

## Briefing Paper:

# Measuring protective factors against violent extremism

### Summary

This briefing paper aims at providing practical guidance to practitioners working to monitor programmes aimed at supporting protective factors to prevent violent extremism to help ensure that the monitoring process and tools developed are aligned with emerging good practice and principles of do no harm, apply a conflict-sensitive and gender-sensitive lens, and incorporate lessons learned from different contexts.

## Introduction

This paper builds on UNDP and International Alert's Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E) for Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) toolkit,<sup>i</sup> focusing on capturing learning on issues of measurement in relation to protective factors against violent extremism (VE). It reflects a desire by practitioners and policy-makers, national and international alike, to identify, monitor and assess what protects individuals, communities and societies against VE. As more organisations look at what protects against VE, the paper also responds to the need for good practice and lessons learned in terms of what protects communities and how to identify and measure these factors.

This focus on protective factors reflects the evolution of PVE programming towards what some organisations refer to as resilience-building approaches, rebalancing a focus away from the emphasis on risk or VE vulnerability factors. The emphasis on threats is reflected in the literature, which predominantly discusses drivers of VE and push and pull factors for recruitment.<sup>ii</sup> Meanwhile, there is a lack of joined-up, inter-disciplinary research and exchange on protective and resilience factors to VE.

This briefing paper explores the strengths and limitations of applying the framework of protective factors to PVE and presents learning from relevant research and programming. It also identifies good practice for measuring and assessing such methods. The paper offers guidance on: 1) clarifying terminology related to protective factors for PVE; 2) the value of focusing on protective factors in PVE; 3) framing protective factors in the context of PVE programming; 4) considerations on designing an intervention framed around protective factors; 5) establishing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for such interventions; 6) gender dynamics and protective factors; 7) conflict sensitivity; and 8) challenges and limitations; it completes with 9) key takeaways; and 10) recommendations.

# 1. What are protective factors? Clarifying terminology

This paper uses the term ‘protective factors’ to describe resources, processes, capacities and structures that enable individuals, groups, communities and institutions (local, national, formal and informal governance structures) to protect themselves from and prevent violence, including VE. Rather than a series of traits, these protective factors are highly contextualised and dynamic,<sup>iii</sup> and should be seen as an “interactive and reciprocal process”.<sup>iv</sup>

There are clear complementarities between research and programming on protective factors and on resilience to PVE. Indeed, discussion of protective factors consistently features in the resilience literature. While the number of programmes has increased and evidence is emerging on the impact of resilience-based approaches to PVE, programmes draw from an array of definitions of resilience from different fields (psychological, social, humanitarian, development, etc.), and thus apply different concepts. This can create confusion around which are the most effective and appropriate models for PVE and can result in a lack of shared conceptual clarity, which compounds an all-too-present challenge of clarity of definitions in PVE.

In addition, using the language of resilience in a PVE context has garnered some criticism.<sup>v</sup> This includes the fact that resilience for development actors has been defined as resilience to shocks and used in emergency settings, and has a different set of definitions, criteria and guidance. As such, the framework of resilience applied to crises and disaster settings, including UNDP’s own guidance, does not readily fit a PVE model.<sup>vi</sup>

However, within the PVE context, programmes within UNDP do address resilience-building at a **community level**. For example, UNDP’s Africa Programme identifies five community-level resilience-building outputs for PVE related to: 1) community-based reintegration; 2) targeted livelihoods support; 3) increasing community awareness of VE; 4) sensitisation of religious leaders/institutions to serve ‘as a bulwark’ against VE; and 5) resilience of women.

For this paper, the term ‘protective factors’, therefore, is seen as distinct from the broader discourse on resilience, focusing concretely on what protects individuals, communities and institutions. Given the focus on protective factors within the resilience literature, substantive elements of resilience research and programming for PVE remain extremely relevant and provide valuable learning. The paper draws on this body of literature to inform the guidance provided.

## **Box 1: Preventing and responding to VE in Africa: a development approach**

UNDP’s Africa Programme’s regional PVE project includes resilience-building and strengthening protective factors at the community level. UNDP’s whole-of-society, development approach to PVE is comprehensive and community development focused, working on themes including conflict prevention, inclusive growth, stabilisation, supporting PVE strategies and National Action Plans, and trust-building between law enforcement/security actors and communities. This approach widens the resilience lens beyond individual-level behavioural change of at-risk audiences to identifying protective factors at the community level. This includes sub-outcomes and indicators related to community protective factors, for example:

### **Result: Communities are empowered to prevent and respond to VE from a development-oriented perspective**

Indicators:

- Total number of non-governmental actors (community-based actors, CSOs, religious institutions) engaging in PVE programming
- Total number of people included in responding to VE-related issues [disaggregated by gender, direct and indirect inclusion]

## 2. Why focus on protective factors?

In recent years, practitioners and academics in the sphere of PVE increasingly have been focusing on strengthening protective factors, rather than primarily identifying and reducing risks to VE. While protective factors and issues of resilience to VE are relatively under-researched, there is growing evidence of the importance of strengthening individual and community resilience, and of supporting social connections and relationships in particular.<sup>vii</sup>

The risk of stigmatisation of participants in PVE and CVE programming is widely acknowledged. Through focusing on individuals' and communities' existing strengths and resources for preventing violence, applying a protective factors lens can serve to reduce this risk, and ultimately result in programming that is more positive, empowering<sup>viii</sup> and rooted in reality, building from individuals' and communities' own strengths, positive social networks, and established and recognised local mechanisms. Indeed, applying a protective factors lens allows actors to avoid the pitfalls of focusing on deficits, problems and gaps (as is usually the starting point) and acknowledges that, despite facing acute and often extreme pressures, the majority of individuals and communities do not engage in violence or VE.

In complex and dynamic VE contexts, establishing new structures or systems to address identified problems can be more challenging and resource intensive than strengthening prevention mechanisms already present. Working with existing mechanisms may also support the legitimacy of an intervention, which is especially important in PVE. It is essential to note, however, that the legitimacy of existing structures may be contested and that such mechanisms might be reflective of existing power imbalances, which could do harm or negatively impact the action's prevention goal.

Taking a protective factors approach also has an added advantage from a measurement standpoint. It remains challenging for many actors to measure prevention, given that this involves measuring a counterfactual (that conflict or VE did not occur), whereas measuring outcomes related to strengthening protective factors is usually much more straightforward. The challenge remains, however, in assessing the link between identified protective factors and VE in a specific context, as well as the intervention's contribution to the improved resilience outcomes.

## 3. Framing protective factors in a PVE context

Protective factors are deeply contextualised, and existing factors, assets, processes and mechanisms (formal and informal) that protect communities should be mapped out at a local level.<sup>ix</sup>

### What are we protecting against?

Vulnerability to engaging in violence, including recruitment into VE groups, involves a complex interplay of psychological, social, political, economic and ideological factors, drivers and incentives, as well as cultural and identity issues.<sup>x</sup> These complexities require us to consider the totality of the individual, their social relationships and the organisations they belong to, as well as their relationships with state institutions or authorities.<sup>xi</sup>

Increasingly, in the literature, negative perceptions of and lack of trust in authorities (local, national, formal and informal), security providers and other state institutions are cited as key vulnerability factors in engagement in VE. UNDP's 'Journey to Extremism in Africa' report is one of a number of examples that highlight abuse by security agents and corruption within authorities as key factors or triggers for recruitment, interacting with other drivers.<sup>xii</sup>

Crucial for PVE, as opposed to broader prevention or resilience programmes, is the identification of the specific vulnerability factors, hazards and pressures that interact with VE dynamics in a specific context through a thorough context analysis.<sup>xiii</sup> Understanding relationships between what increases risk of recruitment (voluntary and forced) and what protects against it is crucial; however, these correlations are not always clear. It is important to note that protective factors are not simply the opposite of vulnerability factors,<sup>xiv</sup> and the relationship between these two is contingent on the perceptions and experiences of the individuals and communities concerned, taking into account age, gender and other factors, as well as the specific context. An example in youth-focused programming: attitudes and behaviours related to grievance or anger are often cited as indicators for vulnerability; however, “‘anger’ ... is an element of almost all adolescent transitions [and directly] countering this factor (i.e. problematising, medicalising or criminalising it) will often prove counter-productive”.<sup>xv</sup> Research and experiences from the field have also shown that, while anger and injustice are often cited as risk factors, they can provide the impetus to engage in prevention activities and, if channelled effectively, can be transformed into constructive, positive and peaceful action. Therefore, such factors should be understood in terms of individuals involved and based on the context.

Attitudes towards violence and the use of violence are often used as proxy indicators for young people’s resistance (or vulnerability) to VE. However, in contexts of widespread trauma related to experience of violence and conflict, prevalence and normalisation of violence, or under extreme conditions where violence is seen as the only resort, such indicators might be misleading or even do harm.

### **Box 2: Contextualising indicators for protective factors related to attitudes towards violence – lessons from research comparing youth education programmes in Lebanon**

Research conducted in the northern city of Tripoli in Lebanon in 2018 revealed that participants in resilience-building programmes expressed a higher likelihood of using violence when angry compared to the control group of youth from vocational training and computer literacy programmes. The former were similarly more likely to agree that ‘it is ok to hit someone who hits you first’ and that ‘the only way to defend one’s family and community is through the use of force’.

Given the widespread use of violence in the young people’s environment, the research concludes that some of these beliefs could be the result of young people becoming empowered through resilience programmes, rather than due to the ‘acceptance of violence’ per se. For youth who see the inability to face violence as a sign of weakness, readiness to fight back can be interpreted as willingness to respond to perceived injustice. This was also evidenced by the much lower percentage of youth from resilience programmes who chose to ‘do nothing’ in a situation where someone makes them angry. One of the resilience programmes under study specifically sought to encourage young people to fight for their rights, refuse injustice, protect themselves against any impending harm, take care of themselves and value their lives.

*Source:* I. Slavova and M. Al Masri, *More resilient, still vulnerable: Taking stock of prevention of violent extremism programming with youth in Tripoli, Lebanon*, London: International Alert, 2018

## What protects?

For community-based interventions, there is broad agreement across the literature on the importance of strengthening social support networks; collaboration with community organisations; enhancing community resources; increasing community safety; building collective identity based on hope, agency, altruism, cohesion,

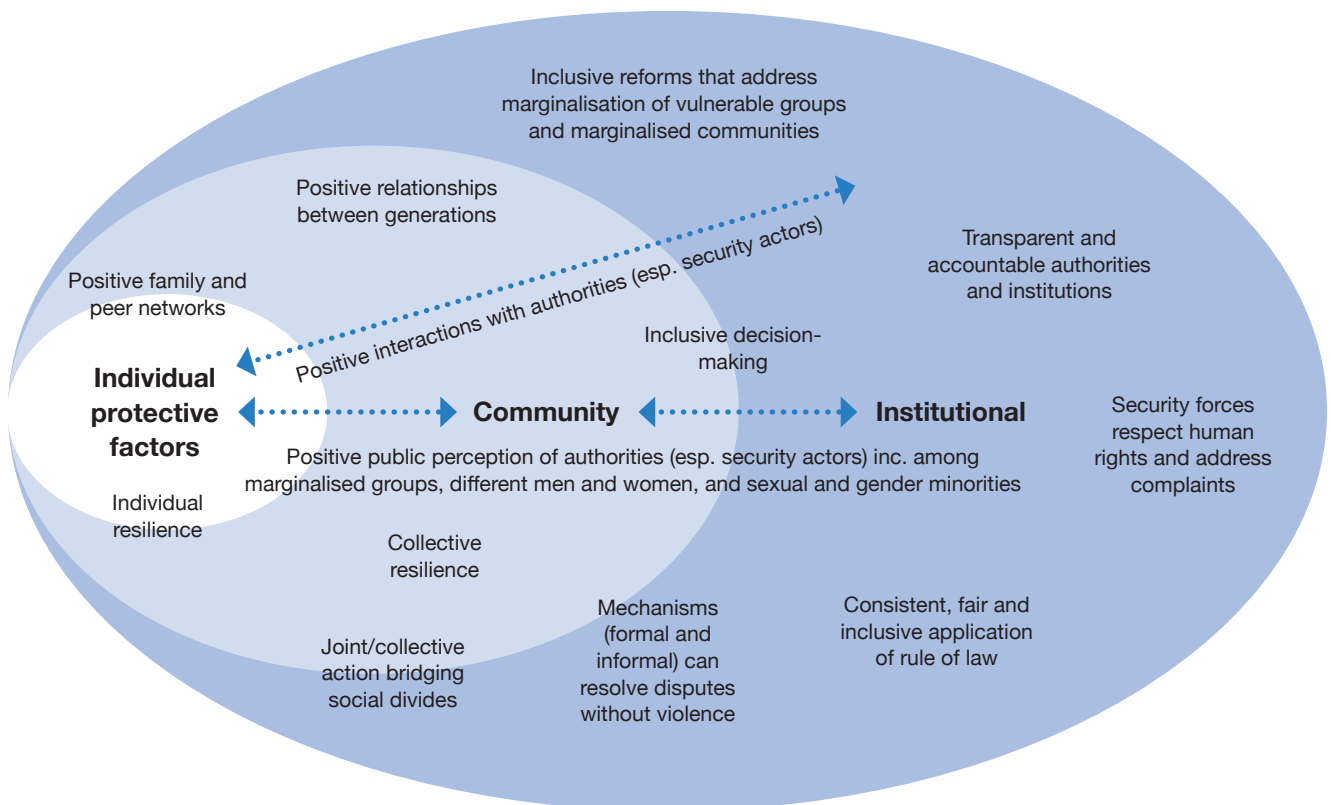
trust and security; training and education in how to handle uncertainty and risks.<sup>xvi</sup> Understanding the contextual specifics of these dynamics, as well as demonstrating cultural sensitivity and an ability to understand the problem, and potential solutions, from the perspectives of communities concerned through dialogue is essential.<sup>xvii</sup>

Understanding protective factors requires looking beyond traits or attributes of individuals and groups and seeing what protects in terms of dynamic processes that interact with each other.<sup>xviii</sup> Individual or community resistance to violence is not simply a sliding scale that goes up or down depending on exposure to risk or enhancing protective factors, but places these interactions within a broader eco-system (taking a social-ecological perspective). Therefore, indicators for protective factors and resistance to VE are both outcome and process based.

The majority of resilience-based interventions tend to focus on the individual, with much less attention on the role of contextual structures and institutions.<sup>xix</sup> Given the growing evidence of the centrality of perceptions of and grievance towards state actors and the counter-productive nature of hard-security-focused CT responses, this focus seems at odds with experiences on the ground. There is a need, therefore, to take a systems and whole-of-society approach to framing resilience or resistance to VE, which includes looking at protective factors at institutional, as well as individual and community levels.

Protective factors for individuals, community and institutions interact and are relational; an individual's internal resources relate to the external context, experiences, situational influences and support systems and their own perceptions and framing of situation and experiences.<sup>xx</sup> Figure 1 shows the interaction between protective factors at individual, community and wider societal levels, including institutions.

**Figure 1: Individual, community and institutional protective factors<sup>xxi</sup>**



### Box 3: Examples of indicators that help measure vulnerability to VE in community-based programmes

While vulnerability factors to VE are **highly context specific**, programmes have used the following indicators:

- Level of violence experienced by the community
- Perception that one's community/group has been treated unfairly relative to others
- Perception that the government is responsive to one's needs
- Perception of level of corruption among local authorities and state institutions
- Self-reported use of violence for a political cause
- Self-reported involvement in a violent dispute
- Self-reported experience of abuse of power by security agents or other officials
- Belief that using violence in the name of religious or political ideology is not justified
- Level of support for armed groups
- Belief that violence is an effective way to achieve goals
- Belief that violence is sometimes necessary

Source: Adapted from E. Hume and E. Myers, Peacebuilding approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism: Assessing the evidence for key theories of change, Washington, DC: Alliance for Peacebuilding, 2018, p.6; additional indicators added by author

## Protective connections and networks

In terms of protective factors for PVE, tailoring to the context and developing culturally sensitive collaboration, capacity-building, social ties and social networks are critical.<sup>xxii</sup> "Social connection is at the heart of resilient communities and any strategy to increase community resilience must both harness and enhance existing social connections, and endeavour to not damage or diminish them."<sup>xxiii</sup> Community and peer-group rejection of armed groups has been shown to have an influence on community support for, or rejection of, armed groups and on youth engagement in violence in various contexts.<sup>xxiv</sup> Therefore, the presence of positive and supportive social networks (horizontal networks *bonding* among groups and *bridging* between different groups) is often important to capturing in monitoring frameworks. Context, norms and prevailing values of these networks are important issues to consider as social isolation is not necessarily an indicator of vulnerability; those recruited into armed groups may be well connected, and in some contexts peer recruitment is common.<sup>xxv</sup>

### Bonding, bridging and linking social capital

- **Bonding:** Building *horizontal* networks, relationships and trust (social capital) *among/within* groups (such as youth from the same area or socio-economic backgrounds or CSO networks representing similar constituencies or with similar missions, etc.)
- **Bridging:** Building *horizontal* networks, relationships and trust (social capital) *across different* groups (such as youth from different areas or socio-economic groups or from across conflict divides)
- **Linking:** Building *vertical* networks, relationships and trust (social capital) *between* duty bearers (such as local or national authorities) and citizens (such as young people – this also includes marginalised, unrepresented, displaced or undocumented groups)

Source: Adapted from B.H. Ellis and S. Abdi, Building community resilience to violent extremism through genuine partnerships, *American Psychologist*, 72(3), 2017

#### Box 4: Collective protective factors against VE in Kenya

A USIP study into community resilience to VE in Kenya contextualised a framework of protective factors around **community capacities**, including social capital, leadership, information, economic resources and place attachment. Resilience to violence is the **ability of a community to harness existing capacities** to adopt mutually agreed-on strategies and self-organise collective action against a specific threat posed by violent actors in a community (in this case, violent extremists). Community competence is part belief and part action; it is a belief in the efficacy of the group to change and influence issues critical to that group and the activities a community engages in to prevent or mitigate the threat of violence.

The study showed that communities with genuine associations (through clubs, investment groups, dialogue, intermarriage, familial interactions) with religious members from different groups experience less VE activity. The study also suggests that communities with existing security capacities (such as security, collective efficacy and social cohesion) have less risk of VE activity. However, these arrangements did not have an impact on levels of VE activity in communities similarly at risk. The study proposes an inter-relationship between interlocking, community-focused security groups and the ability of a community to correctly identify and adapt to extremist threats by buffering the community from heavy-handed police action, triangulating security information for effective response, and creating a space for open discussions of the nature and level of VE activity.

*Adapted from:* L. Van Metre, Community resilience to violent extremism in Kenya, Washington, DC: USIP, 2016, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW122-Community-Resilience-to-Violent-Extremism-in-Kenya.pdf> (with permission)

In addition to relationships among and between communities, the quality of connections with authorities has proven a consistently influential dynamic in PVE. Across a range of contexts, perceptions of community exclusion, injustice, lack of trust in authorities, dissatisfaction with service provision, corruption and abuses have been cited as main motivators for joining armed groups.<sup>xxvi</sup> Such protective factors, which strengthen or deepen both horizontal (among and between groups) *and* vertical (citizen–state) relationships, are important to include in an M&E framework. Government partnering with community members in community-based participatory prevention programmes and joint initiatives is one example of a protective factor.<sup>xxvii</sup> When considering indicators for monitoring these vertical relationships or institutional protective factors, the wider context should also be taken into consideration. For example, at a project level, there may be evidence generated for improvement in relation to indicators such as: frequency of meetings between community members and authorities; examples of joint decision-making on local prevention priorities; and level of satisfaction with responsiveness of government representatives to community priorities or concerns; however, other factors may influence communities' overall trust in government. Issues of perceptions of exclusion, mistreatment, surveillance, etc., excessive counter-terrorism (CT) and hard-security measures are likely to influence participants' experiences. UNDP's 'Journey to Extremism in Africa' report identified that experience of abuse by state security forces was a decisive trigger for recruitment.<sup>xxviii</sup> Box 5 offers some examples of indicators of these horizontal and vertical protective factors, as well as a context indicator for monitoring.



#### **Box 5: Examples of indicators for positive and supportive community social networks and linkages with authorities and relevant context indicators**

##### *Horizontal community networks*

- Community rejection of violence and/or armed groups
- Friendships and social links with members of other/outside group (e.g. across social, political, economic or conflict divides)
- Presence of community-based support networks
- Community-based non-violent dispute-resolution mechanisms

##### *Vertical linkages with authorities*

- Level of satisfaction with authorities' response to needs and/or complaints
- Willingness to report crime to police and other authorities
- Use of and satisfaction with formal justice institutions
- Frequency of public engagement meetings between authorities and community members

##### *Context indicators*

- Changes in national CT, CVE/PVE policy, e.g. new CT strategies or National Action Plan on PVE
- Clashes with security actors or reports of police violence
- Rates of detention without trial, including for terrorism offences
- Number of returned foreign fighters or people associated with armed groups

## 4. What to think about when designing interventions to strengthen protective factors

Critical to designing an effective PVE intervention aimed at strengthening protective factors is an analysis of vulnerability and protective factors and a robust theory of change (ToC). This section gives guidance on what to pay particular attention to when designing a programme.

### Analysis of vulnerability factors and identification of resources and protective factors

The analysis should include a contextually relevant assessment of *both* vulnerability factors and protective factors, and examine how these dynamics interact with gender, age, socio-economic status and other identity markers, considering how these factors are perceived and experienced by different men, women, girls and boys.

Overall, lines of enquiry can be grouped into three main areas, which can be expanded or refined further for deeper analysis:<sup>xxix</sup>

1. What factors contribute to individual and community participation in violence? (*vulnerability*)
2. What factors enable individuals and communities to avoid participating in violence? (*protection/resistance*)
3. What factors contribute to individual and community support to and participation in active conflict prevention, conflict management or peace processes? (*protection/resistance*)

Table 1 further breaks down questions by the different clusters of institutional, community and individual protective factors, and includes questions relating to gender sensitivity. In terms of process, an important step in analysis would be to interrogate how the different factors interconnect or how they are seen from different angles. For example, the degree to which institutions are actively engaged in prevention efforts may be perceived



differently by different communities and individuals based on current and historical relationships with institutions, and whether these approaches are consistently applied across different localities. Furthermore, these factors are not static and change over time, mediated by a number of external and contextual or other environmental factors (presence of armed groups, political protest, economic crisis, natural disaster, etc.). The list of questions in Table 1 is not exhaustive and should be refined and tailored for specific contexts and programming focus.

**Table 1: Key questions to guide analysis of vulnerability and protective factors<sup>xxx</sup>**

Protecting factor
<b>Institutional</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are formal decision-making processes inclusive and do they support the involvement of a diverse range of actors in prevention (including women, young people, local religious leaders, traditional and informal leaders)?</li> <li>• What is the state capacity and willingness to engage marginalised groups in decision-making?</li> <li>• What health and social support services are available? How responsive are these to the needs of young people, women, displaced or refugee communities, etc.?</li> <li>• What education, vocational and training opportunities are available? How accessible are these to the needs of young people, women, displaced or refugee communities, etc.?</li> <li>• What cultural and recreational spaces exist (cultural centres, youth centres, parks, etc.)? How accessible are these to the needs of young people, women, displaced or refugee communities, etc.?</li> </ul>
<b>Community</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are communities' capacities for resolving conflicts?</li> <li>• How strong are networks across social divides (age, gender, ethnic, socio-economic, neighbourhood/region, religious, political, etc.)?</li> <li>• How inclusive are social networks (age, gender, ethnic, socio-economic, neighbourhood/region, religious, political, etc.)?</li> <li>• Do communities have strong and inclusive traditions and customs?</li> <li>• Do communities have strong, cohesive and inclusive identities that allow for diversity?</li> <li>• How strong is the rejection of violence (including armed violence and gender-based violence (GBV))?</li> <li>• How open are local social and economic opportunities (to what extent are these governed by clientelist networks)?</li> <li>• How strong are pro-peace attitudes?</li> <li>• How inclusive are community decision-making processes? What are community attitudes to women's, youth's or other marginalised groups' <b>involvement</b> in decision-making?</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do people have skills and/or mechanisms for resolving conflict without violence?</li> <li>• Do individuals have positive social networks (family, peer group, etc.)? Do young people have positive role models?</li> <li>• Do people have a sense of agency and purpose?</li> <li>• How adaptable are people to change?</li> <li>• How confident are individuals in themselves and their future?</li> <li>• Do people have access to support and help? Do they seek help when they need it?</li> <li>• What are individuals' attitudes to violence (rejection of violence)? How is this perceived differently based on different demographic factors (age, gender, ethnic, socio-economic, neighbourhood/region, religious, political)?</li> </ul>
<b>Contextual and environmental</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are armed groups active in or actively recruiting in the area?</li> <li>• What is the level of armed conflict in the area?</li> <li>• What is the level of violence within communities, schools (corporal punishment, etc.), GBV, domestic violence, etc.?</li> <li>• What is the prevalence of weapons (knives, guns, etc.)?</li> <li>• What is the prevalence of drugs and substance misuse?</li> <li>• What are the changes in national CT, CVE/PVE policy, e.g. adoption and roll-out of new CT strategies or National Action Plan on PVE?</li> </ul>

## ToCs for protective factors for PVE

A common challenge across programmes in the field of PVE is the lack of robust ToCs and evidence bases for interventions, including for those focusing on strengthening protective factors.<sup>xxxix</sup> While there is no one-size-fits-all, a number of macro-level ToCs around prevention and resilience-building for PVE have emerged, and learning has been drawn from relevant conflict-prevention, peacebuilding and development approaches.<sup>xxxix</sup> All ToCs are built on a set of assumptions about threats, vulnerability, protection and prevention, how these interact and which vulnerability or protective factors are most salient to PVE in a specific context among a specific target group. The challenge for ToCs for PVE programmes is that they often remain untested and under-evidenced. However, there are growing efforts among practitioners and academics alike to address these evidence gaps.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The most common theories focus on: 1) changing behaviours of those deemed at risk;<sup>xxxix</sup> and 2) increasing community capacities to resist and mitigate violence.<sup>xxxix</sup> An emerging third strand of theory relates to the role of effective human security approaches in prevention.<sup>xxxix</sup> Programmes that fall into the first category on attitude or behavioural change of so-called 'at-risk' groups tend to focus on strengthening individual protective factors to identified threats or drivers. Programmes focused on community capacities and human security prioritise collective, community and institutional protective factors, and build on theories related to social networks and social capital.<sup>xxxix</sup> A review of ToCs for CVE/PVE programming by Alliance for Peacebuilding in 14 different research studies and programmes found that, while there is evidence for the ToCs' ability to directly affect levels of VE across the examples assessed, community approaches (i.e. those that focused on building collective protective factors and resistance to violence) appeared to be more successful than the targeted approach (working with 'at-risk' individuals).<sup>xxxix</sup> Indeed, the more targeted approaches highlighted challenges of potential stigmatisation and isolation of the target population, challenges in identifying 'at-risk' groups effectively, the relative influence of community grievances vis-à-vis individual grievances as drivers for VE and that the cases revealed that people are more likely to condone and support VE when they believe their community had been marginalised relative to others.<sup>xxxix</sup>

### Box 6: Example of ToC based on a human security approach to PVE

The West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Institute's project 'Theory of Change: Towards more effective human security approaches in the context of the emerging threat of violent radicalisation in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia' aimed to respond to the research question: *how can human security approaches be reconceptualised and implemented to align with, contribute to, and balance policies aimed at countering the transnational threat of violent extremism in the MENA region, with a view to enhancing resilience to conflict?*

This project advanced a ToC for enhancing human security that is focused, comprehensive and inclusive, jointly or mutually enforcing whole-of-society CVE/PVE policies and State Security Policies (SSPs), which respond to community needs and protect human rights.

**Human security framing:** The project findings reconceptualise human security and frame it in two main elements:

1. Material (tangible) level understood as basic services that meet human needs. Research participants referred to various and diverse services that reflect their immediate concerns. This includes safe transportation, decent healthcare, quality education that enhances employment prospects and nurtures critical thinking and positive values, and improved urban planning to provide open spaces for cultural and communal learning.

2. Human security is understood on an abstract level in terms of rights, freedoms and duties. This includes freedoms (specifically from fear, state-driven or otherwise) and the right of assembly in public spaces. Key to conceptualising human security here is also the protection of vulnerable and minority groups, extending to the protection from both the physical and mental abuse to which they might be exposed by state and other non-state actors.

**Objective:** Human security is reconceptualised so that human security programmes align with, contribute to, and balance policies aimed at countering the transnational threat of VE.

**Impact pathways:** The ToC is translated into action points in the short, medium and long term (impact pathways) in three main intersecting areas: 1) human security; 2) joint track for human security providers and security agents; and 3) SSPs.

**Assumptions:** This ToC is based on two main assumptions: 1) effective human security programming would enhance the resilience of at-risk communities located within the fragile context; and 2) although SSPs are designed to counter VE, these policies reinforce drivers of conflict and of extremism through excessive reliance on hard-security measures.

*Source:* Adapted from N. Bondokji and B. Mhadeen, Theory of change: Towards more effective human security approaches in the context of the emerging threat of violent radicalisation in Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, Amman: WANA, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2OtyN8F>

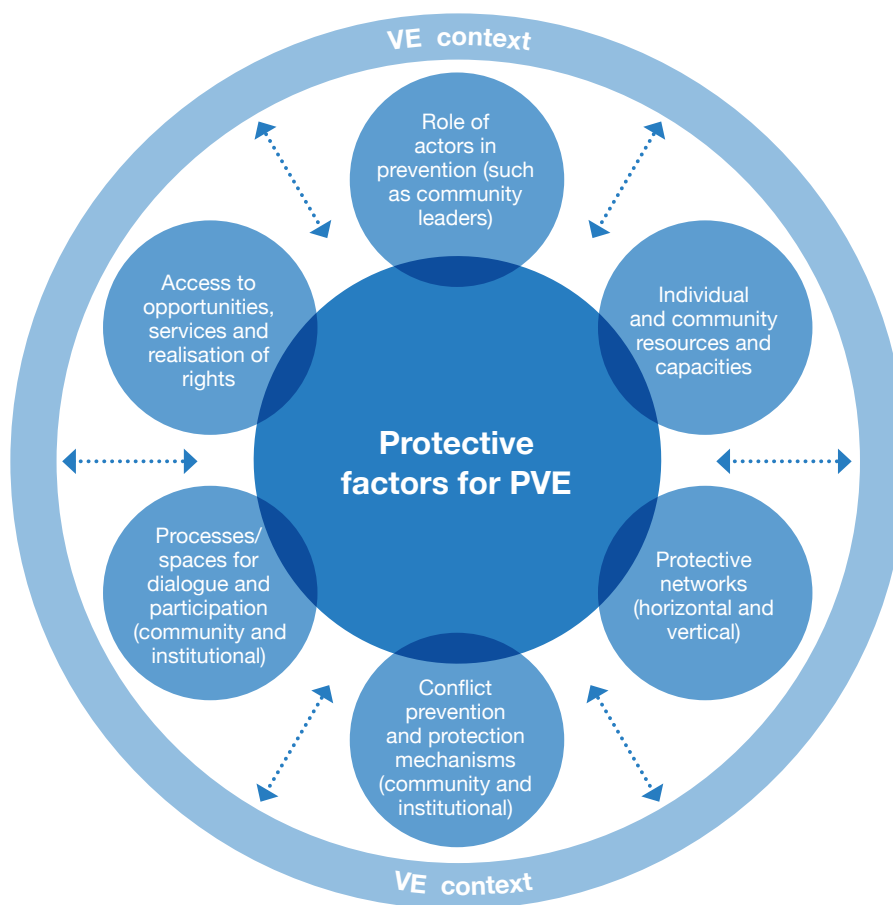
## 5. Establishing a framework for M&E of protective factors

Similar to establishing an M&E framework for other programmes, an M&E framework for a programme strengthening protective factors to PVE should: 1) be based on thorough analysis; 2) be based on a robust ToC; 3) detail methodology for collecting and using data (tools, process and roles and responsibilities of implementing and monitoring partners); 4) detail the purpose and use of data collected; 5) identify types and sources of data; 6) detail frequency of data collection; and 7) be developed and validated in a participatory way to ensure the relevance, appropriateness and feasibility of indicators, data collection and analysis methods outlined within the framework. Typically, the last point is undervalued; however, for PVE programmes, consulting with affected communities and contextualising the M&E framework is crucial in and for identifying, understanding and ultimately measuring protective factors in community-based PVE programmes.

An effective monitoring system is flexible and adaptive, capable of monitoring changes in the VE context (which is often dynamic and fast changing) and how these interact with the intervention, and captures relevant data on protective factors relating to a number of factors, including:

1. Actors in prevention
2. Individual and community resources and capacities
3. Protective networks
4. Conflict prevention and protection mechanisms
5. Processes and spaces for dialogue and participation
6. Access to opportunities, services and realisation of rights. (See Figure 2.)

**Figure 2:** Framework for protective factors for PVE



**Box 7: Things to think about when monitoring protective factors for PVE**

While monitoring for PVE should follow good practice relevant across different sectors, specific attention should be paid to:

1. Underlying assumptions related to PVE and VE dynamics, the relevant importance of protective factors and connection between vulnerability and resistance to VE.
2. Relationships between indicators – how the VE context interacts with indicators of protective factors at individual, community and institutional levels, and how protective factors interact (such as how changes in local or national PVE policy relate to community attitudes to the state).
3. Participation in the design and validation of the framework by implementing partners, affected communities and other stakeholders to ensure that the indicators and monitoring processes identified are relevant, contextualised and feasible.
4. Bias and reliability of data, particularly in relation to sensitive information on recruitment and self-reporting on attitudes and behaviours.
5. Physical safety of M&E participants, monitoring staff and partners – there is increased risk of backlash from armed groups or collecting/giving data exposes participants to stigma or surveillance by authorities.
6. Data security including protection of physical and online data and anonymity of those involved.
7. Specific resources or expertise needed for developing M&E frameworks or analysing data on protective factors, especially when looking at psycho-social protective factors or using interdisciplinary framing of prevention approaches.

## Identifying indicators of protective factors

There is no agreed set of indicators of protective factors for PVE programmes; these are highly dependent on the specific context dynamics, programme goal, ToC and entry points, scale and nature of the intervention.

It can be useful to consider indicators for protective factors at individual, community and institutional levels in terms of *actors* (who is influential in prevention, who are the connectors, positive role models, etc.); resources and capacities (such as individual, community or institutional skills to prevent violence); processes (to capture the dynamic nature of protective factors, quality of mechanisms and spaces created over time); VE context and gender dynamics. Table 2 gives some examples for a programme aimed at increasing young people's engagement in decision-making.

**Table 2:** Examples of indicators of protective factors for a youth-focused PVE programme

Actor	Resource/capacity	Process	VE context	Gender
<i>Individual</i>				
Presence of trusted and positive role models.	Ability to voice grievance through formal channels and trust that these will be heard.  Ability to access training courses for most marginalised youth.	Trust in state authorities, particularly security forces.  Inclusiveness of identities, respect for diversity, networks across different groups.	Presence of safe cultural and other youth-focused services or recreational activities for young people in the area.  Youth exposure to armed groups, drugs or other risks.	Attitudes towards justification of violence in defence of family members or community for young men.
<i>Community</i>				
Presence of local strong, widely respected and trusted community leaders (such as religious, tribal, traditional leaders) who take an active role in prevention.	Ability to respond and manage conflicts non-violently.	Rejection of the use of violence (including in domestic sphere, SGBV and VAWG).  Openness of community leaders and elders to young men and women in decision-making (including from previously excluded groups).	Incidents of violence (including in domestic sphere, SGBV and VAWG).	Attitudes of community leaders to young people, young women in particular, in decision-making (inter-generational relationships).
<i>Institutional</i>				
Effectiveness of mayors and other local representatives in leading local prevention plans.  Readiness of mayors and other local representatives to actively engage young people in local prevention plans.	Effectiveness of police, social services and other agencies' responsiveness to violence.  Inclusiveness of policies and legal frameworks and their fair application.  Social, political and economic inclusion (including marginalised/ underrepresented groups).	Mechanisms for joint community and municipality decision-making actively functioning.	Localised roll-out of community-based PVE programmes.  Nature of state security responses in locality of project.	Inclusion of women in local PVE plans.

*NB: These indicators are examples only, drawn from various youth-focused PVE programmes and should not be taken 'as is', rather as a springboard for identified contextually relevant indicators.*

For complex issues, programmes may need to identify proxy (indirect, observable) indicators of change. For example, if trust in state institutions is deemed an important protective factor in a specific context, when it comes to identifying how to capture this, a number of observable indicators may need to be identified. Although designed to monitor social stability and not specifically tailored to PVE, UNDP and Ark's *Regular Perceptions Survey of Social Tensions Throughout Lebanon* provides some useful examples of how trust in institutions can be measured and analysed, and how quantitative data can be cross-tabulated to assess levels of trust and the relationship between indicators (such as between perceptions of the capability and fairness of services and prevailing attitudes towards institutions regarded as responsible for setting policy).<sup>xi</sup>

It is important to consider the utility and reliability of indicators and whether they provide a full picture or need to be triangulated with other indicators to ensure accuracy. For example, reporting attitudes may not match with behaviours. In certain contexts, we may see high levels of satisfaction with services reported, yet in practice individuals may use other means (such as using informal justice mechanisms rather than formal court systems). Used alone, the indicator for satisfaction in the formal justice mechanism could imply high trust; however, the fact that formal systems are avoided contradicts this, and suggests a low level of confidence in the formal system or a lack of relevance.

Finally, an important note of caution when looking at indicators for individual and community protective factors is to understand that these factors are dynamic processes that need to be looked at holistically. This means that, depending on the conceptual framing of protective factors and measurement tools used, specific indicators should not be used in isolation, as they may be misleading or reductive. This is especially important when looking at individual, psycho-social protective factors, attitudes and behaviours because we cannot isolate the individual from their social context and perceptions and experiences of structural dynamics, and because looking at a specific aspect may give it undue prominence or apply a specific personality trait. Therefore, working with recognised and tested measures, with the support of relevant experts, is advised to ensure the appropriate methods, tools and interpretation of data. There are some measures that have been used to assess protective factors (resilience) in a PVE context, such as the Building Resilience to Violent Extremism (BRAVE-14) measure,<sup>xii</sup> the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM) and Adult Resilience Measure (ARM),<sup>xiii</sup> and other resilience, grievance or radicalisation scales.<sup>xiiii</sup> These measures can offer useful assessment frameworks; however, they may not be suitable in all cases and need contextualising and further study.

#### **Box 8: The Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) measure**

The BRAVE measure is a brief questionnaire to assess risk and protective factors for young people's resilience to VE developed by the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University (Australia) and the Resilience Research Centre, Dalhousie University (Canada).

##### **Five protective factors for PVE**

- 1. Cultural identity and connectedness:** Familiarity with one's own cultural heritage, practices, beliefs, traditions, values and norms; knowledge of 'mainstream' cultural practices, beliefs, traditions, values and norms if different from one's own cultural heritage; having a sense of cultural pride; feeling anchored in one's own cultural beliefs and practices; feeling that one's culture is accepted by the wider community; feeling able to share one's culture with others.
- 2. Bridging capital:** Trust and confidence in people from other groups; support for and from people from other groups; strength of ties to people outside one's group; having the skills, knowledge and confidence to connect with other groups; valuing inter-group harmony; active engagement with people from other groups.

3. **Linking capital:** Trust and confidence in government and authority figures; trust in community organisations; having the skills, knowledge and resources to make use of institutions and organisations outside one's local community; ability to contribute to or influence policy and decision-making relating to one's own community.
4. **Violence-related behaviours:** Willingness to speak out publicly against violence; willingness to challenge the use of violence by others; acceptance of violence as a legitimate means of resolving conflicts.
5. **Violence-related beliefs:** Degree to which violence is seen to confer status and respect; degree to which violence is normalised or well tolerated for any age group in the community.

It is a 14-item measure:

1. It is important to me to maintain cultural traditions.
2. Being violent helps me earn the respect of others.
3. I am familiar with my cultural traditions, beliefs, practices and values.
4. Being violent helps show how strong I am.
5. My cultural identity guides the way I live my life.
6. I trust authorities/law enforcement agencies.
7. In general, I trust people from other communities.
8. My community accepts that young people may use violence to solve problems.
9. I am willing to speak out publicly against violence in my community.
10. I feel supported by people from other communities.
11. I regularly engage in conversations with people of multiple religions/cultures and beliefs.
12. I am willing to challenge the violent behaviour of others in my community.
13. I feel confident when dealing with government and authorities.
14. I feel that my voice is heard when dealing with government and authorities.

*Source:* M. Grossman and M. Ungar, Understanding youth resilience to violent extremism: A standardised research measure, Final Research Report, 2017; <http://brave.resilienceresearch.org/>

### **Box 9: Measuring individual psycho-social protective factors and peace education in Lebanon**

This exploratory study aimed to assess whether there are indicators of susceptibility to 'VE thoughts' among the Syrian young people that participated in Basmeah & Zeitooneh's Peace Education (PE) programme for refugee youth (aged 14–17) in Shatila, Beirut, and whether the programme enhanced their overall resilience. The programme sought to enhance the dignity of participants and promote self-confidence, creativity, communication and dialogue. In Shatila, young refugees are living in difficult conditions, have little access to treatment for the trauma related to conflict and displacement, and experience social and educational exclusion.

It is important to note that, while young people in Shatila are exposed to pressures that could lead people to join VE groups (such as extremist ideologies, horizontal inequalities, unemployment and poverty, as well as perceptions of injustice, socio-political exclusion, human rights violations, rejection of a state's socio-economic/political system, corruption and intolerance towards growing diversity in society), these do not in and of themselves predict the existence of VE thoughts or VE actions. Indeed, CT should not be used as a prism through which to look at people living under the above-mentioned push factor conditions.



Through Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions (KAP) surveys and in-depth interviews, Basmeh & Zeitooneh assessed changes in the following **10 psycho-social protective factors**:

1. Take decisions
2. Set goals
3. Problem solving
4. Have dreams
5. Trust oneself
6. Trust others
7. Work in a team
8. Communicate in a positive way
9. Have a positive sense of belonging
10. Have a sense of purpose and productivity.

### Results

Data indicates that the youths showed increased resilience in dealing with stressful situations following PE programming, as well as more tolerant views on social diversity and gender equality. In addition, programming helped several participants, who initially reported not having any friends, to form new friendships. Research data indicates that female youths exhibited the largest positive effect on their resilience after participating in the programme. The programme had an unclear impact on participants' resilience towards violence, and was less successful in supporting male youth to cope with trauma, self-image and trust.

### Lessons learned

- Research and measurement frameworks focused on protective factors in these contexts should **consider and unpack impacts of past personal and familial trauma and present-day impact of stresses related to discrimination** to identify how they influence young people's perspectives on current situations and future pathways.
- PE approaches can be better fine-tuned to focus on the importance of **peacefully resolving conflict** specifically with young people.
- It would also be beneficial if the PE programme could include more positive and peaceful **leadership examples** for young people.
- **Include participants of different nationalities or youth from different backgrounds** in general to **build safe spaces for building relationships across divides**.

*Source:* Basmeh & Zeitooneh, Exploring resilience, violent extremist thinking, and the impact of peace education on Syrian youth in Shatila, August 2018, [https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Lebanon\\_ResilienceExtremismPeaceEducation\\_EN\\_2018.pdf](https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Lebanon_ResilienceExtremismPeaceEducation_EN_2018.pdf); interviews and email correspondence with Basmeh & Zeitooneh

## 6. Protective factors and gender dynamics

PVE programming and monitoring frameworks tend to focus on women's roles and participation in PVE. However, this hides the roles that gendered expectations play in why some women and men choose to take up arms and others do not, although the same gendered expectations can lead to very different results. Different women, men, boys and girls experience and perceive vulnerabilities and protective factors in different ways depending on, for example, their age, class, background, life experience, disability or educational level. Women's active roles in violence are largely unseen and underexplored, and often women are excluded from discussions on violence or VE. Yet, across contexts, there is evidence that women play an important societal role in supporting, as well as

preventing, violence, particularly as counsellors and advisers to family members and educators of children (see Box 10).<sup>xiv</sup> The expectations placed on men can differ, for example, to be a breadwinner and protector, including expectations to ‘protect’ or control ‘one’s women’ be it at the personal, family or community level, can lead some men to join a VE group, while others may choose to flee the conflict-affected area with their families and thus better protect and support them.

People face different layers of vulnerabilities based on their gender and age, from the heightened risk of physical and sexual and gender-based violence, including sexualised torture, sexual exploitation and abuse, early and forced marriage, to a shift in gender roles. Women can experience having to take on multiple roles in the family and public sphere as pressure is placed on the male members of their families, or they are killed, incarcerated or have their mobility curtailed.

#### **Box 10: Understanding gender roles in Preventing Violent Extremism Actions through increased social Cohesion Efforts (PEACE), Tillabéry Region, Niger**

Mercy Corps’ Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment Initiative to Counter Violent Extremism (VRAI) aimed to design a set of replicable data collection tools, which will enable national, regional and local-level state and civil society practitioners to identify communities most vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups. Mercy Corps carried out the research assessment in October and November 2017 in the Tillabéry region of Niger; it collected data from 207 households with quantitative questionnaires and held 40 focus groups. In addition, 15 local authority questionnaires and eight questionnaires for victims were implemented.

The research examined gender differences in both social cohesion and VE outcomes and explored reasons why interventions may affect girls, women, boys and men differently across the three contexts. This included looking at the different ways young men and women can influence peers, or how older women can be a voice for peace with their children and families and with their networks. In Tillabéry, Niger, for example, it was found that women often are not consulted or are not the voice of the community of family as it relates to violence; however, it is “precisely because of the limits imposed on the representation of women in structures of traditional authority that it is important to communicate more with women and to have their views and recommendations, not just listening to their voices on how to fight violence in their respective villages, but also by allowing women to be actively engaged in maintaining a culture of inclusive peace in their respective villages”.

The data also gave indications for gendered protective factors for women in Tillabéry, including:

- A nuanced understanding of violence beyond its direct and physical aspect, to include the structural and cultural aspects of violence.
- Connectedness to the younger generation, given that women spend more time with their children and are more aware of their concerns, challenges and hopes, and can therefore play a key role as connectors.
- Women are generally the vehicle for transmitting values at the community level, and their potential role in building sustainable social cohesion is paramount.

*Source:* Preliminary baseline report: Focus groups and interviews conducted during the Mercy Corps, Preventing Violent Extremism Actions through increased social Cohesion Efforts (PEACE) Project in Tillabéry Region, Niger, May 2020; and Mercy Corps, Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment Initiative to Counter Violent Extremism (VRAI), Phase Three Assessment Report, Tillabéry, Niger, December 2017

## 7. Conflict sensitivity

Conflict sensitivity is the cornerstone of understanding how an intervention, and the range of resources it brings with it, can impact an environment. It helps practitioners to think through how to minimise negative impacts of a programme and maximise the opportunities to do good. It allows practitioners to assess both intended and unintended consequences and understand how their project interacts with VE and wider conflict dynamics.<sup>xlv</sup> These issues should be considered throughout the programme cycle, including analysis, design, implementation and M&E, and in any outreach or communications activities.

Building an in-depth understanding of the context shines light on protective factors against different types of violence and helps to prioritise needs based on what is happening on the ground. This informs what is captured within a monitoring framework in terms of indicators of protective factors, vulnerability factors and context dynamics.

In practice, this involves developing a programme-monitoring framework that can capture unintended negative consequences, thus reducing the risk of harm (such as stigmatisation or backlash from communities or armed groups), as well as outcomes aimed at enhancing the programme's ability to support protective factors. Such interventions, therefore, should:

- a. be based on, and informed by, regularly reviewed analysis of the VE contexts – including the changing dynamics related to protective factors and vulnerability factors;
- b. have a monitoring framework that includes indicators on the VE context, such as changes in:
  - national and local PVE policy, including CVE/CT measures enforced;
  - role of and relationships between key actors in PVE and in VE;
  - perceptions of trust in government institutions;
  - attitudes towards minorities, refugees or other marginalised groups;
  - attitudes towards security measures; and
  - presence of armed or extremist groups; and
- c. provide for a review of results, including identification of unintended impact (positive and negative).

### **Box 11: Applying conflict sensitivity – adapting to a dynamic PVE context in programmes with survivors of sexual violence in Northeastern Nigeria**

International Alert and UNICEF launched research in 2015 to identify what is protecting women and girls returning from captivity in Borno State (NE Nigeria). The research aimed to identify what was helping the communities reintegrate these women and girls and the babies that were born of sexual violence by violent extremists (Boko Haram). The analysis and programming focused on protective factors using a conflict- and gender-sensitive research framework and included government partners, local university professors and CSO partners.

Based on this analysis, a three-part pilot programme was developed to: 1) strengthen the individual resilience of women and girls returning from captivity; 2) build on community resilience that was struggling to adapt to the changing environment; and 3) foster greater awareness by the entire community of the stigma and discrimination that was being applied to women and girls.

Underpinning the approach to the intervention was the understanding of the interplay between community and individuals as an interactive process of change. As such, the pilot identified and measured social connections and changes at the individual level, such as the conflict-resolution mechanisms functioning

and/or established, horizontal protective networks among survivors of sexual violence, vertical protective networks, such as survivors accessing health services without stigmatisation from the community, etc. Using participant observation, dialogue transcripts and key informant interviews/focus group discussion tools, the M&E identified that two types of horizontal networks were missing, namely:

1. women who survived sexual violence wanted to be in small group sessions with women who did not encounter sexual violence to foster a greater sense of female solidarity; and
2. families wanted to have small group dialogue sessions facilitated with their female family member who was a survivor of sexual violence to reduce their fear of the survivor and consider allowing the survivor to re-enter their family.

Given these observations, adjustments were made to the programme to support these horizontal networks and integrated these aspects into the programme while it was ongoing. As a result, the following protective outcomes of the process of implementation were identified:

1. Reunions between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, etc. proxy for forgiveness.
2. Number of survivors that self-identified as 'knowing someone like me' in the internally displaced persons camps after. Several testimonies indicate that women really became friends and even stood in the food or water line together after the interventions. Kind of a 'safety in numbers' approach.
3. Number of cases of women who kept their baby and those who chose their baby born of rape over reconciling with their families (if the family refused the baby born of rape).
4. Number of testimonies from religious leaders via the radio programming that was aired. Number of individual trajectory changes as a result of the community dialogues that were facilitated by community and religious leaders.
5. Number of quick impact projects for community members to reduce their reliance or perceived reliance on aid (which was giving them a negative social identity).
6. Policy-level changes related to socio-economic opportunities and government action around the issue of reintegration of women and girls.
7. Changes in narratives and policies related to justice and compensation for women and children survivors of sexual violence.

These changes served as proxy indicators for protective factors. They are also evidence of ways in which a conflict-sensitive approach to programming (i.e. analysis linked to intervention adjustments to maximise positive peace and minimise negative interactions) was able to identify, harness and measure greater resilience that was built in the support to women and girls reintegrating at the community level in Northeast Nigeria.

*Source:* International Alert Nigeria programme

## 8. Challenges and limitations

Despite the growing recognition of the relevance of focusing on protective factors in the prevention of VE, there are significant gaps in practical, policy and programming-oriented guidance on effective approaches, and resilience remains difficult to define and measure, with a lack of research into indicators and metrics on these protective factors at individual, community and institutional levels.<sup>xlvi</sup> These challenges are further compounded by practitioners' ability to identify the most salient and critical factors that are related to VE, given that there is rarely a direct or binary relationship between vulnerability and protective factors.<sup>xlvii</sup>

Moreover, there is often a lack of reliable data on the specific VE-related vulnerabilities that are being addressed, and the extent to which resilience-building interventions need to be tailored to identified VE risks in a specific

environment. Often, there is insufficient evidence underpinning PVE programming to fully understand and unpick the complex relationships between resilience and vulnerability to VE.<sup>xlviii</sup>

A cautionary note is that, while applying a protective factors lens to an intervention encourages a focus on strengths and resources (rather than deficits or risks), care must be taken to ensure that the overall VE framing of the action does not erode trust and social capital and therefore work against the protective factors that the project seeks to strengthen.

On a practical level, the initial focus on protective factors can be challenging for some development actors, as analysis and programming frameworks are often focused on identifying challenges, gaps and problems, rather than existing resources.

## 9. Key takeaways on protective factors for PVE

1. Protective factors are deeply contextualised, and therefore existing factors, assets, processes and mechanisms (formal and informal) that protect communities from VE should be mapped out at a local level, with communities and stakeholders concerned.
2. No one formula exists for identifying indicators for and strengthening protective factors, and the dynamics and relationships between them differ based on context, power differentials, gender, age, socio-economic status, etc. There are, however, key elements of commonality, including strengthening social support networks; collaboration with community organisations; enhancing community resources; increasing community safety; building collective identity based on hope, agency, altruism, cohesion, trust and security; and training and education in how to handle uncertainty and risks.
3. Taking a strengths-based approach focused on building existing resources, processes and mechanisms that protect moves the focus to building capacities, empowers and can reduce stigma. Furthermore, shifting the focus from individuals (which risks profiling) to a whole-of-society approach centred on protective factors within the community, and crucially within institutions, which are also key actors in prevention, creates space for more community-centred and effective programming.
4. It is critical to develop a nuanced understanding of the relationships between protective factors and vulnerability factors to VE in a specific context. These linkages are often complex and indirect and their relationships not binary. Contextualising these linkages becomes all the more important in VE programming where risks of profiling, stigmatisation or cohesive responses are heightened.
5. A social–ecological perspective on resilience offers a promising foundation to build upon to inform a comprehensive and holistic understanding of protective factors. In doing so, particular attention must be directed towards ensuring that attention is given not only to possibilities for change at the individual and community level, but, more particularly, to what is required at an institutional and social level.
6. Bonding, bridging and linking social capital framing offers a useful, practical and tested model for identifying, mapping and measuring protective factors related to horizontal relationships within groups, among different groups and vertical linkages with decision-makers and authorities for PVE programming.

## 10. Recommendations

1. Programmes aiming to strengthen protective factors to PVE should be grounded in a solid and contextualised analysis of the specific pressures and vulnerabilities to which communities are exposed and the existing protective capacities, resources and mechanisms within these communities. This analysis should examine the different roles in, and experiences and perceptions of, these dynamics among different men, women, girls and boys from different backgrounds. This analysis should inform the programme's ToC and monitoring framework, including the identification and prioritisation of indicators for protective factors.
2. Given the dynamic nature of VE and of protective factors for PVE, M&E frameworks for PVE programmes should allow flexibility for programme adaptation to new context dynamics or new data around VE vulnerability and protective factors. Developing M&E frameworks that capture outcomes, capacities and recourses, and processes around protective factors, as well as monitor the context, is a crucial part of this.
3. Attitudes towards violence are regularly used indicators for PVE protective factors, yet, in contexts of widespread trauma related to experience of violence and conflict, prevalence and normalisation of violence or under extreme conditions where violence is seen as the only resort, such indicators should be used with caution. Based on the context, further data on experiences of violence (domestic, GBV, community, institutional) should be collected and analysed.
4. Analysis and M&E on protective factors should include community feedback to contextualise factors and indicators identified to ensure that they are relevant and useful. Regular community consultation also helps inform programme adaptation and understanding of changing context dynamics.
5. Given the interactions between individual, community and institutional protective factors for PVE, programme design and M&E frameworks should focus on building protective environments (i.e. taking a systems approach, working at all levels) and creating spaces that are conducive to enabling and developing protective factors, as well as building individuals' and communities' capacities and resources.
6. More inter-disciplinary research and contextualised analysis of protective factors, thresholds and tipping points is needed to evidence theoretical frameworks, programme ToCs and improve the design of interventions.



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