

Recommendations and Findings: Gender Mainstreaming in Operational Responses to VERLT 22-23 November 2016, Vienna

Background

Since 2011, the OSCE has been at the forefront of international efforts to highlight the need for gender mainstreaming to effectively prevent and counter terrorism. In particular, the OSCE recognized needs to systematically integrate gender aspects in technical and policy responses to violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT) among operational law enforcement agencies and other government entities, including policy-makers. The OSCE Ministerial Council Declaration [No.4/15](#) on preventing and countering VERLT, which was adopted in Belgrade in December 2015, recognizes that UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2242 (2015) calls for the greater integration by States of their agendas on women, peace and security, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism which can be conducive to the spread of terrorism. This includes streamlining efforts to integrate both prevention of VERLT among women into operational responses to VERLT, as well as the advancement of women in law enforcement and government positions. Moreover, it requires taking into consideration the differential impact that measures to counter and prevent VERLT may have on the rights of women, gender equality and non-discrimination.

On 22-23 November 2016, the OSCE Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) in co-operation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), organized a technical expert meeting to discuss gender mainstreaming in operational responses, especially by law enforcement and the security sector, to VERLT while ensuring compliance with OSCE commitments and international human rights standards. The meeting was organized in consultation with the OSCE Secretariat's Gender Section. More than 80 senior experts from participating States and Partners for Co-operation, as well as experts from academia, civil society, the United Nations and relevant international organizations contributed to the meeting as participants, speakers and moderators.

The meeting was structured around the following six sessions¹:

1. The Role of Gender in VERLT
2. Gender Mainstreaming in Countering Terrorism and VERLT: State of Play
3. Good Practices and Lessons Learnt for Training Security and Law Enforcement Personnel on Gender Mainstreaming
4. Action! Using Successes and Failures to Improve Women's Inclusion in Preventing and Countering VERLT

¹ For elaboration on each session, please see attached agenda.

5. Capacity Gaps and Challenges for the Participation of Women in Decision-Making and Operational Positions in Countering Terrorism and VERLT
6. Linking Operational Responses to Counter VERLT with Existing Civil Society Efforts

General considerations and conclusions of the discussion

Terrorism and VERLT are gendered phenomena, and are experienced differently by men and women, boys and girls. This creates an imperative for governments to apply conscious and systematic gender awareness in their reactions to them. In order to prevent and counter VERLT, law enforcement agencies and the security sector at large, must recognize the different roles and levels of women's involvement both as perpetrators and agents of change. Furthermore, they must be sensitive to the differential impact of terrorism and VERLT on women as well as to the effect measures to prevent and counter VERLT may have on women's human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination. While there is an interconnection between women's rights and empowerment and the decrease of violent extremism, women's inclusion should not be pursued merely out of an instrumentalist interest to states and security services. Although a gender-balanced security sector contributes to a more efficient approach to security, the advancement of women must never be equated with a security agenda. Achieving gender equality and promoting women's human rights are ends in their own right.

OSCE participating States have committed to combat terrorism in full compliance with legal obligations under international law, including human rights law. Not least, because human rights violations constitute a factor conducive to terrorism. Likewise, the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy is based on four pillars: I) tackling conditions conducive to terrorism, II) preventing and combating terrorism, III) building States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the UN in that respect and IV) ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law as a fundamental basis.

Mainstreaming gender in operational responses to VERLT is part of applying a comprehensive human rights-based approach, which serves the goal of cohesive inclusion. Better gender mainstreaming in the security sector improves responses to security threats, meaning increased security for communities and the protection of human rights.

Recommendations and Findings Relevant For Work on Gender Mainstreaming in Operational Responses to VERLT:

The technical expert meeting generated recommendations on several levels, which fit broadly within the following four categories:

- Gender mainstreaming in programmes on preventing and countering VERLT (P/CVERLT);
- Gender mainstreaming in government policy and law making on security in general and VERLT and counter-terrorism in particular;
- Gender mainstreaming in the operational actions and responses of law enforcement services;
- Improving the gender balance as well as diversity and inclusion in the security sector overall.

The recommendations and findings are presented in one consolidated list below, limited to those recommendations that are specific to the context of State responses to P/CVERLT.

- Governments and organizations must apply a comprehensive gender analysis in all responses to VERLT. This includes, but is not limited to, the different security perceptions and needs; the different roles of women and men in disengagement at all levels, including at community level, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, reconciliation, promotion of rights and peace, social cohesion women's political participation. But also their full and meaningful inclusion into the security sector, the criminal justice system and work on violence against women as well as the differential impact that policy responses to VERLT may have on women, gender equality and non-discrimination.
- International organizations and governments will benefit from collaborating with local women's organizations when identifying and addressing the grievances in communities that make individuals susceptible to violent radicalisation in order to be able to effectively counter it. Many women's organizations work locally while being globally connected and are therefore important partners in this field.
- All activities aimed at P/CVERLT should address the recruitment, engagement and operational strategies of violent extremist groups, including the various roles of men and women in this context, without reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- Efforts to P/CVERLT must include tailored and localised programmes, global programmes as well as capacity development and be carried out within gender-sensitive frameworks. Both men and women's perspectives must be considered when assessing intervention needs.
- Gender mainstreaming at all levels in the security sector, from ministry to police, should be encouraged in line with UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions including UNSCR 2242. This must not be limited to statistical objectives, but also gender mainstreaming in laws, policy and strategic documents on P/CVERLT. In policies relevant to P/CVERLT as well as counter-terrorism, this is especially relevant due to the field's traditionally low percentage of female participation.
- By including more women in higher positions in the security sector, governments have better odds to achieve inclusive and efficient policies.
- Women police officers, civil society leaders and politicians working on P/CVERLT should have fora to network, and opportunities to contribute to and provide advice in decision-making processes.
- Ensuring the 'do no harm principle' is respected and efforts to P/CVERLT do not negatively affect gender equality.
- Adoption and implementation of national action plans (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 are key to increase representation of women and integrate gender in the security sector. This must be linked to the efforts on P/CVERLT. Likewise, UNSCR 2242 reiterates the need for inclusive policies on P/CVERLT and counter-terrorism.
- Tools that have been successful for gender mainstreaming in other areas, such as the military, can be replicated with adjustments appropriate to the civilian security sector. A particular focus must be on achieving gender balance in leadership positions from mid- to senior management.
- Continued research on gender aspects, including the differential impact on women of VERLT and measures to prevent and counter VERLT, is needed for States to have evidence-based policy advice. This could be a role for OSCE to play.

- Empowering women police officers and supporting promotion of female police leadership is necessary to achieve sustainable gender mainstreaming in P/CVERLT, and to access the whole population.
- Media should be engaged to raise awareness on the importance of women in the police forces in general and counter stereotypical perceptions in the security sector
- Diverse, gender-balanced and gender sensitive hiring panels should be the standard, and women should be included in drafting job descriptions for a more gender sensitive selection process.
- Dialogue on local levels on VERLT with gender-balanced participation will increase trust between communities and authorities.
- Experiences show that a more diverse police force, with adequate representation of minorities, including women from minority communities, increases access to marginalized communities and groups. Law Enforcement Agencies must engage with marginalized and minority groups that often face discrimination and socio-economic challenges.
- Long-term efforts to build relationships when approaching marginalized and vulnerable groups are most likely to succeed.
- Community policing should be conducted and is an ongoing effort which must continue in stable periods in order to build networks and relationships for increased resilience when conflict arises. Institutions need advice on how to be gender sensitive and gender mainstreamed, in order to build more and comprehensive bonds between security institutions and communities.
- Visibility of women at all levels in the security sector must be increased, while a gender perspective in policies, law and practices, standard operating procedures and guidelines must be incorporated.
- Patriarchal structures that are prevalent in many state institutions must be challenged and equality promoted in order to counter discriminatory practices.
- International organizations should widen co-operation and work together to identify gaps and opportunities.

Way Ahead: What can the OSCE do?

In accordance with the findings and recommendations set out above, a key component in achieving a gender-sensitive response to the threat of VERLT is to ensure adequate representation of women around the table in defining policy and programming, as well as in operational roles 'on the ground'. The OSCE can support this approach, as part of its efforts to strengthen a gender perspective in P/CVERLT among participating States.

Approaches identified by participants where the OSCE TNTD and Gender Section together with ODIHR can contribute to practical support and leadership include:

- Development of standardized guidelines for gender mainstreaming and human rights-compliant approaches in operational responses to VERLT to assist OSCE participating States in introducing a gender perspective to these responses, as well as in achieving more gender balance in law enforcement agencies and other institutions that work on P/CVERLT.
- Development of training materials on gender mainstreaming and human rights compliant (including non-discriminatory) approaches for law enforcement agencies and other institutions that work on operational responses to VERLT.

- Comprehensive awareness-raising in the security sector, as well as among parliamentarians and the public, on the importance of gender balance in the security sector, as well as the promotion of recruitment, retention and advancement of women on all levels.
- Promoting and facilitating networking and sharing of best practices and experiences internationally, between gender experts and operational personnel working on P/CVERLT.
- Targeted assistance to OSCE participating States for the development of national strategies and national action plans on P/CVERLT, including legal assistance.