

# 18<sup>th</sup> Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights & Prevention of Violent Extremism

5-8 November 2018, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

## Seminar Report<sup>1</sup>

### Contents

INTRODUCTION	
Introduction to the 18 <sup>th</sup> Informal ASEM <sup>2</sup> Human Rights Seminar .....	2
Key Messages.....	3
Recommendations .....	6
WORKING GROUP REPORTS	
Working Group 1: Pull and Push Factors of violent Extremism .....	8
Working Group 2: Targeting Violent Extremism at the Local Level .....	10
Working Group 3: Violent Extremism: Women's Involvement, Rights, and Security .....	12
Working Group 4: Youth, Education and the Prevention of Violent Extremism .....	14
CONCLUSIONS of the 18 <sup>th</sup> Informal ASEM Human Rights Seminar .....	18

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<sup>1</sup> This report summarises the seminar presentations, discussions and conclusions. The report includes key messages of the Background Paper by the two main Rapporteurs Professor. Theo Gavrielides (Europe) and Ms. Irene M. Santiago (Asia) as well as the summary reports prepared by the four rapporteurs assigned to each of the seminar working groups: WK1 - Dr Theo GAVRIELIDES, Founder and Director of The IARS International Institute and the Restorative Justice for All Institute (RJ4All); WK2 - Ms Faiza PATEL from the Brennan Centre for Justice (US); WK3 - Ms Irene M. SANTIAGO, lead convener of the #WomenSeriously Campaign; and WK4 - Professor Lynn DAVIES from the University of Birmingham (UK).

<sup>2</sup> ASEM –The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an intergovernmental forum for dialogue and cooperation established in 1996 to deepen relations between Asia and Europe, which addresses political, economic and socio- cultural issues of common concern. ASEM brings together 53 partners (21 Asian and 30 European countries, the ASEAN Secretariat, and the European Union).

## Introduction

Over the last decade, violent extremism has featured prominently in policy, political and academic debates internationally. These debates tend to revolve around two axes: security and human rights.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Informal ASEM<sup>3</sup> Seminar on Human Rights took place on 5-8 November 2018 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, focusing on the theme of “Human Rights and Prevention of Violent Extremism”. The seminar was co-organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Raoul Wallenberg Institute (nominated by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The host of the 18<sup>th</sup> Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Indonesia.

Four simultaneous closed-door working groups addressed the following topics in detail:

- WG1 – Push and Pull Factors of Violent Extremism
- WG2 – Targeting Violent Extremism at the Local Level
- WG3 – Violent Extremism: Women's Involvement, Rights and Security
- WG4 – Youth, Education and Prevention of Violent Extremism

The seminar ran for three days and representatives from governmental and civil society organisations attended, bringing expertise from research, policy and frontline practice. As anticipated, the debates during the workshops were passionate and the plenaries and Q & A sessions engaging.

This year, a total of 118 people participated in the Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights. Of these, 64 were from Asian ASEM partner countries and 50 were from Europe, with 4 additional participants from international organisations. Overall, a total of 38 ASEM partners were represented at the Seminar.

This report summarises and synthesises the seminar presentations, discussions and conclusions. The report includes summary reports prepared by the four rapporteurs assigned to each of the seminar working groups: Dr. Theo GAVRIELIDES, Founder and Director of The IARS International Institute and the Restorative Justice for All Institute (RJ4All); Ms. Faiza PATEL from the Brennan Centre for Justice (US); Ms. Irene M. SANTIAGO, lead convener of #WomenSeriously; and Professor Lynn DAVIES from the University of Birmingham (UK).

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## Key Messages

Several key messages emerged from the seminar the most prominent of which was one of hope and unity. The mere presence of so many stakeholders and the engagement of key decision makers and government officials demonstrated in practice that under the leadership of ASEF, Asia and Europe are determined to tackle the societal, security and human rights issues that are associated with both the idea, reality and myths surrounding violent extremism. Human rights were also portrayed not as hindrance to anti-radicalisation policies and laws, but as strong levers that can rebalance power, which is a key determinant in the prevention of extreme attitudes that lead to violence.

Similarly, in all debates that involve complex and living notions such as violent extremism and human rights, the issue of definitions was raised. The seminar acknowledged that a more nuanced delineation of key terms is needed. It also agreed that these terms are often not transferable into simple matters of writings. However, consensus was reached that violent acts of extremism warrant definition when it comes to their prosecution. The elasticity of legal terms and the lack of clarity of what constitutes terrorism and violent extremism can easily be misused, exploited or manipulated by law enforcement agencies and the powerful.

Therefore, one must ask why definitions are important before dedicating time and resources to trying to narrow down phenomena that might be best addressed and indeed prevented within a wider conceptual framework. What was also clear from the debates was that violent extremism includes many forms and these are not exclusively motivated by the misuse of faith, but also, by beliefs such as anarchy, and by right and left-wing narratives as well as nationalist and separatist ideologies.

The extent to which the manifestation of the phenomenon of violent extremism is apparently spreading must be viewed critically. For example, in 2017 in the EU, 205 attacks were stopped, failed or completed<sup>4</sup>. The impression is that this number is much larger. Terrorism accounts for 0.03 deaths out of 100,000, a statistic similar to that of death by lightning strike<sup>5</sup>. In fact, one must ask where these attacks took place and understand the reasons behind them.

This led to a debate about the narrative that has been adopted since the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Counter terrorism was framed as a “war on terror”, putting emphasis on security and national borders. In combination with public misinformation, this narrative created an environment where nationalism, extreme views and hate attitudes and speech came to the fore. This created a vicious cycle of division between “the bad” and “the good”; “us” and “them”. The delegates welcomed the conceptual shift from “war on terror” to “prevention of violent extremism”, embodied in the UN Secretary-General’s 2016 Plan of Action on Prevention of Violent Extremism. With this, the emphasis was now placed on addressing the root causes of violent extremism and on adherence to human rights and the rule of law. This shift enabled more actors, especially civil society organisations involved in peace, humanitarian assistance, human rights and development to contribute to the many processes that are needed to prevent violent extremism. In a “whole-of-society” approach to prevention from national to sub-national levels, the local European and Asian communities can now provide a strong basis for any plan of action.

The strong community voice at the seminar showed that communities are rising. Their role in the prevention of violent extremism was not only discussed extensively but also highlighted through best practice in both continents. Local groups and people do matter when it comes to addressing fears and feelings of isolation and hate. The need to work responsibly with these groups was

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<sup>4</sup> Europol, Terrorist Threat in the EU Remains High Despite the Decline of IS in Iraq and Syria, 2018, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/terrorist-threat-in-eu-remains-high-despite-decline-of-in-iraq-and-syria>

<sup>5</sup> In 2015, the terrorism death rate in Europe was approximately 0.034 per 100,000 people. According to the Igarapé Institute using statistics from 2013 (or latest available year), death by lightning in Europe was 0.005 per 100,000 people. More information can be found on the World Economic Forum website, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/europes-terror-threat-is-real-but-our-cities-are-much-safer-than-you-think/>

highlighted particularly when it comes to issues of funding. Governments and regional bodies must include these community voices and acknowledge their distinct contributions in the design and delivery of strategies, at all stages from pre-radicalisation, radicalisation, engagement in violent extremism, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

The challenge in this approach is how to ensure its effectiveness, as security sector strategies run alongside civil society community-led efforts without each cancelling out each other's gains.

The empowerment of the community and individual action is where human rights were seen to be mostly relevant. "Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person", as Eleanor Roosevelt noted during the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Seventy years since humanity came together to collectively say "no more", the ASEM seminar reignited a debate on the value of the universality of human rights and their practical application at the local level.

Participants also agreed that effective policies to counter violent extremism must include considerations of women's role in the prevention of, and participation in, violent extremism. Their role can be seen as both victims and as agents of violent radicalisation. It is now increasingly evident that women are playing a variety of roles in promoting violent extremism, including as propagandists, recruiters, fundraisers, educators, and suicide bombers. Recent cases of female suicide bombers, in particular, as well as evidence for a growing number of females leaving home to join violent extremist groups, did much to dispel the notion that violence is a male business, with women only entering the picture as victims in need of protection. Raising awareness about women's involvement in violent extremism and improving understanding of the motivators behind women's decisions to join it is certainly important and effective from a prevention perspective. Some of these motivators have been shown to be gender specific, such as strategies based on traditional gender roles used by violent extremist groups to recruit women. The involvement of women and girls in violent radicalisation narratives and actions can only be addressed by women empowering themselves to build counter-narratives to the conservative and misogynistic views often linked to violent extremism activities.

The discussion on what the literature has called "pull and push factors" was also extensive and as expected inconclusive. Consensus was, however, achieved in accepting that there is a gap between the academic literature and actual practice. Practitioners highlighted that linear divisions and categorisations by academics do not reflect the complexity of their reality and the multi-faceted reasons that lead to violent extremism. For example, while poverty, social exclusion, victimisation, oppression, misuse of beliefs, cultural and ethnic differences and political ideologies were all mentioned, these were not presented as single factors for violent radicalisation.

There was an interesting discussion on democracy, and a question mark raised on whether democracy did act as a bulwark to radicalisation or whether political systems make little difference. Within this debate the question of power and state terrorism emerged, with the majority of participants bringing forth examples whereby the state, through its actions, provided the "push" to violent extremism. There was a consensus on the necessity to respect separation of powers, rule of law, independence of justice and constitutional rights of suspects. The necessity to ensure the protections of human rights in jail system was also considered as a key point to prevent propaganda and recruitment for violent extremism.

How state and other power is used is paramount in changing the world views that foster extreme ideologies. The issue of abuse of state power was particularly prominent in the Asian delegates' arguments. They also discussed the need for human rights training to be part of the curriculum for security agencies. Concerns were expressed, however, as to whether there are sufficient mechanisms in place for monitoring effectiveness in sensitizing security agencies to human rights concerns. It was suggested that local civil society groups could be part of the monitoring process

for such programmes. There remains scope for further discussion on the potential of cross-border collaboration for preventing PVE.

Looking into the future, the role of education and the implications of current action for young people were discussed. There was agreement that current practice is alienating the European and Asian youth population who is often portrayed as the problem rather than the hopeful, new generation that can bring an end to current divisions. Building resilience and empowering through education were the key messages coming out from the related workshop. Evidence was presented that this resilience can be built through formal and informal education as it can act as the vehicle for engagement even with the most vulnerable of youth.

## General recommendations to ASEM countries:

1. Countries should be encouraged to have **stronger legislation** or statutory guidance in order to ensure government compliance with human rights. This legislation should include compulsory **human rights education** and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (both in schools and for government officials); legislation on equality, diversity and anti-discrimination.
2. While laid out in Pillar IV of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, **human rights must be a cross-cutting concern** in all four pillars. There is a need to continue the dialogue between Asia and Europe to strengthen capacity and understanding of the applicability of human rights as the foundational norms of any programmatic action to prevent violent extremism.
3. Legislation and state action alone will not address the problem of violent radicalisation. Governments must work closer with communities as well as champions of peace, humanitarian assistance and human rights. **The “whole-of-society” approach** requires building trust and relationship between government and civil society, NGOs, the private sector, academia, faith-based groups, women’s and youth organizations. To this end, mechanisms are required to strengthen civil society’s capacity. This includes public consultations and debates, the empowerment of women and the youth. Young women and men can conduct their own training and spread messages around prevention. There should be a youth-led platform for speaking more loudly about local issues but also political no-go areas such as state terrorism, genocide, the culture of impunity and the way youth are used for lucrative purposes.
4. There is confirmation of the need for **National Action Plans on Preventing Violent Extremism**. These would include legislation, as above, but also strategies and finance to provide opportunities for marginalised or disaffected groups, whether in cities or in remote areas. It would include support for inter-ethnic and inter-faith exchanges in order to build **community cohesion** and community solidarity. It would also include support for grassroots organisations (NGOs, teachers, families, religious leaders, women) who are tackling violent extremism or working to combat vengeance. For effectiveness and sustainability, young people and civil society should be meaningfully engaged at all stages. Additionally, cross-border cooperation and dialogue on plans and policy would help to further their impact.
5. The misuse of state and other power was noted as a major factor in shaping world views and the attitudes that then impede our ability to live together and foster extreme ideologies. Human rights are the only universally accepted lever that can rebalance this misuse, and thus more emphasis is needed to promote them at all levels. In this regard, **good and accountable governance** is key to ensuring that human rights are promoted, protected and fulfilled even in times of high pressure.
6. A considerable amount of resources has been dedicated to defining and normatively understanding “violent radicalisation” and associated terms. The benefits of the level of this scrutiny are questioned in light of the need to understand more critically the phenomenon locally. In order to promote **critical thinking**, there should be a strengthening of political education: this means a **rights-based education**, learning about religious and ethnic conflict in one’s own country, and stressing different narratives and perspectives on history. Critical thinking is also enhanced by enabling communities to participate in decision-making through user-led methods of democratic engagement.
7. Women’s critical role in preventing violent extremism should be placed within a **gender framework** in order to understand better how gender stereotypes are manipulated for violent extremism. Since socially constructed norms and behaviours of women and men in a society are used to recruit and mobilize women and men, it is important to understand

how gender may be used in destructive or constructive ways. Context-specific study and analysis of “pull” narratives based on gender will lead to more effective prevention efforts as will commitment to ensuring women’s human rights are protected and fulfilled.

# WORKING GROUP REPORTS

## Working Group 1 Report: Pull and Push Factors of Violent Extremism

This working group aimed to look at what the extant literature has named “pull and push” factors of violent extremism, putting them in the context of human rights. It consisted of 26 participants from Asia and Europe. Notes were taken by Rika Iffati Fariyah and Irsa Wafiatul Qisthi, and facilitation was carried out by Dr. Irfan Ahmad (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Germany).

The discussion was extensive, passionate and, as expected, inconclusive. Consensus was, however, achieved in accepting that there is a gap between the academic literature and actual practice in understanding and dealing with the factors that lead to violent extremism. Practitioners highlighted that linear divisions and categorisations by academics do not reflect the complexity of their reality and the multi-faceted reasons that lead to violent extremism. For example, while poverty, social exclusion, victimisation, oppression, misuse of beliefs, cultural and ethnic differences and political ideologies were all mentioned, these were not presented as single factors for violent radicalisation. However, it was agreed that how state and other power is used is paramount in changing the world views that foster extreme ideologies, and gradually lead to violent, extremist acts.

### Key Messages

- Understanding the pull and push factors that lead an individual to violent extremism requires putting them in our respective European/ Asian, local, historical and societal context.
- Factors that can lead to violent radicalization can be:
  - Micro - the individual
  - Meso - the society
  - Macro - the political.
- Citizens' expectations and relations with their governments are linked with macro factors.
- Economics and the current financial situation faced by both Europe and Asia provide context for push and pull factors. This also includes the level of financing security measures vs Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) initiatives and the community.
- There are shared experiences in the two continents and despite the cultural and social differences, power imbalance is the common variant that leads to segregation and acts of violence and extremism.
- Human rights can act as levers for balancing the distortion of power. However, they must be seen and applied as universal values and not as a hidden form of colonial power or as a Westernized product.

### Key Challenges faced by Asia and Europe

- The terminology of “pull and push” factors is not always helpful or clear especially in the world of practice. Participants acknowledged that a more nuanced delineation of key terms such as extremism and terrorism is needed. It also agreed that these terms are often not transferable into simple matters of writings. However, consensus was reached that violent acts of extremism warrant definition when it comes to their prosecution. The elasticity of legal terms and the lack of clarity of what constitutes terrorism and violent extremism can easily be misused, exploited or manipulated by law enforcement agencies and the powerful.

- What was also clear from the debates was that violent extremism includes many forms and this are not exclusively motivated by the misuse of faith, but also, anarchists, right and left-wing narratives as well as nationalist and separatist ideologies.
- The universality of human rights is currently being challenged.
- The conceptual framework of terrorism vs violent radicalization is not clear.
- Nationalism and isolation are breeding, and these are the key factors the lead to violent extremism.
- Issues of accountability were raised especially in relation to holding states into account vs individual extremism.
- Politicians often use PVE as a policy to destruct from developing other policies of internal and external affairs including addressing poverty.

## Key Recommendations

- In dealing with pull and push factors, it is important to give voice – democratic representation - to minority groups.
- Acknowledge individual as well as collective trauma and how they both impact on the process of violent extremism.
- Encourage civil society to push governments and help governments understand that they cannot deal with the issue of violent extremism on their own.
- There is a need to shift educators and policy makers’ mindset from managing people as risks to seeing them as talents that can be nurtured, tapping into their humanity and encouraging empathy.
- The use of formal/ informal education is important for preventing the pull and push factors that lead to hate attitudes.
- Inform and engage funders (national/ regional) in relation to the role of the community in preventing pull and push factors at the individual and state level.
- Deal with local fears and trauma at the political level; this will gradually lead to healing and restoration.
- Encourage media literacy, better social media regulation and influence their business model.
- Include “state terror” in PVE.
- Address the root causes of hate and the attitudes that lead to violent extremism including nationalism and feelings of isolated.
- It is important to measure progress and the impact of PVE initiatives including the ASEM.

## Working Group 2 Report: Targeting Violent Extremism at the Local Level

The discussion was based in part on selected questions drafted by ASEF in the seminar's concept paper and focused on four main topics. First, the need for participation and representation in the design and execution of PVE programming. Second, the role of economic issues, both in providing incentives for individuals to join violent groups and as part of programs aimed at rehabilitation. Third, how to centre human rights in PVE programs. And, finally the challenge of addressing all forms of violent extremism.

Throughout the discussions, the participants raised current and emerging challenges, expressed critical and thought-provoking views on the issues, and shared positive examples and good practices with the group.

### Participation and Representation

The first topic tackled by the group was the need for participation in PVE programs, which is relevant both for their success and legitimacy and for strengthening democratic participation generally. The group focused on the need to involve a range of voices and the challenges in doing so. Government representatives suggested a model of consultation where national plans were devolved to discussions at the regional and local level in order to develop an agenda that reflected the views of a range of key actors. It was also noted that many countries have either not developed PVE plan or that the plans have been gathering dust in capitals and have not been implemented. These views were echoed by some civil society participants.

A related issue discussed by the group was how to identify community representatives who were best positioned to participate in these types of activities. Participants highlighted the problem of government officials reaching out to the same few groups, who may or may not have legitimacy within the communities they are trying to reach. One government official pointed out that countries that provide funding to PVE programs are faced with civil society groups that are over-funded (i.e., all donors are focusing on them) or are too small. In addition, civil society actors are sometimes naïve in how they engage on PVE issues and can cause more harm than good, especially if they do not have proper safeguards in place. The group discussed the hostility of some government actors to engaging with civil society at all, reflective of the power structures in the country. Participants provided examples of instances in which civil society had been prevented from contributing constructively in addressing issues of violence. Several civil society participants highlighted problems with governments dictating the PVE agenda.

### Financial Incentives

The group discussed the ways in which financial incentives may cause individuals to join violent groups and how they can be used to help people leave a life of violence. One participant highlighted the example of the group Boko Haram, noting the vast discrepancy between perceptions of what motivated individuals to join Boko Haram (82% believed it was religion) versus the results of surveys of these individuals (only 8% reported religious motivation, economic and political factors far more important). The group also discussed discrimination against Muslims in employment in some European countries, with participants highlighting studies showing that people with Muslim names applying for jobs are often rejected and the difficulties faced by women wearing hijab in obtaining employment. Finally, the group discussed the role of employment and economic opportunities in rehabilitating and reintegrating individuals who had renounced violence, with participants providing some concrete examples of how this had worked at the local level (e.g., in Pakistan). However, the number of successful examples presented was quite limited and it is not clear that they could be scaled in any meaningful way.

## Centring Human Rights

Given the focus of the seminar, the group spent a considerable amount of time discussing how PVE programs could centre human rights and the possibility for the involvement of local civil society actors in the process.

Civil society participants from Asia expressed concern about police rounding up large numbers of young men as part of counterterrorism operations and expressed scepticism that these individuals were actually violent actors. They proposed better training for law enforcement actors on the need to respect human rights. Other participants pointed out that any change of culture in law enforcement needs to come from the top and that the human rights imperative must be inculcated in them. The group discussed the need for human rights training to be part of the curriculum for security agencies, which is already in place. Concerns were expressed, however, as to whether there are sufficient mechanisms in place for monitoring whether the training is effective in sensitizing security agencies to human rights concerns. It was suggested that local civil society groups could be part of the monitoring process for such programs.

Civil society actors highlighted the need to translate broad commitments to human rights into policy and practice. There is a need for civil society to develop the capacity to provide concrete recommendations on how to protect human rights in order to turn these commitments into reality as well as to ensure that policymakers are focused on these issues.

The group addressed the particular challenges of situations where PVE is focused on a distinct minority population. In these types of situations, concerns about discrimination and religious and ethnic stereotypes raise specific human rights concerns and require even greater focus on human rights concerns.

## Addressing all forms of Violent Extremism

The last topic addressed by the group was the range of threats that could be addressed under the rubric of PVE. While most discussions of PVE have focused on the threat posed by ISIS, Al Qaeda and local variants, participants noted that the prevalence of the threat from the far right, as well as the targeting of Rohingya in Myanmar and Muslims in India. In terms of the threat of far-right violence, it appears to be addressed primarily as an issue of anti-Semitism, hate crimes and the prevention of genocide. Both the United Nations and European institutions have longstanding programs directed at these types of threats. But, as participants noted, these threats are not yet considered in the same framework as that from ISIS/Al Qaeda and the responses seem quite different. Some participants pointed out the problem of state support for different types of violent extremism, especially with respect to the far right.

## Conclusions

A few key themes emerge from the discussion. The first is the complexity and variety of the PVE space, which is exacerbated by the lack of a clear understanding of what types of programs should come within its umbrella. The result appears to be a smorgasbord of initiatives, some of which are only tangentially related to the stated goal (although they are often worthy initiatives on their own terms). Second, there was a recognition – particularly among civil society participants – of the risk of human rights abuses under the guise of PVE and the need to better integrate human rights into the policy and practical frameworks of these programs. Finally, there is a need to measure the impact of PVE programs. This is obviously a challenging matter since measuring what has been prevented is far harder than measuring what has been achieved. Addressing these three issues is critical to the sustainability and success of the PVE approach.

## Working Group 3 Report: Violent Extremism: Women's Involvement, Rights, and Security

To start the discussions, there was an attempt to define violent extremism. However, the group opted instead to discuss their experiences with gender in their various contexts: in the communities, in government, academia, work with migrants and internally displaced, the UN, in conflict areas, in religious-faith organizations, the justice system, and social media.

### How Gender Works in PVE

After the discussion of their experiences, the group decided to reframe the workshop title to “How Gender Works in PVE” to understand better how gender is used in the various processes related to PVE.

They agreed that manipulation of gender stereotypes is evident in the recruitment and mobilization of women and men to violent extremism.

They agreed, however, that gender may be used in destructive and constructive ways. Some examples of the destructive ways include:

- Using the stereotype “men protect women” – this leads, for example, to rape as an instrument to humiliate the enemy (the men) who are taunted for not being able to protect their women.
- Not acknowledging that men, precisely because they are expected to protect their women and in this instance are unable to do so, tend to seek revenge resulting in another cycle of violence (the victim now becomes the perpetrator).
- Restricting and controlling women's mobility, behaviours, physical appearance, and choices to indicate the essential elements of the envisioned society the group is striving for.
- Overemphasizing women's role as mothers in preventing violent extremism resulting in excluding other roles such as women as political and religious leaders, organizers and mobilizers, media representatives, advocates, etc.

On other hand, there are constructive ways in which gender is used such as:

- Women as mothers having an important role in radicalizing or de-radicalizing their children.
- Women expanding their roles by becoming political and religious leaders with authority in their communities and in other areas of influence.
- Women establishing platforms and networks where they are able to amplify their voices in the public space.
- Women having ample economic security to have the capacity for independent decision-making.

The effective approach therefore is to decrease the destructive manipulation of gender stereotypes that lead to violent extremism and to increase the constructive use of gender for addressing the roots of violent extremism in its political, economic and social dimensions.

Gender is therefore key to undertaking accurate analysis as well as to planning effective interventions. It is, however, important to bear in mind that analysis and planning must always consider context.

## Recommended Actions

### 1. Conceptual

- Redefine masculinities and femininities so that they are based on human rights of men and women and not merely on their culturally-defined roles. Violence as an essential element of being masculine must be countered with active nonviolence in order to remove violence as an option to bring about social change.
- Consider that women are not a monolithic group but belong to all sectors with diverse experiences
- Religious counter-discourse to fundamentalist notions of what constitutes women's purpose for their existence, their roles and behaviours must be articulated in various fora by credible messengers.

### 2. Technical

In pursuit of the “whole-of-society” approach articulated by the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, policies and programs must be provided to expand women's choices and roles by building their capacities (skills, knowledge, resources) to be leaders and equal partners with men.

### 3. Political

Effective political action must use the “More People, Key People” approach to social change, in this case on achieving the goal of women exercising leadership and agency in society. Focusing only on “more people” on the personal or individual level (such as stand-alone projects for women) will not have any impact on the patriarchal manifestations of violent extremism unless these are combined with actions that lead to changes in socio-political institutions and mechanisms that impact on the lives of women and men whose grievances against these structures of inequality fuel radicalization. Key people, who are decision-makers in government, the private sector, academe, religion, etc. must also be involved in setting policy, legislation, and programs to ensure women's perspectives and priorities are taken seriously.

Therefore, support must be provided for the building of women's networks and platforms to increase their capacity to influence changes in policies, structures, mindset, and behaviours.

#### Other actions include the following:

- The State's robust application of its obligation to fulfil women's human rights and equality in PVE
- Accountability and access to justice in case of physical and mental abuse of women
- Accountability measures against abuses of military and other security forces
- Stopping the cycle of revenge (violence) is one important way to prevent violent extremism to avoid victims becoming perpetrators
- Transitional justice mechanisms must be in place and gendered
- Recognition of women not just in leadership but also in authority

## Working Group 4 Report: Youth, Education and the Prevention of Violent Extremism

The importance of addressing violent extremism with regard to its impact on youth and the role of education, has gained global attention, and been underscored in a number of UN and EU resolutions and declarations. In relation to the main theme of the seminar, this working group aimed to look at the specific aspect of human rights in education for PVE – an interlocking triangle of focus.

The group, moderated by Dr Mohammad Najib Azca, had 28 members from a range of governmental and civil society organisations, who came from 19 different countries. The group began with outlining their expectations for the day, in order to frame the discussion and pitch it at the appropriate level. It was clear that a high level of critical debate was to be forthcoming, in their phrases such as ‘problematise education’ and ‘the importance of different contexts’, ‘the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity and religion’, as well as ‘the failure of democracy’.

### Key Challenges

The group was then asked to identify the challenges of this field. These included identity politics, ethno-nationalism, government policies (for example relating to the Rohingya), the different ways youth coalesce (around the older generation, elites or business), the long histories of conflict, division or sectarianism in a country which determine learned attitudes, failure to recognise the positive contributions of youth, and the predictable concern about on-line communication and fake news.

However, a number of important debates emerged. One was around the family – whether this was one of the key roots of vulnerability to radicalisation, or whether the importance of family was overstated or over-simplistic. This linked in part to the discussion on the centrality of poverty and unemployment in propelling youth towards extremist groups, or whether this was not in fact a universal feature of propensity to join movements, and there was little real evidence. There was an interesting discussion on democracy, and a question mark raised on whether democracy did act as a bulwark to radicalisation or whether the political system made little difference. The contested role of religion and teaching religion also started to emerge.

The group then split into two, one to discuss policies on youth, human rights and education, and the other to talk about working with youth, i.e. approaches that were more top down or bottom up.

### Policies on Youth, Human Rights and Education

The first group, on policies, identified five major areas for preventative work:

- Legislation (Race, Minority and Equality Acts; legal provision of human rights and CRC as compulsory in schools; laws on internet use)
- Curriculum (National, Human Rights education, diversity/gender, critical thinking, different narratives of history, local language, culture)
- National level plans or strategies – National Action Plans on PVE, or strategies to provide opportunities for marginalized and disaffected youth
- Empowerment and participation of youth - in decision-making, and in the curriculum, they receive
- Support/funding for the ‘filters’ or supporters at grassroots levels – NGOs, teachers, families, religious leaders

What emerged however was a concern about what might be called ‘the elephant in the room’ – the big issues which everyone knows about but is cautious about drawing attention to. For this

group, these issues include state terrorism, genocide, religious conflict, impunity, and the need for a curriculum which teaches about conflict, justice and reconciliation in one's own country.

## Working with Youth

The second group touched on a number of concerns and solutions.

- That HR sensitive education is not supported
- The clash between freedom of speech and freedom of religion
- There should be regulation of hate speech, religious sermons on TV
- Counter narratives and critical thinking
- Learning about local community culture, good or bad
- Building positive culture, anti-vengeance
- Building up trust, youth associated with policy,
- Participation; youth conducting training and spreading messages
- Bring in minorities and those with disabilities to the training
- Work with private sector
- Different learning media such as board games, video, music, art, sport, 'peacetal', comedy

After feedback from groups, the final exercise began with '*If I Ruled the World*' – that is, what the top priority or priorities would be for change in this area of youth, HR and education for PVE. The group was also asked to state who or what would be responsible for driving forward this area. As well as the responsibility in many areas for international organisations and networks such as ASEM, UN, SAARC, ASEAN or the Commonwealth, it can be seen that both governments and smaller or local players are identified. Seven major themes emerged, summarised as follows: (the responsibility column sometimes has to be divided into two, as there was debate about the prime starting point or effectiveness).

## Top Priorities for Change

Priority	How? Who?	
Engage youth in decision-making, leadership	<b>Govt:</b> implement CRC in legislation, create structures and platforms for participation at local, regional and national levels. Consider the impact of any policy design on family and youth in PVE	<b>Local level:</b> lobbying; involve youth THEMSELVES, youth platforms Economic aid for entrepreneurship of youth
Stop racial/religious discrimination, messages of inclusion; care for the marginalised	Legislation on equality and diversity; Sanitising textbooks; Infrastructure for remote areas; Using business, developing the economic system	School level policy on inclusion, self-reflection
Human rights education in schools from an early age; education on the rule of law	Compulsory education in HR and CRC Build a global HR University/institute that all countries and citizens could share Training of government officers on HR	CSOs, schools themselves. E-groups on HR; Skills in conflict resolution
Hateful and violent internet content	Legislation on internet providers	Teaching digital resilience Peer to peer awareness Youth creating materials to realise how they are being manipulated
Teach negative aspects of VE	Invite victims of terror or refugees into schools, visit camps; role models of extremists who have changed	
Build a culture of love, peace	Inter-faith groups, inter-ethnic exchanges, bringing youth together for music or sport. Learning from Herstory, the contributions of women in history	
Civil society inclusion Culture of trust	Public consultations and debate, youth solidarity, mapping potential youth leaders, women's empowerment Speedy judiciary Speaking more loudly about the negative impacts of impunity and lucrative engagement with youth.	

## Key Messages

Action is indicated at four levels or sites:

1. Countries should be encouraged to have stronger legislation or statutory guidance in order to ensure compliance with human rights norms. This legislation should include compulsory education on human rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (both in schools and for government officials); legislation on equality, diversity and anti-discrimination; and regulation of hate speech and religious disinformation, including legislation on internet providers to filter hate speech and violent content.
2. There is confirmation of the need for National Action Plans on Preventing Violent Extremism. These would include legislation, as above, but also strategies and finance to provide opportunities for marginalised or disaffected youth, whether in cities or in remote areas. It would include support for inter-ethnic and inter-faith youth exchanges, whether in music, sport etc, in order to build community cohesion and youth solidarity. It would also include support for grassroots organisations (NGOs, teachers, families, religious leaders) who were tackling violent extremism or were working to combat vengeance. For effectiveness and sustainability, young people and civil society should be meaningfully engaged at all stages.
3. In order to build trust, mechanisms are required to strengthen civil society and the voice of youth within this. This includes public consultations and debates, the empowerment of females and mapping potential youth leaders. Youth can conduct their own training and spread messages around PVE. There should be a youth platform for speaking more loudly about local issues but also political no-go areas such as state terrorism, genocide, the culture of impunity and the way youth are used for lucrative purposes.
4. At school level, there should be learning to build digital resilience and resilience to being drawn into extremist groups, using outside speakers but also peer-to-peer learning and different interactive media designed to raise awareness of violent extremism. In order to promote critical thinking, there should also be a strengthening of political education: this means a rights-based education, learning about religious and ethnic conflict in one's own country, and stressing different narratives and perspectives on history. Critical thinking is also enhanced but enabling youth to participate in decision-making on their curriculum or their school ethos of inclusion.

## CONCLUSION

Following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the security narrative of Western and Asian governments changed referring and responding to an open “war on terror”. Legislation, policies and strategies were drafted at national and international levels that legitimize the restriction of basic human rights in the name of security. These high-level changes were then interpreted in practice through law enforcement, public service provision and indeed how we all treat and see each other. They were also exercised in the name of communities and marginalised groups. The reasons that fostered the hate attitudes that led to humanity’s most shameful acts of terror, the two World Wars, were forgotten.

At a critical historical moment in the world, the ASEM seminar generated much needed hope. The mere presence and, indeed, the commitment of over 100 individuals from two continents working together on a shared issue was a testament of a will for change. Their arguments and papers showed that communities in both continents are rising and responding to this and numerous other narratives (economic, gender, political, and so on). They collectively acknowledged the conceptual shift from “war on terror” to “Prevention of Violent Extremism” has opened the space to the critical participation and leadership of communities and civil society in the prevention of violent extremism.

A key conclusion from the seminar is that a “whole-of-society” approach to PVE from national to sub-national levels, the local European and Asian communities can now provide a strong basis for any plan of action. There is no doubt that in a globalized world, the underlying drivers of radicalization and violent extremism are intimately manifested at the local level. Community-led interventions supported by local government authorities, the private sector, leaders of communities, professionals, women’s and youth organizations, families, faith-based groups, and social service providers, among others, are crucial to any interventions at all stages from pre-radicalisation, radicalisation, engagement in violent extremism, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

The challenge in this approach is how to ensure its effectiveness, as security sector strategies run alongside civil society, community-led efforts without each cancelling out each other’s gains. Instead, the road that we have taken in both continents is encouraging international society to become more polarised than ever, while the “them” (criminals - terrorists) and “us” (victims) rhetoric dominates political speeches and media presentations. And we have to ask: what will it take for society to finally raise the mirror of responsibility and look well into its reflection? We are the real architects of the social fabric that generates extremist ideologies, which then gradually corrupt universal values such as tolerance and the respect for life, dignity and solidarity among human beings. The extremist ideology that leads those men, and women – many of them young - to inhumane actions is not an alien virus of unknown origin, but a product of our way of living and the structures we have created in our society.