

Gender Analysis of Violent Extremism and the Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security in ASEAN:

EVIDENCE-BASED
RESEARCH FOR POLICY



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is the result of the collaborative efforts and partnership of the National Counter Terrorism Agency of Indonesia (BNPT), The Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (MOWECP) of Indonesia, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). This research was commissioned by UN Women under the regional project Empowering Women for Sustainable Peace: Preventing Violence and Promoting Social Cohesion in ASEAN with the generous support of the Global Affairs Canada and the Republic of Korea. The research was conducted by the Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre at Monash University. It was also informed by multi-stakeholder groups, including government and civil society from the ASEAN region. The findings of this research aim to support the implementation of the ASEAN Bali Work Plan 2019-2025, which was developed to operationalize the ASEAN Regional Prevention of Violent Extremism Plan of Action.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMMTC	ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asia Nations
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BNPT	Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (National Counter Terrorism Agency)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CT	Counter Terrorism
FKPT	Forum Koordinasi Pencegahan Terorisme (Terrorism Prevention Coordinating Forum)
GPS	Gender, Peace and Security
LGBTI Community	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Community
IPAC	Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
MOWECP	Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection
NAP	National Action Plan
NCAP	National Cybercrime Action Plan
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremist
RAN PE	Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism
SOM-TC	Senior Official Meeting on Transnational Crime
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VE	Violent Extremist
WGWC	Working Group on Women and P / CVE
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is well known that radicalization, a shift towards violent extremism, in Southeast Asia takes place during times of peace, when conflict has been stabilized, and/or even in countries that do not experience internal conflict. Recent studies have also shown that women and men's engagement with both extremist content and organizations differ, particularly in terms of radicalization, recruitment and participation.¹

This report identifies both the persistent trends and changing gender dynamics of violent extremism in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, based on an expert survey and interview research conducted between July and November 2021. It examined how and to what extent misogyny and hostile beliefs are fuelling violent extremism in the Southeast Asian region during the pandemic, the degree to which misogyny and hostile beliefs in the ASEAN region are fuelling violent extremism, and how these manifest themselves in the offline space. The report answers the following questions:



What have been the key changing trends and dynamics of violent extremism in the context of COVID-19, including as regards recruitment, propaganda, and/or the spread of misinformation and disinformation to fuel misogynist and hostile beliefs (both online and offline) to justify and legitimize violence against women in the ASEAN region?



To what degree do offline spaces reinforce hostile beliefs and misogyny towards women, potentially in turn further fuelling violent extremism?



What are the points of contestation among women and men in communities affected by violent extremist groups in the ASEAN region? How are women and men coping or pushing back differently? What are the gender dynamics and what are the consequences?



What can we learn from the regional and national efforts in promoting and implementing P/CVE – Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism – in the ASEAN Member States? What have been key achievements and challenges? What are the key policy recommendations and considerations for P/CVE and the security sector?



How can the gender perspective be incorporated into policy and practices, including risk assessments, and how can the role of civil society and women's organizations strengthen P/CVE strategies in ASEAN?

OUR PROJECT FOUND THAT:

1

- The COVID-19 pandemic has been successfully exploited by extremist actors to strengthen their organizations and intensify violent campaigns. During COVID-19, individuals have increasingly relied on social media and the internet to engage with extremist content, a situation to a great measure exacerbated by the pandemic stay-at-home orders. The research indicates a growing concern among regional experts that violent extremist groups throughout Southeast Asia are espousing and transmitting violent messages online. Forty-four per cent of expert respondents have recently viewed such messages continuously or very often, including calls to violent jihad.

2

- Violent extremists are using propaganda and online messaging to espouse misogynistic and hostile views towards women. Sixty-seven per cent of expert respondents have seen this content, sometimes, often or very often, while 65% of experts have observed extremist social media content inciting violence towards women and girls.

3

- Appeals to charismatic masculinities are used to attract recruits and legitimize violence, revealing consistency between online and offline channels/sites of radicalization and participation. However, this differs depending on the ideology of the organization and may not apply across the board among different militant organizations throughout the region that can espouse jihadism, ethno-nationalism or far-right extremism. Contestation amongst women and men in communities affected by violent extremist groups in the ASEAN region exists in pockets with some evidence that women are beginning to push back against misogynistic ideologies, including challenging narratives discursively through discussion forums, and challenging violent extremist ideology through appealing to moderation.

4

- When drafting and implementing P/CVE policies responsive to gender-sensitive approaches, intersectionality perspectives must be embedded/reflected in the substantive conversation of the draft, and meaningful participation must be included during the formulation of policies. The multiplication of concrete National Action Plans (NAPs) P/CVE implementation initiatives at the local level, which signal multilevel coordination between national – local agencies, allows for the broadening of ownership of P/CVE as a shared agenda according to (the VE affected) communities.²

As stated by one expert interviewed for the study:

“

There is no extremist group that supports the ideology of equality between women and men.

”

In their messaging and strategies, “violent extremist groups always place women as saviours or as the cause of conditions that are considered immoral.” Yet there are few moderate groups espousing gender equality as a counter-narrative to extremist and violent extremist ideology. Almost all experts agreed that this online intolerant content is dangerous for women in the offline space, and that COVID-19 has resulted in more significant insecurities for women affected by violent extremism in terms of radicalization, recruitment and the effects of online discourse that promotes sexist views, control and the subjugation of women.

This included through the spread of misinformation and disinformation, which participants observed was heightened during COVID-19. Online behaviour not only influences violent extremist roles, practices and recruitment, but also results in insecurities in the offline space, including increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

Although there are similarities in the ways in which violent extremist groups use propaganda and social media to recruit and radicalize women and men differently and espouse sexist views towards women, this can differ depending

on the organization itself, the geopolitical environment in which it operates and the ideology it espouses. For example, while existing P/CVE approaches are generally tailored towards violent extremist threats posed by jihadism, interviewees suggested that ethno-nationalist extremism (such as in the case of Malaysia) and communist insurgency (such as in the case of the Philippines) could pose immediate and future risks, but they are not currently integrated into existing policies and programming. Consequently, it is important to consider that while organizations recruit and radicalize women and men distinctly, the gender norms prevalent within espoused ideology can influence processes in different ways. Therefore, avoiding a “one-size-fits-all” approach is recommended.

The findings of this study need to inform current P/CVE policies and programming in the Southeast Asia region. More than half the expert respondents agreed that the growth of online misogyny and hostile beliefs toward women was not reflected in current P/CVE policies and programmes. More gender-responsive policies could address the gender-specific dimensions of increasing online radicalization and its impact on both men and women’s offline recruitment to violent extremism.

BASED ON THE RESEARCH STUDY, WE ARE PROPOSING THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR P/CVE POLICY AND PROGRAMMING IN THE ASEAN REGION:

1

P/CVE policy should be based on gender-sensitive analysis of the causes of individual radicalization which transforms itself into violent extremism. This includes acknowledging that radicalization processes and the drivers towards violent extremism can be distinct among women and men.

From our survey data and interviews, a common concern was often raised that policymakers must further acknowledge that radicalization processes are distinct among women and men, despite recruitment and participation within the same organization. Put simply, potential differences in drivers that influence women and men’s radicalization can not only be distinct, but highly gendered. It is important to note, however, that women and men cannot be treated monolithically, but rather the factors that push men to join a violent extremist group may not be the same factors for women.

Risk assessment should incorporate male and female gender-specific radicalization indicators and indicators of misogyny and hostile beliefs and their monitoring should deem them to be related yet distinct from broader conflict dynamics. This involves identifying individuals, both men and women, with hostile sexist attitudes (which is different than the presence of discriminatory gender norms in a group ideology) as particularly at risk of conducting violence. It is important that these are responsive to differing ideologies throughout the ASEAN region.

2

Current P/CVE policies should be informed by gender-sensitive analysis of all forms of extremism and violent extremism and should differentiate between ethno-nationalist extremism, far-right extremism and communist insurgency where religion is not a key dimension of the ideology.

The ideologies of most violent extremist organizations contain inherently gendered dimensions. The way in which violent extremist groups construct gender norms, including how groups can produce masculinities and gender norms that can either enable or limit women's participation, is not only important in understanding violence but also the normalization of certain behaviours. For example, the construction of in-group gender norms can "impact on the likelihood of women's violence being accepted as legitimate by terrorist groups; on the roles imagined for women; on the behaviours normalized for men; and on the treatment of enemy women".³

Policymakers need to take into consideration national threat environments in the ASEAN region and the ideologies of extremist organizations and consider how they can appeal to women and men differently. Although jihadist violent extremism continues to pose an enduring threat within the ASEAN region, it is important to consider violent extremism and conflict posed by far-right, ethno-nationalist and communist groups and their respective strategies to recruit and sustain the involvement of women and men differently.

3

The differential impacts of terrorism on women and girls should be integrated into P/CVE policy and programming.

It is important that policymakers consider their local contexts throughout the ASEAN region and develop programmes that focus on women and girls that specifically reflect how gender dynamics are playing a role in radicalization, taking care not to perpetuate invalid gendered stereotypes that women are always victims or that someone conned them into joining violent extremist groups. This is particularly the case when thinking about the repatriation of former individuals, who were actively or passively involved with Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) or living in their proto-state areas of influence.

This includes considering that women and girls could be victims, perpetrators, supporters, influencers and active participants in terrorist organizations, which necessitates a complex and nuanced understanding of the range of risk factors. It has further implications for online/offline dynamics particularly heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, where women's increased use of social media and engagement in group chats and forums – including women's online forums – during stay-at-home orders exposed women to incentives for joining violent extremist organizations. Furthermore, gender-sensitive e-safety training could be recommended for security and intelligence officers on how to identify hostile sexist attitudes online.

4

P/CVE programmes should support the development of counter-narratives to violent extremism that place women's voices and experiences of misogyny in the foreground

– including those previously involved with extremist organizations and that promote gender equality in contrast to misogynistic narratives. Multiple participants identified in our study that violent extremist organizations throughout the region seek to delegitimize women as leaders. Women's voices and counter-narratives to violent extremism should be amplified by leaders in the community, CSOs and governments, and include their integration into support and referral initiatives and digital gender-sensitive e-safety training.

At the same time, policymakers must acknowledge that counter-narratives can also have the potential to indirectly victimize or create vulnerabilities for women. Policymakers and leaders do not just amplify women's voices and counter-narratives, but they themselves and their organizations are “role-models” in challenging hostile sexist attitudes. As a result, it is crucial that policymakers engage women's CSOs and women's groups in devising these counter-narratives, as they often have extensive knowledge in understanding local grievances that can serve as drivers towards violent extremism and they can offer alternative pathways at the local level.

5

Policymakers should listen to and involve communities in which violent extremist groups exist.

It is important to engage women and CSOs that are already at the forefront of violent extremist activity, who understand the local context, have local contacts and understand real and perceived local grievances. Existing P/CVE strategies throughout the region do indeed tend to be general, and our research found the need for these to not only be more specific to the gendered experiences of women and men, but also to the diverse extremist ideologies and the specific environments in which they exist.

Grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and organizations can play a key role in the P/CVE space and provide the opportunity to bridge the gap between government, policymakers and local communities. Indeed, and as previously mentioned, this could simultaneously contribute to higher accountability for government agencies and ministries – including in incorporating gender mainstreaming – and potentially to decrease the vulnerability of communities at risk. Furthermore, this can be expanded to include a specific focus on security sector reform and training.

One of the ways that security sector organizations can challenge hostile sexism and misogyny is by promoting an inclusive workforce, standing against impunity for gender-based violence and addressing sexual abuse and harassment in their own organizations – which is often targeted at women and religious minorities. The community needs to see a security sector that is inclusive and responsive to their concerns and requirements and that does not provoke extremism.

6

The formulation of NAP P/CVEs can be highly institutionalized, but not necessarily rigid. It can be a participatory process, with engagement not only coming from ministerial organizations but also from CSOs.

The formulation of P/CVE plans that connect to national Women, Peace and Security (WPS) frameworks is crucial to address misogyny dynamics and the attraction of violent extremism, especially the sexist attitudes and socially constructed masculinities and femininities that provide fertile ground for radicalization towards violence. Our case study of Indonesia's NAP P/CVE drafting, and ongoing implementation can provide lessons learned that may inform other action plans throughout the region.

As identified, the multiplicity of NAP P/CVE implementation initiatives at the local level because of multilevel coordination between local and national agencies, allows for the broadening of ownership of P/CVE as a shared agenda between government and grassroots levels. Policymakers need to ensure that intersectionality and the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the drafting of NAP P/CVE's. There must be concrete efforts to ensure the recognition and accommodation of CSOs' representativeness, voices, experiences and contributions in the drafting process. This contributes to meaningful participation, and facilitates opportunities to discuss and debate key concepts, including gender, which are crucial to enhancing the success of P/CVE strategies and tailored P/CVE policies.

INTRODUCTION

The ASEAN Political and Security Blueprint (2015-2025) sets out a vision for a community that ‘fully respects the different religions, cultures and languages of our peoples, upholds common values in the spirit of unity in diversity and addresses the threat of violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations’. It acknowledges that in ASEAN Member States terrorists continue to develop strategies and tactics both as a group and individually, including a new tactic that involves women and children in their attacks. Law enforcement agencies of ASEAN member countries have carried out several coordination and collaboration activities, including joint efforts for effective information-sharing on cross-border terrorist networks.

The 2017 Manila Declaration also called on ASEAN Member States to address the threat of violent extremism, in particular: 1) to prevent radicalization, financing, recruitment and mobilization of individuals into terrorist groups; 2) to consider pursuing deradicalization in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes as an alternative to punitive measures; and 3) to undertake capacity-

building programmes to educate youth and other vulnerable populations on the importance of moderation and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Furthermore, the ASEAN Bali Work Plan 2019-2025, endorsed at the 13th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime in November 2019, under Priority 1.5, specifically aims to empower women and promote gender equality to enhance the capacity, participation and leadership of women in the promotion of moderation and tolerance to prevent the rise of radicalization and violent extremism. In the context of ASEAN and P/CVE policies in member countries, prevention policies must also be in accordance with the principle of equality before the law, and policies must be developed that are inclusive, participatory and in line with the agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This is particularly relevant to the sixteenth goal, which is ‘supporting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable

and inclusive institutions at all levels'. Within the SDGs, the comprehensive approach that involves all components of government and society is called the 'whole of government and society approach'. Key in understanding P/CVE politics, this approach illustrates that governments, citizens, CSOs, academia and the private sector have an important role to play in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development outcomes. In Indonesia, a key case study in this project, this approach was used by the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) in the preparation of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism that Leads to Terrorism 2020-2024 (hereafter NAP-PCVE).

Taking these priorities into consideration, this study examines how far and in what ways misogyny and hostile beliefs are fuelling violent extremism in the Southeast Asian region, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Violent extremists in the ASEAN region have been spreading misinformation and transmitting violent messages online and leveraging crises, most recently the COVID-19 crisis, through online propaganda to radicalize, recruit and mobilize group membership. While a growing body of scholarship has identified the connection between gender norms, gender identity, gender ideology and violent extremism or terrorism, until recently, less research has addressed how misogyny and hostile sexist beliefs espoused online influence offline (community) sites, creating very real insecurities for women and girls in particular. Greater understanding of gender relations and roles and their import for countering and preventing violent extremism is also needed beyond the role of women in high profile attacks.⁴

This research study aimed to examine how and to what extent misogyny and hostile beliefs are fuelling violent extremism in the Southeast Asian region during the pandemic. It examines the degree to which misogyny and hostile beliefs in the ASEAN region are fuelling violent extremism, and how this manifests itself in the offline space. It answers the following questions:

- ?
- What have been the key changing trends and dynamics of violent extremism in the context of COVID-19, including recruitment, propaganda and/or spread of misinformation and disinformation to fuel misogynist and hostile beliefs (both online and offline) to justify and legitimize violence against women in the ASEAN region?
- ?
- To what degree do offline spaces reinforce hostile beliefs and misogyny towards women, potentially in turn further fuelling violent extremism?
- ?
- What are the points of contestation among women and men in communities affected by violent extremist groups in the ASEAN region? How are women and men coping or pushing back differently? What are the gender dynamics and what are the consequences?
- ?
- What can we learn from the regional and national efforts in promoting and implementing P/CVE in the ASEAN Member States? What have been key achievements and challenges? What are the key policy recommendations and considerations for P/CVE and the security sector?



How can the gender perspective be incorporated into policy and practices, including risk assessment, as well as the role of civil society and women's organizations in strengthening P/CVE strategies in ASEAN?

By conducting surveys and interviews with key P/CVE experts, stakeholders and practitioners in the ASEAN region, the study seeks to improve knowledge of the current amplification of gender ideology, and how misogyny and hostile beliefs are affecting violent extremist roles, practices and recruitment. Our research found there was a consensus that online intolerant content is dangerous for women in the offline space, and that COVID-19 has resulted in more significant insecurities for women affected by violent extremism, a situation in particular exacerbated by stay-at-home orders and increased engagement in the online space, as well as exposure to misinformation and disinformation regarding the pandemic.

Online behaviour not only has an impact on violent extremist roles, practices and recruitment, but also results in insecurities in the offline space, including increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence. While there were similarities in the ways in which violent extremist groups use propaganda and social media to recruit and radicalize women and men differently and espouse sexist views towards women,

responses from our interviews and surveys showed that this can differ depending on the organization itself, the geopolitical environment in which it operates and the ideology it espouses.

In that sense, misogyny and hostile beliefs towards women were found to play a key role in framing the narrative, participation and roles/duties of both women and men in extremist organizations throughout the ASEAN region. As a result, it is important to consider that while organizations recruit and radicalize women and men in distinct manner, the gender norms prevalent within the espoused ideology can influence processes in different ways and therefore one must caution against a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

The findings of this study can inform current P/CVE policies and programming in the Southeast Asia region. More than half of the expert respondents agreed that the growth of online misogyny and hostile beliefs toward women was not reflected in current P/CVE policies. More P/CVE policies should address the gender dimensions of increasing online radicalization and its impact on both men and women's offline recruitment to violent extremism, paying particular attention to the differences in gender norms espoused in different ideologies throughout the ASEAN region, including ethno-nationalist, far right and communist ideologies.

EXISTING POLICY FRAMEWORKS IN THE ASEAN REGION

C OVID-19 has resulted in changing trends in violent extremism, including in the extent to which misogynistic and hostile beliefs are transmitted through propaganda, through the spread of misinformation and disinformation and through recruitment efforts, including those that justify and legitimize violence against women throughout the ASEAN region. Research exploring the intersection points between online and offline spaces is therefore needed; in particular, we need to understand whether and where misogynistic and sexist dynamics, which manifest themselves online, reinforce gender identity and ideology in offline spaces, thereby justifying violence and hostile beliefs towards women.

This preliminary literature review examines to what degree gender perspectives are already incorporated into regional ASEAN policies and statements on P/CVE, and whether national frameworks – such as NAPs on P/CVE – have incorporated gender perspectives and gender responsive commitments to address misogyny and hostile sexist beliefs that may fuel extremism and justify the use of violence.

1. THE RECOGNITION OF GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE ASEAN REGION

Over the last five years, since the ASEAN Manila Declaration to Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Extremism and the ASEAN Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN,

there has been increasing recognition of the need to integrate gender perspectives into addressing the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism within ASEAN and ASEAN Member States' statements, frameworks and implementation plans.

This includes the recognition that women play a key role in peace processes and in post-conflict settings, and the need to continue to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality – especially

given the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on women and girls in the region, as documented in the [ASEAN Gender Outlook](#) (2021).⁵ ASEAN's Comprehensive Recovery Framework for COVID-19 has prioritized gender mainstreaming and Women, Peace and Security as part of its strategy to strengthen human security in response to COVID-19 and other threats to regional stability and prosperity.

A recent legacy of regional frameworks and policies in the region both acknowledges the importance in preventing violent extremism and terrorism and of resilience and social cohesion. The ASEAN Political and Security Blueprint (2015-2025) set out a vision for a community that 'fully respects the different religions, cultures, and languages of our peoples, upholds common values in the spirit of unity in diversity, as well as addresses the threat of violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations'.

The **2017 Manila Declaration** called for ASEAN Member States to address the threat of violent extremism, in particular:

- 1 to prevent radicalization, financing, recruitment and mobilization of individuals into terrorist groups;
- 2 to consider pursuing de-radicalization in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes as an alternative to punitive measures;
- 3 to undertake capacity-building programmes to educate youth and other vulnerable populations on the impor-

- tance of moderation and
- of the peaceful resolution
- of conflicts.⁶

There was a specific acknowledgement of the role of CSOs, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in collaboration with ASEAN states, which prevents the radicalization process, one that leads to violent extremism and terrorism and to their transnational nature, methods and operations. As part of this declaration, there was the specific commitment to develop an integrated evidence-based approach to address the rise of radicalization and violent extremism, including the empowerment of women and promoting gender equality (Priority 1.5). The Manila Declaration was an important framework as it gave rise to other frameworks such as the Regional Action Plan on PVE and subsequently the Bali Work Plan (2019-2025).

The Manila Declaration mirrored the commitment in **ASEAN Leaders' Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN in 2017**⁷ that expressed concern about the increasing and unprecedented threats posed by conflict, the rise of violent extremism and the increasing number of refugees and displaced persons, including women and children. That WPS statement encouraged the integration of gender perspective in all conflict-prevention initiatives and strategies. It also supported efforts to ensure the full participation of women in peace processes, including building their capacity at the regional, national and local levels.

In 2017 the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious

society⁸ also specifically recognized the prevalence of various forms of violence, including violence against women, children and vulnerable groups, drug abuse, youth crime, hate crime/speech, irresponsible use of media, intolerance and violent extremism in potentially undermining peace and security of society. That ASEAN Declaration further recognized the compelling need to address the root causes of violent extremism and other forms of violence to ensure that the ASEAN community stays united.

At the 12th meeting in October 2018, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) approved the ASEAN Plan of Action (PoA) P/CVE 2018-2025, an outcome of which was to ask the Working Group on Counter Terrorism of the Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) to immediately prepare and submit the Bali Work Plan to both SOMTC and AMMTC.

In 2019, ASEAN Foreign Ministers' **Joint Statement on Promoting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda at the ASEAN Regional Forum** explicitly recognized the WPS agenda and committed to a variety of measures to make progress on the agenda, especially in conflict settings.⁹ Among others, the statement committed to prevent, respond and end all forms of violence, sexual abuse perpetrated in armed conflict settings; protect the rights of women in conflict settings; to engage men and boys in support of women's empowerment; to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a way to address causes of armed conflict; and to support the role of women in promoting culture and peace.

Furthermore, it specifically committed to increase the meaningful participation of



A common desire among ASEAN Member States to strengthen cooperation on preventing and countering the rise of radicalization and violent extremism.



women in the prevention, management and resolution of armed conflict, and post-conflict peacebuilding reconstruction and rehabilitation. This includes building the capacity of women as peacebuilders, including as mediators and negotiators. This was reiterated in the Chairman's Press Statement of the ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Strengthening Women's Role for Sustainable Peace and Security¹⁰ in 2020, where an enhanced role of women in peace processes was called for, such as within conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Between 4-5 April 2019, the BNPT through the Deputy for International Cooperation of the Directorate of Regional and Multilateral Cooperation held an ASEAN Cross-Sectoral and Cross-Pillar Meeting to draw up an ASEAN Work Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (ASEAN PoA PCRVE) 2019-2025 at the Pullman Bali Hotel. This meeting was Indonesia's initiative to develop a *work plan for ASEAN PoA PCRVE 2019-2025*.

The main agenda was to discuss the draft work plan that has been prepared by SOMTC Indonesia.

One of Indonesia's proposals related to the work plan centred on seeking feedback and responses from the meeting participants regarding the need to establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. This was designed for the implementation of the work plan through the Multi-Sectoral Task Force (MTF), which is under the coordination of the SOMTC Working Group on CT and the ASEAN Secretariat. The event was attended by all ASEAN members, where the work plan became the method for Member States to deal with areas related to violent extremism problems jointly, bilaterally, regionally (ASEAN) and multilaterally.

On 7-8 August 2019 the 2nd ASEAN Cross-Sector and Cross-Pillar Meeting for the Preparation of the ASEAN PoA PCRVE 2018-2025 was held at the Shangrila Hotel, Surabaya, Indonesia. The meeting was aimed at discussing inputs from SOMTC member countries and ASEAN Sectoral Agencies/Organizations/Entities which were present at the 1st Meeting on the draft Work Plan of the ASEAN PoA PCRVE 2018-2025, better known as the Draft Bali Work Plan.

The ASEAN PoA PCRVE 2018-2025 demonstrates a common desire among ASEAN Member States to strengthen cooperation on preventing and countering the rise of radicalization and violent extremism. SOMTC Indonesia, as Chair of the Counterterrorism Working Group with the United States Government, held the ASEAN-US Workshop on the Preparation of a National Action Plan for Combating Violent Extremism. The meeting was held as an effort to encourage ASEAN countries

to formulate National Action Plans on countering violent extremism that leads to terrorism (violent extremism), in line with the recommendations of the ASEAN PoA PCRVE.

The implementation of the ASEAN PoA PCRVE was later translated into the Bali Work Plan 2019-2025, the largest multisectoral Work Plan that ever existed in ASEAN. Despite a strong commitment from the United Nations and dialogue partners to support the implementation of Bali Work Plan Work Plan, its implementation has largely been hindered by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant and disproportionate impact on women and girls, particularly noticeable in terms of the increase in the incidence of gender-based violence, loss of employment and economic livelihoods, decreased availability of essential and social services and quality healthcare and heightened risk of infection.¹¹ The Chairman's Press Statement of the ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit¹² in 2020 outlined the Leaders' acknowledgement that the pandemic threatens to reverse hard-won gains achieved in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and welcomed opinions to mitigate the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls, including preventing and combating violence against women and children, especially in times of crisis.

Dealing with terrorism specifically, the **East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Women, Peace and Security**¹³ in 2020 vowed to continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls to address the causes of conflict, such as poverty, discrimination, social injustice and the economic and/or social

exclusion of persons and communities vulnerable to and at risk of instability and terrorism. Importantly, the statement also encouraged the integration of a gender perspective into the workings of their respective international security efforts addressing armed conflict.

In 2021, the **Five-Year Plan of Action between ASEAN and the UN** was published and initiated in the context of COVID-19. Among other strategic priorities, it recognized the necessity to co-operate to combat international terrorism, and to strengthen cooperation on combating transnational crimes and terrorism, foreign fighters, recruitment, terrorist financing and the supply of illicit weapons to terrorist groups. Importantly, the Plan of Action prioritized the WPS Agenda and support to implement the ASEAN Plan of Action P/CVE. It further endorsed cooperation on capacity-building and the sharing of best practices for prevention, investigation and evidence gathering.

This includes the preservation of media and the prosecution of the use of information and communication technologies by terrorists and their supporters, including the internet and social media platforms. The Plan of Action also emphasizes the support for the development and implementation of gender mainstreaming, particularly in relation to mainstreaming gender into data and statistics for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and to promote the exchange of best practices, technical cooperation and capacity-building in social development, gender equality and women's empowerment.

The **ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security**,¹⁴ launched in March 2021, contributed four main findings

when investigating the advancement of the WPS agenda across the ASEAN community pillars and bodies, including ASEAN Member States. The first finding is that localisation of the WPS agenda is occurring in the ASEAN Member States regarding the prevention of violent extremism. But there is scope for this to be scaled up, with the possibility for various action plan initiatives to be developed and monitored in a Regional Plan of Action on WPS among Member States.

The second is women's peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping networks which are nascent developments in the ASEAN region, but gaps exist in security sector leadership and representation in governance. The third is that a WPS lens is increasingly being applied to P/CVE and to non-traditional security issues, although gaps still exist in protection in regard to addressing sexual and gender-based violence in the context of conflict, crisis prevention and conflict prevention. Finally, the ASEAN Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural Community Pillars have all engaged preliminarily with the WPS agenda, establishing a foundation for further regional institutionalization and integration.

ASEAN has recognized the importance of gender-mainstreaming and cross-sectoral collaboration in promoting the WPS agenda throughout the region – including in P/CVE strategies and programmes. This recognition can be built upon in enhancing gender-responsive security, particularly in responding to the threats posed by terrorism. As mentioned, ASEAN has endorsed the necessity of responding to instability and insecurity that conflict poses towards women, and the ASEAN Regional Study on WPS identified that gaps exist in addressing sexual and

gender-based violence in the context of conflict more broadly. Responding to recent and increasing terrorist attacks involving women as perpetrators, various ASEAN Member States have begun to consider implementing localized approaches to integrate gender perspectives into countering and preventing violent extremism efforts and in rehabilitating and reintegrating former violent extremists.

2. LOCALISED APPROACHES IN THE ASEAN REGION

Women play distinct roles in violent extremist organizations, including recruitment, propaganda, fundraising and even committing attacks against their own local communities. However, although women can both passively and actively be involved in violent extremism, they can also be victims of gender-based and sexual violence, which is particularly exacerbated when such organizations espouse misogynistic and hostile beliefs towards women. For example, a 2019 UN Women and Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre study examining Indonesia, the Philippines and Bangladesh found that hostile sexism and support for violence against women were the factors most strongly associated with support for violent extremism.¹⁵

It showed that individuals who support violence against women were more likely to support violent extremism. Positively, ASEAN Member States throughout the region have begun to respond to the need for gender-responsive policies to preventing violent extremism, to recognize that women experience gender-based and sexual violence in conflict, and to acknowledge the importance of gender

mainstreaming and the participation and leadership of women in P/CVE programmes specifically.

2.1 Indonesia

Indonesia is playing a key role in leading the work on P/CVE both at home and in the ASEAN region, with the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) serving as an integral part. The BNPT led the formulation of the NAP P/CVE with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women, and with contributions from other government agencies, CSOs, and academics. In 2021, Indonesia formally adopted the NAP P/CVE, in view of the increasing threat of violent extremism and terrorism within the country.

The NAP P/CVE consists of four pillars:

- 1 prevention (preparedness, counter-radicalization, and protection);
- 2 deradicalization;
- 3 law enforcement and strengthening of legislative frameworks; and
- 4 partnership and international cooperation.

It integrates the principles of gender mainstreaming and child protection and includes CSOs, specifically women's organizations, which have been included in localizing the NAP P/CVE at the provincial level.

The BNPT is playing a key role in the implementation of the NAP P/CVE, including formulating, coordinating and implementing national policies, strategies and programmes for countering terrorism in the fields of national preparedness, counter-radicalization and deradicalization; coordinating between law enforcers in countering terrorism; formulating, coordinating, and implementing national policies, strategies and programmes to counter-terrorism in the field of international cooperation; developing and establishing national policies, strategies and programmes in the field of counter-terrorism; and organizing the coordination of national policies, strategies and programmes in the field of counter-terrorism.

The NAP P/CVE provides the foundations for facilitating the localization of the plan where women's CSOs play a key role in designing and implementing initiatives to prevent violent extremism, both mainstreaming a gender perspective and monitoring implementation.

According to the *ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security*,¹⁶ programmes integrating a gender perspective have begun to be implemented throughout the country. For example, "Peace Villages", implemented across Java, is a community-based initiative that centres on women's leadership and participation in promoting social cohesion and prevention of conflicts, including dialogues to combat intolerance and radicalization at the village level.

These programmes are designed to empower women as agents of peace who can "promote community problem-solving, including interfaith dialogue for conflict prevention."¹⁷

Other CSOs continue to play a key role in training women on counter-terrorism methods, both in the home and in community resilience initiatives. The Working Group on Women and Countering/ Preventing Violent Extremism (WGWC) serves as a national coordinating body to promote dialogue and knowledge-sharing between government officials and civil society leaders regarding gender mainstreaming and P/CVE.¹⁸

WGWC was established over shared concerns on the increasing involvement of women in extremist networks and on the overemphasis on masculinity in P/CVE approaches. WGWC contains representatives from 16 CSOs, ministries and government bodies working in preventing violent extremism.¹⁹

2.2 The Philippines

Similar to Indonesia, in 2019 the Philippines implemented a NAP on P/CVE that not only provides opportunities for women's engagement and participation in security and conflict prevention, but also the Philippines has worked with UN Women to identify more inclusive approaches to P/CVE.²⁰ The NAP consists of a series of gender-specific provisions and, together with expertise from UN Women, it also includes a set of guidelines for their implementation by stakeholders.²¹

Gender-specific provisions are found across six sections that were identified as overall framers contributing to vulnerability towards both radicalization and violent extremism: community; persons deprived of liberty in jails and violent extremist offenders in prisons; religious leaders; learning institutions;

social media users; and overseas Filipino workers and students sent abroad.

These guidelines include deciding who will take the lead in implementing gender-specific provisions among all parties; providing training on the NAP on P/CVE, gender equality and WPS prior to implementation; ensuring that all programmes respond to the factors that drive radicalization; assessing the implications of interventions for women, men and women and male youth; and to ensure that gender-related actions are related to P/CVE.

Moreover, the implementation guidelines stipulate that, where applicable, gender is mainstreamed into policy, capacity development and any newly developed mechanisms; that the pillars of the NAP on WPS are given due consideration in P/CVE; that non-sexist, non-derogatory language is used in reports, training and implementation initiatives; and that inclusion and non-discrimination of women and female youth is operationalized in P/CVE programmes.²²

Important for this study's purpose – one of the six sections of the Philippines' NAP identifies the different effects of social media and online content on women and men, including the online radical narratives that target unhealthy masculinities and/or stereotyped femininities. Specific interventions include generating counter-narratives based on Islamic documents and counter-narratives to unhealthy masculinities or stereotyped femininities that promote radicalization; generating content on websites and social media platforms that highlight stories of religious coexistence, and collaborating with women and men third-party advocates (e.g. religious/traditional leaders and

former violent extremists) to create narratives that counter radicalization and extremism which can be promoted through online channels.²³

3. COMMITMENTS AND RECOGNITION BY OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES

Other countries in the ASEAN region have recognized the role that violent extremism and terrorism poses, including the differences in radicalization, recruitment and participation among women and men. For example, **Malaysia** has recognized that hard-line counter-terrorism approaches are not sufficient to address the terrorism threat in its entirety and that a P/CVE approach is also needed to respond to such threats. Consequently, Malaysia is currently taking initial steps towards the development of a National Plan of Action to Counter and Prevent Violent Extremism (NAPCPVE).²⁴

Thailand and **Cambodia** both have existing broader, conflict resolution mechanisms that recognize the disproportionate effects of conflict on women, and **Brunei** has supported and acknowledged its support of P/CVE both regionally and globally.²⁵ Furthermore, in 2016 **Singapore** adopted the National Cybercrime Action Plan (NCAP)²⁶ which sets out the government's strategy for effectively dealing with cybercrime.

The strategy has four key priorities:

1. educating and empowering the public to stay safe in cyberspace;

- 2 enhancing the government's capacity and capability to combat cybercrime;
- 3 strengthening legislation and the criminal justice framework; and
- 4 stepping up partnerships and international engagement.

While the NCAP does not address the threat posed by violent extremism and online recruitment specifically, it provides the foundations to respond to threats and to create a safe and secure online environment. None of these action plans, however, mainstream a gender perspective as yet. Using Indonesia as a case study, this study provides some key lessons learned from the Indonesian case that could be applicable to other countries within the ASEAN region.

While ASEAN Member States throughout the region have begun to respond to the need for gender-responsive policies to P/CVE programmes and strategies, there is still an under-examination of the specific gendered dynamics that play a key role in radicalization, recruitment and participation, particularly the role of social media, and how misogynistic and hostile beliefs towards women can serve as a dynamic factor in all three processes.

Moreover, COVID-19 has provided opportunities for violent extremist groups to further espouse hate speech and hostile beliefs towards women through online content, which affects participation within the offline space and in the community. In some existing frameworks, violent extremism appears to be integrated into broader conflict prevention strategies, but it is imperative to recognize that radicalization can occur during times of stability, or even in countries that do not experience internal conflict. The implication is that one should be cautious in considering both violent extremism and terrorism as a manifestation of conflict.

Although the Philippines' NAP recognizes the importance of counter-narratives and the role of masculinities and femininities in framing experiences in violent extremism, it is also important to consider that women and men's engagement with both extremist content and organizations themselves differs. Moreover, violent extremists use propaganda and online messaging to espouse misogynistic and hostile views towards women that create insecurities in the offline space, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Based on this review, this study seeks to identify potential entry points for incorporating gender and misogyny considerations into policy and practice – including by risk assessment and by identifying the roles of women-led CSOs and civil society in general in strengthening existing P/CVE strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This research study critically examines the intersection points between online and offline spaces; in particular, whether and where misogynistic and sexist dynamics, which manifest themselves online, reinforce gender identity and ideology in offline spaces, thereby justifying violence and hostile beliefs towards women. We seek to investigate the amplification of virulent gender ideology among violent extremist groups in the Southeast Asian region, including how misogyny and hostile beliefs towards women affect violent extremist roles, practices and recruitment.

Given the changing dynamics of violent extremism during the COVID-19 pandemic, we examine how misogynistic and hostile beliefs are transmitted through propaganda, the spread of misinformation and disinformation and recruitment efforts, including those that justify and legitimize violence against women throughout the ASEAN region.

The methodology informing this study involves a grounded, interpretivist and feminist research methodology and a mixed-method approach specifically designed to investigate and analyse misogynist and sexist narratives espoused by extremist groups.

The study consisted of four key stages. First, the authors conducted a desk review of the current ASEAN regional policy frameworks and of relevant national initiatives to understand the extent to which existing policies are responsive to the gender dynamics of violent extremism, including addressing the role of misogyny and hostile beliefs towards women. This ASEAN desk research and feedback from ASEAN stakeholders informed the research team and the design of the survey instrument. The qualitative research consisted of mixed methods, including traditional methods such as key informant interviews and focus group discussions. These research methods and tools were informed by an inception workshop held on 20 August 2021 via Zoom.

Second, to promote action-oriented and participatory research and to ensure survey tools are responsive to the ASEAN context, a survey was disseminated throughout the ASEAN region through the Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (Monash GPS), Southeast Asian civil society organizations and other regional networks. The survey was carried out between September and October 2021 and disseminated in all 10 ASEAN countries. Our regional research team also disseminated it through their networks in

Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia in particular, identifying known experts at the national, subnational and community level. The survey and interviews with key informants asked key questions to regional experts on violent extremism to ascertain if hostile sentiments espoused are exacerbating insecurities for women.

The survey was made available in English, Bahasa, Thai and Tagalog. We used the Qualtrics platform to facilitate the ease of dissemination and response from home computers, iPads or mobile phone survey options. Qualtrics, one of the most widely used research platforms, supports the implementation of both large-scale survey and experimental study designs. It is administered online with responses gathered into a central and privacy protected database that only the approved researchers have access to.

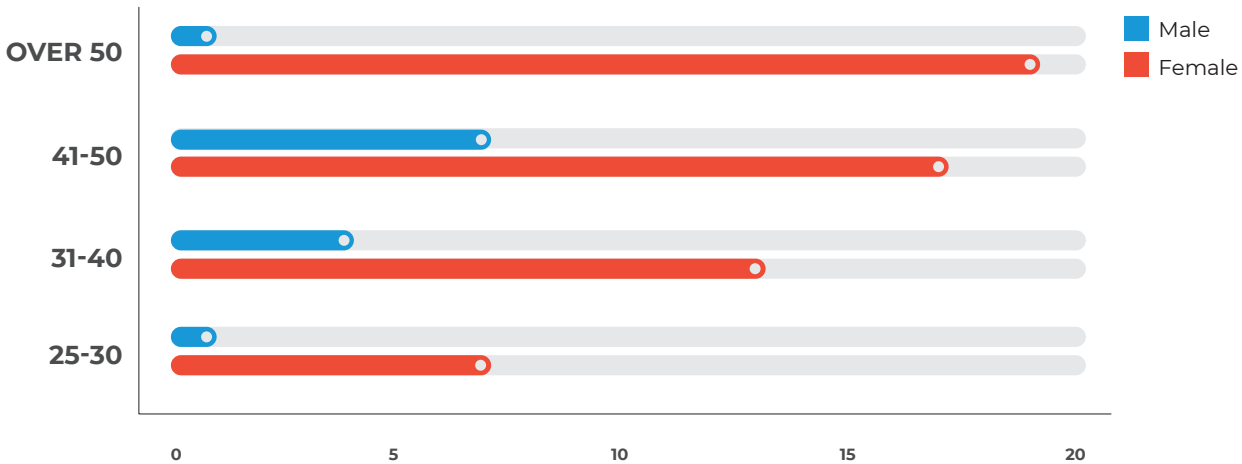
The platform allows for the easy migration of data into various statistical packages, including STATA, the main statistical analysis package that we will use to analyse the data. A limitation of this study is that we were unable to translate the survey in all ASEAN languages, and there is a selection bias in that we are focussing the survey in areas

of the region that most experience violent extremism and terrorism. However, through our networks, where possible, we disseminated the survey throughout all ASEAN countries.

It is important to note the limitations of this six-month study. Although the survey was disseminated among all member states, the majority of expert respondents came from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. While this can be regarded as highly selective rather than representative, it is important to note that Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand are the countries that continue to face the most pressing threat of ongoing violent extremism and conflict.

This is with the exception of Myanmar. Given the current political circumstances and challenges posed by COVID-19, on top of the short project time span, it was unfeasible to include Myanmar within the scope of this study. It is also important to note that the data derived from the surveys and interviews were based on the *perceptions* of experts and key informants, who are involved in peacebuilding, and on P/CVE strategies throughout the region. As a result, it is important to note the subjectivity of responses.

Figure 1: Age by gender of respondents



Although 148 expert responses were received, only 70 were analysed as these surveys had complete information and were filled out in their entirety. Fifty-six respondents identified as female (80%), 13 identified as male (19%), and one respondent preferred not to disclose their gender. Nineteen participants were women who were over 50 years old (34%), and 17 were between 41 and 50 years old (30%). Among males, the largest demographic was seven men between 41 and 50 years old (54%).

In the survey sample, the majority of expert respondents were from Indonesia (46%), followed by the Philippines (26%) and Thailand (19%). Sixty per cent of respondents identified their religion to be Islam and 20% identified as Catholic, with 47.1% of respondents in the sample identifying as “moderately religious” and 21.4% as “very religious”.

The survey consisted of three primary sections. The first consisted of a series of questions pertaining to “gendered recruitment messaging” organized on a Likert scale from “never” to “extremely often” based predominantly on the incitement of violence by extremist actors. The second section consisted of seven qualitative questions asking a respondent to reflect on their experiences and observations regarding how violent extremist groups radicalize and recruit women and men differently, and how misogynistic and hostile beliefs towards women are espoused. Finally, the third section consisted of a series of questions regarding “support for P/CVE” organized on a Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Third, the research team conducted a focus group discussion and key informant interviews in select ASEAN countries to

further explore the survey where there are known violent extremist networks, and with expert ASEAN stakeholders, based on a schedule of semi-structured interviews. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences, observations and research on the links between gender, misogyny and violent extremism. The discussions were designed to investigate the areas of contestation between women and hostile beliefs espoused by violent extremists, including identifying how women are “pushing back” against the gendered ideology, misogyny and views on women espoused by groups in the countries where the participants are based.

The interviews also explored how appeals to toxic masculinities are used to justify and legitimize violence, and whether there is consistency between online and offline channels/sites of radicalization and participation in supporting or challenging gendered dimensions of violent extremism. Furthermore, the purpose of the interviews was to gather data on the degree to which COVID-19 has impacted propaganda, misinformation and disinformation in both the online and offline spaces, specifically as observed by experts, practitioners and stakeholders. Interviews with experts informed how this period has allowed for new opportunities to emerge to promote gender-responsive P/CVE strategies throughout the ASEAN region, and identified the foreseeable challenges to the integration of gender concerns, or ‘Women, Peace and Security’ concerns, in P/CVE policy and practice.

Finally, the survey results were analysed with Stata, and the expert interviews were analysed to triangulate the key themes with the survey findings and descriptive statistical trends, the results of which are presented in the next section.

RESULTS

1.1 INTOLERANT CONTENT ESPOUSED ONLINE

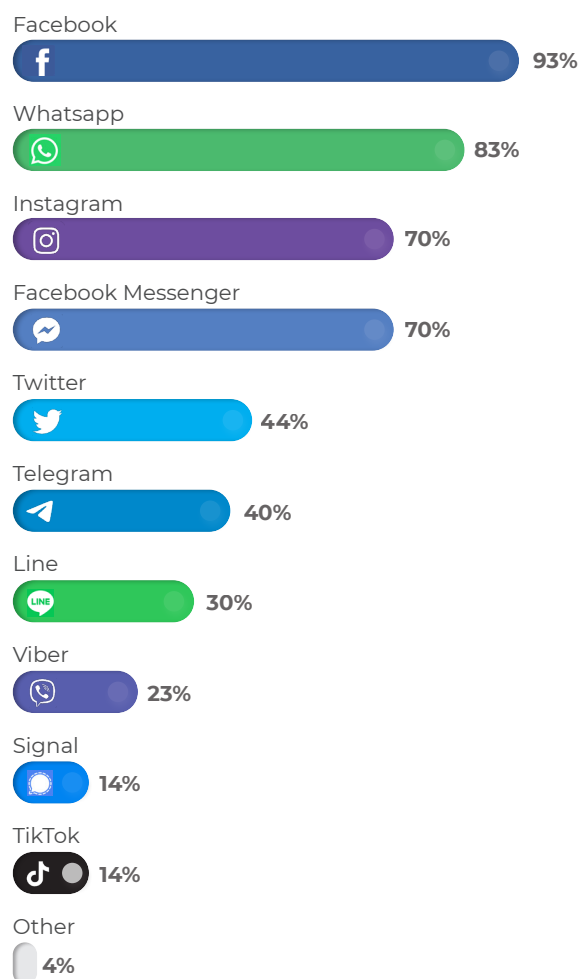
Our research indicates a growing concern that violent extremist groups throughout the ASEAN region are espousing and transmitting violent messages online, including leveraging the COVID-19 pandemic crisis through online propaganda to radicalize, recruit and mobilize group membership.

Our survey asked participants about their social media usage, and how often they observed intolerant content posted on social media. Facebook was the social media platform most used by the respondents, followed by WhatsApp and Instagram. Most of the people surveyed (27.1%) responded that they utilized five social media types (both content and messaging apps) from the list provided.

Respondents were asked how often they have observed intolerant content posted on social media. When asked about intolerant content posted on social media, 44% of respondents identified that they had “always” or “very often” seen intolerant content, with a further 44% stating they had sometimes seen this content. Although Twitter was not among

the top three social media platforms used in the sample, among its users it was the platform that most observed this type of content (61%).

Figure 2: Most Preferred Social Media Platforms



The survey asked participants how often they saw social media content (e.g. posts,

tweets, videos) inciting violence towards religious minorities, ethnic minorities, the LGBTI community, and women and girls. Forty-four per cent of respondents had “sometimes” seen extremist social media content inciting violence towards religious minorities, with 31% seeing this content “very often”.

Both men and women acknowledged that they had “sometimes” seen this content on social media (62% and 41%, respectively). Indonesia was the country from which most respondents had viewed this content “very often” (50%). When collapsing the “always” and “very often” categories, 41% of Instagram users had often seen intolerant content, followed by 36% of WhatsApp users and 34% of Facebook users. Among the Twitter users in the sample, 48% had seen intolerant content towards religious minorities.

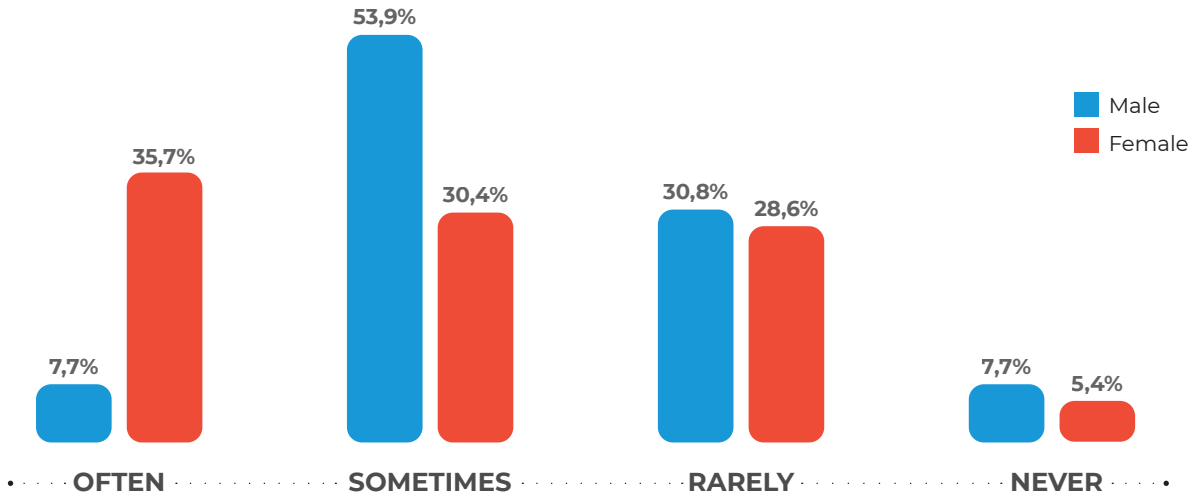
When asked about how often social media content was inciting violence towards ethnic minorities, 46% of respondents had “sometimes” seen this type of extremist social media content inciting violence towards ethnic minorities whereas only 27% have seen this content rarely or never. Women have seen such content more frequently than men (90%), and Indonesia was the country from which most

respondents had seen this content “very often” (58%). Users of Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram acknowledged that they had seen this content “very often” (26%, 31% and 35% respectively).

Thirty-nine per cent of respondents acknowledged that they had “sometimes” seen social media content inciting violence towards the LGBTI community. Women saw this type of content more frequently than men (84%), and Indonesia was the country from which more respondents saw this content with a higher frequency (53% saw such content “always” and “very often”). Participants in the survey observed intolerant content directed towards the LGBTI community. For example, one participant from the Philippines observed that,

“There were instances when women were humiliated in public and on social media after they were labelled as part of the LGBTQ+ community. The comments on posts regarding them were mostly commending their public humiliation (cutting their hair) instead of condemning the act”.

Figure 3: Frequency of viewing extremist social media inciting violence toward women and girls



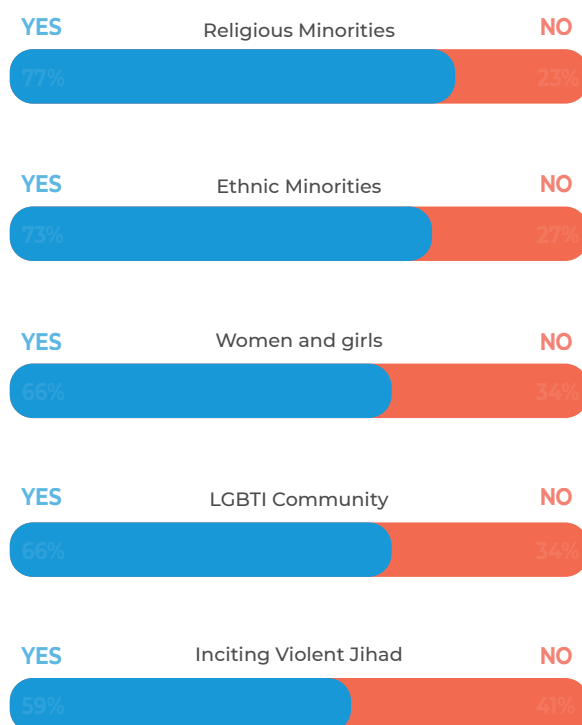
Concerningly, 31% of respondents had “always” and “very often” seen extremist social media content inciting violence towards women and girls, and an additional 34% had “sometimes” seen content inciting violence against women and girls.

More than half, or 55%, of the respondents from Indonesia and 27% of respondents from Thailand have “always” or “very often” seen this content on social media, and women have observed this content more “often” than men. Most of the Facebook users in the sample “rarely” or “never” saw this content on the platform, but WhatsApp and Instagram users had seen this content more often (“always” and “very often”) than less often (“rarely” and “never”).

Survey participants were also asked about how often they observed extremist social media content inciting violent jihad: 43% of respondents acknowledged that they had “sometimes” observed extremist social media content inciting this type of violence, although only 16% had seen this content with a higher frequency (“always” and “very often”). Among those respondents who had “sometimes” seen this content inciting jihad on social media, most were from the Philippines.

A total of 46.6% of respondents from Indonesia had “rarely” or “never seen” content inciting violent jihad online. However, there were also observations made by survey respondents that violent jihad was actually justified based on gender dynamics. For example, one participant from the Philippines observed seeing a Facebook post “saying that the Marawi Siege happened because the previous Governor was a woman, so the City was cursed by God”.

Figure 4: Frequency of viewing intolerant content inciting violence in social media against certain groups



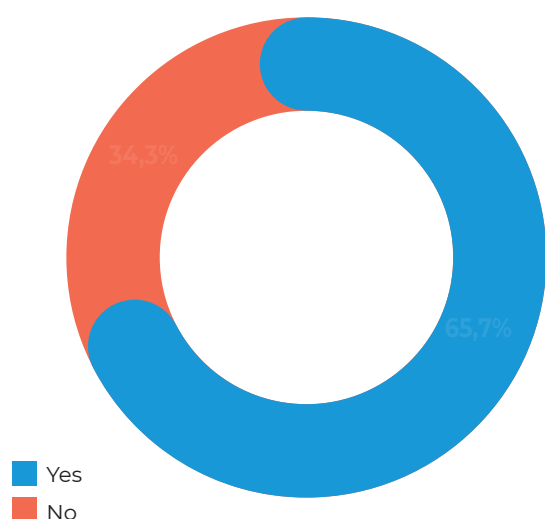
When grouping the options “always”, “very often” and “sometimes” to “yes”, the survey results revealed that 77% of participants had observed intolerant content inciting violence against religious minorities, and 73% against ethnic minorities. Intolerant content inciting violence against women and girls and against the LGBTI community was observed by 66% of respondents, whereas inciting violent jihad had only been observed by 41% of the sample.

1.2 EFFECTS OF INTOLERANT ONLINE CONTENT ON THE OFFLINE SPACE

Thirty-one per cent of respondents acknowledged that they had observed violent extremist groups attempting to recruit members through social media “sometimes” or “very often”. Of the respondents who had observed

this content “very often”, 71% were from Indonesia and 28.6% were from Thailand. When asked about how often participants had heard of groups expressing the importance of men accompanying women when travelling to conflict zones, more respondents had heard this message with a higher frequency (“always” or “very often”, 37.1%) than those who had rarely or never heard it (34%). Forty-six per cent of respondents from Indonesia heard this message with a higher frequency, followed by the Philippines (38%) and Thailand (15%). When grouping the answer options of “always”, “very often” and “sometimes”, 66% of respondents said they had heard groups stress the importance of women being accompanied by men when travelling to conflict areas.

Figure 5: Importance of a male guardian accompanying women when travelling to conflict zones



In the second part of the survey, using a five-point Likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”, participants were presented with a series of statements regarding how worried they were about intolerant content being espoused in the offline space by violent ex-

tremist groups. Most respondents (77%) agreed (combining both “strongly agree” and “agree”) that they were worried about intolerance in their communities, particularly respondents from Indonesia and the Philippines. Almost all respondents in the sample (93%) agreed that they were worried about violent extremism in their countries. This appeared to be a general concern among both men and women as 85% of men and 95% of women agreed that they were concerned.

Significantly, 89% of respondents agreed that religious extremism would impede women’s rights. Half of the participants in Indonesia agreed they were concerned that religious extremism would hamper women’s rights, 27% in Philippines and 16% in Thailand. Both men (84.6%) and women (89.2%) expressed their concerns on this issue. Furthermore, 91% of respondents agreed that religious extremism prioritizes men’s rights over women’s rights – 93.1% of women strongly agreed with the statement compared to 6.90% of men.

For example, one interviewee from Indonesia observed that the teachings of extremism have entered schools, such as high schools, and have also begun to penetrate student organizations. She observed that the teachings “spread from the Middle East, bringing misogynistic teachings towards women as part of their subjugation strategy”. She acknowledged that it was part of the organizational strategy where women appeared to look empowered:

“However, this is just manipulation; behind it is the practice of misogyny, women’s consciousness, their bodies and minds are controlled, even though

they look rigid and militant - their job is to serve. They are militant because of the lure of heaven. They (women who participate in jihadist/ extremist organizations) appear to be active in carrying out the agenda, but it is not based on their awareness. This is just conquest because they are active in politics and carry out the agenda, not for themselves, but for the organization."

One participant from the Philippines recounted that:

"Facebook has proven to be an effective tool, especially in today's world where Facebook is the 'Internet' for most people. I always see misogynist and sexist remarks towards women, especially from friends who label themselves as religious and strict 'followers' of Islam. Harassment also fills the comment sections of these so-called friends, particularly on women's ability to lead. The majority of those orthodox Muslim individuals generally agree that women are not entitled to hold the leadership or the topmost public office – whether in a nation or university setting.

"Many people argue with me because the hadith (record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) on female leadership says: 'A people which has a woman as a leader will never prosper'. On the other hand, the debate over women's rights and Islam is often politicized and riddled with stereotypes. They take passages with overtly misogynist

overtones out of context and use them to support their claims. One of the bigger issues is that religious movements tend to view texts as static documents which cannot undergo any revision over time."

Another participant from the Philippines wrote that:

"Too often, most religious male individuals I know, who practice and preach their religion, hold sexist and misogynistic views towards women. As a feminist, my life's work has been informed by the belief that religion and culture must never be used to justify the subjugation of women".

Comparatively, 93% of women "strongly agreed" that they were worried that misogynistic and hostile beliefs espoused by extremist groups result in violence towards women compared to 7% of men. Eighty-six per cent of those surveyed agreed that there is a close link between what is espoused online by violent extremist groups and its influence on offline behaviour. Of concern, almost all respondents in the sample agreed (94%) with the fact that intolerant content posted online is dangerous for women in the offline space. All men in the survey agreed with the statement, as did 93% of women.

Our informant interviews provided deeper insights into the implications of the link between online and offline behaviour. In Indonesia, the relations between online and offline dynamics were recognized among participants. One interviewee from Indonesia spoke of the case of Zakiah

Aini “ZA”²⁷ who opened fire on officers at the national police headquarters. Prior to storming the headquarters, “ZA” had posted her will letter on Instagram demonstrating how she was attracted to online ideas perpetrated by the online propaganda of a jihadist group.

Furthermore, an interviewee from Indonesia outlined that:

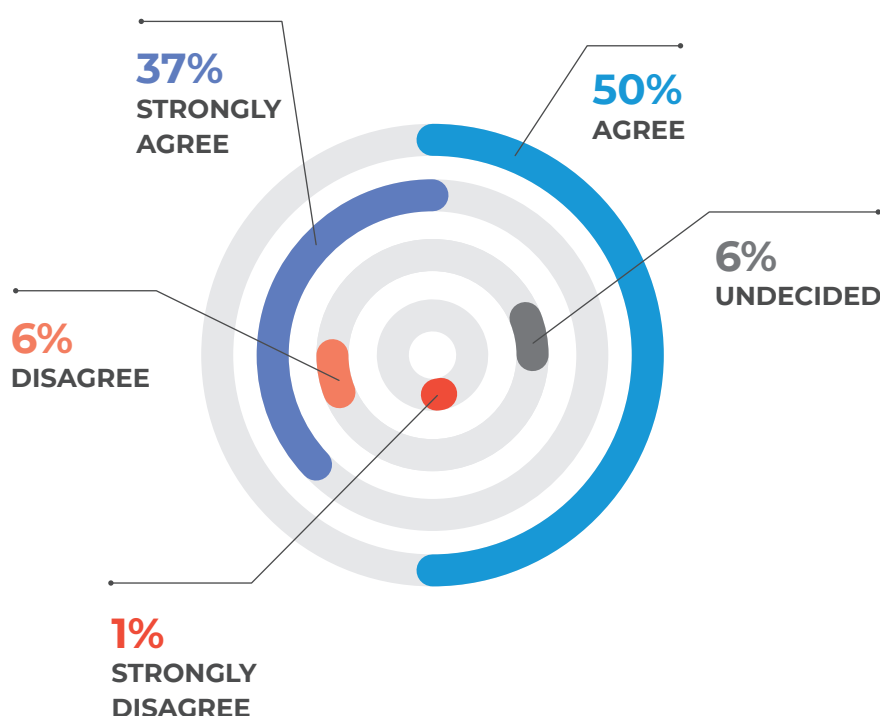
“The polygamy campaign on social media is also quite influential in regard to social trends among hijra groups. Pro-polygamy narratives are usually discussed in line with narratives of gender conservatism, such as the role of women being only in the domestic sphere, control of women's bodies, and religious narratives are used to dehumanize women.

Gender conservatism campaigns on social media affect action in the real world. For example, (we see this in) the emergence of offline mentoring for polygamy, the massive migration movement and the trend of violence against women under the guise of spiritual teachers.”



When specifically asked about whether they were concerned that violent extremist groups espouse misogynistic and hostile beliefs towards women, 87% of expert respondents agreed, with more than half of the respondents being from Indonesia (51%). Eighty-two per cent of women and 16% of men agreed that they were concerned.

Figure 6: Respondents' reaction to the statement, “I am concerned that violent extremist groups espouse misogynistic and hostile beliefs towards women.”



As revealed in the qualitative responses in the third part of the survey, much of the hostile sexism and misogynist views were observed in terms of women's roles in society and controlling the way the women dress and behave. For example, a participant from the Philippines observed that:

“Families in Lanao del Sur, especially Muslim ones, are very patriarchal in nature. Within their homes, women are always just seen as a “housewife,” no more, no less. The Quran explicitly commands women to stay in their homes. I have seen a lot of these posts, quoting the said Quran verse to confine women to their home”.

A participant from Indonesia observed an extremist group that “heavily criticizes how women dress up and how they should abide by what the husband deems is right for them through pictures with comments”. Another participant from the Philippines observed that “extremists encourage women to join the extremists' cause by making them believe that they will be more empowered as a woman and at the same time be better servants of Allah if they support the ideology and beliefs of these extremists”.

An interviewee from Indonesia recounted that,

“I recall a moment with the promotion of the Draft of Law of Eradicating Sexual Violence (RUU-PKS), which regularly becomes the trending topic. It immediately raises harsh

criticisms, predominantly from Islamic radical groups, arguing that the law is the product of western feminism and will liberate women tremendously. Regrettably, a Muslim women lecturer delivered one of the criticisms on Instagram and Facebook by inviting the public to sign a petition to deactivate the process of legalizing the Draft. She falsified the Draft as if it was in support of free sex, legal abortion and legal prostitution. Eventually, the post was withdrawn and deemed a hoax by the Ministry of Communication and Information.

“Meanwhile, much of the public still recalls the video on Instagram regarding the forced headscarf regulation for a non-Muslim female student in a public vocational high school in Padang, West Sumatera. Despite the school's principal's clarification against the video, this event indicates the violation of Indonesians' religious rights secured legally in the State Constitution of 1945.”

Furthermore, a human rights defender for victims of conflict from southern Thailand expressed in an interview that:

“(The) Muslim community here does not cast eyes on what we wear or with whom we go outside. But I also got criticized by those people, as you can see on the media and news, who do not like to see women questioning the role of government. They do not want to see people stand up and fight for civil rights and justice.

They drew a caricature of me and accused me of taking separatist stance... and committing treason against Thailand. They said I am a national enemy. I should be kicked out from this country.”

This was corroborated by another interviewee from southern Thailand that explained that:

“There are still several issues that are strongly against women’s agency and participation as leaders, that is in faith-based organizations, and in this context, women do not have much space to speak out and think differently. In terms of decision-making in various dimensions, it turns out to be the duty of men again. So, this is not a balanced sense of a woman’s self-worth, of the right to work ,although women still must work hard to help the family earn income.”

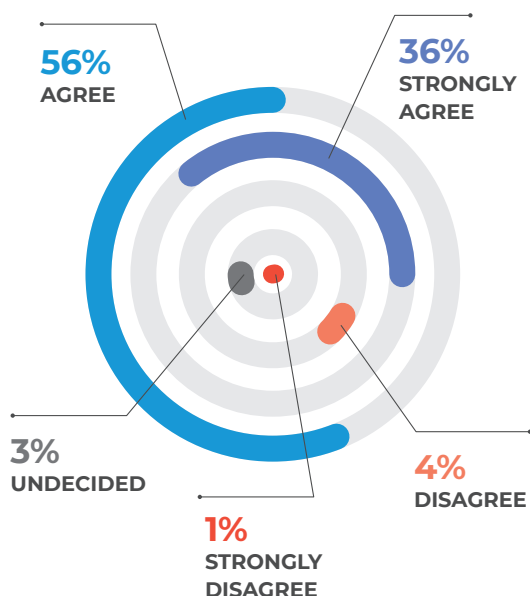
Interestingly, however, misogynistic and hostile beliefs espoused by extremist groups can also affect intragroup dynamics as well. For example, an interviewee from Indonesia recounted from their own observations in 2009 that there was a case of a woman involved in Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) who willingly offered herself up as a suicide bomber, but was rejected by Noordin M Top because it was “uncommon that women in Indonesia conducted this kind of act”, that it was “not a woman’s world”, and that such an act “was not only prohibited in Islam but also according to JI’s organizational laws”.

When asked whether misogynistic and hostile beliefs espoused by extremist groups result in violence towards women, almost all the respondents in the sample (91.4%) agreed that they were concerned, which presents a very clear finding and correlation. Fifty per cent of those who agreed with the statement were from Indonesia and 27% from the Philippines. This is a general concern among men and women since 92.3% of males and 91.1% of females agreed they were concerned.

An interviewee from Indonesia observed that:

“For me, conservative, intolerant and extremist groups are united in hating the ideology of gender equality. There is no extremist group that supports the ideology of equality between women and men...in the context of narrative forms and strategies, violent extremist (groups) always see women as saviours, or the cause of conditions that are considered morally not ideal. For example, in issues related to sexual violence, extremist groups will always attribute the causes of all acts of violence to women’s attributes and clothing. Some examples are the intolerant narratives that appear when responding to (actress) Nikita Mirzani’s comments in regard to Habib Rizieq, a verbal attack ensued that women are hell with the discourse in question involving swear words relating to women’s parts.”

Figure 7: Respondents' reaction to the statement "I am worried that misogynistic and hostile beliefs espoused by extremist groups result in violence towards women."



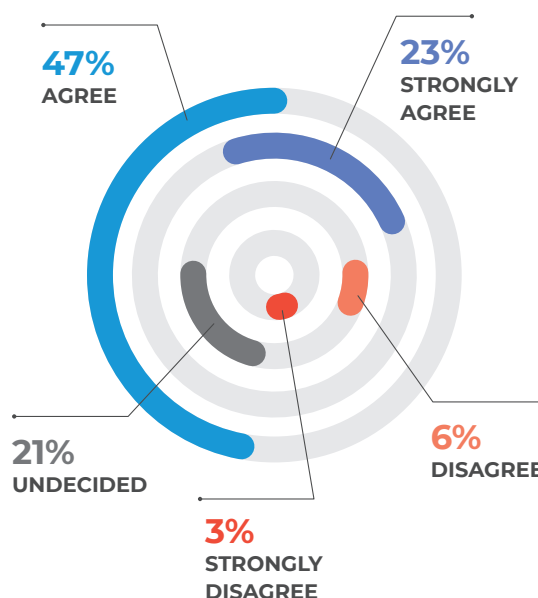
During the COVID-19 pandemic, 70% of respondents agreed that online radicalization and the proliferation of extremist propaganda had increased. Altogether, 76.9% and 92.9% of women agreed with the statement.

One interviewee from Indonesia noted that:

"COVID has managed to restrict direct meetings to disseminate propaganda, misinformation and disinformation through most government's large-scale restrictions to prevent the virus' spread. However, the tendency to utilize online space to disseminate these has increased since the use of online activities is mandatory in various sectors, such as working and education. Most people certainly use online platforms to disseminate false information

regarding the outbreak, as well as radical ideas targeted at people, including recruiting them as a part of groups."

Figure 8: Respondents' view to the statement, "Online radicalization and the proliferation of extremist propaganda has increased during COVID-1".



Another interviewee from Indonesia observed that:

"(Based on my experience), during 2020-2021 one of the interesting things has been the impact of misinformation and disinformation related to COVID, affecting people's views and attitudes in responding to, preventing and handling of (the virus). At the beginning of the Indonesian government's policy on limiting religious activities in places of worship, this issue caused a strong, adverse reaction among extremist groups, giving rise to a narrative that the

“government hated Islam. This has an impact on the reaction of traditional and conservative communities causing them to distrust government policies on the handling of COVID.”

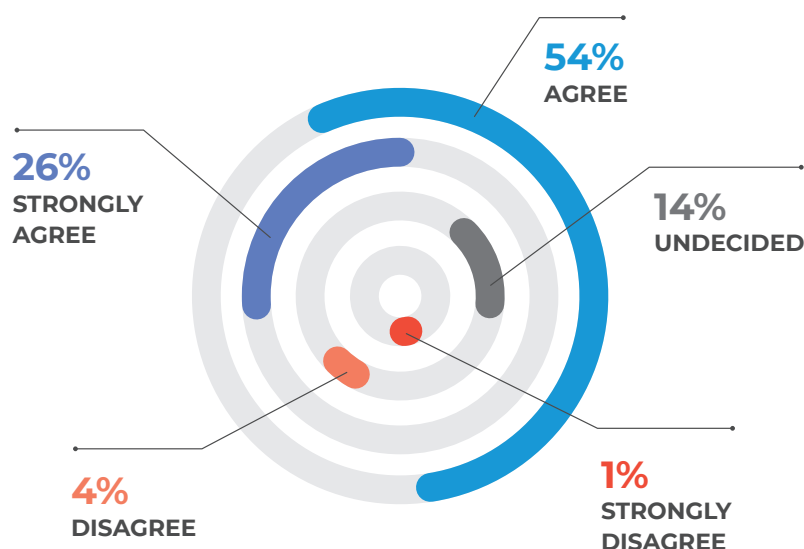
Furthermore, 80% of respondents agreed that COVID-19 has resulted in more significant insecurities for women affected by violent extremism. For example, in Poso, Indonesia, there have been at least four acts of violence committed by the East Indonesia Mujahideen group, led by Ali Kalora, in Gunung Biru during the COVID-19 pandemic (IPAC, 2020b:5–6). Wives of terrorism convicts, who are being detained and those who are widowed because their husbands died as a result of violent extremism activities, have been most affected. Both groups of women have been targeted and exploited by men to support or to partake in acts of extremism.

Moreover, propaganda that associates masculine charisma and herodom

with terrorist acts is promoted online and during the offline funeral rites of terrorists in this region. Young men are encouraged to march to the graves to partake in this masculine rite of passage. Interviews with experts show that efforts to prevent such negative masculine roles and propaganda by women is challenging and women’s organizations require greater support to reach out to these women. Preventing more women from entering the circle of extremism is not only a task of the government, but of civil society organizations, which may be more effective in this sensitive context.

The survey also asked about the recent return to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan in August 2021, given its coincidence with the survey, including views espoused by Southeast Asian extremist groups online. Eighty per cent of respondents agreed that the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan has increased the risk of violent extremism and hostile and misogynist beliefs toward women espoused by groups. More than half of these respondents (52%) were from Indonesia.

Figure 9: Respondents’ view to the statement, “COVID-19 has resulted in greater insecurities for women affected by violent extremism.”



1.3 Gendered recruitment

As previously mentioned, our survey asked participants how often they had directly observed violent extremist groups attempting to recruit members through social media. A total of 68.6% of respondents had “rarely” or “never” seen extremists attempt to overtly recruit individuals through online platforms, with only 31.4% only observing this content “sometimes” or “very often”. The respondents who observed this content “very often” were from Indonesia (71.4%) and Thailand (28.6%).

This lower observation frequency is unsurprising, as participants in our interviews (including one participant from Malaysia who works in this space) documented and observed how violent extremist groups tended to recruit covertly through messaging apps, or after developing relationships and trust with potential members over time. However, some respondents commented on how they had observed recruitment into violent extremist groups. For example, a participant from Indonesia observed that “violent extremist groups would offer unmarried women potential partners with a strong religious knowledge and commitment so that they can protect women. VE groups would offer unmarried man a potential partner, or for those who already married, they could obtain other wives”.

An interviewee from Indonesia outlined that from their observations, women’s participation in violent extremism also differed among organizations, which they observed when examining JI and ISIS. They observed:

“The old guards of JI are still thinking of a woman as being fit for child-bearing – just for biological purposes. They have a very traditional mindset. In this regard, both the role of women in violent extremism and victimization of women, when it comes to JI, is not very pronounced. Women are still being used (strategically) in a traditional manner, whether for strategic intermarriage purposes to bear a child, or as an accessory of violent extremism, where they’re hiding their husband or keeping the organization’s secrets...(but) in ISIS-related groups, their Telegrams are more vibrant. They have their own focus group discussions in Telegram about the role of women, which was very active between 2017 to 2019.

“It’s very different, in Indonesia, where there is a more pronounced role of women as perpetrators. The victimization of women has also become more pronounced. Within Telegram groups, they have started accusing each other of being spies, they have started to threaten each other...now they have similar dynamics as the groups that used to be dominated by males, or are exclusively male. Now they use the same kind of language (as males) when they’re talking about “jasus”, who’s spying on whom, and then threatening to kill them. So I think those are the two different dynamics.”

Another participant from the Philippines observed that:

“Women are direct recruiters; they know how to engage people through discussions; they choose attractive women to recruit other women as they understand their needs and use persuasive language that is effective in empowering women. Empowered women lead people, but empowerment means carrying guns like men and shouting ‘Allahu Akbar’”.

Commenting on their research on Aceh, an interviewee from Indonesia also spoke about the ways in which involvement in militant groups could be seen as a form of empowerment. She spoke about how unmarried women could easily participate within the movement, because they did not have things to worry about, or children to take care of. However, she also mentioned that the idea of becoming a protector of a family, community or nation can attract women to participate and serves as a “pull factor”.

She pointed out that women in this category like to adopt more masculine roles, including within the religious space. She noted that, “when I talked with women fighters in Aceh, they say that they are happy joining the movement where they can carry a gun and wear a uniform. They feel like men in the sense that they can bring security to the community”.

But another participant from the Philippines noted that they had observed “propaganda of fake disappearances or abuses against Muslim women in a non-Muslim area to make it appear that abuse

and discrimination exists in order to gain sympathy from prospective recruit targets”, and “in Lanao del Sur their violent extremist narrative is that our Muslim women were previously raped and killed by Philippine security personnel”. This is a common pattern whereby fear threats and/or unverified reports of sexual and gender-based violence are used by violent extremist groups to radicalize and gain sympathy for their cause.²⁸

However, both expert survey respondents and interviewees observed the nexus between online propaganda and radicalization mechanisms, and how this is manifested in the offline space.

An interviewee from Indonesia outlined how they had observed violent extremist groups attempting to radicalize women and men differently, and how this translated offline:

“They radicalize and recruit women and men, including youth, in various ways. In past periods, they used to recruit them by inviting them to some sermons with Quran recitals in groups. The sermons comprised relevant advice on participating more actively to enforce Allah’s law in the world, starting from a discussion comparing the State’s and Allah’s law and the need for a serious commitment to Allah’s law in all life’s spheres, based on the holy Quran. It eventually led to jihad in terms of battling against the different religious groups or those Muslims who tended not to enforce Allah and the holy Quranic laws...

“...(however), the digital era brings another new radicalization trend by recruiting new members

through social media. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp are the types of social media most violent extremist groups use to share their radical religious ideas. These media networks potentially expose the youth predominantly by sharing ideas adjusted to their daily life, for example the issue of dating (yes or no), the ideal relation between boys and girls. In the end, their goal is to introduce them to be engaging radically through participating in real extremist groups, such as ISIS. They are introduced to the perfect image of life under the Khalifah (Caliphate) system regarding the economy and betterment of other lives”.

Another interviewee provided a specific example of how women in one extremist organization spread their teachings both online and through on-site recruitment as part of the movement’s agenda. She explained that:

“They started with small economic empowerment promotional activities for women. After that, religious (Quranic) recitations were established, memberships created. They were greeted with these recitations, to which children’s activities like colouring were sometimes added. Finally, parents became sympathetic and fell for the cause, they joined the recital group and also sent their kids immediately to attend recitations.

1.4 Contestation and Pushback

The study had some evidence of how women and men are contesting violent extremism and how women are coping or pushing back differently than men.

In an interview with an Indonesian expert, it was mentioned that some young women have joined collective efforts to discuss and reflect on how violent extremist ideology has altered individuals’ behaviour, leading to their exclusion and othering of people with different religious or cultural backgrounds. These discussion forums have created new spaces for young women to critically examine their questions and concerns regarding Islam and social relations between women and men, and also to discuss everyday topics like movies and fashion.

Women leaders have been pushing back on violent extremist ideology through Wahid Foundation’s programmatic approach to religious tolerance. This approach promotes gender equality values through high school student organizations that involve both male and female student members of “Rohis” or “Rohani Islam” (“The Spirit of Islam”).

At the community level in Indonesia, the Peace Village programme aims to break the chain of radicalism through economic empowerment and community education. Sixteen ‘peace villages’ in East Java, Central Java and West Java train community members to create an early detection system so that women and men alike can assess the potential for radicalism in their environment. They seek to build a gender-inclusive dialogue space between community members and to create mutual tolerance towards fellow community members. Each of the 16 ‘Damai’ villages has established a mechanism to detect and respond early on to the threats of social conflict in the community, especially those related to preventing violence against women and children, as well as preventing intolerance, radicalism and violent extremism.

The vulnerability of women to religious conservatism and recruitment by extremist groups is being discursively challenged through the concept of “Reformist Muslimah,” put forward by Professor Musdah Mulia. This is an important development that has the potential to grow women’s participation in P/CVE roles. In her book, “The Encyclopaedia of Reformed Muslim Women: Points of Thought for Reinterpretation and Action,” Mulia emphasizes that it is not enough for Muslim women to be moderate, they must also be progressive actors, engaged in the promotion of peace and conflict prevention.

This concept draws on the teachings on women’s leadership of Tawhid in Islamic law and history that goes beyond motherhood and connects feminism to Islam. In Mulia’s view, Muslim women should not be fixated on Islamic symbols since religious identity tends to be exploited by political and economic opportunists. Politically, symbols that are part of religious identity are often used to gain mass support which can lead to acts of intolerance, while, economically, these symbols may be commodified and exploited by capitalists in the name of religion. From this perspective, Mulia advocates that Muslim women’s activism should be based on the protection of human rights, democracy and religion.

One female interviewee from Indonesia recounted that:

“Women’s groups have various strategies to fight misogynist ideology. Islamic and general urban communities have emerged trying to build alternative narrative campaigns with a more inclusive perspective of gender equality and religious

ideology. On the other hand, there is also awareness among moderate religious organizations about optimizing sectoral assembly spaces to raise equality and ‘friendly Islam’ issues. Nevertheless, the challenge among moderate groups is to raise moderate Islamic narratives by specifically targeting urban groups.

“Inclusive Islamic campaigns against extremist groups are still primordial/sectoral. However, it is also important that young people today are quite independent and do not want to be affiliated with certain mass organizations. Examples of the emergence of misogynistic narrative resistance movements from the Islamic community are through (programmes) like Muslimah for Change, Muslimah Reformis, Mubadalah, Bincang muslimah, Muslimah Feminis, among others”.

Another male interviewee, a digital literacy advocate and expert from a moderate religious organization, asserted that moderate Muslim youths in Indonesia, who had been joining moderate pondok pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), were basically ‘immune’ towards extreme religious ideologists, noting that this was because pupils were studying with ulema who did not condone extremism. He also believed that, in reality, the majority of Muslims in Indonesia were moderates, and practicing (religious) moderation was important to resist extremism:

“In the Indonesian context, Indonesians have excellent resiliency regarding the domestication of women. Why? Because since childhood, they have been living in a moderate environment,

a more open culture: they see their mothers working, having careers like doctors, teachers, peasants, meaning they already have ingrained more egalitarian gender perspectives. Thus, the conservative extremist groups need to make “extra efforts” to alter/ influence Indonesian youths”

Experts from the Philippines participating in the study shared promising information about engagements with women in the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and how women participated in violent extremism, both as true believers in the ideology and as relatives, and were increasingly contesting violent extremism as the pathway for their families and communities. Community programmes with the ASG widows aim to address the drivers of women's participation by providing leadership empowerment and skills training for the 40 widows of ASG specifically, in partnership with the military. As a result of the tailored programming, the numbers of violent extremists surrendering has been increased to over 300 in the Sulu region.

1.5 Existing P/CVE policies

Our study also asked what we have learned thus far from the regional and national efforts in promoting and implementing P/CVE in the ASEAN Member States, and what have been the key achievements and challenges. As previously noted, a key achievement among some Member States – specifically Indonesia and the Philippines, has been the commitment and implementation of NAPs on preventing and countering violent extremism. It is also evident that ASEAN Member States have begun to respond to the need for gender-responsive policies to P/CVE programmes and strategies,

despite an under examination of the specific gendered dynamics that play a key role in radicalization, recruitment and participation.

Some frameworks – such as the Philippines NAP- recognizes the importance of counter-narratives and the role of masculinities and femininities in framing experiences in violent extremism. However, it is also important to consider that women and men's engagement with both extremist content and organizations themselves differs. Violent extremists use propaganda and online messaging to espouse misogynistic and hostile views towards women, creating insecurities in the offline space, including sexual and gender-based violence. COVID-19 has provided opportunities for violent extremist groups to further espouse hate speech and hostile beliefs towards women through online content, which can affect the offline space and tensions within the community.

Participants were asked to reflect on how effective gender-sensitive and gender-responsive existing P/CVE policies currently are, taking into account the concerns surrounding how violent extremism affects women and men, a trend clearly reflected in the study. Out of the sample, 46% of respondents agreed that existing prevention and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) policies reflected the diverse experiences of women and men in violent extremism, with 46% of men and 46% of women agreeing with the statement.

However, only 26% of participants agreed that existing P/CVE policies adequately address misogynistic and hostile beliefs espoused towards women by violent extremist groups. In fact, 50% of the

respondents disagreed that existing policies adequately address misogynistic and hostile beliefs towards women, and 48% who disagreed were from Indonesia.

One interviewee from Indonesia noted that:

“So far in Indonesia, no specific study has been undertaken that analyses the diverse experiences from each actor’s perspective – women, men and youth. In moderate groups, who are active against extremist narratives, few have come up with gender equality narratives against the misogynistic ones. But their approach is still very masculine, which creates resistance and is less persuasive to the public. Moreover, the polarisation is getting stronger between the two camps, namely the moderate and the conservative group. The CVE strategy in Indonesia is very important, initiated with a mapping approach of youth, women and men actors. Therefore, the intervention is designed to be more specific, and the treatment modes are designed according to the actors.”

Importantly, 90% of respondents agreed that misogynistic and hostile views towards women espoused online by violent extremist groups pose a **significant risk** to women's security in the real world.

Participants in the survey provided strong recommendations for how existing prevention or countering strategies can be more reflective of the diverse experiences of women and men in violent extremism, including dealing with misogynistic and

hostile beliefs towards women. Some of these examples include:

“Most P/CVE strategies should involve more narratives of women who were formerly involved with extremist organizations, or of those who were at the receiving end of misogynistic and hostile beliefs towards them. It should be supported further by leaders in the community and organizations that support women” (participant from the **Philippines**).

“We think that the existing P/CVE strategies by the government are very general and do not focus on grassroots peacebuilding. We believe that empowering the communities, especially women, to talk about their concerns, bring up their issues, directly to the agencies accountable, is a way for us to bridge the government and the communities – thus leading to peace. The current P/CVE strategies must be able to bring government programmes closer to the communities, and communities have to be able to know how to access these programmes. This will lead to higher accountability for government agencies, and decrease the vulnerability of these communities in terms of being recruited by violent extremist groups” (participant from the **Philippines**).

“Elevate strategies from merely “countering” to “transforming”. Countering is not peacebuilding. It is the mandate of government, but not of peacebuilders. Peacebuilders “transform” conflict situations. By doing so, these strategies become more reflective of our human experiences” (participant from the **Philippines**).

“PVE approaches should be family-based, context-based and locally-based, but nationally supported, thereby addressing the multi-layered sources that enable grievances, poverty, continuing marginalization and even ideas transformed into VE. A kind of whole-nation approach. PVE approaches have to critically confront the link between women empowerment and VE” (participant from the **Philippines**).

“When we talk about P/CVE we often talk about the individual themselves, such as when they have been released and rehabilitated. (But) it is important to look at the impact on the rest of their families – this area is not highlighted much. We focus on the rehabilitation of the person that was arrested, and do not consider that the biggest impact is actually on the families of those that were arrested. (We need to) consider children and family


more, as well as the individual's community” (participant from **Malaysia**).

“Effective social media campaigns that are easy to understand can incorporate humour that is acceptable in the local culture, and be promoted by private citizens rather than by the government, especially in areas where a high level of distrust towards the government prevails” (participant from **Malaysia**).

“I think we really need to learn from local cultures and communities, as well as from geography. The women in Malaysia differ from state to state, locality to locality. By learning about these differences we can develop a programme or path. We must work with religious leaders – we have no choice. We also must work with far-right nationalists whose women even endorse misogynistic beliefs towards their own gender. The existing strategies, in my humble opinion, seem to be a one size fits all which really does not help” (participant from **Malaysia**).

“P/CVE must look at radicalization and deradicalization as ‘gendered experience’. A gendered experience means that men and women join, stay and leave VE groups differently. Therefore, any P/CVE must address this” (participant from **Indonesia**).

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP ON NAP PVE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIA AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR ASEAN

 Our study provides Indonesia as a case study on collective leadership and how gender was incorporated into the National Action Plan for Counter Violent-Based Extremism that Leads to Terrorism (hereinafter called NAP P/CVE²⁹) formulation and implementation processes, and outlines some lessons learned in the Indonesian case that could potentially be considered for other ASEAN Member States. In the past, Indonesia only referred to the Law No. 5 of 2018 concerning the Elimination of Criminal Acts of Terrorism, a **revised version** of the previous Law Number 15 of 2003 concerning the Elimination of Criminal Acts of Terrorism, as the reference for countering terrorism. While the strategies for minimizing terrorism prior to the development of Indonesia's NAP P/CVE had been implemented, their scope was still limited. In addition, the actors involved were still limited to ministries and law enforcement agencies/security actors. However, the recognition that women can also be perpetrators of violent extremism, especially since the 2018 Surabaya Bombings, played a key role in changing the CT approaches to a more integrated policy that addresses the causes, actors' roles and how to prevent individuals from joining violent extremist groups.

Because of this acknowledgement BNPT referred to, among others, the UNSCR 2242

(2015) and initiated the preparation of the NAP P/CVE. Its objective is to prevent the emergence of the potential for extreme violence that leads to terrorism. It targets not only active violent extremists, but is also designed to build community resilience, including vulnerable communities, and to assist individuals in preventing extremism.³⁰ BNPT formulated the action plan by involving various relevant stakeholders from different ministries, agencies and civil society organizations, applying the “whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach” method. The process was divided into two main stages: drafting and implementation.

Drafting Stage (2017-2020)

Starting in mid-2017, BNPT drafted the NAP P/CVE with a small team consisted of practitioners, experts and BNPT personnel.³¹ The team coordinator was Mr Andhika Chrisna Yudhanto, currently the Deputy of International Cooperation of the BNPT.³² His leadership encompassed diplomatic and comprehensive knowledge in regional organizations and international law. Close-collaboration and multi-stakeholder participation during various consultation sessions with BNPT contributed to refining the substance of the draft.³³ As the BNPT does not have a gender office or office for women, representatives from

women's organizations presented their views in various consultation sessions. They noted the following setbacks for women's advancement, among others:³⁴

- 1 The absence of women in P/CVE policy-making
- 2 The lack of a gender perspective in the implementation of P/CVE policies in Indonesia
- 3 Women's issues have not been an elemental part of the national security sector for a long time

For example, Komnas Perempuan submitted a four-page of substantive inputs to the BNPT drafting team during the public consultation session with UN Women in Jakarta, stating that the NAP P/CVE draft should refer to the Law no. 18/2014 on Indonesia's NAP on the Empowerment and Protection of Women and Children during Social Conflict.³⁵ CSOs recommended that BNPT consider evidence-based findings and perspectives that demonstrate intersectionality between 'traditional security' and what are considered to be 'soft issues'. Since 2018, for example, the Asian Muslim Action Network, Indonesia, had advised governmental security sectors to learn from the Surabaya bombing to ensure the gender inclusivity aspect is included in the NAP.³⁶

BNPT incorporated the feedback that gender mainstreaming is an inseparable element in the policy formulation, including one aimed to prevent violent extremism and combating terrorism. The

Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (MOWECP), as one of the partner ministries of BNPT, obtained firm support from CSO's to take up more prominent roles in discussing the draft of NAP P/CVE, particularly with the history of the increasing involvement of women and children in terrorism. The BNPT Team also substantiated the NAP P/CVE draft through the exchange of views from global partners like UN Women, UNDP, UNODC; and it exchanged views with other multi-stakeholders from different countries in several regional forums.³⁷

Implementation stage (ongoing)

The NAP P/CVE was signed by President Joko Widodo on 6 January 2021 after three years of development.³⁸ In the 113 pages comprising the attachment to Presidential Decree 7/2021,³⁹ the NAP P/CVE, which consists of three pillars, seeks to:

- 1 Improve inter-agencies' co-ordination in preventing and countering violent extremism that leads to terrorism;
- 2 Increase participation and synergy in implementing NAP P/CVE programmes carried out by ministries, regional governments, civil society and other parties/stakeholders;
- 3 Develop data collection and monitoring instruments systems to support efforts to prevent and counter-extremism; and

4

Enhance international co-operation through bilateral, regional and multilateral co-operation in preventing and countering extremism.

The Presidential Decree is a policy strategy that aims to serve two purposes. The first is to maximize a moderate approach involving non-traditional national and local actors, including women, youth, and religious leaders. Second, it aims to facilitate gender mainstreaming in overcoming and preventing violent extremism by implementing programmes that include actors across ministries and agencies. The gender mainstreaming principle is explicitly mentioned in the final document which guides actors in implementing this presidential regulation.⁴⁰ Other principles in adhering to the NAP P/CVE implementation include respect for human rights and good governance. MoWECP argued that women's roles in terrorism must be collectively prevented and, as a result, highlighted the need for ongoing intra-ministerial coordination with BNPT.⁴¹ At present, MoWECP and BNPT are engaged in strengthening coordination in the implementation of the NAP P/CVE.

An interviewee from Indonesia reflected on this process:

“

“So that is why in the National Action Plan, one of the principles is centred on women's empowerment and gender equality... the same thing with the regional action plan. It came about during the drafting sessions. What happened was that we found we had a strong feeling about this plan of action because we needed to implement it more

from the grassroots level. So, we came up with the Bali Work Plan, which was designed to expedite the implementation of the same plan of action. This way ASEAN can recognize the importance of work plan. And when we were drafting/formulating the plan, we also included, for example, the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACWC)”.

“That's why if you look at the Bali Work Plan the words 'migrant worker' is still in brackets. But I think that is another factor that's coming up. But again we cannot dismiss the fact that the issue of migrant workers has a gender perspective. That is one factor that we noted in a number of studies. For example, when working on this national action plan with the Wahid Foundation they ran a survey which highlighted the need to focus on women”.

”

To date, enhanced coordination between different lines of coordinating ministries continues to shape the parallel implementation processes of both the NAP P/CVE and the NAP WPS, which currently is ongoing in Indonesia. There are potential lessons learned from the Indonesian context pertaining to Indonesia's NAP P/CVE formulation that could influence future policy implementation in the broader ASEAN region. Our research on the Indonesia case found that:

•

Solid teamwork, combined with clear leadership, allowed for a healthy and democratic drafting process. Furthermore, there

was a high-level diplomatic impetus to organize, manage and tailor various feedbacks into the draft.

The Indonesian experience demonstrated that intra-ministerial communication and engagement must move beyond “siloeing” of security sectors and “softer” topics, such as social development and gender.

Intersectionality perspectives must be embedded/ reflected in the substantive conversation of the draft, and there must be a recognition and accommodation of CSOs’ representation, voices and contributions in the drafting process.

Collaboration among government actors and CSOs IS not co-optation. The whole process should be institutionalized, but meaningful participation must be in-

cluded during the formulation of NAP P/CVE. To do so facilitates opportunities to discuss/debate/dialogue about critical concepts, such as security sector reform and gender, which are crucial to P/CVE policy.

Creating a common platform (like Indonesia’s KHUB) makes showcasing multi-stakeholders’ participation/community-based programmes easier, which contributes to enhancing a ‘whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach’.

The multiplication of concrete NAP P/CVE implementation initiatives at the local level, which signal multi-level coordination between national and local agencies, allows for the broadening of PVE ownership as a shared agenda according to the VE affected communities.⁴²

RECOMMENDATIONS

From our study of dynamics within the ASEAN region, it is recommended that:

- 1. P/CVE policy should be based on gender-sensitive analysis of the causes of individual radicalization which turns into violent extremism. This includes acknowledging that radicalization processes and the drivers towards violent extremism can be distinct among women and men.**

From our survey data and interviews, a common concern was often raised that policymakers must further acknowledge that radicalization processes are distinct for women and men, despite recruitment and participation within the same organization. Put simply, potential differences in drivers that influence women and men's radicalization can not only be distinct, but highly gendered. It is also important to note that women and men cannot be treated monolithically, but rather the factors that push men to join a violent extremist group may not be the same factors for women.

While this may seem like a strikingly obvious point, risk assessment models still fall behind in incorporating male and female gender-specific radicalization indicators which can play a key role in explaining the differences in why women

and men join, sustain their involvement and leave. Importantly, some current frameworks throughout the region deal with violent extremism as a manifestation of direct conflict, but the proliferation of violent extremism can occur both in the online and offline space during times of stability, or in ASEAN Member States that do not experience direct conflict.

Pearson et al.⁴³ have convincingly argued that regarding women it is not “that they should be targeted in CVE programming, but rather how any initiative to include them should be developed”. This requires acknowledging the relevance of locally specific circumstances to understand how and why women associate themselves with violent extremist movements, including acknowledging the differences in environments in which these groups exist, and the specific socioeconomic, religious and political factors that can influence radicalization.

As a result, risk assessment should incorporate male and female gender-specific radicalization indicators, as well as indicators of misogyny and hostile beliefs and their monitoring as related to, but distinct from, broader conflict dynamics. This involves identifying individuals, both men and women, with hostile sexist attitudes who are particularly at risk of

perpetrating violence. (This is different than the presence of discriminatory gender norms in a group ideology.) It is important that these are responsive to differing ideologies throughout the ASEAN region. Based on our research, areas that could be further examined are as follows:

- Women gender-specific drivers and push and pull factors, specifically taking into consideration local and country-specific contexts.
- The nature of gendered recruitment and radicalization narratives, including how such groups ascribe roles to women and why these roles are ideologically justified.
- The degree to which women are actively or passively influencing their families, or broader communities, including within the online space, with violent extremist ideas.
- Especially during COVID-19 and considering “stay-at-home” orders, our survey and interviews mentioned the importance of “men-only” and “women-only” forums on social media platforms in radicalizing individuals online. By examining these spaces, a greater understanding can emerge of the gender-specific push and pull factors that are being used towards women and men to justify and legitimize extremist activity, as well as the repercussions for offline spaces.

2. Current P/CVE policies should be informed by gender-sensitive analysis of all forms of extremism and violent extremism and they should differentiate between ethno-nationalist extremism, far-right extremism and communist insurgency where religion is not a key dimension of the ideology.

The ideologies of most violent extremist organizations contain inherently gendered dimensions. The way in which violent extremist groups construct gender norms, including how groups can produce masculinities and gender norms that can either enable or limit women’s participation, is not only important in understanding violence but also the normalization of certain behaviours. For example, the construction of in-group gender norms can “impact on the likelihood of women’s violence being accepted as legitimate by terrorist groups; the roles imagined for women; on the behaviours normalised for men; and on the treatment of enemy women”.⁴⁴

Policymakers need to take into consideration national threat environments in the ASEAN region and the ideologies of extremist organizations and consider how they can appeal to women and men differently. Although jihadist violent extremism continues to pose an enduring threat within the ASEAN region, it is important to consider violent extremism and conflict posed by far-right, ethno-nationalist and communist groups and their respective strategies to recruit and sustain the involvement of women and men differently.

Groups may recruit members and expand their ideological influence by prioritizing men's rights over women's rights, and/or through specific gender ideologies appealing to men and women differently. It is important to acknowledge that although these manifestations of political violence are different, radicalization pathways and espoused grievances vis-à-vis the state can be similar. However, the gender norms and gender ideologies within these movements can be distinct and frame participation and involvement differently. For example, promoting greater women's agency in armed

conflict, or prioritizing the rights of women and men of one ethnicity at the expense of others. Consequently, these should be tailored specifically to how gender norms and identity are framed within the movement and not approached with a "one-size-fits-all-model".

Based on our research, when thinking about how to incorporate a gender-sensitive analysis of different ideological forms of violent extremism (jihadist, ethno-nationalist, far-right and Marxist) into risk frameworks, policymakers could consider the following issues:

GENDER-SENSITIVE CHECKLIST FOR VIOLENT EXTREMISM RISK ASSESSMENT

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are there misogynistic and sexist views towards women actively espoused within the ideology of the organization? | <input type="checkbox"/> What are the ideologically justified and legitimized roles for women and men within the organization? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If so, does this place men in a position of superiority over women? | <input type="checkbox"/> How are these framed so as to be perceived as a form of "empowerment", especially for women? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the ideology of the organization justify and legitimize violence, including rape and sexual violence, against women under certain circumstances? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there leadership opportunities, or opportunities that could promote mobility, for women within the organization that could serve as incentives? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In what ways is this normalized among men involved in the violent extremist group? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do violent organizations within the same geographical environment share these same views? If not, where are the points of contestation or tension and how can these be tailored in risk assessment models? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have men justified their misogynistic/sexist views towards women, or violence towards women, in the context of the violent extremist group's ideology? | |

3. The differential impacts of terrorism on women and girls should be integrated into P/CVE policy and programming.

It is important that policymakers consider their local contexts throughout the ASEAN region and develop targeted programmes that focus on women and girls that specifically reflect how gender dynamics are playing a role in radicalization, taking care not to perpetuate outdated gendered stereotypes that women are always victims or someone duped them into joining violent extremist groups. This is particularly the case when thinking about the repatriation of former individuals who were actively or passively involved with ISIS, or living in their proto-state areas of influence.

This includes considering that women and girls could be victims, perpetrators, supporters, influencers and active participants in terrorist organizations, which necessitates a complex and nuanced understanding of the range of risk factors. P/CVE programmes could promote greater public awareness of how violent extremist groups undermine women's rights and empowerment, including the ways in which they delegitimize women's leadership in turn having direct implications for peace and security. In particular, programming can expose how women are recruited to violent extremist groups through marriage offers, through offers of protection from threats or experiences of sexual and gender-based violence, or through false promises of empowerment.

As mentioned above, this has further implications for online/offline dynamics which became particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic, when women's increased use of social media and engagement in group chats and forums – including women's online forums – during stay-at-home orders exposed women to incentives for joining violent extremist

organizations. Furthermore, gender-sensitive e-safety training could be recommended for Security and Intelligence officers on how to identify hostile sexist attitudes online.

4. P/CVE programmes should support the development of counter-narratives to violent extremism that give prominence to women's voices and to experiences of misogyny – including those previously involved with extremist organizations and that promote gender equality in contrast to misogynistic narratives. Multiple participants identified in our study assert that violent extremist organizations throughout the region seek to delegitimize women as leaders. Women's voices and counter-narratives to violent extremism should be amplified by leaders in the community, CSOs and governments, including integration into support and referral initiatives and digital gender-sensitive e-safety training.

At the same time, policymakers must acknowledge that counter-narratives can also have the potential to indirectly victimize or create vulnerabilities for women. Policymakers and leaders do not just amplify women's voices and counter-narratives, they themselves and their organizations are “role-models” in challenging hostile sexist attitudes.

As a participant from Malaysia observed, the perception of the state matters, and when policymakers themselves are also “perceived as misogynistic” it can shape and negatively impact on the policy and practice of P/CVE. As a result, it is absolutely crucial that policymakers engage women's CSOs and women's groups in devising these counter-narratives, as they often have extensive knowledge in understanding local grievances that can serve as drivers

towards violent extremism and offer alternative pathways at the local level.

5. Policymakers should listen to, and involve, communities in which violent extremist groups exist.

It is important to engage women and CSOs that are already at the forefront of violent extremist activity, who understand the local context, have local contacts and understand real and perceived grievances at the local level. P/CVE requires profound local knowledge to understand why biases play out in defining community boundaries and how this works. As one participant mentioned, it is indeed the fact that existing P/CVE strategies throughout the region do tend to be general, where our research found the need for these to be more specific both in regard to the gendered experiences of women and men, in regard to diverse extremist ideologies, as well as to the specific environments in which they exist.

Grassroots peacebuilding initiatives and organizations can play a key role in the P/CVE space, and provide the opportunity to bridge the gap among government, policymakers and local communities. Indeed, and as mentioned, this could simultaneously contribute to higher accountability for government agencies and ministries – including in incorporating gender mainstreaming – and potentially decrease the vulnerability of communities at risk.

This could be expanded to include a specific focus on security sector reform and training. One of the ways that security sector organizations can challenge hostile sexism and misogyny is by promoting an inclusive workforce, standing against impunity for gender-based violence and addressing sexual abuse and harassment in their own organizations, which is

often targeted at women and religious minorities. The community needs to see a security sector that is inclusive and responsive to their concerns and needs, and one that does not provoke extremism.

6. The formulation of NAP P/CVEs can be highly institutionalized, but not necessarily rigid. It can be a participatory process, with engagement not only coming from ministerial organizations but also CSOs.

The formulation of P/CVE plans that have connections to national WPS frameworks is crucial to address misogyny dynamics and the attraction of violent extremism, especially the sexist attitudes and socially-constructed masculinities and femininities that provide fertile ground for radicalization towards violence.

Our case study of Indonesia's NAP P/CVE drafting and ongoing implementation can provide lessons learned that may inform other action plans throughout the region. As identified, the multiplicity of NAP P/CVE implementation initiatives at the local level as a result of multi-level coordination between local and national agencies allows for the broadening of ownership of P/CVE as a shared agenda between government and the grassroots levels.

Policymakers need to ensure that intersectionality and the inclusion of diverse perspective are incorporated in the drafting of NAP P/CVE's, and there must be concrete efforts to ensure the recognition and accommodation of CSOs' representation, voices, experiences and contributions in the drafting process. This contributes to meaningful participation and facilitates opportunities to discuss and debate key concepts, including gender, which are crucial to enhancing the successful of P/CVE strategies and tailored P/CVE policies.

CONCLUSION

Our study has implications for not only ASEAN Member State commitments made in the context of the ASEAN Political and Security Blueprint, but also implications for the WPS agenda as part of regional consequences for peace and security. Specifically, it relates to the impacts on women's ability to participate in peace and security; gender-inclusive protection from violence and other human rights abuses; and the prevention of conflict and women and men's peacebuilding roles.

For example, violent extremism in the context of COVID-19, including recruitment, propaganda and/or the spread of misinformation and disinformation that justifies and legitimizes violence against women throughout the ASEAN region, has clear implications for WPS, particularly in terms of gender-inclusive, gender-sensitive and gender-responsive protection.

P/CVE must respond to and mitigate the social and economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which can exacerbate the conditions conducive to terrorism. Our research further identified that while women are actively participating online throughout the region in extremist activities, misogynistic activities and behaviour in the offline space, reinforced by extremist groups, potentially present a dual challenge where women are both targeted as victims and are also agents of violence.

Both women and men are playing a key role in attempting to counter such narratives and activities, which calls for gender-responsive approaches to conflict prevention and the participation of both men and women in peacebuilding, including enhancing and ensuring their engagement at the grassroots level.

ENDNOTES

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