget for activities specifically on gender in the programme is targeted at 30 percent. These included activities that looked specifically at the gendered dimensions- such as the nexus between hyper-masculinity and violent extremism; that the capacity building and technical support for countries to develop their National Action Plans on PVE included a focus on the impact and role of men and women; and the recruitment of dedicated gender advisors.

Monitoring the gendered dimensions

Annual monitoring of the gendered impact of programming will include the following indicators: impact of and budgets allocated to the number of standalone initiatives that focuses primarily on achieving gender equality and empowerment of women;; how gender issues have been addressed in activities that do not primarily focus on gender equality or empowerment of women; and, the number of NAPs that comprehensively address the gendered dimensions of PVE. Going forward, an assessment of these indicators will be included in the programme's annual report and in UNDP's internal reporting process.

Recommendations

Based on this case study, the following recommendations on what works to ensure gender is mainstreamed into peacebuilding programmes have been identified:

- While every effort needs to be made to continue and to increase the number of standalone projects on gender and peacebuilding, mainstreaming gender into peacebuilding programmes is vital and must not be neglected.
- The mandate for implementing work on gender does not rest solely with UN Women. Concerted efforts need to be made by all agencies implementing peacebuilding programmes.
- Coordinate the work and share information with other agencies to ensure meaningful impact on the ground to ensure activities are not duplicated.

- RCs and the UN country teams need to advise the respective government to help create the space for gender responsive programming to happen, recognising there is often significant pushback against such programmes especially if they address sensitive areas such as ‘honour killings’.
- Agencies implementing programmes on peacebuilding should take the opportunity to build the capacity of national agencies to address gender equality and empowerment of women.
- Recognise that gender and peace/conflict studies are two separate academic areas and that consultants who are experts on conflict issues will not necessarily have the expertise to conduct a gender sensitive conflict analysis. Agencies should invest in recruiting consultants with experience of both gender *and* peacebuilding to ensure that gender is comprehensively mainstreamed.
- Ensure that gender is included in all sections of the programme design and that the budget is adequate.
- Project documents should indicate how the gendered impacts will be monitored and ensure this is conducted as part of the annual monitoring of programmes.

About the PDA Fellowship:

UNDP's Oslo Governance Center in partnership with the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme has established a PDA Fellowship Programme in 2016 consisting of several cohorts, each involving between 4-6 PDA's and/or PDA like conflict prevention specialists over a period of two weeks. The Fellowship Programme involves guided reflections to help draw out the Fellows' experience on pre-identified conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues.

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PRIO

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UNDP Oslo Governance Centre:

The Oslo Governance Centre (OGC) is one of six UNDP Global Policy Centres, established in 2002 and working since May 2015 with a renewed mandate. It is part of the UNDP Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster in the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) and works closely with its New York based Headquarters and other relevant UN and UNDP units strengthening the overall analytical and learning ability in the area of Governance and Peacebuilding. It supports policy development and applied research with an overarching focus on democratic governance and peacebuilding in crisis, conflict and transitional contexts.

Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention

Since 2004, the United Nations Development Programme and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) have partnered to strengthen support to the UN's work in building national capacities for conflict prevention. Often times, such support is extended through the deployment of Peace and Development Advisors (or PDAs), a growing cadre of UN staff who support Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams adapt and respond to complex political situations and to develop and implement strategic conflict prevention initiatives and programmes.