Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism

Introduction

The inclusion of women and girls and gender mainstreaming are often overlooked in efforts to counter violent extremism, despite the participation of women and girls in violent extremism and terrorism, as well as their roles in prevention. This non-binding good practices document focuses on women and gender aspects in the countering violent extremism (CVE) context.[1] It was produced on the basis of two international expert workshops jointly held by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE),[2] which brought together CVE experts and practitioners from GCTF members and non-members on 13-14 May 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey, and on 21-22 October 2014 in Vienna, Austria. This document complements the *Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism* and the *Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as Tools to Counter Violent Extremism*.

A prerequisite for an effective CVE policy is comprehension of the complexity of violent extremism. All interested States are encouraged to consider using these non-binding good practices while taking into account their local needs and conditions, varied histories, and cultures as they look to develop and implement national CVE policies and/or programs. These good practices can also be used to shape any bilateral, multilateral, technical, or other capacity-building assistance provided in this area. Any programs, policies, laws, or actions implemented in furtherance of these good practices must be in full compliance with States' obligations under all relevant international law, including customary international law, international humanitarian law where applicable, as well as international human rights law[3] and international refugee law.

The good practices presented in this document address: (1) general practices on women and gender in the CVE context; (2) countering women and girls' involvement in violent extremism and terrorism; (3) advancing women and girls' roles in CVE; and (4) women and girls as victims of violent extremism and terrorism. This list of good practices is not intended to be exhaustive. The GCTF may choose to expand or modify it to take into account States' experiences, subject to the approval of the GCTF Coordinating Committee. As with other GCTF good practices documents, the adoption of this document would be followed by development of implementation approaches based on its recommendations.

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[1] This document was drafted and developed in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);

[2] The OSCE published a report in 2013 on the findings and recommendations from two experts meetings on 'Preventing Women Terrorist Radicalization' (12 December 2011, Vienna) and 'The Role and Empowerment of Women in Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism' (13-14 March 2012, Vienna). The OSCE also addressed women in its guidebook on *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach* (March 2014, Vienna).

[3] In particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

This document distinguishes between women as actors in CVE and the 'gendered' nature of violent extremism. Women are subjected to a range of gendered experiences based on assumptions about masculine and feminine roles as they relate to economic, political, social and cultural realties. Gender-related assumptions shape available opportunities, rights, recruitment, and roles within organizations for both women and men. This document includes a focus on women's gender-based interactions with, and treatment by, the organizations of social and political life as they pertain to violent extremism.

It is also important to recognize the larger framework of human rights in which this discussion takes place. Practical integration of women and girls into all aspects of CVE programming can only occur in the context of broader guarantees of the human rights of women and girls in particular; these include addressing the causes of gender inequality such as the subordination of women and discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, age, and other factors. The promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality needs to underlie CVE programs and strategies. The human rights of women and girls, as with all human rights, should be promoted and protected at all times and not just as a means for CVE.

Finally, States may also benefit from posing several key questions. These include: How do governments effectively facilitate initiatives that are often created independently? Do the initiatives and organizations know how to get support from their government if needed? How visible does government support need to be, and could certain projects be best served by maintaining some degree of independence? Do governments have the capacity to effectively support grass roots efforts?

Good practices

I. General Practices on Women and Gender in the CVE Context

Good Practice 1: Include women and girls and gender mainstreaming in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all policies, laws, procedures, programs and practices related to CVE.

Including women and girls and gender mainstreaming improves the design, implementation, and evaluation of CVE efforts. It brings additional resources by promoting the unique and significant roles of women and girls in CVE. It also ensures that CVE efforts counter female radicalization and the various ways women and girls are involved in violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Comprehensive approaches to CVE should also consider how violent extremism and counterterrorism impact women and girls differently and give a more full picture of security concerns, including within those communities where radicalization is taking place and where more engagement may be sought. Family and community relationships are critical determinants in the process of radicalization, and both women and men are part of that dynamic process.

CVE efforts should pay attention to the gender of participants and the social norms and societal expectations associated with belonging to a particular gender in their societies. Paying attention to the ways that gender norms shape people's lives is likely to improve CVE programming aimed at women, and it is likely to add a dimension of understanding and responsiveness to CVE programming aimed at men as well. CVE project design should use gender assessments to practically link research on gender norms and conflict, highlighting how those norms might

be related to drivers of violent extremism and how they might frame the conflicts in which violent extremists engage. Sex disaggregated analysis and data on relevant communities, tools, and outcomes can also be used to better inform CVE initiatives and avoid unintended impacts that can undermine relationships of trust in communities.

Good Practice 2: Ensure that CVE efforts counter women and girls' involvement in violent extremism, including by identifying gender dynamics in radicalization leading to terrorism and preventing it among women and girls.

CVE efforts should focus on preventing women and girls from being recruited into, joining, or otherwise supporting violent extremism and terrorism. Women and girls are involved in violent extremism in a range of capacities. Engagement can be direct, by being recruited into or joining terrorist groups to perpetrate terrorist violence (e.g., as suicide bombers) or to participate in planning and preparing attacks. Women and girls are also mobilizers, recruiting other women and girls, especially in their peer groups, as well as men and boys.

In some environments, women and girls' inequalities, sexual and gender based violence, marginalization, and lack of opportunities, may make them more susceptible to the appeal of terrorism. Grievances may also arise where women and girls feel they have been adversely impacted by counterterrorism policies, such as when they are part of a group that feels disproportionately targeted, or if they lost a relative in the context of counterterrorism. Women and girls may also shame men and boys into committing acts of violence to demonstrate their masculinity to avenge perceived injustices. Violent extremists increasingly target women and girls to join, mobilize, and otherwise support their activities by exploiting these grievances and assumptions about men's and women's roles. A response to this may require distinct programming that specifically addresses the needs of women and girls.

Good Practice 3: Recognize and promote the different roles of women and girls as critical stakeholders in CVE, including in developing more localized, inclusive, credible, resonant, and effective approaches.

An effective CVE approach recognizes and promotes the significant and varying roles of women and girls at all levels, including in families, communities, civil society, educational institutions, the private sector, and in government. As a core part of families and communities, women and girls have vital contributions to make to a more expansive understanding of the local context for CVE, including violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, and its underlying factors. They can help formulate and deliver tailored CVE responses that are more localized, inclusive, credible, resonant, and therefore sustainable and effective. This is helpful as gender-mainstreamed CVE needs to more appropriately address localized gender-based recruiting, organizational gender dynamics, local gender dynamics, and to other localized needs in order to be most effective.

Including women and girls also expands the reach of CVE programs as they may have different forms of influence, including over other women and youth at risk of violent radicalization. Engaging and empowering women and girls across multiple sectors creates inclusive institutions that build trust with the public, as well as socially cohesive and resilient societies as a whole. This is particularly true with respect to inclusive security sector reform; research shows that ensuring women participate equally in security services ensures those platforms are more responsive to the diverse needs of the community.

Good Practice 4: Protect the human rights of women and girls, including their equality, non-discrimination, and equal participation, and ensure that CVE efforts do not stereotype or instrumentalize, women and girls.

The promotion and protection of women's human rights are integral to efforts to include women and girls and mainstream gender in CVE. Women's human rights concerns often underlie the incentives for, as well as the difficulties in, their engagement in CVE. For example, the victimization of women and girls by terrorists may motivate them to participate in CVE, but gender-based discrimination and stereotyping can hinder their full and equal engagement. These barriers need to be addressed to enable women and girls to safely and productively contribute to CVE efforts. This must happen in a nuanced way, as there is significant variation in women's rights and gender equity.

In certain environments, women and girls risk being instrumentalized and their rights compromised for counterterrorism and CVE objectives. The use, real or perceived, of government relationships with women and girls for security purposes (e.g., for gathering intelligence) can generate distrust and become counterproductive to CVE. A too obvious association of women and girls' human rights with a CVE agenda can also further expose women and girls as targets for violent extremism.

Good Practice 5: Prevent and address the direct and indirect impacts of violent extremism and terrorism on women and girls.

Violent extremist and terrorist groups often target women and girls for gender-based violence, including abductions, forced marriages, sexual violence, forced pregnancies, attacks on women human rights defenders and leaders, attacks on girls' access to education, and restrictions on their freedom of movement. Preventing these attacks, providing protection for women and girls who are most at risk, rejecting societal acceptance, prosecuting perpetrators, and developing assistance including livelihood opportunities for women survivors are essential. These efforts will not only provide critical improvements in human security but also foster social cohesion and resilience in communities affected by violent extremism and terrorist violence. Addressing these impacts also enables women and girls to safely and productively engage in CVE activities.

Good Practice 6: Involve men and boys in mainstreaming gender, advancing women and girls' participation in CVE, and inclusive efforts to prevent and respond to violent extremism.

The full and active engagement of men and boys is key to mainstreaming gender and advancing the roles of women and girls in CVE. Engaging male leaders can help create space for women and girls in otherwise male-dominated settings including communities and government. Men and boys also play critical roles in supporting women and girls in their families, including by encouraging the education and empowerment of female relatives. This includes non-violent conflict resolution, efforts to encourage rethinking masculinities and stereotypes about women, and mitigation of exposure to violence in the home, which can feed the societal acceptance of violence. Finally, men can work alongside women to open space for their inclusion in CVE responses such as community-oriented policing.

Good Practice 7: Include gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation in CVE policy and programs to enhance effectiveness.

The effectiveness of all CVE efforts will be enhanced by integrating a gender perspective and including women and girls in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Sex-disaggregated data can provide a nuanced picture of the outputs and differential impact of CVE activities, to evaluate positive gains in areas such as skills, awareness, capacity, social cohesion, and resilience, and also to ensure that CVE does not contribute to an increase in human rights violations, such as gender-based violence by all parties. Sex-specific indicators and baseline information should therefore be incorporated in the assessment of both general CVE initiatives and those that specifically seek to advance women and girls' roles in CVE. Quantitative indicators should be used for instance to track the proportion of men and women among target groups of CVE activities, as well as the numbers of women and girls recruited into violent extremism. Qualitative monitoring, such as through polls, interviews, community roundtables, and focus groups, before, during, and after a given CVE initiative, should explicitly include women and girls. Women and women's groups should be included in the independent evaluation of all CVE efforts, particularly those that seek to advance the roles of women and girls in CVE. Monitoring and evaluation of CVE programs focused on women and girls should also take into account the particular context and operational constraints in engaging with them. Developing and sustaining engagement with women and girls to counter violent extremism will likely need to be a long-term process; realistic metrics should be devised to measure effectiveness at each stage of that process. This might include improved performance management systems and evaluations, which could include gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data.

II. Countering Women and Girls' Involvement in Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Good Practice 8: Build and use evidence-based approaches to identify and effectively address the factors that lead to women and girls' involvement in violent extremism and terrorism.

Analyses of the varying roles of women and girls, men and boys, in violent extremism as well as the factors that put them specifically at risk of radicalization and recruitment is a critical component of designing policy and interventions that can address violent extremism's complexity. Women and girls often experience distinct 'push' factors that increase their vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment as well as specific 'pull' factors that violent extremist organizations use to target and recruit women and girls. Yet, our understanding of the dynamics that lead women and girls to violent extremism and of the roles they play and tactics they employ once involved is insufficient. Women and girls' vulnerability and strategies, moreover, often vary based on their demographic and geographic situations. More work needs to be done to expand the limited body of evidence on women and girls' involvement in violent extremism and terrorism in order to design effective interventions. This work should include analysis that helps expose the strategies women and girls employ to radicalize and recruit others in addition to that focused on womenand girls' roles and the push and pull factors present. Analyses should avoid stereotypes, such as that women and girls join terrorist groups because they are coerced or only play auxiliary roles in the organization. Engaging researchers, practitioners and policy-makers across disciplines is vital to develop the nuanced understanding and evidence-based responses needed.

Good Practice 9: Ensure that CVE efforts, including alternative-narratives, address women and girls' involvement in violent extremism and terrorism.

CVE efforts should include tailored and targeted approaches to counter the involvement of women and girls in violent extremism and terrorism. They also should be designed to address the unique factors leading to the recruitment and radicalization of women and girls and recognize the various roles women and girls play in violent extremist organizations.

Involving female teachers, community elders, religious leaders (formal and informal), and former female violent extremists can enhance the success of these efforts to prevent recruitment and radicalization of women and girls. Attention should be paid to addressing the needs of at-risk young women and girls. There also is a need to develop and impart alternative-narratives that explicitly speak to young women and girls, especially using social media. Targeted messages may find success in emphasizing evidence of attacks, abuses, and restrictions imposed by terrorists against women and girls to contradict violent extremist narratives which offer a panacea for women and girls. As with men and boys, the development of materials that offer women and girls tailored guidance around positive responses to terrorist messaging – activism, charitable work, the development of life/society affirming counter-messaging – should also be encouraged. The narrative should also offer specific references to tangible alternatives for women. Former female violent extremists could help formulate and convey these narratives in a more relatable and credible fashion.

Good Practice 10: Develop gender-sensitive disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs that address the specific needs of women and girls on a path to terrorist radicalization or involved in violent extremism.

Traditionally, limited programming options exist to support women and girls who want to exit the path to radicalization, leave extremist groups, or reintegrate into their communities. Yet, women and girls within violent extremist and terrorist groups have different motivations, roles, and experiences than men. The factors that lead to women's and girls' involvement also vary along with their roles within terrorist groups, which range from fighters, to recruiters, to sympathizers, or supporters. Women and girls, moreover, may themselves experience violence, including abuses by group members, and, in some environments, by security forces. To be effective, disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs should be gender-sensitive and address these varying experiences, as well as the specific obstacles and challenges women and girls may face. Programs should consider the ways women and girls in particular can exit these groups and develop reintegration options that take into account their specific needs and experiences.

III. Advancing Women and Girls' Roles in CVE

General

Good Practice 11: Build the capacity of women and girls to contribute safely and productively to CVE efforts in a manner tailored to local contexts.

A range of challenges, including legal and institutional restrictions, safety concerns, and the lack of resources and skills often prevent the full and effective participation of women and girls in CVE policies and programs. Frequently, actors outside the security sector, especially within civil society and the private sector, can engage with and build the capacity of women and girls to overcome these barriers. Governments can support these efforts by coordinating and providing resources, including for training and raising awareness.

Efforts to expand women and girls' ability to contribute to CVE efforts should be tailored to local needs and focus at the grassroots level. It often will require a focus on both skills (e.g., coalition-building, critical thinking, social media and communication skills, mediation, and conflict-resolution) and knowledge, including CVE-specific awareness, such as recognizing the factors and potential warning signs of violent radicalization.

Efforts to build the capacity of women and girls to counter violent extremism should draw and expand on existing initiatives in fields such as women, peace, and security; economic growth; religious tolerance and non-discrimination; and human rights education. Building networks and creating safe spaces often are effective capacity-building strategies, allowing women and girls to exchange experience in confidence, share good practices, develop common solutions and pool resources to address this dynamic. Such platforms can also be created to facilitate dialogue on CVE among women from different backgrounds, including inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue.

Good Practice 12: Ensure the security of women and girls involved in CVE, including in civil society, taking into account when labeling their efforts as such might be dangerous or counterproductive.

Women, including in civil society, are often at the frontlines of efforts to prevent and combat violence in their families and communities, including in restrictive, polarized, and volatile environments. Being on the front lines frequently places them at risk and creates obstacles to women's and girls' involvement in CVE efforts. In certain contexts, for instance, it may be too dangerous or counterproductive for women to closely collaborate with security services or more broadly have their efforts categorized and publicized as CVE. This is particularly the case where initiatives to advance the participation of women are rejected as foreign or imposed. Women and girls may perceive risk when they are part of a group that feels targeted by counterterrorism or CVE policies, including disproportionate and/or discriminatory measures, or instances when male relatives have been detained or killed.

In such cases, and more generally, guidance should be taken from women and civil society organizations working with women on programming, including how to label their activities, necessary security measures, and the role of safe spaces to build resilience in communities. These women and organizations have unique insights into security challenges and how to create safety, particularly in their communities and for themselves.

Security for women and girls involved in CVE efforts is also undermined when human rights, particularly women's rights, are treated as "expendable" when responding to violent extremism and terrorist threats. Such approaches ignore the role women and girls play in violent extremism, leaving them susceptible to recruitment and radicalization, and fail to acknowledge the protection and consideration women and girls need when working to prevent the spread of violent extremism,

Family and Community-Based Approaches

Good Practice 13: Engage women and girls at the local level as sources of influence within families and communities to build resilience and localized, credible, and effective responses to violent extremism.

Women can be particularly critical actors in local CVE efforts. They often are well positioned to serve as locally-knowledgeable, credible, and resonant CVE voices. Women often play a particularly vital role in their families. They often also serve as institutional memories of their local communities. These and other roles mean that women often are best positioned to identify signs of radicalization and discourage this phenomenon in their families and communities. They also may be the best actors to raise the awareness of, and build capacity among, other local women – thus serving a force-multiplier effect in communities where radicalization and recruitment are likely to occur.[4] Families should be offered opportunities to better identify and address violent radicalization in their families, including how to recognize the early warning signs of radicalization in children and how to communicate and use their influence as parents to counter violent extremism. Families should also have access to resources to assist their children. Female family members of violent extremists and terrorists, moreover, should be supported in ways to reduce their susceptibility to recruitment and radicalization.

Good Practice 14: Involve women and girls and mainstream gender in community engagement and community-oriented policing efforts for CVE, through genuine partnerships based on trust and the pursuit of common goals.

Research has shown that women, especially mothers, carry authority within their families and communities which can translate into positive influence against violent extremism. Practitioners repeatedly observe that women are the gatekeepers to their communities and, as such, should be involved in creating and maintaining CVE initiatives. In related fields, the involvement of mothers has been shown to help reduce gang recruitment, while integrating women into police forces can help limit excessive use of force, reduce community tensions and provide opportunities to access marginalized communities.[5]

Community engagement initiatives and community-oriented policing efforts are more effective when they involve women. Women should be engaged as partners in these projects by recognizing and leveraging their influence in their families and communities to, for example, raise awareness, engage vulnerable youth or build referral networks or by recruiting them into the police or other security bodies to expand these bodies' reach, influence and effectiveness. Security bodies – especially the police – should develop genuine partnerships and build trust with women to engage on CVE.

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[4] GCTF, *Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism*, Good Practice 17. www.theGCTF.org.

[5] GCTF, *Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as Tools to Counter Violent Extremism*, Good Practice 5. www.theGCTF.org.

Doing so necessitates openly discussing their terrorism-prevention concerns with women and other community members. Security bodies, moreover, should avoid engagement solely for CVE purposes and instead build partnerships on a range of security and crime-related issues. For instance, they should address what women identify broadly as safety concerns. At the same time, it is important not to focus solely on security issues when engaging with women and the broader communities on CVE, in recognition that the root causes of recruitment and radicalization are often not security-related.

Civil Society and Public-Private Partnerships

Good Practice 15: Engage and empower women in civil society and civil society actors working in the field of women's and human rights, especially women's organizations, as critical CVE stakeholders.

Engaging women in civil society and civil society actors who are working to advance women's rights, particularly women's organizations, is vital for CVE efforts to be effective and sustainable.

These actors already contribute in many ways to CVE through activities which build resilience to violence and intolerance, though these activities are not necessarily oriented towards CVE or described as such. These activities include conflict prevention, peacebuilding, economic growth, security sector reform, and the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, other activities to advance the women, peace, and security agenda, as well as service provision, particularly in areas where the government lacks presence. These activities should be encouraged to continue.

Women in civil society and civil society actors working with women are well positioned to act as a bridge to women in local communities, having better access to reach, empower, and build the capacity of women and girls for CVE, especially those that may be isolated or marginalized. CVE efforts should empower these actors to use this access. Other important CVE contributions these stakeholders should be encouraged to make include: (1) participating in community-oriented policing initiatives; (2) developing and disseminating alternative and inclusive-narratives; (3) advising on the design and implementation of CVE activities; and (4) supporting monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of CVE efforts. Coordination and clear modalities of engagement are essential to engage and collaborate effectively on CVE with women in civil society and civil society actors working with women, in order to ensure their safety, independence, and credibility.

Good Practice 16: Prioritize engagement at the grassroots level with women in civil society and civil society working in the field of women's rights, to build upon local practices and support local ownership.

To ensure CVE is both context-specific and localized, it is key for governments to take guidance from local women on how they assess needs and priorities, as well as effective responses. Programs that are perceived as externally-driven or imposed with a top-down approach risk lacking or undermining legitimacy, potentially generating backlash and being counterproductive, especially if they relate to advancing the roles of women and girls in their communities. Governments, including donors, should genuinely engage actors, organizations, and networks at the grassroots level to promote local ownership. Engagement opportunities include in national CVE strategies, policy formulation, and designing CVE activities.

Partnerships need to be also developed outside of urban centers, including with small organizations, young community members, and non-elites. An effective strategy to ensure CVE efforts are embedded locally and sustainable in the long term consists of building upon existing local level practices of women and civil society actors working with women, and helping to connect these efforts to formal CVE processes while safeguarding local ownership.

Good Practice 17: Develop a framework that allows women in civil society and civil society working in the field of women's rights, especially women's groups, to access resources and undertake CVE activities.

To be effective, women in civil society and relevant civil society organizations need sufficient political space and to be appropriately resourced to succeed. There is a need to build their capacity to assess and mitigate specific risks, such as backlash from families and communities or the threat of reprisals from violent extremists. The possible chilling effect of anti-terrorism legislation on well-intentioned donor activity and civil society initiatives should also be identified, prevented, and addressed. Secondly, improving grant allocation conditions and processes, such as auditing and reporting requirements, can help facilitate access to funding for small civil society organizations, which are often run by, or for women and girls. Another possible strategy is to require larger grant recipients to provide several smaller grants to local organizations. Finally, adequate legal safeguards should also be introduced so that civil society initiatives on women and CVE can be undertaken in vulnerable communities and with at-risk individuals without the fear of being labeled as providing support to terrorists.

Education

Good Practice 18: Engage girls and young women through education and within informal and formal educational environments to counter violent extremism.

Education can be utilized in a myriad of ways to build resilience and reduce recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.[6] This requires promoting access to and protecting formal and informal religious and secular educational institutions as a safe space for all, including girls and young women. Education enhances the capacity of young women and girls to help build resilience among their peers, their families and their communities. Educational materials and activities for girls and young women centered on, *inter alia*, civic education and responsibility, community engagement, tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and human rights can be particularly important.

Education should also address the gender inequalities and the sex and gender-specific factors that may drive violent extremism, including among girls and young women. This includes increasing the access of girls and young women to education, as well as ensuring their participation in CVE-specific educational initiatives. Such CVE-specific educational interventions to engage vulnerable groups should also address the specific needs of at-risk girls and young women. Educating girls and young women reduces their susceptibility to violent extremist narratives that exploit religion or use certain interpretations of history or politics, and equips them to question and challenge these narratives. Involving girls and young women in developing and implementing educational approaches for CVE also improves its relevance to their peer group, local context, and culture.

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[6] Good practices related to education are further elaborated upon in the GCTF *Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism*. www.theGCTF.org

In cases where girls and young women have dropped out of or do not attend formal educational institutions, other venues may be appropriate for similar approaches.

<u>Security Sector</u>

Good Practice 19: Increase the participation of women at all levels, especially those marginalized, and mainstream gender in the security bodies and other public authorities involved in CVE.

Mainstreaming gender in the security sector, including in the working methods and training of security bodies and improving inclusivity of institutions improves operational effectiveness and oversight of CVE measures. Increasing the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in the security sector and other public authorities involved in CVE, including at senior levels will improve assessments and help design more effective responses that also minimize unintended consequences on women and girls. Women and girl's participation is key to the inclusive community engagement and trust-building needed for CVE. Women and civil society actors working with women can help build the capacity of the security sector through training, research, and expert advice on gender issues. Such a participatory and accountable CVE framework also helps to ensure that CVE efforts do not unduly undermine the human rights of women and girls.

<u>Inclusive Narratives to Violent Extremism</u>

Good Practice 20: Ensure the involvement of women and girls in developing and delivering inclusive-narratives to violent extremism.

Women are well placed to effect change, especially at the community-level, and should be empowered to take ownership in the development and delivery of inclusive narratives to violent extremism and terrorism. For example, women community leaders can serve as credible voices to promote positive alternatives and advocate against violence. Women's organizations such as radio-listening clubs offer crucial sources of influence, especially in insulated or at-risk communities. Former female violent extremists and female victims of terrorism also can help highlight the violence and trauma inflicted by terrorism, and helps to clarify the impacts of terrorism on families and communities. Such inclusive narratives should also explicitly address female radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism. Involving women and girls contributes to the formulation and delivery of inclusive narratives that may particularly resonate with their peer groups and in their networks of influence, such as with at-risk youth. Enabling this potential may require the provision of capacity building to women and girls in the areas of developing inclusive narrative content, outreach and communication strategy, and engaging with the media, including competency in social media.

IV. Women as Victims of Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Good Practice 21: Recognize and support women victims of terrorism, taking into account their specific needs.

A terrorist attack is traumatic for a wide range of individuals and institutions, but it most directly affects the victims and their families. How well the victims' physical and emotional needs are met can have a significant impact on how well the victims are able to cope with the trauma.[7] The differential impacts of violent extremism and terrorism on women and girls – including widespread use of sexual and other gender-based violence in many cases – require tailored approaches to women victims and their families from the moment of impact to normalization and beyond. Bodies responsible for assisting victims and their families, including in the security sector, the criminal justice system, the health sector, civil society, and the private sector, should be equipped to recognize and address the particular needs of women victims of terrorism.

Additionally, the majority of terrorist attacks happen in settings already affected by conflict, thus placing even greater limitations on the availability and accessibility of support and services for victims, particularly women and girls. Measures such as integrating a gender perspective in relevant guidance materials and training, and having female first responders and developing gender-sensitive investigative and prosecution procedures for female victims and witnesses, can enhance the rights of all victims and ensure effective CVE. Moreover, victim assistance and support programs as well as survivors networks should include women and girls, taking into account the different needs of women and girls for assistance and protection needs, and addressing the factors that may limit their access to such programs. Recognizing the rights of female victims also involves measures such as collecting gender-disaggregated data on terrorist violence and rejecting social and legal impunity for terrorist attacks on women and girls.

Good Practice 22: Highlight women victims of violent extremism and terrorism, including as part of CVE efforts.

As with all victims of violent extremism and terrorism, women and girls should be highlighted to emphasize their equal human rights, counter their dehumanization and promote solidarity with them. Establishing platforms that amplify the voices of women victims of violent extremism and can also contribute to effective CVE. Victims should also be offered ongoing support and assistance to deal with the emotional complications that can arise from public discussion of the terrorist event. Improving media coverage of willing women victims of terrorism is key to these efforts and highlighting women victims more broadly. The capacity of media should be built for gender-sensitive reporting that recognizes the particular impacts of terrorism on women and girls and also respects their privacy and agency and ability to heal from physical and emotional trauma.

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[7] Good practices related to assistance to victims of terrorism are further elaborated upon in the GCTF *Madrid Memorandum on Good Practices for Assistance to Victims of Terrorism Immediately after the Attack and in Criminal Proceedings*. www.theGCTF.org.