RESILIENCE, COMMUNITY SECURITY AND SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH EFFECTIVE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

A UN WOMEN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT

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Note by the Country Representative Sharmeela Rassool

Contributing towards and creating more cohesive communities and addressing emerging community security threats is a growing area of mandated work for UN Women under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015). The question of women's role in violent conflict and peace-building has been much debated in the academic and development literature. With the UN and other international bodies prioritizing the inclusion of a "gender-focused" agenda in their wider remits of peace-building and security, focus has turned towards the various ways in which gender-specific interventions can advance (or hinder) the cause of peace and social cohesion.

The UN Women mandated knowledge product titled: "Resilience, Community Security, and Social Cohesion through Effective Women's Leadership" was developed with an aim to identify knowledge gaps in the current research available regarding community security and social cohesion from a gendered lens. Primary research was conducted to add to the existing knowledge base on factors undermining community security and social cohesion and its effects on women's voices and representation. Moreover, vulnerabilities of women and gendered drivers that may contribute to security threats and fragmentations of social cohesion which increases the impact of violent extremism were analyzed in detail. Contexts and factors which may cause deep rooted ideologies and mobilization of women and young women, and the roles of women/ young women in preventing and contributing towards violent extremism were thoroughly researched and identified.

The main focus of this research study is essentially on women and the social, economic and political system in which they are embedded. Theoretically, this can be understood as the classic structure-agency dichotomy where women may exercise agency but are also constrained by the structural impediments. The structural realities such as patriarchy, prevalence of extremist ideologies, political violence, lack of economic opportunities affect women in a variety of way. It is important to understand their unique vulnerability to extremist ideas and the peculiar impacts extremism has on women. At the same time, it is also important to understand how women can exercise their agency to resist extremism and what are the capacities that they need in order to do this.

This study encapsulates patterns of conflict & extremism across different regions of Pakistan and aims to understand the structural realities that shape women's worldview and behavior as well as the factors that may help them deal with intense extremism. It is the nuanced understanding of the various factors that determine the interplay between this structure-agency duality that may lead to policy recommendations aimed at reshaping social realities.

UN Women country offices and headquarters undertake significant work in cutting edge research, engaging and collaborating with academics, civil society, and other non-governmental partners to ensure the creation of credible resources, research, and knowledge products. The knowledge product on gendered drivers of violent extremism has also been developed with an objective to inform the government and relevant stakeholders about the systematic vulnerabilities that exist in the societal as well as personal level which result in extremist tendencies. We hope this comprehensive exercise results in generating evidence which will guide the policy making process and decision making at the government level to effectively tackle this pertinent issue.

Introduction and Purpose of Study

UN Women is mandated to contribute towards creating more cohesive communities and addressing emerging community security threats under its strategic plan 2018 – 2021, United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2242 (2015), and UN priority agenda of sustaining peace, Agenda 2030, and the Women, Peace and Security.

This report analyses the gendered aspects of the ethnic and religious conflict in Pakistan that can potentially lead to a breakdown of social cohesion and stability. In order to effectively understand the drivers of conflict and the factors that threaten community security and social cohesion focusing on women and young women, UN Women commissioned a research study titled: "Resilience, Community Security and Social Cohesion through Effective Women's Leadership". The main purpose of the study was to build an evidence base with an aim to enrich the available knowledge base on community security and potential threats.

This report presents the key findings of this larger study. It is designed to be used for advocacy and awareness-raising on the role of women in strengthening community resilience and social cohesion in the Pakistani society. It brings a gender lens to security issues which have plagued different regions in Pakistan; and investigates women's specific vulnerabilities in situations of community conflict and promotes the integration of women in policy and decision-making in the security sector.

"I believe women's voices are the communities' voices, they can consistently bridge divides, build support for understanding among communities, promote dialogue and build trust if given the knowledge, skill and opportunities. Whether preventing violent extremism, contributing to interfaith harmony, responding to emergencies like COVID women take an inclusive approach. Therefore, I always insist on integrating women's participation, leadership and empowerment in developing strategies to prevent violent extremism and we must address existing prejudices and empower women to become leaders and change makers."

Mosarrat Qadeem
Executive Director Paiman

Overall Findings

This report investigates everyday mechanisms of gendered vulnerability to conflict and women's participation (or lack thereof). It shows everyday forms of gender-based violence (such as domestic violence and exclusion from public spaces) as forming key bases for wider conflicts. These everyday experiences of women's marginalisation are compounded by issues of economic insecurity (such as inflation, property disputes etc.) and regional specificities of conflict (such as the sectarian violence against the Shia Hazara community in Balochistan). The regional variations of conflict are detailed below, and should be important considerations for future policy and programmatic responses.

In conflict, extremist organisations target the weakest segments of a social structure including the young, unemployed, and women. The research showed how women's exclusion from prevailing decision-making social structures make them especially vulnerable to conflict participation. Economic insecurity and intrusion of conflict into sphere of social reproduction (such as provision of civic amenities) also prime women for participation in conflict. Inducements of autonomy and prestige condition women's participation in extremist organisation and path dependency also kicks in once involved in such organisation.

Women's participation in post-conflict amelioration structures is extremely low. However, conflicts disturb established social hierarchies and can create spaces for new leaderships to emerge such as women. While women's leadership is often a "firefighting" response to conflict, the material resources and networks women are able to draw upon are key determinants of the effectiveness and sustainability of women's leadership in and beyond crisis situations. Existing networks and capacities (such as education, access to property, judicial system etc.) are crucial for the assertion of women's leadership and the form it takes

> " Women make up almost half of the world's population. The debate around peace and security is incomplete without them. Inclusive policy making is the only way forward. The future is female. "
>
> Amna Baig
> Islamabad Capital Territory Police

e.g. coalition-building, legislative lobbying, and direct action.

In terms of networks and capacities for women's leadership, it is important to note that there is a shift happening within the Pakistani state with regard to representation of women, especially in the security domain. However, while numbers of women have increased, key institutional barriers remain. These include a lack of women role models and female experts in areas of social cohesion and violent extremism, absence of gender perspective in security policy-making and implementation and difficulties for women in taking active operational roles in state institutions (such as the police).

Pakistan's Policy Response to Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Over the years, the Government of Pakistan has adopted hard and soft measures to deal with the hazard of terrorism and extremism. The country's first ever National Internal Security Policy (NISP) was announced in 2014[1], followed by the adoption and implementation of the National Action Plan[2] (NAP) in December 2014, constituting twenty high priority areas derived from NISP 2014. These measures combined with military operations (Operation Zarb-e-Azb, Radd-ul-Fasaad, Swat Operation Rah-e-Rast) against terrorism led to a remarkable improvement in internal security, indicated by a marked decline in incidents of terrorism throughout the country.

However, it is important to note that the policy and operational response to conflict and extremism in Pakistan has generally been of a reactive manner. Operations and measures taken have been a "fire-fighting" response, with scant regard for long-term societal and policy objectives. However, the National Internal Security Policy[3] (NISP) 2018 was the first time a detail and comprehensive policy was developed with long term view and "whole-of-society" approach for addressing the root causes of conflict and extremism.

NISP 2018 postulates that "State must also create an enabling environment for the economic and political empowerment of young men and women to make them resilient against extremist narratives and help them become active citizens". Relatedly, NISP 2018 provided gender-focused policy directives for "enacting laws to ensure gender equality and creating a safe work environment for women to increase female participation in the labour force". Focus was placed on making public spaces women friendly to increase their participation in public life. Moreover, strict

enforcement of Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006, Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences in the name or pretext of Honour) Act, 2016, Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences Relating to Rape) Act 2016 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2011 on Acid and Burn Crime was stressed and further strengthened by including modern scientific investigative methods such as DNA sampling to curb gender-based violence. Lastly, economic value of domestic work by women who sacrifice their careers to take up the responsibility of managing households and child rearing was acknowledged and the policy pledged to amend Family Laws to take women's in-kind financial support to the family into consideration.

The NISP 2018 therefore has taken positive and tentative first steps towards acknowledging the role of gender in security and social cohesion. However, much more research and practical work needs to be done in not just acknowledging but fully integrating gender perspectives in this domain. It is in this context that the multi-pronged research and its analysis presented below can usefully contribute to deepening and extending the women-centered engagements which are currently gestured towards in NISP 2018.

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1   Available at: https://nacta.gov.pk/wp-content/up-loads/2017/08/National-Internal-Security-Policy-2014.pdf
2   https://nacta.gov.pk/nap-2014/
3   Available at: https://www.interior.gov.pk/index.php/down-loads/category/32-policies

Socio-economic Impact of Covid-19 and Violent Extremism

The COVID-19 crisis has affected societies and economies around the globe and has permanently reshaped the world. While the fallout from the crisis is both amplifying existing risks and creating new ones, the gendered effects of the virus are beginning to emerge and will have definite effects on social cohesion and resilience to violent narratives.

Societal narratives with regard to the outbreak of the pandemic in Pakistan have latched onto existing fault lines. Emergency contexts exacerbate gender inequalities, social tensions, and an "us-versus-them" mentality. Hate speech, fake news, discrimination and stigma are rampant. In the initial days of the spread of the virus, the infection of pilgrims returning from Iran caused an upsurge of speculation and discrimination against Shia Muslims. This was especially the case in informal and even official notifications discriminating against the already-marginalized Hazara community of Balochistan.

Relatedly, reports have also emerged of selected charities discriminating against religious minorities (including Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadis) in their ration-distribution drives.

With Pakistan set to experience negative economic growth in this fiscal year (World Bank[1]), cost-cutting, lay-offs and unemployment is offloaded onto the weakest segments i.e. the informal and precarious sections of the workforce where women are disproportionately represented. Moreover, Pakistan's economic structure is critically dependent on commodity and low-value products' export supply chains. With the worldwide economic depression, reduced demand will drastically affect the weaker segments of the workforce downstream (such as women).

Conditions of material deprivation and financial uncertainty can have a deleterious effect on social cohesion and resilience to violent narratives. Emergencies (such as disasters and displacements) are often used by civil arms of fundamentalist groups to increase their influence. This is especially so since the monumental uncertainty of the situation can easily be harnessed to narratives of millenarianism (such as "God has done this to punish the West").

In a prominent case, a police female officer[2] was attacked by enraged worshippers in a lower middle-class area of Karachi for attempting to enforce the moratorium on congregations decreed by the government. At one level, the incident reveals the lack of trust between state and civil society, and the space ceded historically to fundamentalist groups, which has societal space open for conspiratorial, millenarian, and extremist narratives. On the other hand, it also demonstrates the vulnerabilities and insecurities faced even by state officers who are female.

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1   "World Bank. 2020. South Asia Economic Focus, Spring 2020: The Cursed Blessing of Public Banks. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33478 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO."

2   Details can be accessed: https://www.dawn.com/news/1548201

Gendered Realities of Women in Pakistan – Findings of Survey

A comprehensive quantitative survey was held over all four provinces with close to seven hundred and fifty women[1]. The survey assessed a wide range of metrics, but with a focus on understanding women's place in local community structures, their exposure to conflict, their participation in conflict and/or post-conflict measures in the community, their personal autonomy, and civic, economic, and political participation. The survey provided an overall insight and baseline measures about the research participants, which will be detailed in subsequent sections focusing on specific themes.

Overall, the participants came from overwhelmingly lower and middle class backgrounds. Only 3% of the participants were the main breadwinners in their households, even while 79% contributed to the household income in some way. 47% responded that they had influence over household income and expenditures while 37% stated that they had somewhat influence over household income and expenditures. The lack of economic autonomy was closely mirrored by a deficit of personal agency in other spheres of social life. Thus, for example, only 40% of women reported having influence in decision-making within their households, while only 27-30% women reported having influence over both their career and marriage choices. Therefore, women's economic empowerment supports women's agency and participation or influence over decision making at household level, but only unevenly.

In patriarchal societies, and especially in conflict situations, women's mobility is a major barrier to women accessing their fundamental rights. The same was true for the findings of the survey where women's lack of personal autonomy was also reflected in difficulties faced by women in their mobility. Almost

> "Sustainable peace will remain an illusion if women are not included in processes focusing on transforming conflict and addressing challenges of violent extremism."

Muhammad Ali Babakhel
DG Research NACTA

How do you define your primary identity?

☑ **Pakistani**	**45%**
☑ **Religious**	**42%**
☑ **Ethnic Identity**	**4%**

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1   (n = 746, participant numbers from each province was nearer to province's share in total population of Pakistan)
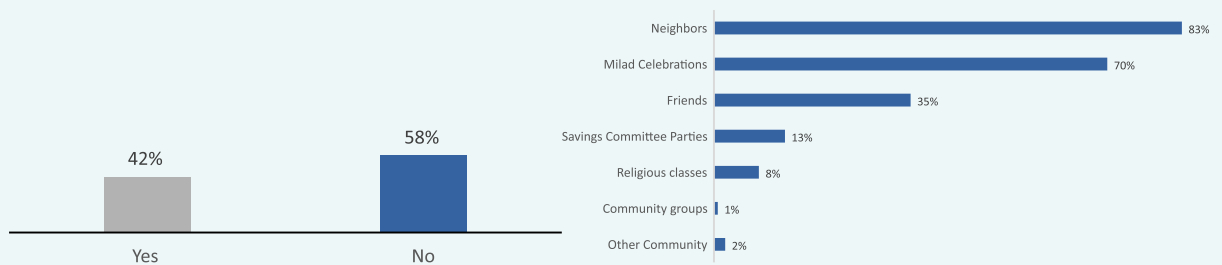
Are you socially connected and take part in community?

three-fourths of the participants (74%) reported that they take permission when going out of the house. The grantees of permission were overwhelmingly the male members of the household, with husbands accounting for close to 70%. There were regional and age variations in this metric, with older women having relatively more autonomy.

In terms of socio-political participation, the participants were engaged to a minimal to medium extent. For example, even while close to 80% of participants possess a Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC), only 60% of them voted in the last elections. Furthermore, only close to 40% of women felt socially connected to and/or as having contributed to the local community. For the overwhelming majority, the major avenue of community participation was their interaction with neighbours (83%).

In terms of violent conflict, even while a majority of women (89%) had not experienced community-level conflict themselves, close to 20% had known someone who had taken part or been exposed to conflict. Moreover, close to 55% of the participants were cognisant that conflicts impact women disproportionally. Economic insecurity, domestic conflicts, and social tensions (such as over resources, land etc.) were cited as the most common reason for women taking part in conflict. Tellingly, 90% of participants reported that women have no voice in post-conflict support structures, and thus have only limited avenues for participating in community affairs at such critical junctures.

However, even with this bleak picture of women's personal autonomy, community participation, and role in conflict amelioration, the women retain a positive outlook on social and political life. National and religious identity are the most prevalent frames of personal identification (45% and 42%, respectively). In terms of political and social outlook, close to 80% disagreed with the use of violence in politics, and 85% believed that religion is a personal matter and should not be used to settle political scores. A similar proportion (79%) identified the Constitution of Pakistan as a social document they identify with.

Moreover, in terms of aims as a community and country, the highest scorers were economic growth (30%) and greater democracy in Pakistan (35%).

How satisfied are you with?

	Completely Dissatisfied	Completely Satisfied
1. Life	20%	80%
2. Judicial System	60%	40%
3. Police system	67%	33%

Do women participate in such support structures?

How satisfied are you with the statement

Legend: Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | No answer | Don´t know
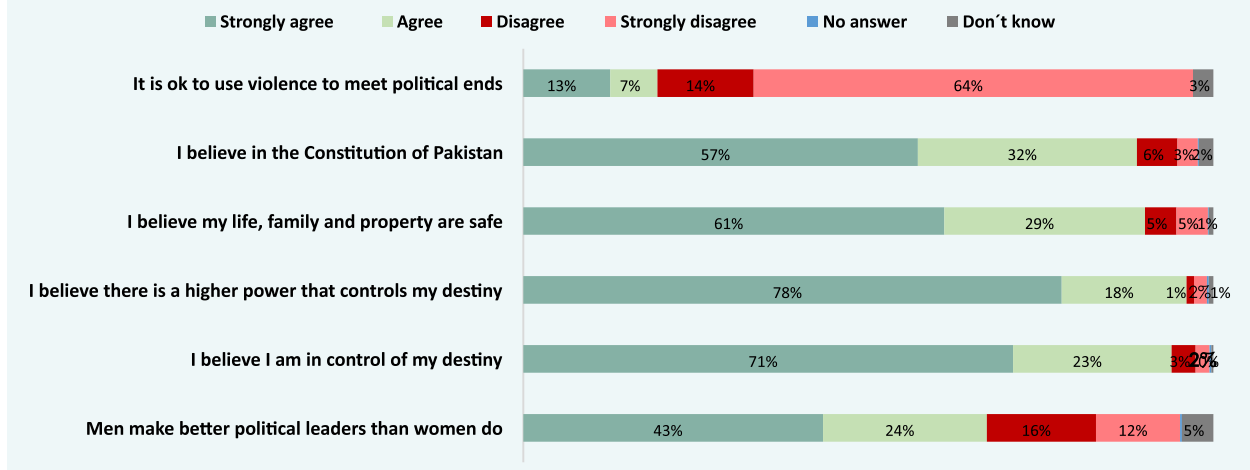
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer	Don´t know
It is ok to use violence to meet political ends	13%	7%	14%	64%		3%
I believe in the Constitution of Pakistan	57%	32%	6%	3%		2%
I believe my life, family and property are safe	61%	29%	5%	5%		1%
I believe there is a higher power that controls my destiny	78%	18%	1%	2%		1%
I believe I am in control of my destiny	71%	23%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Men make better political leaders than women do	43%	24%	16%	12%		5%

Specifically, participants identified democracy with an active say of ordinary people in how affairs are run in the country. These figures point towards a growing understanding of politics and civics on part of women who are strengthening their relationship with the state.

Internalised notions of patriarchy were evident as a large proportion (almost 40%) female respondents believe that men make better political leaders than women. However over 80% emphasised that women should play a greater role in politics (97% identified Benazir Bhutto as a great leader). Similarly, over 90% agreed that women should be part of decision-making during and after conflict scenarios. Close to 90% also supported women's role as breadwinners in the house, in obtaining higher education, and that women should vote in elections. The women's responses pointed towards a greater need to make women and girls and their voices visible during pre- and post conflict scenarios as well as political and state structures to transform state institutions into responsive and inclusive organisations.

Thus, overall the picture obtained of conflict, social engagement and aspirations among the female participants was a mixed one. In the current state, women generally experience limited domestic and public autonomy, with low levels of education, paid employment, and decision-making agency. This is

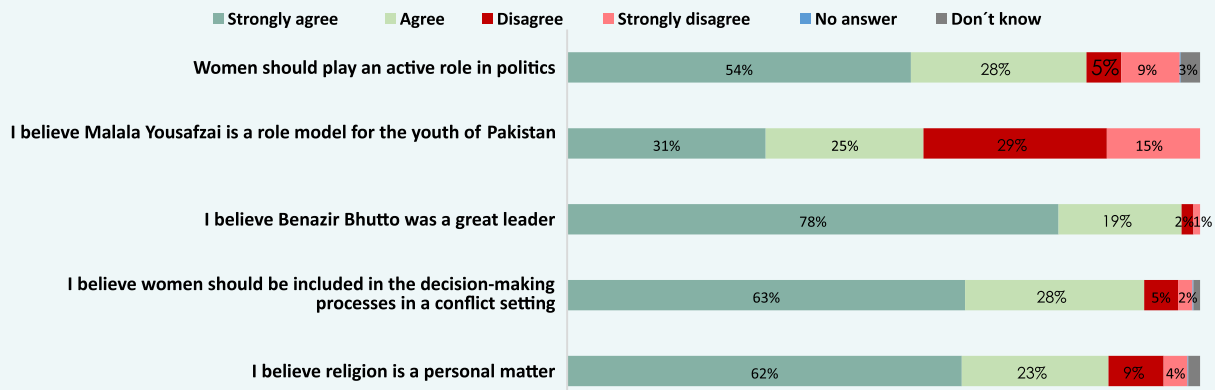"A gender equal society is a more peaceful society - especially, equitable number of women in leadership roles is key to resolving social conflicts of varying nature. It is therefore important to adopt affirmative action for meaningfully incorporating women voices at decision making fora to achieve sustainable peace"

Dr. Adnan Rafiq
Country Representative
United States Institute for Peace (USIP)

How satisfied are you with the statement

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ No answer ■ Don´t know

Statement						
Women should play an active role in politics	54%	28%	5%	9%	3%	
I believe Malala Yousafzai is a role model for the youth of Pakistan	31%	25%	29%	15%		
I believe Benazir Bhutto was a great leader	78%	19%	2%	1%		
I believe women should be included in the decision-making processes in a conflict setting	63%	28%	5%	2%		
I believe religion is a personal matter	62%	23%	9%	4%		

" Gendered policy making leads to comprehensive decision - making processes and an inclusive society. Moreover, Women audibility and visibility in policy making processes reflects upon the maturity of a nation. "

Dr. Asma Khawaja
Head of Strategic Studies Department
National Defence University (NDU)

especially so in conditions of conflict, where women overwhelmingly feel unengaged in decision-making mechanisms.

However, in terms of social and political outlook, women retain a broadly optimistic outlook. The participants are strong believers in the social contract represented by the Constitution of Pakistan, eschew the use of violence in politics, and are overwhelmingly in favour of greater economic, social, and political participation of women in local and supra-local decision-making structures.

Violence Against Women and Gendered Vulnerability

The most common type of violence faced by women is of everyday variety, including criminal activity and domestic violence. This everyday exclusion is perpetuated due to patriarchal structures and norms of domesticity. Moreover, a range of actors and factors – from family members to state functionaries and policies – work to perpetuate such norms and everyday exclusions (often spilling over into overt violence).

Repeatedly, the attitudes of men were pinpointed as the basic factor behind this everyday violence. Inside the household this can be due to issues of reproductive labour, such as food, upbringing of children, and everyday household decisions. This is manifested in various forms, from conspicuous violence, coercive dressing choices, to more subtle ways of devaluing women. As a participant from Lahore put it, "my husband says that I am a sign of misfortune."

Outside the house, harassment and the "male gaze" is identified as the main form of violence. This affects all women, but particularly those who are in middle-class and working-class professions who require moving outside the house. Similarly, young women going out for education purposes also face various kinds of subtle violence. This can be harassment on the streets, mobility issues due to inadequate public transport, and – in extreme cases – the refusal of women's education altogether. As a participant from Karachi put it succinctly, "I think that stopping education itself is a type of violence."

Such subtle, everyday violence creates a perpetual and unrelenting fear among women, and deprives them of equal opportunities for participation in various socio-economic spheres. As a woman participant from a rural area of Lahore put it evocatively, "the question should be what we are *not* afraid of? *We are afraid of everything*."

> "Extremist groups tend to exploit vulnerable, marginalized segments of the society, offering them moral engagement. To plug this gap, we must strive for an inclusive society. Women are the first teachers of any child; UN Women could become a catalyst for attainment of their rightful place in the society."
>
> **Ihsan Ghani**
> Former Head of NACTA and Intelligence Bureau

> "The milestones of evolution were determined by the female gender as she understood the needs of the young she nurtured. Surely women can and will advance the peace and social cohesion trajectory with empathy and compassion laced with resilience. We need to give women equal opportunities and a forum to raise their concerns."

Dr. Feriha Paracha
Psychologist, CVE Expert

With regard to domestic violence, this reflects a crucial point - that acts of aggression against women seem to have been normalized. Thus, awareness of domestic violence, its definitions, and its extent too are sometimes not even registered as such. Lack of information and knowledge about rights such as bodily autonomy, different definitions of "dignity" and "violence", can therefore perpetuate situations resulting in violence against women.

Women also showed awareness of deeper social structures which perpetuate patriarchal attitudes among men, such as economic insecurity, generational frictions, and wider social conflicts where women's bodies become key stakes for assertion. Thus, along with patriarchal attitudes of men, issues of economic security (or lack thereof) were the most cited reason for perpetuation of such violence against women.

A theme which came up quite frequently in the FGDs and KIIs is that of a "crisis of trust between women and parents." Traditionally, parents and male members of the family have acted as "guarantors" of women's safety and autonomy within the circumscribed sphere of the household. Thus, as long as young women remained within a circumscribed sphere, they could exercise limited autonomy while being sure of the trust of parents and elders. However, as women have now become more active in spheres and spaces outside the household, the patriarchal bargain has come under stress, with women's increased autonomy and mobility generating suspicion among elders and males of the family expressed as "crisis of trust between women and parents". This can result in an intensified patriarchal reaction against women. Thus, as women have become more aware and have taken up activities in the non-domestic sphere, this has disturbed stabilised notions of domesticity and gender roles. Access to digital technologies and increasing urbanisation too has contributed towards it. The effects of these wider social changes play out in and over women's autonomy and agency. This can be manifested in various ways: women's education, marriage choices, access to public space etc.

Many regions and communities in Pakistan have faced severe violence over the last two decades, ranging from ethnic violence to fundamentalist terrorism. Especially important here is the lack of support for victims of terrorism in communities such as the Hazara of Quetta. Here, women complained bitterly of the lack of support and restitution mechanisms for the family members of victims of sectarian violence. Due to economic and community uncertainty, practices of child and young age marriage have increased. Their issues unacknowledged, the women complain of rampant mental health problems among victims' families.

Key lessons and opportunities:

- Everyday forms of violence – such as domestic violence and harassment during mobility in

public – are the most commonly reported fears among women of all backgrounds.

- Attitudes towards domestic violence varies with access to knowledge and resources to confront such exclusion. Sometimes domestic violence may not even be recognised as such, and internalised as the "normal" course of things in women's lives.

- Economic and social issues figure prominently in women's narratives of motivating factors behind gendered violence – including familial property disputes, economically precarious situations, and changing gender norms as more women join the paid labour force in Pakistan.

- Changing social conditions – such as macroeconomic crises, urbanisation, and generational shifts – have also seen changing relations of trust between family members (such as between parents and young women). These have the effect of compounding restrictions and backlashes against women's assertion of autonomy and agency. Inter-generational trust building measures can be a potential avenue of intervention. These can include measures like increasing familiarity of family elders of women's study and workplaces, and awareness-raising over differential generational challenges in contemporary society.

- Women suffer greatly in conflict-ridden areas, especially in families who have lost (male) breadwinner to terrorism. The Hazara women of Quetta have been particularly affected due to lack of restitution measures by the state and exploitation by middle-men.

- Mental stress due to facing everyday violence and conflict was a persistent theme among the respondents. Increasing community awareness, resources, and capacity with

" The terrorist's narratives against women empowerment and education have no basis in Islam or the constitution of Pakistan and their rights must be upheld by the state and the society. In Pakistan's quest for stability and security, women remain a strong pillar of support and need to be recognized and celebrated as such. The success against terrorism was not possible without the support of Pakistani women who worked as mothers, teachers, mentors, civil society workers and most importantly those working in the fields of internal security and law enforcement. "

Humaira Mufti
National Security and Terrorism Expert

regard to mental health issues is crucial. This also offers an avenue of intervention, with community mechanisms of restitution offering the additional potential opportunity for increasing social cohesion and playing a role in conflict resolution.

- Everyday forms of violence and exclusion become basis for women's involvement in more "spectacular" forms of violence and conflict.

Women Supporting Conflict

In both the FGDs and the KIIs with experts who've worked on issues of conflict and violent extremism, what is most obvious is that prevailing gender norms and, crucially, suppression plays a crucial role in women actively participating in conflict. From the example of Mullah Fazlullah's movement in Swat in late mid-to-late 2000s to the attraction of outfits like Al-Qaeda and ISIS, gendered hierarchies and aspirations play a crucial role in making women amenable to taking part in and perpetuating conflict. This complicates any linear notion of simply (formal) "education" or "awareness" being an antidote against extremism. It is in fact, the wider social structures which condition and motivate women's entry into extremism and conflicts. In fact, an experienced PVE professional summarised these motivating factors succinctly in three words: "*Family, Prestige, Identity*."

It can manifest itself as an avenue for proving one's mettle for leadership and autonomy. Another main avenue is that of sexual autonomy, especially with regard to choice of partners. In this case, the position offered by groups such as ISIS to females is crucial. Female adherents are offered a chance not only at heavenly redemption, but for becoming a building bloc of a utopia on this earth: the Islamic State. As one respondent aptly summarised when asked about women's motivations for joining violent conflict: "girls feel that they are unwanted."

Violent organisations and terrorist groups also consciously target the most vulnerable groups in any social structure with the promise of "political emancipation". This includes women and various groups in society such as unemployed youth, criminal elements etc. Thus, suppression within prevailing familial structures, being misfit in reigning social hierarchies, opportunities for gaining identity and prestige, and a break from more "traditional" and hierarchy-centred interpretations of religion, opens

> "Women play a pivotal role in countering violent extremism; especially in tribal and semi-urban societies like Pakistan where they typically control and manage the household. Recently a number of case studies have revealed the substantial role of women in combating violent extremism."

Dr. Farhan Zahid
Police Service of Pakistan

the avenue towards reactionary and violent assertions of the same. As Olivier Roy points out, this must be understood less of a "radicalisation of Islam" and more as the "Islamisation of radicalism" (Roy, 2017 Guardian).

Moreover, once women are actively embroiled in these conflicts and in violent organisations, participation can take on a path dependency of its own. This is especially so in the case of so-called "jihadi brides", who get married to active fighters, are sexually abused, and/or bear children with militants. The stigma of sexual abuse and, particularly, the presence of new-borns completely changes the equation. Even if the previous participation had been based on ideological zeal, having new-borns makes them more dependent on the support and (quasi) familial structures offered by militant organisations. As such, extricating one's self out of conflict becomes even more difficult.

Apart from religious millenarian organisations, women have also been involved in other types of conflict. In Karachi, for example, ethnic and sectarian conflict have been persistent themes over the last few decades. The entry of women is most likely when these conflicts directly affect issues of social reproduction (such as water scarcity and other civic issues). In the context of conflict in Lyari, FGD participants also reported that in some cases women played an active part in the conflict in the area. Extreme poverty and lack of opportunities made gang warfare a means of gaining both resources and power. Thus, where prevailing notions of toxic masculinity played into policing of women, some women also lived power vicariously through their relatives' participation in the conflict.

Conflicts thus serve a double function: they grow out of – and can perpetuate – existing societal cleavages including that of patriarchy; but they also offer opportunities for women to negotiate their position in complex ways. Most often, conflicts lead to deepening of patriarchal violence as women's bodies become crucial nodes for notions of "honour" and "belonging". However, as processes which disturb stabilised social structures, conflicts can also offer opportunities for

> "The exclusion of women significantly weakens the efforts to combat violent extremism. Moreover, it results in creation of policies that do not effectively cater to the drivers of radicalization. Therefore, active involvement of women in policymaking in the fields of development and security is imperative for a secure, stable and peaceful Pakistan."

Tariq Khosa
Former Inspector General of Police (IGP)

> "Women radicalization is a neglected and least understood area in Pakistan not only in research but policy making as well. Gendered-specific strategies should be included in PCVE policies and female law enforcement units should be established to deal with gendered-specific aspects of PCVE in Pakistan"

Abdul Basit
CVE and Terrorism Expert

emergence of leadership from among new groups, including women and lower classes. Therefore, the next section will focus the dynamics of women's leadership conflict situations.

Key lessons and opportunities:

- Extremist organisations target the very weakest segments in any social structure, including the young and unemployed, and women. Incumbent social structures and their exclusions are therefore key to understanding women's involvement in conflict.

- More than education, prevailing familial structures and desires for autonomy and prestige account for women's active involvement in violent conflict. Demonstration of religious piety and/or expertise becomes a means of mobility and gaining prestige.

- Increasing awareness among women – due

to increasing literacy, telecommunication technologies etc. – also leads to broadening of social aspirations. In case of patriarchal restrictions on women's agency, these aspirations of leadership and prestige can make women vulnerable to the pull of extremist ideologies.

- Factors relating to path-dependency – such as social security provided by organisations for women's new-born babies – which perpetuate women's involvement in violent organisations.

- There is a need for investigating the path dependencies of women's involvement in violent extremist through focussed research among women who have been part of such organisations. Thus internal structures, incentives, and coercion deployed by these organisation need to be studied to understand women's entanglement in violent extremism.

- Economic insecurity can also lead women to participate in violent either directly or indirectly, such as encouragement provided to male family members' involvement in ethnic conflict and "gang wars" in Lyari, Karachi.

- Women's active involvement becomes especially likely when these conflicts affect the sphere of social reproduction with which women's labour is directly related, such as conflicts over local resources and amenities (water, electricity etc.)

Women's Leadership During and Post-Conflict

Prevailing gender norms determine how women are incorporated in conflict. Thus, while women often take up prominent positions within militant formations, these often end up reinforcing patriarchal norms, such as through elevating their "special" status as "mothers" or "brides".

The flipside of this mode of elevation of women's status within militant formations is the wider valorisation of masculinist violence. So, while women may play prominent roles in violent organisations, women outside the organisation itself become victims of the intensification of regressive and masculinist norms and practices.

Leading on from the above, it is women's – idealised, if not actual – confinement to the sphere of domesticity which determines their leadership roles in conflict amelioration. For example, as an elected female politician from Peshawar recounted, women from her constituency took up prominent roles after major cases of child sexual abuse came up. She also recounted that women in her area have even taken up street demonstrations in response to civic issues such as availability of water and excessive billing for amenities. Thus, conflict situations with major disturbances in the sphere of social reproduction make it more amenable – and even acceptable – for women to come out of homes to actively join protests and campaigns.

The flip side of this tendency is that women's leadership in conflict amelioration is limited to "fire-fighting responses". That is, women's leadership emerges in situations of conflict, however once the conflict ends, older gendered hierarchies reassert themselves. This was the case with women's leadership in the Okara tenants' movement in 2000s. While conflicts create space for assertion by underprivileged groups, these changes are often unsustainable due to absence of transformative change in wider material conditions

> " As thought leaders, civil society representatives, and policy actors, Pakistani women have made great advancements in the domain of Women, Peace and Security and P/CVE in the last two decades. There is now an urgent need to translate this commitment and progress into tangible policy implementation frameworks. The next step should be the unanimous adoption of a Five-Year 'National Women, Peace and Security Action Plan' that stipulates targeted structural, policy, thematic reforms, and budgetary allocations in the formal security sector of Pakistan. Time to put our money where our talk is! "

Ammara Durrani
Assistant Resident Representative,
Development Policy Unit, UNDP Pakistan

(such as ownership and control over means of production).

The different forms of leadership exhibited by women in conflict can also be understood in relation to these wider material structures and social networks of ownership, control, and change. For example, the legislation enacted in Pakistani parliament with regard to sexual harassment policies in workplaces was the result of close to a decade of dedicated lobbying and activism by the Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASHA) mobilising networks of middle and upper-middle class women. Similarly, research respondents also recalled cases where women have been successful in obtaining their inheritance even in face of opposition from immediate relatives (such as the late father's brothers). This was made possible in one case in Gujrat through the presence of a lawyer among the sisters fighting for inheritance, who was able to both navigate the criminal justice system and leverage her contacts with prominent civil society persons.

The Hazaras of Quetta have faced brutal sectarian violence over the last two decades, with their social opportunities (education, business etc.) devastated. It is pertinent to note that the community has traditionally had higher education levels than those around them. Similarly, democratic and progressive parties have a strong foothold within the community, with prominent women voices within these. It is in this context that, for example, Ms. Jalila Haider gained prominence as a dedicated lawyer and brave human rights activist taking issues of Hazaras and other communities of Balochistan. Women from the Hazara community have been active in organising collective action against sectarian oppression and also in the electoral sphere. Dr. Ruqaiya Hashmi is an example of the latter, she was a National Assembly candidate in the 2013 general elections and eventually became part of the provincial assembly on a reserved seat.

As such, the presence of latent support networks in the community or civil/political society are crucial

determinants of whether women take up leadership roles in times of conflict. Most often, a reassertion of the older social structure takes place because a wider redistribution of material resources (such as property, control of resources, means of production etc.) does not take place. In most cases thereofore women's leadership ends up being a temporary, "fire-fighting" response to situations of stress and rupture.

However, there are many instances of women taking up and sustaining leadership roles during and post-conflict. This is crucially dependent on not just transformation of material resources, but also the kinds of networks through which women's initiative is initially organised. In case these networks of sociability and support can be sustained and generalised (such as in the spheres of civil and political society), women's leadership can outlast the duration of the conflict itself.

Key lessons and opportunities:

- Conflicts disturb stabilised social structures and thus open up space for emergence of new leaderships. For women, this is a double-edged sword: conflicts can both create space for women to emerge as leaders, but can also lead to backlash and reinforcement of patriarchal oppression.

- Women's leadership is conditioned by wider conditions of social reproduction and prevailing normative values. Thus, women's leadership can also draw upon essentialised notions of "femininity" and "motherhood", which often leads it to be a "fire-fighting response" i.e. women's leadership in the community is asserted in times of crisis but then traditional norms are asserted once conditions move back towards some kind of "normality".

- The key determinant of the longevity, effectiveness, and sustainability of women's leadership in conflict are the material

resources and networks they are able to draw upon. In situations where conflicts result in substantive redistribution of material resources (such as property), women's leadership is more effective and sustainable. In the absence of such, "fire-fighting" responses become more prevalent.

- Existing social networks and capacities are crucial determinants of whether women's leadership is asserted during conflict. Women mobilise different types of networks, for example according to their educational or occupational status, and/or existing levels of women's public involvement in a community. These networks are crucial in determining the specific form of mobilisation (i.e. direct action, advocacy etc.) and effectiveness of women's leadership.

- Building of social networks and capacities is essential for sustaining women's leadership in conflict and post-conflict situations. Different types of capacities can be built, including building community confidence/solidarity and more advocacy-focussed forms of activism. This kind of capacity and network-building must happen in times of no conflict, through initiatives such as women's community centers, which may then potentially be mobilised during conflict.

- Specific trainings with regard to women's role in conflict and as peace-makers can be incorporated in CSO activities and programs. Interaction of women community leaders with state institutions (such as police), and understanding the norms and procedures therein, is one avenue. These will not only help build women leaders' networks (to be mobilised in times of conflict), but can also help build greater gender sensitisation among security institutions.
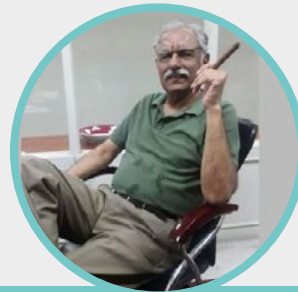
> " Two factors have increased the role of women in spreading extremism. One, the growing trend of female empowerment globally and the increased role of internet in radicalization, making it easier to work from home. This calls for greater involvement of women in not only in CVE policy formulation but also in its implementation, by recruiting more women in organizations dealing with CVE. "

Tariq Parvez
Former Head of NACTA
and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)

Women in Security Sector, Law Enforcement and Policy-Making

Over the last decade, state priorities have been shifting when it comes to violent extremist organisations. At one level, this is related to the shifts in post-9/11 geopolitics. In Pakistan, these changes have followed an uneven path. The historical patronage of fundamentalist groups by the state came under great pressure from mid-2000s onwards and the horrifying Army Public School Attack in Peshawar in 2014 saw public opinion turn firmly against fundamentalist violence. In this context, different state actors – especially the security establishment – have taken steps to dissociate (even if not completely) with religious fundamentalist groups and curtail their influence. This is through an increased proactiveness when it comes to minority protection (e.g. in the Aasia Bibi blasphemy case), military operations, and an effort to curb militant groups through inducement to enter the "mainstream" of Pakistani politics.

Considering this shift, it is interesting to note the progress made with regard to incorporation (or lack thereof) of a gender-specific agenda in the responses to conflict. An activist who has served on the KP Commission for the Status of Women put it well: "the problem in Pakistan is that we always want to portray them [women] as victims." As such, there has been a focus on mere passive deliverance of "aid" to women (and that too in a highly flawed manner). Governmental schemes have often led to reinforcement of "traditional" gender roles. For example, as described previously, the compensation policy for victims of terrorist attacks has been of limited efficacy. In turn, this has left to large numbers of women from affected communities (such as the Hazara) being left in highly precarious conditions, and even more vulnerable to gendered violence.

Conversely, this has also been effected in the lack of gender-sensitive voices in security institutions and policy-making, and devaluing women's agency when

"Making Pakistan and particularly KP gender sensitive will go a long way in helping the females overcome what are the daily hurdles of their life. By introducing female representation in parliamentary boards of political parties to sensitizing the public to gender violence to setting up women desks in police stations there is a lot that needs to be done. A good start would be increased visibility of women in politics, sports and the civil service, all traditionally male dominated areas."

Samar Bilour
Member Provincial Assembly KP

it comes to conflict. Limited recognition of women as autonomous agents has also led to overlooking of women's potential contribution to security policy-making. For example, women represent only 2% of total police officers in Pakistan, with Balochistan province – a major center of extremist violence – only having 0.48% participation of female police officers, and Gilgit-Baltistan (3.1%) having the highest percentage – other provinces hover around the 2% range (DAWN April 26, 2017). Fundamental structural barriers remain to fostering of women's leadership and capacity. The most prominent issue here is the attitude of male police officers, who often do not take female colleagues seriously. The reluctance to include female colleagues in key decisions excludes the incorporation of gender-sensitive to conflict amelioration and prevention.

Relatedly, the high barriers of entry to women also prevents the formation of "role models" who can inspire other women. Such exclusion also acts in other ways. For example, several female respondents from policy-making and security circles mentioned that "female complex" operates in a male-dominated society. By this they meant that due to issues of personal insecurity, there is intense competition among females in the domain. Combined with general negative attitudes of men, this leads to psychological pressure and creating hurdles through tactics such as character assassination, office politics etc.

Similarly, these negative personal attitudes combine with wider structural barriers. For example, women narrated handling and feeling the burden of multiple responsibilities. As several respondents narrated, female officers often actively avoid being involved in field jobs and key decisions with regard to security policy and implementation. Thus, a combination of both internalised insecurity of female officers, patriarchal attitudes within institutions, and pressures on female workers from other spheres (such as family and household responsibilities).

Other institutional issues also prevent effective female participation. Flexibility in terms of maternity leave policy was highlighted. Similarly, one respondent pointed out that even a seemingly small addition such as having female-specific restrooms in police stations can make women feel welcome. Related to the above, there is a need to have more female experts trained in conducting CVE research and approaches in the field, and developing policy guidelines specific to the field.

Respondents also identified a crucial lack of women-friendly public spaces in wider society. This in turn leads to a lack of public sociability among women and issues of mistrust and leg-pulling when translated into higher, institutional spheres. Both active female politicians and those involved in security institutions recommended the institution of womens' community centers at local level.

Key lessons and opportunities:

- There are indications of a shift in state policy and wider societal attitudes in Pakistan towards reigning in and dealing with violent extremist groups. This has been manifested in various measures such as police and military operations, attempts to curb hate speech, and defanging these groups' militancy through incorporation into mainstream politics.

- A gender-sensitive approach to security and countering violent extremism is sorely lacking. This is manifested at various levels including compensation schemes for women victims of extremism, policy-making and implementation, and in institutional barriers to women's participation.

- While women are increasingly active in policy-making and the state bureaucracy, this is less so the case in the security sphere. Women face institutional barriers – ranging from negative attitudes to detrimental policies around leaves – to full participation in security institutions such as the police.

> " Efforts to come up with a holistic, robust CVE framework will be ineffectual if women, who happen to be lead actors in shaping the direction of a society at the micro and macro levels, are left out of the discourse. CVE is a process that demands inclusivity, participation, and a diverse set of views, things that women bring to the table. The inclusion of women will only streamline and harness the country's CVE campaign. Ignoring them is not an option. "

Dr. Rabia Akhtar
Director Center for Security, Strategy and Policy Research (CSSPR)

- There is also a lack of women experts in areas of social cohesion and violent extremism. Lack of women "role models" in key policy-making positions and in security institutions also discourages younger women who might potentially work in these areas. This compounds the lack of inclusion of female voices and gender-sensitive perspectives in security policy.

- Women-friendly public spaces in wider society (such as community centers) can help build trust among women, and among women and state officials. This can help in womens' greater interaction among themselves and gaining confidence for tackling public problems. Female members of state bureaucracy and police can also interact with community members more easily in these spaces, providing more opportunity for women role models to develop in these domains.

- State led policies on engagement of women in public affairs need better implementation strategies for fruitful results.

What have we learned?

The overall analysis shows that a number of structural and sustainable interventions are required to fully realise the potential of women to contribute to domains such as community cohesion, resilience, security, policy making and other decision-making platforms. Following are some of the recommendations emanating from this study that should be considered by a range of stakeholders including governmental and non-governmental bodies.

Shift from 'Gender sensitisation' to 'Gender responsive' and 'Gender Balance' approach:

- Interventions have generally focused on 'sensitisation' of state functionaries and other stakeholders about gender related issues, through ad hoc donor-funded trainings. While the underlying assumption is that trainings alone can result in a change in behaviour, there is little independent evidence to show its impact. A shift is required from 'gender sensitisation' approach towards ensuring greater gender balance in public and private institutions and improving their organisational processes, rules and regulations.

- The state must lead the way in this direction. All pillars of the state must take affirmative action to increase the number of women among their ranks. The recruitment processes should be reviewed to ensure women applicants are not discriminated against and are given preference. Women's recruitment should become part of the mandate and performance evaluations of HR sections of all state institutions.

- State institutions should eliminate discrimination on gender basis in promotions and pay scales. Women should not be confined to gender specific roles, but
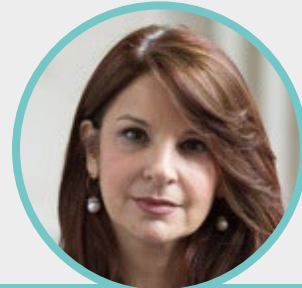
> " Women play a complex role in violent extremism: both as VE actors as well as social enablers for community resilience against VE. There is however a lack of understanding of drivers of VE in women in Pakistan and there is insufficient empirical data on women radicalization. "

Dr. Simbal Khan
CVE Specialist

encouraged to take on mainstream tasks. Infrastructure and other essential facilities, such as separate washrooms, restrooms, adequate paid maternity leave, and flexible work hours for women, should be promoted to achieve better work-life balance.

Economic empowerment and financial independence:

- Fulfilment of women's leadership potential requires financial security and independence. The government must ensure equitable opportunities for women in higher education and increase women's participation in work force. The equitable distribution of inheritance must be ensured and legislation brought to recognise the unpaid household work of women.

Perceptions on the role of women:

- The perceptions around the role of women in society remain regressive. Efforts such as advocacy campaigns, curriculum reforms, media and entertainment regulations are needed to ensure equitable and non-discriminatory depiction of women in popular discourse. Women leaders should be introduced as role models equally capable of performing tasks that are otherwise exclusively with male counterparts.

Enforcement of non-discriminatory and women protection laws:

- A number of pro-women laws have been promulgated in the last two decades in Pakistan such as the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, 2006 and Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act (2010). These laws are however seldom applied and both citizens as well as frontline law enforcement personnel are largely unaware of them. Capacity

building of law enforcement personnel and awareness-raising among citizens is required to improve the effectiveness of these laws.

Safe public spaces for women:

- Safe spaces are critical for women to feel part of public life and access educational and work opportunities. All stakeholders, including civil society organisations, state institutions, and the international development sector must join hands to make public spaces more inclusive and women friendly. This includes steps such as the provision of street lights to taking strict action against harassment and intimidation.

Supporting change makers:

- Social change happens through complex and multidimensional struggle. It is ultimately the people who challenge the prevalent system and shape it for the better. Women, who take up the cause of gender equality, whether as activists or proponents of financial independence, are at the forefront of such social change. Greater synergies should be developed to support these women so that they can inspire others to follow suit.

- Reduced gender disparities and enhanced agency can result in greater protection for women and girls during social conflict. Economic resilience and empowerment initiatives can give women the necessary voice in decision-making at household level which in turn allows women's concerns about safety and protection during disharmony to be addressed and measures to be taken for protection from violence.

- Advocacy and campaigns debunking patriarchal attitudes and enhancing the rights of women and girls can mitigate impact of disruption in social cohesion on women and

girls. However, caution must be exercised to not strengthen any patriarchal notions that result in violence against women and girls in contexts of conflict in the first place. For example: campaigns along the lines that 'women are our mothers, sisters, daughters etc.' reinforce patriarchal notions which feed into violence in conflict situations to 'dishonour' families and communities.

- Accountability measures can be institutionalized to pre-empt any disruptions in community harmony in order to protect women and girls. For example, Inter-Faith Councils established at provincial and district levels in Punjab can be engaged to resolve conflicts between religious minorities before these conflicts escalate into violence. Engagement of existing governmental support structures with necessary gender and peace perspectives can create accountability mechanisms to pre-empt conflicts' escalation.

- A robust accountability mechanism against hate speech targeting marginalized and vulnerable groups should be ensured by the state. The accountability mechanism should adopt a preventive approach by prosecuting hate speech and speeches inciting violence before such speeches result in violence. There is great danger here of surveillance mechanisms being used to target vulnerable groups such as women and/or curb basic freedoms (such as of speech and association). There needs to be greater research (especially in the Pakistani context) on how gender-inclusive cybersecurity measures may be developed which can tackle hate speech issues, without impinging on basic freedoms and on the rights of already vulnerable groups such as women and minorities.

- Representation and participation of women is necessary in all support structures,

> " There is a dire need to evolve from a hyper-masculinized vision of counterterrorism, recognizing women's agency independent of gender biases; the current vision is not equipped to respond to the ever-evolving security landscape of the country. "
>
> Sheharyar Khan
> Conflict and P/CVE Expert

committees etc. established by the government to promote peace and pluralism. Particularly, women from marginalized groups like religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, should be given representation on all such governmental bodies. Women's voices are essential in peace related interventions to highlight the disproportionate gendered impact of disharmony and what steps can be taken to mitigate that impact.

- Reform and regulation of curriculum in formal and informal educational settings to transform deeply engrained mind-sets justifying violent extremism. As women and girls are disproportionately impacted by violent extremism, it is pertinent to induct them as change-makers in the process to not only transform narratives but also infuse gender perspectives in security-related matters.

- A gendered approach to civic education for communities is vital to strengthen not only social contract between women and the state but also increase participation of women in state matters. Political empowerment of women at community level instills greater focus on women and girls' rights and generates democratic accountability. This in turn brings forth women's issues in incidents of disharmony and accountability of elected leaders in preventing and prosecuting perpetrators of violence.

- Capacity building for civil society organisations on peace building should be gender focused. Alternative discourses advocated and campaigned to counter violent extremist narratives should be gender sensitive. For example, promoting indigenous ethnic precepts in a peacebuilding initiative runs the risk of condoning traditional patriarchal practices, like deprivation from inheritance.

Therefore, capacity building for CSOs along gender lines is necessary to complement other initiatives.

- Organisation and mobilization of women networks at community levels to demand their basic rights and hold duty bearers accountable. Strengthening social contract between women and the state is a necessary ingredient to counter violent extremism and close gender gaps.

- Reviving women friendly indigenous practices across Pakistan to promote diversity, inclusivity and pluralism for women and marginalized groups in Pakistan. Promoting women's voices and giving visibility to women in cultural tones is essential to challenging extremist narratives that negatively impact women and girls.

- Support capacity building of media and entertainment industries to promote messages of equality, diversity, religious harmony and inclusivity to highlight pluralism and challenge 'hegemonic narratives' about citizens in general and women in particular as an alternative discourse to radicalization.

Recommendations for Legislators

Equality of all citizens is the cornerstone of social cohesion and harmony. From a state perspective, discrimination against citizens on the basis of sex, gender, religion, caste, creed creates power structures that perpetuate disharmony and conflict. In this regard, it is pertinent to amend the Constitution of Pakistan 1973[1] to reflect equality of all citizens before the law and Constitution and end the disenfranchisement meted out to minorities, especially women.

- Autonomous Commissions serve as important human rights institutions to protect the rights of vulnerable groups. In this regard, legislative interventions for statutory Commissions, to protect the rights of religious/sectarian/ethnic minorities, at federal and provincial levels, are necessary to ensure that any incidents of conflicts are responded to by responsible and seasoned members of Commission. This would ensure that the conflict does not exacerbate into violent extremism.[2]

- Political stakeholders can also promote social cohesion by aggravating criminal charges and punishments where elements of violent extremism are involved. Therefore, a differentiation in the Pakistan Penal Code between 'committing assault against a fellow citizen' and 'committing assault against a member of religious/sectarian/

> " Our society is very controlling of women. We cannot even grow our nails with our choice. In my family, if I grow my nails, my brother brings a nail cutter and asks my mother to make me cut my nails. "
>
> Andaleeb Inam
> A student from Swat

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1 Articles 41(2) and 91(3) stipulate that the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan can only be a Muslim. Political stakeholders, Parliamentarians and Members of Provincial Assemblies can start a dialogue and political advocacy to amend the Constitution of Pakistan in order to promote social cohesion, harmony and gender equality.

2 This recommendation was also highlighted by Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jillani in S.M.C. No. 1 of 2014 and others in relation to the suicide attack on church in Peshawar and other incidents of disharmony and conflicts. Furthermore, the Commissions should statutorily include adequate representation of women from religious minorities to put forward their needs and vulnerabilities.

> "We claim that education is increasing for girls but do girls have a choice what to study? After I finished my FSc, I wanted to study Science but one of my male cousins decided that I should not study Science anymore. I had to switch to arts and did my BA instead of BSc."

Sidrah Akbar
A student from Swat

ethnic minority due to his or her identity' is necessary. The latter instance could include stricter punishment for the crime being motivated by or a manifestation of violent extremism. The same principle can be applied to the offence or murder in order to bypass provisions of qisas and diyat and making murder of a member of a minority an offence against the state rather than an offence against an individual. Similarly, acts of sexual and gender based violence, meted out against women and girls from minorities, should attract harsher punishments owing to their vulnerability and multiple discrimination faced by them.

- Political participation of religious minorities, in particular women from religious minorities, remains another prominent issue impeding groups from affecting real social change. In this regard, the 'joint electorate' system for religious minorities does not represent their concerns. Even though religious minorities can participate in the general elections, the religious minorities 'selected' on reserved seats in the Legislatures are mere puppets of majority winning political parties and do not adequately address the issues of the communities they represent. Therefore, in order to increase political participation of women from religious minorities, it is pertinent for concerted political advocacy to amend Articles 51 and 106 of the Constitution to i) introduce a dual-vote casting system where the members of religious minorities would be allowed to vote members on reserved seats; ii) increase reserved seats for women from religious minorities to represent their issues on political platforms.

- Forced conversions are one of the worst manifestations of violent extremism in form of gender-based violence. Political stakeholders can address the issue by advocating for a

law to criminalise and regulate instances of forced conversions. Violations like forced conversions lie at the intersection of gender and disharmony, therefore, it is crucial to address such violations in order to mitigate the gendered ramifications of breakdown in social cohesion. While efforts made by the Sindh Assembly to criminalise and regulate forced conversions were rolled back, it is necessary for political stakeholders to keep the debate alive and move for legislative actions to protection women and girls from religious minorities when possible.

- Increase in child marriage is a by-product of conflict and disharmony in communities most affected. Therefore, criminalising child marriage should be prioritised by political stakeholders to reduce such violations of the rights of the girl child and ensure that bodily integrity, right to education, health and welfare of the girl child is protected.

- Political advocacy at provincial level for affirmative actions for women in general and women from religious minorities (scheduled castes) in particular, in local government legislation can provide strategic avenues for issues of conflict or disharmony to be resolved at community level by all religious factions of community. Mediation powers given to local government institutions coupled with representation from religious minority community can assist in responding to conflict and tensions in a conciliatory manner, thereby, avoiding escalation into violent extremism.

- Political advocacy to amend provincial textbook and curriculum board laws to include members from religious minorities communities, especially women, on their boards. Inclusion of women from religious minorities in the board for curriculum

" Our society has different rules for boys and girls. A boy can go outside his house at any time without asking permission. A girl has to ask if she can go, she has to tell the reason for going, where she is going, how she is going and what time will she come back. Even then she cannot go alone and in some cases not even allowed to go if her reason for going out is considered unimportant by men of the family. "

Shawkat Bibi
A house maker from Swat

development will ensure both gender sensitisation as well as pluralism in the curriculum. Giving decision making powers to members of religious minority women will also lead to a curriculum which is reflective of the land's diversity and pluralism. Proactive role can also be played by religious minorities included in the curriculum board to document in school syllabus the contributions made by non-Muslim Pakistanis for the country.

- Political advocacy to amend Election Act 2017, institutionalising affirmative action for women from religious minorities in political parties, can enhance meaningful political participation from religious minorities communities to push their communities' agenda within party manifestos.

- Sensitisation regarding violent extremism, its roots and manifestations, is important for all political stakeholders. Political stakeholders can bring meaningful change by passing resolutions in Assemblies acknowledging and appreciating contributions by religious minorities, women and other marginalised groups. Celebrating indigenous cultural traditions like Vaisakhi, Holi, Nowruz and others can promote social cohesion and harmony.

Recommendations for Policy Makers:

While the accountability mechanism is certainly necessary, we also need to bear in mind that laws governing alleged "fake news" and online media have been used to restrict freedom of expression and tighten censorship during the COVID-19 pandemic. More and more governments across the region have adopted digital surveillance and contact tracing applications. The distinct consequences of digital surveillance and contact tracing for women and girls must be addressed, violations of their human rights prevented, and avenues for women human rights defenders to continue their work in the digital space

protected. (Pls see Action Brief: Women, Peace & (Cyber) Security in Asia and the Pacific)

- Several findings above attest to the disenfranchisement of women, and women of minorities in particular. State officials are often not sensitized to women's oppression or to exercise of their agency, which can lead them to underestimate and ignorance when it comes to dealing with gendered crimes such as sexual harassment and rape. The Study has revealed that sexual and other gender-based violence against women and girls in areas of conflict is largely unreported and invisible due to gendered notions of honour. Hence there is a need for gender sensitisation of state institutions to strengthen social contract between marginalized women and state functionaries like law enforcement agencies; thereby ensuring that the impact of disruption in social harmony on women and girls is reduced and mitigated.

- The Federal Government can utilise the Ehsaas Programme to promote social cohesion in communities that they have suffered from disharmony and conflict by allocating resources towards families, communities and societies within Pakistan that are re-building themselves post-conflict. The gender conscious approach of Ehsaas Programme targeting women as beneficiaries can not only promote social cohesion through women's economic empowerment but also redress grievance of disenfranchised marginalised groups.

- The religious Fatwas such as "Paigham e Pakistan"(the message of Pakistan) and "Dukhtaraan e Pakistan" (the daughters of Pakistan) serve as strong counter narrative to terrorist's ideologies of violence against women. These two documents effectively challenge the terrorist's narratives with

respect to the rights and privileges of women under Islam, constitution and the cultural values of Pakistan. These narratives need to be promoted by the Federal and Provincial Governments, civil society organisations and parliamentarians as they grant the women of Pakistan their rightful share in the society. The references to the rights of minorities and marginalised communities in Paigham-e-Pakistan should be made part of the national curriculum including madaris so that these values as espoused by Islam are deeply ingrained in the psyche of the nation as true Islamic values.

- The national security and internal security conceptual framework must include gender and empowerment as a critical theme and focus area so that the violence against women is neither legitimized nor accepted as a norm by the extremists and terrorist organisations. The absence of state policies that accommodate women as partner in development and security gives license to extremists to impose their world view and define the status of women in Pakistan. The concept of human security and national security are incomplete without participation of women as active members of the society. There is a need for study on gender dimensions in National Security policies and counter terrorism action plan including CVE initiatives in the country so that appropriate interventions are made for gender mainstreaming.

- Accountability measures can be institutionalized to pre-empt any disruptions in community harmony in order to protect women and girls. For example, human rights bodies like the Inter-Faith Councils being established at provincial and district levels in Punjab by the government can be engaged to resolve any conflicts between religious

"That violent extremism in our society is also attributed to the lack of awareness among women and men about their rights and responsibilities. In our area, women accept violence and harassment at the hands of men because they think they must have done something wrong for which they have been subjected to non-acceptable behavior. Sensitization of women and men on gender roles is important, it will take time but it needs to be started."

Shahi Begum
A Lady Health Supervisor

minorities before these conflicts exacerbate into incidents of violence. Engagement of existing governmental support structures with necessary gender and peace perspectives can create accountability mechanisms at district and provincial levels to pre-empt any conflicts before they manifest into incidents of violent extremism.

- A robust accountability mechanism against hate speech targeting marginalized and vulnerable groups should be ensured by the government to effectively reduce and prevent incidents of violent extremism. The accountability mechanism should adopt a preventive approach by prosecuting hate speech and speeches inciting violence before such speeches result in violence.

- Representation and participation of women is necessary in all support structures, committees, councils etc. established by the government to promote peace and pluralism. Particularly, women belonging from marginalized groups like religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, should be given representation on governmental bodies promoting peace and pluralism. Women's voices are essential for any peace related interventions to highlight the disproportionate impact of disharmony on women and girls and what steps can be taken to mitigate that impact.

- Reform and regulation of curriculum in formal and informal educational settings to transform deeply engrained mind-sets and attitudes justifying violent extremism in the name of religion, ethnicity, nationalism etc. As women and girls are disproportionately impacted by violent extremism, it is pertinent to induct them as change-makers in the process to not only transform narratives but also infuse gender perspectives in security-

related matters.

- Support capacity building of media and entertainment to promote messages of equality, diversity, religious harmony and inclusivity to highlight pluralism and challenge 'hegemonic narratives' about citizens in general and women in particular as an alternative discourse to radicalization.

- Government functionaries should make a conscious effort to implement all women-related legislation to promote gender equality and close gender gaps. Reduced gender parities can serve to decrease the incidents of gender-based violence (forced conversions, child marriages etc.) birthing from violent extremism.

- Social cohesion can also be promoted by the federal and provincial governments by protecting religious and spiritual sites of religious minorities. Furthermore, gestures like announcing government holidays on major events of religious minorities can go a long way in giving a message of social cohesion and harmony. The governments should also undertake to provide security for celebrations of religious minorities.

- Use affirmative action to ensure gender balance in all State Institutions (Executive, Judiciary and legislation)[3]

- A greater focus on changing perceptions of women's role in the security domain at societal, community and family level to encourage more women joining security related fields. Greater conscription of women in security related fields results in a state functionary becoming more responsive to the needs and issues of women.

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3   Due to the orientation of our research we are focusing mainly on Police and LEAs.

- Infrastructure needs for women in security related fields should be addressed to create a conducive environment for working women. Government offices and police stations need to be equipped and provided with adequate infrastructure for proper functioning of working women, for example: separate washrooms, staff room or rest room, and day care for children amongst other things..

- Flexible working arrangements should be encouraged for women in security-related fields. During the course of the research, it was observed that there was no regular system of work time table where some duty timings extended to 16-18 hours. This demotivates women from joining security-related fields therefore a flexible working arrangement with fixed time table would be beneficial to encourage women joining such area of work.

- Deductions in allowance during maternity leaves also negatively impacts women working in security related work. According to the Study's findings, women police are entitled to 90 days of maternity leaves. However, total ten thousand rupees are deducted in case of maternity leaves (pick and drop allowance). This deduction negatively effects their monthly domestic expenditures.

- National Police Bureau (NPB) should devise a National Gender Strategy for Police and coordinate effective implementation of the gender strategy through advocacy with provincial Inspector Generals of Police. NBP should constitute an implementation committee with due representation from provincial police forces to facilitate implementation of gender responsive plans of action at provincial levels.

- Provincial Home Departments should review

and standardise recruitment requirements, create more sanctioned posts for women, conduct awareness-raising, outreach and support to women to encourage them to apply and take measures to tackle the dominant male culture to make it a more comfortable and accepting environment for women officers in police force.

- Special measures should be taken to ensure women are not confined to gender-based policing roles and are given adequate training, support and experience to be mainstreamed throughout the police and also recommends addressing the training issues identified to ensure women officers have the necessary skills, experience and confidence to progress.

- Proper medical facilities should be available to both police men and police women. Currently, there is inadequate health insurance/dispensary or first aid treatment equipment in police stations for staff.

Recommendations for Civil Society Organisations

- Economic resilience and empowerment initiatives can reduce existing gender disparities in communities as per the findings of the Study. Reduced gender disparities and enhanced agency of women can result in greater protection for women and girls during any disruptions in harmony. Economic resilience and empowerment initiatives can give women the necessary voice in decision making at household level which in turn allows women's concerns about safety and protection during disharmony to be addressed and measures to be taken to protect women and girls from violence.

- Pre-existing gender disparities can also be reduced through a proactive role of the national and provincial CSOs regarding the

rights of women and girls. Advocacy and campaign debunking patriarchal thought processes and enhancing the rights of women and girls can mitigate impact of disruption in social cohesion on women and girls. However, caution must be exercised to not strengthen any patriarchal notions that result in violence against women and girls in contexts of conflicts in the first place. For example: campaigns along the lines that 'women are our mothers, sisters, daughters etc' reinforce notions of women belonging to men which in turn results in high incidence of violence in order to 'dishonour' families and communities.

● A gendered approach to civic education for communities is vital to strengthen not only social contract between women and the state but also increase political participation of women in state matters. Political empowerment of women at community level instills greater focus on women and girls rights and generates democratic accountability by women as a 'constituency' of their elected leaders; thereby bringing forth women's issues and susceptibility in incidents of disharmony and accountability of elected leaders in preventing and prosecuting perpetrators of violence.

● Capacity building for civil society organisations on peace building should be gender focused in order to ensure that peacebuilding initiatives are not only promoting peace but also reducing gender disparities. Alternative discourses advocated and campaigned to counter violent extremist narratives should be gender sensitive. For example, promoting indigenous ethnic precepts in a peacebuilding initiative runs the risk of condoning traditional practices of violence against women, like deprivation from inheritance. Therefore, capacity building for CSOs along gender lines

is necessary to complement other initiatives to reduce violence against women and girls.

● Organisation and mobilization of women networks at community levels to demand their basic rights and hold duty bearers accountable. Strengthening social contract between women and the state is a necessary ingredient to counter violent extremism and close gender gaps. Decrease in gender disparities will result in decrease in gender based violence in contexts of conflicts and violent extremism.

● Reviving women friendly indigenous practices across Pakistan to promote diversity, inclusivity and pluralism for women and marginalized groups in Pakistan. Promoting women's voices and giving visibility to women garbed in cultural tones is essential to challenging extremist narratives that negatively impact women and girls.

Program Development Recommendations for UN WOMEN

● Intersectionality is important to inform activities linked to social cohesion. Breakdown in social cohesion impacts women, girls, boys, transgender persons and members from religious minorities differently. The pre-existing gender inequalities and power relations are huge determinants with regards to the violence manifested upon breakdown in social cohesion. Therefore, interventions related to gender equality and VAWG, even without any focus on conflict, are important to reduce gender disparities and mitigate the extreme forms of violence resulting from community disharmony.

● Multiple identities of beneficiaries, especially with regards to women, girls and transgender persons from minority communities, are important to strategize for during project

implementation. In line with the 'Do No Harm Principle', all activities designed need to be implemented in a manner to ensure that the safety of women, girls and project staff are not jeopardised in any manner. In this regard, it is essential to conduct a gender analysis documenting gender relations, access and control over resources, laws, support structures etc in the proposed geographical area of intervention to devise informed programme strategies in line with the 'Do No Harm Principle'.

- Identify women change makers who can promote communty harmony and social cohesion. These women can serve as strategic points of contact for project implementation in select districts. Women change makers with leadership roles within their communities can bring the necessary community perspective to project implementation and devise advocacy, keeping in mind the cultural, ethnic, religious, sectarian etc sensitivities. For example, power structures within the family could also be a good starting to promote women leadership and social cohesion within families. Grandmothers and older women within families have more power as compared to young women and girls. Older women can also be targeted to transform attitudes and behaviour and pave the way for young women and girls to take up leadership roles.

- Building upon the previous point, it is imperative to acknowledge male family members and male supporters within the family. Generally, most of initiatives focusing on inequality and discrimination against women have been fixated on men as perpetrators of discrimination and subordination of women. Attaining gender equality should be recognised as a societal responsibility and fully engage men as

partners in achieving the goal. This will also have an added advantage of bridging the trust between women and parents (as discussed on page 9).

- There is a need to develop networks of male allies who have come out in support for gender equality and against male violence against women. Moreover, these men have actively challenged existing stereotypes and men's roles in perpetuating regressive sexual relationships. Taking these male allies onboard, advocacy campaigns and programmes emphasizing the need for men to change their attitudes and behaviours to order to improve the situation of women should be developing, highlighting the positive role of men as partners and allies in building a more gender equal and responsive society.

- Mapping of human rights related support structures and mechanisms across Pakistan to identify strategic entry points to promote social cohesion and women's leadership. Post devolution, each province has its own set of committees and support structures in relation to human rights, rights of religious minorities, rights of women, inter-faith harmony etc. A mapping of the existing structures with an analysis of their terms of reference or statutory mandate can be a good starting point to identify relevant governmental structures that can be utilised for maximum outreach till grass root level. Linkages with relevant governmental structures can be established through capacity building incentives and consultative meetings for not only greater outreach in social cohesion initiatives but also strengthening public-private partnership.

- Capacity building of state institutions with mediation powers, like Village Councils,

Neighbourhood Councils, Dispute Resolution Councils etc, can serve an important function of mitigating community incidents that can exacerbate into violence. Capacity building of community leaders and state institutions who are the first point of contact or first responders to incidents can also transform power structures to make these structures more responsive to values of harmony and cohesion.

- Various existing CSO platforms working directly on women's leadership or social cohesion can be harnessed for project implementation. In order to ensure efficient allocation of resources and time, it is pertinent to synergise project implementation efforts with existing initiatives and platforms. Creating synergies would therefore not only generate greater community ownership but also result in sustainability in relation to the critical mass of change makers capacitated in the process.

- Campaigns and advocacy for the programme should be rooted in local indigenous schools of thought and enlightened religious interpretations in respect of social cohesion and women's leadership. Each province of Pakistan has a history of Sufism promoting phrases that negate toxic masculinity and male power and are messages that resonate with the general masses. Therefore, campaigns and advocacy should be developed after thorough research on progressive religious interpretations and Sufi thoughts with a gender lens to effectively promote social cohesion and women's leadership.

- A mechanism for the program to track shifts in power structures is essential to integrate an Early Warning System. Shifts in power relations and social hierarchy are important indicators leading to community disharmony,

however, it is important to note the shift in power relations is patriarchal at both ends. According to the Study, tools and form of patriarchy change in light of the altering power relations, for example, from Maliks and Khans to Maulvis in case of tribal areas.

- Identity politics and the role of multiple identities impacting the lives of women has been another important finding of this Study. In this regard, it is important to devise project strategies keeping in mind the ethnic and linguistic identities of the beneficiaries and what messages would be responsive to the targeted beneficiaries in question.