

# Meeting of experts of the North Africa regional platform

Expert Meeting Report

Casablanca, April 2019

Experts from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia convened in Casablanca in April 2019 to discuss issues of gender and the prevention and countering of violent extremism (PVE/CVE).

Building on the group's first meeting in October 2018 in Tunis and a series of webinars, this meeting aimed to: (i) discuss broad terminology around PVE/CVE and gender in the North African context; (ii) share best practices from the region on gender-sensitive approaches; (iii) validate the Platform's terms of reference and agree on high level deliverables for next steps.

This report summarises key takeaways and discussions from the three-day meeting.

Growing recognition of gender is visible in frameworks such as UNSC resolution 2242 (2015), which aims to enhance gender-responsive action by Member-States in CT and CVE, and UN Resolution 2396 (2017) on the return of foreign terrorist fighters, which recognizes the diverse roles women play in violent extremism (VE). These serve as important steps to be built upon, while also ensuring the meaningful translation of these frameworks into policies and programmes.

## I. A global perspective on gender and VE

To ground the group's discussions in the international context, the meeting opened with presentations from two keynote speakers on global work on gender and violent extremism.

A presentation from Aleksandra Dier, Gender Coordinator for the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), discussed areas of progress and of backlash and where more work is needed. Ms. Dier presented findings from the CTED report 'Gender Dimensions of the Response to the Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters,' published in 2019.<sup>1</sup> She stressed that today is a 'key moment' for progressing and enhancing gender-sensitivity in policies and programmes on PVE/CVE.

The **complexity and nuance of gender dimensions of VE** was discussed. Women play diverse roles - as victims, perpetrators and supporters in counter terrorism and PVE/CVE, and sometimes two or more of these roles at the same time. Women are more likely to be recruited by extremists online than offline and can be exploited by those who take advantage of gender dynamics. Terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have led women to, for example, become complicit in atrocities including those committed against the Yazidi community (such as some women keeping Yazidi slaves in their homes and mistreating them), participating in an all-female morality police (for example serving in the all-female ISIL religious police the 'Al-Khansaa brigade'). These realities clearly don't fit into neat categories; for example, a woman who was a victim of a violent extremist group may become a supporter and member of such group later on.

It was argued that while extremist groups have been somewhat successful at co-opting and

---

<sup>1</sup> This report 'Gender dimensions of the response to returning foreign terrorist fighters: Research perspectives' (CTED Trends Report, February 2019) is available in Arabic [https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/03282019\\_Trends\\_Report\\_Arabic.pdf](https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/03282019_Trends_Report_Arabic.pdf) and English [https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Feb\\_2019\\_CTED\\_Trends\\_Report.pdf](https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Feb_2019_CTED_Trends_Report.pdf).

exploiting women, gender norms and gender dynamics, **PVE/CVE programmes have not sufficiently addressed these issues, often instead finding their grounding in gender assumptions. As a result, programmes are often limited in their engagement with women, and therefore in their effectiveness.** Research has identified in some regions the roles poverty, social marginalisation and lack of socio-economic opportunity play in driving women into violent extremism (these were highlighted, for example, as factors prompting women from Boko Haram to return to the group). Research also suggests that gendered assumptions can impact the treatment of women by PVE actors, for example women often receive less severe treatment in criminal justice systems.

In some cases, **PVE programmes can have adverse effects on women particular,** an important consideration when bearing in mind principles of ‘do no harm’. As explained by Yasmine Ahmed, Director of Rights Watch UK, there are a number of areas where CT/CVE policies and practices impact women, including 1) women being directly targeted by policies in circumstances which fail to appreciate their vulnerabilities and experiences, 2) women experiencing collateral consequences of policies directed at male family members, 3) the impacts on and burdens of women of the increasing securitisation of social services, 4) the gendered impact of surveillance policies, and 5) the representation or lack thereof of women in decision making roles. In discussing the UK context, Ms. Ahmed stressed the risks of securitizing services essential to women such as those addressing domestic violence, or English as a second language and other educational programmes, which can shut down opportunities for people to voice concerns and for vulnerable women to access much needed support. These gendered impacts should be further recognised and explored in research and programme design in ways that engage civil society actors, including women.

Both speakers highlighted that ensuring women’s inclusion in the design, implementation, and evaluation of PVE/CVE programmes, engaging civil society more directly, and involving men and boys in gender and PVE/CVE programmes should be prioritized to ensure a more rights-based and gender sensitive approach across country contexts.

## **II. Definitions**

Definitions relevant to work on gender and VE bring forward a range of interpretations, connotations and meanings in North Africa. Experts discussed terms such as gender, PVE, CVE and Violent Extremism/Terrorism from a country-specific perspective – grounding these terms in legal frameworks, and raised use of other terminology such as ‘counter-terrorism’, ‘radicalization’ and ‘demobilisation and reintegration’ (DDR) for addressing VE in the region. There was no consensus on definitions, rather that terminology is context-specific in its use and understanding. Participants recommended to undertake a study to look at the relationships in language between laws at the national level and international legal frameworks. While experts noted that these are fluid concepts and based on historical context, they also shared context-specific observations.

Gender was identified as a term which requires better clarity in translation and usage in the region. The word gender for example in Arabic in the region is not mainstreamed in research/literature or legal/official frameworks and often not understood. Instead, the word “women” is used as the concept of gender can present “red lines”. However, experts recognized the importance of understanding gender relationships and not focus on women only. For example, in understanding why women join VE groups, the change in gender roles needs to be

taken into account. The intersectionality of gender related dimensions should be considered to make programmes ‘gender’ sensitive in relevant ways at all levels.

The participants found the distinction between PVE and CVE as laid out in the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism (2016)<sup>2</sup> to be outdated and requiring further nuance and integration/alignment with terms such as rehabilitation and de-radicalisation. During the previous Tunisia meeting, experts noted the use of the concept of prevention in their National Strategy. It was noted though that the word ‘extremism’ is sometimes used in North Africa, but is sometimes, but not always, combined in the phrasing ‘violent extremism’.<sup>3</sup> Overall, ‘terrorism’ is a more commonly used by government institutions, national strategies and legal frameworks in the region. Some felt that the use of the term terrorism can be restrictive, with particular connotations (such as a securitised understanding) and can prompt specific policy responses that might not be relevant for all situations, and wider understanding of the range of terms and how they can bring nuanced understanding to debates should continue to be explored.

### **III. Push and pull factors and drivers of VE: Learnings from North African countries**

Discussions on the push and pull factors driving VE highlighted the need to better understand the drivers of extremism in North Africa for both men and women. Experts stressed the point that more gender-specific research on the push and pull factors is needed to address and prevent violence.

#### *Stereotypes and models of VE actors*

Experts discussed the prevailing assumption that women are easy to radicalise but are less likely to practice terrorism. This perception, which requires further exploration, risks creating stereotypes that cause actors to be unable to appropriately address and recognise women’s roles as active fighters and perpetrators of violence. Experts highlighted the importance of recognising the varied roles women play in the region in perpetrating violence, as active actors in terrorist groups performing a wide range of roles such as recruiting people online (including foreign terrorists in ISIL), providing safe havens and logistical support, collecting information and planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

There isn’t one model that explains why people, including women, join terrorist groups. An Egyptian expert presented research that highlighted factors that are commonly found among terrorists in Egypt. Through her research<sup>4</sup>, she found that middle or high education coupled with the inability to find work or being engaged in low-quality jobs, as well as a limited knowledge of religion, can contribute to a situation where a person has limited opportunity to contribute to public life and is more likely to develop grievances making that individual vulnerable to radicalisation. The research also showed that radicalization, within her sample, took place mostly online, and other spaces for radicalisation included mosques. Radicalisation often occurred in a close circle of friends and relatives, and in particular for second generation

---

<sup>2</sup> Please see FAQ from the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violence Extremism, 7 and 8 April 2016, ‘What is the difference between PVE and CVE?’, available at <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctif/en/faq-geneva-conference-preventing-violent-extremism>.

<sup>3</sup> Tunisia has a 2015 national strategy on ‘extremism and terrorism’.

<sup>4</sup> Research covered a sample of 30 radicalized men and women, including young people. Interviews took place in 2015-2016.

Egyptians living in Gulf countries. The expert also noted that women become an attractive constituency for terrorist organizations who take advantage of their grievances (for example if victims of terrorism, lost a member of their family) to recruit them, and highlighted the different roles of women in contributing to terrorism. It was posited that those who enjoy better socio-economic living conditions coupled with sufficient economic and social opportunities are more difficult to recruit in extremist/terrorist groups. It was also argued that Egyptians living abroad are susceptible to extremism. It was noted by presenters that social media networks, which are widely used in Egypt (48 million Egyptians use the internet on a daily basis versus 27 million who use Facebook on a daily basis), are being abused by extremist/terrorist groups to recruit Egyptians, particularly women. Experts noted that not only have women been recruited into joining such groups, but they have also committed serious crimes as IS fighters. Research shows that some of the recruited women have even become leaders within these groups. There are currently at least 750 Egyptians in Syria and Iraq.<sup>5</sup>

A Tunisian expert further elaborated on the different roles of women and use of stereotypes. She noted that stereotypes prevail in understanding why women join. Women are often depicted as making an emotional decision (romance) while in reality women experience socio-economic marginalization, which may be a contributing factor. She added that men are not less emotional than women and are also manipulated into joining VE groups. She emphasised that while women play different roles in terrorist groups, it is often not women's decisions to undertake these roles; rather it is a decision made by the group leaders with the idea that women are subservient to men. The expert added that there are differences in the roles women are given can find their differences in nationality – with women from Europe/USA and from Saudi Arabia taking on different roles than women from the region. She considered that the assumption by Tunisian women of leadership positions in Daesh results from their longing for empowerment and leadership and their capacity to exercise such a role. In Tunisia for example, many women were used as recruiters and spies to collect intelligence for terrorist groups, with one recent case of a female suicide bomber in Tunisia. Moreover, women from the Maghreb were often not featured in the publications and writings of Daesh (ISIL), while many Saudi women wrote statements featured publicly, supporting terrorism through writing. She added that many women have suffered and were tortured in trying to escape these groups, “*we need to listen to these women on a moral basis/obligation*” and that as researchers and experts it is important to dig deeper and without judgement to make gender-sensitive recommendations.

Participants further discussed the importance of gender norms and expectations about men and women and how they can drive VE – both stereotypes about masculinity (the ‘zero to hero’ trope) and how women's ideal role in society, the family and the public space can serve as drivers of radicalization and require fuller attention in strategies to develop gender-sensitive approaches to PVE. Several experts also highlighted the importance of undertaking research with psychologists who are trained on the issue to better identify psychological factors, including per sex and age disaggregated data.

### *Violence, drivers and approaches*

Participants highlighted the importance of historical and national context in developing programmes that address the drivers of violence and radicalisation across the five North

---

<sup>5</sup> For further exploration of returning foreign terrorists and the security challenges they raise, see Dr. Eman Ragab (2018) ‘Returning Foreign Terrorists: What Type of Security Challenges Are They Posing?’ *Violent Extremism*, IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook and Dr. Eman Ragab (2019) ‘IS returnees’ *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 17 April.

African countries, and picked up on themes discussed in the first platform meeting. Domestic violence and psychological violence as drivers were identified as important areas of concern that require greater focus in PVE initiatives. Experts highlighted the need to consider programmes addressing family safety and prevention of domestic violence as relevant to PVE in the region. In a series of discussions on national programmes and policies (explored in the following section), a number of religious education initiatives were presented and explored for informing further work on PVE in the region, and members stressed the need for more learning and evaluations to understand what works to prevent extremism.

#### **IV. Best practices and learning on gender and PVE/CVE programmes and policies and a gender sensitive security sector from North Africa: Evidence and knowledge gaps**

Experts discussed a range of specific country research, programmes and initiatives in sessions on ‘what works’ in mainstreaming gender into PVE/CVE programmes and on gender in the security sector. Through these sessions, a range of examples were raised and discussed within the national histories and contexts relevant to the meeting. Highlights from the discussions are explained below.

- **Morocco**

Experts discussed a few of the large programmes in Morocco aimed at preventing terrorism and violent extremism, including the Mourchidat programme, launched by the Government of Morocco in 2015 through the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams to deliver religious training programmes for men and women that promote an ‘authentic, tolerant and open Islam’.<sup>6</sup> The programme annually trains around 150 (male) imams and 100 (female) mourchidat as religious preachers. Training is available for Moroccan citizens, and African and European countries have also sent candidates to participate in the trainings. The role of female mourchidat was described as to preach the teachings of the Islamic Sharia and contribute to preserving the religious unity and social cohesion of society. Courses include the history of religions, languages and jurisprudence for women, among other topics. Requirements for mourchidat applicants include knowing at least half of the Quran by heart and having a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent.<sup>7</sup> Successful candidates are hired by the state by contract and their preaching is monitored to ensure alignment with agreed messaging.

The Musalaha (reconciliation) programme launched in 2017 was also discussed as a relevant to PVE in the region. The programme aims to reconcile, reintegrate and rehabilitate those in prison on terrorism charges. It is implemented by the Directorate for Prisons, in collaboration with the Rabita of Oulemas, the National Council for Human Rights and experts specialized in radicalisation. The programme is composed of three main axes: reconciliation with oneself, reconciliation with religious texts and reconciliation with society. It is part of a wider security governance programme in Morocco. It is run across four regions in Morocco, engaging in work to promote education and support those who are vulnerable.

---

<sup>6</sup> ‘HM the King, Commander of the Faithful, Inaugurates Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidins and Morchidats in Rabat’. Available at <http://www.maroc.ma/en/royal-activities/hm-king-commander-faithful-inaugurates-mohammed-vi-institute-training-imams>.

<sup>7</sup> Mohammed-vi-institute-training-imams, Available at <https://bit.ly/2WwlpWS>.

In its first edition, the programme included: a dimension of religious preparation for understanding and correct assimilation of the religious text in a manner that reinforces the values of tolerance and moderation; a rights-based and legal dimension; training prisoners in understanding and accepting the legal framework; re-education and psychological accompaniment, and socio-economic re-education.<sup>8</sup>

Within the scope of security programming, an expert presented recent efforts by the Government to build trust between the citizens and security forces by organizing annual ‘open door days’ across the country where people can meet with security sector actors. The Government of Morocco has also developed a human-rights training for security actors.

Experts debated the impact and potential of these programmes, and suggested learning and evaluation needs to be done to better understand how these and similar programmes can support PVE in the region. It was noted that the Mourchidat programme should be further analysed to understand its impacts and potential for use as a tool for women’s empowerment and for PVE, as well as the challenges and risks such programmes may raise in entrenching patriarchal norms. Members discussed the challenges posed by patriarchal social norms in the region, which can hinder the ability of women to gain equal respect to men as religious preachers. Experts also raised the challenge that further legislation to protect people who reach out to returnees across North Africa would be necessary to prevent those aiming to work with returnees from being targeted by security forces as suspects themselves.

- **Egypt**

Egyptian experts presented the results of fieldwork aimed to explain the motives behind youth joining extremist/terrorist groups. Lack of democracy, unemployment, a low level of general knowledge, illiteracy, the existence of a wide marginalised strata in the society coupled with limited knowledge of religion have been all cited as being some of the driving factors which have driven people to participate in VE in the Egyptian context. Experts discussed these factors including how they relate to other experiences and research across the region to help inform approaches in Egypt to address the factors driving violent extremism (see section on push and pull factors for further details).

According to experts, there is a wide range of national frameworks, policies and programmes that aim to support women and address violence, including those aimed to enhance the economic empowerment and social protection of women. Specific programmes to support women’s social protection in Egypt include the Takaful and Karama cash transfer programmes, which support low-income families, including those with very young, very old or disabled family members. These efforts aim to support and empower women and girls in Egypt and address some of the barriers women face in society. On the policy side, Egypt’s National Council for Women in 2015 adopted a strategy to stop violence against women, which works with various partners to implement programmes. A number of government programmes to support women were discussed, such as a department dedicated to incidents of violence against women run by women officers as part of Egypt’s Ministry of the Interior. The Bibliotheca

---

<sup>8</sup> Musalaha programme, Available at : <http://www.dgapr.gov.ma/Baramej/Pages/%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%A9.aspx>



Alexandrina (Library of Alexandria) in Egypt was also discussed as a site for enhancing tolerance, dialogue and understanding in Egypt through cultural, artistic, and intellectual activities.

- **Tunisia**

A reduction of terrorist incidences in the region was seen the result of increased surveillance and military presence. Experts highlighted that dormant groups still exist in Tunisia, especially in the mountains and women may be playing a role in these groups. Tunisia's programmes to train women preachers were raised as an approach requiring further analysis. While these programmes have trained some 280 women, training has not always been sufficient, and concerns exist that women don't share the same status as male preachers and that they have limited impact on men's ideologies. One initiative proposed was to have an ombudsman who check in on the content of mosque preaching, a role that women could play as well as men. It was also stressed that young women and young men should be trained as preachers to reach younger groups. An expert raised concern that non-Salafi Imams often have a poor grounding in theology and are not able to respond to questions raised by different Islamic groups in Tunisia.

Concern was raised by some participants about the lack of involvement of women in the development of the National Strategy for Countering Extremism and Terrorism, in 2015 in the context of a number of high-profile cases of violent extremism. Experts stressed the importance of discrediting and countering the illusion of empowerment that terrorist organizations use to attract women. They also noted the importance of the security sector engaging with women and young women to define responses and highlighted the lack of access to returnees for research as a limitation in adopting a comprehensive approach to PVE/CVE.

Findings from research conducted on the reintegration of former fighters and extremists, including women, in prisons in Tunisia was presented to demonstrate some of the latest learning on women returnees in the country. Recent cases of women engaged in VE such as Fatma Zouaghi and Mona Gibbi have highlighted the importance of understanding why women are attracted to violent extremist groups in Tunisia.

The research found that some 3% of female prisoners studied were in prison for terrorist acts, but most of them - 98% - were returnees (many of whom fought in Syria, Iraq and Libya). While the women researched share characteristics in common, they are also diverse in many ways. 50% of these female terrorists in the prisons were divorced, 30% have children, 70% were unemployed or were daily labourers and 40% have husbands who are terrorists. Among returnees, 40% are suffering from mental trauma. While many were not employed and were school drop outs, 80% of returnees were literate, and most felt marginalised. Everyone interviewed for the research including returned fighters agreed that 'Islam was a religion of tolerance' – suggesting there is important work to be done to explore Islamic thought as a source for peace and tolerance.

The discussion on prisons in Tunisia helped raise a consensus that there is a need for new research, data collection, and scientific approaches to build on the existing research in this area in order to improve policies for reintegration and prisons that are gender sensitive as a matter of priority for those interested in gender and PVE. It was also highlighted that there is a need for more female researchers and scholars, including those with a solid background on religion,



to reach women and to interpret religious sermons in an inclusive manner taking into account women's perspectives.

- **Libya**

With funding from UN Women, a Libyan expert and her team are currently conducting research in Libya on VE. The research includes interviews with a broad spectrum of people in Libya, interrogating how men and women are recruited by extremist groups, why extremist groups target women in particular ways and what tools the Libyan state can use to counter violent extremism. The many challenges in conducting the research were highlighted, including security risks for researchers and participants and difficulties in reaching the selected sites. The experts discussed initial early findings.

In Sabha, where there is a large Salafi and illegal migrant community alongside known extremists of varied ideologies, researchers found that there was no confrontation between the community and extremists. In Germa, known to be a hub for illegal migrants, armed groups, and militias from different religious affiliations, the expert expressed concern that there is a lack of collaboration between the state and tribes to control extremist groups and saw more people siding with violent extremist groups than in the other three sites.

The research found that while some women participate in extremist groups in Libya, they tend to be non-Libyan nationals. These women faced unequal treatment, sometimes arrested and going through courts while Libyan women accused of terrorism sometimes had support of families and tribes to evade such ramifications. The experts stressed the need and urgency of rehabilitating violent extremist women who have left Iraq and Syria and returning to, or coming to Libya, as many often have no other alternative than to follow a violent extremist group. Foreign women -including from Morocco, Egypt, the UK – fleeing Syria and Iraq and arriving in Libya are sometimes married to a Libyan terrorist fighter. The experts noted the need for rehabilitation and reintegration in the security environment in Libya, areas identified as a blind spot for existing programmes, where civil society organisations (CSOs) working on justice systems could invest more directly in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes that support women not only within the justice system but after they reintegrate in communities.

- **Algeria**

The expert focused on Algeria's history and social context as critical to understanding gender and PVE in the country. The experience of civil war (1991-2002) has had lasting social and political impacts relevant for addressing VE. Extremists who were arrested during the civil war were imprisoned, and their victims and families have lacked adequate psychological and other support. After a number of years, extremists were slowly returned to the very communities where they had launched attacks, which threatened the re-victimization of those who had been previously harmed, and processes did not sufficiently address the need for reconciliation and support for the victims.

In the aftermath of Algeria's civil war, the government worked to control certain Islamic groups resulting in the promotion of pacifist and apolitical forms of Salafism. The gendered dimensions of this require further understanding, including on perceptions of masculinity. Armed groups were seen as an opportunity for fraternity and men who participate can be portrayed as strong heroes and martyrs. Linked to the promotion of apolitical forms of

Salafism, one change observed was that women wearing a full veil gained particular respect as religious women in the society, and that the influence of religion and changes in social and gender norms have impacted the ways in which women have been viewed differently over time in Algerian society, indicating that work on empowerment and equality need to understand the address historical and social context in Algeria. The role of the veil and how veiled women are treated across the region was discussed, for example, when they wish to join security and government services and in certain public spaces. In Algeria there have also been efforts to professionalise women's religious positions. Similar to Morocco, there are also mourchidat. Again, it was highlighted that the role of women mourchidat would be essential in promoting women's leadership, though it was emphasised that work to establish roles for female preachers in Algeria needs to ensure patriarchal standards are not reproduced.

In light of history in Algeria and modernisation of the postcolonial state, there have been social crises including young people left behind seeking a type of authority. Experts expressed concern that this can be a factor driving Algerian youth to violence and extremism. The image of the 'hero' holds importance in Algerian society and efforts to fill the male stereotype can be a factor in the drive to extremism.

## V. Conclusions

The meeting identified a range of areas of convergence among experts and agreed takeaways that are useful for cross regional exchange.

Key takeaways from the meeting include:

- The issues of returnees, rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists and their gender and psychological dimensions require urgent policy and programming attention in North Africa. Rehabilitation and reintegration were identified as a key gender issue in the region in need of further analysis and attention.
- Harmful masculinity and femininity and stereotypes for both men and women need to be addressed in programmes to prevent violent extremism, including work for reintegration and rehabilitation.
- The role of families including mothers should be better explored and account for understandings of gender dimensions.
- Drivers of extremism include isolation/marginalization which require family and community responses.
- Gender as an intersectional approach which take into account diverse drivers and factors of VE can help widen our understandings of extremism in North Africa.
- There is a need for more evidence and data-driven methods for addressing gender and VE, including to improve rehabilitation programmes in prisons and community integration strategies. This includes having more female researchers and specifically trained psychologist undertaking research.
- Education, including religious education, can play a key role in combatting the lack of knowledge on religion which can drive VE. Countries' various programmes should be further explored and evaluated from a gender perspective to further enhance women's leadership (an area to continue to explore in the region includes the role of education female religious scholars).

- There is a need to engage victims and marginal women and young people, more thoroughly throughout the process of design, delivery and PVE/CVE programme activities.

Given the range of priority areas identified by the group for future regional discussion and collaboration, further meetings and cross-regional engagement among North African experts should continue to explore these priority areas. Further engagement on the topic of gender and PVE in the region could support more targeted and specific workshops on priority areas such as the reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees, gender and religious training and education, and gender-sensitivity in national and community programmes.

There is a particular interest among experts for the next Platform meeting to be on the topic of returnees, which could help expand on areas of interest raised in the recent Casablanca meeting. This and other more focused discussions across priority areas can help shape and deepen more specific Platform activities and outputs in the future.

## ANNEX I

### *Theories of change*

Meeting participants explored theories of change as a tool for designing gender-sensitive programmes to address PVE. Theories of change involve '[M]aking explicit a set of assumptions in relation to given change process'.<sup>9</sup> As documents that explain causal relationships and assumptions between activities intended to lead to an outcome/goal, theories of change help programme designers deal with complex realities and develop approaches for implementing PVE efforts in different contexts.

Meeting participants in two groups explored the theory of change tool to unpack the relevant steps, activities and assumptions for reaching goals in the regional context around two statements selected by the groups:

- Goal #1 Female returnees are rehabilitated in ways that address their human rights and reduce the probability that they re-join an extremist group
- Goal #2 The international funding environment supports the development of gender and PVE programmes

Group #1 discussed the goal of rehabilitating returnees, identifying and mapping a number of priority areas and linked actors and activities for achieving this and related goals. A priority identified was for efforts to align programmes and policies to national legal frameworks in each of the National African countries. Participants highlighted the importance of building bridges for communication with returnees and developing customized rehabilitation programmes that focus on the religious and psychological dimensions facing returnees. The role of the media and approaches such as art therapy and family therapy were also identified as important tools, and girls and mothers were identified as having specific experiences and needs that need to be addressed. Evaluation and monitoring tools to follow up with returnees should be prioritized to improve a more rounded and long-term approach to PVE.

---

<sup>9</sup> Craig Valters (2015) 'Theories of Change: Time for a radical approach to learning in development'. Available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9835.pdf>, p. 5.

Figure 1 draws from the group discussions to provide a sample Theory of Change (ToC) for a multisectoral returnee programme. The figure captures points raised in the meetings and distils them into the starting points for the logic and language of the ToC model, standing at the meta level to depict the various initiatives one might start to build analysis on. A more detailed ToC could be developed at each level, identifying relevant assumptions and risks.

**Figure 1: Sample meta ToC on returnees**



**Figure 2: Table of discussions - dilemmas of international funding architecture**

Group #2 discussed the international funding environment and highlighted the importance of working alongside existing channels and policies to promote international partnerships. The context in Egypt, for example, was raised where existing programmes for women could be leveraged to harmonise with international funding interest in supporting women. Discussions also covered Morocco, where the civil society and nongovernmental actors were discussed.

