



AWARE GIRLS
Working towards Gender Equality and Peace



IMPACT OF RADICALIZATION ON WOMEN, IN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN: WOMEN'S SHARED RESPONSES TO RADICALIZATION

Samina

and

Ruqaia Tabasum

aware
girls



Aware Girls and Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD)



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The project “Peace Exchange: Pak-Afghan Women's Bridge for Peace”, was conceived by Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD), and Aware Girls, in response to the need for gender sensitive strategies for countering radicalization and violent extremism as well as inclusion of women in peace processes, in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The consortium partners wish to express their sincere gratitude to individuals and organizations that offered their time and commitment to this project. We are particularly indebted to the many members of civil society including, elders, activists, and all the individual women whose responses have been very instrumental in this research report.

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We feel indebted to field researcher who worked tirelessly to collect data from hard to reach target groups i.e., female victims, relative of victims and relative of militants in conflict ridden areas.

About the Researchers

The EPD research team responsible for this report consists of (in alphabetical order): Farzana Doosti, Madina Sahari, Maseeulah and Ruqaiya Tabasum.

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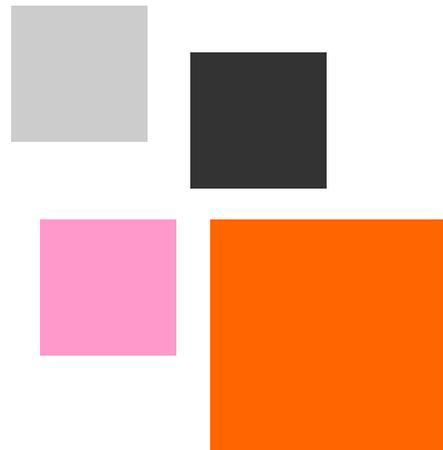
This study has only been made possible with the financial support from Open society Afghanistan. We highly appreciate their willingness to put up with delay in submission of report owing to sensitivity of the topic, fragile security situation and hard to reach target respondents.



LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS



AOG	Anti Governmental Groups
APS	Army Public School
BUIITEMS	Baluchistan University of Information and Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IED	Improvise Explosive Devise
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
LEAs	Law Enforcement Agencies
VE	Violent Extremism
USA	United States of America
UN	United Nations



GLOSSARY

<i>Abaya</i>	Cloak, a robe like over-garment
<i>Burqa</i>	Long loose covering with veiled holes for the eye
<i>Caliphate</i>	Rule of, or area governed by, a caliph; governance under Islamic Law
<i>Chadari</i>	Covering from head to toe
<i>Fauji</i>	Soldier
<i>Farz</i>	Duty
<i>Hijab</i>	To cover, a covering for head and face
<i>Hazara</i>	Persian speaking ethnic group, mostly Shia
<i>Jihad</i>	Struggle or striving; both inner and external struggle to be a good Muslim; though it can refer to legal, political, diplomatic, economic and military actions to protect faith, but the concept of Jihad has been hijacked by certain groups to justify violence against states and innocent human beings
<i>Kafir</i>	Infidel
<i>Kanjaar</i>	Pimp or prostitute
<i>Mujahid</i>	Inner struggler; one who struggles for the sake of Islam
<i>Madrassa</i>	Arabic word that refers to any type of educational institution, however it is predominantly understood as educational institution for religious instruction and learning
<i>Shariah</i>	Islamic law derived from precepts of Islam, especially the Quran and the Hadith

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

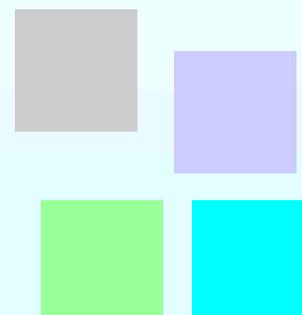


This study charts and assesses impact of radicalization and violent extremism on women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan; and strategies women use to cope with, and counter, radicalization. Both countries are faced with endemic radicalization and violent extremism that directly or indirectly affects individuals, institutions, communities and infrastructure. Adverse effects range from physical and mental illnesses to destruction of roads, buildings, businesses; decline in literacy, productivity and tourism; prevalence of distrust, intolerance, hostility, aggression, disregard for law, crimes and disproportionate use of violence by Law Enforcement Agencies (robberies, kidnapping, imprisonment, killing, maiming etc.); intensification of religious, ethnic and sectarian divides; and reinforcement of patriarchy. Radicalization and violent extremism in both countries primarily hit against women's rights. Women not only suffer direct physical and sexual violence in the form of flogging, stoning and beating to death, forced marriage and rape etc., but also bear most of the brunt of loss of livelihood and displacement; disappearances, disabilities and killing of family members. This study documents both direct and indirect adverse effects of radicalization and violent extremism on women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The study is divided into two parts; Part I focusses on Pakistan and Part II Afghanistan.

Part I discusses meaning of radicalization and violent extremism to women in conflict ridden areas of Pakistan. Women distinguish two categories of violent extremism: one inflicted by militants that primarily manifests in explosions, target killing, extortions, destruction of infrastructure, regulation of dress code and behavior, restrictions on mobility and indoctrination of youth and children; while the other perpetrated by the military during operations against the militants, especially in Swat and FATA, exhibited in indiscriminate and disproportionate use of violence, killings and disappearances. Part I also brings forward women's responses to varied forms of violence, regulations and restrictions. Their responses range from passive submission and internalization- considering extreme religious and political ideals and consequent violent, oppressive and discriminatory practices legitimate, sanctioned by religion and/or culture; to rejection and condemnation of radicalization and violent extremism.

Part II focusses on violence perpetrated by Anti Governmental Groups (AGG) in Afghanistan. It discusses women's responses to sexual violence, disability, displacement, killing of a family member, and presence of a former fighter in the family. It is very difficult for victims of sexual violence to speak up due to cultural norms of honour. The study brings forward instances wherein victims of sexual violence either committed suicides or went into severe depression. Their entire families found it hard to continue their normal life and often went into hiding to avoid humiliation disgrace and taunts by people around them. Disability also affects women more severely, further enhancing their marginalization. Women with disabilities have lesser prospects of employment and marriage; and are often treated as a burden. Displacement and consequent poverty, loss of ancestral

homes, farm lands, and cattle also exacerbates plight of women. Loss of family members, especially breadwinners, is not only painful for women, but also leaves them behind in poverty. Though some women resort to live on charity and begging, but mostly muster up the strength to learn skills and work to generate their livelihood.



INTRODUCTION



This study documents impact of radicalization and violent extremism on physical, emotional, social, political and economic dimensions of women's lives; and strategies they creatively employ to counter radicalization and its varied manifestations, in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Radicalization specifically hits against marginalized segment of the society such as; women, children, religious, sectarian and ethnic minorities. In confluence with patriarchal cultural practices, violent extremism further intensifies oppression and marginalization of women. It enlarges the ambit of patriarchal control over: women's body, mobility, health, education; social, political and economic participation; impeding them from claiming their fundamental human rights. Peace and women's rights are interconnected. It is an established fact that women enjoy better status in peaceful societies and contribute more to the socio-economic development; while radicalized and conflict-ridden societies relegate women to lower, rather sub-human status.

Since, women are placed differently in society, their experiences and perspectives of radicalization are also different from men. Loss of lives, physical disabilities, displacement, destruction of houses and infrastructure etc., affect men and women differently. Consequently, women have different approaches towards de-radicalization, conflict resolution and peace building. Most of the available literature, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, brings together the impact of radicalization and violent extremism in the form of gender blind numbers and statistics, and misses woman as the category of analysis. Moreover, women have mostly been portrayed as passive victims of violent extremism, ignoring diverse role she plays as sympathizer, supporter and preventer of Violent Extremism. Consequently, women remain excluded from decision making at all levels and stages. Hence, there is a need to bring forward the deeper and long term effects of radicalization on women and diversity of roles she plays to make a case for inclusion of women as active agents of peace in countering violent extremism.

Women in Pakistan and Afghanistan are faced with similar challenges and forms of radicalization and violent extremism due to geographical and cultural proximity. For decades, they have been playing an active role in sustaining families and communities and preventing family members from indulging in violence. Women peace activist in both countries have been challenging both the militants and the military over violations of human rights, despite imminent threats to their lives. There is a need to bring together responses of women, to radicalization and violent extremism, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, to have a better understanding of the problem in local and regional context, and to have better synergy against radicalization.

Aims

and Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to document impact of radicalization and violent extremism on women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and coping mechanism including counter strategies women use in response to radicalization and violent extremism.

Specific objectives of the study are the following:

- Trace meaning of radicalization and violent extremism in the local context from women's perspective
- Enlist impact on health and education
- Chart impact on livelihood
- Delineate impact of displacement
- Discuss impact on cultural activities
- Bring forward coping mechanism of women in face of radicalization
- To fill the existing gap in knowledge concerning women and radicalization
- To compare experiences of women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, in the wake of radicalization and Violent Extremism to explore joint peace initiatives for better synergy
- To make a case for inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes

Methodology and Approach:

This study employs mixed-method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data to describe and assess impact of radicalization into VE on women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and coping mechanism of women. Primary data has been collected using interviews, case studies and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs); while secondary data comprises: publically available data and statistics, newspapers, magazines, research articles and reports prepared by various UN agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Sources of secondary data have been cited throughout the report. Detailed research designs for Pakistan and Afghanistan have been discussed in Part I and II respectively.

Scheme of the Study

This study is divided into two parts: Part I shares women's responses to radicalization in Pakistan and Part II shares women's responses to radicalization in Afghanistan.

Part I comprises introduction and 3 chapters; chapter 1 discusses meaning of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in the local context, especially from women's perspective and manifestations of VE in Pakistan. Chapter 2 delineates impact of violent extremism on dress code, mobility, health, education, and cultural activities. It also brings forward coping mechanism of women, especially counter strategies to radicalization and VE. Chapter 3 discusses women's responses to displacement, disappearances, disability and death.

Part II comprises five chapters (4-8), discussing five main areas of violence that women faced due to VE including: sexual violence, disability, displacement, killing of a family member, and having a former fighter in the family. Chapter 4 discusses cases of women who have lost their husbands or any other family member due to radicalization. Chapter 5 discusses cases of women who have suffered physical violence and got disabled. Chapter 6 discusses cases of women who have former fighters in their families. Chapter 7 discusses cases of women who were forced to leave their place and got displaced due to radicalization. Chapter 8 discusses cases of women who were sexually abused or any family members had faced sexual violence due to radicalization.

Conclusion summarizes women's responses and makes recommendations for inclusion of women in peace processes.

PART I

SHARING WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO RADICALIZATION IN PAKISTAN



INTRODUCTION

Part I of the study describes and discusses impact of radicalization and violent extremism on women in Pakistan. Though, the entire Pakistan has been suffering from radicalization, but the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan; and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA) are one of the hardest hit areas. Following ‘War on Terror’ in 2001, FATA became the epicenter of terrorism; scenic valley of Swat fell to Taliban in 2008; and Baluchistan still continues to bleed from ethnic and sectarian violence. Despite the fact, that women have been affected more severely in Swat, FATA and Baluchistan, their experiences and perspectives have not been documented well. This study attempts to fill the gap in knowledge and make a case for gender inclusive policies for countering radicalization and violent extremism in Pakistan. Chapter 1 discusses meaning and manifestation of radicalization in the local context from women’s perspective; and impact of militancy, military operation and drone attacks on women; Chapter 2 records women’s responses to regulation of dress code for both men and women; restrictions on mobility and cultural activities and impact on gender relations. Chapter 3 brings forward women’s coping mechanism to loss and disappearances of family members, disabilities and displacement.

Research Design for Pakistan:

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods for data analysis. Primary data has been collected using interviews, case studies and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) carried out in 13 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa namely: Abbotabad, Bannu, Buner, Charsada, Dera Ismail Khan, Haripur, Lower Dir, Mansehra, Malakand, Mardan, Peshawar, Swabi, Swat); 7 agencies of FATA (Bajaur, Kurram, Khyber, Mohmand, Orakzai agencies, North-Waziristan, South-Waziritsan); and Baluchistan. Total 340 respondents have been reached out using 220 individual interviews and 15 FGDs with 120 (15x8) participants. On average, duration of each one-on-one interview had been one hour and FGDs last for 2 hours.

Semi structured/in-depth interviews have been conducted with: women, directly or indirectly affected by radicalization, especially as victims, relative of victims and relative of militants; working women; female college and university students; both male and female peace activists; artists; scholars and experts on peace and gender; traditional tribal elders and religious leaders.

Demographically, 52% Respondents had been married, 29% unmarried, 17% widowed or divorced and marital status of 2% respondent was not documented; 43% respondent belonged to the age group 16-29, 30% respondents 30-45, and 27 % were above 45; 83% respondents are Sunni Muslims, 12% Shia and 5% Christians and other religious minorities.

In total, 45 case studies have been collected that illustrate concrete instances of the impact of radicalization on women's mobility, dress code, livelihood, displacement, loss of family members, injuries, disabilities and gender relations. Cases of survivors illustrating coping mechanism and counter strategies have also been documented.

Secondary data consists of publically available data and statistics, newspapers, magazines, research articles and reports prepared by various UN agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations concerning radicalization, violent extremism and its impact on women.

Several challenges and obstacles had been faced during data collection. It was difficult for most of the respondents to revisit memories of oppression, fear, insecurity and personal losses. People are still afraid of talking openly against Taliban, since they believe that Taliban still have supporters within the communities and state organs, and can strike back. It was really hard for people to speak about the violence perpetrated by the Military and other law enforcement agencies. Sensitivity of the people with notion of honour and shame also prevented them from speaking about direct physical or sexual violence. We, therefore, could not directly reach out to a victim of sexual violence. Moreover, fragile security situation and sudden escalation in tension on Pak-Afghan border and adjacent tribal areas of FATA also impeded data collection. Keeping in view security of the respondents, names have been replaced with pseudo names.

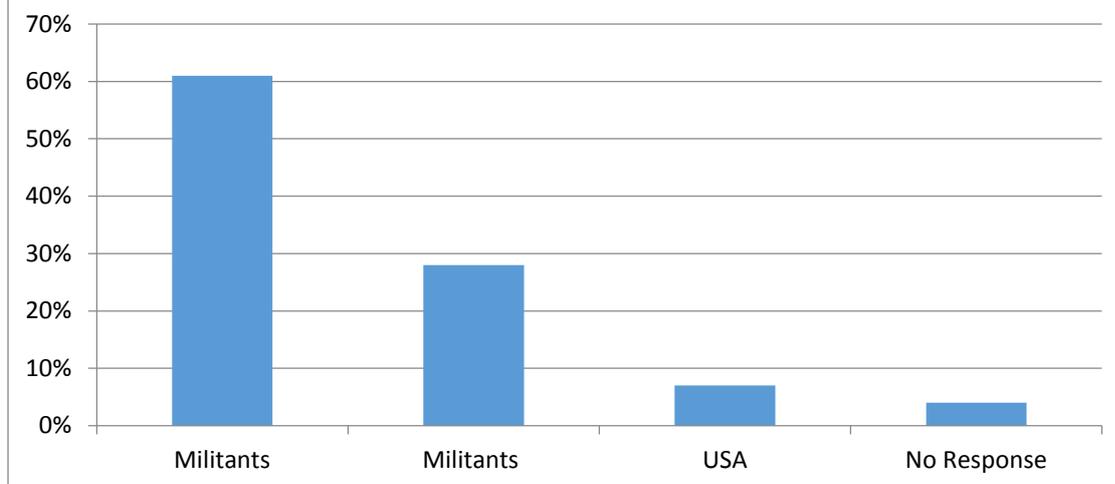
Radicalization and Violent Extremism: Meaning and Manifestation

The term ‘radicalization’ has been used in several senses, referring to a range of ideas, concepts and actions. However, it has predominantly been defined as a process of change in ideas, beliefs, behavior and actions of individuals or groups, whereby they develop or adopt extreme religious, political or ideological positions for societal change.¹ Radicalization does not necessarily lead to violence; however, one of the pathways of radicalization is the adoption of extremist beliefs that justify use of violence in pursuit of extreme religious or ideological positions. Radicalization and extremism are often used interchangeably, since both refer to positions that are at variance with the mainstream and normal social and political order. Extremists can employ violent and non-violent means to achieve their goals. Though, all extremists individual and groups do not resort to the use of violence in pursuit of their beliefs, nonetheless, the difference between violent and non-violent extremism lies in methods, not goals. Extremism per se breeds intolerance, authoritarianism and supremacy of a particular religious, racial or social group, contravening legal, democratic means and human rights and it, therefore, carries strong potential to turn violent. Increasingly, extremism has come to be defined as a phenomenon that pursues extreme positions through extreme undemocratic, unlawful methods, even violence.² Violent extremism, specifically, refers to beliefs and actions that support use of violence to achieve radical/extreme religious, political or ideological positions. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, radicalization predominantly precipitated into willingness to use or support indiscriminate violence both by state and non-state actors either in the name of imposing *Shariah* and *Caliphate* or to establish peace, order and security. Radicalization and violent extremism may have many facets and meanings, but for women in the conflict-ridden and terrorism affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA and Baluchistan, radicalization and violent extremism stands for fear; insecurity; discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, sect, and ethnicity; bloodshed, killing, destruction, displacement and loss of control over one’s life. Women accuse both military and militants of killing innocent people and destroying private properties and infrastructure. Nonetheless, women differentiate between violence perpetrated by the militants and the military. 61% respondents enumerate violence perpetrated by militants; 28% by army; 7% by USA (drone attacks); and 4% did not respond to the question.

¹Defining the Phenomenon of Radicalization in Pakistan. Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 2009. Available at: pakpips.com/download.php?f=115.pdf

² Githens-Mazer, Jonathan. The rhetoric and reality: radicalization and political discourse. International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique, Vol. 33, No. 5. Sage Publications Ltd., 2012, pp. 556-567 at p.558. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23353159>. Accessed: 20-03-2017

Violence by Militants and Military



1.1 Violence Perpetrated by Militants: Violent extremism of Taliban manifested in bomb blasts; dead bodies on roads; killing of police men and journalists; mutilation of bodies; restriction on women's mobility, visit to markets, schools, hospitals and shrines; burning and destroying holy shrines; loss of freedom and control over one's life; attack on education and health institutions and workers; forbidding women to work; kidnapping for ransom; forced marriage; disappearances; slaughtering in public places; public hanging; ban on TV, music, singing and dancing; flogging, humiliation, extortion; compulsory beard and dress code for men; veiling and confinement for women; threatening letters; banning business run by women; waging war on Pak Army; forcing people to join militants; brainwashing and training children to become suicide bombers; labelling people infidel; forcing people to perform rituals of Islam; propaganda against state system of education and English medium private system of education.

A respondent from Peshawar considers bomb blast, in markets, schools and mosques, a product of radicalization. She lost her school going son in a bomb blast in Khyber Bazar, Peshawar, on October 9, 2009. She regrets that her son was having exam and did not want to go that day, but I persuaded him to go.

Ameena from Matta, Swat, lamented that Taliban misused Islam to exert violence and power. They began with teachings of Islam and women's rights on FM radio to mobilize women in their support, receiving huge amount of donations too. Soon, they disclosed their real violent face and began hanging people with trees. They took control of almost all of Swat, and even relatively peaceful areas of Swat, such as Marghozar, and terrorized people by throwing threatening letters in their houses.

Fatima, from Mingora, Swat, related that "Talibans kidnapped my friend's father and demanded 3 million rupees. Victim's family could not arrange the ransom and consequently,

Taliban brutally killed my friend's father and threw the mutilated body outside his house. The entire family has not been able to overcome the trauma after 7 years.”

Mumtaz from Buner said that Taliban not only banned going to holy shrines, but burned the shrines too. They publicly announced that if anyone dared visiting a shrine, they will be burned alive inside the shrine. They further terrorized people by forcing journalists to eulogize their brutalities in newspapers and magazines.

Sakina said that Taliban strictly confined women to the four walls. They instructed women not to step out of the house, unless extremely unavoidable, and in that case too must be accompanied by male relatives. If found alone, will be punished severely. They sent notices to the female students' homes that if any girl is seen going to school, she will be shot dead. Feeling concerned about our safety and well-being, our male relatives strictly forbade us from going out. We stopped going to schools, hospitals, workplace and markets. We used traditional method of healing to cure patients, especially female. Voicing her feelings of helplessness, she said “We were only free to breath; otherwise our lives were totally under control of Taliban.” Another respondent from Saidu Sharif, Swat, added in, that women ran small businesses such as; vocational centers, domestic sewing and embroidery centers, and beauty parlors; but militants warned them especially beauticians to close their salons, or they will be slaughtered.

A young girl who had to quit school in grade 6 considers violent extremism as ban on education. She recalls that Taliban dropped threatening letters in our school, and a bearded man stopped our school van to threaten our driver and teachers. Subsequently, we stopped going to school. She did not return to school even after restoration of peace, but misses hanging out with friends.

A young girl Gulmeena grieves that we used to watch TV, sing and dance in weddings and other family functions, but Taliban strictly banned all forms of entertainment. They closed down CDs shops and warned people against buying and selling CDs. Even now, we are afraid that someone can make our video while singing and dancing and send it to Taliban.

For Saba, from Bara, Khyber Agency of FATA, extortion of money on the pretext of providing security, building mosques and madrassas, is also a manifestation of violent extremism. Moreover, she thinks forcing young men to join militants in their so-called Jihad against Pakistan Army and the government; brain washing and training children to become suicide bombers and declaring Pak army and innocent civilians of Pakistan as *kafir*, infidel, are also forms of radicalization.

Bakht Jahan, from Bara, related that Mangal Bagh and his men initially spoke about Islam, but gradually incited people towards violence in the name of *jihad*. They announced that each family has to contribute at least one *Mujahid*, fighter, and in case of non-compliance, will have to pay fine. A rich man named Sher Zaman refused to pay the fine, consequently, Taliban killed his son in front of the whole market. It led all others to silently pay the amount demanded by Taliban. Mangal Bagh used to announce death list on his illegal FM Radio, but no one could dare challenging him. She further recounted stories of horror and violence that

once a man in our village was late for the prayer, Taliban stopped him and insulted him, to which the man retorted. At this, the young Talib became furious and picked up his gun, but the man rushed and shot two militants before they could do anything and ran away. After a few days, Taliban traced and brutally killed him.

Shah Babo, from Swabi, recounts that when an NGO-operated school was not closed despite warning by Taliban, they attacked the school van, killing 7 teachers (6 women and 1 men) in 2014.

Nasreen, a school teacher, considers propaganda against state system of education a form of violent extremism. Religious leaders stress that children should be removed from formal secular institutions and enrolled in madrassa.

Rubina deems misogyny and violence against women a form of violent extremism. She lives in a huge extended family wherein the only purpose of a woman's existence is to bear and rear children despite her health and age and to bear in silence violence of husband and in-laws.

A large number of respondents in Swat, and FATA complained that they were caught between the military and militants. Both suspected ordinary people of being supporters of the other side, consequently pressured and tortured. Thousands of common people had been killed in the fight between Taliban and the military.

Shaheen, from Quetta, considers persecution of *hazara* community a form of radicalization and violent extremism. She laments that militants attack educational institutions, mosques, religious processions, traders, public servants, community elders, women even children of the *hazara* community. She also cites attack on Sariat Police Training College as manifestation of VE. This attack claimed lives of more than sixty security personnel, injuring more than hundred.³

For Irum, a Christian peace activist, religious intolerance and target killing of minorities is a form of violent extremism. She bemoaned that people call us *Kafir* and assign us subhuman status.

For Sabeena, a peace activist, radicalization also manifests in hatred and discrimination against Afghans both by the government and ordinary people. Afghans are considered cause of crimes and terrorism without any solid ground.

1.2 Violence Perpetrated by Law Enforcement Agencies: Violent extremism of the Military manifested in forced displacement and evacuation from ancestral homes; occupation of houses and schools; destruction of private properties and infrastructure; use of heavy weapons; indiscriminate military operation; arrest, disappearance and torture of suspects and their relatives including innocent people; disappearance of terrorists without due course of

³ The Express Tribune. October, 24, 2016. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1208735/militants-attack-police-training-centre-quetta/>

law; searches; barriers; curfew and drone attacks; and arbitrary killing sans due process of law. Women's lives have been affected in myriad ways by the violence inflicted by the military. They not only lost the protection of ancestral homes, but also relatives, often bread winners. Destruction and occupation of health and education facilities impeded their access to health and education. Displacement, curfew, check posts, searches and use of heavy weapons bred feelings of fear, helpless and humiliation, giving rise to serious physical and psychological problems.

Jamila from Kabal, Swat, thinks that military pushed us out of our homes and "we were not even allowed to go to our real houses." She believes that the military operation did not bring any good to anyone. Businesses and schools were destroyed, domestic animals killed, fields and crops destroyed.

Spogmai, from Kanju, deems arrests, torture and imprisonment of innocent, unarmed civilians especially, the young men of Swat, a form of violent extremism. Even those who shook hands with Taliban or offered hospitality on account of threat or fear have been shot dead or have gone missing. Army even arrested and killed innocent family members of the Taliban.

Shaheen, from Bara, thinks labelling innocent people terrorists; indiscriminate bombing from helicopters; use of heavy artillery and missiles manifestation of violent extremism. It has resulted into loss of precious lives and property. Her own cousin, aged 25, lost life during military operation. Another respondent from Bara added that the army searched our house, and took not only the ammunition, but gold too. They arrested all men of our family, sparing only the very old ones. These men were tortured by making them lie flat on hot burning sand.

Zartaj deems arbitrary killing and destruction of property, in the name of security, by the Military a manifestation of violent extremism. She recounted that one day Taliban came to stay in their Hujra. We were forced to give them food and shelter. They stayed in our Hujra for 11 days. Soon after they left, the army raided her house and arrested her son and husband. The military also destroyed their house and crops.

Haleema, from Islam Pur, Swat, considers arbitrary killing sans due process of law by LEAs, a category of violent extremism. She said that Army considered us supporters of Taliban, without any valid ground, just for being good Muslims. They killed my husband and 15 years old son, just outside the house. "I could hear the voice of bullets and screams. They also destroyed our house, we begged for mercy but of no avail."

For Shahida illegal detention by LEAs is also a form of violent extremism. She related that her brother, a university student, went to Mingora to buy some books on Dec., 16, 2009. Police arrested him in Mingora, and handed him over to Army after 19 days. Her brother's case is in the court, "we have submitted several applications to army, but of no avail."

Noordana said that before military operation in South Waziristan, in 2009, I had not encountered violence and terror. We first heard the word curfew, and found out that it meant closure of shops, shortage of food, water and medicines, and killing of those who stepped out

of their houses. We spent weeks within the house, rather within a room. Her uncle who suffered from mental disorder went out during curfew, and was shot dead by the army and labelled a terrorist.

Shabana, from North-Waziristan, considers drone attack and heavy bombardment by fighter planes a product of radicalization and violent extremism. Before military operation, we could fetch water, gather fuel and graze cattle, but it all stopped with bombardment from fighter jets. We left our homeland and ancestral house following attack by the government and the America.

It is evident from the above cited narratives of women that they identify radicalization with violence perpetrated by: militants in the name of enforcing *Shariah*; and LEAs in the name of establishing peace and security. Varied responses of women in conflict ridden areas of FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan demonstrate that radicalization not only restricted women's mobility and access to health and education facilities, but also deprived them of the comfort and shelter in their ancestral homes. Fear, anxiety, feeling of helplessness, insecurity and loss of control has changed the entire course of their life. They no more feel safe in tending crops, grazing cattle, fetching water and sending children to school. It has shaken the trust in religious leaders, *madrassa* and state institutions.

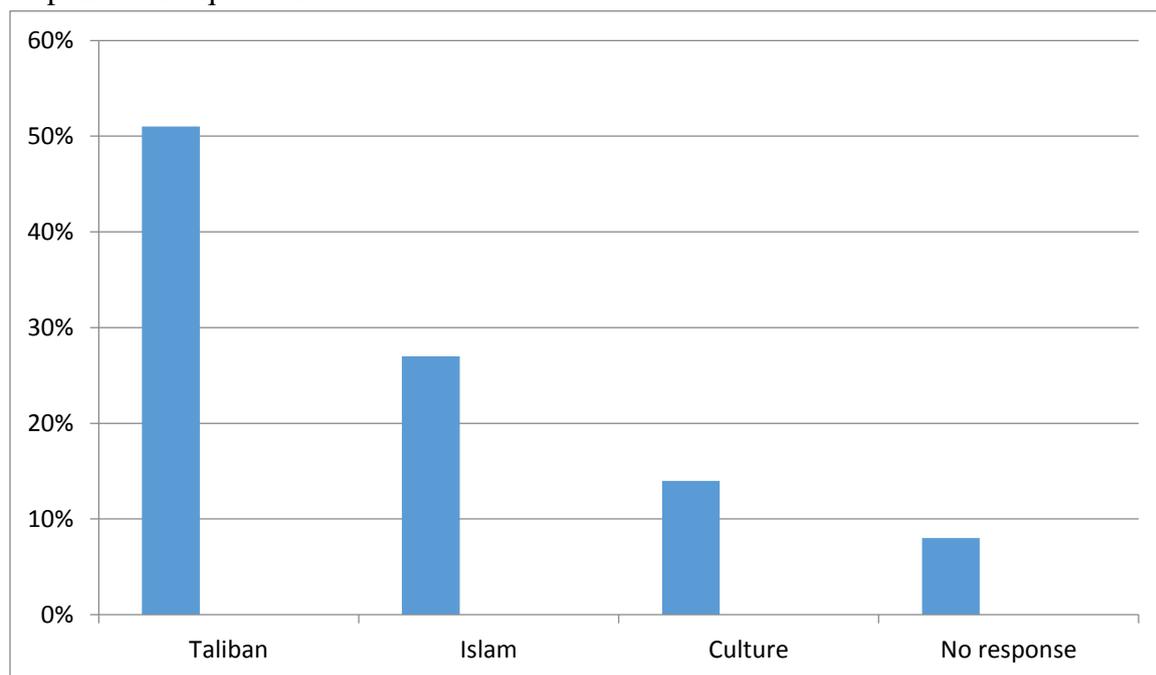
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Women's Responses to Regulation and Restrictions

This chapter discusses women's responses to: regulation of dress code and mobility; and restrictions on access to health and education facilities. It also brings forward the impact of radicalization and violent extremism on cultural activities and gender relations within the household. Discussion is supplemented with narratives of women and case studies.

2.1 Impact on Mobility and Dress Code:

Regarding restrictions on mobility and regulation of dress code, respondents held diverse opinions. 51% respondents condemn forcibly regulating dress code and mobility by Taliban; 27 % said that Taliban prevented women from engaging in sinful activities and enabled them live their life according to Islam; 14 % said we are Pukhtun and already observe strict Purdah, veiling, and don't step out of home unless extremely unavoidable; 8% women did not respond to the question.



Naheeda, from Swat, related that Taliban ordained: women to wear loose clothes, shuttlecock burqa, and flat shoes; men to keep beard and wear caps. They not only banned wearing paint shirt, but also closed barber shops. "Once, I fell down wearing burqa, since I was not used to it. I could not do anything except cursing Taliban loudly." They ensured, if a woman has to go outside, she must be accompanied by father or husband. Even going out with brother could make her suspicious. No woman could dare stepping out of her house alone, if someone dared, she was dragged in the main bazaar and beaten by Taliban. Propaganda by

Taliban led young children ask “if we wear paint shirt, shall we go to hell?” Before Taliban, women wore *chadar* and *abaya*, but due to propaganda of Taliban, people started calling Balck *Abaya*, *Kanjaar*, as an insult to those wearing it. Naheeda added that all of a sudden all markets were flooded with burqas. Women did not feel safe even in *burqa* and *abaya*.

Rasheeda, from Mingora, Swat, shared that her pregnant cousin was suffering from high blood pressure, she went with her mother to a doctor’s clinic in the market wearing chader. A Talib took out a knife and threatened her that if she wore chadar again, she will be stabbed. Since, the woman had high blood pressure, she retorted back, and made Talib furious. He was about to stab her, but her mother intervened and begged for mercy. Such instance led people ban womenfolk from the market place.

Sajida, from Bara, said that we used to work in our fields before Taliban but now Taliban strictly restricted us to the four walls. We silently submitted to the injunctions of Taliban, since defiance meant death for oneself and for the whole family.

Nazia, from Quetta, said due to frequent targeted attacks on Shia Hazara Community, we have started wearing hijab, since our features can be easily discerned, making us vulnerable. Most of us have restricted out movement to Alamdar Road and Hazara Town. We don’t feel safe in going to schools, markets and workplace.

Shaheen, from Kanju, Swat, justifies restrictions imposed by Taliban. They forbid women from going outside alone, because some women, whose husbands were abroad, engaged in sinful activities. Another respondent added in that we are Muslims and Pakhtun, and we always observed *pardah*, veiling. Some other respondents said that our mobility, dress code and all actions are already regulated by male relatives, presence of Taliban made no difference to us. She said that she has lost interest in watching TV and listening to music; she does not go shopping, rather, her mother in law and husband buy things for her.

Another woman said that Taliban did not restrict our mobility, but asked us to be modest and cover face and body properly. She said wearing *burqa* is not a bad thing, it is according to Islam and Pashto. She further added that we do go out to attend weddings and funerals, but within proper hijab. Another respondent argued that Islam prohibits women from going outside. How can they reject and counter teachings of Islam? Another respondent further observed that women willingly observe *purdah*, since it is the teaching of Islam. She considered tight clothes *Kafir*, dress of the infidels.

Paro from Waziristan said that Taliban did not impose any dress code on us. We are tribal Pashtun, we already observe strict *pardah*. We should follow our norms and values and women should stay within limits. Another respondent from Banu said that we are illiterate and live in remote area; all people are known to each other. So, we have to wear decent dress and observe *pardah*.

2.2 Impact on Education and Health

Radicalization and violent extremism directly hits education and health, especially women’s. Militants not only destroy health and educational institutions, but also forbid people,

especially women, from visiting schools, health centers and working as teachers and health personnel. According to the estimated data, around 458 educational institutions have been demolished by militants in FATA.⁴ Moreover, around 500 schools are dysfunctional since teachers are afraid of doing their duties due to threats by Taliban.⁵ During military operation in Swat and FATA, not only militants but military also occupied schools to use as barracks and bases.

Large majority of the respondents think that radicalization affects health and education extremely adversely. Shamim said I had attempted only one paper when I heard the news of attack on Bacha Khan University. I got high fever, and lost my sleep and appetite. My family took me to several doctors, but all in vain. Doctor referred me to psychiatrist; I am under treatment but had to quit education. A young girl in Swat regrets that she was a student of class 9, and her exams were cancelled. She quit school and never joined back.

Parents were also reluctant in sending their children to school fearing that Taliban may kidnap children and train them to become suicide bombers. A number of children refused to join back their schools, after restoration of peace due to fear. Some private schools in Swat were completely shut down because their principles or owners had been killed by Taliban. A respondent from North-Waziristan shared that her husband took her two sons to study in a school in Karachi. The children find it really difficult to adjust and learn due to language problem.

Raheela, from Quetta, said attacks on Baluchistan University of Information and Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, (BUIITEMS), in 2012, and Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University Quetta, in June 2013, specifically targeted Hazara students. It resulted into many Hazara students, especially girls, quitting studies even during last year of education. Both attacks killed and injured many students. The attack on Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University was carried out by a female suicide bomber against female students.⁶

Amna said female teachers, nurses and doctors stopped working due to threats, leaving schools and health centers without staff. She shared "I was expecting and due to lack of health facilities lost my baby." Shahana was hit by a mortar shell and lost her left leg. She is trying to recover, but grieves more for her children who are traumatized. Another lady reported that I had two daughters and was expecting again. We desperately wanted to have a male child. My young daughters also prayed to have a brother, but the miscarriage plunged the whole family into despair. Another respondent said that children suffered from insufficient food during military operation and curfew that affected their health adversely. They mostly remain silent and don't take interest in games and sports. A respondent, from Batkhela, shared that her mother needed medical care, since hospitals in Malakand were

⁴ Why did the Taliban destroy our school?- Report from FATA by SAWERA. <http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/partners-in-pakistan/sawera/sawera-news/4592-towards-fata-education.html>

⁵ The Daily Dawn, February 25, 2012. <https://www.dawn.com/news/698333>

⁶ The Daily Dawn, June 16, 2013. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1018631>

mostly closed, we took her to Peshawar. On the way back, the road was blocked, and it took them full day to reach their home.

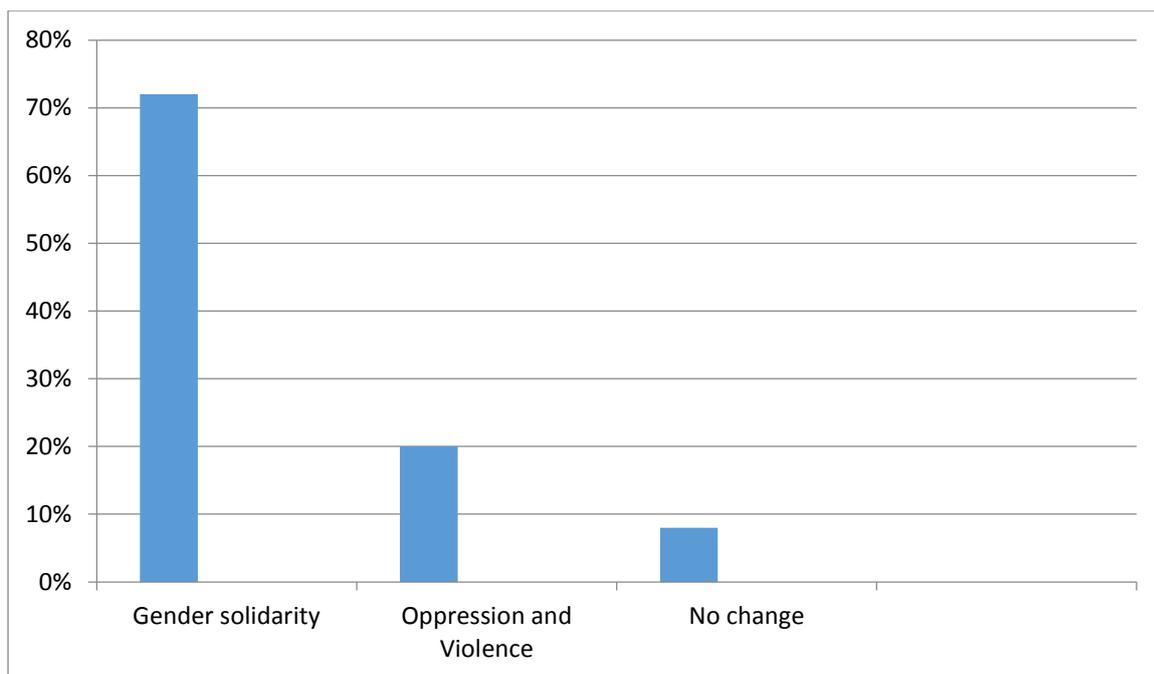
One of the prime targets of radicalization has been polio vaccination. Taliban not only attacked polio teams, but also forbid parents from vaccinating their children. Resultantly, KP and FATA account for 96% of the reported polio cases.⁷ Shabana told us that Taliban publicized that polio vaccine is made out of pig's blood. Another respondent reported that it is propagated by extremists that polio vaccine is the conspiracy of the Jews and the West to paralyze Muslim children.

Women also spoke of adverse impact on mental health of women, men and children. Zahida related that during surge of militancy, my younger brother went into complete seclusion, he would not come out of his room and speak to anyone. He remained silent for months and quit his studies too. His condition improved after treatment and he has resumed his studies in cadet college Swat. Shaheen, a displaced woman from South Waziristan, shared that her son, aged 9, cannot sleep and go anywhere alone, He starts screaming whenever he sees or hears of explosion. Majority of the respondents shared that their male relatives also suffered from anxiety and depression and had to take relaxant. Young men particularly were afraid that they will be picked up or insulted by the army. Women said we feel insecure whenever male relatives are out of the house, whether they will return safe or not. Zar Taj said I always have headaches and cannot relax mentally. I have lost my appetite completely. Whenever firing started, I used to hide myself along with my children in a room. Sometimes, bullets shell fell in our yard. We could not do anything except weep and felt very weak and helpless. Khalida said my only remedy in time of distress was to weep and pray to God for mercy.

2.3 Impact on Gender Relations

Contrary to generally held assumption that men become more oppressive and violent during conflicts, majority of the respondent said that their male relatives became more caring and softer towards them. According to 72% of the respondents, war, displacement and militancy produced gender solidarity amongst men and women, since tough times brought them closer and made them sensitive towards each other's problems and sufferings; 20% respondents reported increased in incidence of violence with increase in radicalization and VE; 8 % believed that no change has occurred in gender relations within the household.

⁷ KP, Fata residents comprise 96pc of polio victims this year. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1137933/kp-fata-residents-comprise-96pc-of-polio-victims-this-year>



A respondent explained that the relationship between men and women strengthened during surge of militancy, since men realized that home is the only place where they can find peace. In the wake of distrust and fear, one could only trust family member. Our men fought against Taliban to protect us, since Taliban were against women. Women reported that there was no domestic violence at all, our male relatives always tried to console us. Another respondent added in that men spent more time at home those days, so they developed a better understanding of the domestic workload of women. Few respondents were of the view that men themselves became weak and helpless, so they better understood our situation.

A few respondents reported increase in the incidence of domestic violence. Shakila said that men took out all their frustration on us. Her husband had his own shop, but after displacement from Bara, he had to work on daily wages. Men were more vulnerable than women, since both militants and military humiliated them. They were also concerned about our protection and well-being. So they strictly imposed burqa upon us.

2.4 Impact on Cultural Activities: Taliban declared a war on music, dancing, sports, TV, CDs, cinema and other sources of entertainment. They threatened and killed artists, destroyed CD shops and cinemas, burned TVs, attacked sports grounds and shrines.⁸ In the wake of confinement of women to four walls and limited opportunities of entertainment, especially in Swat, FATA and other rural areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, CDs, and TV program, apart from singing and dancing at family functions have been the sole convenient means of entertainment and pastime for women. Taliban's war against cultural activities not only deprived women artists of their means of livelihood but also from a large number of women from means of entertainment.

Horrendous killing of a singer Shabana in Mingora, Swat, is still a nightmare to artists, especially females. Banr in Mingora used to be the hub of singers, dancers and musicians. In

⁸ Cultural Terrorism. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1094274>. March 20, 2014

the former State of Swat, Banr was established as center of singers and dancers, who were provided security by the state.⁹ However, when Taliban took over control of Swat, they immediately launched a sinister campaign against the artists of Banr, forcing a large majority of the families of dancing girls to quit Swat. Most of the families did not return even after restoration of peace. Currently, only a handful of the artists reside in Banr.

Taliban did not spare playgrounds too. Suicide attack in Lakki Marwat on a volleyball match, in 2010, left more than 100 people dead, most of them youth.¹⁰ A respondent from North-Waziristan related that we restricted children to play inside home only. Children too had lost all interest in games and sports. They don't even want to go out of the house. Another respondent shared that children only play to imitate fighting between Taliban and army. They play either soldiers or Taliban and talk of attacks and killing.

Another prime target of militants has been the *ziarat*, shrine, culture. Throughout centuries, women have been deriving consolation, peace and power from shrines.¹¹ A respondent therefore, grieved that by destroying shrines, militants changed our everyday life. They announced if a woman visited a shrine, she will be burned alive inside the shrine. Women in Buner grieved that we used to visit shrines of Pir Baba, Foladi Baba, Dewana Baba but Taliban banned us from going there. Another respondent from Jamrud, Khyber Agency, FATA, added that we used to regularly visit Wali Baba, but then we heard about threats of attacks on the mazar. One day, women found a human skull in the *mazar*, which scared them to death and they stopped going there.

A respondent, from Bara, narrated that on the eve of the marriage ceremony of my uncle, my male cousins and neighbors arranged a musical night at our Hujra. When the news reached Taliban, they came swiftly and started firing at our Hujra. Luckily, there were no casualties but our joyous celebrations turned into fear and grief. The next morning, my father apologized for playing music and ensured that no music shall be played in future.

Summing up, narratives and case studies of women exhibit diverse responses to impact of radicalization on mobility, dress code, cultural activities and gender relations. However, they unanimously agreed that radicalization and VE adversely impact health and education, especially women's and children's. Women's responses to regulation of mobility and dress code range from internalizing and legitimizing to silent submission, condemnation and rejection. Some quit going out, others began wearing burqa, while some others justified the restrictions and regulations in the name of Islam or Pakhtunwali. Some ethnic minorities found refuge in covering faces to hide their identities. Some complained that militants limited their movement to the four walls of the house but military restricted it to one room. Some children and young women quit education forever, while others continued despite all odds.

⁹ Militancy-Hit Swat Artists Feel Neglected. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1243026>. March 02, 2016

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/512180>, Jan 03, 2010

¹¹ Mernissi, Fatima. 'Women, Saints and Sanctuaries'. In :*Signs*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Women and National Development: The Complexities of Change (Autumn, 1977), pp. 101-112, [The University of Chicago Press](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173083).
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173083>

Fear, insecurity, insufficient food, lack of medicines and health personnel resulted into mental and physical illnesses. As for as gender relations are concerned, men tended to be softer and caring in areas controlled by militants, but overall, patriarchy was strengthened and control of men over women increased in the name of protection and security.

Women's Responses to Displacement, Disappearances, Disability and Death

This chapter brings forth the adverse and long lasting effects of displacement, disabilities, disappearances and deaths of family members on women.

3.1 Displacement:

Around 1.8 million people have been displaced by radicalization and ensuing violence in Pakistan, most of them belonging to K-P and FATA.¹² Radicalization and Violent Extremism in the form of terrorism and control of militant groups in Swat and FATA, and military operation against the militants led millions of people to leave their homeland. Amongst our respondents, 55 women, from Swat and FATA, had left their ancestral homes due to violent extremism. Majority of them lived with host communities in Mardan, Pesahawar, Nowshera, Tank, Banu, Dera Ismail Khan, etc. They either lived in rented houses or with relatives and family friends. A very small faction, who could not find any other alternative, chose to live in IDP camps. Displacement was unanimously considered a painful experience by women. They had to leave behind houses full of things collected and cherished all over their lives, livestock and at times even senior member of their families who were not able to walk long distances. Most of them were of the view that displacement adversely impacted education of our children.

One of the respondents in Maidan, Lower Dir, reported that we left three cows and six goats in our house and moved to Takht Bhai. When we were leaving, a *fauji* told us not to leave our house empty, otherwise it will be occupied by Taliban. My husband's grand uncle and aunt stayed back to look after the house and cattle. But they also had to leave in a rush after a few days due to heavy bombardment and firing. When they returned, the cattle had gone missing and things were either stolen or broken in the house. Another woman added in that we sold our livestock at very low prices before leaving. Another lady said I was a maid at a private hospital and lost my job due to conflict and displacement. She could not get her job back after the restoration of peace. Riffat, a young woman in Dir, shared that I was expecting my first baby, when all of a sudden the army asked us to evacuate our houses. We along with children had to walk 14-15 hours in scorching sun to reach Thana, a relatively peaceful place. Soon she had a miscarriage.

Razia, from Kabal, Swat, said we sold many things at lower prices before leaving. We had a decent house, but in IDP camp, there was no water and electricity. Her husband lost his job as a manger in a marble factory in Swat. Another respondent shared that we had a fruit orchard,

¹² Pakistan IDP Figures Analysis. Report by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, July 2015, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/pakistan/figures-analysis>

but when we returned, we found that it was hit by a bomb and all the trees destroyed. We had shops too full of wheat, tea and oil, but when we returned we found them broken and robbed.

Zarina said life in IDP camp was miserable and restricted. We had to limit our activities due to the presence of unfamiliar and unrelated people in the surrounding and wear big *chadar*. We heard that our home, workshop and farms have been destroyed back in the village that further distressed us. She complained that the camp administration and staff at registration desk and distribution points were mostly rude to women.

Bibi from Bara said one of our major concerns in displacement had been the burial of our relatives. It is most of the time the last wish of our elders to be buried in ancestral graveyards, closer to the graves of relatives. When her grandfather died in Peshawar, the main road to reach Bara was inaccessible. Hence, they had to take a very cumbersome route to take the dead body for burial in Bara.

In a nutshell, displacement not only deprived women of the shelter of their homeland, but also exposed them to both physical and economic insecurity. Not only the experience was intrinsically difficult and painful, but it also carried extremely adverse effects on physical and mental health and education of women and children.

3.2 Disappearances:

Violent Extremism in the form of militancy and terrorism accounts for thousands of enforced disappearances in Baluchistan, Swat and FATA. Militant organizations picked people who mounted opposition to their authority. Similarly, LEAs also indiscriminately arrested people on little suspicions without due course of law, during military operation in the hunt against militants. LEAs even arrested relatives of the militants, and a large number of these people have gone missing.¹³ Fahmida, from Bara, reported that her two sons and husband are taken by the army and she does not know anything about their whereabouts. She said that her sons and husband are innocent. She does not have any means of livelihood after her male relatives have gone missing, she has to live on charities of her neighbours. She demanded of the government that her son and husband should be released, since they are innocent. In case they are guilty, the state punish them after due course of law.

Another respondent from Kanju, Swat, said that she has three daughters and only one son. Her son was a student of technical college, and a hope for the sisters and mothers that he will support them after completion of education. When Taliban took over control of almost all of Swat in 2008, military launched operation against them and indiscriminately arrested young men on little suspicions. Her son was arrested by army near Batkhila in 2009, and since then, she has no idea whether her son is alive or not.

Sabina's brother is also amongst the missing persons. Her father mostly remains quiet and shed tears after army took away her brother. Her mother too remains sick most of the time. Sabina has mobilized a group of female relatives of the missing persons. She shared that

¹³ Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan: UN Statement. <https://www.icj.org/enforced-disappearances-in-pakistan-un-statement/>

army insulted and baton charged the peaceful demonstration of women in Islamabad held for the recovery of missing person.

4.3 Disability:

A large number of people in Swat and FATA have incurred disabilities due to violent extremism and military operation. Shahana lost her leg when a mortar shell hit her house. She is mostly having body aches and headaches. She finds it really difficult to perform her domestic chores. She grieves for her daughters, who despite their young age have to assume the responsibility of looking after the house.

Alif Jana, from lower Dir, shared that her elder son lost his hands in an explosion. He was 11 years old when he found a toy bomb in the fields outside. He brought it home and was playing with it, when it exploded. His younger sister also incurred minor injuries. The boy has turned 18 now and has become very irritable. His mother said I used to do everything for him, from eating and drinking to cleaning and bathing. Gradually he has learned to take bath and clean himself on his own, but still needs to be fed by her.

3.4 Death: More than 30,000 civilians and security forces personnel have lost life, since 2001, to violent extremism.¹⁴ Families, especially female relatives, of the deceased not only suffer from immense pain and grief, but also poverty if the deceased was a breadwinner.

A respondent, aged 40, from Jamrud, FATA, shared that her husband lost his life in a bomb explosion in 2011. She has 5 daughters and a son, who was born after her husband's death. She was immediately faced with the issue of securing means of subsistence, as she had no one to support her financially. She began a small business at her home with the little compensation money she received from the government. She brings sweets, snacks, drinks, ladies' and children's clothes, from big cities at retail price and sells them at home. She related that I had not seen markets and cities before, but had to muster courage for the sake of her children. She earns enough to send all her children to school.

Safia's husband was killed in a bomb blast in Dera Ismail Khan in 2011. She was 20 years old at that time and had 2 children. After sometime, her in-laws forced her to marry younger brother of her late husband. She had two more children from this husband. She lamented that her husband discriminates her children from the first marriage. He does not work and is always in a bad mood. His mother always hurls taunts at her that my son does not like you, so I will bring him a bride of his choice. She lamented if I had been alone, I would have committed suicide, but thought of my children prevents me from taking drastic action.

Sakina's son was killed in Afghanistan last year. He joined Tehreek Taliban seven years back and went to *Jihad* in Afghanistan. She believes that *Jihad* is *farz*, a religious obligation. She said I am proud of my son and am very happy for him. God will bless me with Jannah, heaven, for the great sacrifice my son has made for the sake of religion. He was not fighting

¹⁴ Fatalities in Terrorist Violence. <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>

against Muslims, rather he fought against the infidels for the sake of his Afghan brethren. The infidels are killing and humiliating our Muslim brothers in Afghanistan.

Jameela, aged 24, from Swabi, worked with Polio team. Militants attack their van and she was killed along with her other colleagues. She had recently completed her bachelors and was the sole breadwinner of her family. She was the eldest in a family of 7 siblings. She also taught children at home to generate some extra money. A little before her death, she bought a cow to add to the meager income of her family. Her death has severely affected her mother's physical and mental health. She has become a heart patient and is on relaxant too.

Safia lost her son in the attack on Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar, in December 2014. Initially, she was in a great shock and had no idea what to do except grieving. She lost all interest in life, however, after some time she realized that she should struggle to make Pakistan a safer place for children. She is currently an active member of a forum of martyred children's parents who demand judicial inquiry of the attack on APS, so that failures of all relevant departments and institutions can be known to avoid such incidents in future.

Summing up, women's responses demonstrate that displacement was mostly a painful experience for women. It made them feel more vulnerable and helpless. In case of disappearance, female relatives not only suffer the pain of loss of their near and dear ones, but also face harassment by the community and LEAs. Disabilities further marginalize women, and in case of disabilities of a family member, women have to take care of them. Deaths of family members, especially bread winners plunge women into poverty, without any skills and knowledge to generate livelihood and support families. However, women do not always passively submit to their circumstances, rather daringly face the situation. They sustain their families against all odds and peacefully struggle for the recovery of their relatives and to make Pakistan a safer place for women and children.

PART II

SHARING WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO RADICALIZATION IN AFGHANISTAN



Research Design for Afghanistan:

Prolonged conflict in Afghanistan tends to be complex, and the general climate of instability hinders data collection. This research takes a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. For this research, a number of primary and secondary sources of data were utilized. Primary data was collected through focus group discussions, case studies and the key interviews with women affected by violence incurred by Non-governmental groups in fifteen provinces — Kabul, Nagarhar, Balkh, Herat, Bamyan, Daikundi, Parwan, Faryab, Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, Paktia, Lagman, Badakhshan and Kunduz. In each province, around 13 interviews were conducted with women who were directly or indirectly affected by radicalization. During data collection, 184 interviews were conducted targeting five main areas of violence that women faced due to violent extremist including sexual violence, disability, displacement, killing of a family member, and family of former fighter. Around 52 cases were interviewed where women had lost their husbands, 49 IDP women, 30 women who had a former fighter in their family and nine women who were sexually abused by the AOG's. Additionally, six in-depth case studies were collected in total, according to a set criterion of scenarios. The case study scenarios were: Woman Who has suffered sexual violence (sex-slavery) due to radicalization; Woman who has suffered physical violence (any disability); woman who has lost a family member to a violent extremist group; Woman whose husband is a former fighter; Woman who got displaced due to the conflict (IDPs) due to AOG violence.

Around nine focus group discussions were conducted with community elders, CSOs and women effected by radicalization.

Secondary data was collected through publically available reports and figures, as well as through data collected from institutions including UN agencies and government institutions. The sources of secondary data are noted throughout the report.

While collecting data for this study data collectors faced many challenges especially in terms of collecting data for sexual violence and families of former fighter's cases. It was very hard and crucial to interview women who had suffered sexual violence. Cultural norms restrict women from discussing such experiences with other people. The data collectors could identify many cases in this regard but often were denied the permission to speak to the respondent by the family members and also in many cases the victims themselves denied to discuss their experience with the data collectors. Security is another challenge especially when the data collectors tried to meet former fighter's families. One of the data collectors

was threatened by Taliban when she was conducting an interview with wife of a former fighter in village. As a result she had to stop the interview and leave the house immediately.

Women Who Lost Their Family Members

Radicalization in Afghanistan resulted in killing a lot of people and left financially dependent widows and orphans. It is estimated that since 7 October 2001 around 31,000 civilian have been killed and over 40,000 have been injured seriously including women and children.¹⁵ One of the respondents from Laghman mentioned that 19 women were killed only in Alingar district of Laghman province as a result of ongoing war.¹⁶ In year 2015 and 2016 there were more Taliban attacks and the casualties were serious and bloody.¹⁷ For example, Kunduz Province collapsed on 28 September 2015 and the city was taken by Taliban. The battle lasted for few months and resulted to a massacre where insurgents, military and civilian were killed and injured.¹⁸ Civilian in Kunduz once again suffered during an airstrike led by NATO. The bombardment killed 30 civilian and wounded 25 others among which most of the victims were children and women.¹⁹ Bloodshed on 7th August 2015 is also a bitter memory which shall not be forgotten by people in Kabul. Another explosion in Kabul created a big hole inside the ground and all the markets nearby were destroyed and people close to the incident disappeared. All the members of the nearby households got injured and the infrastructure of the whole area was damaged.²⁰ These are not the only examples, but there are continuous explosions, assassinations, bombings, firing, suicide attacks and military operations going on, which harm people and affect women directly or indirectly.

¹⁵ Neta C.Crawford, "Updates on the Human Cost of War for Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001 to mid-2016", Cost of War, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 29 July 2016, http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20in%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%20UPDATE_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁶ Individual Interview-Laghman-Loss of family members-03

¹⁷ Neta C.Crawford, "Updates on the Human Cost of War for Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001 to mid-2016", Cost of War, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 29 July 2016, http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20in%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%20UPDATE_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁸ "Afghanistan Security Situation", EASO Country of Origin Information Report, European Asylum support Office, January 2016, https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/EASO-COI-Afghanistan_Security_Situation-BZ0416001ENN_FV1.pdf.

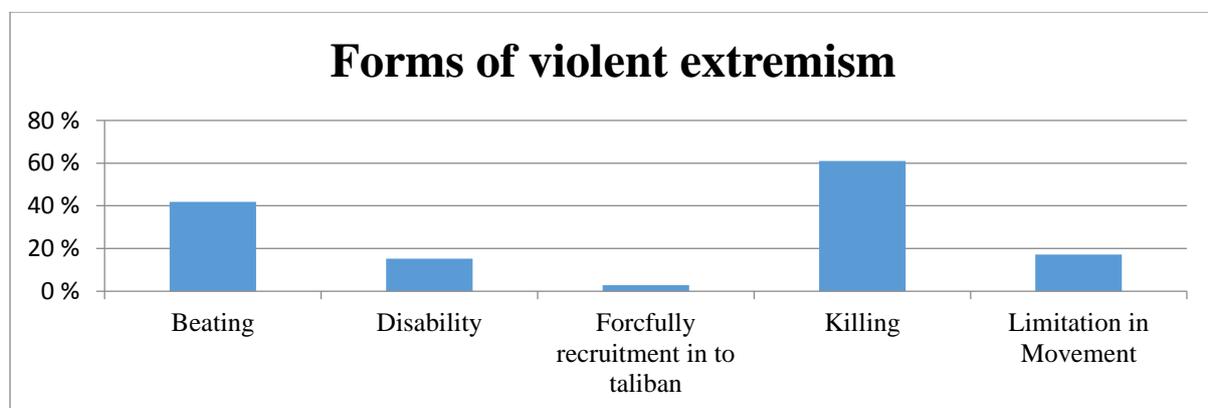
¹⁹ <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/03/11/2016/30-Afghan-civilians-killed-in-Kunduz-NATO-airstrike-officials>

²⁰ "Afghanistan Security Situation", EASO Country of Origin Information Report, European Asylum support Office, January 2016, https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/EASO-COI-Afghanistan_Security_Situation-BZ0416001ENN_FV1.pdf.

Decades of war and conflict has affected Afghan civilians among which women and children are the most vulnerable. It is reported that mental disorders has affected more women and disabled, which can be attributed to consequences of conflict and violent extremism.²¹

During this study respondents mentioned a number of ways in which radicalization has affected their life. Around 70% of the respondents mentioned that they have lost their relatives due to radicalizations. However it is worth mentioning that only 28% of the total target cases were interviewed for this category of women who had lost their family members. This indicates that a significant number of households in Afghanistan have suffered loss of their family members. Furthermore, when the respondents were asked about forms of violent extremisms appearing in their provinces, the most frequent answer was “Killing”. Some of them mentioned that the violent extremist groups also beat people quite often.

Some of the respondent mentioned that they lost their husbands; Taliban killed their husbands and survival became very difficult for the whole families both emotionally and financially. Suddenly there was no one in the family to earn money and all the financial responsibilities came to these women. Without any skills they went out for in search of work and faced a lot of hardships. Survival became challenging for the whole family in general and for these women in particular. Violent extremism has also very badly affected women’s health, employment, movement and education.



The respondents asserted that loss of the family members due to violent extremism has badly influenced their family lives. Women who have lost their husbands generally faced economic problems and their children couldn’t attend schools. During this study a lot of widows stated that they are bound to take the economic responsibility of their families and in this struggle

²¹ Ghulam Dastagir Sayed, “Mental Health in Afghanistan: Burden, challenges and way forward”, The international Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Washington, DC, August 2011, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/HEALTHNUTRITIONANDPOPULATION/Resources/281627-1095698140167/MHinAfghanistan.pdf>.

they ended up taking jobs like, cleaning dishes, laundry and washing cars for other people to feed their families. Children were victims as well, during an age where they should have been in schools, were going for hard labor. Some of them had to work on streets in order to make the ends meet. Very few women take up jobs like tailoring, handicrafts and working on farms for livelihood. Consequently, illiteracy or lack of education is a reason of less job opportunities for such children in future.

Lack of health and education services are the other side effects of conflict²². Almost all respondents confirmed that the loss of their family members has negatively affected health of their family members. Most of the women stated that stress due to violent extremism has led to depression and other mental illness. Nightmares are quite common among children.

Army and civilians are not the only victims of war. War and violent extremism resulted to death and displacement of many doctors and teachers as well as destruction of infrastructures like schools and clinics.²³ These factors made health and education services more limited. The respondents almost in all of the provinces mentioned killing of vaccinators. Limitation in access to education for girls during war becomes far more difficult than boys.²⁴ The respondents in Badakhshan, Bamyán and Daikundi stated that school attendance deteriorates during conflict and this is more serious for girl students. The respondent also added that losing male members of the family is a direct factor hindering children in general and girls in particular to attend the schools.

The shared experiences by the women who had lost their family members were really heartbreaking. A widow in Kandahar lost her second husband also due to radicalization and faced violence after both of her husbands were killed. When she lost her first husband, her children were very young and she had nowhere to go and also she was facing financial problems. Unwillingly, she had to marry her younger brother in law to have a shelter and take care of her children. After a while, she lost her second husband also due to this violent

²² Becky Carter, "Women and Violent Extremism", Helpdesk Research Report, March 2013, <http://docplayer.net/41950779-Women-and-violent-extremism.html>.

²³ Marie S. Huber and Maurits Rade, "The Cost of Conflict and Violent Extremism in Afghanistan: An estimation of the economic and financial cost of ongoing conflict and violent extremism", EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, August 2015, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Costs-of-Violent-Extremism.pdf>.

²⁴ *ibid*

extremism and now the widow is again facing hardships to provide sustenance to her young children.²⁵

One of the respondent's from Helmand mentioned that she lost her husband during war. She narrates that her husband was working with national army and one day Taliban showed up in their house. They took her husband with themselves and after four days put his body in front of the house. Now they face financial problems because they are 10 member in family. After her husband got killed, she had to earn money and take all the responsibility of her family. She further said, it is difficult for a woman to suffer that kind of situation. Now her children have grown up and they have started working. However, she has not stopped working and is still working in a tailors shop. Now they have a better life in terms of financial stability but they are broken emotionally even now.²⁶

Radicalized groups not only threaten life of male members of the community but also prosecute women by manipulating religious ideas. Women get killed in case of adultery and if found outside of their house not dressed properly. Heinous crimes like lashing and stoning a women to death is penalty for such cases and this was decreed as a rule of law especially in Taliban regime.²⁷ Some of the respondents in Bamyan, Faryab, Herat, Kandahar and Kunduz confirmed that they have observed or heard news related to women's stoning to death by radical groups for not following religion properly and committing adultery.

According to United Nation Population Fund estimation, each year around 5000 women and girls have been killed as a consequence of honor killing. Stoning women to death has always been associated with Islamic teachings, however, stoning to death is nowhere mentioned in the holy Quran and it is said to be un-Islamic concept.²⁸ In Afghanistan, it is an act of radicalized groups to terrify people and practice extremism to take control over people and oppress them all in general and women in particular.

Woman who lost family: Personal Story

Bobo Gul mentioned that she lost her husband, brother and nephew due to radicalization. Taliban killed all of them in one go. Her husband was a shopkeeper and one day a group of

²⁵ Individual Interview-Kandahar- Loss of family members -02

²⁶ Individual Interview-Helmand- Loss of family members -01

²⁷ "UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the international Protection Needs of Asylum-seekers from Afghanistan", UNHCR, 19 April 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/570f96564.pdf>.

²⁸ Shaina Greiff, "No Justice in Justification: Violence against women in the name of culture, religion and tradition", the global campaign to stop killing and stoning women and women living under Muslim laws, March 2010, http://www.wluml.org/sites/wluml.org/files/SKSW%20Policy%20Briefing%20Series%201_No%20Justice%20in%20Justifications_Greiff.pdf.

Taliban came to his shop and asked him to close the shop. To which her husband disagreed and they killed her husband. She further said that after death of her husband and brother, the whole family faced a lot of problems, like they couldn't go out of their house frequently and financial condition also deteriorated. Her brother's family also started living with them in the same house which is really small for all these people. Her elder son who has taken all the responsibilities of both the families searched for a job but he couldn't find it. She said it is very difficult, but we are trying to manage because we have no other way to survive.

Women Who Got Disabled

Physical disability is another impact of radicalization which affected a lot of women. Violent Extremism has left a lot of people physically challenged in Afghanistan. In suicide attacks and explosions carried out under the influence of radical ideas, people get injuries and some of them lose their limbs, hands, eyes, ears and other parts which makes their survival difficult. In some cases, respondents mentioned that the male members (bread earning members) lost their body parts due to VE and the economic responsibility of the whole family came to their shoulders, which was challenging for them at every point of time. The female members of the family had to earn money to keep their families going but they had no education and skills to work. Which affected their financial condition and children's education and health. All of the respondents suggested that the government should help such women by establishing literacy classes and skill training courses for them so they can make their lives better.

Estimation by UNAMA, suggested that during 2009 to 2015 there were 40,900 injured people and many of these injuries lead to amputation.²⁹ After getting injured victims need medical care and in severe cases need follow up treatment. Frequently, referring to the hospital is both time consuming and costly. Governmental hospitals in some conditions provide free medical care for war casualties but it doesn't cover the whole expenses and it has to be borne by the patient him/herself. In some cases, the treatment is not possible inside the country and the patients have to travel to foreign countries. Considering high cost of visa, communication facilities and room for stay, it is very expensive especially for the families whose financial condition is not sound. Furthermore, major disabilities like limb amputation and losing eyesight or hearing power can render the victim jobless forever. Most of these victims can't go back to their job or can't work with the same performance, which affects the financial condition of the families, especially in those cases where the victims were sole bread earners.³⁰

²⁹ Neta C. Crawford, "Updates on the Human Cost of War for Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001 to mid-2016", Cost of War, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 29 July 2016, http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20in%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%20UPDATE_FINAL.pdf.

³⁰ Marie S. Huber and Maurits Rade, "The Cost of Conflict and Violent Extremism in Afghanistan: An estimation of the economic and financial cost of ongoing conflict and violent extremism", EQUALITY for Peace and

Financial constraints are not the only challenges for disabled victims but demoralizing effect of the injuries develop a different kinds of mental disorders among these patients. Disabled women are more vulnerable and prone to mental disorders and are more likely to go into depression.³¹ So apart from the economic loss, physical disability highly affects health of women.

One of the respondents in Bamyan was shot in her head and got injured during Taliban regime. She stated that she has some chronic health issues for which she has to visit the doctor quite frequently. She loses her body balance and consciousness and cannot hear anything for a long time after each shock.³²

One respondent in Bamyan had lost her eye during the conflict and that hampers her day to day life. This respondent has also lost her husband due to radicalization and is living with her two children. She has to work in order to take care of her children and manage the family. Disability is the main barrier for her to manage the family affairs. Also, physical disability and loss of husband has affected her mental health.³³ In another case the respondent had lost hearing power in one of the blasts. For these women it is very difficult to manage their life and there is no access to good doctors who can help them. Such victims of radicalization face a lot of problems in their day to day life. A large number of Afghans are suffering from disabilities. Apart from the injuries and disabilities that are the direct result of radicalization, there are many children in Afghanistan who were infected with polio and got paralyzed due to lack of health services and vaccination during war. Afghanistan is one of the very few countries where polio exists and the reason is prolonged war, where health services remained limited.

A respondent narrated that during militant operations in Kunduz, a bomb struck her house and she got severely injured and also lost her eyesight. Now, it is very difficult for her to take care of the family. She had also lost her young son very recently in a firing. After that incident, any time the family hears firing sounds, they start crying and yelling and fear death. They are scared that they may face another disability or martyr in their home.

Democracy, August 2015, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Costs-of-Violent-Extremism.pdf>.

³¹ Ghulam Dastagir Sayed, "Mental Health in Afghanistan: Burden, challenges and way forward", The international Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Washington, DC, August 2011, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/HEALTHNUTRITIONANDPOPULATION/Resources/281627-1095698140167/MHinAfghanistan.pdf>.

³² Individual Interview-Bamyan-disabled-04

³³ Individual Interview-Bamyan-disabled-06

Disability among women has more side effects than men. Women are usually more sensitive and develop more serious forms of mental distress. Furthermore, female handicaps are more endangered victims in the society as they become marginalized and abandoned by the society. As there is less chance of marriage for them and usually are considered as a burden on families.³⁴

Physical Violence: Personal Story

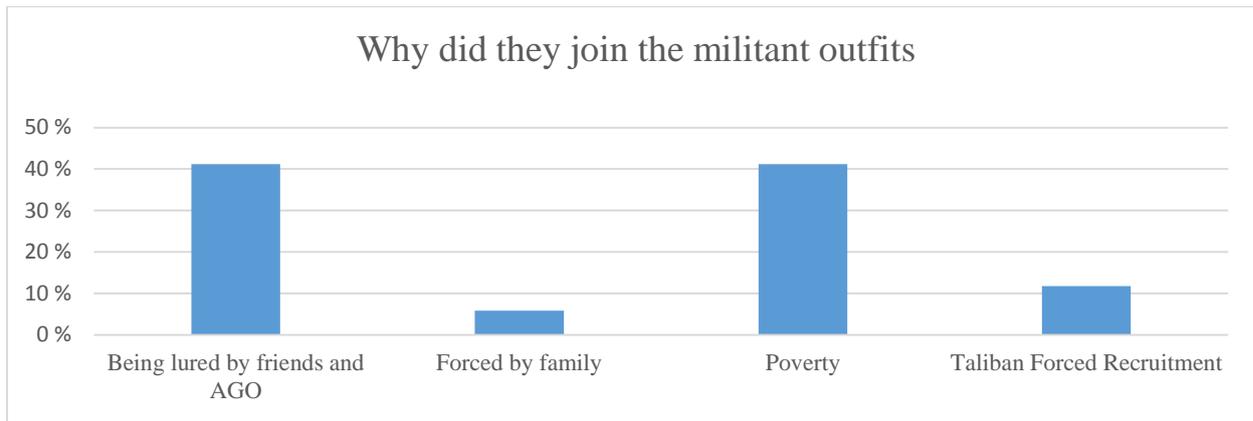
Reza Gul narrates her story of physical violence. During first collapse of Kunduz on 2015, one of the militant groups attacked her area and during the bombard her house was destroyed. A bomb fell on her roof top and the whole house was destroyed. She also got injured and Shrapnel hit on her eyes. Her eyes were bleeding and her family took her to hospital in Kunduz city, where after giving some medicine doctors referred her to the hospital located in Takhar province. When they reached there, doctors said, it is too late to save her eyes and eyesight. The respondent further mentioned, she lost her eyes in that incident and life is very difficult for her without eyes. She also added that it is not only me who suffered violence during war but there are other hundreds of kids who got killed.

³⁴ Jean-Francois Trani and Parul Bakhshi, "Vulnerability and Mental Health in Afghnaistan: Looking beyond war exposure", Brown School Faculty Publication, 2013, http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=brown_facpubs

Women whose family members were former fighter

Families who have former fighter family members face a lot of challenges in terms of security and economy. Around 40% of the respondents mentioned that poverty and influence by friends has been the main reasons for youngsters to join extremist groups. A very few percentage believed that Taliban recruit members forcefully.

In one of the cases respondent mentioned that Taliban compelled one of her family members to join their group and when he joined them, they killed him.³⁵ Losing a family member is always difficult to deal with and it has badly affected the family both emotionally and economically. There is always a security threat to the families of former fighters from these extremist groups. Women of the family cannot go outside of the house due to security reasons and also the behavior of other male members of the family becomes very strict towards women.



One of the respondent in Uruzgan mentioned that her husband was lured by some his friends who were members of an extremist group. They promised him to give him a lot of money if he joins their group. She further narrates that her family was financially very weak and since they offered money, he joined their group. After joining Taliban, the financial conditions of the family worsened as they were not paying him enough money. Besides he could not also continue terroristic attacks as he found that very cruel and un-Islamic. Finally he stopped working with them.³⁶ Another respondent in Uruzgan cited that history sheeters join Taliban

³⁵ Individual Interview-Balkh-Former Fighter-09

³⁶ Individual Interview-Uruzgan-Former Fighter-10

because they have no place among people in the community. They join extremist groups for their own security.³⁷

Extremist groups use different tactics to increase the recruitment. During Kunduz collapse, it was reported that teenagers joined insurgent groups as they are very emotional, hence easy targets for radicalization.³⁸ Some of the respondents in Parwan mentioned that Taliban usually target people in mosques by giving sermons on Jihad during prayers and make people emotional about the religion.

Most of the respondents mentioned that that condition of the families of the former fighters is not good in terms of security and economy. The government is not helping them and they have to hide themselves because they receive threats from extremist groups. A respondent in Parwan provinces stated that due to her husband's background of working with Taliban now everyone has stopped relationships with them and on the other hand government is not helping them.³⁹

A woman whose husband was previously working with Taliban stated after leaving that radicalized group now all the family members are facing threats from Taliban. They have also burnt all the family photo so Taliban can't find track of other relatives through photos.⁴⁰ In contrast, a respondent in Helmand claimed that joining Taliban is very normal in their place and now her husband after leaving Taliban is facing no threat and easily had joined back the community.⁴¹

In Herat one of the respondents stated that her uncle was forcefully recruited by an extremist group, on the way when he was going to Iran. He was forced to join them and fight for them. After a while he lost his hands while fighting for these extremist groups. After that he couldn't fight and came back home. Now he is handicapped and cannot work. He is a burden on meager resources of the family and the female relatives have to look after him apart from taking care of domestic chores.⁴²

One of the respondents mentioned that her husband was working with Taliban earlier and then he left and joined peace process. Now this man has no job and that can compel him to go back to join Taliban. Another respondent in Kunduz shared the same story and stated that her

³⁷ Individual Interview-Uruzgan-Former Fighter-07

³⁸ "Afghanistan Security Situation", EASO Country of Origin Information Report, European Asylum support Office, January 2016, https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/EASO-COI-Afghanistan_Security_Situation-BZ0416001ENN_FV1.pdf.

³⁹ Individual Interview-Parwan-Former Fighter-09

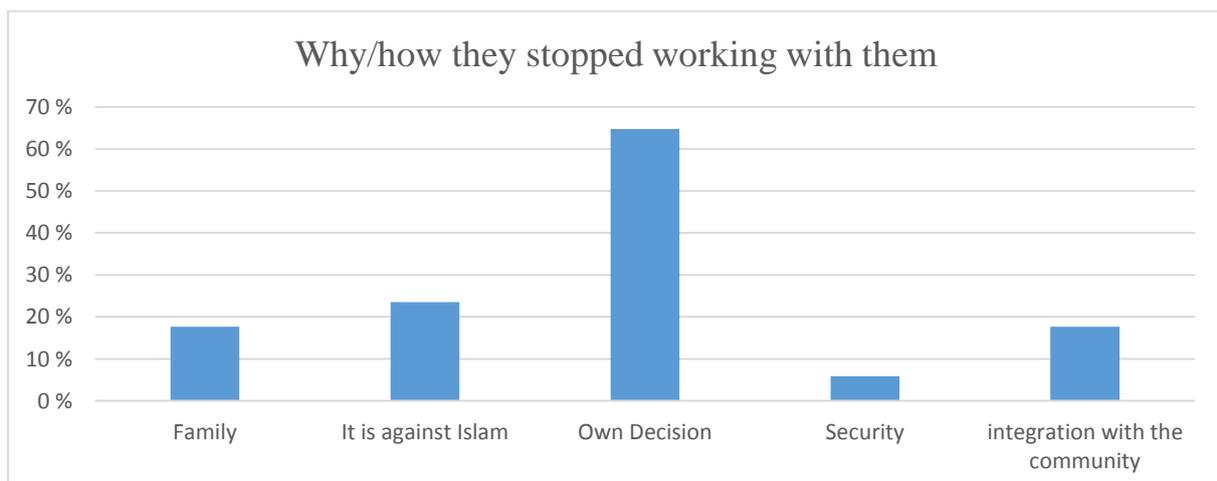
⁴⁰ Individual Interview-Uruzgan-Former Fighter-11

⁴¹ Individual Interview-Helmand-Former Fighter-09

⁴² Individual Interview-Herat-Former Fighter-10

husband was working with Taliban because they had financial problems and her husband joined Taliban in order to get some money. She further mentioned that all her relatives were not happy with him and they forced him to join peace process. Now her husband is not working with Taliban but he does not have job to manage the family. These respondents recommended that the government should create job opportunities for such people who join peace process in order to prevent them from going back to violent extremist groups. Though, women have been mostly excluded from peace processes and not recognized as agents of peace, yet they are aware that they can play important role in peace process as mothers, wives and sisters. They can always prevent men from joining these groups. If women are educated they can raise their children in good way and encourage their children to go for higher education instead of joining any extremist groups and these women can also talk to their husbands about peace and say that faith is not good thing.

While asking the main reasons for leaving the extremist groups, majority of the respondents mentioned that their former fighter family members themselves decided to leave the group and there was no external compulsion. It can be attributed to the fact that they came to know about the atrocities of the insurgents after a while. Taliban recruit members and convince them that they are fighting for Islam. After sometime these members realize that whatever Taliban is doing is completely un-Islamic. A respondent in Parwan stated that her husband left Taliban only because he realized that whatever they are doing is immoral and unethical. She further mentioned that Taliban forcefully take beautiful women and kill their husbands.⁴³ In some cases family also plays a main role in leaving Taliban.



⁴³ Individual Interview-Parwan-Former Fighter-09

Women Who Got Internally Displaced (Women IDPs)

Radicalization in the form of terrorism and control of, and infighting between, militants groups increased forced migration all across Afghanistan. Whole families migrated from one place to another where they faced a lot of problem in terms of educating their children and jobs. Most of the migrated children couldn't go to school and grew up without education. These violent extremist groups didn't allow women to go out of their homes; in case a woman was found out of her home she was beaten on the streets. Conflict in Afghanistan has resulted in both, internal and external displacements. During Taliban regime, external migration was the dominant form of displacement while after transitional government run by Hamid Karzai, external migration rate came down and the trend for internal migration was elevated. The reason for such internal displacement was mainly random wars in the provinces and remote areas.⁴⁴ UNHCR has estimated that there were around 1 million internally displaced individuals inside Afghanistan⁴⁵ among which 117,976 people were reported to be displaced newly in first four month of January 2016.⁴⁶ 2016 was a year of conflicts for Afghanistan especially in provinces such as Baghlan, Kunduz, Uruzgan, Helmand, Laghman and Faryab. A lot of people got killed, injured, displaced and homeless as a result of conflict led by insurgents.

Women who forcefully migrated to another places along with their families faced a lot of economic and social problems. After migrating to different places, they had no houses to live and no enough budget to rent a house for the family. They lost their houses, farm lands, and

⁴⁴ Emily Winterbotham et al., "Wartime Suffering: Patterns of violation in Afghanistan", Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, October 2011, <http://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/1123E-Legacies-of-Conflict-Wartime-Suffering-2011.pdf>.

⁴⁵ UNHCR Doubles Grant for Registered Afghan Refugees Opting to Return to Afghanistan[Press release], UNHCR, 2016, <http://unhcrpk.org/unhcr-doubles-grant-for-registered-afghan-refugees-opting-to-return-to-afghanistan/>

⁴⁶ "Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements", United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 15 May 2016, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/afg_conflict_idps_2016_jan_apr_s_napshot_20160515.pdf

job and did not even had food to eat. Some of their family members were seriously injured during the war and there was no access to doctors to treat the injured people. The education of their children suffered as they couldn't afford to send their children to schools in new places. They lost their properties and became financially weak. It also had its impact on women's health and their children health.

In Bamyán, one of the respondents mentioned that she lost her husband due to radicalization in the form of militancy, and no one was there to take care of her family. They were in bad economic situation and a few relatives helped her to raise her son. When the son grew up a little, he started working as a laborer to take care of the family. At very young age children have to take the economic responsibilities of their families and lose the opportunity to go to school. These orphan children who have lost their fathers to VE are more susceptible to join violent extremist groups owing to poverty and illiteracy. Women who have lost their husbands or any other family members are also effected in terms of their health, both mental and physical.⁴⁷

One of the respondents in Herat mentioned that one night Taliban broke into their house and killed her husband. They forced the family not to make any noise and threatened them of raping the women. After that incident the whole family migrated to another place and lost everything including house, farmland and economic stability. This also effected the health of the family and children couldn't continue their education due to financial instability.⁴⁸

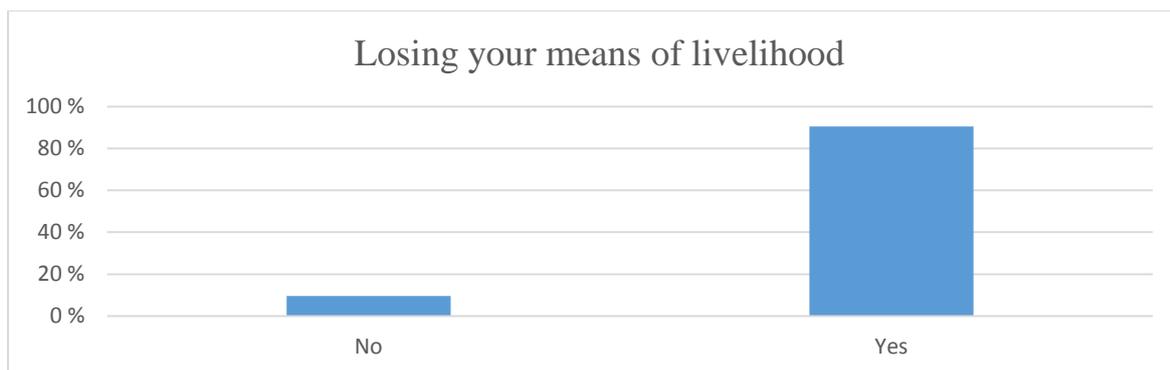
In another case of Herat, the respondent, who is a young girl lost her parents in the conflict. She has other young siblings and now she is alone taking care of her young sisters and brothers. She couldn't continue her education because she has to earn money and run the family. She is too young to take this responsibility of managing a household and handling all her siblings.⁴⁹

When the IDP respondents were asked if they have lost their properties, around 90% of them stated that they have lost their property and assets like land, house and animals. Some of them mentioned that they have their own houses, farms and other means of livelihood in their original places but after moving to a new place they have to pay rent for the house and work in other's farms.

⁴⁷ Individual Interview-Bamyán- IDP-07

⁴⁸ Individual Interview-Herat- IDP-09

⁴⁹ Individual Interview-Herat- IDP-08



Apart from financial problems, IDPs also faced a lot of problems in raising their children in new places. They couldn't take care of their children's health, education and nutrition. Respondents in Badakhshan stressed that due to intense war male member of their family were killed. They couldn't carry their children's educational documents with them when they migrated and children couldn't join any schools after that. It was also mentioned that due to financial problems children were forced to leave school and take financial responsibility of the family. During displacement, health among both children and women deteriorated drastically. Sudden invasion of IDP to a new area highly affects distribution of civil service and create shortages and limitation in access to resources and services for both the IDPs and the main residents.⁵⁰ Displacement further leads to insecurity, sexual and gender-based harassment, stress and mental disorder, child mortality and poor maternal health, low level of hygiene and unemployment.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Chiara Altare, "The burden of armed conflict: a public health approach," Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters Presentation for the Microcon Conference, Brighton, 30 June 2011.

⁵¹ Marie S. Huber and Maurits Rade, "The Cost of Conflict and Violent Extremism in Afghanistan: An estimation of the economic and financial cost of ongoing conflict and violent extremism", EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, August 2015, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Costs-of-Violent-Extremism.pdf>.

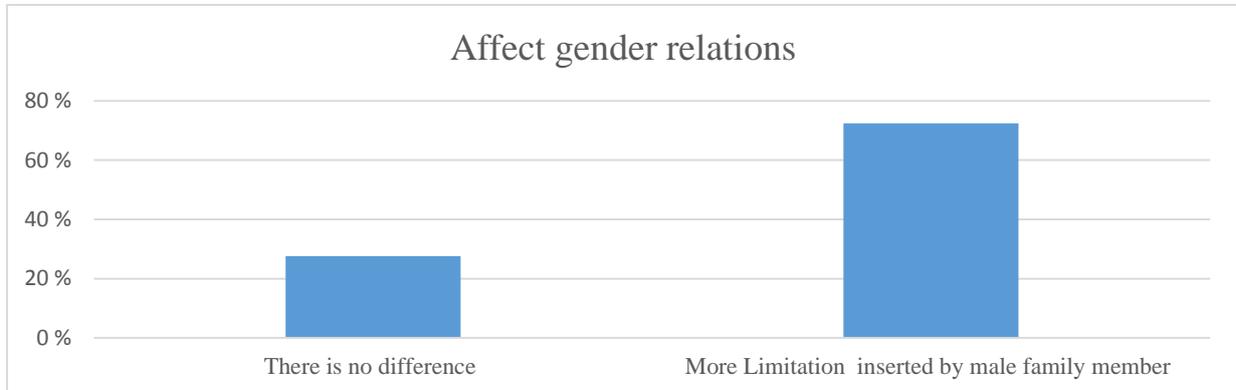
Women who faced sexual violence

Women in Afghanistan faced all types of violence due to radicalization and sexual violence is the most brutal among all of them. Extremist groups were forcing young girls to get married to them. They were lashing and beating women in public in case found out of their homes. In some areas the extremist groups did not allow the girls to go to school. Women were beaten up and stoned if they were not following the proper dress code (*Chadr*) or if women were going outside of the houses for work. Especially during Taliban era, women were threatened and even beaten up if they were wearing clothes other than Chadari (Covering from head to toe). Women had to wear the dresses approved by the radicalized groups to avoid threats from them. Rape and forced marriages happened frequently in most of the areas. It was also recorded in order to prevent rapes families would arrange marriages of their daughters with the members of these violent extremist groups.⁵² Also, women were not allowed to go to hospitals which badly affected the health of both women and children. Mental health problems increased highly among women.

Around 72 % of the respondent's believed that conflict has affected the gender relationship with their male members in the family. Violence perpetrated by extremists inculcates a kind of non-violent extremism that manifests into strengthening control of male members of the family over women. Men become very cautious about women's movement, job and education. The respondents stated that male members of the family were limiting movement of women in order to protect them from violent extremism. This movement limitation was very serious especially for women who had faced any kind of sexual violence. However, it was not limited only to sexual violence cases but other female members of the family were also restrained from going out in order to avoid repetition of the mishaps caused by these extremist groups. In this scenario, it was difficult for women to get their children vaccinated and take care of their health. In many cases, violent extremist groups killed male members of the families and there was no one to earn the living for these families. Also, women of these families were not allowed to go out for work and to earn money for livelihood. These things very badly affected the family life, financial condition, health and education of the children.

⁵² Emily Winterbotham et al., "Wartime Suffering: Patterns of violation in Afghanistan", Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, October 2011, <http://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/1123E-Legacies-of-Conflict-Wartime-Suffering-2011.pdf>

In other incidences where women couldn't deal with these limitation left the place and migrated to another places. They lost all their farm lands, houses, animals and other means of livelihood and that again affected their financial condition.



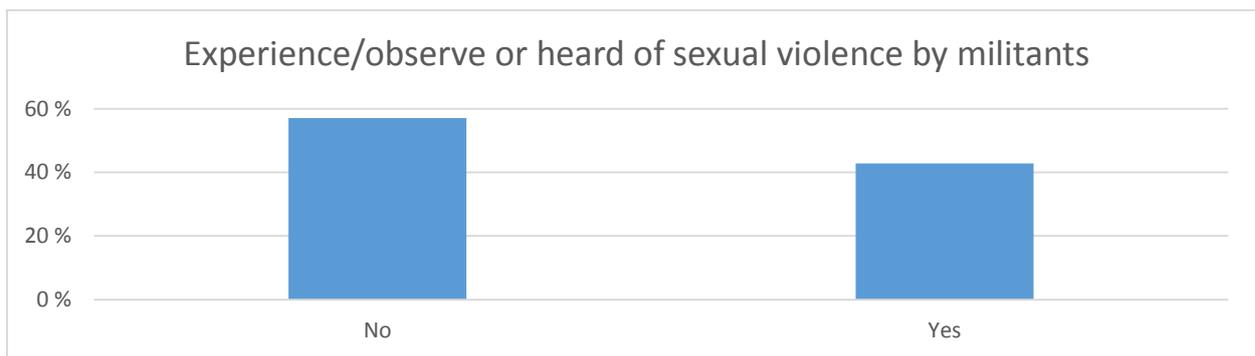
Victims of sexual violence are very sensitive and generally suffer mental disorders like depression. When the respondents of sexual violence were asked if they have tried to reintegrate with society, they replied when they tried to reintegrate they faced a lot of cultural problems. Around 91% stated that the sexual violence incidents have affected their interaction with the family and other relatives negatively and 89% mentioned that they faced problems in communication with the people in their community.

In one case of Balkh, the respondent told us that her girl was raped by Taliban and later she killed herself. This incident has badly affected mental health of the respondent (mother of the girl) as well as the other siblings. The family feared that Taliban can again rape their other children, so they migrated to another place to save their life.

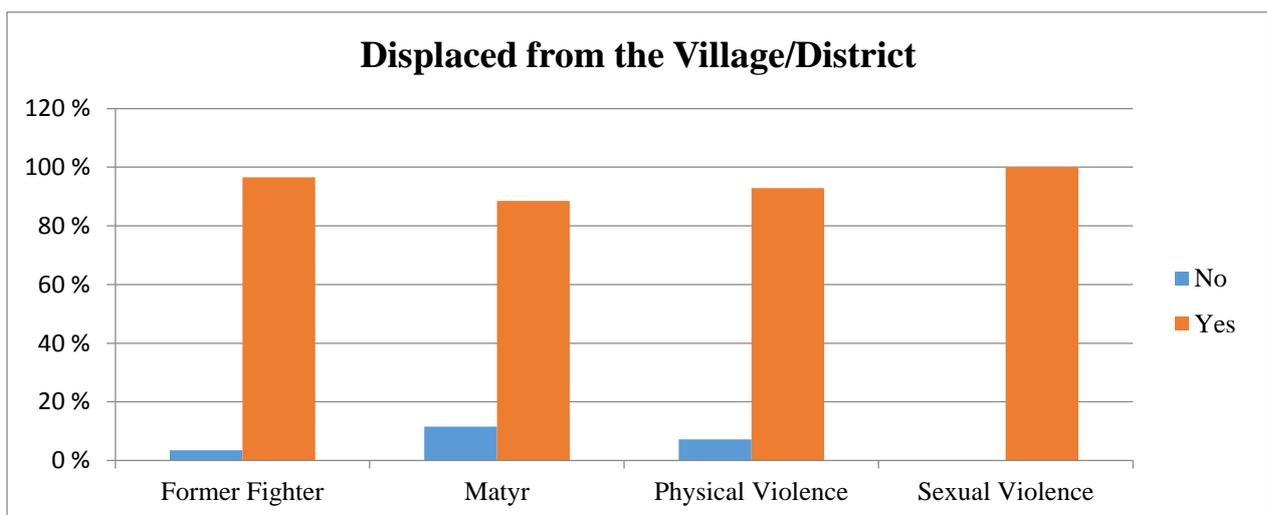
Another case the respondent from Helmand mentioned that her sister was raped by the extremist groups. She further mentions that one night while all the family members were sleeping, a group of Taliban broke into their house and started searching the whole house. They looted the whole house and raped her sister. They also threatened their father and asked him to leave the place. They had to leave their place and migrate to a different place which was not known to them. Now her sister is suffering from serious depression. They try to convince her to go to schools but it seems impossible to them to see her getting back to normal life. The respondent further elaborates that in afghan culture if a girl is raped, no one will ever marry her. People will taunt her for the entire life which will keep haunting her and will keep the incident alive in her eyes forever.⁵³

⁵³ Individual interview-Helmand-Sexual Violence-07

One of the respondents mentioned that Taliban did not allow her to go outside of the house for work. She was physically challenged and had also lost her husband during war. So she had to work to earn money for her children. She struggled a lot with Taliban because they were not letting her go out for work. Taliban lashed her when she was going outside of her house. Also, people in the community were talking about her in a negative way like, why she needs to work outside the house and why she is wearing such of clothes which is not accepted by Taliban. However, she did not care about people and worked hard. She just wanted to educate her children so they will have a better life in the future.



It is very sad to know that most of the families of those women who faced sexual violence had to leave their places and migrate due to cultural and societal challenges. In the table given, it was found that displacement has happened in most of the cases regardless of which type of violence. Most of the respondents mentioned that they had to leave their place due to violent extremism. However the highest rate of displacement has happened in the families in which women suffered sexual violence. All of women who had suffered sexual violence had to leave their place because of cultural norms.



Sexual violence: Personal Story

While narrating her story, Zahra mentioned “She was 14 years old when she was raped continuously for two months by Taliban. Her school was far from the house and she used to walk to school. It was a regular day when she was going to the school, a car stopped in front of her. A few men came out of the car and forcefully pushed her into the car. Inside the car, they started beating her. Zara was crying and screaming but there was no one to listen to her cries. In all this struggle she fainted and after many hours when she opened her eyes it was a new world. She was in a different house which was far away from her house and from the central city. The place belonged to Taliban and Government couldn’t even reach there.

Zahra’s father was not alive and she was living with her mother and grandmother. So there was no one who could search for her and find her. When her grandmother heard about all this, she got a severe heart attack became paralyzed and later she died.

She further mentioned “Taliban kept her for two months and were raping her every day during that period. She was heartbroken and couldn’t share her experience of living with Taliban. Zahra doesn’t even feel like wearing new clothes and going somewhere. She feels unsafe everywhere as there is no one to support her. She is afraid of going out of the house thinking that the incident might happen again to her. All this experience has affected her health and she takes a lot of medicines for the sicknesses. Zahra has tried many times to reintegrate with the society and continue her normal life but she has always faced a lot of problems. People do not behave nicely with her and even with her mother. They were forced to migrate from their village to the central city of Herat. Even in the new place she tries to adjust with the people but it is difficult for her. She finishes her story by saying “When I sleep every day, I have terrible nightmares. I tried to kill myself several times but couldn’t do that. Now I am just waiting for death to come.”

Conclusion and Recommendations

Radicalization, in the form of Violent Extremism, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, results into reinforcement of patriarchy and feminization of poverty. Fear, insecurity, loss of lives, displacement and destruction of institutions, private and public property enhances vulnerabilities of women, pushing them farther ahead to the margins. Women associate radicalization and violent extremism with explosions, use of heavy weapons, suicide bombing, target killing, enforced disappearances, ban on cultural activities and all sources of entertainment; discrimination on the basis of religion, sect, ethnicity and gender.

Restrictions on mobility prevent women from going to schools, hospitals, shrines and even relatives' homes. Shuttlecock *burqa* has been imposed on women that prevented them from fetching water, gathering fuel and work in fields, vital economic activities performed by women. Displacement also incurred physical and financial losses. Loss of jobs, destruction of crops and cattle plunged displaced families into poverty. Unskilled and illiterate women found themselves in alien places looking for jobs or asking for charities. It has adversely affected physical and mental health of women. Incidence of anxiety, depression, loss of appetite, malnutrition, miscarriages, high blood pressure and heart diseases have tremendously increased amongst women.

Women with disabilities become more vulnerable and marginalized; while disabilities of family members increases burden of care and domestic work, since providing care to sick, old and children is women's responsibility. Explosions, target killing, military operations and drone attacks have left a large number of women widowed and children orphaned. They live in poverty and can't even send their children to schools. Some women have taken up menial jobs which does not provide for the needs of their families. To supplement meager family income, their children have also taken up menial jobs. Female relatives of militants are either harassed by security forces or ostracized by people in the surrounding.

Women in Pakistan and Afghanistan share a common enemy of Radicalization in the form of Violent Extremism and have been facing almost similar adverse effects. Since, both countries share historical, cultural and geographical ties, conflict and violence in one country always spill over across the border to the other. Lack of trust between the two nations further exacerbates the fragile peace and security situation. It is need of the hour that women on both sides of the border unite against their common enemy and build bridges for peace.

Since, women suffer dire consequences of Radicalization and Violent Extremism by virtue of being women, relative of victims or relative of militants. Still, they are excluded from decision making at all levels and stages concerning peacebuilding and de-radicalization. On the basis of women's experiences and perspective, it is recommended:

- 1. Recognition of women as agents of peace and involving them in peace building:** It is recommended to involve women in countering violent extremism and radicalization. Women can encourage their children to go for education and work for peace building rather than joining any of the militant groups. Women can also talk to

their husbands and convince them to live with the families instead of joining any groups and can encourage them to take part in peace process and restraint them from joining any extremist group. As mothers they can teach their children the negative impact of joining any extremist group, hence can prevent them from joining any.

Also, Women's representation in official peace processes appears critical to the sustainability of peace agreements. This is because there are capable women who possess a wealth of knowledge and perspectives acquired through their efforts in peace processes at the grassroots. It is also important that the needs of women and their perspectives are integrated into peace agreements. While international legal instruments, civil society organizations and national governments have made some commitments to increase women's participation, there is a lot more that needs to be done to confront the challenges that hinder women's effective participation at the negotiating table.

- 2. Literacy classes for women:** In order to involve women in countering violent extremism, both Pakistan and Afghanistan government should create opportunity for women to receive education in order to get involved in the peace process. Literacy classes should be arranged for women in order to give them information and to raise their awareness on peace building. If women are educated they can raise their children in a way that encourages children to go for higher education instead of joining any extremist groups. Job opportunities should be created for them to work in governmental offices where they can take part in the peace process. Also women should be involved in decision making processes to be more impactful in the society at large and should work in high positions in governmental offices in order to influence a larger group.

Effective Implementation of National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan: In order to address the impact of war on women, the UN Security Council adopted the Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. This document highlights role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peace processes. Put simply, UNSCR 1325 recommends specific actions to ensure gender equality in the security sector for member states, as well as for parties to a conflict and it aims to increase the role of women in peace-processes, reducing the likelihood of conflict. Afghan Government should allocate budget to each ministry in order to implement the objectives of UNSCR 1325. In all the ministries positions should be specifically allocated to women in order to involve them in decision making and enhance women's participation at the policy level.

- 3. Development and implement National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in Pakistan:** Government of Pakistan should develop an action plan on UNSCR in order to ensure equal participation and full involvement of women in all peace and security efforts. Women are agents of change and peace, evidenced by their active participation in peace processes all over the world, yet they are the first group of the population to be affected as the most vulnerable group. If women are included in the decision making and peace-building, the legitimacy of the decision-making process can be ensured, making peace more sustainable, inclusive and achievable. The inclusion of women in the peace-building efforts is women's right as citizens, to contribute to national solutions and to shape the destiny of their country. UNSCR 1325 as an international mandate urges this right to be respected.
- 4. Involving Religious Leaders at community level:** Radicalized groups expand influence over community by manipulating people's religious beliefs and ideas, thus, religious leaders have important role in countering radicalization. It is recommended

to involve Khatibs and Mulla's at the grass root level in countering violent extremism as they are highly influential at the community level. They can reinforce the better understanding of the teachings of Islam among the community people and can raise awareness on the negative aspects of violent extremism and stop people from joining radicalized groups. Mulla's are expected to become key partners in developing anti-extremism and antiviolence messages and community-level programming.

5. Awareness-raising programs: Government should start awareness raising programs on peace building and negative impacts of violent extremism at the grass root level. In these programs, prominent religious leaders should be targeted in order to engage in dialogue with them about the state and its legal system. These religious leaders can influence a larger community through the acquired knowledge in awareness raising events on VE.

6. Involving Civil Society: The Governments of both the countries should involve civil society as their partners in reaching out to the religious leaders, women and youth at the grass root level. Both the governments should be able to identify reliable and trustworthy voices within the communities for dialogue and outreach. These voices can be civil societies, independent peace activities, networks and these partners can help the government to reach out to the community people in anti-extremism efforts.

Apart from the above mentioned recommendations the governments should also create women's networks and forums at local, national and regional levels to enable them to be heard in the peace processes. Both the governments should conduct training needs assessment of women in Pakistan and Afghanistan for greater participation in peace processes and build cross-border alliances of women in both the countries for peaceful co-existence with neighbors.

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