Examining the Gender Dimension of Countering Violent Extremism Policy and Programming

The roles of women relating to countering violent extremism (CVE) is an critical security issue in the 21st century that directly relates to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the seven resolutions on Women, Peace and Security that have followed it, most notably UNSCR 2242. Today, there is growing awareness that women can play complex roles and can be critical partners in prevention. Women are often the first to identify the early warning signs of radicalization in their families and communities, and can be well placed to identify appropriate response measures that suit the context. Local programmes to engage women in CVE efforts can provide women with increased awareness about how to detect the early warning signs of radicalization, and teach them how to leverage their influence through dialogue or other means to stop or prevent violent extremism. Further, evidence demonstrates that supporting women socially, politically, and economically has a positive effect on countering violent extremism, as does their meaningful participation in peace and security efforts.

In 2014, The Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates, the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, and UN Women partnered to convene a Panel Series on Women, Peace and Security to support and inform the Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). A goal of this series was to explore emerging and urgent issues within the field of Women, Peace and Security, including a focus on the role of women in countering violent extremism. One of our key findings from this partnership, and from our collective work to date, is that there is an acute research gap on gender and CVE. Existing WPS research has only recently begun to include a focus on violent extremism, and existing work on CVE rarely includes a gender lens.

We are at an important crossroads and need to identify lessons learned and good practices, and where and how we can best scale up or multiply efforts. CVE emerged as field of practice in the recent past, and rigorous research has been slow to catch up with policy, programming, and government rhetoric. Growing interest in the gender dimensions of CVE comes both from normative pressure to include women in all peace and security processes, and from a practical realization that women are key players, whether perpetrators, recruiters, or de-radicalizing agents.
There is a respectable body of research on women as violent actors, which comes primarily from political science and terrorism studies, but women’s roles in countering violent extremism are much less studied. What does exist is often in the form of NGO reports, opinion pieces, news articles, policy briefs/recommendations, conference proceedings, or short case study analyses. This panel will put forward concrete examples of lessons learned and good practices, and recommend how these insights from the ground can be inform practical action items for policymakers and practitioners on both the national and multilateral levels. Speakers will also reflect on which platforms and forums are best placed to collect and disseminate research, and consider how efforts to advance implementation of UNSCR 2242 can strengthen collective international efforts to address terrorism and violent extremism.

The following questions will guide the discussion:

- How can researchers and practitioners create a knowledge base of what’s working across the globe? What are the right success metrics to evaluate these examples?

- What is happening on the ground that is scalable/transferrable, and how do we amplify it? How can we link local initiatives to global solutions?

- What are the best platforms or forums to aggregate successes we know about? How can we ensure existing platforms include research on women and gender, and are usable for practitioners looking to gender-mainstream their CVE work?