WOMEN AND EXTREMISM

THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH JIHADI GROUPS
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

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**NOTE: This is an independent report and does not represent official
British Government policy.**

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STUDY PURPOSE

Women are typically portrayed as either the victims of ideologically based violence or as positive agents of moderation. **The purpose of this study is to review the evidence on the role of women in violence and particularly in acts of terrorism.** The report reviews evidence from selected jihadi groups that use violence in Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

Understanding women's and girls' perspectives and motivations is critical in order to explain why some women support organisations that use extreme violence and which do not treat women as equals. More pragmatically we need to increase our understanding of the different types of relationships that women and girls have with jihadi groups in order to inform policy and make effective interventions. To date interventions aimed at preventing radicalisation have been targeted almost exclusively at men and boys; however, the growing significance of women and girls' involvement means they can no longer be ignored.

In this study we seek to acknowledge the agency of women and adopt a perspective that encompasses the range of social, political, economic, ideological and religious dimensions that, outside the feminist literature, have previously been applied only to their male counterparts.

The report draws on four main sources of data: published and HMG literature, interviews with researchers on radicalisation, interviews with women activists and organisations, and the author's own interviews with male jihadi group members and female supporters in previous HMG work.

FINDINGS

The report is structured around nine hypotheses under three headings: Drivers and Entry Points; Women's Role and Impact; and Lessons about What Works. Main findings are summarised below; recommendations for HMG follow this summary.

HYPOTHESES ON DRIVERS AND ENTRY POINTS	
1. The drivers of girls' and women's involvement in armed groups that use terror tactics are broadly the same as those that drive boys and men to join such groups	This paper finds this is **largely true**. However, generalisations are difficult as local contexts vary markedly. And in some contexts individuals do not make choices as clan, tribal, ethnic or religious identity determines group allegiances.
	That said, in *general* both men and women have a combination of individual/personal and collective/political reasons for joining or sympathising with a group. Individual factors tend to predominate initially for both and include: • remuneration - payment to fighters & for services • peer group encouragement, status and camaraderie • protection and safety (critical for women) • honour and prestige (particularly relevant for men)
	Collective/political drivers for both genders include: • feelings of economic and political exclusion • a perceived threat to religious or political identity • lack of trust in the government to provide fair governance, services, justice, security • gender injustice (this affects women only and explains the

	attraction of Shari'a law, which many women see as giving them rights denied by traditional male 'cultural' practices). Responses to this hypothesis partly depend on the approach adopted: the security and counter-terrorism literature tends to see women as lacking in political agency and motivated primarily by personal factors. In contrast, feminist researchers portray women as political actors, and therefore as driven by a similar range of personal and political factors as those that hold for men.
2. The entry points for women (as against the drivers) are different. Women require familial links to engage – boys and men do not	**This is only partially true**. Women and girls are *more likely* than men and boys to become associated with a jihadi movement as a result of their family connections. However, for both sexes there are at least four different entry points: • familial and community links • forced abduction (boys are abducted to fight, girls to be forcibly married to fighters) • religious study/the influence of teachers in madrassahs and study classes • self-mobilisation, including through the internet and social media.
3. Women and girls are more likely to be active combatants in groups with an ethno-nationalist cause than those with a jihadi mission	**This is true.** All jihadi groups encourage women to support the cause but most allow them to operate only in 'support' activities in line with gender roles (fighting is a man's job) and to maintain norms of modesty. However, we should recognise that distinctions between combat and non-combat roles are being eroded, as are those between ethno-nationalist and jihadi movements. The battle of ideas, especially through social media, is of growing importance. Jihadi groups with statehood ambitions recognise the critical role that women can play in a venture that entails not only military defeat of the enemy but also the establishment of a new society. The fact that women are rarely front-line combatants should not lead us to underestimate their importance to the long term objectives of jihadi groups.
HYPOTHESES ON WOMEN'S ROLES AND IMPACT	
4. Women and girls play the same range of roles in groups that use terror tactics as do boys and men	This is this is only **partially true**. Roles overlap but jihadi groups see a woman's primary role as a mother, and a man's primary role as a fighter. Women are found playing three kinds of roles in jihadi movements: • as wives and mothers supporting male jihadis, and as influencers of the next generation • in front-line, non-combat roles as recruiters, messengers, intelligence gatherers, hiders and transporters of weapons • as front-line combatants, including suicide bombers. But note: women account for a tiny proportion of suicide bombers relative to men. Women are used because they are more able to escape detection but suicide bombing, especially by women, is highly controversial in Islamic theology.

5. Participating in violent jihadi groups, including as combatants, allows women to transcend gender roles	**This is not true.** There is no evidence from any country or group that women's participation in a jihadi movement has allowed them to transcend gender roles. Women have never been appointed as leaders of jihadi movements, and there is no evidence of their being consulted on matters of policy, strategy or theology. That said *individuals* may feel temporarily empowered if they voluntarily join or support a jihadi group, or defy their parents to join a group in another country.
6. Women and girls find it harder to leave violent groups than boys and men	**This is true.** Women and girls are more likely to be prevented from leaving by the group itself. They are also more open to ostracism and rejection by their communities of origin, and less likely than men or boys to be offered support to make a return to civilian life a practical possibility. This study found a significant need for support to enable women and girls to leave jihadi groups and help them reintegrate into civilian and community life.
HYPOTHESES ON 'WHAT WORKS' - FROM EXPERIENCE AND EVALUATIONS	
7. Counter-insurgency (COIN) approaches have been inadequate in preventing girls and women from supporting or joining jihadi groups	**There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement.** This paper finds that traditional COIN approaches based on assumptions that women can be co-opted and used to undermine family support for an insurgency ('win the women and you own the family unit') were not effectively implemented. Current and future COIN approaches are likely to build on lessons learned and be better rooted in an understanding of the nuance of women's affiliations, their limited public influence in deeply patriarchal societies, and the realities of complex political situations.
8. Programming that aims to 'counter violent extremism' (CVE) tends to be less effective than it could be. Many programmes focus on young men and ignore women and girls	**This is true – on the basis of the evidence available.** To date poor design, a lack of coordination and limited learning have undermined CVE programme effectiveness. Programmes need to be better targeted, to address more than one driver and to be delivered by a neutral party. Most importantly, there has been little understanding of the needs and motivations of women and girls in violent conflict environments that involve jihadi groups. Most programming has therefore excluded them and focused only on boys and men.
9. Community and civil society women undertake significant CVE work and understand the complex issues facing women and girls. But they are rarely asked for their advice on programming - and funding for their work is limited	**This is true.** Women's activists and organisations can be found in all environments where jihadi movements are operating but their organisations often lack the capacity and reporting systems to be funded by donors. Sometimes, also, women's organisations are reluctant to accept funding specified as CVE or counter-terrorism, aware this may compromise their independence or jeopardise their security. Consequently a more nuanced understanding of women's needs and priorities often goes unheard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Invest in gathering data and information about women and girls - the nature of their relationship with jihadi groups, how they join, their motivations, the roles they are used for, whether they can leave. Use this information to address gender issues in all future programming.

2. Develop specific programmes to support women and girls who want to leave jihadi groups and re-integrate into civilian life and their communities. Give special attention to those that have been abducted and suffered sexual violence, including as a result of forced marriage. Be aware of the economic dependence of poor women on jihadi groups and the financial and psycho-social support they may need to leave or escape from the group.

3. Identify how women's organisations can play a moderating influence in areas where jihadi groups are operating. To this end: listen to women's grassroots organisations already operating in areas of jihadi group activity. What do they need to better support women and girls – to prevent their involvement and help them to leave? Use flexible, responsive funding mechanisms to build their capacity and increase their effectiveness.

4. Appreciate that the involvement of women and girls in forced acts of violence and terrorism is a form of violence against women and girls (VAWG). See the grooming of girls by jihadi groups on social media in a similar light to the grooming of girls for sexual exploitation, i.e. as a child protection issue. Treat abductions and forced marriage by jihadi groups (as well as violence by state armed forces) as mainstream gender rights issues. Monitor wider work on VAWG to ensure that it encompasses women and girls involvement in violence and terrorism. Indicators might include the inclusion of internet grooming, abductions and forced marriage by jihadi groups in wider strategies and interventions addressing VAWG.

5. Appreciate that Shari'a law can have enormous appeal for poor women who are denied their rights as a result of patriarchal norms and traditional cultural practices. Reassess security and justice approaches that focus only on supporting formal government systems. Consult grassroots women's organisations to gain a more nuanced understanding of women's perspectives on Shari'a law and use this understanding to inform programming.

6. Mainstream gender in all CVE programming. Act on the lessons learned from recent evaluations to improve overall targeting and implementation of CVE work. Concurrently, develop specific components that address the needs of women and girls – but don't just 'add them in' to current programmes. Rather, empower women to come forward and help in the practical design of CVE interventions that address women's specific motivations, priorities and challenges in each country context.

7. Ensure on-line and social media work that aims to counter jihadi group narratives is reaching women and girls in a way that makes them listen and rethink. Is it countering the welcome 'inclusiveness' messages of groups like Islamic State? Is it giving women and girls practical solutions to the problems they have, including feelings of isolation and threat? Listen to women and girls drawn from groups targeted by jihadi group recruiters and reassess current approaches based on their testimonies and recommendations.

8. Invest in monitoring 'what works' on the ground for women and girls and ensure that there is an equal emphasis on women and girls in all evaluation work. Publicise this widely, including programme failures (essential for learning).

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Background

Radicalisation studies paid relatively little attention to women and girls in the decades prior to 2001. In the 1980s and 1990s 'jihad' was most often used to refer to the resistance movement of Palestinians against Israel or to Pakistani and Afghan resistance fighters who joined ranks against the Soviet administration in Afghanistan during the 1980s. In both cases jihad was being fought in the manner of traditional insurgencies – between fighting men with weaponry funded largely by external countries. The role of women and girls was not discussed; even though they bore the brunt of war they were not fighters.

The interest in women's role in jihadi groups began in the early 2000s, when women began to be used as suicide bombers. Women and girls had played many roles before that date but their use as suicide bombers[1] signalled a radical departure in tactics that also seemed in blatant contradiction to their established gender roles. This attracted the attention of governments, the media, the public, and researchers alike. All began to ask: Why did they do it? What could have gone wrong?

As scholars began to grapple with these questions, Islamic governments were already several steps ahead. As early as 2001, the High Islamic Council of Saudi Arabia had openly urged women to join the jihad against Israel and become martyrs. This pronouncement was then followed by adjustments to the interpretation of religious texts. The clerics needed to demonstrate – not least to shocked Muslim populations – that women's new role as martyrs was sanctioned by, and consistent with, religious dogma.[2]

Since the early 2000s, the nature of jihadi wars has diversified. In some areas, jihad is still waged between fighting men in mountainous terrain. In many other areas, today's jihad has become a propaganda war intent on establishing a narrative of history, a sense of threat and a vision of a more just society that will win over wider populations. And within those populations women have an important place, not least because they will influence future generations. The multiple roles that women can play are now on the map of every jihadi organisation. This study is pertinent for this reason.

Why are women's motivations important or interesting? There are several answers to this question. First, because it is counter-intuitive to many people (and not only westerners) that women and girls would want to identify with organisations that use extreme violence, including against civilians, other women and co-religionists. Further, these organisations are male-dominated and do not appear to value women as equals. As Maliha Aslam asks: 'Why are women drawn to groups that make women subordinate and negates their rights? What advantage can joining such a group have for women?'[3] This is one reason we are interested – we don't understand their motivations and we want to.

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[1] Female suicide bombers were not new, they had been used by the Tamil Tigers. Most famously it was a female suicide bomber - Thenmozhi Rajaratnam - who assassinated the Indian prime minister in May 1991.
[2] Aslam, Maliha (2010)
[3] Aslam, Maliha (2010)

Amongst the development and counterterrorism communities, there are more pragmatic reasons for asking these questions: to date most policy and programme interventions on preventing radicalisation and addressing political and economic grievances have been targeted at men and boys on the basis that they are most vulnerable to being recruited and they constitute the fighting force. However, as more detailed studies become available, these gendered assumptions are called into question. It is no longer possible to ignore women on the assumption that they blindly 'follow the men'. The recent movement of young women to join Islamic State in Syria from Europe, the Middle East and the US has signalled the naivety of that approach. A new framework for analysis is required; one that may suggest new and more productive directions for counter terrorism policy and for programming.

It is worth stressing from the outset that many women's organisations within Muslim majority communities have been working for years on ways of preventing girls and women joining jihadi groups, giving them support so they can find alternative solutions and, where feasible, helping them reintegrate into civilian life. One of the objectives of this study is to identify what we can learn from the experience of these grass roots organisations that may be relevant for future programming.

A note on the literature
The analysis of women's roles in jihadi movements in the literature is problematic. Many studies reveal far more about the attitudes of the researcher than about women's experience. Thus an enormous amount has been written about the motivations of women suicide bombers (the same question is not asked of men), and an equal interest shown in trying to explain why women would want to join an Islamic jihadi group whose cultural and religious norms relegate them to the status of second class citizens (the same question is never asked of non-Muslim groups). There tends to be a focus on women and girls as victims and on personal trauma as a major reason for sympathizing or joining up. Men are not subject to this depolitisation; the numerous studies on men's radicalisation see them as rational, thinking beings (albeit misinformed and 'wrong') whose call to a military cause can be understood, not least because fighting is a man's job.

The pathologising of women and girls' association with Muslim armed groups makes it all the more important to investigate what jihadi groups are themselves saying about the role of women and girls in their movement, and to also ask women and girls themselves: why they sympathise with a cause, what draws them in, their experience within the group, what they want in future. Currently there is little research on either of these issues. Yet without this understanding we cannot develop sound policies or programmes that help build women's resilience, and find other ways of addressing grievances. This report is therefore just a beginning; in the future we need more information from *within* jihadi movements, particularly from women who are apparently members or sympathisers.

Objectives of this study
As the Terms of Reference for this study note, women are typically portrayed as either the victims of ideologically-based violence or potential positive agents of moderation. The **purpose of this study is to review the evidence on the role of women in violence and particularly in acts of terrorism**.

The Terms of Reference for the study posed a series of research questions. These were further refined at the beginning of the research, in discussion with DFID and FCO colleagues, into nine hypotheses for investigation. These hypotheses were found to provide a suitable framework for structuring the evidence from the country reviews, and presenting the findings of the study.

This report is based on evidence from an analysis of jihadi group approaches to women and girls in eight countries. The main body of the report presents the main findings of the study in synthesis, illustrated with country examples. The country annexes provide a wider background. Each annex summarises the political context of the jihadi group in question – how it formed, and its current strategy - as a precursor to looking at how women and girls have become involved and the roles they play.

Methodology
This study draws on four main sources of data:

- Research and HMG literature on women and girls' involvement in Islamic militancy (and, for comparative purposes on the drivers and entry points for boys and men);
- Interviews with researchers investigating men and women's radicalisation into jihadi groups both in the countries under study and in the UK;
- Interviews with women activists and organisations in Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and the UK that are familiar with the reasons for which women and girls support jihadi causes, and are providing support to women and girls in these contexts;
- My own interviews with male members of jihadi groups and women and girls associated with the group in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

The TOR did not mention the UK. However, because citizens from the UK and other European countries are being recruited into jihadi groups in Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen, the UK experience is referred to when relevant.

Terminology
The terms 'terrorism/terrorist' and 'violent extremism' are not used
In this paper the principal used in terminology for groups is **self-reference**. Thus 'jihadi group' is used throughout this paper; it refers to a group that describes itself as pursuing jihad. Other issues regarding terminology and the choice of terms are outlined in annex 1.

SECTION 2. TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

A. DRIVERS AND ENTRY POINTS

> **HYPOTHESIS 1. THE DRIVERS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS' INVOLVEMENT IN JIHADI GROUPS ARE BROADLY THE SAME AS THOSE THAT DRIVE MEN AND BOYS TO JOIN SUCH GROUPS**

Summary: this is **largely true**. However, whilst there is substantial evidence in support of this hypothesis, the conclusions of analysts differ according to the approach adopted (counter-terrorist vs. feminist). It is also important to note that local contexts are critical, and vary markedly, and that sometimes individuals do not make a choice about who to support as their clan, tribe, ethnic or religious identity determines group allegiances. That said, in *general* both men and women have a combination of individual/personal and collective/political reasons for joining or sympathising with a group.

Detail: There is a significant division in the literature on the main drivers for women. Those writing for a counter terrorism and security audience have largely focused on women as 'terrorist' suicide bombers and sought to explain why they should act in a way that appears to so completely contradict the gender roles typically associated with women and girls – as carers, mediators and peace builders. They have tended to see women as motivated primarily by personal factors: following their husband-fighters; out for revenge having lost loved ones; or transgressing their normal gender roles driven by the shame and rage they feel as a result of their own rape or abuse. These interpretations have generally been based upon profiles of women's lives that come from interviews with would-be bombers or their families.

This approach inevitably tends to yield explanations at the individual psychological level in terms of personal characteristics and past traumas. Whilst some women are found also to have political reasons for becoming suicide bombers (to throw off foreign domination, achieve independence, secession) these are normally interpreted as being secondary to personal drivers. Compared to men, women are seen as lacking in political agency, especially if they are Muslim.

At the other end of the continuum (and it is a continuum) gender specialist and feminist researchers have argued that such individual explanations are a product of their authors' gender stereotyping. These researchers consider the wider context: the full gamut of roles played by women and girls in militant Islamic groups (not just as suicide bombers), the political objectives of the group they have joined, and the degree of political agency women have in their society. All of these factors influence women's motivations and the push and pull factors that lead them to sympathize with, or voluntarily support, a jihadi cause. Their conclusion is that women are political actors as much as men; when they voluntarily support or join a jihadi group it is because they want to achieve the sort of society where they feel included and where justice – including gender justice – prevails. These authors argue that for both men and women, religion is the prism through which the desire for political change is often

expressed but this does not make their radicalism a 'personal' issue; their religious faith becomes a political driver.[4]

The polarised debate in the literature can detract attention from the fact that local contexts for women's radicalisation vary markedly and are critical to shaping their aspirations and actions. The moment when the personal becomes political depends enormously on the historical and political context. The personal-political debate is therefore an abstract one that does not yield pragmatic conclusions on either side. It rather reflects the very different orientations and objectives of counter-terrorism and gender studies/feminist research. Counter-terrorism specialists are keen to underline to policy makers that 'Women are also terrorists – don't ignore them!' In contrast gender studies and feminist researchers are interested in whether the political agency of women brings personal empowerment, and whether it influences gender norms within jihadi movements. They wish to explore whether the promised 'new' society is likely to take women seriously as political actors or to keep them voiceless and powerless.

Given these differing orientations, what can we actually say about the drivers for women and girls and whether they are similar to those of men or not?

Drivers in clan-based and tribal systems

In some violent conflicts, the main driver for joining an armed group is allegiance to one's community – based on clan, tribe, ethnicity or religious identity. In parts of Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan (FATA) for example, the resources and assets on which livelihoods depend are controlled and managed by the clan, tribe, ethnic or religious group. In these circumstances, there are powerful incentives for men and women to follow the political alliances determined by their community leaders; their livelihoods and security depend on community allegiances and there are sanctions for falling out of line.

Jihadi groups with a global agenda may use the clan system to recruit locally but they will also have an international strategy. For example, Al-Shabaab (AS) is an important *local* player in Somalia and it operates shrewdly within the clan system to gain the allegiance of smaller clans by mediating their conflicts with more powerful groups. However, in the international arena, AS also actively recruits individual men and women beyond the clan system. As a recent report for DFID notes:

> 'Joining any clan-based armed group will be based on the clan affiliation at birth or through marriage which is actually based on strong exclusion factors. In clear opposition to this, AS is the only entity where anyone can join; **there is no exclusion factor**. This point is very important as this lack of restriction for recruitment defines one of the key strengths for AS compared to all others armed groups, included the SFG ones, which are based directly or indirectly on clan balance.[5]

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[4] Linda Ahall summarises this argument (2008)
[5] SEED Programme Report (forthcoming)

Thus, in clan and tribal systems there may be two parallel recruitment drivers operating: group processes that oblige individuals to fall in with the political decisions of their community leaders, and individual drivers that are engaged when jihadi groups actively promote their message and seek recruits across community divides. Figure 1 below, from the evaluation of the DFID supported Sustainable Employment and Economic Development (SEED) programme, depicts this dual system of recruitment for al-Shabaab in Somalia.

Figure 1. National and international approaches to youth recruitment used by AS in Middle and Lower Shabelle, Somalia

Nationalistic approach	International Jihad
Clan based approach / pragmatic	Strategy challenging the clan system
Individual radicalisation is not key	Radicalization is key
Recruitment is made as a group (clan)	Recruitment is made as individual
Clan elders decide on joining AS. Youth do not decide and have no choice.	Youth choose to join without / against clan elder's support.

Training
Believed to be the most efficient space of radicalization by both groups

From the step of joining, the youth have very little choice and defection is often sanctioned by assassination.

Source: SEED II Programme Report (forthcoming)

Gender differences in the way that personal and political drivers are experienced

When individuals have a choice about whether to associate with a jihadi group, the evidence indicates that men and women may have both a) individual/personal *and* b) collective/political reasons for sympathising with a group or becoming active participants.

a) Individual/personal drivers – men and boys
Interviews with men and boys that have joined jihadi groups indicate that they – like women and girls – are often initially attracted for what we might call 'personal' reasons, i.e. that relate to their experience as individuals rather than as group or community members. These personal factors are often given as the *first* reasons for joining up. They may include:

• **remuneration:** the offer of 'cash for work' was widespread for all the main groups covered in this study. For example, Al-Shabaab, unlike its armed Somali adversaries including the Somali Federal Government, pays its soldiers and

operatives well and regularly and provides for its veterans and the families of its 'martyrs'.[6]

- **peer group encouragement** and the **status and camaraderie** that comes with feeling part of a movement. In some cases this includes the prospect of 'adventure', e.g. the opportunity to travel to another country and receive training.[7]

- **protection and safety:** the belief that their own families may be targeted if they do not make their allegiances clear. Some commit themselves as part-time jihadists – for example among the Taliban in Afghanistan – agreeing to be called up when required, but otherwise getting on with their jobs as traders or even policemen. Such dual affiliation is seen as affording a degree of security.

- **honour and prestige:** jihad provides men the opportunity to safeguard family honour and to be protectors of Islam and society. The role of protector may resonate with traditional male gender roles towards family, community and nation, in addition to the call of religious faith.[8]

Individual/personal drivers – women and girls
The first three personal drivers identified for men above also apply to women and girls, although not always in the same ways. As with men, **remuneration** can be a critical driver for women and girls who have no other form of support. Groups in Nigeria and Pakistan make payments to women and girls for various combat support activities and poor women may come to depend on these (see country annexes). **Peer group encouragement** is also important for women and girls. In Pakistan in 2006 women and girls from the girls *Jami'a Hafsa* (Red Mosque) madrassah occupied the public library, took alleged brothel owners hostage and burned CD shops, all in the name of jihad. Their feelings of solidarity as a women's group were critical in this. A similar sense of solidarity is evident in the case of foreign women and girls joining Islamic State in Syria; they are attracted by the tweets and on-line blogs of women their own age who welcome them as part of a brand new society-in-the-making. **Self protection**, and the practical desire for safety, is a critical driver for women in all violent conflicts. Like men, they will sometimes choose the strongest side, even if it is the most brutal, if this is the only way to survive.[9]

As regards honour and prestige, the fourth set of drivers, gender roles do not require women to be society's defenders. However, they do require women to epitomise the ideal Muslim woman who should be defended. An equivalent driver for women is therefore the aspiration of living a society where Muslim ideals, including those of feminine behaviour, can be realised. This is one of the attractions of Islamic State.

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[6] International Crisis Group Report (2014a:15)

[7] This was a major reason men gave for initially joining Lashkar-e-Taiba in Derawar, southern Punjab. See Ladbury, Sarah and Maliha Hussein (2008)

[8] There is also discussion in the literature about the promise made by jihadi groups that dying for the cause will allow immediate entry to paradise, and special culinary and sexual benefits for male shaheed (martyrs). The degree to which such promises function as additional inducements to young men is not known although it might be assumed that young men might be particularly susceptible to a promise of sexual rewards after death.

[9] As Nimmi Gowrinathan points out (2014), the desire for security can also determine women (and men's) decisions on which of their various identities to prioritise in a conflict. She discusses and compares women's reasons for choosing sides regarding ISIS and the Tamil Tigers.

Is rape a driver for women and girls to become suicide bombers?

In both the counter-terrorism and the feminist literature, rape is sometimes cited as a major driver for women to volunteer as suicide bombers.[10] It is argued that if Muslim women are raped then martyrdom may come to seem the only way to recover their lost honour. Further, if a rape is perpetrated by men of the same side – as happened in the Chechnyan conflict – then some writers assert that women will be unable to face the shame of returning to their communities and martyrdom may seem 'like a blessing'.[11]

However, the argument that 'rape turns women into suicide bombers' holds little water. First, rape is a relatively common weapon of war – of men as well as of women. Hundreds of thousands of women and girls are raped every year during violent conflicts as well as during peacetime, yet there are relatively few women suicide bombers. Second, the evidence that rape is a primary driver for more than a handful of women is thin; the evidence for generalisations by the proponents of this view cannot be substantiated.[12] Third, we know that jihadi groups use women for suicide bombing missions selectively – as an operational tactic in a calibrated strategy. The decision makers in these groups are men, not women; men do not choose 'any volunteer' – rather they train and groom women and girls that *they* identify as capable of following through without detection, and achieving maximum deaths and casualties. Fourthly and finally, the rape-as-driver argument comes from a particular standpoint – it presents women as victims who have chosen to die because of abuse done to them by men, not as political actors who choose terror tactics because they see them as a means to achieve societal change and to protect a wider 'threatened' community.[13]

In short, rape may well be a factor influencing some women who go on to become suicide bombers. But to make too much of this point would be to overlook the full gamut of personal needs and political grievances that women have.

b) Political/collective drivers - men and boys
Political/collective drivers include both 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors are the perceived injustices and grievances that cause discontent, and pull factors the alternatives visions and socio-political realities proffered by jihadi groups.[14] For men, the following have been identified:

- **exclusion from political participation and economic opportunity**. In some cases this may arise from group identity, due to the exclusion of specific clans, ethnic categories or religious groups from political power; or discriminatory state policies and practices against such groups.[15] In other cases a lack of qualifications,

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[10] Bloom is a major proponent of this view; she cites sexual abuse as a major driver of women who commit acts of terror in all her publications. For example: Mia Bloom (2005a, 2005b and 2011)

[11] Bloom argues that 'martyrdom seemed like a blessing' for Chechen women who were videoed being raped by Chechen men. (2011:63)

[12] For example, Bloom argues that in Iraq 'increasing numbers of Iraqi women have been raped by members of their own community to create squads of suicide bombers' The source of her evidence for women is not given.

[13] Alisa Stack (2011) makes this argument well with regard to Chechen women who use terror tactics politically, contradicting Bloom's argument.

[14] The push and pull distinction is a useful framework used in USAID's policy report on the development response to violent extremism and insurgency (2011).

[15] Groups like al-Shabaab in Somalia are adept at playing on the political insecurity of clans, offering support to those squeezed between larger rivals. In agricultural areas where livelihood opportunities are based on control over irrigated land, and where that land is under the control of clans, clan politics largely determines whether men align with al-Shabaab or not. International Crisis Group (2014a:13)

connections, employment and economic opportunity and the consequent inability to achieve social status and dignity or fulfil sanctioned social norms may be critical. The relevant 'pull factor' is the jihadi vision of a Muslim *ummah* (community) – the vision of a new order that will bring an end to exclusion, provide opportunity, and a valued role in striving towards that vision.

- a belief that one's **political or religious identity is threatened** by Western culture, politics or cultural hegemony, by the state or regional powers, or by other ethnic groups or religious communities. The idea that there is a profound threat to Islam from outsiders is a core part of the radicalisation process and is instilled by all jihadi groups. The relevant 'pull factor' here is the jihadi promise that the enemies of Islam will be defeated, be this the US, the 'west', or other Muslim groups who follow a different path or sect.

- **a lack of trust in the government to address social and economic problems**. This may arise from experience of corruption, fraud, nepotism and discrimination on the part of local, state and national governments, serious failures in government accountability; the impossibility of access to justice; and serious human rights abuses by national security forces or foreign powers. The relevant 'pull factor' is the promise of a new form of governance based on Shari'a law, and the eventual establishment of an Islamic caliphate, which will bring Islamic justice.

Political/collective drivers - women and girls
To a great extent the same drivers appear to exist for women as for men, although naturally these are shaped by the social experience particular to each gender, including the political context and levels of exposure. Women confined to their houses are not subject to formal radicalisation by jihadi goups in the same way as men who join up; and they may not express their discontent in the same geo-political terms as men who have more public access. However, even in these circumstances women's awareness of local violent conflicts and fatalities caused by government and western military forces do reach them - through radio broadcasts, local leaders and religious teachers and reports from male family members.

An important issue for women that is not shared with men, and where the personal and political merge, is their own experience of **gender injustice**. My own research, like that of others, has found that this is often the primary politicising factor for women. Many of the women interviewed by this author in southern Afghanistan and northern Nigeria had never left their immediate communities. They nonetheless had strong views about their lack of rights as women and the sort of changes they wished to see. In both, they were strong supporters of the implementation of Shari'a law and a more moral form of governance – which was what they understood jihadi groups to be offering. They aspired to an end to the oppressive, cultural gender practices to which they were subject, and that denied them the most basic rights.[16] In both

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[16] Women in Afghanistan talked bitterly about practices under Pashtunwali (a cultural code of honour amongst men). They complained about the practice of baad (using girls as blood money), lack of inheritance rights, and the lack of institutions to appeal to in cases of honour killings and violent abuse. In Nigeria women were major supporters of Shari'a law when it was formally implemented across 12

Afghanistan and Nigeria, women's political support for Shari'a law was a political act; it promised to give them rights for the first time. This desire for a society based on gender justice, which women saw as the promise of Shari'a, makes the promise of a state based on this system an attractive proposition. However, it is important to note that whether women's expectations for greater gender justice under Shari'a law is actually realised depends on the way in which it is implemented by male political and religious leaders. Women's expectations have frequently been dashed by the patriarchal way in which Shari'a is interpreted and the fact that customary practices – the result of centuries of male decision making – are often deliberately maintained in order to ensure women's dependence.[17]

For more educated women with more exposure to political debates, and those with access to the internet and social media, the political drivers differ little from those for men and boys laid out above. As we saw, the evidence is that both men and women are mobilised first through their personal experiences (lack of livelihood opportunities, immediate family deaths and fatalities, gender injustice in the case of women); only later – sometimes after direct contact with a religious leader or jihadi group – comes an awareness of a threat to Muslim communities globally and belief that these injustices can be swept away through jihad.

In considering the implications for development (and counterterrorism) policy and practice, it is essential to appreciate what women and girls are actually seeking when they support jihadi groups, of whatever complexion. Understanding their aspirations can indicate what would lead them to repudiate the jihadi proposition and persuade others to do so. Three issues come to the fore: the desire of women to live in a society in which they feel **included and listened to;** the belief that living under Shari'a will bring greater **justice**, including gender justice; and **an end to violence and conflict** – women want peace for themselves as women and for the community of which they are a part. These aspirations are condensed from numerous accounts, and do not of course encompass the perspectives of all women in all political and geographic contexts. However they capture what women in numerous political contexts are asking for – whether they are relatively well off young Britons, rural women in Afghanistan or poor townswomen in northern Nigeria. In these respects, their aspirations differ very little from those of men.

> **HYPOTHESIS 2. THE ENTRY POINTS (AS DISTINCT FROM THE DRIVERS) OF RECRUITMENT DIFFER BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN. WOMEN REQUIRE FAMILIAL LINKS TO ENGAGE – BOYS AND MEN DO NOT**

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northern states from 1999. This saw – only temporarily as it turned out – a reduction in prostitution, drug taking and alcoholism by men (and therefore greater safety to themselves) and the Islamic institution of Hisbah, where they could have cases of domestic violence and the denial of inheritance rights adjudicated according to Shari'a law in a supportive environment for the first time. Discussed in reports for DFID, on Afghanistan (Ladbury et al, 2010) and Northern Nigeria (Ladbury et al 2011).

[17] Women's responses to the implementation of Shari'a law in any country also depends on their own socio-economic status and education as both determine how legal changes affect them. An authoratative account of the impact of Shari'a law in northern Nigeria, including on women, can be found in Ostein, Philip (2007).

Summary: this is only **partially true**. Women and girls are *more likely* than men and boys to become associated with a jihadi movement as a result of their family connections. However, for both sexes there are at least four different entry points:
a. through family members and community allegiances
b. as a result of forced abduction
c. through religious study under the influence of teachers with links to jihadi groups
d. as the result of self-mobilisation, including through the internet and social media

Detail: This section considers these four basic entry points as they relate to women and girls.

a) Through family relations and allegiances
Most women and girls in Muslim majority communities become involved with jihadi groups because of family allegiances – either due to the allegiance of the family or of the particular involvement of their sons or husbands. This is not specific to women and girls, as there is evidence that a significant proportion of men are also recruited to jihadi groups through familial relationships. For example, Fair interviewed 141 families of slain militants in Pakistan in 2008: 42% of families interviewed said that the men in their family who had joined militant groups had been recruited through family or friends.[18]

As for men, 'familial relations' encompasses several types of relationship and entry points:
• through the existing **tribal, ethnic or religious** affiliations and alliances of their family and clan. As noted, some minority clans in Somalia support al-Shabaab because of AS' backing in conflicts over land with more powerful clans; similarly Sunni tribes in some regions of Iraq and FATA are aligned with Sunni jihadi groups that have supported them against Shi'a groups and tribes.[19]

• as **wives of men who are have joined the group.** Normally women and girls will remain at home if they are already married to fighters; they will not become combatants, although they may be asked to undertake support roles. It is important to note that women and girls may not necessarily be whole-hearted supporters of jihadi groups, even if their husbands and sons are involved. In a study undertaken for DFID in 2009, women from Bajaur agency in FATA complained bitterly about the added washing and cooking work required of them when Taliban fighters were billeted in their villages, even though some of these men were kin and tribesmen.[20]

• as **mothers of** *shaheed***, or 'martyrs'**– in some contexts women who have lost their sons are recruited by the jihadi movement for support roles and paid for their services. Such women may have no other source of livelihood, and may gain a degree of prestige if their sons have died for the cause. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)

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[18] Fair, Christine (2008)

[19] As already indicated, some conflicts that are described as religious or jihadi began as, *and continue to be*, disputes over local land and resources or protest movements against the partisanship and corruption of government. Members of the group being supported may well be acting opportunistically, and cannot be assumed to have embraced the jihadi narrative. Whilst a minority may be radicalised in these – essentially - resource based conflicts, there is no evidence that this is generally the case.

[20] These women were interviewed in refugee camps in Peshawar. Ladbury, Sarah and Maliha Hussein (2009a).

have used women in this situation as 'spotters' of would-be male recruits in peri-urban Lahore.[21]

b) Forced abduction and kidnapping

Many militant non-state groups have had a history of abducting children, both boys and girls. McKay and Mazurana's extensive studies of abductions of girls by armed forces note that, between 1990 and 2003, girls were abducted in 29 countries.[22] Jihadi groups abduct girls and boys although the prevalence of this practice appears to be less than amongst secular armed groups.[23] Boys tend to be taken to fight as soldiers; girls to be forcibly married to fighters. Abducted girls who are not Muslim are normally forced to convert.[24]

Today both al-Shabaab in Somalia and JAS in north-eastern Nigeria regularly abduct girls and young women. A 2012 Human Rights Report on Somalia asserts that all parties in the Somalia conflict have abducted girls since 2010. In addition to using girls for domestic labour and other forms of direct support for its fighters in camps and on the front lines, al-Shabaab also uses girls for rape and forced marriage.[25] The report, based on interviews with those who have escaped, observes that families who try to prevent their children's recruitment or abduction – and children who attempt to escape – face severe consequences, including death.[26] A similar situation exists in northern Nigeria. Although international attention has been drawn to the 250 or more girls abducted from a school in Chibok in April 2014, the number of girls and women abducted by JAS since 2011 is over recorded at over 3,000.[27] Civil rights activists suspect that the majority are forcibly married to fighters whilst being indoctrinated into the ideology of the group, including through the use of drugs.[28]

There are fewer reports of abductions of girls and women in the other countries covered by this study – and none from the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, the line between 'voluntary' joining and forced abduction can be a fine one. The fact that young women who travel to join Islamic State in Syria are not allowed to leave indicates that volunteers can become *de facto* abductees when kept against their will.

c) Through religious study (da'wa) under the influence of teachers with links to jihadi groups

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[21] Ladbury and Hussein, ibid 2009a

[22] McKay, Susan and Dyan Mazurana (2004)

[23] At that time of McKay and Mazurana's work in 2004 the only countries covered in this study with a history of abducting girls for armed conflict were Somalia and Iraq.

[24] The mass abductions of women and girls of the sort we have seen by JAS in Nigeria appears to occur as a punishment to those believed to support the Nigerian military or as a tactic when there are not enough women volunteers to service fighters' sexual and domestic needs.

[25] The forced marriage of women to al-Shabbab fighters is discussed in the Somalia and Kenya annex. The Norwegian Landinfo study, referenced in the annex, suggests that as al-Shabaab weakened its recruitment strategies changed. All families in areas of AS control were told they had to contribute human resources - with boys used as soldiers and girls as wives and mothers for more future recruits.

[26] Human Rights Watch (2012)

[27] JAS abductions are discussed in more detail in the Nigeria annex.

[28] Personal communication with women's rights activists in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state.

Women and girls who join religious study classes, or are sent by their families to study, may become sympathetic to a jihadi group that uses violence, particularly if their teachers themselves take a jihadi world view.[29] For example, the Jami'a Hafsa girls I met in Pakistan were mainly poor girls from the Swat valley sent by their parents; they said they had had little religious knowledge before they arrived in Islamabad. However, after extensive da'wa classes they could confidently quote their teacher's interpretations of the Qu'ran and Sunnah and believed absolutely that violence was justified to defeat Islam's enemies – whether this was the secular leaning Islamabad municipality, 'sinful' brothel owners, or the foreign enemies of Islam, i.e. the west.

Middle class families also send their daughters and sons to da'wa classes. In Pakistan the women's preaching institution Al-Hoda attracts middle class Pakistani women as well as well-off girls from Somalia, Yemen and other Arab states who are sent to Pakistan to improve their religious knowledge. Al-Hoda has no known relationship with jihadi groups. However, the institution provides a highly conservative religious education that defines strict limits on what is 'permissible' under Islam and emphasises the responsibilities of girls and women in enforcing moral strictures within their family and community.[30] This does not necessarily 'radicalise' students but it does inculcate the idea that there are 'enemies of Islam' who, in Islamic tradition, have been defeated through violent jihad. It is not a big step for girls instructed into this narrow mindset to support the use of violence, particularly since violence is used at home by their own governments and by foreign military.

In Somalia, al-Shabaab is known for its emphasis on religious study and da'wa instruction. An International Crisis Group report attributes the large number of young men and women who appear ready to act for al-Shabaab to the influence of its da'wa activities. The report notes that the translation and propagation of al-Qaeda ideology in Somali, especially the call for jihad, has been undertaken by al-Shabaab's effective da'wa networks; these are present throughout Somalia but also reach Somali populations in the region - Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia and the wider international diaspora.[31]

d) Self-mobilisation, including through social media
As the more detailed information provided in the country annexes indicates, poor women and girls may volunteer their services to jihadi groups in return for both cash and protection. However, the independent decision to seek out and join a group as a result of an already formed ideological commitment is more likely to occur amongst those with financial and social independence who can join groups independently of their families or wider community.

The internet and social media have played an important role in self-mobilisation for some years, including for women and girls. As a study for the Institute for Strategic

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[29] Men are also drawn to jihadi groups through da'wa or religious study classes and proselytising clerics. Christine Fair's study of entry points to jihadi groups in Pakistan found that 19% of those killed in action for a jihadi organisation had been recruited to the organisation through its da'wa activities. Fair, Christine (2008)

[30] This paragraph is based on interviews with girls who were attending classes in al-Hoda's headquarters in Islamabad in 2009. See Ladbury, Sarah and Maliha Hussein (2009a)

[31] International Crisis Group Report (2014a)

Dialogue notes '…there is growing evidence to suggest that the anonymity of the internet offers greater opportunity for women to become active within extremist and jihadist circles in a way that isn't generally the case offline.'[32] The remainder of this section considers the ways in which different jihadi groups are using social media, including to recruit women and girls.

The role of social media in self-mobilisation
Jihadi groups have become proficient in indoctrinating their recruits into a jihadi mindset over the last three decades. In the past, this was done through top down communications strategies where message were relayed to the masses through standard communications technology: recorded religious teachings, televised and videoed sermons, videos showing fellow Muslims being bombed, abused and murdered, and the 'victorious' jihadi army fighting against a background of stirring religious music.

The sophistication of media usage has increased exponentially over the last five years with the use of social media. The media strategies of jihadi groups have been termed a 'frontline struggle for virtual supremacy' by commentators.[33] Social media has also helped to polarise political opinion: facebook and twitter feed users are blasted daily with requests for contact and feeds that reflect only their own opinion. There is no counterbalancing voice or link to an alternative point of view. Unless users specifically look for hashtags reflecting views from the 'other side' they are exposed to only one story. As Berringham et al note: '(Social media) allows individuals to find like-minded people where they are not able to do this offline, creating an online community. And in doing so, it normalises abnormal views and behaviours, such as extreme ideological views or the use of violence to solve problems and address grievances'.[34]

There is little published research on the role that social media plays in radicalising women and girls specifically – and none that compares their responses to those of boys and men. The following comments are based on analysis by researchers, journalists, women's organisations, and from the author's own interviews with civil society organisations that study the development of jihadi websites and follow the hashtags of specific jihadi organisations.

First, the use of social media by both sexes, and particularly women and girls, depends enormously on location and context. Women in remote rural areas in Pakistan or Nigeria have no access to a telephone let alone social media. Recruitment into a jihadi mindset in such settings is usually through religious study classes, complemented with radio sermons.[35] This is a very different context from the social media access enjoyed by better off women in internet-connected regions.

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[32] Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2011)
[33] This description was used to characterise the use of social media in the Palestine-Israel conflict. The point made was that although the 'war' is asymmetric militarily (Israel has far more fire-power and will always 'win') the social media struggle is also asymmetric - Palestinians have far more global support than Israel when expressed through social media. BBC Archive on 4, 2014
[34] Bermingham, Adam et al (2009)
[35] The radio alone has proved an effective radicalising force in some contexts. In Pakistan Mullah Fazulllah, the so-called 'Mullah Radio' in Swat (now head of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) attracted women not as recruits but as funders through his fiery sermons and emotional appeals to women to be

Second, even where there is good media access, jihadi groups have very different levels of skill in using social media to reach diverse social and demographic groups. Many al-Qaeda sponsored videos continue to contain the traditional mix of photographic imagery of Muslims being killed, military success strikes by the group itself, spliced with speeches by the AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and lectures and sermons on religious texts. These may appeal to frustrated, religiously educated young men who see conflict as exciting, but they are likely to have less appeal for more urbane, educated young women and men.

Both al-Shabaab and Islamic State are competent users of social media, which they use to reach out to domestic and diaspora populations. It is instructive to compare these two movements, and the similarities and contrasts that they exhibit in terms of their use of social media to recruit women and girls.

The use of social media by al-Shabaab and Islamic State – a comparison

Researchers that have undertaken detailed content analyses of **al-Shabaab's** social media campaigns agree that it has a sophisticated and diverse communications strategy.[36] Using English rather than Arabic, it is designed to appeal to disapora populations.[37] Pearlman notes that AS uses Twitter in three ways: to position itself politically and ideologically (Somalia as a key battleground in the struggle between Islam and the West), to continually update supporters about the movement's progress (including troop mobilisation and the results of attacks) and to establish itself as a reliable and evidence-based news service. However, an ICSR study notes that although al-Shabaab presents its mission in global terms and uses the concept of 'ummah' to encourage Muslims to identify with the suffering of Muslims in other countries, there is no mention of audience profiling or messages that seek to appeal particularly to women and girls.[38]

Islamic State has a very different social media strategy. The intention of IS is primarily to create an on-line ummah - an IS community which all Muslims are invited to join. Participants on IS-related social media sites all call each other 'brother' and 'sister', generating the idea of community in virtual space. According to Muslim women's groups in London, this idea of joining an accepting and inclusive community appeals particularly to young British Muslims, particularly young women.[39]

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good Muslims. Won over by his rhetoric, women in the Swat valley gifted him significant amounts of their jewelry. Discussed by Ladbury, Sarah and Maliha Hussein (2009a)

[36] This section draws on three studies: Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Shiraz Maher and James Sheehan (ICSR 2012), Pearlman, Lindsay (2012) and Menkhaus, Ken (2014). Each study provides a comprehensive analysis of the use of social media by al-Shabaab and the ideological messages of its leaders.

[37] As Pearlman observed in 2012: Only 106,000 Somalis, or 1% of the population, use the Internet and if al-Shabaab had intended to appeal primarily to the Somali people, the organization would have written in Arabic and relied less on electronic means of communication. Pearlman, Lindsay (2012)

[38] The nearest that the AS media strategy appears to come to appealing to women is its assertion that it is better able to provide security, stability and services than incumbent governments. Pearlman notes that (at least in 2012) its chosen social service was education and that it publicised the rise in the number of universities, madrassahs and primary and secondary schools that AS had established in the areas it controlled.

[39] Information on the IS approach to social media is based on conversations with members of the Jan Trust, a London based Muslim Women's grass roots organisation, who are monitoring these sites. London, September 2014.

Islamic State video productions are also quite different to those released by al-Shabaab or al-Qa'eda. A recent video release of IS (18 October 2014) is aimed at recruiting both boys and girls from western countries. As Jason Burke notes, rather than show horrific pictures of Muslims killed by 'the enemy' it depicts the relatively exciting aspect of conventional warfare in the 'palms and scrubs of a distant land'. There is no religious textual interpretation, no sound-bites from speeches, no long lectures and no religious songs. According to Burke this lack of religious content is consistent with stories of young Britons buying copies of 'Islam for Dummies' prior to going to Syria – indicating that they have little knowledge of Islam but are coming for other purposes – excitement, and to be part of a new enterprise.[40] IS appears to have concluded out that indoctrination into a violent mindset can be done after recruits arrive; for young western-based recruits, the appeal is the prospect of an inclusive, welcoming community.

The use of social media by Islamic State therefore creates an environment within which women and girls can feel safe, and which leads them to feel part of an accepting community.[41] Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and specific Muslim sites help to globalise the concept of an IS jihadi community of practice by instantly linking up interested individuals in numerous countries – thereby forming an international movement of would-be and actual supporters. Note that IS does not ask women to go and fight, it seeks to inspire them to help build a new society as wives and citizens.

In summary, although there is no systematic study on the success of different jihadi groups in attracting women and girls, the evidence indicates that the development of media strategies tailored to different population profiles is more successful in mobilising women and girls than a more traditional, top-down, militaristic approach. Now that IS has shown how women and girls can be reached effectively, the question is whether other organisations will also adapt their strategies. This may depend on how near they are to securing territorial control and establishing a 'state'. Once a state becomes a real possibility the need for women as role model Muslim citizens - if not as fighters - becomes imperative.

HYPOTHESIS 3. WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE ACTIVE COMBATANTS IN GROUPS WITH AN ETHNO-NATIONALIST CAUSE THAN THOSE WITH A JIHADI MISSION

Summary: this is **true**. However, we should not underestimate the importance of non-combat roles. Women have a critical role to play in a venture that entails not only military defeat of the enemy but also the establishment of a new society.

Detail: Many authors have pointed out that significant numbers of women have become active combatants in militant movements with a domestic nationalist or secessionist agenda.[42] Thus women formed 30%-40% of the guerrilla force in the

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[40] Jason Burke (2014)

[41] Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander et al (2012) note that the appeal to an 'ummah' has also been used to attract men and boys. In a 2009 video features an American convert who says 'If you guys only knew how much fun we have over here, this is the real Disneyland!'. So clearly the ummah appeal is not a new strategy or one that has been developed specifically for women and girls.

[42] Parashah, Swati (2009a). Prashar usefully compares issues around women's involvement in the LTTE – which she defines an ethno-nationalist struggle - and women's involvement in Indian

Maoist movement in Nepal,[43] and have frequently been used as front line combatants by militant groups in Sri Lanka, [44] Ethiopia, Israel, the Philippines and Colombia.[45] The participation of Muslim women in Palestine and Chechnya has also received attention.[46] Other examples cited in the literature include women's roles as fighters in the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK)[47] and in Kashmir.[48]

Analysts point to two factors that help account for the involvement of women as combatants in these ethno-separatist movements. First, the gender ideology and long-term vision of the movement itself: groups aiming to overturn traditional power hierarchies based on class, gender and ethnicity are more likely to welcome women and girls as fighters. Thus, movements like the LTTE and the Maoists of Nepal had a vision of greater gender equality in the society they wanted to create. As a result they *allowed* and *encouraged* women and girls to become active combatants alongside men as a reflection of these longer-term 'inclusiveness' goals.[49]

Second, groups struggling for secession, independence or against discrimination and marginalisation will normally be fighting the 'near enemy', typically the state and other groups opposed to their political existence. Women may be far more motivated to get involved in these wars – where the enemy is on their doorstep and the political outcome is freedom from forms of oppression that affect them directly – than in wars against a more nebulous 'far enemy' (enemies of Islam, the west etc.). Farhat Haq discusses this issue with regard to Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan.[50] LeT has a challenging task persuading poor women and girls who live in rural and peri-urban areas of southern Punjab to support its militant activities in Kashmir, in India or in the border areas of Afghanistan – regions which they are unlikely to have visited or to know much about. Why should they encourage their sons to go and fight there?[51] Whilst young men can be won over to support a distant war with offers of money and a chance for military training these options are not open to women for whom there are no obvious advantages for engaging in such a war.

A further reason why jihadi movements do not generally use women as front line fighters is that this would mean women and men fighting in close proximity. This would contravene the strict code of modesty jihadi groups normally enjoin on women. Thus, women are encouraged to uphold the cause but are normally allowed to operate

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administered Kashmir - which she defines as a religio-political movement. I draw on several aspects of her analysis in this section.
[43] The Maoists made a particular effort to recruit women as active participants in their movement. This was consistent with their policy manifesto which aimed to end 'all forms of patriarchal exploitation of women' and to give women 'all the rights equal to men'. International Crisis Group (2005:16)
[44] Gonzalez-Perez, Margaret (2008); Alison, Miranda (2011); Berko, Anat and Edna Erez (2007)
[45] McKay, Susan (2008)
[46] For example, Cunningham, Carla (2008); Speckhard, Anne and Khapta Akhmedova (2008); Stack Alisa (2011)
[47] According to Gol Jihar reporting for the BBC 40% of PPK fighters are women. Gol, Jihar, (2014); and according to Mia Bloom 43% of suicide bombers in the KPP have been women. Bloom, Mia (2011)
[48] Parashar, Swati (2011)
[49] Whether such aspirations regarding gender equity have actually been put into practice by any of these groups is discussed in hypothesis 5 - on whether women's involvement in militant insurgencies (whether 'ethnic' or 'religious') enables them to transcend gender roles.
[50] The Pakistan country study discusses this issue in more detail.
[51] Haq, Farhat (2007:1023-1046)

only in support roles – intelligence gathering, taking messages, carrying and hiding weapons, etc., and as mothers who educate the next generation into a jihadist ethic. The main exception is suicide bombing: this is most definitely a combat role, but one that can be carried out more or less alone, and without contradicting norms of modesty.

This argument provides a reasonable general explanation of why women and girls are less often involved as front line fighters in jihadi movements than in secular ethno-nationalist groups. However, it hangs upon two distinctions that are increasingly being eroded: that between a) combatant and non-combatant roles, and b) ethno-nationalist and jihadi movements.

In today's wars the division between combatants and non-combatants is less and less clear-cut. A great deal of today's 'combat' is not about hand-to-hand fighting but about triumphing in a war of words, persuading others of a narrative, and winning over the hearts and minds of local populations.[52] New 'weapons' include social media. And if we in the West maintain a division between fighters and non-fighters this is because *our own norms of patriarchy* continue to see men as fighters and protectors and women as victims who require men's protection. Western national armies have operated on this basis for centuries and continue to do so.[53] The implications are more than conceptual: through this distinction, *we* render women's roles in all wars, including jihadi movements, largely invisible and relatively unimportant.

I would suggest that jihadi groups are different. Although they also see men as the primary fighters they also see that the real objective is to control – and eventually win – the hearts and minds of the civilian population. In this, they see women as having a critical role in sustaining jihad – a venture than is far longer term than winning military victories.

If there is no clear dividing line between combat and non-combat roles then neither is there one between ethno-nationalist and jihadi movements. Many jihadi movements also have nationalist ambitions. The Palestinian struggle, for example, has always been about establishing an independent nation state and only became infused with religious ideology after the Iranian revolution in 1979.[54] Al-Shabaab also fuses an anti-Ethiopian (i.e. anti-state) sentiment with global Islam.[55] The Talban in Afghanistan were a jihadi group that succeeded in realising their state ambitions between 1996-2001. And with Islamic State we have a similar situation – a group that began by fighting state, US and Coalition forces in Iraq, but by 2011 was determinedly establishing its own independent Islamic Caliphate in northern Syria and Iraq – a territorial project across state boundaries. And although al-Qaeda Central might be described as the global jihadi movement par excellence it also backs groups

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[52] Mary Kaldor makes the point – amongst many others – that new wars are not only or even primarily about military exercises to capture territory, rather '…territory is captured through political means, through control of the population. …Violence is largely directed against civilians as a way of controlling territory rather than against enemy forces'. Kaldor, Mary (2013)
[53] Cynthia Enloe discusses the disinclination of western militaries to have women in combat roles except when needed for specific tasks. She notes that after both WW1 and WWII the practice of women being 'last-in and first-out' of military service ensured a quick return to the (unequal) gender status quo as soon as war ended. Enloe, Cynthia (1980)
[54] Cunningham, Carla (2008:87); Ness, Cindy (2008:25)
[55] Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, Shiraz Maher and James Sheehan (2012)

fighting for the overthrow of national governments and their replacement by Shari'a law in many countries – i.e. it supports essentially nationalist struggles.

In short the emerging pattern is one in which jihadi groups are no longer only fighting the 'far enemy' (the US, the west etc.) but also – and in some cases *primarily* – the 'near enemy' (states and other groups in the region that deny them statehood and power). Indeed, in this new landscape of jihadi movements where insurgents try to hold, control and expand territory, most groups increasingly have geographical 'statehood-Caliphate' ambitions.[56] In these circumstances, the distinction between ethno-nationalist and jihadi groups becomes less clear.

Whether or not a group is trying to establish a state has significant implications for the roles of women and girls.

Roles of women and girls in jihadi groups – a closer look

It is worth comparing the roles for women and girls in two different types of 'religico-nationalist' movement: the Taliban between 1996 and 2001 and Islamic State today.

The Taliban in Afghanistan had a clear position regarding the roles of women and girls in their state. The Taliban Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice used its edicts on women to signal the Taliban's return to traditional 'Islamic' values. With a few exceptions these edicts banned women from taking employment, appearing in public without a male relative, participating in government or other public debates and receiving secondary or higher education. Enforcement was through summary punishments that included public beatings.[57]

Islamic State today already has at least one branch of religious police that enforce a similar series of edicts that restrict women's mobility and access. The IS al-Khansaa brigade in Raqqa – an all-women's unit – hands out harsh punishments similar to those of the Taliban.[58] However, IS also has a parallel rhetoric that welcomes women and girls as citizens of the new state. When it comes to state building and international communications IS have realised that its new women citizens can play a positive role. Hence they encourage and use women and girls – particularly foreigners – to communicate the 'joy' of being a woman in the new 'ummah'. This provides a powerful counter narrative to the brutality and violence that characterise IS war actions.

Whether the IS approach to women and girls will be copied by other jihadi movements remains to be seen. Will other groups also start to use women to advance their statehood ambitions and claim recognition from other countries? Such strategies, even if they are taken up more widely, are unlikely to signal empowering women as a group - there is no evidence of this at all. Rather they are likely to reflect the creative ways that new and aspiring religico-nationalist movements like IS can use women to signal their new state's normalcy and make public claims for its legitimacy. It follows that our response to women and girls' involvement in violent jihadi groups should reflect the centrality of their role, actual and potential, including in the creation of legitimacy for new states.

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[56] Jason Burke discusses other aspects of this 'new landscape' in the Guardian, 21 August 2014
[57] Internationally it was acknowledged that the Taliban government violated international human rights law on a daily basis. Human Rights Watch (2001)
[58] The significance of the women's al-Khansaa unit is further discussed in the annex on Syria and Iraq.

B. WOMEN'S ROLE AND IMPACT

> **HYPOTHESIS 4. WOMEN AND GIRLS PLAY A SIMILAR RANGE OF ROLES TO MEN AND BOYS IN GROUPS THAT USE TERROR TACTICS**

Summary: this is only **partially true**. Although men and women undertake a similar range of non-combat roles and both are used as suicide bombers, women are rarely used as front line fighters. Jihadi groups see a woman's primary role as a mother, responsible for educating and influencing the next generation of mujahidin; the primary role of men is as fighters.

Detail: Women play three kinds of roles in jihad movements:
a) as wives and mothers supporting male jihadi fighters
b) as front line non-combatants - recruiters, educators, spies, transporters and hiders of weapons, as messengers
c) as front line combatants, including suicide bombers

a) Women as wives and mothers

Women in all countries, including western ones, are always thought of first as reproducers and nurturers of future soldiery.[59] Their fighting role is always played down, even when they are actually combatants.[60] If there is a major difference between secular state militaries and jihadi militant groups it is the importance given by the latter to women's *other* roles, and particularly their role as mothers and educators of the next generation. An often-quoted article in al-Qa'eda's Women's Magazine entitled 'Women Must Participate in Jihad' exemplifies the role normally expected of women in jihad:

> 'A Muslim woman is a female Jihad warrior always and everywhere. She is a female Jihad warrior who wages Jihad by means of funding Jihad. She wages Jihad by means of waiting for her Jihad warrior husband, and when she educates her children to that which Allah loves. She wages Jihad when she supports Jihad when she calls for Jihad in work, deed, belief and prayer'.[61]

Looking across the jihadi groups that are the focus of this paper, it could be argued that women are actually *more* visible and more important than they are to secular state militaries. This is because jihadi groups focus, with real conviction and with no apology, on women as influencers of future generations and therefore as contributors to the long-term political goals of a new society based on (the jihadi version of) Shari'a. The message is that women are just as important to this goal as men, although they have different roles.

It can also be argued that the emphasis on the importance of women as mothers and wives has another benefit for male jihadi leaders: by emphasising that motherhood and marriage is a 'sufficient' contribution to jihad they also communicate that women

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[59] Cynthia Enloe discusses the role women play in state militaries; much of what she observes is relevant for non-state groups, including those with a religious ideology. Enloe, Cynthia (1980)
[60] Throughout World War II British military manpower officials continued to refer to women as 'non-combatants' even when they were manning anti-aircraft guns. Enloe, Cynthia (1980) quoting Nancy L. Goldman (1978)
[61] Umm Badr, quoted by Von Knop (2007:1)

are not needed or wanted in other roles, for example in policy, strategy or leadership roles.

b) Women in front-line roles but not as physical combatants
In all the jihadi movements considered in this paper, women and girls play important roles in recruiting young men (LeT), organising women into a women's units and organisations supporting jihad (al-Shabaab, Islamic State), gathering intelligence (JAS), hiding and transporting weapons and supplies (JAS, al-Shabaab, AQAP), and providing food and washing services for billeted troops (Afghan and Pakistan Taliban).

Women's roles in recruitment, intelligence gathering and as messengers entails activity in public spaces. Jihadi groups have often targeted specific groups, particularly widows and the poorest, for these tasks on the basis that their honour will be least affected by assuming a public role. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Pakistan, for example, has paid widows that have also lost husbands and sons in Kashmir to identify potential male recruits in their local area. This practice also has social welfare benefits: a 2008 study notes that the organisation has been careful to target mothers who have no other income. In northern Nigeria, too, the remuneration that JAS provides to women for hiding weapons can be an economic life-line for very poor women.[62]

c) Women as front-line combatants, including suicide bombers
There are very few examples of women being used in front line, combat/fighting roles in any of the groups considered in this paper. The main reason given by researchers for women's absence on the front line is that, as Muslims, women are forbidden from being combatants because of social and religious norms that define men as their protectors and defenders. Further, due to norms of honour, women and unrelated men are not allowed to share the same public space or physically interact. Hence the battlefield is for fighting men; barring exceptional circumstance women have no place in it.

This argument is a reasonable one, if over generalised, though it is worth noting that it also applies to state militaries, including western ones. As Cynthia Enloe notes in her study of women in national armies, all militaries use men and women in ways that chime with the established order. States may mobilize women when it is absolutely necessary to do this but they will demobilise women as rapidly as possible in order to hide 'uncomfortable contradictions'.[63]

There is nothing particularly Islamic about this; it is a reflection of patriarchal norms and deeply entrenched gender roles in all countries. Nor does the argument explain why jihadi groups use women in certain combat roles - suicide bombing for example – but not others. Is it simply that women's tactical advantage as suicide bombers trumps the issue of honour?

Women began to be used as suicide bombers in jihadi groups from 2002 onwards. Nationalist-religious groups led the way, particularly in Chechnya, where 68%

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[62] These examples are discussed in more detail in the Pakistan and Nigeria annexes.
[63] Enloe, Cynthia (1980:45)

percent of identified Chechen suicide bombers were female.[64] In contrast jihadi movements have used women as suicide bombers only occasionally and in specific circumstances: when women are needed to easily escape detection, when the shock value of an attack is important, and at moments of retrenchment when women suicide bombers can signal to local populations and male jihadists, that 'even' women and girls are prepared to die for the cause.

The use of women as suicide bombers by jihadi groups is therefore *not* the norm; it has increased over the last decade but women continue to represent a tiny proportion of suicide bombers compared to men.

One principal reason why jihadi groups relatively rarely use women as suicide bombers is that the role remains highly controversial in Islamic theology and debate. Farhana Qazi charts the doctrinal debate amongst the global Muslim ulema about whether suicide by men or women is permissible within Islam and the appropriate role for women in jihad. She concludes that the violent jihad movement is not of a single view on either issue, and that even in societies where female fighters *appear* to be the norm (e.g. Palestinian territories) the deep divisions within the Muslim ulema about suicide bombing in general, and the use of women in particular, makes the future use and frequency of women as suicide bombers difficult to predict.[65]

HYPOTHESIS 5. PARTICIPATING IN VIOLENT JIHADI GROUPS, INCLUDING AS COMBATANTS, ALLOWS WOMEN TO TRANSCEND GENDER ROLES

Summary: This is **not true**. There is no evidence from any country or group that women's participation in a jihadi movement allows women to transcend gender roles. Women have never been appointed as leaders and there is no evidence of their being consulted on matters of policy, strategy or theology. However, there is evidence that women and girls feel can personally empowered if they voluntarily join or support a jihadi group.

Detail: As noted above, there is no evidence that women's involvement in jihadi military movements improves the status of women, either in the movement itself or in the society generally. Farhana Haq, drawing on evidence from various Arabic speaking jihadi movements, notes that although men extol women suicide bombers on websites they do not allow these women to transcend authority and replace male folk heroes. She notes that Muslim women operatives never even have contact with senior male leaders except to execute attacks.[66] And Mia Bloom quotes the head of Hezbollah (Hasan Nasrullah) in August 2013 when he stated that women can participate as suicide bombers but cannot run for elections.[67]

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[64] Chechen women suicide bombers, referred to as the 'black widows' in the media made up the majority of suicide bombers in the Chechen conflict from 2002. This is in marked contrast to their numbers in other countries. In Palestine for example women have made up only a very small minority (around 5%) of attackers. Reuter, John (2004)

[65] Qazi, Farhana (2011)

[66] Qazi, Farhana (2011)

[67] Andrea Ó Súilleabháin quoting Mia Bloom. Ó Súilleabháin, Andrea (2013)

Women suicide bombers are probably the group least likely to bring about a change in gender roles. Women who kill themselves are clearly not in a position to become political leaders or to represent the rights of women more generally. As Afiya Shehrbano Zia concludes after examining the implications of women suicide bombers in Pakistan, by dying, women help maintain a male-dominant status quo; they may be mythologised as military heroes but a woman's sacrifice and martyrdom at no stage translates into an active struggle for tangible freedoms for herself or future generations of women.[68]

It is not only in Islamic militant movements that women's participation in war fails to lead them to transcend gender roles. Nimmi Gowrinatham observes that even though female fighters were given control of social policy after the victory of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, they had no real political voice.[69] And Swati Parashar notes that women's contribution over many years to the armed struggle in Kashmir has even been wiped out of public memory by the dominant patriarchal discourse, which omits to mention women's role in keeping the armed struggle alive.[70] The only exception to this general rule may be Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger Movement, the LTTE. On reviewing the evidence Miranda Allison argues that some changes were definitely made for and by women as a result of women's involvement. For example, she notes that the movement led to a new understanding of, and activism around, the issue of sexual violence against women, and that Tamil women more generally 'used the new context created by militant nationalism to articulate their interests as women'.[71] Thus in some cases, while militancy by women may have lead to greater attention to issues concerning women, this has fallen short of transforming gender roles.

The pattern of women's involvement having little impact on gender roles within jihadi groups also applies to their involvement in state militaries. All militaries are led by men and any 'allowances' made to admit women to combat and other roles during the fighting period are normally reversed as soon as the conflict ends. It seems improbable that jihadi groups will break with global trends given the influence of male clerics with highly conservative and patriarchal interpretations of women's roles.

Note on Samantha Lewthwaite – a leader?

The woman most associated with al-Shabaab in the UK is Samantha Lewthwaite, the wife of one of the 7/7 bombers in London. She has gained a high profile as a terror suspect and achieved a near mythological status in the press, which refers to her as 'the white widow'.[72] After initially denying any involvement with the London bombings Lewthwaite disappeared and was traced to Kenya and South Africa. In Kenya she is suspected of involvement with several attacks, including the terror attack on Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall in September 2013.

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[68] Shehrbano Zia, Afiya (2014).
[69] Gowrinathan, Nimmi (2014)
[70] Parashar, Swati (2011b:101)
[71] See Alison, Miranda (2011). She quotes Maunaguru's study 'Gendering Tamil Nationalism'.
[72] Samantha Lewthwaite is the widow of one of the four suicide bombers, Germaine Lindsay, that attacked London on 7 July 2005. She is referred to as 'the white widow' due to her colour (white), the death of her two first husbands and the fact that Chechen women suicide bombers were referred to as 'black widows'.

The UK press has often maintained Lewthwaite is part of the AS command structure.[73] However, there is no evidence that she has a leadership role, nor that has she has been an attacker or organiser. Her role appears to be in the 'normal' roles undertaken by women associated with AS, i.e. as a wife of jihadist fighters (her first and second husbands died in attacks), as networker and messenger and possibly as fund-raiser and hider of explosives.

Individual feelings of gender empowerment

Field research in the countries covered by the study indicates that women and girls who voluntarily join jihadi groups and are given practical tasks will often feel a sense of empowerment. This is normal enough – any group of people feel empowered if they take action with others and it results in some form of change. It is worth exploring the basis of such feelings of empowerment, as they are important for individuals even if they have no impact on gender roles.

Many factors can underlie feelings of empowerment. Interviews with women recruiters for Lashkar-e-Taiba (discussed in the Pakistan annex) felt empowered through the status they were given as the mothers of martyrs, and the payments they received for their recruitment and intelligence work. Similarly, women in the ward of lepers in Maiduguri (a highly stigmatised community) that were being paid for hiding weapons for JAS felt empowered because they were able to use the stigma that they suffered positively - to earn money to support themselves (see Nigeria annex). The women and girls currently arriving in Syria to join Islamic State communicate feelings of empowerment in their tweets to friends back home. This appears to be based on a sense of excitement and adventure – they have left home and family and arrived in Syria to join a young new Islamic enterprise. For different reasons, the women of Jami'a Hafsa in Islamabad were empowered by their knowledge of Islam (the interpretation they had been given) and their certainty that their vigilante actions were 'right' by God.

In summary, even if individual women feel empowered through associating with a jihadi cause this is unlikely to impact on women's wider status in the movement or in the society more generally.

HYPOTHESIS 6. WOMEN AND GIRLS FIND IT HARDER TO LEAVE VIOLENT GROUPS THAN BOYS AND MEN

Summary: This is **true**. Women and girls are more likely to be prevented from leaving by the group itself. They are also more open to ostracism and rejection by their communities of origin, and less likely than men or boys to be offered support to make returning to civilian life a practical possibility.

Detail: There are two questions here: Are men able to leave violent groups? And is there evidence that this is more difficult for women and girls?

National governments tend to make it difficult for men to safely leave jihadi groups. While systems of justice to address war crimes are imperative, the threat of arrest and

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[73] Williams, Zoe (2014)

imprisonment can be a powerful disincentive for men that want to leave violent groups. There has also been an historic reluctance to involve former jihadi militants a role in dialogue processes,[74] to offer amnesty to men that are not proven 'terrorists', or to offer significant opportunities for 'deradicalisation'. Until national governments and the international community make a determined effort to get ex-jihadi group members back, to provide fair and transparent justice for those accused of crimes, and to then work with ex-militants and their communities towards rehabilitation, there will remain few incentives – even for those who may be disillusioned – for men to leave jihadi groups.

These same considerations also apply to women and girls. However, because women and girls' roles in jihadi groups are little recognised, there is even less provision in place to support them if they leave (indeed in most countries, none at all).

Women's organisations interviewed in researching this paper mentioned two other hurdles for women and girls; these relate to the issue of abductions and to the problem of future livelihoods.

If women have been abducted, and particularly if they have been forcibly married to fighters, 'leaving' will be seen as desertion of both the marriage and of the group, and attempts to do so will be prevented and punished. Even if women are able to escape from their abductors, their families and communities may refuse to accept them, either for fear of reprisal or because of beliefs that women have been changed by their experiences and are no longer capable of being reintegrated. In northern Nigeria women's organisations report that even if the Chibok girls are released, their communities may not take them back.[75] A Human Rights Watch report on Nigeria recorded that, when 26 girls were rescued from JAS by the Civilian Joint Task force in November 2013, their parents immediately sent them to relatives in Abuja or Lagos to escape the stigma of rape and being pregnant outside marriage. Banishment by parents to escape community stigma reflects the lack of any wider institutional support for the girls.[76]

The need to make a living is also important. If a jihadi group has provided women with an income, then they need an alternative form of financial support if they leave. The need for a cash income – specifically as an incentive to leave a jihadi group – was emphasised by several women's organisations consulted for this paper. I could find no cases of even limited and temporary financial support for women and girls either as a preventative measure or as a means towards reintegration.

In summary, the fact they women and girls may be dependent on a jihadi group for their basic livelihood, including the wellbeing of their children, together with the stigma and ostracism they face from their home communities, makes it extremely difficult for women and girls to leave even if they want to.

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[74] Excluding Taliban groups from the Bonn conference in 2002, and the lack of any effective DDR programmes for Taliban and other jihadi militants is given as one of the major reasons for their resurgence after 2002. DDR and DIAG shortfalls in Afghanistan are discussed by Stapleton (2008). (DDR=disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; DIAG=Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups.)
[75] Personal communication with the head of FOMWAM (Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria) in Maiduguri, October 2014
[76] Human Rights Watch (2013)

C. WHAT WORKS? LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE AND EVALUATIONS

This section examines operational reality. Hypotheses 7 and 8 take a critical look at two types of programming commonly used to reduce support for jihadi groups – counterinsurgency (COIN) and 'countering violent extremism' (CVE) programming. The CVE section goes on to suggests questions that need to be answered before designing CVE programmes that target women and girls.[77]

The final hypothesis turns to the often-neglected work that women's organisations are already doing in situations where jihadi groups are recruiting or operating. The section ends with recommendations made by some of these organisations as to how western governments and donors can best help lessen support for jihadi messages and support women and girls in contexts where jihadi groups are active or in control.

HYPOTHESIS 7. 'COUNTER-INSURGENCY' APPROACHES HAVE BEEN INADEQUATE IN PREVENTING GIRLS AND WOMEN FROM SUPPORTING OR JOINING JIHADI GROUPS

Summary: There is **insufficient evidence to accept or reject** this hypothesis. However, on the basis of the evidence from Afghanistan it is clear that COIN programming made untested assumptions about women being both more malleable than men and having influence within households. COIN programming aimed at women lacked an appreciation of their nuanced views on the Taliban, and in some cases, their support for it. Current and future COIN approaches have built on lessons learned and are better rooted in the nuance of women's political affiliations and the realities of complex political situations.

Detail: Counter terrorism interventions cover a wide range of activities and objectives. These include the use of intelligence to prevent terror attacks in specific countries, direct military interventions on the ground, the provision of military supplies, weaponry and training to the military of foreign allies, and the pursuit, capture or elimination of identified suspects. Most of these interventions are designed with men in mind – they assume a male leadership and a male fighting force.

In contrast to the 'pursue and disrupt' aspects of counter-terrorism, are counter-insurgency (or COIN) operations that seek to win over the 'hearts and minds' of local populations and build their resilience. COIN experts often see women as capable of playing an important influencing role in counterinsurgency projects.[78] David Kilcullen epitomised this view when he argued: '…co-opting neutral or friendly women, through targeted social and economic programmes, builds networks of enlightened self-interest that eventually undermine the insurgents….win the women

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[77] The OECD guidance on 'Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism' (currently in draft, January 2015) was produced during the final stages of this study. It is an excellent document that encourages OECD states to use 19 good practices on women in the development and implementation of national CVE policies and programmes. The OECD document reflects many of the points made in this paper. (OECD 2015)
[78] Khalili discusses the gendered aspects of COIN. Khalili, Laleh (2011:1470ff)

and you own the family unit. Own the family and you take a big step forward in mobilizing the population on the side of the counter insurgents'.[79]

The Female Engagement Team (FET) concept, introduced by the US following a similar experiment in Iraq, involved charging young women soldiers with the task of building rapport with Afghan women in order to gain their trust. It was assumed that this trust would then translate into women turning against the Taliban insurgency and supporting ISAF and the Coalition. Following David Kilkullen's injunction - that if you win the women you own the family - it was assumed that women would then influence their male family members to also back ISAF and the Afghan government. Over time this would help turn the tide against the Taliban.

The 'theory of change' implicit in the FET concept was based on assumptions that were untested in the Afghan context. To begin with, ISAF did not understand the role of women within the insurgency, and in some cases, their support for it. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam's study on the impact of FETs outlines a number of further flaws in the FET logic, for example, the assumption that Afghan women would form an association with foreign women *as women* and would be won over by their views; that foreign women's 'rapport' with Afghan women would automatically translate into trust, and that women in rural Afghanistan could and would influence their male family members to side with the Afghan government and ISAF against the Taliban. Such assumptions belied a lack of awareness of the complexities of Afghan responses to the Taliban and the Coalition, as well as the deeply patriarchal nature of Afghan society. Importantly, ISAF instructions to female soldiers to conduct searches and build rapport with local women in the process '…assumed that women were insulated from the impact of the war on their doorstep: while women were becoming widows and losing sons as a result of ISAF activities, FETs could search women in compounds and checkpoints AND engage successfully with them, communicating while using force'.[80] The study notes that FETs were under intense pressure to demonstrate success despite the flawed logic of their role; they consequently fell back on easy options such as giving out free medicine; then reporting successes when women accepted the handouts given.

A great deal has been learned since the initial FET concept was developed and implemented. Current and future COIN approaches are likely to build on lessons learned and be rooted in a clearer understanding of the nuance of women's affiliations, their limited public influence in many contexts, and the realities of complex political situations.

> **HYPOTHESIS 8. PROGRAMMES THAT AIM TO 'COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM' (CVE) TEND TO BE LESS EFFECTIVE THAN THEY COULD BE. MANY PROGRAMMES FOCUS ON YOUNG MEN AND IGNORE WOMEN AND GIRLS.**

Summary: This is **true**. While little CVE programming is subject to rigorous evaluation, such detailed evaluations as exist indicate that CVE initiatives often do not fulfil their potential. The reasons for this include the lack of operational

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[79] Kilcullen, David (2006)
[80] Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, Sippi (2014)

coordination between CVE interventions in any one country, the failure to share lessons about 'what works', and the 'adding in' of CVE concerns as supplementary objectives. There is also very little understanding of women's situation and needs in violent conflict environments involving jihadi groups.

Detail: There is now a significant programming effort going into 'countering violent extremism' in areas where jihadi groups are active. In some cases, CVE objectives are primary; in others they are included as objectives in programmes with another primary purpose (to improve livelihoods, extend services, support democratic governance etc.).

A common and serious problem is the lack of operational coordination – and therefore learning – between CVE interventions in the same country. In Pakistan, to give one example, a mapping study undertaken by the EU in 2012 identified 13 broad categories of programming, and several hundred projects, that had direct or indirect CVE objectives. [81] Most were designed by individual member states with limited mutual coordination or communication. The lack of any independent evaluation of individual programmes, let alone of the totality of effort, meant that small-scale projects continued to be designed without an understanding of which programmes were having an impact and which were not. The disinclination to class any initiative as a failure in EU and donor discussions was a further impediment to sharing lessons about what *not* to do next time. Pakistan is not unique – a lack of coordination and critical learning is common to most countries with substantial CVE programming.

The evidence reviewed suggests that it can be difficult to include security objectives in programmes that have broader poverty reduction objectives. However, recent evaluations have identified the conditions that need to be met if programmes with dual objectives (e.g. security *alongside*, say, economic growth or livelihoods) are to achieve a greater degree of success. [82]

Lessons on CVE programming from recent evaluations
Evidence from evaluations and the experience of practitioners point to four broad lessons about how CVE interventions can have maximum impact. They need to:

a) target populations most 'at risk'
b) address more than one driver
c) ensure that the programme is offered by a neutral party
d) base interventions for women and girls on a thorough understanding of their needs and context.

These lessons have generally still to be acted on, and the first two are not specific to women and girls.

a) Target populations most 'at risk'

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[81] Ladbury, Sarah and Jose Luis Penas (2012)
[82] Many of the points made in this section are drawn from two recent evaluation studies. The first involves a USAID funded CVE programme in Kenya, the second a DFID funded livelihood programme in Somalia that added in a CVE objective to its second phase. See Khalil, James and Martine Zeuthen (2014) for the Kenya case study and Axiom Consulting (2014) SEED II Programme Study (forthcoming).

When a primary driver for joining a jihadi group has been identified, it is important that a CVE programme is able to target its 'offer' effectively at those groups for whom this driver is primary.

For example, a CVE programme providing skills training or employment might be expected to have impact, *if* it has been proved that financial inducements offered by a jihadi group are a major driver of recruitment, *if* the CVE programme carefully targets the groups likely to respond to such incentives, and *if* the incentives provided by the programme will be sufficient to match what is on offer from the jihadi groups in the area. Thus, if a jihadi group is paying its fighters a $200 joining-up fee, or a monthly salary of $50-150,[83] then the CVE programme needs to have the credible prospect of providing livelihoods that meet or beat that. In a CVE intervention involving skills training with no certainty of a job to follow, or involving increased agricultural incomes that will not be certain or visible for a year, then the immediacy and certainty of the jihadi offer may remain more attractive.

Targeting issues can occur even in programmes directed specifically at CVE. In the Kenya Transition Initiative (KTI), the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives rightly targeted their activities to areas where Muslim Somalis were living (the Eastleigh suburb of Nairobi and the Kenyan coast). However, they did not distinguish specific youth populations at risk within these locations. As Khalil and Zeuthen point out, to be more effective, the programme should have focused their grants on members of clans loyal to al-Shabaab or on those arrested by the police following the Westgate incident.[84] As it was, KTI activities, which included livelihood training, cultural activities and community debates, did not attract the young men who were most disaffected and angry with the government and therefore most likely to join al-Shabaab.

When considering 'at risk' populations, it is also important to recognise that at least two senses of the term need to be distinguished. One population clearly at risk is potential fighter-recruits. However, there will also generally be a wider population that *sympathises* with a jihadi movement, and may harbour and support active members, although not necessarily joining the group. This population includes women and girls. It is therefore important that interventions be designed to address the factors that influence both would-be recruits and the wider sympathising population. However, despite the plethora of CVE interventions that sometimes crowd a particular environment (e.g. in southern Punjab, Khyber Pakthunkhwa, the Horn of Africa) I could find no examples of a joined-up CVE 'package' of measures that targeted such distinct 'at risk' populations in a co-ordinated way.[85] Rather, and as

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[83] Al-Shabaab's reported monthly salary. Khalil, James and Martine Zeuthen (2014) quoting Hassan, M. (2012)

[84] Discussed at length in the case study conducted by Khalil, James and Martine Zeuthen (2014)

[85] Kenya provides an example of a parallel programme that could have complemented an employment programme. In the Eastleigh suburb of Nairobi, the International Crisis Group notes that sympathies for al-Shabaab by Somali residents have been driven by an increase in Kenyan police racial and cultural profiling, leading to police harassment and indiscriminate arrests and detentions of Somali residents. Offering employment opportunities in such an area may deter would-be fighters from joining up, but it would be unlikely to have any impact on the wider grievances of Kenyan Somalis that lead them to sympathise with al-Shabaab. A CVE programme that also worked closely with the Kenyan police to change their behaviour towards Somali Muslims in the Eastleigh area, and get the relationship onto a very different footing, may have helped. Discussed by Khalil, James and Martine Zeuthen (2014).

mentioned at the beginning of this section, a large number of small and uncoordinated activities, funded by different countries, all battle for space and impact.

b) Address more than one driver

As we have seen, there are often several drivers in the decision to support or join a jihadi group. Drivers may also differ for different age groups and for men and women.[86] Given this, a CVE programme that focuses on only one driver can be expected to have only limited impact. In such circumstances it is important to work with a wide range of individuals and groups to identify the different drivers that exist for different population groups, and then to work with other agencies to ensure a coherent and coordinated response to these.

c) Ensure the programme is offered by a neutral party

A CVE programme needs to be offered by a neutral, trusted body – not one associated with wider political grievances. If grievances against the state are severe, and if the government is seen to be offering a particular programme, then those who are politically alienated may shun programme activities.[87]

d) Design interventions for women and girls based on a thorough understanding of their needs and context

Due to gender stereotyping of 'men as militants' and 'girls as non-violent victims' most CVE programming targets men and boys. Women and girls tend to be little served by programmes either with a prevention objective (such as employment programmes), or in deradicalisation programmes, which focus on fighters. Women and girls' roles in peacebuilding work have been highlighted by UNSC Resolution 1325. However, National Action Plans do not specifically mention women's roles in jihadi movements or the need for their representation in dialogue processes between jihadi groups and governments.[88]

Women and girls *are* included, although not specifically targeted, in broader CVE programmes that seek to increase the wider population's trust in the government through improved services (education, health, water, infrastructure), as well as in programmes addressing justice and the rule of law and media and communications.

The point with regard to women and girls is not that they 'should' be targeted in CVE programming, but rather how any initiative to include them should be developed. Design needs to be informed by an locally specific and sociologically informed understanding of the ways in which women and girls are associated with a jihadi movement. In general women's role will not be as fighters. More often, women will be 'associated' with a group because they live in an area that the jihadi group controls

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[86] USAID's analysis of VE drivers in Yemen found that young people stressed several drivers of violent extremism that adult youth stakeholders did not. USAID (2011:9)

[87] A finding of the study by Khalil and Zeuthen on USAID's Kenya Transition Initiative in Kenya. See Khalil, James and Martine Zeuthen, 2014:7.

[88] Civil society women and women's organisations are increasingly being involved in peace building forums. This has been encouraged by UNSC resolution 1325 which requires member states to provide protection for women and girls in war and to ensure the full participation of women in humanitarian, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. However, WPS National Action Plans tend to reserve their 'peacebuilding' funding for women and girl's 'peace work'. They tend not to mention the need for their involvement in high level processes, for example in dialogue between government and jihadi movements.

or because their husbands or sons are members. Women may or may not support the group and may not have a single voice on the issue. Some may see a jihadi group as a more moral form of governance, and more likely to provide security than the current government. However, other women may be opposed to the group to a greater or lesser extent, and yet others may be unaligned, feeling caught between the violence of the jihadi fighters and the security forces.

Programming for neither women nor men can succeed in the absence of an understanding of such complexities. Even in one local programme area, the differing perceptions, affiliations, and priorities of women and girls can put them on opposite sides of a violent divide; these therefore need to be taken into account in programme design.

The in-depth interrogation of the context advocated here differs little between men and women. However, the questions need to be asked (and analysed) separately for each. Women's and men's experience and needs can be very different in any conflict situation. The specific questions to be posed need to be drafted carefully depending upon the initial knowledge that one has of the context, the nature of the programme objectives envisaged, and the provisional theory of change informing design.

A number of questions are given below to illustrate the concerns that may need to be investigated. Without answers to such design questions, the risk is that programmes will be constructed on the basis of untested assumptions that prove not to be correct, and it will be impossible to shape programming with a credible chance of deterring women and girls from joining or supporting a jihadi group, or helping them leave it.

Pre-design questions for programmes that aim to support women and girls in jihadi related conflict environments

1. Is the area under the control of a jihadi group or the government? Does the jihadi movement have significant support from the local population and if so why? How are *different* groups of women and girls responding to the group - and to the fact that local men and boys are joining up?

2. What are the *push factors*? If women and girls are supporting the group why is this (are they supporting sons and husbands - or clan allegiances)? Do they have grievances against the government? Against other non-state groups? Against any foreign powers operating in the area?

3. What are the *pull factors*? Are any women supporting themselves through jihadi group payments? What other benefits does an association with the group have (e.g. protection, speedy justice, rights under Shari'a?)

4. What are the *entry points* for women and girls? Is abduction and forced marriage common? How important is family or clan association? Did a formal women's unit or brigade encourage them to join? Were they persuaded to join as a result of religious study classes? Or the internet?

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5. What are *women and girls' roles*, if any, within the jihadi movement? Are they primarily mothers and housekeepers? Do they undertake support roles? Are they trained, including as fighters? Are any women being trained as suicide bombers?

6. *What do women and girls identify as their main needs now*? Which of these could an externally funded programme help with? And which should it not attempt to address – on a 'do no harm' basis?

Activist local women who are deeply embedded in communities impacted by violence can usually answer these questions. To test this, I sent a version of the above list of questions to a Nigerian activist colleague based in Maiduguri who has been working with civil society groups, the government and the JTF since the violence began. She consulted with other community women; together they answered all the questions, adding significant nuance about the reasons why some women and girls were involved and others were not.[89]

In summary: in order to design CVE programmes for women and girls we need to understand their circumstances, perspectives, needs and priorities. Merely including them in programmes designed for men and boys will not necessarily help – women and girls need the opportunity to define their own priorities.

HYPOTHESIS 9. WOMEN MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY UNDERTAKE SUBSTANTIAL CVE WORK, AND UNDERSTAND THE COMPEX ISSUES FACING WOMEN AND GIRLS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE RARELY ASKED FOR THEIR ADVICE ON PROGRAMMING, AND FUNDING FOR THEIR WORK IS LIMITED

Summary: Women's activists and organisations can be found in all environments where jihadi movements are operating but their organisations often lack the capacity and reporting systems to be funded by donors. Sometimes, also, women's organisations are reluctant to accept funding specified as CVE or counter-terrorism, aware this may compromise their independence or jeopardise their security. Consequently a more nuanced understanding of women's needs and priorities often goes unheard.

Detail: Women's organisations in all the countries covered in this study undertake a wide range of conflict reduction and peace-building work. Whether this also counts as CVE depends both on the context (if jihadi groups are operating in the area), and whether the work includes addressing specific push factors (grievances that push people to look to a jihadi group alternative), or pull factors (the benefits the group is offering, including cash, a chance to avenge the enemies of Islam etc).

For the purposes of this section I use a fairly narrow definition of CVE and 'count' work as CVE only if it aims to address the push or pull factors previously discussed, or if it aims to rehabilitate women and girls who have been involved in jihadi group

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[89] I am grateful to Hamsatu al-Amin for her comprehensive response and insights. She also identified the range of issues she thought an outside agency could help with. These are included in the final section ('Listening to what women say').

activities. It is important to mention that women's organisations do not generally separate out CVE work targeting jihadi groups from their work to reduce all forms of violence, including violence against women and girls (VAGW), and violence perpetrated by government and international military.

Women's organisations also undertake a lot of work with men and boys but the focus here is on work with women and girls who are rarely given attention. On this basis it is possible to discern four broad areas of CVE work undertaken by women's organisations in countries where jihadi groups are operating:[90]

a) Informing and empowering grassroots women and girls so they have the skills to mobilise against violent jihadi narratives and organise for peace
b) Preventing indoctrination/radicalisation (of young men and women)
c) Deradicalising youth and providing rehabilitation support for women and girls who have been associated with jihadi groups
d) Advocacy activities – to change the policies and behaviour of government, security forces, the media, the international community or other institutional actors.

A brief synopsis of the types of work being undertaken in each area is given below.

a) Informing and empowering grassroots women and girls so they have the skills to reject violent jihadi narratives and organise for peace
The jihadi groups covered in this study (including al-Shabaab, JAS, AQAP and the Taliban) tend to recruit the majority of their male footsoldiers from poorer communities. Women from these communities often have little secular or religious education and may have no independent political voice; many will depend on male incomes. For these women mobilisation and empowerment programmes help increase their confidence, identify the injustices they experience, and plan activities that signal their rejection of violence in all its forms.

The work involved in mobilising and empowering women to say 'No' to jihadi narratives is too broad to site individual initiatives here – there are literally hundreds of different initiatives involved. They include programmes that involve street marches condemning extremist violence, including gender based violence; community and school based initiatives to bring children from different communities together (e.g. through peace clubs) and to learn mediation skills; creative arts work that challenges stereotypes about other communities or beliefs; and work that challenges the monopoly of religious authorities over definitions and interpretations of Islamic texts.[91] All of these activities begin by building the awareness of women and girls to

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[90] This was a difficult classification to make due to the plethora of activities in different countries, and the fact that many women's organisations do not divide their activities into CVE-non CVE. Thus I found many of the activities women's organisations classified as human rights work, addressing VAWG or peacebuilding also contributed to CVE because it involved addressing violence in an environment where jihadi groups were operating. However, few called this work 'CVE'.
[91] An International Civil Society Network (ICAN) Brief discusses the range of work that women's organisations and activists are doing with regard to CVE (2014a). A recent conference on challenging extremist ideologies convened by ICAN confirmed this diversity. Sixty women from 13 countries gave examples of the work they were doing to empower women and girls to mobilise for peace, reject violent jihadi narratives, and protest against international policies that furthered violence. See ICAN (2014b).

the threats of an extreme world-view; they then help build their capacity to take an active part in CVE activities. Community-based women are closest to the violence and to the recruitment activities of jihadi groups but because of their own lack of organising experience they often need 'capacity building support' to apprehend and plan the contribution they can make to CVE.

b) Preventing indoctrination/radicalisation (of young men and women)
As mothers, teachers and community activists, women are in a good position to notice the indoctrination of children, as they are most likely to detect changes in their behaviour. However, to be effective influencers, women need to understand the propaganda that young people are exposed to, and identify what they can do to limit its influence.

Work by women's organisations to prevent radicalisation generally involves two key steps: First, they must build the awareness of community women to recognise when radicalisation is occurring (what behaviour to look out for). Secondly, they must develop women's knowledge and skills so they can actively dissuade their children (and other young people) from associating with a jihadi cause. This is not easy: poor women's influence within patriarchal communities is *not* a given, boys in particular are more likely to be influenced by their peers than their mothers. If women have minimal education – secular and religious – they are unlikely to have the knowledge or arguments to counter the religious justifications for violence given by jihadi groups. Nor can they offer the other benefits the jihadi group may be promising – a chance to travel, receive training, be paid, and contribute to a 'new society'. In short, despite the tendency to say that mothers are the 'natural influencers' of their sons and daughters, their preventative task is a huge one. They often need considerable support, new knowledge, and planned strategies to play this role effectively.

Examples of CVE work by women's organisations

Several Muslim women's organisations in the UK (as elsewhere) are working to increase women's awareness of Islamic State on-line propaganda.[92] They aim to equip women in a community with the skills they need to engage their sons and daughters in conversations about IS and provide them with a mainstream religious narrative that counters the jihadi call to join them in Syria. They also encourage women family members to discuss alternative solutions with their children – in order to make them feel less marginalised and more optimistic about their future. In other cases women's organisations concentrate solely on increasing women's knowledge about mainstream Islam, gauging that this is the best way to enable them to authoritatively reject forms of religion that condone or promote violence, or the oppression of women.[93]

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[92] I am grateful to discussions with the London based Jan Trust for information about how they are supporting Muslim mothers and young people in the UK to counter IS propaganda along the lines described above.

[93] Initiatives under this 'preventing radicalisation' category include work that aims to break down stereotypes about the 'other' religious or sectarian group. For example, by bringing together girls and boys from different communities on the basis of identities they share as young people, artists, 'active citizens', university students, sportspeople etc. The aim is to empower them to stand up to the binary 'us and them' world-view espoused by jihadi groups. A good example is the work that the Pakistani CSO Barghad is doing in universities to prevent VE, or the British Council managed Active Citizens programme.

Initiatives that aim to increase women's knowledge of Islam so they can counter extremist thinking occur in several countries. Their awareness is raised in various ways: through training programmes run by mainstream religious madrassas,[94] through radio and TV broadcasts; and through women's NGOs working with Muslim ulema to develop guidance for women on their rights under Islam, so they can use this knowledge to assert their rights and oppose radical and violent narratives.[95]

c) Rehabilitating and supporting women and girls who have been associated with jihadi groups

This work focuses on women and girls that have been directly associated with a local jihadi movement but have left or escaped. Women's organisations are undertaking three specific areas of work in this regard. Those consulted for this study emphasised that all three areas were not normally funded by donors – but comprised critical rehabilitation measures.

- **Rehabiliation**. This involves supporting girls and women who have been abducted, or have undertaken some form of work for a jihadi group with whom they are no longer associated. This is a particular problem in north-eastern Nigeria at the time of writing, where women's groups are currently organising trauma counselling for girls and their families that have escaped from JAS; they are also working with communities to encourage them to take back girls that have been raped or have become pregnant. This work is not well publicised and attracts little funding.
- **Legal counselling** for women and girls that have been arrested for associating with a group and are held in detention. Whilst women and girls are a small proportion of detainees relative to men, they are extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse and other forms of human rights abuse whilst in detention. I could find no examples of this work in the countries under study (which is not to say they do not exist) but there are other examples: women's organisations in Tajikistan are providing legal advice and assistance for women and girls in detention.[96]
- **Negotiating work opportunities** for women and girls formerly associated with a jihadi group. As discussed in the next section, women's organisations consulted for this study stressed the critical importance of providing women and girls with income earning opportunities – both as a rehabilitation measure and to stop their associating with jihadi groups. Again, the majority of employment training funded by donors goes to men and boys as potential fighters; it is not used to target vulnerable women and girls.

d) Advocacy activities – aimed at government, the security forces, the media and the international community

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[94] Hedieh Mirahmadi (2014) discusses examples of mainstream religious education for women in Afghanistan and Pakistan. She cites the Dar ul-Ifta school in Afghanistan which is training 12 women as religious scholars to provide guidance to Afghan women on a range of issues that affect themselves, their families and communities.

[95] A good example is the Mursheeda programme in Morocco. Established in 2006 this gives women a 45-week training, with courses in law, history, communication, religion and psychology. Women are empowered and educated to counsel others in family and religious matters and counter violent narratives of Islam. Mirahmadi, Hedieh (2014)

[96] Personal communication with Sanam Anderlini, co-founder of ICAN who reported back on the types of CVE work undertaken by the 60 women activists at the recent ICAN facilitated conference.

'Advocacy' covers a range of activities, including providing opportunities for women and girls to feed their own experiences and ideas into security forums (a UNSCR 1325 objective). Advocacy may also involve working with the police or security forces to sensitise them to the impacts of their own behaviour – for example, how beatings and detentions can push communities to sympathise with a jihadi movement because it is seen as less partisan or less brutal.[97] Channels that provide women access to the police or to security chiefs in a public forum are important to get women's messages across at an operational and policy level.

Advocacy also involves working with and through the media. Balanced media reporting that give women and girls a chance to describe their own experiences (for example, the impacts of jihadi violence in their local area or their reactions to the hate messages about people from other religious communities) can make powerful stories for other women faced with similar circumstances. Whilst a great deal of CVE funding goes into 'strategic communications' very little of this puts women and girls centre stage and lets them tell their own stories.

In summary, current CVE funding largely misses the work that women's organisations are undertaking. This is partly because their work is often small scale and does not appear on donor agency radars. Sometimes it is also because women's organisations are reluctant to take funding specified as CVE or counter-terrorism, aware this may compromise their independence and integrity or jeopardise their security. That said, there is every reason for donors funding CVE work to seek out and talk in depth to women's organisations – a great deal more could be achieved if donors listened to women's organisations at the outset, and funded the activities that they considered to be priorities for CVE in their local contexts.

Listening to women's organisations - what they say

In the course of preparing this paper I asked a number of community and civil society women's organisations to say in what ways they thought western development agencies and governments could do to help the situation of women in conflict environments involving jihadi groups.[98] Their main recommendations are summarised under the five headings below. They urged western donor agencies to:

1. Appreciate that the majority of women and girls are not ideologically radicalised into supporting a jihadi movement. Women's organisations noted that women often find themselves between two fires: the violence of jihadi fighters and that perpetrated by government forces and/or foreign military. In these circumstances the allegiances of many ordinary women[99] are determined by three main factors: the stand taken by their family and primary identity group, their understanding of what form of governance each side can offer in future, and their immediate survival needs.

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[97] Many DFID peace-building and conflict management programmes allow for civil society women's input into security forums for this very purpose. For example, the DFID funded Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme provides channels for community women to feed their experiences to security chiefs at state and local levels.

[98] The points are drawn from discussions and briefing notes prepared by women activists and organisations based in areas where JAS, al-Shabaab, Islamic State and the Taliban are operating.

[99] I use the term 'ordinary women' here to make a distinction with educated, middle class women who may think similarly, but who will not necessarily be able to speak for grassroots women whose experiences of violence they may not share.

Women's organisations asked that western governments and donors reassess their typecasting of women and girls. They stressed that women and girls should not be seen as hapless victims, influenced by their male family members or, alternatively, as 'radicalised'. Rather, we should recognise that whilst some women and girls do become radicalised the majority of women who support jihadi groups do so because it seems the least bad form of governance, or appeared more likely to provide protection and long-term security.[100] They argued that interventions involving women and girls needs to be based on this appreciation.

They also emphasised that women's support can change. If jihadi group violence against civilians increases or, alternatively government shows it is committed to a more inclusive, less corrupt and law-based approach, then women's allegiances can shift. However, they also stressed that, in order to understand the logic and dynamic of women's political thinking, grassroots women need to be consulted – and this rarely happens. This leads to the second point.

2. Put more effort into understanding and supporting community-based women, and building their organisations – so that grass roots women are better able to scale up their efforts to support the range of needs that women and girls have as a result of the ongoing violence between jihadi groups and government/foreign security forces. Women activists and organisations, including in the UK, noted that women's organisations are doing a great deal to support women and girls in jihadi movement recruitment areas; they are also helping to rehabilitate girls and young men who leave a jihadi group.[101] However, these organisations are often small and may not have the capacity to manage grants or report results in ways required by external funders. Fink, Barakat and Shetret observe a similar situation in Somalia, where women's *hagbads* play an important role in supporting women to resist radical messages but do not have the capacity or resources to meet counterterrorism financing rules and regulations.[102]

Women's activists noted there *are* ways forward. A DFID funded programme 'Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme' (NSRP) is finding ways to build the administrative capacity of women's organisations in the north-east so they can be awarded grants to scale up their activities. This has necessitated a more flexible approach than envisaged in the original logframe where the need to invest

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[100] In north-eastern Nigeria women activists have charted women's changing support for JAS versus the government over the last four years. They note that support has veered towards JAS under two circumstances: when government security force brutality against civilians has been even more violent than JAS, and when it has seemed the government is purposively prolonging the conflict for its own electioneering purposes. Personal communication 2010-2014.

[101] For example, women's organisations in Maiduguri in north-eastern Nigeria are currently working with mothers to stop the recruitment of boys and the abduction of girls by groups affiliated with JAS and to help rehabilitate them back into their communities if they escape from the group. Similar work is ongoing in the UK: Muslim women's groups such as the Jan Trust are working with mothers to raise their awareness of on-line recruitment by Islamic State and what they can do to prevent this.

[102] These authors note there is sometimes also a security issue involved for women's groups that engage with foreign militaries or even with aid agencies. Fink et al note, 'Relationships of trust between women's groups and local communities may be compromised if their programming is believed to be serving an externally imposed security agenda.' With regard to UN security interventions the authors conclude that these can both marginalise women's groups and can increase their physical and political insecurity. Fink, Naureen Chowdhury, Rafia Barakat and Liat Shetret (2013:6)

significantly in capacity building organisations was not built in. It has also meant rethinking logframe indicators and adjusting milestones.

3. Lobby national governments to change those behaviours that most alienate citizens – and may cause and prolong jihadi group violence. Women's (and men's) support for a jihadi movement is often due to the human rights abuses, corruption and partisanship of national governments. Women's organisations suggested a number of issues about which foreign donors could usefully lobby governments. For example, encouraging them to:

- commit to end the conflict by bringing jihadi groups into the political process through dialogue. This should be a consultative, transparent process involving civil society, and civil society should include women representatives
- become less corrupt, less partisan and more transparent and accountable, e.g. by ensuring police and security forces are tried and prosecuted for human rights abuses and other behaviour that contravenes national or international law[103]
- provide services to populations least well served, including those in jihadi controlled areas, and not just to areas supporting the government
- provide a positive return environment for men and women with jihadi group connections. This could involve offering a deal which upholds principles of justice but also allows for amnesty arrangements and rehabilitation. Women and girls need to be central to these processes.

Women's organisations noted that western governments were well placed to influence their own governments, and indeed that exercising such influence might constitute a more effective contribution to peace building and to increasing community resilience than their stumbling into areas they knew little about, such as madrassah reform or countering religious narratives.

4. Provide economic support for women and girls in violent environments – including those currently working for jihadi movements. The need to provide women and girls with independent financial support and opportunities was mentioned by all the grassroots women consulted. This was not because women pose a security threat (some may but this is a small minority); rather it is because women in violent environments are often desperately poor and vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.[104] This leads some to turn to illegal or dangerous activities, including prostitution. A number become dependent on the payments they receive from jihadi groups for support activities (ferrying food, hiding weapons, identifying new recruits etc.). Women activists saw need to offer women and girls 'more' than jihadi groups were offering them – this particularly applied to remuneration.

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[103] A point made by women's organisations was that when governments treat local populations as 'siding with the enemy' then human rights abuses committed by government forces are under-investigated, or justified in the name of national security. This further alienates local communities, including women, against the government and in favour of jihadi alternatives.

[104] They noted that in areas where jihadi movements are fighting with government many poor women are near to destitution - because the economy has failed and they have lost their jobs, because they have lost assets (livestock, farming land, kinship networks), because they are ostracised as widows or abandoned, or because they have been internally displaced.

Many women activists noted the tendency of western donors and national governments to skew funding towards economic programmes for men because they are perceived as the greater security threat. They said the 'securitisation' of poverty reduction programmes meant the rights and needs of women are being overlooked – and that these policies should be urgently reviewed – and changed.

5. Recognise that a small minority of women and girls *are* active supporters of jihadi groups, and do support and carry out terror tactics. Women's organisations stressed that the increased international commitment to women's roles in peacebuilding processes necessitated a parallel recognition that a minority of women and girls *are* the active members of violent groups and do take part in violent atrocities against civilians, including terror attacks.

They expressed the need for women perpetrators to be brought to justice for crimes in the same way as men. They argued that if women's vast experience in situations of violent conflict – including as combatants – was not recognised then the skills and perspectives they could bring to bear in terms of peace building processes would continue to be undervalued. Government commitments to include women in peacebuilding forums in response to UNSCR 1325 might continue, but women's voices would remain marginalised.

The recommendations to HMG that arise out of the findings of this report are outlined in the Executive Summary.

ANNEX 1. CLARIFICATIONS

Why 'jihadi group' is preferred as a reference term to 'terrorist' and 'extremist'

There are several reasons for not using the term 'terrorist' and particularly 'Islamist terrorist' in this paper.[105] The reasons for avoiding such terms have been outlined by Bruce Hoffman and include:[106]

- they are subjective, and used politically to signal 'whose side we are on'
- they are used to justify a military response and no dialogue as in 'we won't talk to terrorists' (this has rarely proved an effective response)
- in the UK 'terrorism' has become associated mainly with political movements involving Muslims. This has lead to racism and Islamaphobia[107]
- use of these terms by country governments can destroy trust in the state by Muslim populations – those who adamantly reject violence and resent the fact that the government allows their religion to be so casually and incorrectly labeled.

However the *main* reason that the term 'terrorist' and particularly 'Islamist terrorist' is not used in this paper is that it is a barrier to our understanding the multiple reasons for which local populations support jihadi groups. Many of these reasons are *not* ideological or particularly religious. Many conflicts now categorised as a religious/jihadi conflict began as, and continue to be, disputes over land and other resources between locally competing ethnic groups, or protest movements against the perceived partisanship and corruption of government. In short religion is effectively *used* in a variety of conflicts to create a sense of shared identity and to justify and inspire struggles for power, or to keep the continuing spoils of the conflict coming. Whilst a proportion of the members of jihadi groups are undoubtedly radicalised it is unclear to what extent radicalization extends to the population associated with these groups. There is certainly no evidence that wider populations condone the use of terror tactics, locally or internationally. It is therefore neither appropriate to 'tar' a population with the label 'terrorist' nor advisable to base programming on this assumption.

'Violent extremism' has become a commonly used alternative term to 'terrorism' in the UK, especially in government circles. The term focuses on the threat of ideology as well as action, which seems a relevant distinction. However, 'violent extremism' is applied almost solely to Muslim groups and carries the same dangers as the term 'terrorist', i.e. the assumption that if populations have even minimal sympathies with a jihadi movement they will also have 'extremist' views.[108] And like 'terrorist' it is easily exploited to demonise anyone whose political opinions are radically different to those of the government or their international supporters.

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[105] I appreciate that there are advantages for governments in drawing up a formal list of terrorist groups. It gives them wide ranging powers to take action without recourse to parliament: for example, to cut off and seize assets, undertake surveillance without recourse to warrants, agree joint action with like-minded governments - and access additional funding. However, ordinary people do not know which groups are on the list in their country and the media does not use the term in this way.

[106] Hoffman, Bruce (2006)

[107] Foreign labelling can also endanger civil society organisations that are working with local populations to build resilience. CSOs have often been targeted if their source of funding is thought to be from donors. Using terms of self-referral for militant groups can protect their security.

[108] As one expert aptly put it 'Who defines what is extremism? The local context? Western governments? Are Hamas and Hezbollah 'violent extremists' or are they democratically elected political parties with armed wings fighting against Israel? Is any group against the status quo extremist?' Nicola Pratt, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick. Interviewed for a GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report on Women and Extremism, 13 March 2013

For these reasons, I have found it more helpful generally to use the term 'terror tactic' to describe actions that aim to spread fear and terror, rather than label individuals or groups as 'terrorist'. Within the field of conflict studies terror tactics are generally understood as a strategy that non-state militant groups use during specific phases in their struggle in conjunction with other strategies – military, communications, recruitment, indoctrination, intelligence etc.

My principal reference point on terminology is the BBC guidelines in referencing groups and their actions. I quote relevant sections of the BBC position below. BBC guidelines do not deal with the term 'violent extremist' but the same principles apply.

BBC Guidelines on using the terms terrorism/terrorist

'There is no agreed or universal consensus on what constitutes a terrorist, or a terrorist attack. Dictionaries may offer definitions but the United Nations has again just failed to reach agreement. The obvious reason is that terrorism is regarded through a political prism….

'The word "terrorist" itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. We should convey to our audience the full consequences of the act by describing what happened. We should use words which specifically describe the perpetrator such as "bomber", "attacker", "gunman", "kidnapper", "insurgent", and "militant". We should not adopt other people's language as our own; our responsibility is to remain objective and report in ways that enable our audiences to make their own assessments about who is doing what to whom….

'(This)… does not mean we should emasculate our reporting or otherwise avoid conveying the reality and horror of what has occurred; but we should consider the impact our use of language may have on our reputation for objective journalism amongst our many audiences.'

In this paper the principal used in terminology for groups is **self-reference**. Thus a 'jihadi group' – a term used frequently in this paper – refers to a group that describes itself as pursuing jihad. This term is not, of course, without it difficulties as the Arabic word jihad, meaning 'struggle', does not necessarily imply or justify violence (except perhaps in self-defence). That said, 'jihadi group' is a common term of self-reference and is therefore used throughout this paper.

Why women and *girls* – and not just women? Girls are explicitly referred to in this paper because girls under 18 – and even of nine or 10 - are often associated with armed groups, including those with a jihadi mission.[109]

Why non-state groups? Non-state groups are not the only ones either using terror tactics or recruiting women and girls. National and international security forces also use terror tactics to create widespread fear amongst civilian populations.[110] Civilian populations have been bombed and burned, women, men and children have been abducted, raped, tortured and held without trial – all in the name of national security or the international fight against terrorism. Women have sometimes been party to these atrocities as victims, perpetrators or both. The human rights violations committed by state and international security forces are an important issue, but not one addressed in this paper.

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[109] The 'Principles and Guidelines on Children associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups' or Paris Principles (2007) define children as under 18 years of age. UNICEF (2007)
[110] Amnesty record that 950 people died in military custody in the first six months of 2013 alone. Amnesty International Public Statement (2013)

Why Islamic 'jihadi' groups? The focus on groups with an Islamic national or global mission is because of the success of myriad jihadi projects and the level of threat that they now pose to Muslim and western countries.

For at least three decades, non-state actors have used calls to a violent form of 'jihad' as a central means of advancing their political projects.[111] They have successfully constructed a world-view that neatly defines the problem (an alleged attack on Islam led by Western powers), the enemy (Muslims who interpret Islam differently and the non-Muslim 'west') and a solution (the overthrow of enemies and the imposition of a caliphate based on their interpretation of Islamic texts). The concept of 'jihad' has emerged as both flexible and exportable; combined with effective recruitment strategies - the use of social media, ample funding from national governments using jihadi projects to pursue their own military ends, and a continuous stream of willing recruits – it has born fruit: multiple jihadi ventures are now achieving real success. At the time of writing mini caliphates are now being physically established: in Syria and Iraq by Islamic State, by JAS in north-eastern Nigeria, by al-Shabaab in Somalia. This is not to suggest that groups with ethno-nationalist objectives have not also used terror tactics and been just as brutal in their methods; however, at the time of writing they do not pose the same global threat as those with a jihadi ideology.

Which groups? There are hundreds of militant Islamic groups today that express their objectives in terms of 'jihad'. Most begin as single entities but become part of wider networks over time, shifting and changing allegiances as their political goals coalesce or divide. All demand some form of political change. For some this is expressed as a clearly defined territorial project; others offer the end of Islam's enemies and the establishment of a Caliphate but are less clear about the location of the enterprise.

For this study I selected a small number of the better-known and studied groups that are based in one or more of the countries covered by the research. Other groups using terror tactics – including in struggles more usually defined in terms of their secular political objectives (secession, independence, equal rights) – are also referenced throughout this paper when they indicate interesting similarities or differences with regard to their political project or the way they use women and girls.

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[111] State governments have also used the call to jihad in this way, for example, Pakistan under Zia-ul-Haq, Saudi Arabia to support Sunnis, Iran to support Shias.

Glossary

Caliphate	A historical Sunni Muslim institution of leadership that combined political and religious offices. Some Islamist groups seek to re-establish a caliphate that applies their understanding of Shari'a as state law.
Da'wa	Conveying the message of Islam to others, i.e. preaching/proselytizing. From the gerund of the verb meaning to invite or to summon.
Deobandi	Ulema associated with the Indo-Pakistani movement within Hanafi Sunni Islam established in Deoband India in 1867. Used religious and secular education to revitalize Muslim identity and oppose British colonial rule. Became a focal point of Islamic teaching; has schooled hundreds of thousands of ulema. Many Taliban and other jihadi group leaders were trained in Deobandi madrassas – hence there is an association of the term with jihadi group ideology and practice.
Jihadi group	In this paper: used to describe a militant group that describes its political mission as a holy war against the enemies of Islam. Jihadi groups may be fighting the 'near enemy' (e.g. the government or other Islamic sects or ethnic groups) or the 'far enemy' (e.g. the west).
Mujahadin	A term for those engaged in fighting for an Islamic cause. Used particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
Pashtunwali	'The way of the Pashtun' – a code of conduct and honour. Male elders apply the principles of Pashtunwali to regulate social interactions between themselves and with outsiders. In resolving disputes under Pashtunwali, priority is given to achieving reconciliation and preserving honour between groups of men.
Salafism	A Sunni movement that seeks to revive 'original' Islam, drawing on the Pious Ancestors (Salaf). It purports to transcend the four traditional Sunni schools of jurisprudence and does not recognise the legitimacy of Shi'a Islam.
Shari'a	A complex term. Widely used to mean Islamic Law, the sources for which are the Qur'an and Sunnah. The Qur'an and Sunnah are used by the ulema to produce a body of rulings. As a result of this of this their interpretations can diverge widely.
Takfir	A Muslim who accuses another of being takfiri (from the word kafir - infidel) indicates the accused is believed to be guilty of apostasy - meaning they have renounced Islam and are no longer a Muslim.
Ummah	Community. In this paper used to refer to the community of Muslim believers.
Ulema	Body of Muslim scholars recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic law and theology.
Wahhabism	Islamic movement named after Ibn Abdul Wahhab who initiated a reform movement in the eighteenth century to return to the pure and original form of Islam and reject innovations (e.g. praying to saints). The movement is based on a strict interpretation of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. 'Wahhabism' has come to have connotations of ultra-orthodoxy, inflexibility and is now often used negatively, to denote a person who is likely to be radical/extreme.

Acronyms

AAS	Ansar al-Shari'a, Yemen
AIAI	al-Itihaad al-Islamiya, Somalia
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AQ	Al-Qa'ida
AQAP	Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsular
AS	Al-Shabaab (Harkatul al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen)
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force, Nigeria
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CPAU	Co-operation for Peace and Unity (CSO) Afghanistan
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Pakistan
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK
FET	Female Engagement Team
FOMWAM	Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council, Yemen
KTI	Kenya Transition Initiative
ICAN	International Civil Society Network
ICSR	International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence
ICU	Islamic Courts Union, Somalia
IS	Islamic State (also referred to as ISIL and ISIS)
ISI	InterServices Intelligence, Pakistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIL	Islamic State in the Levant
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JAS	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram), Nigeria
JTF	Joint Task Force
JUD	Jamaat ud-Dawa, Pakistan
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba, Pakistan
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSRP	Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
SEED	Sustainable Employment and Economic Development
SFG	Somalia Federal Government
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls

ANNEX 3. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Women and Violent Extremism & Terrorism: A Scoping Study

Background

In October 2013 DFID's Development Policy Committee approved the paper: *Countering Violent extremism and Terrorism (CVET): DFID's Approach & Contribution* and emphasised the need for DFID to build the evidence base on CVET and development through research, analysis and evaluation.

The Home Office and the FCO expressed interest in analysis on the role of women in ideologically based violence and acts of terrorism.   In 2013 DFID launched two Helpdesk enquiries to review the available literature which revealed that this was a significantly under-researched area but there was limited and growing evidence that women are increasingly participating violence and acts of terrorism as radicalisers, fundraisers, logisticians and more rarely perpetrators of violence.[112] Certain militant groups such as Al Shabaab are known to specifically target women. There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that the experience of being a victim of violence, especially sexual violence can act as a motivation for women to participate in violence and support the use of terror tactics.

This scoping study builds on previous DFID research and analysis on the drivers of radicalisation and the role of women and Islam (2006-10).

Purpose

Women are typically portrayed as either the victims of ideologically based violence or potential positive agents of moderation. The **purpose** of this study is **to review the evidence on the role of women in violence and particularly in acts of terrorism.**

Research questions:
1)   What is the evidence that women are participating in violence, including the use of terror tactics?
     -   How do they participate? What is their motivation?
     -   What roles and functions do they perform?
     -   How are women treated by male counterparts? Are they allowed to assume senior / leadership roles?
     -   What are the factors that cause women to disengage leave? Are they different from men?
2)   In the ideology and narratives of violent groups, what is the role of women?
3)   What evidence is there to link violence against women and girls with their own involvement in violence, including acts of terrorism?
4)   What is the evidence that women can and do play a moderating role, either on an individual level - by personally seeking to prevent the involvement of others or as members of organisations that seek to build the resilience of young people of both sexes to extreme narratives and the use of violence
5)   What has been the impact of national and international counter-terrorism action on women?

Methodology
This is primarily a desk based study which will review:
          -   Published research and analysis by academics and researchers
          -   Available grey literature from civil society, NGOs, think tanks etc

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[112] GSDRC & CCVRI Helpdesk Literature Reviews on Women & VE&T

- HMG analysis

The study will identify:
- Current and planned relevant research and analysis
- Areas for further research and analysis

Research focus

The focus of the scoping study will be primarily, though not exclusively, on Islamist groups that use violence and terror tactics. This will include groups associated with Al Qaeda, its affiliates and AQ inspired groups. Evidence from the role of women in other violent groups and conflicts (e.g. Tamil Tigers, Chechnya, Bosnia) may also be relevant. The Scoping Study will review the global evidence but with a particular focus on Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Nigeria and Kenya. The study should focus on 2001-current, though older, more historical evidence may be useful and context and reference.

Outputs:
1) A summary of HMG evidence and analysis of women and VE&T (Unclassified) by end-September 2014
2) Final Report (Unclassified) by December 2014
   - Up to 30 pages including executive summary, bibliography and current and planned relevant research initiatives

Researchers:
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