

TECHNICAL PAPER

POLICY GUIDANCE ON PROSECUTION, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMING

MANAGING EXITS FROM NON-STATE ARMED
GROUPS IN CONTEXTS AFFECTED BY TERRORISM



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UN Women

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the gendered nature of conflict and terrorism, current counter-terrorism measures remain fragmented and often overlook the specific experiences of women and girls. Security-led responses frequently result in human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, stigmatization, and exclusion from justice. This guidance establishes a human rights-based, gender-responsive framework for UN Women as it approaches prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (PRR) programming.

While women and girls may occupy diverse roles in conflict – including, in some cases, perceived or actual affiliation with terrorist groups listed by the United Nations (UN) – current legal, policy, and operational frameworks frequently fail to account for the complex and constrained conditions under which women and girls live their lives in contexts affected by terrorism, counter-terrorism or conflict and how such affiliations occur. Overly broad counter-terrorism laws and policies, coupled with gender stereotypes that conflate women's victimhood with culpability or, conversely, deny women's agency altogether, have resulted in discriminatory practices that undermine due process, human rights protections, and gender equality commitments. These dynamics have been documented by UN Women,¹ other UN entities,² independent human rights mandate holders,³ and civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly in relation to the treatment of women human rights defenders and women connected by family, community, or perception with UN-listed terrorist groups.

There remains a critical need for a common analytical framework that enables UN Women and partners to systematically assess gendered risks, power relations, and questions of agency across counter-terrorism and in contexts where PRR models are being discussed, proposed and/or available, including in both conflict and non-conflict settings. This policy guidance addresses core challenges UN Women may face when confronting practices related to PRR programming often designed and implemented in ways that overlook the differentiated impacts on women and girls, including exposure to gender-based violence, arbitrary detention, family separation, stigmatization, and long-term exclusion from services, justice, and reintegration pathways.

UN Women understands PRR as a model distinct from, but sitting within, the broader context of transitional justice; peacebuilding; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); and security sector reform, particularly where evidence-based approaches have been developed. UN Women therefore prioritizes the language and the approach to these challenges as managing the exit of individuals from armed groups, including in contexts affected by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) designated by the UN.

This policy guidance therefore presents UN Women's five key entry points to ensure holistic, human rights-based and gender-responsive approaches to managing the exit of individuals from armed groups, including in contexts affected by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) designated by the UN. By highlighting country specific successes, challenges and lessons learned across diverse contexts (Iraq,

1. [UN Women's Engagement in Support of Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism \(Policy Framework\), 2022, Terminology](#)

2. See S/2024/671, paras. 77–78; A/HRC/57/29.

3. See A/78/520, Ní Aoláin, Fionnuala, Megan L. Manion, Alyssa Yamamoto, [Global study on the impact of counter-terrorism on civil society and civic space](#) (2023).

Syria, Jordan, Nigeria, Indonesia, Colombia, Tunisia and Pakistan), UN Women shows the sustainability advantages of the following entry points:

- Entry Point 1: Provide gender-responsive context analysis.
- Entry Point 2: Advocate for women's rights through a thorough human rights due diligence analysis.
- Entry Point 3: Strengthen gender-responsive, representative and accountable security sector institutions and mechanisms.
- Entry Point 4: Advance localization and community-owned holistic programming to strengthen armed violence prevention and peacebuilding engagement.
- Entry Point 5: Strengthen evidence-based policymaking.

This policy guidance accounts for the distinct human rights, peace and security, development, and humanitarian issues of women and girls in situations where PRR programming is likely to be undertaken or requested by Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other UN entities. It provides an overview of the legal foundations and emergence of PRR as one programming framework

within the UN system and the implications of its implementation by Member States through the United Nations Security Council.

The guidance document further situates PRR within the broader and long-standing normative frameworks and programming models of UN Women related to transitional justice, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, security sector reform, and DDR.

Finally, the guidance document offers a framework suitable for UN Women that is rule of law and human rights compliant and gender-responsive in its approach to justice and security programming amid emerging and continued demand for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals exiting NSAGs.

Furthermore, this guidance aims to support UN Women management and technical practitioners at regional and country levels in the planning, design and implementation of integrated programmatic assistance to national stakeholders managing the return, exit and reintegration of individuals from areas previously held or controlled by UN-designated terrorist organizations. Other UN entities, civil society partners, or Member States may also value its findings and observations in seeking to improve human rights safeguards and the gender responsiveness of relevant programmatic approaches.

INTRODUCTION

At the global level, UN Women plays a vital role in several UN mechanisms aimed at supporting the implementation of the [UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy](#) and assisting Member States in successfully repatriating and reintegrating individuals returning from conflict zones. These mechanisms include the [UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact](#), established in 2017. UN Women chairs the Compact's Gender Working Group focusing on gender-sensitive approaches. Additionally, UN Women is actively involved in the [Global Framework for UN support on Syria and Iraq Third Country National Returnees](#), developed in 2019, and the Al-Hol Task Force, established in the same year. UN Women's contributions to these forums and its programming priorities are also driven by decades of experience both in-country and at the regional level. Therefore, this policy guidance document aims to support the presence of UN Women at regional and country levels where there is an identified need or demand for engagement and support on managing the exit of individuals from armed groups, particularly in contexts affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism (CT).

In these contexts, a mode of programming referred to as prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (PRR) has been increasingly referenced or used by UN entities and Member States, particularly in the above mentioned UN structures.⁴ UN Women understands PRR programming to refer to contexts where the UN, governments, and other stakeholders have identified a collective need to address accountability for terrorist offenses committed by individuals associated with UN-listed terrorist groups and to manage their exit from such groups, while also addressing broader individual and community

needs for rehabilitation or reintegration. Importantly, PRR is situated as one programmatic framework among many that are applied by the UN system and that may or may not include aspects of transitional justice, peacebuilding assistance, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) as noted above.

UN Women's work globally, and at regional and national levels, is driven by a commitment to leverage its strategic and comparative advantage toward the implementation of gender-responsive, human rights-based, context specific and conflict-sensitive approaches to programming, including in cooperation and partnership with other UN agencies, funds and programmes, and Member States. These commitments are particularly critical in the context of any engagement on PRR given the risks associated with discriminatory and securitized approaches to countering terrorism and the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) conducive to terrorism. These risks and harms have been widely documented as leading to gross violations of human rights in diverse contexts.⁵

Human rights due diligence, intersectional and gender-responsive conflict analysis, and the prioritization of inclusive programming through the meaningful participation of women's civil society and affected individuals in design, development and implementation is vital when assisting national actors to manage the exits of individuals from UN-designated non-state armed groups (NSAGs).⁶

4. Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2349 (2017) and 2396 (2017) establish requirements for Member States to develop and implement comprehensive and tailored PRR strategies for individuals they have reasonable grounds to believe are terrorists, including suspected foreign terrorist fighters and their accompanying family members, including spouses and children.

5. See [A/78/269](#).

6. See [Gender mainstreaming principles, dimensions and priorities for preventing violent extremism \(PVE\)](#).

Based on the above, this policy guidance takes into account the distinct human rights, peace and security, development and humanitarian issues of women and girls in situations where PRR programming is likely to be undertaken or requested by Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other UN entities. It provides an overview of the legal foundations and emergence of PRR as one programming framework within the UN system and the implications of its implementation by Member States through the United Nations Security Council.

The guidance document further situates PRR within the broader and long-standing normative frameworks and programming models of UN Women related to transitional justice, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, security sector reform, and DDR.

Finally, the guidance document offers a framework suitable for UN Women that is rule of law and human rights compliant and gender responsive in its approach to justice and security programming amid emerging and continued demand for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals exiting NSAGs.

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy guidance is intended to support UN Women management and technical practitioners at regional and country levels in the planning, design, and implementation of integrated programmatic assistance to national stakeholders managing the return, exit and reintegration of individuals from areas previously held or controlled by UN-designated terrorist organizations. In such contexts, UN assistance to national governments and local authorities is guided by multiple frameworks, including the

Global Framework on Prosecution, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (PRR) and, where applicable, DDR processes.⁷

Additionally, the guidance positions UN Women's engagement within integrated UN responses by grounding assistance firmly in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda⁸ and UN Women's broader mandate on gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEWE).⁹ This is particularly urgent given the proliferation of PRR¹⁰ frameworks and practices that, at times, diverge from, or contradict, established DDR principles. In navigating these evolving policy debates, UN Women must remain anchored in its mandate, normative standards and human rights-based approach.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE

The evolution and expansion of global PRR frameworks have contributed to approaches that broadly label individuals and families as 'associated' with terrorism, resulting in violations of due process, arbitrary and prolonged detention, barriers to repatriation and reintegration, and other serious human rights concerns. As PRR concepts and practices have expanded in scope, many responses remain insufficiently grounded in international human rights law, gender analysis, and rule of law standards. This has produced gendered harms, including stigmatization, securitized service delivery, and the reproduction of discriminatory practices, notably the continued exclusion of women and girls from decision-making and programme design.

At the same time Member States recognize, in principle, their obligations under relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions to implement PRR measures in a manner consistent with

7. See <https://www.unddr.org/the-iddrs/level-6/>.

8. UN Women mandate on WPS detailed online, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security>

9. UN Women assistance to advancing GEWE at the national level is outlined in UN Women's Strategic Notes that are aligned and correspond to the UNCT UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

10. See <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/en/global-programme-prosecution-rehabilitation-and-reintegration-prr>.

international law. They acknowledge that safeguarding due process, preventing arbitrary detention, and enabling sustainable reintegration are essential to long-term peace and security outcome

There is, therefore, a shared interest in approaches that avoid stigmatization, uphold human rights obligations, and integrate gender-responsive perspectives. Strengthening consultation, clarifying definitions and procedures, and ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls in the design and delivery of relevant programmes are critical to supporting national efforts to manage exits from non-state armed groups, including UN-designated terrorist organizations, in a manner that minimizes risks and aligns with the rule of law.

Hence, this document seeks to guide UN Women's engagement, including within integrated UN assistance, by providing a gender-responsive, human rights-based framework for supporting national stakeholders in the management of exit, return, and reintegration processes linked to PRR and related frameworks, ensuring compliance with rule of law standards, mitigating gendered risks and harms, and advancing the meaningful participation and protection of women and girls. Furthermore, the document provides reporting guidance, in line with the new strategic plan (2026–2029), to help UN Women practitioners at all levels report effectively when operationalizing relevant policy (PRR-related or adjacent engagement) into practice through UN Women's triple mandate – whether that be through policy support, coordination or programming at all levels.

3. IMPACTS OF COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES AND THE REALITIES OF WOMEN'S AFFILIATION WITH UN-LISTED TERRORIST GROUPS

Despite growing recognition of the gendered dimensions of conflict, terrorism and counter-terrorism, responses to women's and girls' experiences in these contexts remain fragmented, inconsistent, and insufficiently grounded in gender analysis.¹¹ Military- and security-led counter-terrorism measures continue to be designed and implemented in ways that overlook the differentiated impacts on women and girls, including exposure to gender-based violence, arbitrary detention, family separation, stigmatization, and long-term exclusion from services, justice, and reintegration pathways.

While women and girls may occupy diverse roles in conflict – including, in some cases, perceived or actual affiliation with UN-listed terrorist groups – current legal, policy, and operational frameworks frequently fail to account for the complex and constrained conditions under which such affiliations occur. Overly broad counter-terrorism laws and policies, coupled with gender stereotypes that conflate women's victimhood with culpability or, conversely, deny women's agency altogether, have resulted in discriminatory practices that undermine due process, human rights protections, and gender equality commitments. These dynamics have been documented by UN Women,¹² other UN entities,¹³ independent mandate holders,¹⁴ and CSOs, particularly in relation to the treatment of women human rights defenders and women associated – by family, community, or perception – with listed terrorist groups.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. See S/2024/671, paras. 77-78; A/HRC/57/29.

14. See A/78/520, Ni Aoláin, Fionnuala, Megan L. Manion, Alyssa Yamamoto, [Global study on the impact of counter-terrorism on civil society and civic space](#) (2023).

In the absence of coherent, gender-responsive guidance, PRR processes are often applied unevenly, reinforcing punitive approaches and exacerbating harm to women and girls across humanitarian, justice, and accountability systems. This gap is especially acute for children for whom any association with terrorist groups must be understood within a framework that categorically rejects the notion of voluntary recruitment.¹⁵

There remains a critical need for a common analytical framework that enables UN Women and partners to systematically assess gendered risks, power relations, and questions of agency across counter-terrorism and PRR contexts, in both conflict and non-conflict settings. In addition, complex questions of agency must be considered by UN Women at the inception of any analysis in these areas, with past work by UN Women conducted in Northeast Syria providing a clear roadmap.¹⁶ Without such guidance, programming risks perpetuating rights violations, weakening accountability, and undermining the effectiveness and legitimacy of UN-supported counter-terrorism and peacebuilding efforts.

There are **six core areas** that are important to recognize when conducting a gender-sensitive situational analysis for UN Women programmes focused on women and girls in contexts affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism.¹⁷ Other preconditions and context-specific conflict analyses in these settings often also surface key materials and symbolic factors that can be linked to the emergence of such violence. Intersectional analysis is relevant across each of these categories, including based on age, and should review the following:

- **Gendered nature of the harms perpetrated**, and serious violations of international law perpetrated by state and non-state actors in contexts affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism.
- **Essentialization of women and girls**, including through stereotypes and discriminatory policies that can criminalize women and girls for family association and/or solely as victims/survivors.
- **Pre-existing limitations and barriers in access to justice**, including issues related to legal aid, gender-responsive correction systems, or competencies of government authorities on international crimes, counter-terrorism, and sexual and gender-based violence and crimes.
- **Revictimization and stigmatization of women and girls** in the context of rehabilitation and return to communities of origin, including analysis of intersecting identities.
- **Risk of securitization¹⁸ of rights and services** for women and girls in rehabilitation and reintegration settings.
- **Historical exclusion and the imperative for meaningful participation** of women and girls in decision-making and influence in the design and delivery of UN programming.

15. See UNICEF, [Working Paper, Children's Involvement in Organized Violence: Emerging trends and knowledge gaps](#), September 2024; UNODC, [Roadmap: On the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups](#).

16. Fuglei, C. (2025). [Understanding the lives of the women, men and children of Al-Hol camp](#). UN Women.

17. These six core areas draw from qualitative research produced by UN Women. Gender-responsive conflict analysis and other root cause approaches to analysis regularly employed by UN Women also contribute to comprehensive and preventive perspectives on addressing terrorism and the misuse of counter-terrorism measures. The confluence of these approaches enables a clearer picture of where women can play a significant role in mediation, mitigation and community protection within these contexts without replacing the obligation of states to safeguard human rights. Such analysis also recognizes women as rights bearers and active, peace-oriented citizens and not only as victims or perpetrators.

18. 'Securitization' refers to the tendency to encompass women's rights and gender equality under counter-terrorism and national security agendas. In such contexts, women can be squeezed between terrorism and counter-terrorism responses (<https://wps.unwomen.org/cve/>).

4. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK OF PROSECUTION, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION AND MANAGING EXITS FROM NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS

The UN Security Council has progressively built a framework around the concepts of PRR in response to the stated ‘phenomenon’ of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs).¹⁹ Resolution 2178 (2014) first required Member States to prevent the travel of FTFs, strengthen criminal justice responses, and manage exits from terrorist groups. Resolution 2349 (2017) went further by obliging states to criminalize and thwart terrorist financing, promote defections and deradicalization, and protect civilians from abuses such as sexual violence and torture. Resolution 2396 (2017) expanded these obligations, urging Member States to enhance border controls, share information, and take ‘appropriate action’ toward suspected terrorists and their families – including spouses and children – through PRR measures consistent with international and domestic law.

Although these resolutions collectively require Member States to develop comprehensive PRR strategies that balance security concerns with human rights protections, results have been mixed.²⁰ Zero risk approaches to managing the exit of individuals from armed groups and finding repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation and reintegration solutions for individuals and families displaced and affected by armed conflict and terrorism have proliferated. This means that Member States have defined and categorized individuals and families as

broadly associated with terrorist groups in opaque processes that never really allow them to recover from this label in the eyes of the state or their communities.²¹

These approaches have been marked by a lack of due process and severe cases of indefinite and arbitrary detention. Alongside the UN Security Council framework, the UN General Assembly has also begun to build a more holistic understanding of where PRR is applicable beyond the situations it was first applied in, namely Syria. Through the most recent UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review, Member States have removed language that equated PRR terminology with the conflict in Northeast Syria and ISIL/Da’esh.²² While the removal addresses potential forms of exceptionalism for other contexts affected by terrorism, it also expands the ways in which PRR programming may arise in other contexts at the expense of holistic and criminal justice and rule of law-based approaches.

4.1. The UN and managing exits from non-state armed groups

Alongside these more recent developments of PRR, the UN has a long history of managing the exit of individuals from NSAGs, including those that have engaged in terrorist acts. Such processes have usually been framed as DDR,²³ and implemented alongside broader security sector reform processes, such as vetting and, where applicable, transitional justice. In situations where women and girls are characterized as having ‘links’ to UN-listed terrorist

19. Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2349 (2017) and 2396 (2017) establish requirements for Member States to develop and implement comprehensive and tailored PRR strategies for individuals who they have reasonable grounds to believe are terrorists, including suspected foreign terrorist fighters and their accompanying family members, including spouses and children.

20. See Submission by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and the UN Special Rapporteur on arbitrary, summary and extra-judicial executions in the case of H.F. and M.F. v. France (Application no. 24384/19) before the European Court of Human Rights.

21. For a discussion of the opacity of these terminologies and processes, specifically linked with transitional justice frameworks, see Anne Charbord, *Transitional justice in contexts where terrorism and counterterrorism is part of the discourse* (2023). She contends that “The labelling of non-state armed groups as terrorist or violent extremist groups, whether by the United Nations, through resolutions and sanctions regimes, or by the Government, means introducing a generally permissive international framework grounded in exceptionalities and securitization, which empowers government action when countering terrorism or preventing violent extremism, however these are defined”.

22. A/RES/77/298, para. 31.

23. See UN DDR-supported mission and non-mission settings at <https://www.unddr.org/un-ddr/>.

groups, a broad and holistic spectrum of priorities for programming is necessary. These prime concerns include the need for political engagement, security evaluations, repatriation, justice, prosecution, rehabilitation and community reintegration, access to economic alternatives and meaningful livelihoods, and access to psychosocial and essential services.²⁴

These priorities are also directly connected to UN Women's programming on gender equality and women's rights and are not mutually exclusive. The challenge often concerns how to sequence or achieve positive outcomes by responding to a holistic understanding of the difficulties on the ground that do not neatly fall into any one of these categories of PRR, security sector reform, DDR, or transitional justice. Although many Member States, national security counterparts, and even UN partners may frame peacebuilding, DDR, or transitional justice frameworks as ill-suited or not timely due to security risks, these assumptions are often based on prioritizing hard security measures and/or stabilization efforts; there is, however, convincing evidence that peacebuilding approaches are necessary to complement security measures. **While specific legal risks and tailored risk registers may apply in these scenarios, the status of a group as UN-designated should not, on its own, lead UN entities to depart from established, principled, evidence-based and results-driven programming models.**²⁵

5. UN WOMEN COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES IN MANAGING EXITS FROM NSAGS OR WOMEN RETURNING FROM CONFLICT ZONES IN CONTEXTS IMPACTED BY TERRORISM

5.1. Adhering to principles of post-conflict recovery, peacebuilding, and comprehensive transitional justice through holistic programming

To ensure holistic and rule of law compliant approaches, UN Women integrates principles of post-conflict recovery, peacebuilding, and comprehensive transitional justice, alongside the recognized functions of PRR and DDR in its programming at all levels. Importantly, UN Women ascribes to the UN definition of transitional justice as “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation” – including both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms.²⁶

The intersection of PRR programming models with transitional justice includes initiatives to ensure prosecution for serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of human rights, including through ensuring the protection and promotion of the rights of survivors/victims. These two frameworks further intersect in the open-ended nature of what rehabilitation and reintegration look like for individuals who have been demobilized or are exiting from armed groups designated as terrorist by the UN, as well as what these two categories mean

24. United Nations (2019). Key principles for the protection, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children with links to UN-listed terrorist groups, p. 3. For example, see [“The reintegration of former guerrilla female fighters, a key piece in the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombia,”](#) UN Women (2022).

25. United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) (2015). Inter-agency human rights due diligence policy (HRDDP) guidance note.

26. [Guidance Note of the Secretary-General: Transitional Justice: A Strategic Tool for People](#), Prevention and Peace (2023), p 2.

for accompanying family members that do not meet the threshold for membership in such groups including children.

Notably, in contexts affected by terrorism, the exceptionalities of responses to terrorism often result in a conflation of these two categories, including through a muddying of who has taken active part in hostilities, broader understandings of ‘membership’ and ‘association’, and a disregard for the standards applicable to children under international law.²⁷ This is not historically the case in contexts where international criminal law or transitional justice pathways are engaged. Through understanding these deficits, UN Women’s approach aims to preserve opportunities for holistic justice and accountability while safeguarding the rights of women and girls in the process.

The core tools leveraged by UN Women’s normative and programmatic mandate under the WPS agenda and investment in the leadership of women-led civil society further necessitate a considered set of positions as any office explores support to national actors to manage exits or returns from conflict zones.

In many contexts affected by terrorism or the reverberating effects of armed conflict that include an NSAG designated as a terrorist organization by the UN, UN Women may already be engaged in programming that can contribute to the overall objective of PRR programming and/or that is aligned with what PRR programming would look like in that context.²⁸ In these contexts, UN Women may also have existing programming unrelated to PRR and necessitates

BOX 1

Key Principle

For UN Women’s engagement in contexts impacted by terrorism, **terminologies matter** for UN Women’s relationship with civil society, government, UN partners and other stakeholders. Therefore, **terminology used by UN Women must be clearly defined and promulgated among national and international stakeholders.**

clear firewalls, whether focused on humanitarian assistance, transitional justice, peacebuilding or community-based reintegration.

The risks that come along with PRR programming – legal, reputational, and programmatic – mean that terminologies matter for UN Women’s relationship with civil society, government, UN partners and other stakeholders, particularly in contexts where there is broad misuse of counter-terrorism and P/CVE laws and policies, and where the risk of securitization of programming may affect stated objectives and core mandates. The lack of widely recognized definitions in the context of CT/PVE has often resulted in perpetuating existing gender inequalities and poses a significant threat to current advances towards attaining women’s rights and gender equality. In some contexts, these terms are used to describe acts of political dissent, activism against climate change, and to wage attacks on democratic and civic spaces in general.²⁹

27. ICRC, Chapter 5: [Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism Measures, and IHL in International Humanitarian Law and the Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflict](#).

28. See Case Study 1, Colombia.

29. See UN Women’s Engagement in Support of Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism (Policy Framework), 2022, Terminology, p. 8 at <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UN-Womens-engagement-in-support-of-counter-terrorism-and-prevention-of-violent-extremism-en.pdf>.

CASE STUDY 1

UN Women's support to peacemaking, peacebuilding and reintegration in Colombia

In the aftermath of the 2016 peace agreement [UN Women began supporting nearly 3,000 former women combatants in 11 regions to lay down arms and rejoin their families and communities](#). Since then, women have taken up new roles as citizens, students, entrepreneurs, mothers and political leaders. UN Women supports national gender machineries, as well as justice initiatives established through the peace process, including the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Colombian Women's Peace Initiative Alliance.

Alongside the development and transitional justice processes, UN Women [continues to contribute to UN benchmarks](#) to ensure former FARC combatants in the process of reincorporation, and their families, have access to a comprehensive and effective reincorporation with the support of the UN Country Team in coordination with the Presidential Council for Stabilization and Consolidation and the Agency for

Reincorporation and Normalization. UN Women continues to work within the UN system and with government partners to strengthen the gender approach of the National Council for Reincorporation and to overcome barriers to the meaningful and empowering participation of women ex-combatants in social and economic reincorporation.

Lessons learned: UN Women's approach in Colombia demonstrates the importance of long-term, holistic, and gender-responsive analysis that can enable programming across conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and conflict recovery processes, including transitional justice and reintegration. Results like those seen in Colombia are only possible due to multi-year, multisectoral programming that builds in robust human rights, and gender- and conflict-sensitive analysis to support communities towards long-term peace.



Dama Verde is an economic project in Pácora (Colombia) led by women former guerrilla fighters in the process of reintegration. As the women reintegrate into civilian life following the peace agreement with the Colombian Government, they grow aromatic plants, among other crops, to sustain their families and contribute to the community. This economic project is supported by UN Women. Photo: UN Women/Pedro Pío

Key guidance is available from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (Figure 1) on the main human rights and securitization challenges in counter-terrorism and preventing

violent extremism conducive to terrorism and, more specifically, within work related to the repatriation and return of suspected foreign fighters and their families.³⁰

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING THE CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO TERRORISM



Figure 1: OHCHR Toolkit, Diagram 1.1

Although PRR may be relevant in some cases, any UN Women engagement under this banner should be carefully considered in consultation with headquarters. The UN and many Member States continue to use terms like ‘women and children with links’ or ‘allegedly associated,’ which often justify detention, surveillance, and stigmatization.³¹ UN Women must resist such framings, ensuring women are not reduced to tools of security but recognized as rights-holders, citizens, and agents of change. UN Women’s work further necessitates the **prioritization of victim/survivor-centred approaches** that include opportunities for individuals and communities to not only shape programming, but also the political and justice processes UN Women may support.

These tensions are evident in high-profile contexts – specifically Northeast Syria where securitized approaches in Al-Hol, Al-Roj, and satellite camps

mean sizeable groups of individuals, including children, have been criminalized and subjected to large-scale and indefinite arbitrary detention.³² **These tensions give tangible insight into the trade-offs, reputational risks, and human rights risks that may be at stake for UN Women in this programming area in all settings.**³³

In neighbouring countries and other contexts, however, the UN has to some degree navigated these dynamics positively and made progress in finding holistic and cross-sector approaches to repatriation and community-led reintegration within disparate mandates and understandings of these terminologies. **For example, in Iraq, UN Women has navigated legal and rehabilitative complexities through work with civil society partners to support livelihoods and protection services for women returnees.**

30. OHCHR, Toolkit on Strengthening Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Policy, p. 4.

31. A/74/677, Annex V, para. 4.

32. Fuglei, C. (2025). Understanding the lives of the women, men and children of Al-Hol camp. UN Women.

33. Ibid.

CASE STUDY 2

UN Women Iraq

“Providing Livelihood and Protection Services to Women Returnees in Nineveh/Mosul Governorate”

UN Women is engaged in holistic programming in Northern Iraq focused on livelihoods, protection and social cohesion for women returnees in Nineveh/Mosul. The programming is designed to improve access to protection services, enhance the well-being of vulnerable women and girls (returnees and internally displaced persons) and establish literacy, basic civic understanding, cultural inclusion and empowerment for adult vulnerable women and girls with the aim of leading to improved socioeconomic status and overall well-being.³⁴

Lessons learned: Reintegration must include protection and social cohesion, case management and structured support across engaged institutions, including partnership with civil society and dedicated preparation of relevant authorities for legal and rehabilitative complexities.

34. For more information, contact UN Women Iraq: <https://iraq.unwomen.org/en>

5.2. Holistic solutions and serious violations of international law

Fundamentally, UN Women’s programming should recognize the necessity of holistic solutions to address the need for justice and accountability, including through prosecutions for serious violations of international law. Violations are often implicated in contexts where NSAGs are active, alongside other requirements such as reintegration, access to essential services, economic livelihoods, community engagement and more. UN Women’s programming will necessarily contend with domestic legal frameworks that also criminalize terrorist acts, requiring detailed understanding of domestic and international avenues for justice.

BOX 2

Key Principle

UN Women’s programming should recognize the value of **holistic solutions** that address the need for justice and accountability, including through prosecutions for serious violations of international law, alongside other needs such as **reintegration, protection, access to essential services, economic livelihoods, community engagement** and more.

In such contexts, human rights complaint screening processes and close engagement with relevant UN investigative mechanisms, in line with particular mandates, should be a key priority.³⁵ These approaches allow UN Women to ensure that individuals, where appropriate, are able to return to communities of origin and that UN Women programming in contexts that may receive individuals returning from NSAGs, designated terrorist organizations by the UN, is prepared to integrate transitional justice models that preserve past records of violations, including in other territories.

This integration also ensures UN Women complies with a holistic understanding of victimhood and survivorhood in these contexts. This understanding encompasses those affected by terrorist acts and serious violations of international law – as well as those who have experienced violations based on overly broad CT responses and who will face stigmatization and social ostracization.

Both categories include women and girls. Such an approach further counteracts a growing practice among Member States that have begun to rely on the prosecution of terrorism membership, support, and travel rather than investing the required resources in prosecuting crimes associated with terrorist offences and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.³⁶ In some contexts, such programming may benefit from consideration of UN Women's work in partnership with Justice Rapid Response and its swift deployment of experts to investigate international crimes and serious human rights violations, with an emphasis on ensuring holistic, gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches to justice.³⁷

6. STRATEGIC ENTRY POINTS: UN WOMEN'S RULE OF LAW COMPLIANT AND HOLIS- TIC APPROACH

In all contexts, UN Women prioritizes principled, results-based and measurable outcomes focused on long-term and gender-responsive access to justice, security, and community resilience and recovery. **Ultimately, this means that UN Women programming at all levels does not stretch to fit within the broader category of PRR programming, but instead responds to needs identified through approaches that are gender-responsive, conflict-sensitive and comply with rule of law and human rights.**

Investment in the political and operational infrastructure to ensure that UN Women is part of key inter-agency and secretariat level processes, as well as offering its own technical expertise to undertake this work, is critical.

The following indicative entry points are both political and operational. They provide key entry points for UN Women's engagement at policy and programmatic levels and consider its strategic advantages, key political dynamics both within the UN system and external to it, as well as measures to mitigate risk to the organization's reputation and relationship with civil society. The programming examples highlighted demonstrate how these priorities are embedded in existing and evidenced approaches already undertaken by UN Women at the country level.

35. For further discussion of the challenges related to prosecutions in these contexts see [A/77/345: Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism](#).

36. A/75/337.

37. See further information about the Justice Rapid Response and UN Women partnership at <https://asp.icc-cpi.int/complementarity/justice-rapid-response-jrr>.

6.1. Entry Point 1: Provide gender-responsive context analysis

UN Women's focus should be underpinned by leveraging its strategic advantages to ensure that its own office, other UN entities, the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator's Office or, in mission settings, an Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General³⁸, UN Country Team, relevant sub-clusters or country specific infrastructure are equipped with a gender-responsive analysis of the situation of women and girls in contexts affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism. This starting point already presents an opportunity for UN Women to focus on programming and its contribution to joint efforts supporting Member States to meet international law standards, including international human rights and humanitarian law obligations.

UN Women's seat at the table, particularly in contexts where PRR programming may be most relevant, however, is not always guaranteed. Therefore, this work must be underpinned by support and political leadership within UN Women to ensure the agency can play its normative and leadership role.

In some contexts, political investment could include garnering support and technical assistance from lessons learned within headquarters, but more likely is best situated within the leadership of UN Women Country Representatives. Where UN Women can provide such analysis, it should insist upon the maintenance of its internal best practices and ensure the exercise is conducted in consultation with affected communities, potential partners and beneficiaries. In security-oriented settings, or where such analysis affects individuals allegedly associated with NSAGs designated as terrorist by the UN, this may require careful negotiation with country-level UN architecture and government interlocutors. Such analysis

should also prioritize the meaningful participation of women and girls and support the expression of their agency.

While UN Women's existing standards for gender-responsive context and conflict analysis already integrate principles of human rights and conflict sensitivity, an additional level of scrutiny should be placed on the broader human rights context and human rights due diligence obligations. UN Women's standards for gender-responsive conflict analysis already enable several important insights, including (i) how specific conflicts/tensions/violence affect women, men and (where possible) people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities differently; (ii) what constitute the prevailing social norms based on gender and/or gender stereotypes that contribute to, create, fuel or perpetuate specific conflicts/tensions/violence and/or their drivers; and (iii) what women, women's organizations and networks are already doing to address and transform them.

This operational feature of UN Women's work is addressed through Entry Point 2 below. However, such analysis is most useful when effectively integrated into, and informing, the actions of country-level programming instruments – particularly UN Women's Strategic Notes, common country analyses, reports of strategic assessment missions, technical assessment missions, and UN cooperation frameworks and humanitarian responses. Integration of such analysis at these levels is particularly important to ensure that due process standards related to screening and PRR are observed alongside gender responsiveness. UN Women policy and operational work is informed by its Strategic Plan 2026–2029.³⁹

38. UN Women undertakes this work in diverse country settings. In mission contexts and non-mission contexts, UN Women plays a crucial role in supporting relevant and senior leadership offices of the UN, including the [Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator Offices](#) and the Offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the context of [Special Political Missions](#) and [peace operations](#).

39. UN Women Strategic Plan 2026–2029, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/strategic-plan>.

6.2. Entry Point 2: Advocate for women's rights through a thorough human rights due diligence analysis

Beyond UN Women's gender-responsive context analysis, the organization holds an additional responsibility to use human rights due diligence analysis when considering PRR-related or adjacent programming. While the UN's [Human Rights Due Diligence Policy](#) on UN support to non-UN security forces was developed for engagement with non-UN security forces, it has become increasingly apparent that this policy and its approaches are necessary for engagement with government counter-terrorism and national security actors. As detailed throughout this guidance, there is significant securitization risk for women and girl beneficiaries of UN Women programming as well as credibility concerns with civil society stakeholders in contexts affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism.

UN Women has a record of integrating human rights analysis into its programming and in its engagement methods. Pairing gender-responsive context and conflict analysis provided by UN women (Entry Point 1) with human rights due diligence analysis also requires UN Women's leadership to operationalize that analysis in inter-agency discussions on human rights due diligence. These processes can often be politically fraught, piecemeal, time sensitive, resource constrained and gender blind. Human rights analysis asks questions about the recipient government entity's broader human rights record;⁴⁰ assesses the availability and quality of accountability mechanisms⁴¹ and existing legislative and policy frameworks;⁴² considers UN Women's ability to influence and the risk⁴³ of not engaging or providing support⁴⁴ as well as reputational and political risk for the UN. Entry Point 2, therefore, pushes back

against observed tendencies to remove or sanitize gender-responsive analysis from the broader, more political and risk-oriented conversation implicated when conducting human rights due diligence analysis.

Furthermore, such analysis is essential for informed and effective advocacy by UN Women when engaged in the CT space at national and local levels. This is also to highlight **the critical role terminology plays in the context of countering terrorism as it carries political weight.**⁴⁵ UN Women should avoid securitized framings that risk undermining women's rights and agency, instead prioritizing WPS commitments. It should also advocate for, and insist on, the clarification of terminology used and the legal implications of its use as well as measures to ensure gender-sensitive investigations and the provision of security services.

The **Case Study 3** from **UN Women Arab States** offers examples of gender-responsive and human rights due diligence analysis that could be built on, as well as programming sequencing and multistakeholder engagement that addresses human rights concerns, securitization and cooption of civil society and communities. Strategic partnerships play a critical role when developing a human rights due diligence policy (HRDDP). UN Women in-country may explore partnering with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and/or the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to develop such an HRDDP with a strong focus on women's access to security services at local and national levels and to highlight the intersectionality aspect, especially as it pertains to minorities and communities living in border regions.

40. UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, p. 35.

41. Ibid, p. 36.

42. Ibid.

43. The risk intended here refers to aspects of not engaging in the discussion about reintegration and how that could result in processes that are gender blind and hence harmful to individuals concerned and the community at large.

44. Ibid.

45. See p. 11.

CASE STUDY 3

UN Women Arab States (Tunisia, Pakistan)

— Integration of gender analysis and prioritization of human rights-based framing of the organization's contribution

UN Women's programming in the region has advanced to balance the organization's mandate on WPS, developing necessary research as well as human rights and gender-responsive analysis followed by tailored, context specific programming.

- **UN Women Tunisia** frames its contribution in its [Strategic Plan](#) as focused on "women's participation for inclusive peacebuilding and reconciliation." Its work is founded on [concrete gender and human rights assessments fit for the context](#)
- **UN Women Pakistan** [facilitates engagement with the National Counter-Terrorism Authorities](#) to strengthen policy and

programming coherence between WPS and counter-terrorism (including PRR touchpoints), while engaging in community-level dialogues with women's CSOs.

Lessons learned: Analytical tools underpinning programming provide a clear basis for guarding against securitization of women's and girl's rights when working in contexts affected by terrorism where PRR programming is of relevance. In addition, UN Women has been able to effectively ensure that human rights safeguards and survivor-centred standards are non-negotiable in programming across diverse countries in the region.

6.3. Entry Point 3: Strengthen gender-responsive, representative, and accountable security sector institutions and mechanisms

UN Women brings decades of expertise in gender-responsive transitional justice, security sector reform, peacebuilding, and the harmonization of laws and policies at the national level. In contexts where PRR processes are relevant, this expertise should not be reframed as PRR-specific but leveraged to advance UN Women's evidence-based approaches. Context analyses must remain human rights-based and gender responsive, reflecting the lived realities of individuals and families affected by conflict, violence and terrorism.

Given the political weight of terminology, UN Women should avoid securitized framings that risk undermining women's rights and agency, prioritizing commitments under the WPS agenda.

Where national action plans on WPS exist, engagement by UN Women should align with these instruments. In their absence, UN Women can articulate support within the framework of Member States' international obligations under instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), CEDAW, and General Comment 30, particularly in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

This approach provides a foundation for human rights-based engagement and enables UN Women to support national partners in fulfilling their international obligations. UN Women should systematically engage to strengthen gender-responsive, inclusive, and accountable security sector institutions and

mechanisms, with the goal of improving security service delivery for all. Depending on context, support may include facilitating women's effective participation in security decision-making bodies, promoting gender-sensitive law enforcement practices, integrating gender perspectives across line ministries and national policies, and enhancing accountability mechanisms. Across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, protection and accountability must be embedded in UN Women's support to national partners managing exits from

NSAGs and the reintegration of returnees from detention centres. Such institutional support ensures that women's rights are advanced both within security institutions and in the delivery of security services to communities.

The **Case Study 4** below, from the **UN Women Nigeria Country Office**, illustrates this approach, with multi-sectoral programming spanning justice and security, humanitarian response, peacebuilding, reintegration and livelihoods.⁴⁶

CASE STUDY 4

UN Women Nigeria (specifically Boko Haram-affected areas), including emergency assistance to internally displaced women and girls and survivors of Boko Haram terrorism attacks in Nigeria

UN Women has engaged in multisectoral and diverse programming to address the situation for women and girls in Boko Haram-affected areas. UN Women has enabled psychosocial support, education, livelihoods and gender-responsive approaches to justice and security (linking prosecution with survivor/victim rights). UN Women has also worked at the community level to combat stigma through community dialogue, ensuring prosecuting authorities are not re-victimizing women and girls. At the same time, UN Women has played a critical role in addressing the lack of gender integration in the humanitarian response and in strengthening emergency assistance initiatives to internally displaced women and girls.

Lessons learned: UN Women must maintain its multisectoral programming lens and continue to focus on holistic interventions in humanitarian, justice and security, and economic and social programming. These programming modalities are critical prerequisites to ensuring rehabilitation and reintegration of women and girls is carried out with due process, dignity, and access to essential livelihoods and services.

46. For example, see [UN Women Nigeria, Annual Report](#) (2022) and UN Women, [Rebuilding Lives after Boko Haram](#) (2016).

6.4. Entry Point 4: Advance localization and community-owned holistic programming to strengthen armed violence prevention and peacebuilding engagement.

For UN Women, reintegration of women and girls in contexts impacted by terrorism must prioritize **community-led approaches** that integrate economic empowerment, psychosocial support, education (including digital literacy), and livelihoods as the foundation for sustainable, long-term outcomes. Programming should explicitly address the risks of stigmatization and social exclusion, operationalizing a **whole-of-society approach** that reinforces social cohesion and community ownership and strengthens and consolidates the role of women as peacebuilders, including as mediators.

To ensure programming addresses all sites of stigmatization and social exclusion, it is vital to engage with digital platforms and prevalent information communication technologies as well as find ways to not only mitigate risks but also enable safe and meaningful civic engagement and leadership for women, young women, and girls.⁴⁷

Unlike narrow counter-terrorism-focused PRR approaches, sustainable reintegration requires rebuilding trust within communities and addressing social and relational dimensions of reintegration. Investment in local peace infrastructure – through dialogue, reconciliation mechanisms, and community-based platforms such as peace villages or local dialogue forums – is critical to fostering durable peace, as demonstrated in UN Women's programming, including **Case Study 5 in Indonesia**.

Partnerships with traditional and religious leaders, women's groups, and civil society are essential to reduce stigma, promote acceptance, and strengthen women's agency throughout the reintegration process. Programmatic support should address immediate needs while advancing transformational change to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. This includes livelihood and economic empowerment initiatives, access to basic services, civic education on rights, and support to navigate state institutions for documentation, housing, land and property rights, inheritance, and, where available, mechanisms for victims of terrorism.

Such **holistic, rights-based strategies**⁴⁸ prevent re-marginalization, strengthen resilience, and create pathways for inclusive recovery, ensuring that reintegration is grounded in human rights and gender equality rather than securitized frameworks.

47. UN Women in Asia and the Pacific has demonstrated success in approaches for engaging youth (particularly young men) as allies in reintegration and prevention efforts, without diluting women's leadership or reinforcing securitized frameworks. Lessons learned from community-level PVE programming in the region show that structured engagement with youth – through dialogue, awareness-raising, and social cohesion initiatives – can reduce resistance, shift harmful norms, and strengthen collective ownership of reintegration outcomes, provided women's leadership and decision-making roles remain explicit and protected. For example, see Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/empowered-women-peaceful-communities>.

48. See <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/indonesia/peace-village>.

CASE STUDY 5

Peace Village: Women-led initiative to promote peaceful and resilient communities in Indonesia

Peace Villages are a community-based initiative to enhance women's leadership and participation, focusing on their potential role as peace agents. It centres on the women's empowerment approach to conflict prevention by supporting the community in identifying early warning signs of radicalization and intolerance, promoting women's voices and agency through economic empowerment and livelihood opportunities, and building their capacity to address communal conflicts.

Lessons learned: The Peace Villages are emblematic of UN Women's ability to bring in diverse UN stakeholders (UNODC, UNDP), government entities (Indonesia's National Counter-Terrorism

Agency (BNPT)), and local communities (over 10 Peace Villages) to ensure concrete pathways for women's leadership at the village level, including when it relates to addressing intolerance, potential conflict, or indicators of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. It represents UN Women investments in its Strategic Plan's theory of change in this area. Independent evaluation of the programme has affirmed the focus on women's economic empowerment as an invaluable entry point in programming success, engagement, and outcomes.

For further details see: Review and Scoping Study of the Peace Villages Initiative in Preventing Violent Extremism in Indonesia



Peace Villages are a community-based initiative to enhance women's leadership and participation, focusing on their potential role as peace agents. Photo: UN Women/Satu Bumi Jaya

6.5. Entry Point 5: Strengthen evidence-based policymaking

Ensuring the connection between programming experiences among UN Women country and regional offices in achieving concrete results and relevant political and legal processes at UN headquarters will ensure UN Women's strategic advantage in this area. Currently, programming policymaking in this area across the UN is highly fragmented. The replication of this type of fragmentation may subject UN Women to concrete political risks at national, regional and international levels. It is difficult to counter pushback on gender equality and women's rights in the articulation of policy positions among Member States at the UN without concrete field evidence of what contributes to long-term solutions or to be able to debunk securitized narratives about communities, families and individuals.

When these connections are made, however, UN Women achieves improved results at all levels. This principle is less about the sharing of resources and more about leveraging the decentralization and distinct policy and programming spaces of the organization at all levels to achieve results. This connection can support improved integration of UN Women's support to Member States as well through its natural advantages found in engagement with country-level government officials through national policymaking, such as national action plans or other initiatives related to PRR. A recent example is provided through **Case Study 6** on UN Women's normative leadership on women's rights and gender-responsive approaches to the situation in **Al-Hol**.

CASE STUDY 6

Connecting global policy and in-country expertise: UN Women's leadership on gender-sensitive approaches through the Al-Hol Task Force

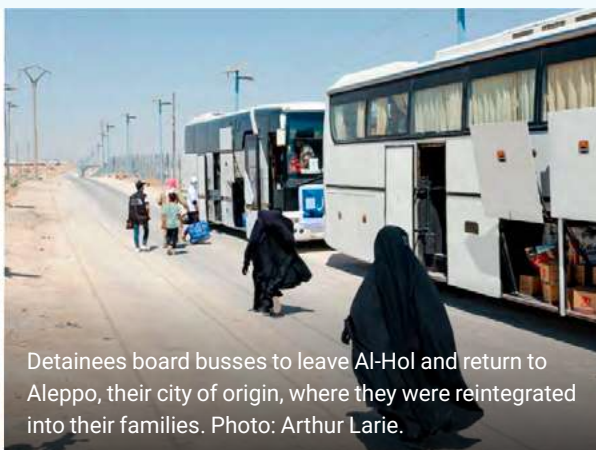
In 2025, UN Women launched *Understanding the lives of the women, men and children of Al-Hol camp*, the first study of its kind as part of its lead role in implementing Recommendation 4 of the All-of-UN Taskforce on Al-Hol, Al-Roj and related detention facilities. The taskforce directed the UN to "find concrete ways to recognize and communicate that the women and girls in Al-Hol are not a homogenous group and that any meaningful and effective intervention requires identifying and addressing their varying circumstances and needs in a human rights-based and gender-responsive manner."

The implementation of this recommendation resulted in the mandate for UN Women to develop a comprehensive gender analysis of the situation in Al-Hol camp. Ultimately, the study generated evidence in support of a human rights-based, gender-responsive policy and programmatic approach to address the situation of indefinite, mass arbitrary detention. Collaboration across UN Women regional and country offices and UN Women headquarters in this political process exemplifies how to leverage UN Women roles at all levels to achieve strategic programming and political objectives.

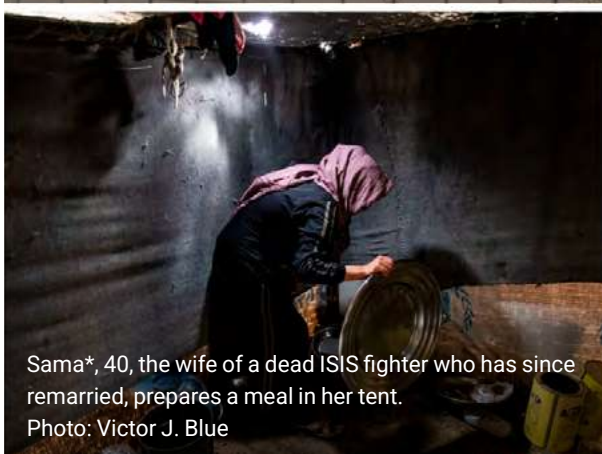
CASE STUDY 6



Al-Hol camp in Northeast Syria. Photo: Arthur Larie.



Detainees board busses to leave Al-Hol and return to Aleppo, their city of origin, where they were reintegrated into their families. Photo: Arthur Larie.



Sama*, 40, the wife of a dead ISIS fighter who has since remarried, prepares a meal in her tent. Photo: Victor J. Blue



An Al-Hol detainee outside her tent. Photo: Zomia.



Member States and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York to participate in the launch of UN Women's study on Al-Hol and discuss the findings and recommendations. Photo: UN Women.

7. FRAMING UN WOMEN'S STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND DONORS

The table below shows how UN Women country and regional offices can frame the organization's principled approach and strategic advantages to engage with national stakeholders on issues of prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration. Decisions

on whether UN Women engages in support of individuals returning from conflict zones is primarily the prerogative of the Country Representative.

The following list highlights UN Women's comparative advantages as an integral part of the UN Country Team. The list is non-exhaustive and indicative, and some advantages may not be transferable or applicable in all contexts.

Advantages of the UN Women Approach	Risks to be Assessed
Fidelity to the WPS normative mandate & international law. Programming approaches originate from the normative mandate of the WPS agenda rather than counter-terrorism and security policy frameworks. This posture is important to ensure that support is grounded in gender equality and a women's empowerment mandate guided by 'do no harm' and conflict sensitivity principles. This posture also protects already achieved progress towards GEWE at the national level and highlights the risks and threats of regression. People-centered approaches are prioritized as stand-alone and/or as part of institutional support to strengthen gender-responsive approaches and services. This is a critical aspect that is usually not periodized by UN mandates focusing on peace and security through support to the state. People-centred approaches are essential for sustainable peace. In this sense, UN Women programming focuses on addressing harms, the rights of survivors/victims and their communities and features strong links to gender justice, peacebuilding and community reconciliation.	State-centered programming on PRR can originate from counter-terrorism and national security imperatives that risk subordinating gender quality and survivor/victim protection and recovery. UN Women's legitimacy lies in promoting rights, equality and inclusion for women and girls, as well as women-led civil society and women human rights defenders. In contrast to other frameworks, PRR is not a rights-based UN norm but a counter-terrorism construct advanced by the Security Council's counter-terrorism legislation and counter-terrorism bodies. In some instances, these constructs are developed with limited attention paid to realities on the ground or the ability of state institutions to comply with international law when implementing relevant Security Council resolutions. Prioritizing transitional justice/DDR keeps UN Women's programming aligned with human rights norms and the WPS agenda, while also contributing to the aims of countering terrorism and reducing armed violence.

A guard against essentialization and the retrenchment of intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls.

UN Women programming focuses on supporting women's voices, their right to participation and expression of agency as citizens and political agents. Hence, UN Women programming on rule of law, peacebuilding and civil society engagement is well suited to address challenges and risks faced by individuals returning from conflict zones and particularly regarding social stigmatization and ostracization. In addition, programming supports girls and women to gain the literacy and economic empowerment crucial to effective reintegration.

Evidence-based and multisectoral. UN Women has decades of experience in multisectoral approaches to sustaining peace, peacebuilding, relief and recovery and preventive responses.

This experience includes managing gender mainstreaming within the UN system's integrated response, relevant government mechanisms and multistakeholder processes, as well as operationalizing survivor-centred services, advocacy for women's rights, integrating psychosocial support, livelihood creation, education, restitution, reparations, and community reconciliation.

UN Women support to state institutions to increase gender-responsive services is often accompanied by support to civil society with a focus on women's rights to effective engagement in the thematic area and their expression of agency in public life – especially as it pertains to peace and security matters at national and local levels.

UN Women's role within UN coordination, mechanisms and joint programming in relevant contexts highlights the importance of a clearly articulated division of labour and effective UN coordination within integrated UN responses, while ensuring that UN Women's engagement remains anchored in WPS, gender equality and women's empowerment, and human rights-based approaches (e.g., Case Study 6 – Connecting global policy and in-country expertise: UN Women's leadership on gender-sensitive approaches through the Al-Hol Task Force).

PRR can often conflate victims and perpetrators (e.g., women formerly abducted by armed groups are sometimes prosecuted instead of supported). DDR and transitional justice frameworks differentiate between categories of affected populations (combatants, associates, survivors, communities), enabling more tailored and just responses. Broad categorization of affected communities as 'perpetrators', and a lack of nuanced understanding of gender-experiences in armed conflict and complex patterns of victim/survivor experiences can undermine survivor rights and perpetuate stigma. UN engagement and support to PRR processes risks reinforcing the securitization of women's rights by engaging in PRR, whereas focusing on rule of law support, peacebuilding and recovery approaches may better safeguard agency, dignity, and human rights for programme beneficiaries and partners.

PRR tends to focus narrowly on preventing recidivism or security risks, rather than long-term empowerment or rights realization. Survivor needs – from mental health support to economic autonomy – risk being sidelined or tokenized.

PRR-focused programming may place multilateral actors in a securitized operational role, dominated by counter-terrorism actors thereby diluting its feminist and rights-based approach. Communities often mistrust PRR programmes because they appear state-imposed and security-driven and can result in the stigmatization of women associated with armed groups.

In the context of UN Women's role within UN coordination mechanisms and joint programming, UN Women may have to assess its normative mandate and imperatives to preserve compliance with policies required by UN Women as detailed throughout this guidance. Varying standards or levels of engagement with civil society within UN processes and among UN agencies, funds, and programmes – whether due to policy frameworks, resources, or political will – may necessitate greater technical support on this requirement for UN Women's own work or abstention from joint programming.

ANNEX 1: REPORTING AND LINK TO UN WOMEN STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2029

The policy guidance on Managing Existence from Non-State Actor Groups and Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration is meant to guide UN Women engagement at the country level as part of the UN system. It is therefore essential that UN Women engagement - whether through advocacy, analysis, technical assistance, capacity building and/or support to national and local authorities, civil society or direct implementation - will need to be captured and reported accurately within the current UN Women Strategic Plan 2026–2029. The alignment of each entry point recommended in the guide can be reported under the suggested indicators in the table below.

ENTRY POINTS	RELEVANT STRATEGIC PLAN INDICATORS ⁴⁹
Entry Point 1: Provide Gender-Responsive Context Analysis	• Indicator 0.1.5: Number of (multi)sectoral strategies, policies, regulations and/or action plans that are adopted with a focus on gender equality, women's rights and empowerment (ILO, UNDP, UNFPA) • Indicator 0.1.a: Number of institutions that have increased capacities to promote, design and implement legislation/strategies/policies that advance gender equality and women's empowerment (ILO, UNDP) • Indicator 0.1.c: Number of research, data and knowledge products made available by UN Women to strengthen the development of gender-responsive normative frameworks

49. The indicators above are suggested indicators, however technical advisors, policy specialists and/or programme managers are responsible to ensure that support provided is accurately linked to the Strategic Plan, Peace and Security Programmatic Framework and relevant indicators. The indicators' methodological notes provide detailed instructions on what and what could not be included under each indicator.

Entry Point 2:

Advocate for Women's Rights through a thorough Human Rights Due Diligence Analysis

- **Indicator 0.1.a:** Number of institutions that have increased capacities to promote, design and implement legislation/strategies/policies that advance gender equality and women's empowerment (ILO, UNDP).
- **Indicator 0.1.c:** Number of research, data and knowledge products made available by UN Women to strengthen the development of gender-responsive normative frameworks
- **Indicator 0.2.c:** Number of institutions with increased capacities to identify and/or address discriminatory behaviour and/or changes in social/gender norms
- **Indicator 0.3.6:** Number of normative, policy and peace processes influenced by CSOs advancing gender equality and women's rights (UNFPA)

Entry Point 3:

Strengthen Gender-responsive, Representative, and Accountable Security Sector Institutions and Mechanisms

- **Indicator 0.1.5:** Number of (multi)sectoral strategies, policies, regulations and/or action plans that are adopted with a focus on gender equality, women's rights and empowerment (ILO, UNDP, UNFPA)
- **Indicator 0.1.a:** Number of institutions that have increased capacities to promote, design and implement legislation/strategies/policies that advance gender equality and women's empowerment (ILO, UNDP)
- **Indicator 0.1.c:** Number of research, data and knowledge products made available by UN Women to strengthen the development of gender-responsive normative frameworks
- **Indicator 0.3.b:** 0.3.b Number of women and girls that have accessed capacity development opportunities to participate in public life and exercise leadership (UNFPA, UNDP)
- **Indicator 0.3.f:** Number of mechanisms and/or platforms, including multistakeholder based, created and sustained that enable meaningful and safe participation and engagement by gender equality advocates and civil society organizations in decision-making (UNDP)

Entry Point 4:

Advance Localization and Community-Owned Holistic Programming to Strengthen Armed Violence Prevention and Peace Building Engagement

- **Indicator 0.3.5:** 0.3.5 Number of women accessing services, resources and/or assets through programmes and platforms (UNDP)
- **Indicator 0.3.b:** 0.3.b Number of women and girls that have accessed capacity development opportunities to participate in public life and exercise leadership (UNFPA, UNDP)
- **Indicator 0.3.f:** Number of mechanisms and/or platforms, including multistakeholder based, created and sustained that enable meaningful and safe participation and engagement by gender equality advocates and civil society organizations in decision-making (UNDP)

Entry Point 5:

Strengthen Evidence-Based Policy Making

- **Indicator 0.1.c:** Number of research, data and knowledge products made available by UN-Women to strengthen the development of gender-responsive normative frameworks.
- **Indicator 0.3.6:** Number of normative, policy and peace processes influenced by civil society organizations advancing gender equality and women's rights (UNFPA)

ANNEX 2: KEY RESOURCES

UN Security Council Resolutions

1. S/RES/2178 (2014)
2. S/RES/2242 (2015)
3. S/RES/2250 (2015)
4. S/RES/2299 (2016)
5. S/RES/2349 (2017)
6. S/RES/2396 (2017)
7. S/RES/2462 (2019)
8. S/RES/2482 (2019)
9. S/RES/2560 (2020)

UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review resolutions

1. [A/RES/77/298](#)
2. [A/RES/75/291](#)
3. [A/RES/72/284](#)
4. [A/RES/70/291](#)
5. [A/RES/68/276](#)
6. [A/RES/66/282](#)
7. [A/RES/64/297](#)
8. [A/RES/62/272](#)
9. [A/RES/60/288](#)

UN Women publications, including from country & regional offices

1. [Gender mainstreaming principles, dimensions and priorities for preventing violent extremism \(PVE\)](#). United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UN Women. (2019, September 19).
2. Internal document on organization's position and strategic engagement in support of the Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (PRR) of Returnees from Northeast Syria (Al-Hol and Al-Roj). UN Women. (2025).

3. [Empowered Women, Peaceful Communities Results and lessons learned from the regional programme on preventing violent extremism in South and Southeast Asia](#). UN Women. (2023).

UN documents

1. [Guidance Note of the Secretary-General: Transitional Justice: A Strategic Tool for People, Prevention and Peace](#) (2023).
2. United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Centre (UN DDR). (2019). [IDDRS 2.11: The legal framework for UN DDR](#). United Nations.
3. United Nations (2019). [Key principles for the protection, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children with links to UN-listed terrorist groups](#). United Nations.
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UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

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

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



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