



# **Training Curriculum Development - SSR Contribution to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)**

*Gender Mainstreaming Case Example*

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## **Training Curriculum Development – SSR Contribution to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism**

In 2018, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland mandated ISSAT to develop a course on the “Contribution of SSR to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism” (SSR-VE). The objective of the mandate was to create a 5-day course that included a strong component on the prevention of violent extremism (VE) and that covered dimensions related to human security, governance and engagement of local communities. The courses were later piloted in Bamako, Mali and in the Hague, Netherlands.

From the onset, ISSAT adopted a gender-sensitive approach to course development and delivery, given the significant link this thematic area has with community security and its relevance to the safety and livelihoods of men, women, boys and girls

### **Entry points for Gender Equality**

#### ***Gender references in the course’s founding documents***

The course’s terms of reference set explicit gender equality commitments for the course. The course design paper emphasised that *“Gender related considerations will be mainstreamed throughout the Programme. It focused on presenting evidence-based experiences reflecting the critical importance of gender sensitive analysis in addressing the unique needs of local communities, the challenges of injustice and marginalisation on different segments of society”*.

Anchoring gender equality considerations in the course’s vision and founding documents not only provided a common understanding of the importance of gender equality and SSR but also ensured that this aspect was mainstreamed throughout the course material. It also enabled the course facilitators to be more committed to the need for greater focus on gender equality within their individual sessions.

#### ***Gender parity among course team and participants***

ISSAT invested considerable efforts in aiming for equal representation within the training team. The curriculum development team, as well as the facilitation teams had equal representation between men and women.

The main challenge remained in ensuring gender parity amongst training participants, an area where ISSAT has the lowest margin for impact. In spite of its active follow-up to include women participants, at the first pilot session in Bamako, only 3 women (14%) attended the course, as a direct result of low numbers of female applicants. The second pilot session in the Hague, women’s participation rate was higher, at 47%.

A comparative analysis of both training sessions highlights the importance of gender parity for more representative, relevant and diversified discussions of security and justice reform related issues. It also fosters a stronger engagement by participants with regards to the course topics.

### ***Determining the level of gender equality awareness among participants***

ISSAT determined the level gender equality awareness among training participants through participant applications analysis and pre-course questionnaires. Accordingly, ISSAT adapted course content to the participants needs. This step is of key importance in anchoring the training material in the trainees' needs and in ensuring that the debate around gender equality matures from the introduction to basic themes and issues, towards more complex understanding of gender roles and implications on security and justice institutions' effectiveness, accountability and legitimacy.

### ***Content development***

The SSR-VE course content development efforts sought to raise awareness on the importance of developing gender-sensitive SSR programmes that are based on gendered analysis of community security aspects and strive towards gender equality in access to services, as well as, in service delivery. It aimed to change the current focus of the SSR community which is predominantly on dealing with the recruitment of men and boys in extremist groups, and rebalance it towards the often-overlooked recruitment of women and girls and on the roles that they play in the community and in security institutions.

The two pilot courses also included a session on "confidence-building between citizens and uniformed forces" which included a focus on gender equality and human-rights based approaches. This session introduced a role-play session to illustrate that women, men, girls and boys have different experiences of (in)security and included exercises to discuss the roles of different groups in preventing violent extremism. In addition, the good practices of inclusivity and representativeness were extensively discussed in SSR thematic sessions on governance, criminal justice and policing. The key message conveyed in the framework of the SSR and governance session, was on the key role gender equality plays in strengthening the effectiveness, accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of security and justice institutions. During the criminal justice chain reform session, facilitators addressed the issue of access to justice and the exclusion of specific groups due to their cultural, gender, age or socio-economic backgrounds. The session on community engagement focused on the conditions for the community violence reduction (CVR), discussing how to empower men, women, boys and girls and promote social cohesion.

### ***Course delivery***

In the delivery of its two pilot courses, ISSAT recognises the importance of developing gender mainstreaming strategies that are culturally sensitive. Understanding the context in which the training was delivered was of primary importance to the facilitators. The course's delivery approach was designed taking into consideration deep-rooted beliefs and gender sensitive values among participants. Course facilitators ensured that gender equality issues were addressed in a relevant manner to the local and regional contexts. For example, LGBTQ relevant issues were more easily addressed during the second pilot training in the Hague.

## **Recommendations**

- Set clear gender equality related outcomes, objectives and deliverables in the course's founding documents. It helps secure team-wide commitment since the onset and ensure focus on this key policy priority throughout the design and delivery of the course.
- Allocate sufficient time to explain and deconstruct the notions of gender, gender mainstreaming and gender equality. Often, participants have preconceived conceptions of what is meant by gender. Having an open discussion on what gender is, at the beginning of the course can help build a common understanding among participants and consequently enable a richer and more productive exchange during the sessions.
- Seek equal gender parity among training participants through proactively disseminating course applications among potentially relevant female participants. This can be particularly challenging, due to the low representation percentages of women in many security and justice institutions. The impact of diversity amongst training participants is very high on the level and quality of the discussions, as well as, on the strength of the message the course communicates on the organisation's commitment to gender equality.
- When gender parity is not achieved, facilitators should adopt alternative strategies to compensate for this gap. Such strategies could include the use of additional female facilitators or guest speakers, the establishment of ground rules that enable all participants to intervene without fear or intimidation, or the promotion of an open discussion among course participants on positive or negative gender-related experiences in their professional and/or personal lives.
- Establishing evidence or experience-based insights and examples prior to the course are key to the course's success. Facilitators need to increasingly refer to existing research and evidence on gender dynamics and masculinities as related to the course's topic. Cultural specificities related to gendered and social constructs within the geographical context of the course's venue also need to be taken into consideration in order to maximise the training's impact and to avoid cultural gaffes.