The Roles of Women in Counter-Radicalisation and Disengagement (CRaD) Processes

Best Practices and Lessons Learned from Europe and the Arab World

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Background

This input paper was provided in the framework of a workshop on the roles of women in counter-radicalisation and disengagement (CRaD) processes organized by the Berghof Foundation in Beirut in August 2017. The author looked into best practices and lessons learned from Europe and the Arab World. She also analysed the dynamics of the workshop and introduced among others the recommendations put forward by the participants.

Table of Contents

About the Author

Dr. Jennifer Philippa Eggert is a Research Fellow in the Institute of Advanced Study and the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick. She was previously a visiting fellow at the Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. At the moment, Jennifer's research focuses mostly on the inclusion of female fighters in the Lebanese and Palestinian militias involved in the Lebanese civil war (1975 – 1990), but she has also worked on the roles of women in other non-state armed organisations, such as the so-called 'Islamic State' and Al-Qaeda. She holds a PhD in politics and international studies from the University of Warwick, an MSc in comparative politics and conflict studies from the LSE and completed her undergraduate studies in social and cultural sciences at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) and at Sciences Po Paris. Jennifer is also trained in non-violent civil conflict management. She has several years of work experience in the areas of research, counterextremism, community engagement, intercultural dialogue and civic education in Germany, France, the UK, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen and Pakistan.

1 Introduction

Rationale for this input paper

Strategies aimed at countering radicalisation and violent extremism are often based on hard security concepts, with military approaches being prioritised. Comprehensive concepts that take into account the complexity of security issues and include soft security factors are, in many cases, neglected. In CRaD and security more generally, several societal groups which tend to be marginalised in the political sphere anyway are largely excluded from debates on security issues. This includes, for example, women and youth. Despite this fact, in recent years, soft security approaches have been increasingly debated. Awareness of the importance to include marginalised societal groups, such as women and youth, is slowly but surely increasing. Nevertheless, women's roles not only as victims and perpetrators of political violence but also as (potential) actors in CRaD processes often remain overlooked and underestimated. Programmes and projects aimed at facilitating and supporting CRaD processes that take into account the roles of women remain the exception. Many existing programmes have been criticised for the problematic approaches they take. This paper aims at discussing existing approaches to CRaD and the roles of women in these processes by highlighting academic and international practitioners' debates as well as the experience of three grassroots organisations that work in Lebanon, the UK and Germany. It then discusses the broader applicability of these initiatives in Lebanon.

Methodology

This input paper relies on four main sources of data. First, it analyses secondary source literature and publications by think tanks, non-governmental and international organisations and government agencies. In addition to that, it is based on short interviews with members of the three initiatives highlighted in this paper. The interviews were conducted over the phone or by e-mail. Third, material published on the organisations' websites was used. Fourth, in August 2017, Berghof Foundation conducted a two-day workshop on the roles of women in CRaD processes in Beirut. The workshop, which was facilitated by the author of this paper, was attended by practitioners, academics and activists working on CRaD, women's rights and / or community engagement in Lebanon. During the workshop, first findings of this paper were used to stimulate debate. These discussions fed into the final version of this paper, and the section about the broader applicability of the three presented initiatives in particular. In order to provide a safe space for debate, the workshop was held under Chatham House rules. Individual participants are thus not identified by name or affiliation. The comparative approach of this paper, which looks at organisations based in Germany, the UK and Lebanon, aims at highlighting similarities and differences in the work of various CRaD initiatives. Indeed, while all three organisations analysed in this paper can be classified as grassroots initiatives, they do work in a range of different contexts and tackle various types of radicalisation and extremism.

Structure of this input paper

The question of how women can be best integrated into CRaD processes lies at the centre of this input paper. In order to tackle this question, in the following section of this paper conventional approaches to CRaD processes will be discussed. Section three analyses academic debates on the roles of women in CRaD processes. It summarises the conclusions academics and international practitioners working on the topic have come to. Section four presents the work of four organisations from Germany, the UK and Lebanon, which work in the field of CRaD. This section highlights the experience of the different organisations and discusses examples of best practice and lessons learned. In section five, the outcome of the debates in the workshop in Lebanon and participants views on the applicability of the three presented initiatives is discussed. The final sections of this paper present conclusions and recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners working on CRaD processes.

2 Conventional Approaches to CRaD Processes

Hard security and soft security approaches

While many states have long prioritised so-called 'hard' or military approaches to the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism, recently calls for more 'soft' or non-coercive approaches, which focus on dialogue, cooperation and reconciliation, have been increasingly made (Rabasa et al. 2010: 164, El-Said 2015: 2-3). In fact, military approaches alone are now often considered to be counterproductive, as they can create more violence and make the state lose credibility and sympathy amongst local populations and international observers. Moreover, extremists are believed to fight until the very end if they know that they will be killed upon surrendering (El-Said & Harrigan 2011: 245). Modern soft CRaD approaches to right-wing, left-wing and separatist violence were notably implemented in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (El-Said & Harrigan 2011: 244). Soft approaches targeting Islamist violence first emerged in Muslim-majority countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Indonesia, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Lybia from the mid-1990s onwards, with many of these focusing on work with prison inmates (Rabasa et al. 2010, El-Said & Harrigan 2011: 237, El-Said 2015: 4). Some of the most extensive CRaD initiatives now exist in the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark (El-Said 2015: 5). While some of these initiatives are often praised as successful, CRaD processes are hard to measure and in most cases the data necessary to assess the effectiveness of CRaD programmes is not available.

Key terms and concepts[1]

One of the main flaws of many debates on CRaD processes is the lack of clearly defined terms and concepts. What exactly is considered extremism, for example, often depends on the context. The fact that what constitutes a crime often differs from country to country tends to further complicate matters. For the purpose of this input paper, **radicalisation** describes the process in which radical and extremist ideas are acquired. **Extremism** is the holding of dogmatic, radical and extremist views and black-and-white thinking. Extremism is manifested in violent and non-violent forms. **Non-violent extremism** is often considered to be less problematic than **violent extremism**, even though, despite not directly using physical violence, non-violent extremism can nevertheless be conducive to a climate in which violence emerges. **Deradicalisation** describes the process whereby an individual who has previously been radicalised renounces their radical or extremist beliefs. It can, but does not always, coincide with **disengagement**, the process of a person leaving a violent extremist movement. In some cases, disengagement also occurs as a role shift: the individual remains within the movement but stops engaging in violence. In the same vein, a person can be engaged with a (violent) extremist movement without, in fact, being radicalised. **Counterradicalisation** describes efforts to prevent and / or respond to radicalisation and extremism. Other commonly used terms include **PVE** (preventing violent extremism), **CVE** (countering violent extremism) or **P/CVE**. In this paper, the abbreviation **CRaD** is used, in order to cover both the processes of counterradicalisation and disengagement from violent and extremist movements.

A common problem when discussing CRaD programmes is the lack of empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness (El-Said & Harrigan 2011: 237-238, Marsden 2017: 4). The topic remains largely under-researched, with very limited data being available for analysis (Rabasa et al. 2010: 14, El-Said 2015: 5). What we do know is that disengagement and deradicalisation processes are as complex as the engagement and radicalisation processes that precede them (Horgan 2009: xxiii). Most academics working on the topic describe disengagement and deradicalisation as a process with different stages (Horgan 2009: 142, Rabasa et al. 2010: 29-30). While it is possible to identify some patterns, the exact process manifests itself in different ways depending on the individual and context (Horgan 2009: xxiii).

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[1] For a more detailed overview of the different terms discussed in this section, see Horgan 2009: 152-153. Marsden et al. 2017 also provides a useful overview.

Different approaches to CRaD processes

Many existing CRaD programmes have been criticised as demonstrating "a lack of coherent strategy" (Winterbotham & Pearson 2017: 54). Across the spectrum of existing CRaD initiatives, a number of different approaches can be identified. There are individual and collective, top-bottom and bottom-up strategies (El-Said 2015: 10-11). El-Said & Harrigan deplore that many CRaD programmes do not tackle root causes of violent extremism (2011: 245). They claim that, especially in the Arab world, many CRaD programmes have not strengthened democratic structures or improved the national or local environment but have, instead, made conditions worse (El-Said & Harrigan 2011: 265). Another debate evolves around the role of radical ideas and attitudes. Recently, many CRaD programmes have focused on promoting ideological change (or deradicalisation), which has led some to speak of a "war on ideas" (El-Said 2015: 4; see also Marsden 2017: 12). On the other hand, some question whether the focus should not instead lie on practical barriers and opportunities former extremists face when reintegrating into society (Marsden 2017: 3). Behind the different positions in this debate stand differing assumptions of what causes individuals to join violent extremism movements and what encourages and facilitates their disengagement. Most analysts agree that multidimensional, holistic approaches that take into account context should be prioritised (Bjorgo & Horgan 2009, Horgan 2009, Rabasa et al. 2010: 19, Marsden 2017: 3-4, 123-4).

3 Academic and International Practitioners' Debates on the Role of Women in CRaD Processes

Women's roles and experiences are often overlooked in conventional CRaD approaches. This is the case despite the fact that, in the last 30 years, a substantial body of expertise on women and gender at times of war and violent conflict has developed.[2] While, at first, many of these studies focused on the roles of women, there is now a new trend to look a gender more broadly and include, for example, the analysis of masculinities and issues affecting the LGBT community.[3] Moreover, recent studies increasingly focus on questioning binaries of victimhood, perpetration and activism of women at times of war and violent conflict.[4] Instead, studies stress the fact that the women's identities and their role in situations of violent conflict are often more complex than widely assumed. Since 2014, with the emergence of the so-called 'Islamic State' and its proactive recruitment of women, interest in the link between women, war and different forms of political violence has increased.[5] However, while the amount of literature that goes beyond seeing women as agency-less victims of political violence is slowly increasing, academic analyses of women's roles in CRaD processes remain rare. Notable exceptions include Brown (2013), Giscard d'Estaing (2017) and Winterbotham & Pearson (2017). Winterbotham & Pearson (2017: 56, 60-61) criticise that many CRaD programmes in Europe which engage Muslim women are based on problematic assumptions, such as the beliefs

- that Muslim women are oppressed and need to be empowered,
- that women should mostly be involved in their capacity as mothers,
- that radicalisation is somehow a Muslim problem
- and that it is thus the Muslim community's responsibility to counter it.

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[2] For a discussion of how theory, research, activism and policy in the area have developed in the last 30 years, see Sharoni & Welland 2016.
[3] Sharoni & Welland discuss this area of the literature in detail (2016: 9 – 11).
[4] See, for example, Rana & Berry 2015: http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2015/12/17/a-woman-did-that-thoughts-on-women-perpetrators-of-violence/ (last accessed 23 August 2017).
[5] Publications focusing on women and IS include Jacoby (2015), Eggert (2015), Peresin (2015), Peresin & Cervone (2015), Davis (2017), Pearson & Winterbotham (2017) and Loken & Zelenz (forthcoming). The authors of some of the earliest – and most prominent – publications on women and terrorism include Cunningham (2003, 2008), Bloom (2005, 2011), Ness (2005), Gentry & Sjoberg (2007).

Moreover, Winterbotham & Pearson conclude that CRaD programmes are often perceived as random, intrusive and patronising by Muslim women (2017: 56, 58, 62). Brown comes to a similar conclusion in her analysis of gender and CRaD in the UK, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia (Brown 2012). Like Giscard d'Estaing (2017), she warns of an instrumentalisation of women in CRaD processes.

In addition to academic literature on women's roles in CRaD processes, a number of think tank reports and policy papers on the topic have been published in recent years.[6] These often include recommendation for policy and practice. However, most of these reports and policy papers focus on measures implemented by governments or international organisations, and not on grassroots-led initiatives.

4 The Roles of Women in CRaD Processes on the Ground: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

What are some of the reasons why grassroots organisations focusing on CRaD decide to include women in their work? What works when involving women in CRaD processes and what are some of the pitfalls in this area? In what follows, the experience of three grassroots organisations who work on the roles of women in CRaD processes will be discussed. These include the ConnectFutures (Birmingham, UK), the Empowering Women, Countering Extremism (EWCE) project (Beirut, Lebanon) and the Expert Centre on Gender and Right-Wing Extremism of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation (Berlin, Germany).

ConnectFutures | Birmingham, UK[7]

ConnectFutures (CF) is a Birmingham-based social enterprise which was founded in 2013. It brought together a group of colleagues who had already been working on CVE in various contexts as academics and practitioners, and who were increasingly frustrated with conventional approaches to CRaD. The organisation aims at countering right-wing and Islamist extremism from within a social justice framework. It intends to bridge the divide between academia, practitioners and communities who often felt excluded and alienated by CRaD initiatives. CF conducts research, provides analysis and delivers training to schools, colleges, young people as well as organisations from various sectors including prisons and religious institutions. During these trainings, the aim is to create safe spaces in which participants can uninhibitedly talk about issues they face, learn from each other and the trainers and create solutions everyone feels comfortable with. In the words of one of its directors, by "including, listening and responding to multiple and often critical voices", Connect Futures hopes to create a "diverse and critical mass of active citizens". CF practices diversity and inclusion, not only for ethical reasons but because they believe it is effective. Its senior leadership team includes Muslims and non-Muslims, academics and practitioners, as well as individuals of different ages and racial backgrounds. In their work, the CF team focuses on bringing together people with different skill sets and social backgrounds. For example, in their trainings, they consciously mix people of different age, abilities, behaviours, ethnicities, faiths and gender. Behind this stands the belief that "violent extremism affects everyone and it is defeated by everyone", as described by one of the directors of CF. Moreover, bringing together people from different backgrounds helps to avoid the stigmatisation of any single group and does not imply that it is the responsibility of any particular societal group to counter radicalisation and violent extremism as some other programmes do.

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[6] Examples include Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice 2011, Chowdhury Fink et al. 2013, Couture 2014, Dufour-Genneson & Alam 2014, Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations & Georgetown University 2014, Hedayah 2015, Chowdhury Fink et al. 2016, LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security 2017, GCTF n.d. Other publications focus on women and radicalisation more broadly but include sections on the roles of women in CRaD processes (such as Saltman & Smith 2015, UN Women 2016).
[7] The website of ConnectFutures can be accessed (in English) at http://connectfutures.org/ (last accessed 24 August 2017).

CF is currently led by three female directors; however, it does not see itself as a women's organisation and, in line with its belief in diversity and inclusion, it does not exclude including men in the leadership team in the future. The organisation sees problematic assumptions about the roles of women in both violent extremism and CRaD processes and a general overlooking of women's (potential) contributions in society and the workplace as a major reason for women's exclusion in many conventional CRaD programmes. In particular, they denounce the belief that women "as wives, mothers and sisters [...] can wield moderation and soft feminine power to moderate men", as one of its directors explains. They stress the need to avoid tokenism and gender stereotyping and not to see women as inherently different than men. Instead, it should be acknowledged that women have agency, interests and skills, just as men do. Women should be included in CRaD processes as society cannot afford not to tap into their talent and expertise as practitioners, academics and leaders. Moreover, situations may arise in which gender becomes relevant and in which women can contribute a gender-specific perspective. As summarised by one of CF's Directors, pitfalls to avoid include the assumptions

- that women must talk about women and gender;
- that women are inexperienced, less professional or less qualified;
- that women need to be included in order to wield soft power and moderation on 'their men';
- that men will talk to women or will not talk to women, because they are women.

In the last years, CF has acquired a reputation for successful engagement with societal groups that are otherwise considered 'hard to reach'. While the organisation is proud of that, they also find the labelling of people as 'hard to reach' frustrating, as they see it as an excuse not to include parts of society that are often excluded from social and political decision-making processes. CF believes that ultimately, legislation, prosecution and conventional military and policing approaches can only achieve so much in the fight against violent extremism. Instead, it is the grassroots that need to be involved and, in fact, be leading. In the words of one of the CF directors: "We need young people, minorities, people who don't walk the corridors of power, to be involved and leading. Credible voices count for everything, and these don't come from the top down."

Empowering Women Countering Extremism (EWCE) | Beirut, Lebanon[8]

EWCE is a one-year pilot project focused on women, counterextremism and social media. It is a result of a cooperation between the Lebanese Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD) and the Danish Danmission. The project started as a virtual meeting of a group of young professionals and activists from Denmark and several Arab countries, which was then followed by meetings in Beirut implemented by FDCD. FDCD and Danmission are 'non-governmental organisations, with a focus on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, citizenship, human right and emergency response (FDCF)[9] and poverty reduction, religious dialogue and church development (Danmission).[10] The two organisations have been working on countering religious radicalisation since 2013. EWCE was implemented with the support of the Danish-Arab Partnership Initiative of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an initiative focusing on reform and democratisation in the Middle East and North Africa.[11] The specific focus of the project was chosen after careful consideration of the experience of stakeholders and experts working in the field of CRaD, including the participants of EWCE. This highlights the value the EWCE staff attach to grassroots-led initiatives. For them, it was of utmost importance for the participants of the project to be involved in the development of the project, to give them a safe space to debate the issue and come up with solutions.

In total, 30 young men and women from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Denmark participated in the project. The group of participants included activists, consultants, students, teachers and NGO

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[8] While EWCE does not have its own website, a summary of the project can be found on the website of the implementing organisation FDCD: http://www.fdcd.org/events-details.php?id=143. Further information about the project can be found on the blog of Danmission, the Danish partner organisation of FDCD: https://english.danmission.dk/blog/2017/05/09/womens-fight-against-violent-extremism/, https://english.danmission.dk/blog/2017/06/23/women-fight-isis-on-facebook/ (all last accessed 21 August 2017).
[9] http://www.fdcd.org/who-are-we.php (last accessed 21 August 2017).
[10] https://english.danmission.dk/about/ (last accessed 21 August 2017).
[11] https://www.detarabiskeinitiativ.dk/english/ (last accessed 21 August 2017).

workers, with experience in social media activism, religious dialogue, the prevention of extremism or women's rights. The project consisted of an online phase, a four-day seminar, a one-week workshop and a final campaign and evaluation, taking place between October 2016 and March 2017. The seminar and workshop were conducted in Beirut. Participants developed a training manual on how to launch a media campaign. EWCE's aim was to train and empower young professionals in the area of women's involvement in countering violent radicalisation and extremism. It was intended to promote peaceful coexistence, interfaith dialogue and reconciliation. In the words of one participant, the international character helped to stress the fact that radicalisation and extremism are global phenomena and exist in various manifestations. Moreover, intercultural learning also took place between the participants. For example, one participant believed that the encounters made possible by the project helped to counter simplistic representations of Arab women in Western countries such as Denmark. Networking was an essential part of the programme, which relied on a distinctive cross-cultural, interfaith methodology, bringing together participants from a range of different cultural, religious and professional backgrounds. Moreover, the project included both male and female participants. The specific focus of the project lay on developing counternarratives to extremist propaganda on social media channels. The programme included sessions on how to develop and implement efficient media campaigns, stakeholder analyses and dialogical engagement with extremists. Participants developed a toolkit on countering extremism through social media, launched a mobile application and designed and implemented online initiatives targeted at their local communities. By doing so, the organisers aimed at training participants to build their own counter-messages to extremist propaganda and help prevent the travel of women and youth to IS-controlled territory. The inclusion of women was at the heart of EWCE, as its aim was to empower individuals who could be role-models to their communities and inspire them to stand up for the protection of their human rights. In this context, the focus lay on developing tools that work for the local context.

EWCE deemed it essential to include a variety of different actors in their CRaD efforts. For example, they were faced with the fact that some Islamic and Christian institutions were not in favour of including women in CRaD processes. In navigating the field of CRaD initiatives, EWCE strived to avoid "the over-focusing on the role of women as mothers in PVE/CVE" which they saw as "based on a narrow and over-simplistic understanding of the causes of extremism and the solutions", as one FDCD employee put it. The EWCE staff was also highly critical of a securitisation of the women's rights agenda. They saw this as a major risk in CRaD processes and they described it as a factor that puts "the role of women at risks and may provoke a backlash against women's rights activists", as described by the FDCD employee.

Expert Centre on Gender and Right-Wing Extremism of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation | Berlin, Germany[12]

The establishment of the Expert Centre on Gender and Right-Wing Extremism dates back to 2007. It is part of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation which was founded in Berlin in 1998. The Amadeu Antonio Foundation focuses on "strengthen[ing] democratic civic society and eliminat[ing] neo-nazism, right-wing extremism, and antisemitism and other forms of bigotry and hate in Germany."[13] The Foundation and its Expert Centre work in the areas of civil society empowerment and research on the far-right and related forms of extremism. The Expert Centre has its origins in a local project in the eastern German federal state Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which was founded under the name 'Lola für Lulu'[14]. The project's aim was to encourage women and girls to engage in political processes from a feminist standpoint. The focus lay on efforts to strengthen civil society processes in democratic structures. The project did explicitly not have a deradicalization or disengagement component, but focused on community empowerment and the prevention of radicalisation instead. To this date, the Expert Centre does not work directly

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[12] The website of the Expert Centre is available in Germany only: http://www.gender-und-rechtsextremismus.de/. However, a small section of the 'About Us' section has been translated into English: http://www.gender-und-rechtsextremismus.de/wir-ueber-uns/. The website of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation is available in German (http://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/) and English (http://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/eng/) (all last accessed 21 August 2017).
[13] http://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/eng/about-us/ (last accessed 21 August 2017).
[14] The German website of the project can be accessed under http://www.lola-fuer-lulu.de/ (last accessed 21 August 2017).

with right-wing extremist women. Instead, it aims at empowering local women to question and expose undemocratic practices, gender constructs and anti-feminist discourses in right-wing extremist movements. 'Lola für Lulu' was founded based on the belief that social work needs to offer more services to girls, take a feminist approach and highlight the often-overlooked roles of women as extremists. The Foundation decided to work with women in order to counter the widespread tendency for women to be perceived less as political subjects. The first projects were aimed at providing women with the opportunity to participate in democratic processes, to create spaces where women can try out democratic interaction in small groups and experience success in implementing democratic values. These processes were meant to raise awareness amongst the women, cause them to reflect upon their experience and thus empower them to eventually participate in shaping the social and political landscapes in their immediate environment. Ten years after the establishment of the Expert Centre, it is well-established as one of the very few organisations in Germany working on gender and right-wing extremism. In addition to civil society projects and research, the Expert Centre conducts trainings on gender and right-wing extremism for police officers, journalists, educators and social workers. Moreover, the Expert Centre advises schools, kindergartens, sports associations and other organizations on strategies to incorporate democratic values in the organisation's work in order to counter extremists' attempt to spread their hateful ideology.[15] The Expert Centre has published a number of guides and policy papers on gender and right-wing extremism.[16] Members of the Expert Centre and the association which arose out of 'Lola für Lulu' are regularly invited to international expert meetings and conferences to report on their experience. Together with this international recognition and the Expert Centre's many small victories on the ground, one of its biggest successes may be the fact that, in early 2017, one of the Expert Centre's founders was appointed a professor of the methods and theories of social work at a university in Eastern Germany.[17] In the words of one of the current employees of the Expert Centre, the appointment shows clearly that gender has been established in the prevention of extremism and that even academic institutions now consider gender-specific approaches of relevance to the training of future social workers. While in recent years, in Germany there has been an increased focus on the roles of women in Islamist extremist organisations, the Expert Centre continues to focus on gender and right-wing extremism only, as this is where their expertise lies.

5 Applicability of women and CRaD initiatives in Lebanon

The experience by ConnectFutures, the Expert Centre on Gender and Right-Wing Extremism and EWCE in the area of women's roles in CRaD processes was discussed with great interest during a two-day workshop held by the Lebanese branch of the Berghof Foundation in Beirut. The workshop, which was facilitated by the author of this paper, gathered up to 30 participants with a background in research, practice and activism. Participants included academics, lawyers, business consultants, journalists, education practitioners, political activists, women's rights activists, civil society representatives, prison officers and members of international security forces. Except for one male participant with years of grassroots activism, who had recently implemented a project focused on women and peacebuilding, all participants were female.

Many of the participants identified a need for debates on theories and definitions of the key terms used in debates on CRaD and their applicability in Lebanon. They reported an increased interest in the topic in Lebanon in recent years and stressed the need to approach the topic from a research-based perspective. Participants believed that context-specific definitions of terms and concepts, such as indicators of radicalisation, would be helpful in their work.

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[15] https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/heike-radvan-carmen-altmeyer/overlooked-and-underrated-women-in-rightwing-extremi (last accessed 21 August 2017).
[16] Documents translated into English include http://www.gender-und-rechtsextremismus.de/w/files/pdfs/fachstelle/best-practices.pdf and https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/w/files/pdfs/fachstelle/140407_overlooked-and-underrated.-german-women-in-right-wing-extremist-groups.pdf (both last accessed 21 August 2017).
[17] http://www.mwfk.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php/bb1.c.476469.de (last accessed 21 August 2017).

Participants agreed that a focus on soft security approaches was central in CRaD processes. In particular, they stressed the need to focus on community engagement, education and women's empowerment. They contended that CRaD work in prisons was important, but that engagement with radicalised or at-risk individuals and groups needed to start prior to individuals being incarcerated. Participants saw the work with schools, families, religious authorities and media representatives as essential in this context. They controversially discussed the use of social media in CRaD processes and agreed that it was a useful tool, but questioned whether it would allow practitioners to reach all populations who are at risk or already radicalised.

Participants stressed the importance of working with grassroots organisations and directly engage with communities. They warned of CRaD initiatives that focused on work with elitist groups only. Instead, participants believed that change needed to be rooted on a grassroots level. Participants saw a need for an eventual change of legal frameworks which discriminate against women and thus limit their potential to be seen (and see themselves) as fully engaged citizens. However, they also agreed that change in attitudes to women's roles in political processes was more important than legal changes. Participants criticised a tendency in some parts of Lebanese society to expect change from the top rather than actively influence and create policies on the grassroots level. Participants stressed the need for the grassroots to organise in order to influence policies, such as on the level of the newly formed Ministry of Women's Affairs, which is working in the area of women and radicalisation.

Participants deplored widespread discrimination of women in society, law and the labour market and agreed that problems related to toxic masculinities in Lebanese society needed to be addressed. In their view, these constituted one of the main barriers to women's active involvement in CRaD processes, as their skills, experience and capabilities were often overlooked and underestimated. They agreed that men and women often have different backgrounds, perspectives and skill sets. Rather than seeing this as a weakness or an indicator of a deficiency displayed in women, participants believed that men and women should work together and complement each other. Participants highlighted the contradiction that, when compared to other Arab countries, Lebanon was often said to be a freer and more open society, but that de facto women did not enjoy more rights than in many other states in the region.

When working with communities, participants stressed the importance to take into account the relatively high diversity of Lebanese society. They notably argued that CRaD initiatives must involve all religious groups in order to overcome sectarian divides and use civil, non-confessional language. However, other forms of diversity should also be taken into account.

As far as international links are concerned, some participants thought that international exchange was helpful in their work, as a comparative perspective allowed to highlight the fact that radicalisation, extremism and engagement in political violence are by no means culture-specific but global phenomena. They also believed that projects working on the roles of women in CRaD, which took an international approach, could help to counter simplistic depictions of Arab women in, for example, the West. On the other hand, some participants identified the risk of being perceived as 'Westernised' in their work with communities. In this context, they stressed the need to speak the language of the grassroots and engage with them directly. Participants also described that in Lebanon the state was not often seen as an effective actor and that this critical view was sometimes extended to non-governmental organisations, especially those with international links. Participants saw this as a factor to be taken into account in their work.

As far as the strengths of the organisations that were represented at the workshop were concerned, participants stressed the broad experience they had in working in the areas of community engagement, research, lobbying, advocacy, activism and others. In some areas, organisations cooperated successfully. Nevertheless, all participants stressed the need for more exchange and cooperation between different actors working on CRaD, community engagement and women's empowerment in Lebanon. Moreover, participants deplored that CRaD initiatives were often not based on independent research but followed trends instead, and that some actors in the field avoided to address the role religious aspects played in processes of radicalisation. Lack of funding, training opportunities and clear follow-up mechanisms after implemented measures as well as poor infrastructure were

identified as further problems. Participants also saw a risk of politicisation and securitisation of their work in the areas of community engagement and women's empowerment.

6 Policy and Practice Recommendations

Avoid problematic gender stereotypes

- Do not assume that women are only victims of violent extremism or *the* solution in the fight against it
- Do not involve women in their capacities as mothers and wives only, but because of their experience and expertise
- Do not expect women to only speak about women and gender but include them on all levels
- Include men and do not see them as adversaries but as partners and supporters in the fight against radicalisation and extremism

Take a holistic and multidimensional approach to CRaD

- Adopt research-informed approaches
- Aim to help bridge the gap between research, practitioners and communities
- Include a range of different societal groups, such as schools, grassroots organisations and (male and female) members of religious institutions
- If possible and of relevance, address different forms of radicalisation and extremism
- Take into account context
- If possible and of relevance, use social media in CRaD initiatives, but be aware of its limitations

Practice diversity and inclusion

- Include, listen and respond to individuals and organisations from a variety of different backgrounds
- Avoid stigmatisation of single societal groups, which is ethically wrong and can prove to be counter-productive in CRaD processes
- Include the excluded and those not in positions of power and socio-political decision-making
- Avoid an elitist, top-bottom approach
- Be aware of the language you use (is it inclusive? does it fuel societal divides? does it speak to the grassroots?)

Provide opportunity for learning and exchange

- Create safe spaces for learning and dialogue, in which women (and men) can try out democratic interaction
- Train men and women on gender and the roles of women in violent extremism and CRaD processes
- Consider extending these spaces to online spaces and / or spaces enabling international and / or interfaith encounters
- Allow individuals and organisations you engage with to develop critical thinking

Let the grassroots lead

- Bear in mind that context and credible voices matter in CRaD processes

- Do not make any assumptions about the situation in a particular context without having the required knowledge
- Acknowledge the grassroots' expert knowledge on the situation on the ground
- Do not simply 'include' or 'engage' the grassroots – let them lead

Be aware of risks and limitations

- Speak the same language as the individuals and organisations you engage with
- Be integer, credible and authentic
- Be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation and its partners
- Be specific about the aims of the measures you implement
- Avoid the securitisation and instrumentalisation of women's rights and other human rights

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