Empowering women for peaceful communities:

Evidence from Indonesia
and Bangladesh

Monash University
Gender, Peace & Security

UN WOMEN

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RESEARCH BRIEF

This project begins from the premise that **women can be powerful partners in fighting violent extremism**. It investigates the impact that women's economic empowerment and their leadership and participation in local communities can have on social cohesion and efforts to challenge extremist ideology and related violence. It also seeks to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of the causes of violent extremism, ways in which to best prevent and counter its threat, and the extent to which individuals see themselves and their communities as having a role in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE).

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

1 **Greater individual empowerment:**

People in UN Women programme sites demonstrated greater empowerment with respect to both confidence in joining P/CVE initiatives or reporting violent extremism and knowledge of what to do to counter or prevent violent extremism. This self-efficacy was also a strong predictor of support for P/CVE initiatives, for trust in various institutions – the police, government, media, law courts – and for stronger reasoned disagreement for the use of violence to address socio-economic inequalities. Women and men were more confident in engaging in PVE initiatives and aware of the positive impact they had.

2 **Increased awareness:**

Women in the four programme sites in both Bangladesh and Indonesia were much more aware than women in non-programme sites of the problem of violent extremism and how their roles in the family and in community could contribute to P/CVE. Women in the non-programme sites had experience with community engagement and with some gender equality issues but they did not recognise the connection between these and PVE, and so were less aware of the role they had and could have in PVE.

3 **Economic empowerment:**

Both women and men in the programme sites recognised that the economic empowerment of women decreased tensions within the family and community and thereby contributed to more peaceful and resilient societies.

4 **Community engagement:**

Across research sites in Bangladesh and Indonesia, women and men underscored the important role of communities and families in P/CVE. They particularly stressed the important role of mothers as being on the frontlines of P/CVE. Related to this was general agreement that increased awareness within families and communities of violent extremism and how it can be prevented was critical to the success of P/CVE efforts. Given 'aloofness' was frequently said to be an indicator of potential development of extremist attitudes or behaviours, the increased awareness and opportunities for community engagement, outreach and inclusion provided by the UN Women programme is especially important.

1. INTRODUCTION: LINKING WOMEN'S AGENCY AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The role of women in preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE) is often ignored and underestimated. Counterterrorism efforts across the world have given short shrift to the idea that women can also represent an untapped resource in the fight against extremism and radicalization. This despite the fact that women are uniquely placed to effectively challenge extremist narratives in homes, schools, and societies the world over. They also wield influence over some of the most vulnerable segments of the population to radicalization, namely youth.

In fact, women seeking to build peace and tolerance and prevent extremism are often caught between repressive governments on one hand and extremist groups on the other. One respondent to the civil society survey for the Global Study on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), based in Libya, went so far as to state:

''

Women's groups are trapped between terrorism and countering terrorism ... working in very dangerous context[s] where terrorists [exist] and on the other hand their chances to deliver their voice ... [are] shrinking in the name of countering terrorism.

(UN Women 2015, 224).

Despite international calls to include women in peacebuilding and reconstruction, women remain marginalized in these processes, often presented as "subjects, not agents, and their ways of knowing and being are ignored" (Brown 2013, 51). Thus, their experiences and expertise are side-lined and the shrinking of space for civil society discourse and activism continues to hinder outreach to women (Giscard d'Estaing, 2017).

1.1 The UN Women approach: Empowered women, peaceful communities

In fact, women can play a vital role in preventing the spread of extremist ideology and activity. As community leaders, professionals, and as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters in family settings, women shape the values of their community members. Their roles are multifaceted and include shaping community and family values, influencing decision-making of potential recruits, identifying and intervening at the early signs of radicalization that lead to extremism. For instance, there are examples of female imams preaching religious

tolerance, women using different forms of media to promote counter-narratives and female police officers engaging with local communities to collect information.

However, gender discrimination and inequalities in the family and community may inhibit the full realisation of women's agency in P/CVE. Recognising women's agency, their depth and diversity in voices and experiences, and knowledge is fundamental to ensuring their rights and building more cohesive societies and sustainable peace. Thus, to effectively engage with the gendered dynamics of violent extremism and reverse its effect, prevention and response efforts must prioritize women's rights, empowerment, participation and leadership—both at the community level, as well as in national decision-making.

Linked to the goal of expanding and deepening the data-driven evidence base for programming, this report presents the main findings of an in-depth study that investigates the impact that women's economic empowerment and their leadership and participation in local communities can have on social cohesion and efforts to challenge extremist ideology and related violence. It contributes to an understanding of the perceptions of the causes of violent extremism, ways in which to best prevent and counter its threat, and the extent to which individuals see themselves and their communities as having a role in P/CVE. In the process, we identify how these perceptions differ within and between communities and, notably, between women and men. The ultimate aim is to shed light on how women's empowerment can directly contribute to communities being more cohesive, resilient and peaceful, whilst being less vulnerable to fundamentalist or violent ideologies.

2. UN WOMEN PROGRAMMING IN BANGLADESH AND INDONESIA

UN Women has focused in particular on communities at risk of radicalization in Bangladesh and Indonesia. In real terms, this has translated into support for regional programmes (i.e. strengthening the evidence base through investing in research studies on women and P/CVE across programme countries, convening knowledge sharing workshops and multilateral regional dialogues, promoting innovative initiatives that counter narratives of terrorist groups, etc.)[2], as well as country-level support for local partners and governments programmes that empower women in economic terms and enable their leadership and participation in local communities.

In Bangladesh, UN Women has partnered with BRAC, the largest non-governmental development organization in the world, to promote women's economic empowerment and to build their capacities to identify the early signs of radicalization of adults and children in their own communities, whilst finding solutions for prevention. For instance, UN Women currently supports BRAC initiatives to build women-owned and operated businesses. 600 women have received funding to start or expand their own businesses. In addition, UN Women supports a 'popular theatre' initiative that seeks to build awareness

of the importance of social cohesion and preventing violent extremism through theatre. To date, over 90,000 individuals have attended 226 community theatre shows, which promote messages of women's empowerment and community harmony.

In Indonesia, UN Women has worked closely with its local partner, the Wahid Foundation to administer and analyse a 2017 National Survey on the threat of radicalization among Muslim women and men. It has further provided technical support for a gender-sensitive National Action Plan to counter and prevent violent extremism. This includes identifying opportunities to promote the participation and leadership of women in P/CVE programmes. UN Women is also working with powerful national champions, such as President Joko Widodo and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Retno Marsudi, to promote women's empowerment and the role of women in P/CVE.

BOX 3.
LINKING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT WITH P/CVE

Prioritizing women's economic empowerment can have tangible impacts on their security. The 'Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities' regional programme was developed to test the idea that when women are empowered economically and part of decision-making in their communities, societies will be more cohesive, resilient and peaceful. Tying women's economic empowerment to P/CVE is a new idea for many, but one that could yield significant impact. Economic empowerment programmes are conceived as an entry point for engaging and bringing together women to increase their confidence, self-efficacy, and skills to take part in family decision-making and to resolve community problems and conflicts. While they may contribute to easing tensions within the home and community, women's economic empowerment programmes were not intended to address any perceived root causes of violent extremism, but designed as entry points to work with the community.

2.1 Enhancing the evidence-base: UN Women research and programming in Bangladesh and Indonesia

As part of UN Women's mission to support women's and community empowerment to prevent violent extremism, a research study was also simultaneously launched to monitor, evaluate and analyse the impact of this approach and generate lessons learned for future programming. The aim was to investigate whether and how the empowerment of women impacts efforts to promote tolerance and prevent and counter violent extremism. It was additionally important to assess whether and how programmes can help communities as a whole to be more cohesive and resilient and less vulnerable to fundamentalist or violent ideologies. The project further intends to illuminate how women's empowerment can directly contribute to efforts to prevent violent extremism and build more peaceful societies.

To assess impact, different community sites were compared within and between Bangladesh and Indonesia. This included two sites in both Bangladesh and Indonesia that had received support from UN Women's 'Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities' programme ("programme sites"), as well as one site each in both countries that had not received this or similar programming ("non-programme sites"). Six sites in total were studies, three in each country. In Bangladesh, the study was conducted in three locations: Dinajpur, Sathkhira and Rangpur. Dinajpur and Sathkhira are UN Women programme sites, whereas Rangpur is a non-programme site. In Indonesia, the three research sites were Klaten district (Central Java Province), Sumenep district (East Java Province) and Depok district (West Java Province). UN Women programme sites in Klaten and Sumenep were included in the research, while non-programme sites were selected in Depok.

3. CONTEXT: VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA AND BANGLADESH

Violent extremism linked to political groups has a fairly long history in Bangladesh and Indonesia, with globalising, trans-regional and geopolitical trends seeing an uptick in religious fundamentalism in both countries.

In post-authoritarian Indonesia, legacies of violence between different streams of political Islam have shaped the competition for political power. There have been seventeen terrorist attacks in the country since 2012 and a flourishing of groups committed to politico-religious changes by violent and non-violent means (True and Eddyono 2017). While there are diverse Islamic political parties and groups, right-wing parties tend to be associated with Islamic populism and violence (Hadiz 2018).

Political campaigns often involve different streams of political Islam and take place in the education sector, with Islamic boarding schools, universities and teachers affiliated with NU, Muhammadiyah, fundamentalist groups, and more secular state-based institutions competing for students, allegiances and power. In the context of the continuum between fundamentalism, extremism and violent extremism in Indonesia, it is important to note that political parties and non-state violent groups in Indonesia often organise around gender regressive agendas, including restricting women's movements and dress, hate speech and acts of gender-based violence (True and Eddyono 2017).

Meanwhile, the political state of Bangladesh developed in the context of widespread, religious-based political violence. Since taking power following Bangladesh's return to democratic rule in 1991, the Awami League has used state security forces to crack down on the opposition BNP and its Islamist affiliate, Jemaat-e-Islami. However, political reprisals, including the controversial execution of several Jemaat-e-Islami leaders, have spurred rioting and political violence from their supporters.

Like in Indonesia, upholding a patriarchal order is a key rallying point for many violent groups in Bangladesh. One example is the populist right wing Islamic party, Hefazat-e-Islam, which was formed to lobby against any moves to give Muslim women equal rights in inheritance or to reform the religious-led education sector (Griffiths and Hasan 2015). Indeed, as Goetz and Jenkins (2016) highlight, concessions to religious conservatives on issues affecting women, including inheritance, by state representatives has been a feature of Bangladeshi peace settlements over many decades.

Another similarity to Indonesia when examining violent extremism in Bangladesh is the role of religious educational institutions. Bangladesh has a large, privately-run but state-funded Islamic boarding school system, and a smaller, independent religious school sector. These are of varying quality with three important implications for the current study. First, educating children in religious schools is correlated with gender regressive outcomes for family planning, education attainment and labour force participation in Bangladesh (Asadulla, Chaudhury and Rashed 2009). Second, because religious schools do not produce consistent education outcomes, they encourage the feelings of 'unmet expectations,' which Bangladeshi participants identify as a cause of violent extremism. Third, the schools themselves, teachers or leaders, might encourage fundamentalist or extremist ideology, which exists on a continuum with violent extremism (True and Eddyono 2017).

4. KEY FINDINGS

The findings from analysing programming sites as compared to non-programme sites in Bangladesh and Indonesia generated insights into six key areas: a) perceptions and attitudes towards violent extremism, b) gender differences in perceptions of causes of violent extremism, c) gender differences in perceptions of the community's role in P/CVE, d) the important role of mothers, e) empowerment and self-efficacy in P/CVE, f) empowerment and self-efficacy in P/CVE and g) community cohesion and trust in institutions. Each area is described in detail.

4.1 Perceptions and attitudes toward violent extremism

Across all research sites almost half of all survey respondents – equal proportions of men and women – considered extremism and violent extremism to *'not be a problem at all'* in their communities. However, when the question changed to *'is it a problem in your country'* over two-thirds of all respondents in Bangladesh (70 per cent) said it was *'a very big problem'* (a little over one third of all respondents agreed in Indonesia or 36 per cent). Qualitative research corroborates these survey findings.

BOX 5.
WOMEN MENTION NOVEL INDICATORS OF RISING (VIOLENT) EXTREMISM

Several interesting early warning indicators for the spread of extremist ideologies were flagged by women during qualitative interviews. They included:

•   Domestic violence and children not talking to their mothers

•   People becoming 'aloof' and/or separating themselves from their communities for periods of time

•   Violence during elections, including threats to steal property and animals

•   The connection between elections, and a sudden uptick in the activity of vigilante groups and violence

•   Sudden acquisition of money and wealth, especially by youth

•   The exclusive use of mosques by people on university campuses

•   Husbands controlling women's behaviour, particularly relating to clothing

GRAPH 4.1A

PEOPLE PERCEIVE VIOLENT EXTREMISM AS A BIG PROBLEM IN THEIR COUNTRIES, BUT NOT THEIR COMMUNITIES

Perception of violent extremism as a big problem
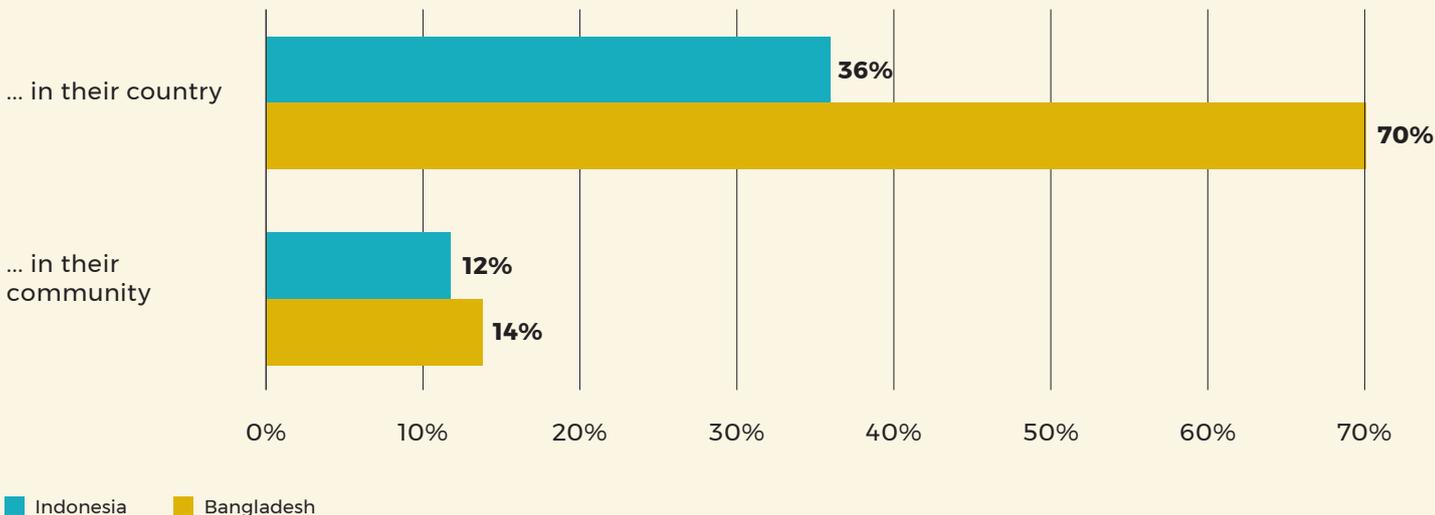
Indonesia Bangladesh

GRAPH 4.1B

MEN PERCEIVE VIOLENT EXTREMISM AS A BIGGER PROBLEM IN THEIR COMMUNITY THAN WOMEN IN INDONESIA, BUT THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE IN BANGLADESH

Perception of violent extremism as a problem in community, by sex

BANGLADESH

INDONESIA

Women Men
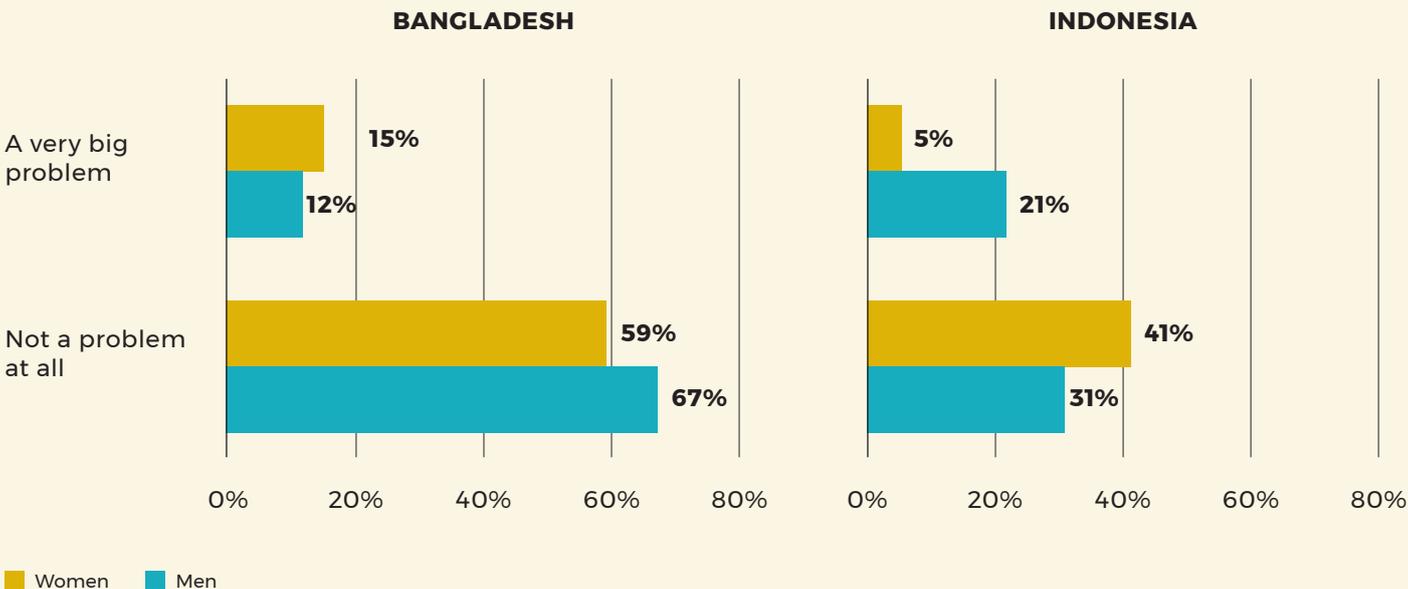
For example, in Indonesia most respondents said that violent extremism did not exist in their communities, but that fundamentalist and radical ideologies did in a number of ways. Participants recognised the differences between violent extremism, fundamentalist ideologies and radical movements. Nonetheless, many saw linkages between these distinct phenomena. For instance, in two of three sites in Indonesia (Klaten and Depok), both men and women viewed fundamentalism and the rise of fundamentalism and radicalism as potential threats leading to violent extremism, which need to be prevented. This finding about the continuum of fundamentalism, extremism and violent extremism echoes previous research (True and Eddyono 2017). Only in Sumenep, did community members not openly discuss any connection between fundamentalism and violent extremism.

Novel indicators of rising extremism and violent extremism were raised in qualitative research by women and men. In Bangladesh, women noted domestic violence and children 'not talking with [their] mother' were indicators, alongside people becoming aloof and/or separating themselves from their communities for periods of time. This 'aloofness' was something many respondents, both female and male across all sites mentioned, and is something the 'Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities' programme can help effectively address through promoting dialogue and raising awareness.

In Indonesia, early warning signs mentioned included violence during elections, such as threats to steal property or animals if the person would not vote for a certain candidate. Respondents in Klaten observed the connection between politics, crime and vigilante groups, noting that 'those who lose [in the election] will tell the thugs to rob' the villagers in retribution. Suddenly having money was seen as an indicator among all groups that a person may have started working for an extremist group. For instance, a female respondent in Debhata suggested, 'If youths suddenly start to earn more money, they should be monitored properly. How they are earning money and how they are spending it, we should try to investigate that.' Other early warning signs included the exclusive use of mosques on university campuses, judging people negatively because they are different, and teaching very young children at school to hate others. This final indicator is also part of the context

of the role that educational institutions play in both preventing and increasing violent extremism. Finally, as other research has found, controlling women's behaviour was seen as an early warning sign (True and Eddyono 2017). Additional signs included a husband not allowing his wife to participate in a community event because 'it will not assist her in the afterlife.' Echoing earlier research in Indonesia, where 'women's concern for warning signs of radicalisation is the *judgement* as well as the *coercive direction* about *what not* to wear' (True and Eddyono 2017, 23), in Bangladesh women pointed more to the overlap of controlling women's behaviour as being an indicator of extremism. In Djanapur, one woman said:

> "
> ─────────────
>
> *I know that my behaviour and the way I lead my life is correct. But if someone says that I am doing wrong or says my behaviour is wrong and makes bad comments that means he is into fundamentalist ideology.*

4.2 Gender differences in perceptions of causes of violent extremism

More women than men across all the research sites agreed that violent extremism is caused by poverty and inequality (41 per cent compared with 31 per cent).

A female respondent in Satkhira sums up this perception:

> "
> ─────────────
>
> *There are many types of problems in our village and poverty is the most crucial one. When someone is living in abject poverty and some random person comes to him and tells him to do something and in return offers him a handsome amount of money, the poverty-stricken person gets manipulated very easily. This is how [violent extremism] is spreading here.*

GRAPH 4.2

MORE WOMEN THAN MEN STRONGLY AGREE THAT POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND LIMITED ACCESS TO JOB OPPORTUNITIES ARE PART OF THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Strong agreement with the statements, by sex
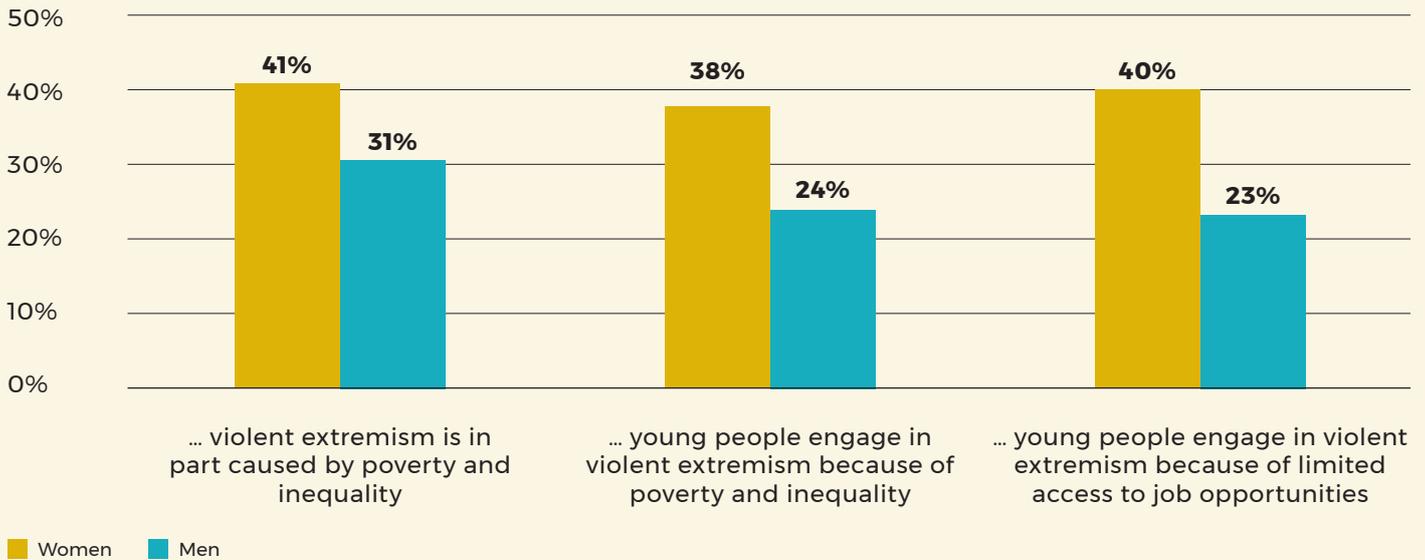
Source: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018).

When asked specifically if women, men and young people engage in violent extremism because of poverty and inequality, women agreed to a greater extent than men in the communities studied. For instance, with respect to young people, 38 per cent of women strongly agreed with the statement compared with 24 per cent of men. Women also more strongly agreed that women and young people engage in violent extremism because they have limited access to job opportunities (40 per cent compared with 23 per cent). In one case in Djanupur, Bangladesh, echoing findings in True and Eddyono (2017), motivations for women to get involved in violent extremism also included poverty linked to domestic violence:

"

... women are tortured by their husbands and suffer from poverty. Their needs are not met and as a result they leave their family and get involved in bad things to earn money. They may get involved in this kind of activities.

This finding corroborates our qualitative research that suggests parents, and mothers in particular, are concerned about the future prospects of their sons and daughters.

Although poverty was considered a driver, unemployment and lack of opportunity was also seen as driving 'affluent' youths towards joining extremist groups.

Feelings of 'unmet expectations' are thus seen as a critical to fuelling violent extremism. Women as mothers are typically more directly involved with their children and young adults, and interacting with educational institutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that they express stronger agreement than men about the lack of access to job opportunities as a potential driver of violent extremism. In Rangpur, one mother said violent extremism was caused by:

"

… scarcity and needs from poverty. Sometimes the extremist leaders offer fake job opportunities and this attracts a huge number of people towards them. Sometimes people sell their assets to get a job, but often times they do not get any. It makes them depressed and this depression works as a motivation to join the extremist groups.

## 4.3 Gender differences in perceptions of the community's role in P/CVE

Significant gender differences, as well as differences between programme and non-programme sites, were found in responses to the statement *'most initiatives to counter or prevent extremism are led by the community.'*

In Bangladesh, just 58 per cent of men in the non-programme site (Rangpur) agreed with the statement, compared with 94 per cent of women in the non-programme site, and 90 per cent of men and 90 per cent of women, respectively, in the programme sites. This finding was strongly supported by qualitative data: women in Bangladesh programme sites were much more likely than men or those in non-programme sites to think the community has a key role to play in P/CVE. Across the survey there is a significant relationship between those who agree with the statement (and related statements) that *'violence is never a solution to problems and extremist groups needs to be stopped'* and agreement with statements about government support and cooperation with communities on P/CVE initiatives. The correlation was especially strong in UN Women programme sites. Men in programme sites were more vocal about the role of formal, governmental actors in P/CVE, suggesting a key gender difference. By contrast, women in non-programme sites did not appear to be aware that their roles in the community, such as raising awareness of women's education, child marriage and dowry, actually contributed to P/CVE.

In Indonesia, just 16 per cent of women in the non-programme site strongly agreed that the community leads most P/CVE initiatives compared to 44 per cent in the two programme sites. Women in the two programme sites were also more likely to agree with the statement than men (44 per cent compared with 32 per cent), indicating a significant gender difference. Discussions with community members highlighted that it is easier to involve women rather than men in P/CVE community activities due to cultural norms that enable informal engagement with women. Engagement with men, on the other hand, tends to be more formal, sometimes requiring an invitation from the head of the village or other leader. Due to men's, on average, greater engagement in formal, paid work, women were also more likely to be available to take part in community activities. This point was also consistently made in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi men gave many reasons for their limited engagement compared with women. Some men said they did not have enough time to engage in PVE or were concerned about ramifications (such as 'chaos in society') of involvement beyond sharing names with officials.

GRAPH 4.3

WOMEN AND MEN IN UN WOMEN PROGRAMME SITES TEND TO AGREE MORE WITH THE STATEMENT THAT "MOST INITIATIVES TO COUNTER OR PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM ARE LED BY THE COMMUNITY"(AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

Agreement that most initiatives to counter or prevent violent extremism are led by the community

AGREEMENT IN BANGLADESH*

Programme sites	90% (Women) / 90% (Men)
Non-programme sites	94% (Women) / 58% (Men)

AGREEMENT IN INDONESIA*

Programme sites	44% (Women) / 32% (Men)
Non-programme sites	16% (Women) / 29% (Men)
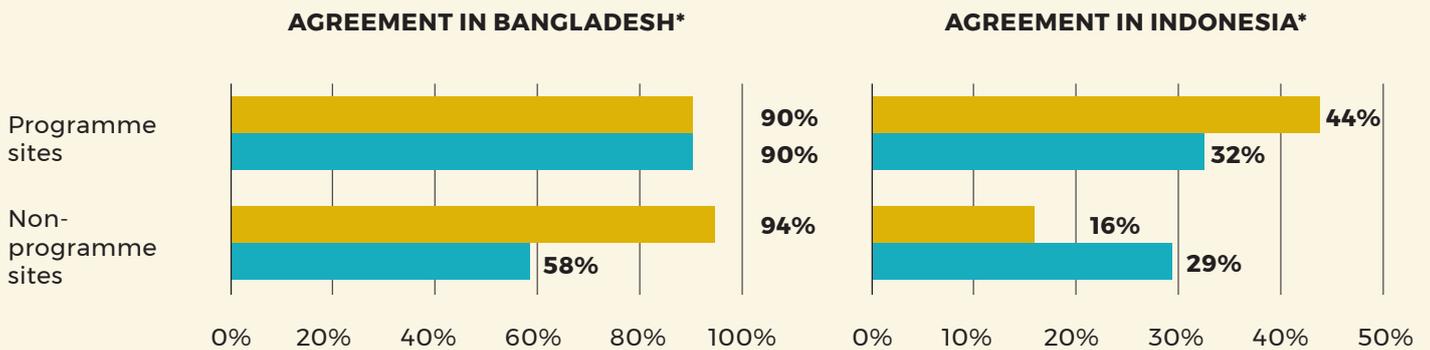
Note: the scales of agreement in Bangladesh and Indonesia were different; Bangladesh had only two categories (agreement/disagreement) and Indonesia had a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

■ Women ■ Men

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

However, women's participation in P/CVE is determined by context and not ensured due to their greater availability and engagement in informal social networks. For instance, in Sumenep, Indonesia, where there is stricter gender segregation in roles and activities due to the more conservative nature of the community, some women may still be prevented from participating in community activities by their husbands. Overall, women's roles and social networks can be seen as informal mechanisms for P/CVE, which are not as open or available to men. As such, they should be recognised and harnessed in approaches to PVE.

Women's stronger perception of community leadership on P/CVE aligned with their seemingly greater engagement in P/CVE at the community level, especially in the programme sites. In programme sites, women were more engaged in P/CVE and were much more likely to stress the value of communities, families and mothers in prevention, while men were less involved and more likely to credit formal institutions for P/CVE.

4.4 The important role of mothers

Research results in Bangladesh and Indonesia strongly highlighted the role of mothers. Indeed, mothers were often perceived to have the most important role in PVE by many research participants. The gender division of labour means that mothers are held responsible for children's activities, whereabouts and wellbeing. In Dinajpur, Bangladesh, one participant stated that if a woman has a 'good relationship with her children, she can help steer them away from extremist ideologies.' Mothers were seen to be particularly effective in this regard because of their ability to observe their children over time:

"

A mother can understand if her son is in the right path or not. She can understand by looking at his face and through his behaviour.

One female respondent further mentioned that because men are busy and often outside the homes, it is the mother that notices 'when [her son] starts to say emotional things' and thus she is best able to prevent violent extremism. Fathers in Dinajpur reiterated this belief that it was the mother's responsibility to check up on their children's behaviour.

Other women in Bangladesh underscored the importance of women engaging in P/CVE initiatives, explaining that women had previously stayed in the home and were not aware of such things as P/CVE efforts. Crediting the work of BRAC, one respondent said: 'Now I can tell these things to others and create awareness. I got this experience and I am very happy about this.' Women participants mentioned that women have a key role in P/CVE because they have a key role in the home and are able to monitor and check the behaviour of husbands, brothers and children (notably, some participants assumed that only men are radicalised).

While the perceived importance of mothers to prevent their family members from radicalizing provides a source of legitimacy for women to work in P/CVE within the family realm, it is vital to note that this perception can also be problematic. The instrumentalization of mothers as monitors or informants reduces the perception that the whole family, including the father, can play a role in preventing violent extremism, potentially causing the blame for radicalization of family members to fall solely on mothers.

In Indonesia, respondents reflected a similar belief that mothers are significant in educating children and protecting them from fundamentalist ideology. Women, as mothers with the gendered division of labour in child rearing similar to that in Bangladesh, are also seen as those who mediate between families and educational institutions. This has on occasion resulted in women

BOX 6.
WOMEN CAN COUNTERACT EXTREMIST MESSAGES IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INDONESIA

In Depok, Indonesia, one discussion focused on how mothers can stop bigotry. The discussion began as a mother retold the story about how teachers at her child's school teach their students to hate others who are different, even stating that killing *kafirs* or hypocrites would be acceptable. In this case, women participants attempted to use their influence as mothers to counteract the messages communicated in such prayer groups that instil particularly intolerant values. In that sense, tolerant mothers can help bolster the critical thinking skills of their children when faced with intolerant worldviews.

Another example, involved a woman who attempted to counteract fundamentalist teaching when her daughter went to a prayer session held by an *ustadz*, or qualified Islamic scholar. She mentioned how during the prayer sessions, her daughter's grandfather came to know how the *ustadz* was 'delivering misleading teachings.' The mother then described how she coincidentally knew another *ustadz* and attempted to introduce him into the prayer session: 'when we held a prayer session in the Cilembar area, I brought the *ustadz* there. Most of the pupils could accept and understand what the *ustadz* was delivering, because his sermons were relatable to their daily routine and did not contain misguided teachings.'

Unfortunately however, the woman was not able to replace the previous *ustadz*. In fact, the university continued to support the original *ustadz*. However, her attempt to counteract the prevailing narrative demonstrates the many ways in which women stand at the crux of the messages that educational institutions instil in youth and raise possibilities for how they can be further supported in advancing a counter-narrative against extremism.

counteracting extremist messages, leading to tensions between parents and educational institutions (see box 6). Aside from extremist and intolerant ideologies being communicated through some institutions, sometimes students are actively targeted in both Bangladesh and Indonesia for recruitment into vigilante and extremist organisations. Those from poorer backgrounds may be targeted with the promise of money, as well as those from affluent backgrounds. In Indonesia, respondents said 'intelligent children are often targeted' for recruitment into extremist organisations.

In addition, several reports of the reluctance of educational institutions to address community concerns about extremist teachings were reported across several villages in Indonesia. The village head in Sumenep, for instance, suggested that although *kyai*—an Islamic

expert or cleric—and Islamic boarding schools had a role to play in P/CVE, the '*kyai* himself is reluctant to prevent such issues.'

4.5 Empowerment and self-efficacy in P/CVE

In Indonesia, there was much greater confidence in joining a community P/CVE initiative expressed by respondents in programme sites than in non-programme sites. Women's responses in programme sites largely explain this greater confidence. For example, in Depok, a non-programme site in Indonesia, just 33 per cent of women strongly agreed with the statement compared with 61 per cent of women in the programme sites of Sumenep and Klaten.

GRAPH 4.5A

WOMEN AND MEN IN UN WOMEN PROGRAMME SITES FEEL MORE CONFIDENT IN JOINING COMMUNITY INITIATIVES TO C/PVE (AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

Strongly agree with feeling confident in joining a community initiative to counter or prevent violent extremism, by sex and type of site


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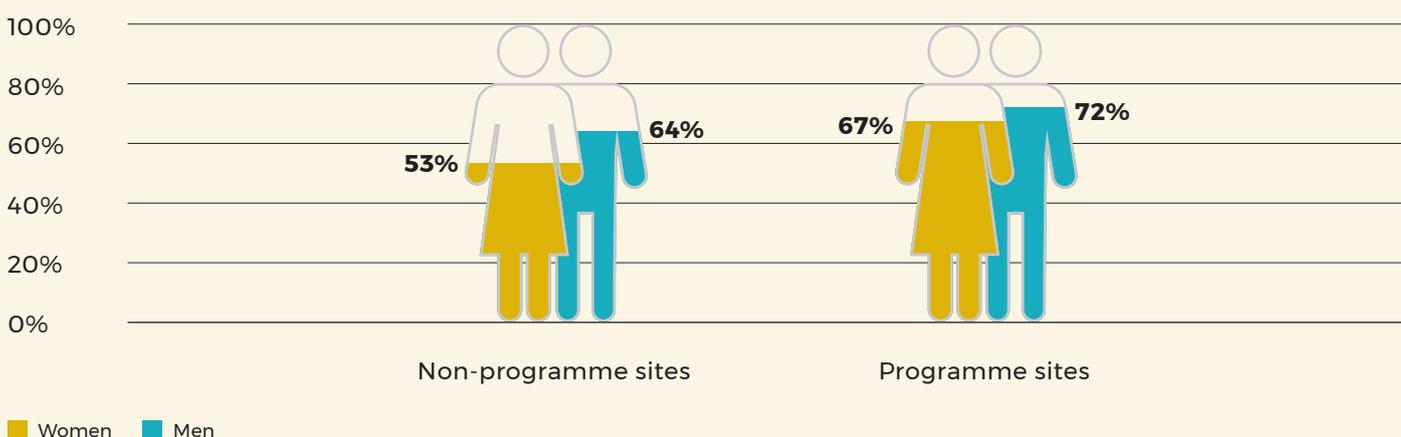
Source: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018).

Overall, women in the programme sites have higher confidence and self-efficacy to join a P/CVE initiative or report violent extremism than women in the non-programme sites.

GRAPH 4.5B

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

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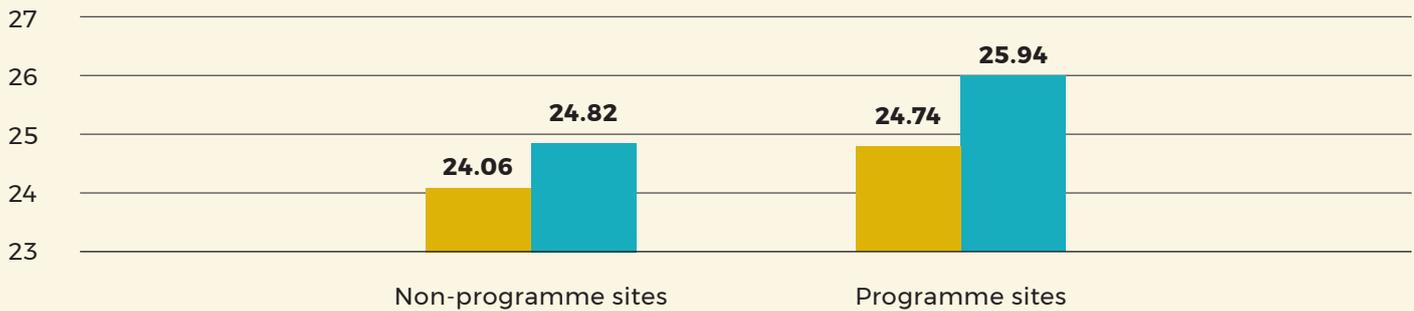
Note: The confidence self-efficacy scale is a 6-item scale that assesses people's agreement (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) with statements such as "I am confident that my community would support me if I reported concerns about people involved in violent extremism." Higher scores indicate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

■ Women   ■ Men

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

Even in Sumenep, Indonesia, the conservative and more gender-segregated site, women's strength was emphasised, likely elicited by economic empowerment programming targeted at women for the first time. One female respondent stated:

" _____

Many people say that women in Sumenep are weak and their positions are subordinate to men's but, in reality, women here are very strong, stronger than men, we do almost every activity at home...in the field...earning money.

The government's 30 per cent gender quota policy was also noted as a positive influence on women's participation at the village level in decisions about government programmes and activities. High levels of self-efficacy and empowerment were linked to stronger disagreement with statements justifying violence on the basis of inequality (statements such as *'sometimes violence and extremist attacks are needed in order to address inequality and people's needs'*). This relationship was substantially stronger for men than for women. We can therefore conclude that greater empowerment leads to a greater reluctance to use violence for political ends, especially among men.

In Bangladesh, female participants in programme sites claimed to have the ability to influence the people in their community to take part in P/CVE. In contrast, while women in the non-programme sites are engaged in preventing child marriage and promoting female education, they did not see these as contributing to P/CVE. Some of those women who recognised they were contributing to P/CVE indicated they are not listened to in their PVE efforts because of their gender, but one mentioned that with persistence, people listen. Many

women said they received support from neighbours and husbands, and that they did not face challenges in doing this work, although some of their husbands initially discouraged them as they considered it to be dangerous or were doubtful or confused.

In both Bangladesh and Indonesia, gender differences were evident in responses to the statements '*I know what to do in order to prevent violent extremism in my family*' and '*... in my community.*' The difference with respect to prevention in the family was more marked than with respect to the community. More men agreed or strongly agreed (69 per cent) than women (53 per cent) that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to prevent violent extremism in their community, and in their family (their responses on this statement were highly correlated with their responses on '*I know what to do to prevent violent extremism*').

There was also a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy—or the confidence to join a P/CVE initiative—and reporting concerns about violent extremism, and having greater trust in public institutions, such as the police, the law courts, the government, the media and political parties. This suggests the need to enhance women's knowledge and skills on community actions that they may be able to take outside the family.

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

GRAPH 4.5C

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

Strongly agree with knowing what to do in order to prevent violent extremism in their family, by sex, country and type of site
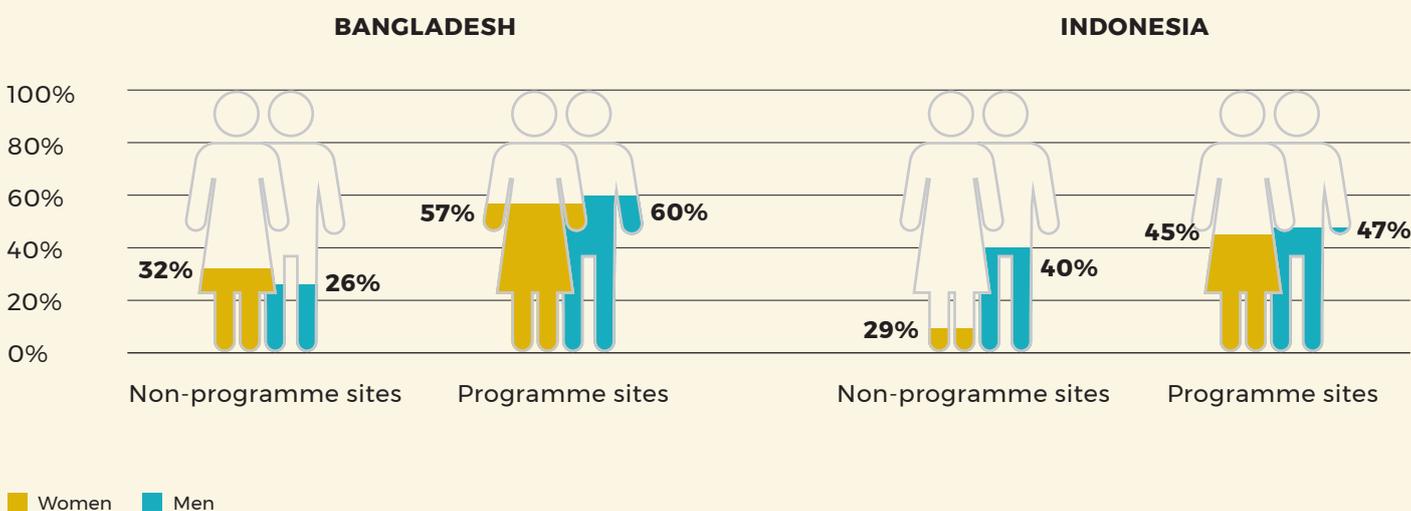
Source: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (2018).

In fact, irrespective of gender, more people in programme than in non-programme sites strongly agreed that they know what to do to prevent violent extremism in their families: 59 per cent in programme sites compared with 29 per cent in the non-programme sites in Bangladesh and 46 per cent in programme sites compared with 34 per cent in non-programme sites in Indonesia. There was also a significant difference in 'knowledge self-efficacy' between UN Women programme and non-UN Women programme sites, with people in the UN Women programme sites reporting higher 'knowledge self-efficacy' than people in the non-UN Women programme sites. In other words, people in programme sites are more likely to know about violent extremism and what to do to help prevent and counter the threats it poses.

Significantly, these results suggest that both forms of self-efficacy or sense of empowerment (confidence and knowledge measures) were higher in the UN Women programme sites compared to the non-UN Women programme sites. It is also worth noting that both forms of self-efficacy appear to be slightly higher in men compared with women, which is what we would expect given societal gender inequalities and discriminatory norms affecting women's self-efficacy in particular.

Overall, there are large differences between programme and non-programmes sites on knowledge and capacity to prevent violent extremism in the community. Bangladeshi women were also more confident than Bangladeshi men to report any concerns they may have about family members being involved in violent extremism; while in Indonesia, women in the programme sites, though less confident than men to report their concerns about family members involved in violent extremism, were significantly more confident in doing so than women participants in non-programmes sites.

People in programme sites are more likely to know about violent extremism and what to do to help prevent and counter the threats it poses.

GRAPH 4.5D

WOMEN AND MEN IN PROGRAMME SITES HAVE HIGHER LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE SELF-EFFICACY ABOUT PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

Knowledge self-efficacy (mean group scores)*
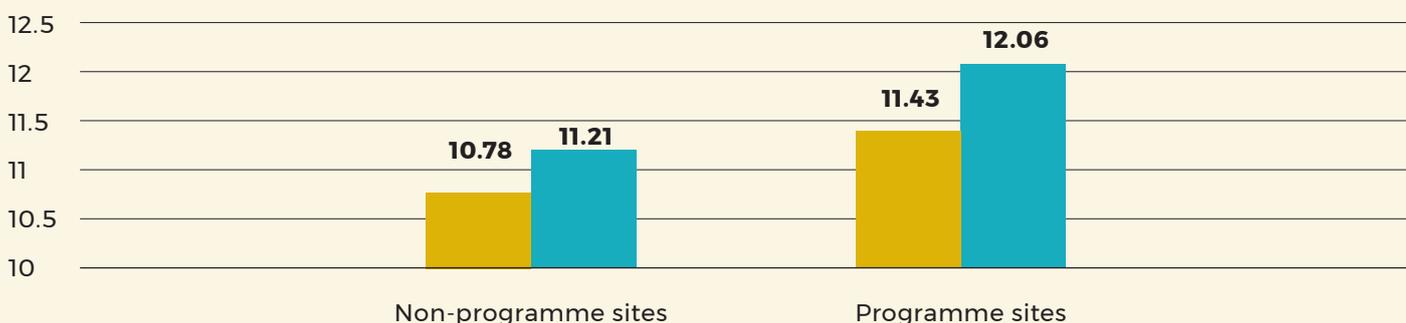
Note: The knowledge/skill self-efficacy scale is a 3-item scale that assesses people's agreement (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) with statements such as "I feel I have the knowledge and skills necessary to prevent violent extremism in my community." Higher scores indicate greater self-efficacy (empowerment) regarding knowing how to counter violent extremism, with a sample size of n=686. Cronbach's alpha test for reliability of the scale indicated that reliability was good (α = .73), and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed a single factor solution (eigenvalue = 2.29).

■ Women ■ Men

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

4.6 Community cohesion and trust in institutions

We expected trust in institutions to be aligned with confidence in reporting to these same institutions (police, government, community groups). In this study, we also expected that both trust and confidence in reporting would be stronger in programme than non-programme sites. We found support for both assumptions. Strikingly, among all sites, the relationship between trust in the police and confidence in reporting to the police was strongest for women in the Indonesian programme sites (closely followed by Indonesian men in the programme sites). This suggests that if women trust law and justice institutions then they are more likely to feel confident in reporting violent extremism to them and thus able to contribute to P/CVE in this way.

There was also little difference in *'support for initiatives for preventing and countering violent extremism'* between males and females in programme sites. However, there was a significant difference between programme and non-programme sites, with programme sites reporting higher support for P/CVE initiatives, than non-programme sites.

Arbitrary and politicised policing may be eroding both community cohesion – through reporting community members to the police – and trust in institutions in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, in both Bangladesh and Indonesia, people in programme sites express greater trust than those in non-programme sites, in the police and other institutions.

However, there is much higher confidence in reporting violent extremism to the police in Bangladesh than in

GRAPH 4.6

TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS IS HIGHER FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN IN PROGRAMME SITES (AS COMPARED TO NON-PROGRAMME SITES)

Trust in institutions (mean group scores)*

Non-programme sites — Women: 18.25, Men: 18.89
Programme sites — Women: 19.26, Men: 19.67
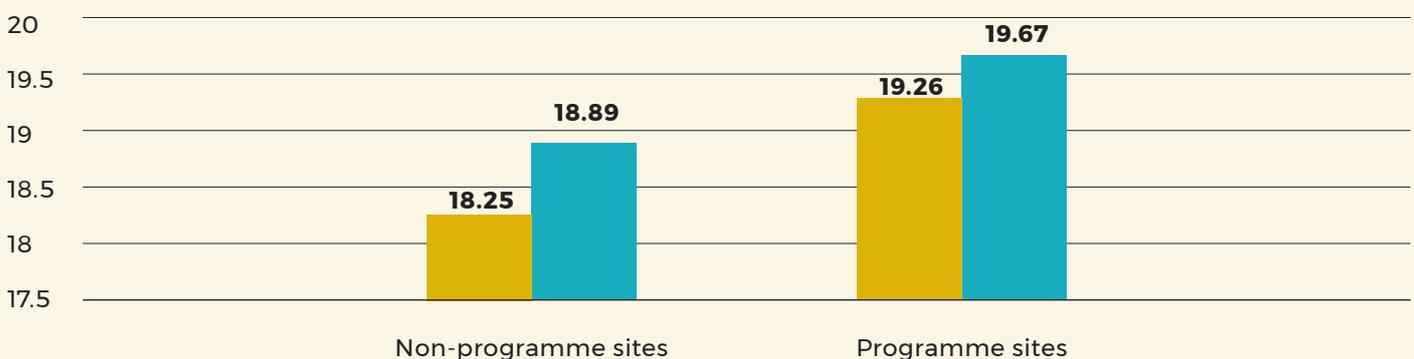
Note: Trust in Institutions was assessed with a 5-item scale with participants required to indicate how much they trust (1=no trust at all to 5=a lot of trust) a range of different institutions (e.g. police, law courts, political parties) with a sample size of n=686. Higher scores represent greater trust in institutions. Reliability for the scale was good (α = .79), and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed a single factor solution (eigenvalue = 2.18).

■ Women ■ Men

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

Indonesia (91 per cent compared with 64 per cent), to a community leader (94 per cent compared with 51 per cent) and to a religious leader (89 per cent compared with 55 per cent). In both countries, there is also higher confidence in the programme sites to report violent extremism to the police than to community and religious leaders (in that order).

Significant gender differences were evident in the Bangladeshi non-programme site (Rangpur) with women far more confident than men in reporting incidents or concerns related to violent extremism to a community leader, than to religious leaders and the police (in that order). For instance, 82 per cent of women compared with 44 per cent of men strongly agreed that they felt confident in reporting violent extremism to a community leader; 72 per cent of women compared with 52 per cent of men felt confident in reporting to a religious leader; and 70 per cent of women compared with 44 per cent of men felt confident in reporting to the police.

This finding appears to reflect women's engagement in Rangpur in activities indirectly contributing to P/CVE. At present, women in Rangpur tend to view violent extremism as decreasing in their communities and to credit the government with this outcome. They were less likely than women in programme sites in Bangladesh to credit themselves as having an important role in this endeavour or, indeed, even recognise that their engagement at the community level (including addressing gender equality issues) contributed to PVE efforts. Taken together, this highlights the potential scope and need for engaging women in PVE interventions.

A key factor in Indonesia, potentially explaining a community's cohesiveness and tolerance of difference was the extent and type of local leadership present. For example, in Klaten, the local government has been providing substantial support to efforts to promote tolerance and social cohesion. Here, the head of villages have developed different programmes and budgeted to maintain diversity, peace and tolerance through organising cultural events so that every resident from different religious groups can participate. This is in contrast to Depok, which receives limited support from local government for community-building initiatives and also has institutions perceived to be more closely connected to the emergence of religious intolerance and violent extremism. People here are understandably less confident to report incidences of violent extremism to the relevant authorities. A number of respondents in Indonesia therefore pointed to the role of community cohesion and empowerment to enable members to resist external influences from extremists. For example, an Islamic school board member in Klaten suggested that the point of the empowerment programme is to strengthen the bond between members of the community, as it can 'contain the community from external influence', which he attributed as the main cause of violent extremism.

5. NEW KNOWLEDGE AND NEW FREEDOMS: EVIDENCE OF PROGRAMME IMPACT

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

Research results in both Indonesia and Bangladesh elicited positive and enthusiastic responses by women and local governments to novel programming targeting women in an effort to prevent violent extremism. Across the board, both men and in particular women, in programme sites were more aware of perceptions and attitudes towards violent extremism and its connection to poverty, inequality and lack of job opportunities. They were also more attuned to the role of communities in preventing and countering violent extremism, with women in programme sites engaging more strongly in P/CVE at the community level.

In Bangladesh for instance, women in particular noted increased awareness of issues related to violent extremism and how to address it, as well as other issues relevant to building more peaceful and resilient communities (gender equality, religious tolerance, domestic violence, access to education). Many respondents said they believed these changes have decreased the likelihood of children engaging in violent extremism, decreased the rate of crime in their areas, and contributed to women's empowerment.

The critical role of mothers in detecting any possible slide into extremist ideologies within their families and amongst their children was also underlined. The women were particularly careful to point out that poverty may be a factor in radicalizing youth as many children may feel the pressure to provide for their families and therefore engage in violent extremist activity for money.

Economic empowerment of women (and the greater income it generates for the family) was also regarded as a factor in reducing tension and domestic violence within the family, as well as economic pressure and violence within the greater community. Other respondents emphasised how it 'helps us women to become self-sufficient and allows us to help other women.' Both men and women in Bangladesh underscored how economic empowerment of women contributed to P/CVE by addressing poverty and gender inequality, both of which were seen as causally related to violent extremism.

Another key finding within UN Women programme sites related to the greater level of self-efficacy and confidence on the part of both women and men in joining community P/CVE initiatives in programme sites. Where there is more empowerment and self-efficacy, people (particularly men) reported being less likely to use violence as a political tool to address poverty and inequality and more likely to report concerns about violent extremist. Women in programme sites in Bangladesh also reported being able to influence others in their community to take part in initiatives aimed at P/CVE. Greater self-efficacy and confidence to join P/CVE initiatives were also positively associated with greater trust in public institutions. In fact, this relationship is mutually reinforcing: where women trust law and justice institutions, they are more confident in reporting incidences of violent extremism to them, and thus able to become active community players in efforts to quell violent extremism. These results also indicate the need to improve trust in public institutions, particularly law and justice institutions.

Taken together, initial results indicate that UN Women programming has had extraordinarily positive results in terms of catalysing greater levels of: a) individual empowerment, b) increased awareness, c) economic empowerment and finally, d) community engagement. In fact, in Klaten, Indonesia, the results have been so successful that villages taking part in the 'Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities' programme have been declared 'peace villages.'

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