



UN WOMEN STRATEGY ON COUNTER-TERRORISM AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY,
PEACE AND SECURITY



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UN Women

New York, 2026



This thematic strategy sets out UN Women's contribution to advancing gender equality, peace and security in counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, in support of national, regional and international stakeholders and in line with its WPS mandate and Strategic Plan (2026–2029).



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1. BACKGROUND

Since 2015, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has called for the integration of the women, peace and security (WPS), counter-terrorism (CT), and preventing and countering violent extremism (PVE) agendas, particularly through Security Council resolutions 2242 (2015) and 2467 (2019). Grounded in international human rights law, the WPS agenda extends the application of upholding women's rights in conflict and post-conflict settings, as reflected in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and General recommendation No. 30.

In response, UN Women has systematically engaged with the UN CT architecture since 2017 following the establishment of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). Its role focuses on advancing the implementation of the WPS agenda within the UN CT framework, chairing the Gender Working Group of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, facilitating the engagement of women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) in global and regional policy processes,¹ and providing technical guidance and knowledge products to strengthen gender integration² in CT/PVE responses. UN Women also works to prevent the securitization and instrumentalization of women's rights³

1. See "Global digital consultation: Voices and perspectives of civil society on the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and counterterrorism responses – Outcome report". <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/11/gendered-dimensions-of-violent-extremism-and-counterterrorism-responses>.

2. The UN Women Global project "Preventing violent extremism (PVE): Integrating gender 2019–2022" supported the promotion of women's rights through the integration of gender perspectives in efforts to prevent violent extremism at all levels – particularly through the increased participation of women in security and in the discourse on the prevention of violent extremism across different platforms and relevant mechanisms. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/10/preventing-violent-extremism-integrating-gender-perspectives>.

3. See "Gender mainstreaming principles, dimensions and priorities for PVE" at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/09/gender-mainstreaming-principles-dimensions-and-priorities-for-pve>.

by providing support from a gender equality lens, accompanying and supporting women's movements at regional and national levels to engage effectively in CT and PVE policymaking processes and mechanisms, and by partnering with UN actors to strengthen accountability for gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive approaches within the UN CT Framework.

UN Women's engagement in the UN CT framework is critical given the disproportionate impact of terrorism and counter-terrorism measures on women and girls, including adverse effects on the enjoyment of human rights and progress towards gender equality.⁴ At the same time, in contexts affected by terrorism, women leaders and women-led CSOs are often at the forefront of prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution, particularly in areas where state presence or authority is limited. However, overly broad or vague CT laws and

measures can inadvertently restrict civic space, undermine women's leadership and participation, and weaken these locally led efforts with far-reaching consequences for community resilience and sustainable peace.

To strengthen its strategic engagement, UN Women commissioned an independent review in 2025 of gender integration across the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination and wider inter-agency mechanisms.⁵ The findings informed the revision of UN Women's engagement framework and strategic priorities for advancing gender-responsive CT and PVE approaches. This strategy sets out UN Women's strategic priorities for advancing gender-responsive CT and PVE guided by the frameworks mentioned above and in line with its WPS Programmatic Framework and Strategic Plan (2026–2029).

2. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

This strategic framework outlines UN Women's key assumptions, theoretical framework and implementation measures in support of its strategic objective in promoting and supporting women's rights in the context of the UN CT and PVE agenda, and in contexts impacted by terrorism at all levels.

Building on the *Programmatic Note: UN Women countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism support within the framework of women, peace,*

and security (2022)⁶ and drawing on the UN Women Programming Framework/Gender Accelerator Plan on WPS (2026),⁷ the current strategy serves as a programmatic guidance and positioning document that clarifies the added value and different angle of engagement of UN Women in the thematic area as integral to the UN system working on the CT agenda.

4. See *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism*, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/46/36>.

5. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2026/04/un-women-review-of-gender-integration-in-un-counter-terrorism-mechanisms-a-summary-of-the-findings>.

6. See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/05/brief-un-women-countering-terrorism-and-preventing-violent-extremism-wps> and <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/05/un-womens-engagement-in-support-of-counter-terrorism-and-prevention-of-violent-extremism>.

7. UN Women's Programming Frameworks – also known as Gender Equality Accelerators – translate international normative guidance on gender equality into local actions to achieve gender-responsive results, leveraging the expertise and comparative advantages of UN Women and UN partner organizations. Based on a comprehensive analysis of gender issues, including drivers of persistent inequalities, and the broader landscape and trends, they intend to address the most pressing challenges in realizing the human rights of women and girls and achieving gender equality across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3. NORMATIVE AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

UN Women support in peace, security and humanitarian settings is outlined in its Strategic Plan 2026–2029 and the corresponding Programming Framework on Women, Peace and Security throughout its three outcomes. This support is demonstrated in Impact Area 4 on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action of the Strategic Plan.⁸

The UN CT agenda is articulated in its commitment to support Member States to implement, in a balanced manner, the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (UNGCTS):⁹ 1) addressing the root causes; 2) prevention; 3) capacity-building; and 4) human rights aspects of terrorism.¹⁰ In 2015, the UN Security Council passed resolution 2242 (S/RES/2242) on WPS which explicitly called for greater integration of the agendas on both WPS and counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism.

Furthermore, UN Women centralizes prevention and peacebuilding approaches given that any legitimate and effective CT responses must seek to extend sustainable peace. As such, UN Women's approach

recognizes that violent extremism and terrorism are often rooted in historical, political, and structural conditions related to conflict, exclusion, political disenfranchisement and inequality, rather than being exclusively a security issue. This approach also recognizes that CT initiatives can significantly affect human rights if not developed and executed in accordance with international law. This perspective necessitates comprehensive and integrated strategies that extend beyond traditional securitized and militarized methods.

UN Women places equal emphasis on providing support across three levels of implementation, through: a) providing institutional and capacity-building support to enhance national ability to deliver gender-sensitive justice and security services; b) supporting local agency at the community-level, participation in public life, and enhancing everyday experiences of peace and security; and c) providing strategic policy guidance and technical support to increase harmonization of national frameworks with international law and commitments on WPS.

4. CORE ASSUMPTIONS AND ANALYTICAL LENS

The role of women in CT, and within peace and security more broadly, can be understood as that of rights-holders and political-actors who are diverse and hold competing interests and that at times is embedded in broader conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Such positionality of the role and voice of women within CT responses must be formally recognized and included in frameworks and mechanisms to

ensure legitimate, accountable and comprehensive CT and PVE approaches and responses. UN Women brings in these realities to the UN CT policy and practice through its strategic technical advisory services, coordination support and programmatic engagement at all levels.

8. See para. 61 and para. 62, UN Women Strategic Plan 2026 –2029. <https://docs.un.org/en/unw/2025/7>.

9. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288) is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. Through its adoption in 2006 by the General Assembly without a vote (by consensus), all United Nations Member States agreed to a common strategic and operational approach to countering terrorism.

10. For more information: <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/en/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>.

5. PROBLEM STATEMENT, THEORY OF CHANGE AND ALIGNMENT

Against the backdrop above, UN Women acknowledges the challenge of over-securitized CT approaches that systematically ignore gendered aspects, drivers, impacts and consequences of terrorism and violent extremism and therefore risk reproducing the structural grievances that have fuelled violent extremism and terrorism in the first place. In addition, the persistence of predominantly over-securitized approaches to CT and PVE often hinders peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts led by women peacebuilders, civil society and women-led organizations due to shrinking civic space caused by broad and over-securitized CT policies.

As such, in contexts impacted by terrorism, conflict and/or high-risk settings, efforts by civil society regarding conflict resolution, violence prevention and peacebuilding provide a much needed first line of defence against violence and terrorism – especially when there are governance deficits. Therefore, UN Women promotes women's rights in the context of CT and PVE by advancing the implementation of WPS commitments, including in its engagement within the UN CT and PVE agenda based on the following **theory of change**:

IF key stakeholders strengthen their capacity to centre and advance gender perspectives, prevention and peacebuilding approaches as a component of CT/PVE policies and practices; and **IF** key stakeholders have access to data and analysis on gender and power dynamics to effectively inform CT/PVE frameworks; and **IF** women and young women in all their diversity have opportunities to effectively participate and influence the development and implementation of CT/PVE policies

THEN targeted international, national and local institutions, including UN entities, develop and implement policies on CT and PVE that are gender-responsive and inclusive, and targeted international, national and local institutions, including UN entities, promote and implement practices that are gender-responsive and inclusive to prevent and address counter-terrorism and violent extremism, and civil society and women-led organizations effectively influence normative, policy and peacebuilding processes advancing gender equality and women's rights within counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism frameworks

THEREBY contributing to more women leading and benefiting from peace and security processes, humanitarian action, and crises prevention and response (SP impact 4).



Maria de Lurdes, founder of the Mozambican Association for Community Education, leads grassroots efforts in Cabo Delgado to prevent child labour, resist youth recruitment by extremist organizations and promote social cohesion. Through her civil society platform, and as part of the Sentinels of Peace network, Maria empowers women to lead in decision-making and peacebuilding, advocating for inclusive peace in resettlement centres and conflict-affected communities. Photo: UN Photo/Alice Ambrucer via UN Women.

Core assumptions

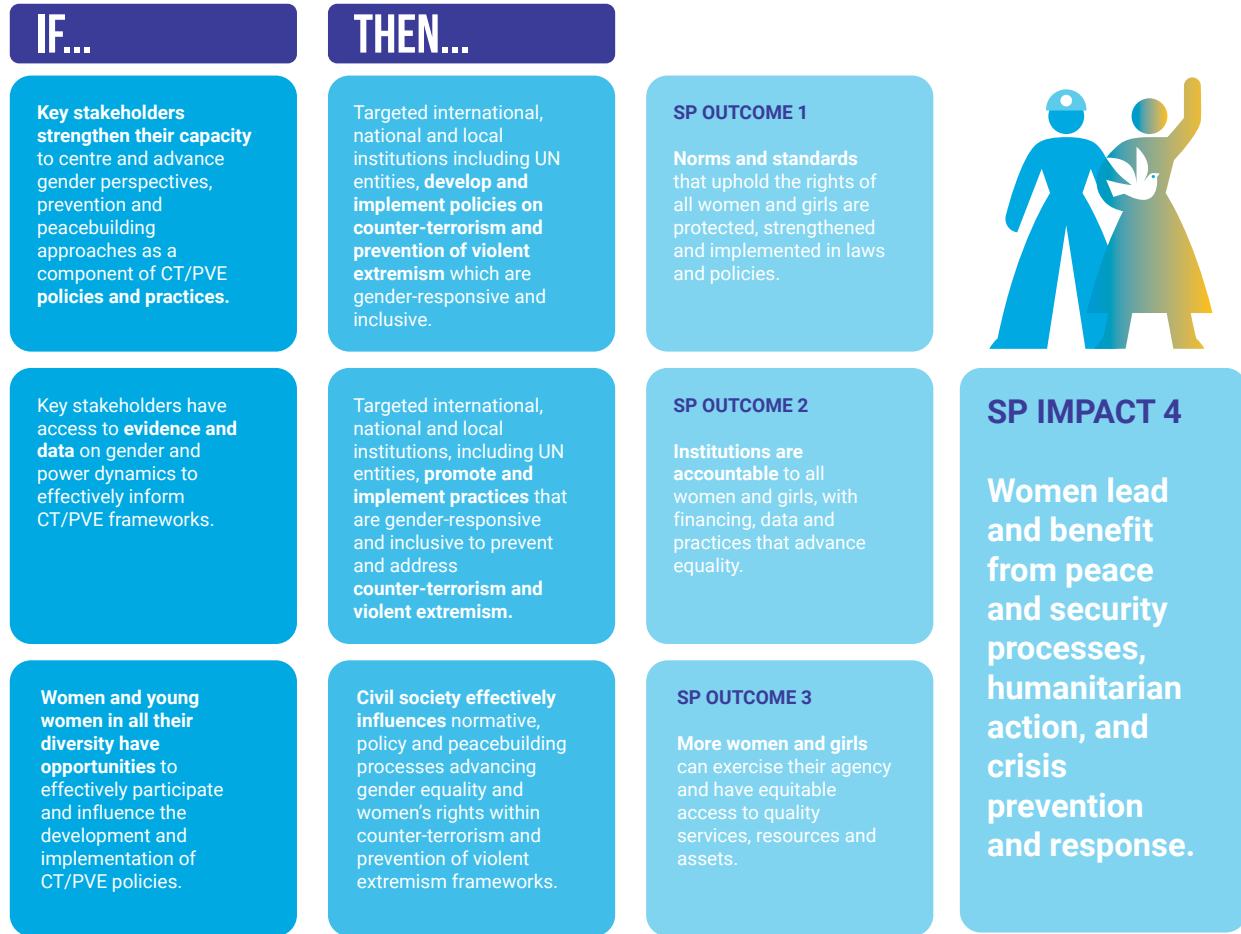
This theory of change is underpinned by the following core assumptions:

- A.** Violent extremism that could be conducive to terrorism often emerges from structural inequalities and systemic violence, including gender inequality, systemic political exclusion, economic marginalization, and contested state-society relations.
- B.** Women and marginalized groups experience and navigate violent extremism, terrorism and counter-terrorism responses differently, based on intersecting identities and positionalities.
- C.** Local actors, particularly women's leaders and women-led organizations, are political actors and rights-holders and they are producers of knowledge and peace practices, and their inclusion and effective representation strengthens the legitimacy of national processes.
- D.** Over-securitized, heavy-handed security approaches, and externally imposed CT/PVE responses risk reproducing the grievances they seek to prevent, including distrust in national institutions, repression and exclusion.
- E.** CT/PVE measures that fall outside international human rights standards risk undermining the legitimacy of national institutions, closing civic spaces, compromising peace infrastructure in much needed settings, and undermining long-term prevention efforts.
- F.** Sustainable prevention of conflict requires transforming unequal power relations, not only changing negative social norms.
- G.** Resilience and recovery assistance requires mid-to long-term investment, rather than short-term project-based assistance.
- H.** In contexts affected by conflict or recurring violence, CT/PVE measures should be understood as complementary to, rather than substitutes for, support for conflict resolution, peacebuilding, prevention of conflict, security sector reform and transitional justice processes, accountability, truth-seeking, reparations and investing in guarantees of non-recurrence.
- I.** The thematic strategy applies an intersectional gender and power analysis central to both UN Women's mandate on gender equality and the empowerment of women as well as its WPS mandate. The strategy recognizes the realities experienced by women in all their diversity at all levels, as follows:
 - Gender norms inform/dictate access to power, resources, services, institutions and political voice.
 - Women's roles in contexts affected by terrorism are diverse and cannot be understood through a single or static lens. Depending on the context, women may be perpetrators, survivors, victims, peacebuilders, mediators, human rights defenders, activists, caregivers, returnees from conflict zones, or individuals allegedly associated or formerly affiliated with designated terrorist groups. These roles are neither homogeneous nor fixed and may evolve over time, underscoring the importance of context-specific and gender-responsive analysis.
 - Women's peace work often occurs in informal community-based spaces that are undervalued and frequently unrecognized in formal peace and security architectures and may be missing or excluded from national peacebuilding processes. In addition, women-led peace work often exists under extreme pressure from coercive and restrictive laws, as well as from attacks and targeting by designated terrorist groups.
 - Gender perspectives in CT and PVE efforts are often deprioritized and underfunded, increasing the risk that assistance becomes gender-blind and inadvertently reinforces harmful gender norms or exacerbates existing inequalities. Moreover, failure to integrate gender analysis can result in CT and PVE responses that overlook how gender and sexual-based violence and gendered power dynamics are exploited by these groups to strengthen control, undermine community resilience and sustain their operations.

KEY RISKS AND BARRIERS TO GENDER-SENSITIVE CT/PVE EFFORTS

Risk	Mitigation Measures
<p>Political environment hostile to women's rights and an inclusive process</p> <p>Securitization of women's rights, tokenism and essentialization of their engagement in security sector policy debate and practice solely to achieve security goals</p> <p>Backlash, threats of reprisals and the targeting of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders</p>	<p>UN Women will continue its systematic engagement to advocate for women's rights in line with normative frameworks and international Member State obligations.</p> <p>UN Women will continue to advocate for the meaningful inclusion of women and for the uptake of their recommendations to shape policies, responses and outcomes. This includes efforts to increase recognition of women's critical contributions to local peacebuilding and prevention efforts; promoting rights-based approaches that place women's rights, agency and protection at the center of responses; and shifting the focus from participation and representation alone to the degree of influence women are able to exercise over decisions, policies and outcomes. UN Women will also continue to engage partners and stakeholders to strengthen accountability for these commitments and ensure that women's participation translates into substantive influence.</p> <p>In doing so, UN Women will maintain its commitment to voluntary, informed and risk-sensitive participation, guided by a coordinated approach and applying the do-no-harm principle, particularly when engaging women and civil society actors in contexts affected by conflict, terrorism, violent extremism and counter-terrorism measures.</p> <p>UN Women assesses and cross-checks risk exposure before, during and after engagement through coordination across its country, regional and global offices, considering the political context and heightened risks associated with elections, referendums and other national processes. UN Women adopts a transparent, risk-informed approach with partners, clearly communicating potential risks to representatives to ensure that participation is voluntary and based on informed consent.</p>

THEORY OF CHANGE: UN WOMEN STRATEGY ON COUNTER-TERRORISM AND PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM



KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Women and marginalized groups experience terrorism, violent extremism, and CT/PVE responses differently, requiring intersectional, context-specific analysis.

Women leaders and women-led organizations are political actors, not only beneficiaries, and are essential sources of knowledge, legitimacy, and peacebuilding practice.

Over-securitized CT/PVE approaches can reinforce grievances, including distrust, repression, exclusion, and shrinking civic space.

Human rights-based and gender-responsive approaches are essential to ensure legitimate, accountable, and effective CT/PVE responses.

Sustainable prevention requires transforming unequal power relations, not only addressing harmful social norms or short-term security risks.

Resilience and recovery require sustained investment, rather than short-term project-based support. CT/PVE efforts should complement peacebuilding, conflict resolution, justice, accountability, and transitional justice processes, not replace them.

ROOT CAUSES

Structural inequalities and exclusion: Violent extremism is framed as rooted in systemic inequalities, political exclusion, economic marginalization, contested state-society relations, and broader structural grievances.

Dominance of security-first CT/PVE approaches: Counter-terrorism responses are overly securitized, heavy-handed, and sometimes detached from human rights, prevention, peacebuilding, and gender equality commitments.

Marginalization of women's leadership and shrinking civic space: Women peacebuilders, women-led civil society, and local actors are not sufficiently recognized as political actors, while restrictive CT policies often shrink civic space and limit their role in prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.

Indicators:

0.1.5 GEA_WPS (3) Number of multisectoral strategies, policies, regulations and/or action plans with a focus on effective rule of law, security and justice service provision for women

0.1.a GEA_WPS Number of institutions that have increased capacities to promote, design and implement legislation/strategies/policies that strengthen justice and/or security services to women

0.1.2 Percentage of key intergovernmental outcomes that integrate a gender perspective

0.1.b Number of multi-stakeholder dialogue processes to promote engagement of governments, civil society and other partners to advance norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment

0.2.f Number of UN system coordination mechanisms, including thematic coordination mechanisms chaired/co-chaired by UN Women that drive progress on gender mainstreaming mandates and WPS commitments

0.3.5 GEA_WPS Number of women who have access to justice or security services through UN-Women programmes and platforms

0.3.6 Number of normative, policy and peace processes influenced by CSOs advancing gender equality and women's rights



Civil society participants at the Nairobi Interregional Symposium organized by UN Women in October 2024. The symposium brought together representatives of civil society and women's rights organizations from across Africa to strengthen interregional dialogue and collaboration and to enhance their ability to engage effectively in CT/PVE processes and mechanisms. Photo: Courtesy of Adjaraatou Wakha Aïdara.

6. PATHWAYS OF CHANGE FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE CT/PVE

To achieve the intended outputs of the theory of change above, UN Women engages in three mutually reinforcing pathways of change. The pathways of change are programmatic support entry points where UN Women plans and initiates assistance jointly with national stakeholders depending on context

and political analysis. As such, in some instances UN Women may adopt one or two pathways from the three pathways below. However, collectively these three pathways define how UN Women goes about implementing its theory of change above.

Pathway 1: Strengthen capacities of key stakeholders to advance gender-responsive CT and PVE

1. Provide technical support and institutional capacity strengthening to promote gender-responsive and coordinated approaches, policies and service delivery within justice and security institutions.
2. Advocate for the integration of gender perspectives into relevant CT and PVE policies, legal frameworks, strategies and institutional mechanisms.
3. Strengthen the capacity and knowledge of women and women's organizations on the evolving landscape of CT and PVE policies, mechanisms and practices.

Pathway 2: Increase the evidence base and knowledge ecosystem for gender-responsive CT and PVE

1. Strengthen the evidence base on gender and CT and PVE through advancing research, gender analysis and documentation of good practices to inform policy and programming, including emerging issues such as AI, emerging technologies and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV).
2. Strengthen inter-agency collaboration and coordination to integrate gender perspectives, informed by local research and country-level practice, into CT and PVE policies, programmes and initiatives.
3. Facilitate knowledge-sharing, South-South and triangular cooperation, and coalition building among women's organizations and key stakeholders to strengthen collective advocacy and advance women's rights in contexts impacted by terrorism.

Pathway 3: Strengthen participation of women and women-led CSOs and their influence in CT/PVE mechanisms and decision-making platforms

1. Support effective participation of women's organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) in CT and PVE relevant mechanisms and decision-making platforms.
2. Increase the engagement and leadership of women in local peace infrastructure and community-based peacebuilding mechanisms in contexts affected by terrorism and violent extremism.
3. Strengthen advocacy for the protection of women human rights defenders, women peacebuilders, and women activists, and promote an enabling environment for their safe and meaningful engagement in contexts affected by conflict, terrorism and counter-terrorism measures.

7. IMPLEMENTATION LEVELS

The implementation of the three pathways for advancing gender-responsive CT and PVE requires coordinated action across global, regional, national and local levels. While the pathways are mutually reinforcing, the specific entry points and interventions will be determined by context-specific gender and conflict analyses.

At the **global level**, implementation focuses on strengthening normative frameworks, promoting policy coherence, advancing research and evidence generation, facilitating inter-agency coordination, supporting South-South and triangular cooperation, and advocating for the integration of gender perspectives within global CT and PVE policies and mechanisms.

At the **regional level**, implementation emphasizes translating global commitments into regional policy frameworks, strengthening the capacities of regional organizations and networks, facilitating cross-border cooperation and peer learning, promoting regional coalitions of women's organizations, and supporting the exchange of good practices and evidence across countries facing similar challenges.

At the **national level**, implementation supports governments and national institutions to do the following: integrate gender-responsive approaches into CT and PVE legislation, policies, strategies and institutional mechanisms; strengthen the capacities of duty bearers and security institutions to increase gender-responsive service delivery; improve coordination among relevant ministries and agencies; create enabling environments for women's participation; and strengthen capacities of and partnerships with civil society.

At the **local level**, implementation prioritizes community-based engagement by supporting women-led and women's rights organizations, CBOs, survivors, local authorities, and other community actors to participate meaningfully in CT and PVE processes. This includes strengthening women's leadership and capacity, facilitating safe engagement with security institutions, generating locally grounded evidence and learning, and ensuring that community perspectives inform policy development through continuous feedback loops. Together, these four levels reinforce one another to ensure that gender-responsive CT and PVE interventions are locally informed, nationally owned, regionally coordinated and globally aligned.



Paivi Kannisto, Chief of UN Women Peace, Security and Resilience Section, discusses gender-responsive approaches to peace and security in the digital age at the Austrian Embassy in Berlin. Photo: © Philipp Gaiko.

8. UN WOMEN'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE IN ADVANCING GENDER-RESPONSIVE COUNTER-TERRORISM AND THE ENTITY'S ADDED VALUE

a) Gender equality-based approach

UN Women's engagement is grounded in its normative mandate on WPS and in international law, ensuring that assistance remains anchored in gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEWE) while applying conflict sensitivity and the do-no-harm principle.

Operationalized through its triple mandate, UN Women's approach bridges the security and development pillars and promotes evidence-based, human rights-centered responses that contribute to identifying and addressing the root causes of violence. This approach helps to safeguard progress on GEWE, mitigate risks of regression, strengthen women's agency, and address structural gender inequalities that contribute to vulnerability in contexts affected by terrorism and violent extremism. This represents a **key comparative advantage** considering documented concerns around the securitization of women's rights and the risk of reinforcing pre-existing discriminatory practices. By grounding engagement in GEWE and WPS commitments, UN Women promotes women not as instruments of effective security responses, but as

rights holders and political actors whose meaningful participation and inclusion is essential to sustainable peace and security.

Accordingly, UN Women's engagement in CT seeks to strengthen women's inclusion through an equality-based approach that identifies and addresses structural and institutional barriers to participation at local and national levels using gender and intersectional analysis. This approach includes engaging local and regional actors to tackle discriminatory practices that both marginalize women and increase their vulnerability in contexts impacted by conflict and terrorism.

At the same time, this approach supports women's effective participation in security institutions and decision-making processes and promotes gender-responsive planning and budgeting. UN Women's comparative advantage lies in advancing CT engagement in ways that uphold women's rights and accelerate implementation of WPS commitments, contributing to sustainable and durable progress on GEWE.

b) Bridging global policy and national implementation

UN Women's triple mandate and presence across global, multilateral, regional, and country levels provide a unique comparative advantage within the UN system by connecting policy to implementation and translating lessons learned into evidence-informed policymaking.

As Chair of the Gender Working Group of the Global Counter-Terrorism Compact, UN Women engages directly in shaping and advancing gender-responsive implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Through this role, UN Women briefs Member States on a quarterly basis, contributes technical

analysis leadership to the Strategy review processes, supports implementation, and promotes stronger integration of gender perspectives across UN CT efforts.

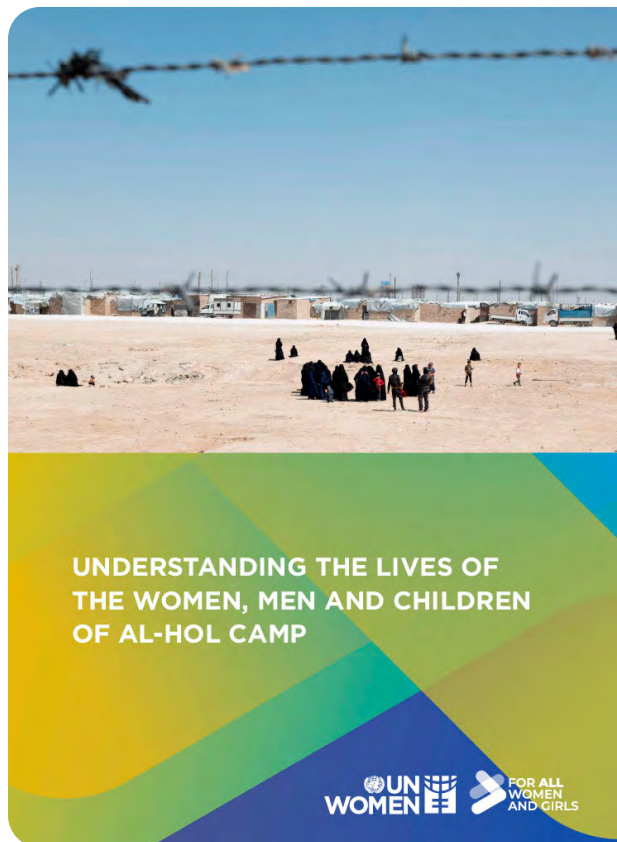
This positioning also enables UN Women to bring insights from regional and country offices, together with inputs from women-led CSOs and national partners, into global policy discussions, ensuring that local realities and emerging context-specific challenges inform multilateral decision-making.

UN Women's annual briefing to the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security provides an important platform to bring attention to the realities and priorities of women in contexts affected by conflict, terrorism and counter-terrorism.

In parallel, through its role as permanent secretariat of the Informal Group of Experts on Women, Peace and Security (IEG), and through its rule of law and human rights portfolios, UN Women contributes to

strengthening accountability efforts related to SGBV, conflict-related sexual violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

This positioning allows UN Women to elevate women's voices within the global peace and security architecture and human rights mechanisms and to advance implementation of global commitments through its country-level presence.



In 2025, UN Women published the first UN-led, in-depth analysis based on primary data on the situation of the population of Al-Hol camp in Northeast Syria. Member States and UN entities gathered at UN headquarters in New York to participate in the launch of the report and discuss the findings and implementation of recommendations in Syria and Iraq. Photo: UN Women.

c) Strategic partnerships with women-led civil society and women peacebuilders

UN Women's long-standing partnerships with women-led CSOs and women's rights movements – many of which predate its current institutional form – represent another distinct comparative advantage within the UN system. These partnerships position UN Women as a trusted interlocutor and create both an opportunity and a responsibility to elevate the voices, priorities and lived experiences of women in contexts affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism across relevant policy and decision-making mechanisms.

Through sustained engagement with women-led civil society, UN Women has helped reinforce the interface between the UN CT community of practice and local actors in contexts including the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, West Asia and North Africa and other settings impacted by terrorism. This engagement has enabled

more inclusive dialogue and contributed to bringing women in all their diversity into policy discussions and implementation processes.

Vitally, these partnerships strengthen context-specific analysis and ensure that policy development and programming are informed by local realities and community experience. They also provide a critical qualitative lens to assess the effectiveness of existing approaches and identify areas where implementation gaps or regression may emerge. Combined with UN Women's engagement with national institutions, national gender machineries, and broader peace and security mechanisms, this positioning supports stronger policy coherence and contributes to system-wide implementation of WPS commitments across global, regional and national levels.

d) Inter-agency collaboration and complementarity

UN Women works closely with UNOCT, CTED, OHCHR, UNODC and UNDP within the framework of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. This collaboration takes place at the global level, while UN Women also leverages its technical expertise, country presence and partnerships with national gender machineries and civil society to support UN entities and offices in integrating gender perspectives into the delivery of their respective mandates. In

addition, UN Women works closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to advance joint advocacy and research. Through these partnerships, UN Women brings its gender expertise, networks and country-level knowledge to support a more coherent, gender-responsive and rights-based approach across the UN system's counter-terrorism and prevention efforts.

ANNEX I

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The framework is structured around the following interrelated concepts.

- **terrorism:** There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. For the purposes of this document, the term refers to the UN definition describing terrorism as: “Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public. Also referred to as acts of terrorism.”¹¹
- **counter-terrorism:** The term counter-terrorism is used to refer to military operations as well as the adoption of legislative and policing frameworks to control, repress and track terrorist activities; training, equipping and reorganizing national security forces and intelligence services; and enhancing border surveillance and checkpoints.¹²
- **violent extremism:** The United Nations does not have a universally agreed definition of violent extremism. The UN Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism recognizes violent extremism as a diverse phenomenon without clear definition and focuses on violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism.¹³ However, the Plan of Action calls for a comprehensive preventive approach addressing underlying conditions and drivers, alongside security-based counter-terrorism measures.
- **prevention of violent extremism:** Prevention of violent extremism is focused on preventing the further spread of violent extremism. It primarily refers to advocacy, policy and programmatic support at all levels addressing different areas of engagement as outlined in the UN Plan of Action.¹⁴
- **peacebuilding:** Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.¹⁵
- **sustaining peace:** A process to build a common vision of a society that ensures the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account and encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict.¹⁶
- **conflict prevention:** Prevention of the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.¹⁷
- **agency:** Agency is the ability to define one’s goals and act on them.¹⁸

11. United Nations General Assembly resolution 49/60 (1994) *Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism*. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/res/49/60>

12. UNDP *Journey to Extremism in Africa* report (2017). <https://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/v1/en/reports>.

13. *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, report by the Secretary General, December 2015. <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/en/plan-of-action-to-prevent-violent-extremism>

14. Ibid.

15. Secretary General Policy Committee decision (2007); for more information see https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/default/files/documents/peace_dividends_thematic_review_2012.pdf

16. *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, World Bank and United Nations report. <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/pathways-peace-inclusive-approaches-preventing-violent-conflict>

17. UN Security Council resolution 2282 (2016). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/827390?ln=en&v=pdf>

18. For the purposes of this strategic framework, agency is defined following Kabeer (1999) as the “ability to define one’s goals and act on them” and the World Bank Voice and Agency (2014) report that states: “Agency is the capacity to make decisions about one’s own life and act on them to achieve the desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear”. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/586221468335982164>.

UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead United Nations entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social norms and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector, coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations, deliver lasting changes. We make strides in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and peace, security and humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



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