

# EMPOWERED WOMEN, PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES

Regional office for Asia and the Pacific

2017-2020

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**“Empowered women  
and empowered  
communities are the  
best defense against  
radicalization  
and further violence.”**

**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**

Executive Director, UN Women

Statement by Executive Director on Boko Haram, *UN Women*, October 2, 2015.

## OUR PROGRAMME

**With the generous support of the Government of Japan, UN Women implements the programme “Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities” aimed at preventing violent extremism and building resilient societies in Asia.**

## INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Since April 2017, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has been implementing one of UN Women’s largest programmes on preventing violent extremism “Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities”, with a focus on Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. The programme engages in pioneering work by building understanding of women’s diverse roles in violent extremism, including as promoters or preventers. Through the programme, UN Women works with women at the community level to support their empowerment as a key strategy for building social cohesion.

Independent research found that the programme directly contributed to increasing women’s understanding of the problem of violent extremism and their confidence to participate in initiatives to prevent it. Both men and women in the programme sites recognized that the economic empowerment of women decreased tensions within the family and community and thereby contributed to more peaceful and resilient societies.

Under this programme, UN Women developed new and innovative research on the gender specific dynamics of violent extremism as well as novel tools to collect sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data. For example, the first sex-disaggregated analysis of social media in Asia that examines where online appetite for extremist materials is greatest in the region was conducted. Further, this research analyses any potential or inferred association between support for violent extremist groups and violence against women.

UN Women advocates for the integration of gender considerations in national, regional and intergovernmental peace and security processes. This includes providing dedicated gender expertise to Indonesia’s Counter Terrorism body as they developed their National Action Plan on Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism, and supporting ASEAN on their Regional Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. UN Women provides support to the Philippines as they transition to the new political body in the Bangsamoro, and to Sri Lanka as they develop their first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

Through this programme, UN Women contributes to the implementation of the Secretary General’s Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism and to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 goals, particularly SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, and SDG 5 on promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.



UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka meets with Deloara and her family at her shop in Ukhiya January 31, 2018 in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong district, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/ Allison Joyce.

UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka meets with Deloara, a beneficiary of the Programme, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Deloara utilized the financial package from UN Women to expand her grocery store by stocking it with a wider variety of items. Deloara's husband has an injury-induced disability that makes movement

difficult. The grocery store enables Deloara to make money for their family while not requiring to go too far afield so that she may also care for her family. With an expanded array of items, Deloara's store will hopefully become a location frequented by community members. Ukhiya, Chittagong district, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce.

# WHY FOCUS ON WOMEN?

Currently, approaches to countering terrorism and violent extremism are going beyond military and security strategies to focus on prevention. Attention is increasingly turning to the role women play in prevention and response efforts including their role in promoting social cohesion at the community level.

Terrorist and violent extremist groups manipulate gender stereotypes to recruit men and women to their ranks, promoting violent notions of masculinity and using women to convey these messages. Women and girls are differentially affected by violent extremism. Increasingly, they are themselves

being recruited, forcibly or willingly, to these groups, many of whom are now returning to their home countries. But women are not just victims or perpetrators of this phenomenon. Many have been and continue to be on the frontlines of prevention efforts, including shaping community and family values, influencing decision making of potential recruits, identifying and intervening at early signs of radicalization that lead to terrorism, female imams preaching religious tolerance, women using different forms of media to promote counter narratives, and female police officers engaging with local communities to collect information.

## WOMEN PLAY KEY ROLES IN VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND ITS PREVENTION:



Given the gendered underpinnings of this agenda and the gendered approach used by violent extremist groups in their recruitment, the very promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is in itself a counter-measure to the spread of radicalization. In order to effectively

engage with the gendered dynamics of violent extremism and reverse its growing trend, it is critical that prevention and response efforts prioritize women's rights, empowerment, participation and leadership— both at the community level as well as in national decision-making.

## THEORY OF CHANGE:



## WHERE WE WORK



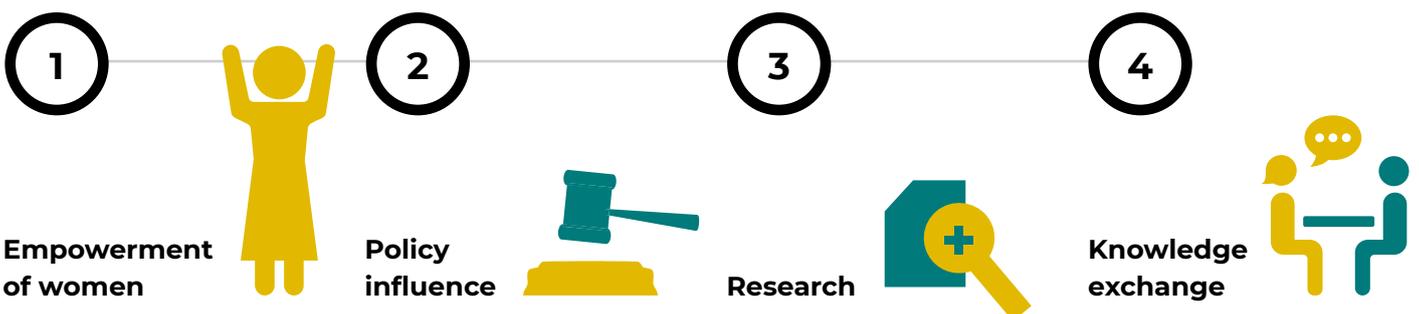
The programme “Empowerment Women, Peaceful Communities” focuses on communities at risk of radicalization, with broader national and regional components. External evaluations of the programme found that it is particularly effective at connecting grassroots duty bearers with national and regional policies and policy makers.

-  Focus Countries
-  Engagement through Regional perspective

The programme has four mutually reinforcing areas of prevention: (1) promote women's leadership and economic empowerment as strategies for strengthening social cohesion at the community level; (2) influence policy, including through strengthening women's groups and

networks working on social cohesion and the prevention of violent extremism; (3) enhance the evidence base and social understanding linked to the roles women play in preventing violent extremism; and (4) promote south-south cooperation and knowledge exchange.

### WE WORK IN FOUR KEY AREAS:



## BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

Monash University's Gender, Peace and Security Centre conducted research in conjunction with UN Women's "Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities" programme. The research examined how the programme has impacted social cohesion, women's empowerment, community empowerment, and preventing and countering fundamentalist or extremist ideologies in the programme communities in Indonesia and Bangladesh.

To do this, an in-depth qualitative and quantitative study across six communities, three each in Bangladesh and Indonesia was conducted. Two of the sites in each country are areas where UN Women programming had been implemented ("programme sites") and one site in each country had no such intervention ("non-programme sites"). Research revealed that the UN Women programmes contributed directly to women's confidence and their subsequent contribution to PVE in three distinct ways:

### 1. **Women and men are more aware and empowered to join and lead PVE initiatives:**

Women and men in the four programme sites in both Bangladesh and Indonesia were much more aware than women and men in non-programme sites of the problem of violent extremism and how their roles in the family and in community could contribute to PVE. In addition, people in programme sites demonstrated greater empowerment with respect to both confidence in joining PVE initiatives or reporting violent extremism and knowledge of what to do to counter or prevent violent extremism. Women and men were more confident in engaging in PVE initiatives and aware of the positive impact they had.

### 2. **Women are engaging their communities in PVE initiatives:** Women and men underscored

the important role of communities and families in PVE, especially mothers. Related to this was general agreement that increased awareness within families and communities of violent extremism and how it can be prevented was critical to the success of PVE efforts. In addition, the research found a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy—or the confidence to join a PVE initiative—and reporting concerns about violent extremism, and having greater trust in public institutions, such as the police, the law courts, the government, the media and political parties. This suggests the need to enhance women's knowledge and skills with respect to community actions they may be able to take outside the family.

- ### 3. **Economic empowerment:** The regional programme included economic empowerment activities for women as an entry point. While these activities were not specifically intended to address poverty as a potential root cause of violent extremism, both women and men in the programme sites recognized that these economic empowerment activities decreased tensions within the family and community and thereby contributed to more peaceful and resilient societies.

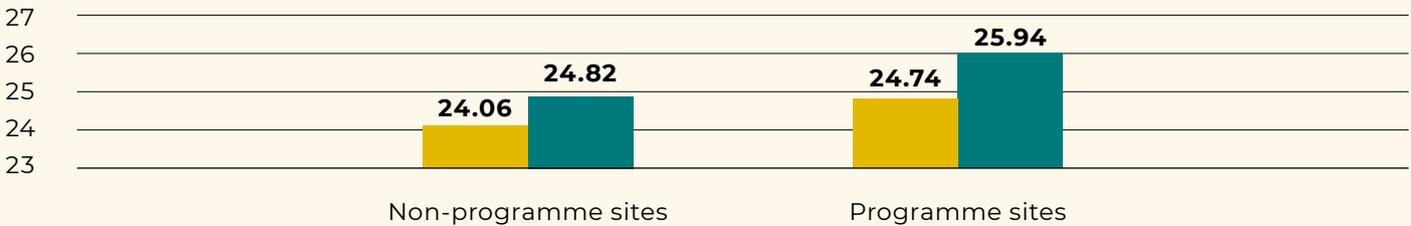
**"We were unaware before, now we are aware. We didn't know what to do, we were backdated, and our husbands didn't allow us to go out of our house and forbid us to do many things. In the meetings, now we can discuss many things and exchange ideas. Now we think if others from the other villages can do something then we can also do it. We are women, but we can do it. We are becoming aware."**

**Female respondent in a UN Women Programme site, Dinajpur, Bangladesh**

## WOMEN AND MEN IN PROGRAMME SITES HAVE HIGHER LEVELS OF SELF-EFFICACY TO JOIN A C/PVE INITIATIVE (AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

One of the key findings of the research relates to the greater level of self-efficacy and confidence on the part of both women and men in joining community P/CVE initiatives in programme sites.

Confidence self-efficacy (mean group scores)\*



Note: The confidence self-efficacy scale is a 6-item scale that assesses people's agreement (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) with statements such as "I am confident that my community would support me if I reported concerns about people involved in violent extremism." Higher scores indicate greater self-efficacy (empowerment) regarding reporting violent extremism, with a sample size of n=686. Cronbach's alpha test for reliability of the scale indicated that reliability was good ( $\alpha = .78$ ), and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed a single factor solution (eigenvalue = 1.54).

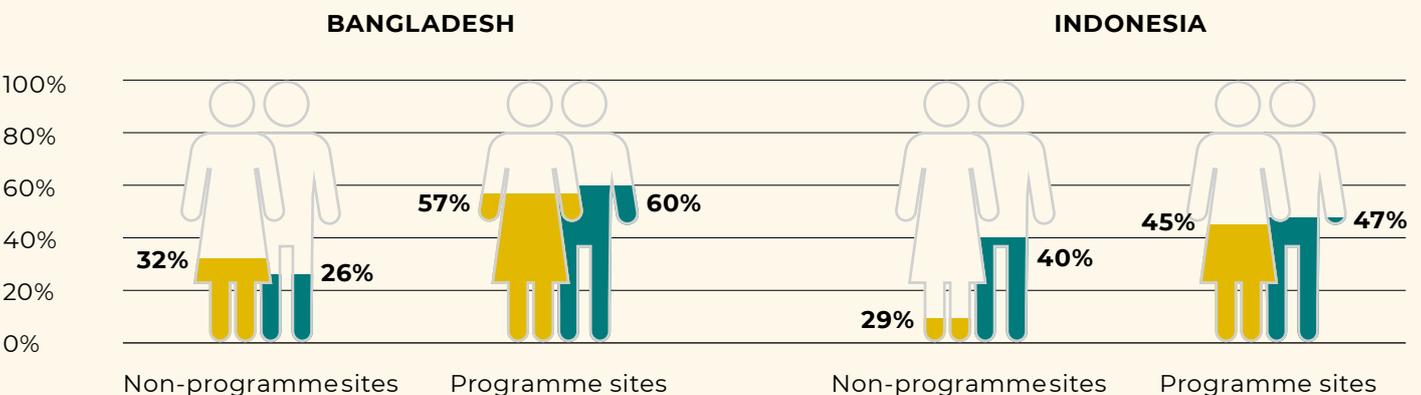
Women Men

Source: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018).

## WOMEN AND MEN IN UN WOMEN PROGRAMME SITES STRONGLY AGREE THEY KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT TO DO TO PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE FAMILY (AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

More than half of all women in the programme sites strongly agree that they know what to do in order to prevent violent extremism in their families (49 per cent of women), compared with just under a third (31 per cent) of women in non-programme sites. In Bangladesh, 57 per cent of women in the programme sites said they knew what to do, compared with 32 per cent of women in the non-programme sites. In Indonesia, 45 per cent of women said they knew what to do, compared with 29 per cent of women in non-programme sites.

Strongly agree with knowing what to do in order to prevent violent extremism in their family, by sex, country and type of site



Women Men

Source: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018).

# FOCUS ON INDONESIA

## EMPOWERMENT

In Indonesia, 2000 women increased their business and leadership skills, with 60 local products developed including branded packaging. In addition, 1500 women participated in saving and loan schemes

through women's cooperative groups (Koperasi Cinta Damai / Peace Love Cooperative). Through these groups, UN Women's partner Wahid Foundation promotes a spirit of tolerance among the community.



Women beneficiaries of economic empowerment initiatives implemented by UN Women's partner in Indonesia, the Wahid Foundation. Depok and Bogor, Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/Iwan Kurniawan.



Women's economic empowerment collectives show off their products in Gemblegan, Central Java, Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/Eric Gourlan.

The Peace Village Initiative is a model for women's roles in promoting peaceful and resilient communities to cultivate peace. Local women's groups, supported by the programme, approached their village leadership to explore ways to promote tolerance and sustain peace within their communities. As a result, nine village leaders committed to pilot the Peace Village concept. A Peace Village Declaration, signed by involved partners, is based on specific commitments, captured in nine indicators that measure progress in efforts to prevent violence, promote tolerance and advance social justice. At this point, seven additional villages across Java are preparing to follow this path.

In addition, the nine Peace Villages have been selected as the pilot communities for the local implementation of the Indonesian National Action Plan on PVE. To support this plan, UN Women, in partnership with the Wahid Foundation, developed a community-based early warning system which will be piloted in the Peace Villages.

In Indonesia, the radicalisation of several migrant women as they worked abroad in recent years emerged as a new threat to the region. UN Women, with the support of Indonesian NGO INFEST, engaged key government partners to develop modules on PVE in pre-departure and post-arrival training/education for migrant workers. INFEST also worked with government agencies to enhance their understanding of the gender dynamics in PVE.

## BUILDING PEACE WHILE EMPOWERING WOMEN ON INDONESIA'S JAVA ISLAND

The group of 20 women from the farming community of Nglinggi in Klaten, Central Java gathered on a stage and pledged before their neighbors and friends: "We, Indonesian women, are determined to live in love and peace with all elements of society regardless of one's ethnicity, religion, and faith." With this pledge on November 1st 2017, and the signing of a peaceful village inscription by the Regent of Klaten, Nglinggi became the first community in Indonesia to be declared a model Kampung Damai, or "peace village".

As a "Kampung Damai", the community holds discussions on what it takes to become a peaceful village and encourages resolutions of conflicts that arise. Community members agree on

guidelines for conflict resolution, such as that people of various faiths should cooperate to solve problems and set community policies, neighbours should jointly maintain the community such as by cleaning and fixing common buildings, and women must be economically and socially empowered.

"We see women as potential bearers of peace in the community," says Yenny Wahid, Director of the Wahid Foundation. "So we want to empower them to find their voice. We hope that by empowering them, it will change the dynamics in their communities." Empowering women creates stronger, more peaceful communities that in turn help prevent violent extremism.



Living in a multi ethnic and multi religious communities, Nani sometimes worried that conflict might occur in her village. UN Women has supported Nani and the women in her village with empowerment, leadership and peace building training in order to strengthen social cohesion in the community.  
Photo: UN Women/Iwan Kurniawan.



Meyli Aryani, a small business owner in Pondok Cina village in West Java province. Photo: UN Women/Roni Bintang.

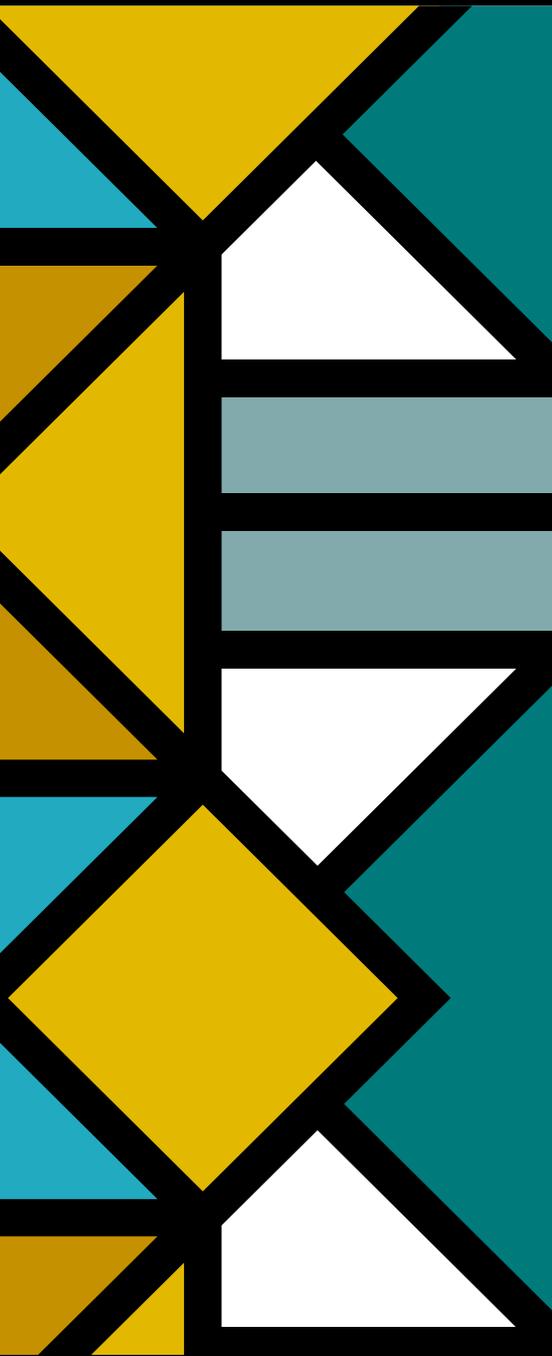
In Java, the Wahid Foundation facilitates women's microfinance groups that meet weekly to learn about financial management and how to develop their small businesses. UN Women provides the groups with capital for loans. Through these groups, women of diverse religious and social backgrounds learn to support each other.

Members of the microfinance group in Pondok Cina village in West Java point to the benefits for their own businesses as well as for the community. "The Wahid Foundation programme developed this idea of peace and tolerance among the village community," says Meyli Aryani, a teacher and shop owner. "Before they came, everyone was thinking that their religion was the only truth. Now we count on each other, we appreciate each other, and there is solidarity among the village members" she

explains. "The village is an example of tolerance and mutual respect. Muslims join Christians for Christmas. During the Chinese New Year, we go to our Confucian neighbour's house. We all communicate well with each other. It is the key to having a peaceful village."

Nani, a 27-year-old owner of a lamp business, received training from the project on conflict mediation as well as financial management. She applies the concepts at home, in her relationships with her husband and her two children – "the programme is very useful for my business. With peace in the village, we can expand our businesses, get wider recognition and get to know more people. Through this group we are getting to know each other better and build trust among the different religions and communities in the village."

# FOCUS ON INDONESIA



To commemorate their status as a Peace Village, the community of Gemblegan, Central Java, Indonesia commissioned a statue. The village chief said, "We all agreed to have a peace symbol in this village. It's a Javanese woman bringing a container of flowing water. Clean and flowing water is the symbol of prosperity. Empowered women are giving prosperity to the community." Photo: UN Women/Eric Gourlan.



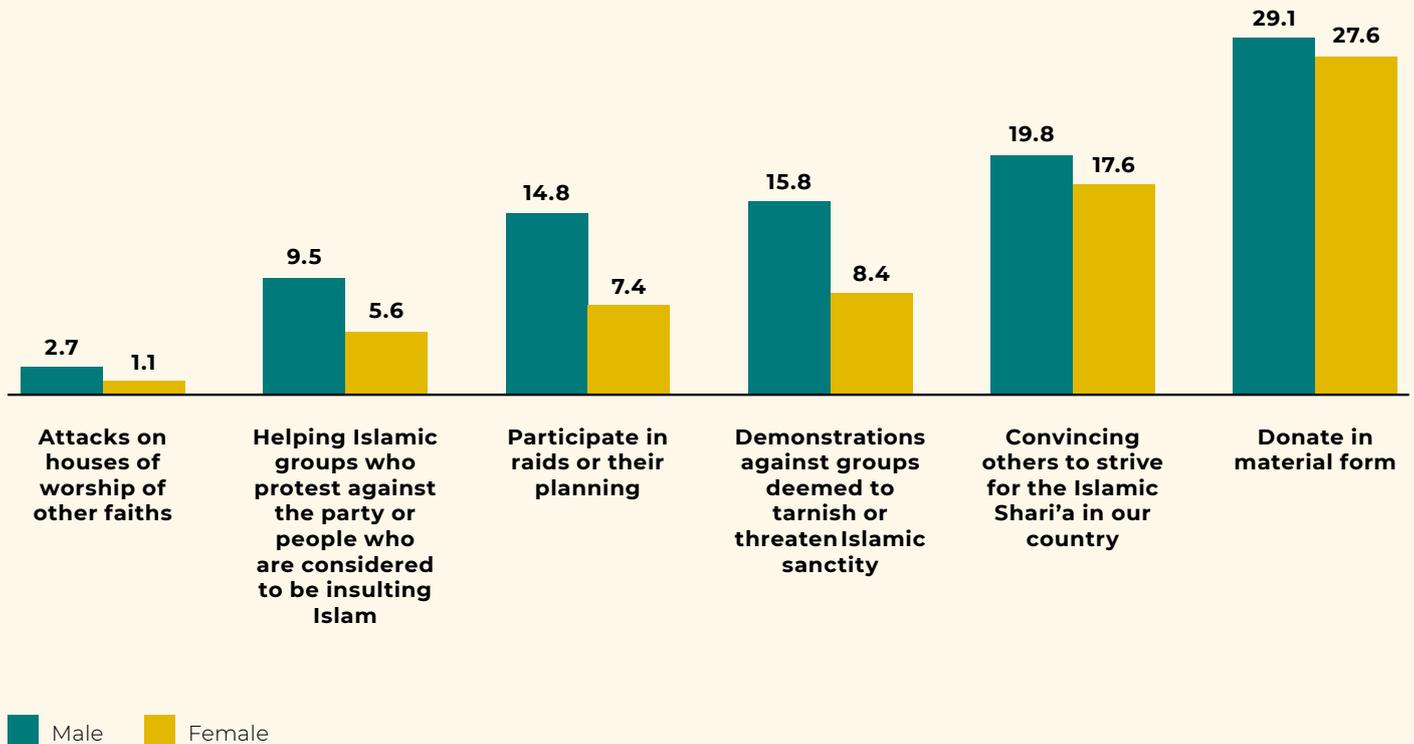
# The threat of radicalization among Muslim women and men in Indonesia

Results of the 2017 National Survey on the Threat of Radicalization Among Muslim Women and Men by the Wahid Foundation in Indonesia show that Muslim women are less willing to participate in radical activities than men. However, it is significant that the difference between men and women’s willingness to participate in radical activities is much larger when referring to public activities (attacks, demonstrations, protests, raids) compared to

more private activities (convincing persons, contributing in material form).

In contrast, the survey shows that Muslim women are ideologically more supportive of violent extremist groups than men. On average 1 out of 10 women are supportive of groups known to have perpetrated violent extremist acts (including ISIS and Jamaah Islamiyah), compared to 1 in 13 Muslim men.

## WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN RADICAL ACTIVITIES (BY SEX)



Notes: This graph shows data on whether respondents are willing or have actually participated in radical activities.



Tri Wahyuningrum. Photo: UN Women/Eric Gourlan.

## Tri Wahyuningrum

Tri Wahyuningrum is a housewife. She says she got started sewing because her television broke, and a man passing by offered to trade her the broken TV for a sewing machine. Her friends then approached her to try the skills training from the UN Women project. After the first day, she says, "I tried to make a bag that night and when my kids saw it, they said, 'Oh that's really nice!' and that

encouraged me to try more. Thank God that until now, my income keeps increasing."

She says, "Women have always been involved in the village activities but not much. Now, we are involved in so much more. We are helping our village to have a bigger heart."



Hikmah Bafagih. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.

## Hikmah Bafagih

Hikmah Bafagih, from Malang in East Java, Indonesia, is a religious leader, steering the women's wing in her region of Nahdlatul Ulama (commonly known as NU), a traditionalist Sunni Islam movement which is considered to be the biggest Muslim organization in Indonesia. She helps run programmes to prevent radicalization and intolerance, including developing preachers who can advocate for anti-radicalism in all districts of East Java. Her organization also handles the people from the region who were deported due to being affiliated with ISIS or ISIL. On Sundays, she converts her house into a centre for skills training for women

who were terminated from their work, and different groups of people that need support such as gay and transgender people and people living with HIV.

She says, "Women are discriminated against, suffer from stigma, suffer injustice because of improper religious interpretation, and suffer from the patriarchal culture. This often disrupts their potential to build solidarity. What is most important is to empower women and to ensure that they are not experiencing violence, so that women can return to being solidarity makers. Our vision is to create an inclusive Islam."

# FOCUS ON INDONESIA

## POLICY INFLUENCE

### Towards a gender sensitive National Action Plan to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism in Indonesia

Indonesia is finalizing a National Action Plan to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism, led by BNPT, the National Agency for Combatting Terrorism. This plan promotes a holistic approach to C/PVE, integrating diverse sectors such as education, employment, and media and communications.

Through the “Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities” programme, UN Women provided technical support to incorporate a gender

sensitive approach to this National Action Plan. A dedicated gender advisor supported the drafting process, including identifying opportunities to promote the participation and leadership of women in C/PVE programmes in Indonesia.

BNPT stated that they consider the Peace Villages model a concrete programme that will complement the draft National Action Plan on P/CVE, in particular in the Prevention Pillar.

### Working with champions

A key strategy for successful policy influence is working with champions and role models supportive of women’s empowerment and the role of women in preventing violent extremism. In Indonesia, these champions have included President of Indonesia Joko Widodo and Ms. Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia who was awarded the “UN Agent of Change” award at the UN General Assembly in 2017.



From left to right: Sabine Machl, UN Women Country Representative, Yenny Wahid, Director of Wahid Foundation, Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director Asia Pacific. Photo: UN Women/ Iwan Kurniawan.



President of Indonesia Joko Widodo, Wahid Foundation Executive Director Yenny Wahid and UN Women Regional Director Miwa Kato, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace Celebration, Sumenep, Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/ Fuli Handoko.



“From my experience as Minister of Foreign Affairs, with vision and hard work, women can become an agent of peace” - Retno Marsudi, during the event “Agents of Change, Builders of Peace, a conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs” in Jakarta on 30 November 2017.

## WOMEN-LED PEACE VILLAGES DISCUSS WAYS TO MOVE THEIR VISION FORWARD

**Solo, Indonesia** — At the Peace Village Workshop on 9 October 2018, both declared Peace Village members and four communities aspiring to take the pledge came together to create a plan for urging this grassroots movement forward.

They are village chiefs, stay-at-home parents, small business owners, religious leaders, and local authorities – about 60 community members from around Java island, gathered together with one mission: to make their communities more peaceful.

But how to make this happen? For these individuals, the answer came with a local declaration as Kampung Damai or Peace Villages, a little over a year ago. They agreed to live in peace and harmony with their neighbors, settle conflicts respectfully, and to empower the most marginalized in their communities – especially women – to have a say in decision making.

The idea of Peace Villages was conceived by UN Women and the Indonesian NGO Wahid Foundation, and implemented under UN Women's regional programme Empowered Women,

Peaceful Communities. In order to become a Peace Village, community members commit to protecting and fostering tolerance and peace within their communities, starting with making peace within the family. They then agree on guidelines for the community. These can include calling for neighbours to jointly clean and fix common buildings; for people of different faiths to set community policies; and for women to be involved in the local economy and decision-making processes.

Presented with the idea, women from each local community lobbied with their village heads and won the support of other community members to implement the idea. Yuli, from Sidomulyo village in East Java, convinced her neighbors to implement the Peace Village plan in her area. She said, "At the beginning, our village leader didn't really understand what this program is about. We explained that this program embodies values that can transcend all boundaries such as religion, ethnic groups and others." Eventually, the village leaders came around, and Sidomulyo declared themselves as a Peace Village.



Yuli is a 45-year-old housewife who, through the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme, started a business group with other women from her community. Of women's role in promoting cohesive societies, she says, "Empowering women to build a peaceful community fits the slogan of our city: empowered village, successful city. For me personally, peace starts from home and community." Photo: UN Women/Eric Gourlan.



The workshop hosted individuals from all reaches of Java Island, posing here for a group photo. What started as a movement within women's groups now has the support of entire communities. Photo: UN Women/Eric Gourlan.

A key theme of the workshop was women's pivotal involvement in peacebuilding, especially at the community level, an area where they have traditionally been left out. Sugeng Mulyadi, Chief of Nglingsi Village, said, "If we learn from our history, leaving out women from our struggle will only lead to bigger trouble. We must give more room for women to engage."

The meeting concluded with a joint agreement on steps moving forward for the Peace Village movement. The national counter terrorism body, BNPT, plans to adopt Peace Villages as a strategy for implementing the National Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism, including by using the villages as pilot communities for rolling out the National Action Plan. The Peace Village governments will also receive guidance from BNPT on how to integrate the National Action Plan into their local policies.



Elisabet Anita Wahyuningsih, Member of Jetis Village Women's business group and Peace Agent Facilitator, takes notes with her group from Klaten, Indonesia. Elisabet shared her experience with the UN Women Programme at the Regional Conference in Tokyo in 2018. Photo: UN Women/Eric Gourlan.

## PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA AND COMMUNITY LEADERS SPOTLIGHT ROLE OF WOMEN IN BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE

A landmark community festival led by Indonesian President Joko Widodo in Sumenep, Indonesia, to commemorate the International Day of Peace, brought together 8,000 people to celebrate women's empowerment and their role in creating people societies.

President Widodo, who in 2015 announced his support to UN Women's HeForShe global initiative to advance gender equality, joined with UN Women and the Wahid Foundation, with the support of the Government of Japan, to celebrate the contribution of women entrepreneurs in local development and

to emphasize women's roles in promoting peaceful co-existence and resilient communities.

The massive gathering in Pesantren Annuqqayah on Madura island, East Java, under the theme "Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All", brought together religious leaders, santri and santriwati, and women's economic groups to take part in a range of dynamic events including a panel discussion on how Madura women contribute to peace, a community-led collective peace oath, cultural performances, and a bazaar hosted by women's entrepreneurs showcasing their products.



President Joko Widodo speaks of the importance of women's empowerment to build peace. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.



From left to right: Yenny Wahid, Director of Wahid Foundation, Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, President Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.

### Women's role in building peace:

Indonesian President **Joko Widodo**:

**"Women are the key to sustainable peace, from family, to country, to the world. Peace cannot be forced, but cultivated. I congratulate this partnership with UN Women and Wahid Foundation, "Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities", which will build peaceful societies. Let's build and spread the value of peace to the country and to the world."**

**Miwa Kato**, Regional Director of UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific:

**"Women have a unique position to positively influence their families, communities, and society as a whole to build peace and tolerance. By investing in women and girls, by ensuring they can participate in the economic, political and social life of their communities, and by valuing their contributions their societies will be stronger, more inclusive and more peaceful".**

**Yenny Wahid**, head of the Wahid Foundation:

**"By empowering women we know that it will strengthen the dynamics of their communities to be peaceful and tolerant. This is good for women, good for communities, and good for Indonesia".**

# FOCUS ON BANGLADESH

## EMPOWERMENT

Through the programme “Women for Peace and Social Cohesion”, and in partnership with BRAC, the the largest non-governmental development organisation in the world, about 2,000 “Polli Shomaj Women” (women-only community groups) increased their business and leadership skills. In addition, they are building their capacity to identify the early signs of radicalization of adults and children in their own communities and find solutions for prevention. In total, 830 women have also received funding to start up or expand their businesses.

Over 80,000 individuals have attended community theatre shows, which promote messages of women’s empowerment and community harmony. This “Popular Theatre” builds awareness of the importance of social cohesion and preventing violent extremism.

As part of the programme, UN Women works with the Centre for Peace and Justice at BRAC University to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of 320 female students to engage in leadership and preventing violent extremism at two regional universities: Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur and Khulna University.

Female students take part in three-day “business bootcamps”, where they discuss problems in their communities, including violence, sexual harassment and violent extremism. They then learn about the concept of social entrepreneurship and gain essential business skills, such as marketing, sales, customer service and fundraising strategies. Students with the best business ideas receive seed funding to pilot their social businesses.



A popular theatre show in Joypurhat, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.



Beneficiaries of UN Women economic empowerment project in Satkhira, Bangladesh in October 2018. Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.



UN Women and BRAC University offer training for young female university students on social entrepreneurship at Begum Rokeya University in December 2018. Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.

## IN BANGLADESH, FEMALE STUDENTS DEVELOP BUSINESS IDEAS TO IMPROVE SOCIETY

**Rangpur, Bangladesh** — With the support of UN Women, Begum Rokeya University launched the first Women Peace Café on International Women's Day 2019. The student-led business incubator engages young women in promoting peace through social entrepreneurship or by combining livelihood and social issues to improve the lives of people from their community. During the first year of its launch, the Women Peace Café will help 250 female students to develop 50 social business concepts.

"I want to become an entrepreneur and a businesswoman", said Snigdha Gupta, a participant in the programme and social science student at

BRUR. "My idea is to give trainings to women and transgender people to become bus drivers and helpers in the transportation system. This way, other women can feel safer on public transport. It is also an opportunity for women and transgender people to have an income-generating activity and to be less vulnerable."

Thus far, seed funding has been awarded to 20 students from two universities in Rangpur & Mymensingh. At BRUR, two projects, "Songshoptok", a community club for learning self-defence skills against sexual harassment, and "Break Through", a student magazine on women, career and campus related issues were awarded.



Shoko Ishikawa, UN Women Representative in Bangladesh, and female students from Begum Rokeya University celebrate International Women's Day at the Women Peace Café launch in Rangpur on 10 March 2019. Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer.

Seed funding winner Rahat Ara Risti accepts her prize at the Women Peace Café launch in Rangpur on 10 March 2019. Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer.

# LOCALIZING POLICIES AND CONSULTATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY



Sarothi Rani Saha smiles in the courtyard of her Rangpur, Bangladesh-based NGO. Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.



Community consultations help to localize the NAP on Women, Peace and Security to local women's needs. Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.

**Rangpur, Bangladesh** — In the rural district of Rangpur, UN Women works at the community level with Social Equality for Effective Development (SEED), a local NGO to identify and reflect women's experiences and needs related to the Women Peace and Security agenda.

Activities in the community include courtyard meetings with women's groups to discuss different issues such as sexual harassment and rising intolerance of different religions. Key concerns

and recommendations from Rangpur women are collected as part of the National Action Plan development process.

Through these local consultations, Sarothi Rani Saha, Executive Director of SEED, wants to convey the message that "women are a part of society, and they can accomplish anything. If women can make decisions at home and manage their households, they have the capacity and capability to make decisions everywhere".

## WOMEN IN BANGLADESH BOLSTER EFFORTS TO TURN THE TIDE ON RISING EXTREMISM

**Dinajpur, Bangladesh** — The idea is simple, and makes perfect sense—when women are empowered economically and are part of decision-making in their communities, societies are more cohesive and more peaceful.

It's Wednesday morning in Dinajpur, a rural district in the northern part of Bangladesh. A group of women sit in a circle sipping tea, their children playing at their feet, as they prepare for a meeting. They are known in the community as “Polli Shomaj Women” [community-based women's group], and they come from all walks of life—teachers, mothers, students, local elites and members of the local government — convened by UN Women's programme.

Md. Munjur, a member of the Dinajpur Community Action group says, “A year ago, a young man from the village joined a violent extremist group. The boy was a good student, but he was very religious. When he moved for higher studies, he got involved with some bad people who turned him to extremism, and he was killed in a standoff with the police. The family needed support, so they came to our group. We had never encountered this issue before, so we weren't sure how to help.”

Hosne Ara Baby from Nawabgonj in Dinajpur district has been involved with the Community Action Group for the last two years. “We thought that the community should come together and help people solve problems. So BRAC helped us form this group,” she says. Tying women's economic empowerment to preventing violent extremism is a new idea for many, but to Baby, it's common sense. She explains: “Women can play very strong roles in ensuring social cohesion, but first they need to be aware of their rights and to be included in the local economy. That will help them get involved with a wider network of people, improve their level of understanding regarding the society and people they live around, and most importantly, this will increase their confidence, which will make them feel empowered.”

After receiving trainings through the programme, Baby worked with her group to lobby schools to include information in their curriculum on how to identify and prevent violent extremism. “We mothers are now more aware because we have attended the trainings. Women can work together and raise awareness within the communities.”



Monosha Sharma, who owns a tea stall, is seen in Shilpara village March 7, 2018 in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce.



Polli Shomaj women at the peace fair in Joypurhat, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.

Talking about the programme, Shoko Ishikawa, UN Women Bangladesh Country Representative says: “We want to empower women in the community with the knowledge and skills to address instances of violent extremism and to see the warning signs before it happens. We also want to support women to have a greater say in their community when things are going wrong, and economically empowered women are better able to claim that space.”

Mosammat Kamrunnahar, one of the Polli Shomaj Women in Dinajpur is a case in point. She has developed her business skills and increased her understanding about the importance of cultivating a spirit of peace and tolerance in her community.

“Mothers can play a strong role in ensuring cohesion within their families as well as in the

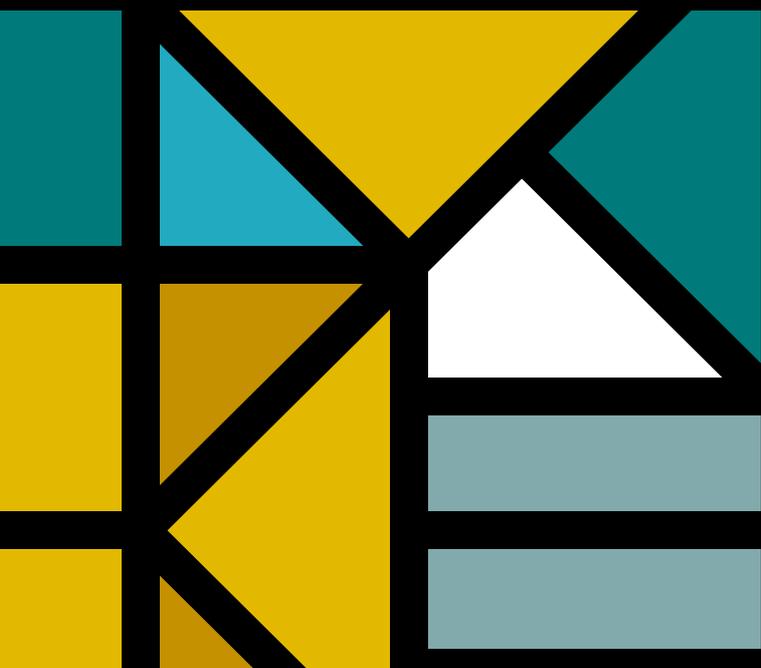
society,” she elaborates that mothers often know more about what their family members are doing and maintain friendly relations with others in a community. “So, they are well placed to help themselves and also others to avoid any possible extremism.” While preventing violent extremism takes awareness and effort from all parts of the society, the programme is among the first ones to specifically target and empower women.

The communities experience a difference: “Before, no one knew much about violent extremism or considered the actions they could take to prevent it in their communities,” says Shuvashis Chandra Mahanta, Manager-Capacity Building and Communication, BRAC. “Now we see that women are very outspoken about this issue, and they are talking to others about what they can do to prevent radicalization.”

# FOCUS ON BANGLADESH



Kohinoor Begum is a leader in her community and a member of Polli Shomaj for over 12 years. Begum has been involved in various collective efforts to stop early marriage, domestic violence, and to support community members, such as widows and the disabled, in obtaining government allowances. "Leadership trainings helped me realize my own worth and the possible changes I could make in my life and in the life of others." She uses her voice to teach others about social cohesion and how to live with others regardless of their religion, caste, gender or ethnicity. She was also the lead organizer of the first community fair in her town that promoted social harmony. "I can proudly say that people in my community are in harmony and solve their problems together." Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.



Bangladeshi women performing traditional game at the Peace Fair in Joypurhat. Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood.

## POLICY INFLUENCE

The Government of Bangladesh, with the support of UN Women, and led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is developing a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The National Action Plan reinforces Bangladesh's continued efforts in establishing peace and security within and beyond its borders by ensuring women's greater role in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, disaster management, and preventing violent extremism. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UN Women conducted inclusive consultations with civil society and representatives from government ministries and agencies to produce a National Action Plan that will focus on the ways of enhancing women's participation and meaningful contribution in these significant areas.

To support civil society to contribute to this National Action Plan development process, UN Women and partner Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS) built the capacities of civil society groups across 21 districts, 7 divisions and at the national level.



Female police officer, AIG Community Police Unit, Ms. Sahely Ferdous presents her views during the UN Women Results and Lessons Learned Workshop in Bangladesh in March 2019.  
Photo: UN Women/Tasfiq Mahmood



UN Women and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bangladesh discuss the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in December 2018.  
Photo: UN Women/Fahad Kaizer.



# FOCUS ON THE PHILIPPINES

## EMPOWERMENT

In the southern Philippines, UN Women works with our partner, The Moropreneur Inc. (TMI), in 22 at-risk communities in Basilan and Maguindanao Provinces. 800 young women and men increased their social entrepreneurial skills, going on to establish eight social enterprises working on production of food,

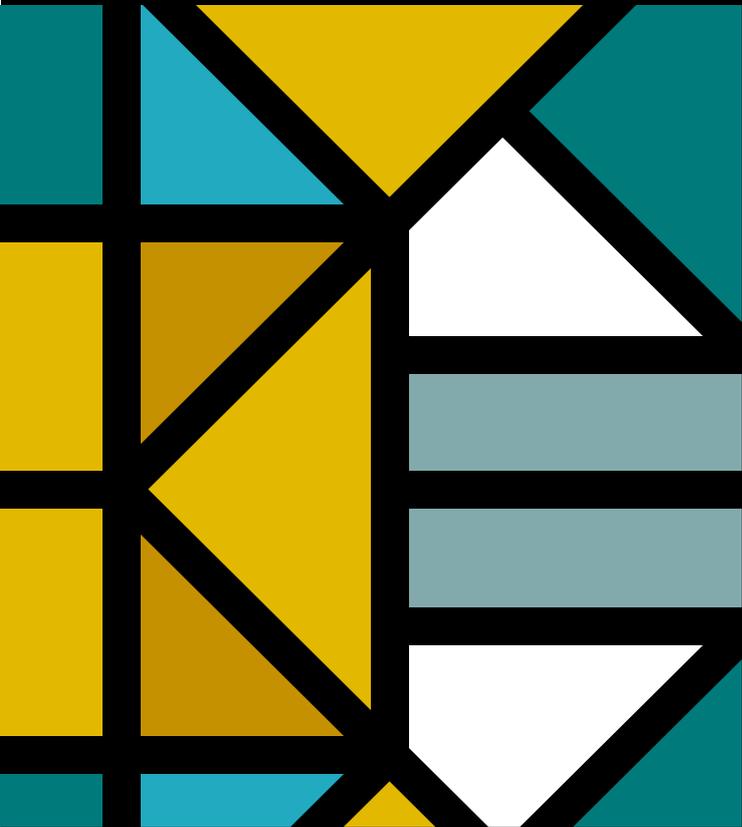
snacks, traditional woven fabrics, and crafts. The local governments in Basilan and Maguindanao Provinces have committed to ensuring sustainability of these community-based projects by pledging a portion of the Gender and Development budget to support the women's groups.



Baranggay Bulalo is heavily affected by flooding. The women in this community are weavers of Inabal, a traditional fabric. Through the UN Women training, they learn how to sew finished products with their fabrics. By selling the finished products, rather than the raw fabric, they will be able to increase their income. Photo: UN Women/Joser Dumbrique.



Islamia N. Kamakan is a mother and new entrepreneur from the Bangsamoro region of the southern Philippines. When she was younger, conflict forced her family to leave their home behind. After 3 days on the road without food or water they found shelter in the Buayan community. Through the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities, she is working towards a better future for herself, her family and her community. She said, "Before I joined The Moropreneur Inc.'s training, I thought that women should only stay in the house and that their only role was to raise children. But now I learned that women can do much more than that. Women are an important part of the community and the country. We could be heroines, and we can create peace." Photo: UN Women/Joser Dumbrique.



Almira Maricor is a mother and entrepreneur from Orandang community in the Bangsamoro area of the southern Philippines, where she received skills training through the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme. When a clan feud broke out in her village she fled with her family to another village, where they lived for seven years before returning to their home. The feud continued and Maricor, along with other women from Orandang, had the courage to mobilize the local government and successfully reduce conflict in their village. She said, "Thanks to the women's determination, we brought peace to the community." Photo: UN Women/Joser Dumbrique.



Anisa Taha Arab. Photo: UN Women/Joser Dumbrique.

## Anisa Taha Arab

At age 14, Anisa Taha Arab was promised to a man from her community. She refused and ran away to study religion. In 2015, she received training from UN Women on how women can be involved in peacebuilding. Today, she is the host of a UN Women sponsored radio show broadcast across

Mindanao, Philippines, where she uses her platform to inform women about their rights and how they can contribute to peace. *“Most of the women do not know their rights; they only know their responsibilities. A woman has to know her rights, because without that, she will always be a victim.”*

# FOCUS ON THE PHILIPPINES

## POLICY INFLUENCE

Following decades of struggle for peace in southern Philippines, the Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified in July 2018. The law creates a new political entity to replace the existing autonomous region, which is home to 13 ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao.

UN Women supports the Government of the Philippines as they navigate this transition to the new political authority while grappling with the issue of violent extremism. This includes support to the government as they developed their National Action Plan on P/CVE. UN Women trains grass-roots women from the five provinces in leadership and advocacy and supports women's organizations to participate in monitoring of the peace agreement.



Women from Mindanao lobby for the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in July 2018. Photo: UN Women/Maricel Aguilar.

## BANGSAMORO WOMEN'S SUMMIT RAISES GRASS-ROOTS WOMEN'S VOICES IN PEACEBUILDING

**Bangsamoro, Philippines** — At the Inaugural Bangsamoro Autonomous Region Women's Summit from 28-29 March 2019 in Davao, Philippines, over 100 grass-roots women came together to call for women's full participation in the new political entity. The Summit was organized by UN Women in collaboration with Norway, Canada and Australia.

The Summit produced a women's agenda, which called for: spaces to ensure women's needs are met in laws and policies, full implementation of the existing Gender and Development Budget, and the creation of a Ministry for Women in the new Bangsamoro government. A representative from the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women accepted the agenda from the women at the Summit, in a symbolic ceremony signifying the Commission's willingness to push forward the women's recommendations.



Highlighting the cultural richness of the Bangsamoro region, the Summit featured a variety of cultural displays and dress, including a fashion show of traditional inaul fabric and customary dances. Photo: UN Women /Joser Dumbrigue.



In a symbolic gesture, Janette Rojas of the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women (second from left) accepts the women's agenda. Photo: UN Women/Joser Dumbrigue.



Women leaders from the Bangsamoro post with representatives from the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women, local governments, and donor partners. Photo: UN Women/Joser Dumbrique.

“Rest assured, this will be prioritized as we craft the regional peace and security agenda of the BARMM,” said Janette Rojas of the Regional Commission on Bangsamoro Women.

Following decades of struggle for peace in the southern Philippines, the Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified in July 2018, creating a new political entity to replace the existing autonomous region in Mindanao. The new law includes reserved seats for women in Parliament and Cabinet and

ensures that at least five per cent of the budget will be allocated to programmes on gender and development.

“Bangsamoro women have been historically ignored in formal peace, security and development processes in our region. But we are driving change within our communities, and we want to participate on a bigger scale,” said Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, a participant of the Summit and a professor at Mindanao State University.

### Guidance on implementing gender provisions in the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

UN Women developed a guide on gender sensitive implementation of the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. This guide is intended for use by stakeholders from government agencies, religious leaders, members of civil society, and non-government organisations. Good practices identified throughout the guide include:

- Decide who will take the lead in implementing gender-specific provisions to ensure cooperation amongst all parties;
- Ensure that all programmes, plans and activities directly respond to the factors that drive radicalisation;
- Assess the implications of the interventions for women, men, female and male youth, respectively;
- Ensure that gender-related actions are related to PVE;
- When applicable, ensure that gender is mainstreamed in policy, capacity development, and in any newly developed mechanisms, programmes and services;
- Ensure that the other pillars of the NAP on WPS, namely, the protection of women and the prevention of the violation of their human rights, are given due consideration;
- Ensure the use of non-sexist, non-derogatory language in reports, training and all implementation initiatives; and
- Ensure non-discrimination of women and female youth in the operationalization of the NAP on PVE.

## The Marawi siege: women's reflections then and now

Following the siege of Marawi in the southern Philippines, UN Women conducted a series of Listening Processes in the surrounding region, giving women survivors of the siege the opportunity to share their stories. During two sets of conversations in 2017 and 2018, the women respondents discussed their experiences in the days leading up to the siege, their recollections of the battle, and the difficulties they face as evacuees and internally displaced persons.

The insights reflected through the Listening Processes highlight that the women of Marawi wish to have their voices heard, their struggles recognized, and their unique perspectives on

recovery and rehabilitation considered by the government. The women interviewed also make clear that returning to their homes and regaining their sense of belonging and community is paramount, in addition to economic relief.

Further, the women's reflections on the early warning signs of the conflict and the unaddressed grievances following their displacement are crucial in understanding how to prevent the recurrence of violent extremism in the region. Policy should ensure that women play a vital role in leading efforts for both recovery and for the prevention of violent extremist activity in their communities.



A female IDP discusses her family's situation at the Listening Process in 2018. Photo: UN Women/Diana Fontamillas.



A female IDP shows photos of her business and home, which were destroyed during the siege. Photo: UN Women/Diana Fontamillas.

## AFTER THE MARAWI SIEGE: WOMEN'S RECOVERY AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE PHILIPPINES

**Philippines** — Women internally displaced by conflict and violent extremism often face multiple hardships. Loss of livelihoods, insecure housing, and a lack of access to services reduces women's ability to lead recovery efforts and rebuild their homes and communities. Women displaced by the 2017 siege in Marawi City in the Philippine's southern island of Mindanao told UN Women that finding income generating opportunities to restore their livelihoods is their top priority.

Marawi is the first and only city in the Philippines that has been completely destroyed in conflict. On May 23 2017, the city came under siege from violent extremist groups aligned with local and regional affiliates of ISIS. The battle raged for five months, claiming over 1,000 lives and displacing 77,000 families (nearly 400,000 residents). As of the end

of 2017, only 26,400 families had returned to their homes leaving the rest to take shelter with family members in neighbouring areas, or to reside in evacuation centers.<sup>1</sup>

The predominantly Muslim population of Moro people has fought for the right to self-governance for decades. The slow pace of implementation of the 2014 peace agreement, growing alienation especially among the youth, violent local conflicts over land, and the growing international influence of radical religious discourses in social media, mosques, and educational institutions have all given rise to unprecedented levels of violent extremism, which fueled the battle in Marawi. In 2017, the weakening of ISIS control in Syria led to many fearing that Mindanao could become the potential site of an Asian caliphate.



UN Women's Regional Director with women displaced by the Marawi siege in Balo-i. They are eager to build their economic empowerment and rebuild secure lives for their families. Photo: UN Women/Carla Silbert.



With courageous women leaders from Mindanao who are at the frontlines of helping Moro women in need, preventing violent extremism within their communities. Photo: UN Women/Malberry Suites.

To better understand the experiences of the women who suffered in and fled Marawi City and their priorities for recovery, UN Women, working with partner civil society organizations, started a Listening Process in September 2017, to document the experiences of the women, gather their narratives of how the conflict began, and enable them to voice their needs for recovery and rehabilitation.

At a shelter in Balo-I, women survivors shared that they hold little hope of being able to return to their homes in Marawi City in the near future. While families are slowly being resettled in the outlying areas of Marawi, those whose homes were at 'Ground Zero' are unable to return while the security situation remains fragile. Up to 95 per cent of Marawi IDPs are 'home-based' and residing with family or friends therefore placing burdens on their new households - with many now caring for up to 20 family members - creating financial hardships in providing food and basic necessities, with humanitarian relief delivered only intermittently and focusing instead on those in evacuation centers.

Discussions with women also revealed that recruitment of young men by violent extremist groups in the region is rapidly growing, with many offered money and arms to join extremist forces. In addition, young women are also increasingly becoming perpetrators of extremist violence, with some reported to have been snipers in the Marawi combat. The women also reflected that the displacement and lack of income is enhancing the vulnerability of young women to trafficking.

Despite the government and aid organizations' efforts to deliver practical support and services to improve the conditions faced by the IDPs, there is still much more needed to be done, especially that which focuses on the needs of women. Listening to the priorities of the women, UN Women is working to support their income generating opportunities as they work to rebuild peace in their communities and prevent the recurrence of violent extremism.

<sup>1</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Philippines: 2017 Key Displacements and Responses', 2 February 2018

# FOCUS ON SRI LANKA

In response to a growing trend of intolerance in the country, UN Women expanded the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme to Sri Lanka in 2019. The project will engage women in mixed religion and ethnic communities to sustain a lasting peace in Sri Lanka.



Through the 30-year civil war in Sri Lanka, over 1.2 million women became heads of household. The UN Women project in Sri Lanka focuses on this vulnerable group. Widows from Nepal, Sri Lanka and India meet during a previous UN Women project to support widows. Photo: UN Women/Gaganjit Singh.

## EMPOWERMENT

UN Women is piloting approaches to promote women's economic empowerment with particular attention to female headed households in one district. The project will expand to include three other districts in 2020. Economic empowerment also empowers women socially and enables them to participate effectively and safely in the process of peacebuilding.

UN Women provides grassroots organizations, religious and community leaders and women's groups with capacity building to promote social cohesion and peacebuilding at the community level (including online and through social media), as well as inform gender responsive approaches to promote peace and security from the grassroots.

## POLICY

The Government of Sri Lanka, with the support of UN Women, and led by the Ministry of Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, is developing a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The National Action Plan will include provisions to enhance women's participation and meaningful contribution

in areas such as peacebuilding, post-conflict rebuilding, and preventing violent extremism. UN Women and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs will conduct consultations with civil society and representatives from government ministries and agencies in order to gain local insight and buy in to the Plan.

## COOPERATION AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

UN Women acts as the Secretariat for the G7 Women, Peace and Security Partnership Initiative, thus fostering linkages between stakeholders working on WPS in the country. Through secretariat support to the G7 WPS

Partnership Initiative, the project also aims at better coordination of the development partner community to align key advocacy messages linked to WPS relevant to the country.

# FOCUS ON THE REGION

## INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

### Gender and violent extremism in the online space

UN Women commissioned Moonshot CVE to generate the first sex-disaggregated survey of support for violent extremism in the online space in Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Malaysia. The research examined metadata from online search traffic from Google and publicly available Facebook data.

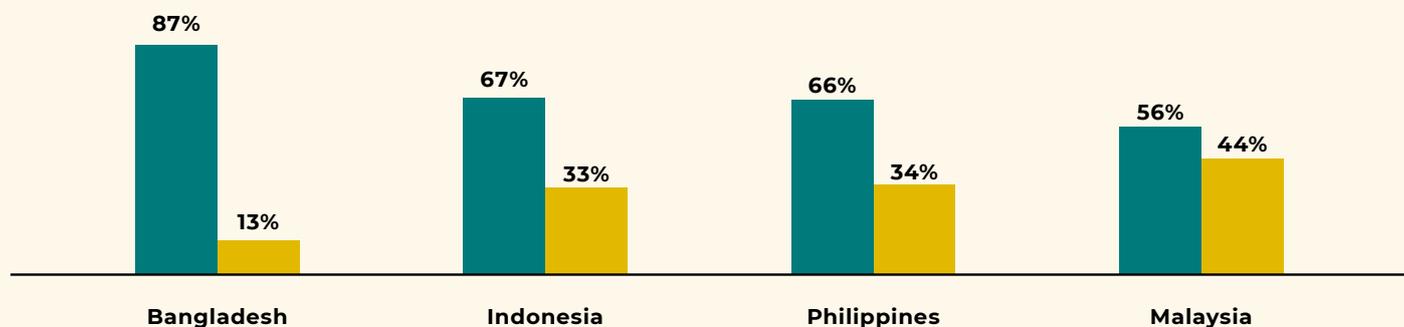
### A gender analysis of the terrorist and violent extremist online audience

For the first time, this programme has gathered data on a large scale of the sex of those attempting to access extremist content online in South and South East Asia. The difference in the sex breakdown country by country is striking, with almost half of Malaysian searches being carried out by females. This has serious implications for how CVE and PVE programmes are planned and implemented, and highlights the crucial role that an understanding of gender dynamics plays in effectively reducing extremism.

The results show that, in total, women performed over 215,000 searches for content related to terrorism and violent extremism in these four countries over a two-month period. Overall, women performed 32 per cent of all recorded searches. Further, the analysis found that men and women are consuming gendered violent extremist and terrorist messaging via social media. For women, these themes ranged from motherhood to combat; from a freedom from secular States' 'restrictions' on one's faith to finding true love. However, the underlying message was of empowerment.

If violent extremist groups are offering empowerment, programmes and strategies to counter this messaging must offer the same. Further, empowerment should not just be offered in counter-messaging strategies. Women must be provided alternative choices in life via economic empowerment and awareness raising, and not only alternative narratives.

## SEX BREAKDOWN OF SEARCH ENGINE USERS ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS VIOLENT EXTREMIST CONTENT\*



Note: The total sample size was 918,592 searches. Of those, 93,613 were in Bangladesh, 629,660 were in Indonesia, 131,326 were in the Philippines, and 63,993 were in Malaysia. The sex of the user was indeterminable in 27% of total searches.

Male Female

## POLICY INFLUENCE

There is growing attention to the important role that women play in the maintenance of peace and security and prevention of violent extremism among intergovernmental organisations in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2017, ASEAN adopted its first ever Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security – highlighting its commitment to advancing women’s role in conflict prevention efforts. In 2019, ASEAN began the process of adopting its first-ever Regional Action plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (RAP P/CVE). UN Women supports ASEAN by:

- Providing technical expertise as ASEAN developed the RAP P/CVE to ensure the document is gender sensitive and takes into account the needs of women.
- Collaborating with other UN agencies to support the development of a work plan for implementation of the RAP P/CVE.



Leaders embrace in the 'ASEAN way' at the Sixth ASEAN-UN Regional Dialogue on Political-Security Cooperation (AURED IV) on the topic 'ASEAN-UN Cooperation on Women, Peace and Security – The Role of Women in the Prevention of Violent Extremism' (5-7 December 2017, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia). Photo: UNDP.

# The use of comedy to counter violent extremism: fighting terrorism one laugh at a time

Violent extremist groups use the online space to promote radical messages, which glamorize terrorism in an effort to recruit young men and women to their ranks. Comedy and satire are a powerful force to counter these harmful messages and prevent violent extremist activity. Numerous studies document how young people are most likely to share content on social media that is funny and least likely to share content that is political. Comedians and social influencers have legions of online fans and can engage their followers in topics such as preventing violent extremism. Female comedians in particular are proving to be a major driving force for change in the region and the way Asian society sees women.

UN Women partnered with Mythos Lab and popular comedians in the Asia region to

produce online counter-narrative videos. The project harnesses the power of comedy to offer alternative messaging to online violent extremism and gendered stereotyping. The initiative also collaborated with popular comedians such as Aparna Nancherla and Tig Nataro for events showcasing the work.

UN Women has also taken this concept to the community level, with the pilot project “My Power”, which empowers rural women to engage with their communities on addressing harmful social norms by producing and sharing short videos. The videos address issues ranging from child marriage to domestic abuse. The women also learn about online safety and how to identify rumors and fake news.

## VIDEOS AVAILABLE ONLINE

### Southeast Asia:

#### *“HI-SIS Female Ad Campaign” (Indonesia)*

Desperate to attract more female recruits, the Marketing Department of a terrorist group thinks it will be a good idea to film a series of online video testimonials featuring current female members talking about how much they love it here.

#### *“Unsung Women Heroes” (Malaysia)*

A satirical take on a woman auditioning for a movie role and teaching the producer about inspirational and strong female characters he could be portraying through his films instead of perpetuating gender stereotypes.

#### *“Hall of Heroes” (Indonesia)*

The “Hall of Heroes” wing of a museum and highlights how few Indonesian women heroes are honored as compared to men. As the portraits spring to life, the heroes use humor to showcase the pioneering work of women who broke down cultural barriers in Indonesian history.

### South Asia:

#### *“Brainwash” (India)*

A satirical TV commercial for the ultimate women’s product – not face-wash or body-wash, but “brainwash.”

#### *“India’s Next Top Role Model” (India)*

The video features the true stories of unsung women in Indian history, as told by a mother in a toy shop.



Participants in the Comedy and Comics event, left to right: Yenny Wahid, Wahid Foundation Director, Indonesia ; Aaron Haroon, Burka Avenger Project Manager, Unicorn Black, Pakistan ; Priyank Mathur Chief Executive Officer, Mythos International, LLC, India; Miwa Kato, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. Photo: UN Women/Gökhan Süssler.



Renown American comedian and actress, Aparna Nancherla, addresses the audience at the June 2018 event Comedy for Equality in New York.

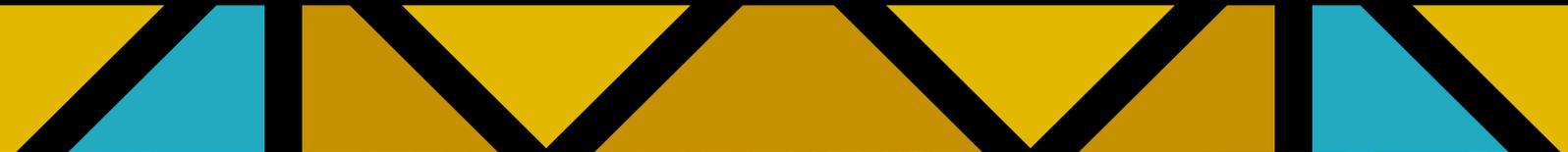
# USING COMEDY TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES

**New York, New York** — Comedians Aparna Nancherla, Tig Notaro and Natasha Vaynblat brought laughter to all who gathered at a dynamic event titled “Comedy for Equality” on 25 March 2019 in New York. The event showcased UN Women’s work using comedy to promote women’s empowerment and counter extremism, as part of the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme.

During her appearance Aparna Nancherla echoed the critical role that comedy can act as a gateway for topics that are harder to approach otherwise. “I think you can talk about topics that can be taboo—whether that’s gender equality or mental health or even politically divisive issues—because you’re talking from your own experience and your own story,” she said. “I think the more stories and

experiences we can bring to the table in comedy, it enriches the lengths you can go in changing people’s minds or just discussing a broader variety of experiences.”

To counter violent extremist narratives in digital spaces, UN Women partnered with Mythos Labs to create highly shareable comedic videos that would spark public dialogues on these issues. At the 25 March event, Priyank Mathur, CEO of Mythos Labs, presented the ‘sheroes series’ created with comedians in different countries. The comedic sketch videos present the stories of empowered women who have defied social norms. The stories are meant to provide alternative role models and means of empowerment to female youth who may think of joining a violent extremist group.



Comedian Tig Notaro performs at the “Comedy for Equality” event in New York City on 25 March. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.



Audience members at the “Comedy for Equality” event in New York City on 25 March. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.

# Using cartoons to teach tolerance and counter trauma

With generous funding from the Governments of Australia and Japan, UN Women commissioned Big Bad Boo to localize and pilot its “1001 Nights Curriculum” as an immediate psychosocial intervention to counter the trauma of children in Marawi exposed to extreme violence during the Marawi Siege. Big Bad Boo partnered with Save the Children Philippines to implement the program with 20,000 learners enrolled in public elementary schools, madaris and temporary learning spaces in internally displaced centers.

Pre and post testing found a significant reduction in notions of gender inequality amongst boys and girls. Further, evaluation of the project showed a 15% reduction in religious intolerance among students and an 18% reduction in ethnic intolerance.

Given the successful results, the Department of Education in the BARMM plans to include the project in its education curriculum and scale the intervention in coming months.

**“Teachers from Sikap Elementary School noted that since the roll-out of “1001 Nights”, learners from the different Barangays who attend their school interact more freely and no longer distinguish in playing with children who come from Barangays other than their own.**



Teachers receive training on the “1001 Nights” curriculum. Photo: Big Bad Boo.

## Transforming gender social norms through comedy

Japanese pop sensation PIKOTARO debuted his new song, "Gender Equal Peaceful World", at a dynamic event in Tokyo on 1 March, organized by UN Women and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. His song, *I have a man, I have a woman...Gender Equal Peaceful World!* with signature dance moves brought a smile to all who gathered at the event, titled, "Transforming Gender Social Norms through Comedy: Fighting Terrorism One Laugh at a Time", at the prestigious Sophia University.

Through social media and online platforms, PIKOTARO's new song reached over 2.2 million people within the first five days of its release. The song, written in partnership with UN Women, connects the concepts of "gender equality" to a "peaceful world", highlighting the links between Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality, and Goal 16 on peace and justice.



Japanese singer and YouTube star PIKOTARO performs his new song "Gender Equal Peaceful World".



The performers and audience hold up five fingers - representing SDG 5 for Gender Equality.



Performers and producers from "HI-SIS" and "Brainwash" share the stage for a panel discussion on the power of the arts to change gender social norms.

Many other prominent artists gave performances or spoke about their work, including a live painting by calligrapher Yuuna Okanishi and accompanied by Takashi Matsunaga on the piano.

Speaking at the event, Mitsunari Okamoto, Parliamentary Vice-Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, said, "Through community engagement at the grassroots level, we will challenge intolerance by fostering dialogue and the power to oppose terrorist messaging."



Mitsunari Okamoto, Parliamentary Vice-Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, delivers opening remarks at the evening event.



# Sharing new approaches for promoting gender equality and peace

The regional conference “Women and their Role in Creating Peaceful Societies and in Preventing Violent Extremism”, which took place in Tokyo on 1 March 2018, brought together grassroots practitioners and representatives from the government, academia, media and the private sector across Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines, to share their perspectives.

Women from Bangladesh and Indonesia who have been a part of the Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities programme in their villages shared their experiences of how it has improved their economic empowerment and built their capacity to be leaders for peace.

Hasbiyah shared her story of transformative change through the programme in her village in Indonesia: “After we joined, we learned how to implement the values of pluralism and tolerance, including equality, and trained to deal with issues that arise in our village, and to become more empowered women.”

The conference launched three unique pieces of research commissioned under the programme, including the first ever sex-disaggregated national survey in Indonesia on the threat of violent extremism among Muslim men and women, conducted with the Wahid Foundation.



Experts from government, civil society, academia and the media shared their learnings from the 'Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities' project.



Teresita Quintos Deles from the Philippines emphasizes the need to address root causes of conflict such as harmful gender social norms.

Moonshot CVE launched the first ever sex-disaggregated data across the region tracking where appetite for extremist material is greatest online. Preliminary findings show that in Bangladesh, searches by women account for 13 percent of all searches for extremist materials, while in Malaysia searches by women account for nearly 50 percent of queries for this content. The research also found that women who are prone to engage in violent extremism will do so more often in private spaces rather than public ones.

With the successes of the project on full display, Masato Otaka, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan pledged to his government's continued support of this work: "Japan places emphasis on women's point of view, the empowerment of women in measures against violent extremism, and we will continue to actively support UN Women's activities".



Hasbiyah is working with the UN Women programme in Indonesia. Of the impact the project has made on her community, she says "We want this programme to be sustainable, so we approached figures in our community who were intimidated to be involved, but they have now found the courage to be involved in the programme and to declare their village a peace village."



**“Empowerment is the best way to prevent protection challenges that arise from violent extremism, human rights violations, xenophobia and other threats. We need you more than ever before.”**

UN Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** at the Commission on the Status of Women, 2017

**#WomenEmpower4Peace**

