



Gender-Sensitive Approaches to FTF Child Returnee Management

Katherine E. Brown and F. N. Mohammed

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¹ Corresponding Author, k.e.brown@bham.ac.uk

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Gendered Experiences	4
Gender Analysis of SPRR Provision	9
Appendices	14
Bibliography	18
About the Authors	22

Executive Summary

This paper highlights the challenges for training professionals to enable gender-sensitive rehabilitation and reintegration interventions for children returning to Europe from the conflict zone in Iraq and Syria. The paper identifies the need for gender-sensitive training and responses based on a) the gendered experiences of children while in Iraq or Syria and b) the gender-blind provisions for their return to date. The paper also emphasises the importance of age-appropriate consideration based on age on arrival and departure and the length of time they spent in the conflict zone.

Keywords: Gender; Children, Reintegration; Rehabilitation; Training; Prevent; ISIS

Introduction

While there is a normative legal commitment to gender mainstreaming¹ and gender-sensitive² approaches to counter-terrorism and screening, prosecution, reintegration and rehabilitation (SPRR)³ of those affiliated with terrorist organisations in the EU, in practice this has been harder to achieve. This paper addresses the reasons for this gap between principle and practice. In doing so it establishes the need for training, and the challenges arising, when planning and implementing gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive responses in the management of child returnees⁴ and their families in the European context. It reflects on policy frameworks, normative settings, and multi-sectoral practices developed over the past four years in four countries which have had different approaches and requirements to this issue. As a result, the paper identifies policy-relevant opportunities and recommendations to enhance multi-sectoral gender-sensitive and mainstreamed responses.

The challenge

In the MENA region, approximately 1,300 children with links to European countries, and probable parental links to extremist groups remain. The increasing instability, the lack of provisions and security in the displacement camps, and the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic mean there is urgency to facilitate the return of EU citizens—especially children. The Council of Europe’s Human Rights Commissioner in July 2021 urged countries to repatriate European children stranded in internal displacement camps (IDP) in north-eastern Syria run by Kurdish forces as it was not compatible with Article 3 of the European Convention on Human rights.⁵

1 Gender Mainstreaming: “is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as girls’, boys’ and men’s concerns and experiences, an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetrated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality”. See: Economic and Social Council ECOSOC, ‘Agreed Conclusions’. A/52/3 UN, Section 2, 1997, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF>; OSAGI, ‘Factsheet: Gender mainstreaming: strategy for promoting gender equality’, 2001, https://www.humanrights.ch/cms/upload/pdf/070822_factsheet1.pdf; K. E. Brown, ‘Gender Mainstreaming, Principles, Dimensions and Priorities for PVE’, UN Women, New York, 2019.

2 A frequent error in reporting is conflating biological categories (male and female) with social categories (men and women). Gender refers to the social attributes, roles, and opportunities associated with being male and female in a society. See: OSAGI, ‘Factsheet: Gender mainstreaming: strategy for promoting gender equality’, 2001, https://www.humanrights.ch/cms/upload/pdf/070822_factsheet1.pdf. Consequently, there are no gender-neutral interventions. There are often differential gender-based outcomes in SPRR; for returnees, their families and the communities in which R&R occurs. Therefore gender-sensitive responses take into account the particularities pertaining to the lives of both women and men, while aiming to eliminate inequalities and promote gender equality, including an equal distribution of resources, therefore addressing and taking into account the gender dimension. (UNODC n/d.b)

3 This is the term used to capture the entire process and all options available to states when managing returnees. The authors fully recognise that children are not subject to prosecution in Europe upon return, but for brevity the acronym SPRR is used throughout.

4 The term “returnees” is used to describe those returning, seeking to return, or who have returned from Daesh to the EU. It does not differentiate between those who returned through their own endeavours, those who returned voluntarily with support from the EU member states and third parties, or those who are repatriated involuntarily.

5 Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, ‘Third Party Intervention in the Case of H.F. and M.F. v. France and J.D. and A.D. v. France’, Strasbourg (2021), Paragraph 17, <https://rm.coe.int/third-party-intervention-by-the-council-of-europe-commissioner-for-hum/1680a31834-e/1680a2f4ff>; Commissioner for Human Rights, Speeches: ‘Hearing of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the cases of H.F. and M.F. v. France and J.D. and A.D. v. France’, Strasbourg (2021), https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/speeches/children-rights/-/asset_publisher/v0lZfS0vWJg9/content/hearing-of-the-grand-chamber-of-the-european-court-of-human-rights-in-the-cases-of-h-f-and-m-f-v-france-and-j-d-and-a-d-v-france.

Some have suggested that there are wider security considerations – including arguments that the children represent ‘sleeper agents’ for future terrorist operations.⁶ Despite the media attention of ISIS ‘lion cubs’ being weapons-trained, Voronkov, the UN counterterrorism chief, states ‘what we see thus far is that fears of security risks have been unfounded’.⁷ Nevertheless, the commander of the US Central Command, stated that children at al-Hawl camp “are being radicalised,⁸ and unless we find a way to repatriate them, reintegrate them and de-radicalise them, we’re giving ourselves the gift of fighters five to seven years down the road, and that is a profound problem. It will be a military problem in a few years if we don’t fix the non-military aspects of it now”.⁹

The rehabilitation and repatriation of European children has been slow. According to Save the Children,¹⁰ only 25 of nearly 60 home countries have repatriated any of their nationals from north-east Syria, and repatriation operations fell from 29 in 2019 to 17 in 2020 and three in the first ten weeks of 2021, with over 85% of all child returnees being to Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Kosovo. European countries – especially France and the UK – have been criticised for their lacklustre approach to repatriation. However, given the high numbers of children and mounting international and humanitarian pressure, EU member states are likely to repatriate and rehabilitate children affiliated to terrorist organisations more speedily and in greater numbers than at present. Moreover, while international attention is on ISIS, it is possible that children born to European parents may also need repatriation from other terrorist-zones—those controlled by Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, or in light of the instability in Ukraine, for example—in the future.

Methodology

This paper was produced following a desk review of academic, think-tank and advocacy literature in English, Dutch and French published primarily since 2018; primary qualitative research, participant observation data in workshops for SPRR returnee management. The analysis focuses on Belgium, Netherlands, France, and Finland, as these represent a broad spectrum of SPRR processes, these are represented in Appendix 1, and in Appendix 2 other SPRR contexts are provided for comparison. It is worth noting that there is very little official or open-source primary documentation on the nationally adopted protocols and processes in place for supporting child returnees, and less research on the post-repatriation phase of child returnee support. Moreover, some of the information presented here was gathered under conditions of anonymity or following the Chatham House Rule. Where possible supporting citations are provided. This means in the absence of information some elements of the tables in the appendices are missing. The limit of this analysis is that it is primarily focused on those affiliated/linked to religiously inspired extremism, and future consideration will be needed for those supporting other extremist groups overseas, especially with reference to differential expectations regarding re-integration and race

6 B. McKernan and E. Graham-Harrison, ‘How women of Isis in Syrian camps are marrying their way to freedom’ The Guardian, 2 July 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/02/women-isis-syrian-camps-marrying-way-to-freedom>.

7 E. Lederer, ‘UN urges countries to repatriate 27,000 children from Syria,’ 30th January 2021, AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/counterterrorism-islamic-state-group-united-nations-syria-terrorism-60a0f9f0dfb2937d8f34fe7967def30a>.

8 There is no agreed definition, process, cause or resolution to radicalisation. Broadly it may be defined as, “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.” See: Her Majesty’s Government (HMG), ‘Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales’. Crown Stationary Office, London, Issued on 12th March 2015 and revised on 16th July 2015. There is no single root cause (University of Amsterdam 2013). Not all factors feature in every case, and there is often considerable variation.

9 McKenzie, General K. F. Jr., AEI Transcript, April 28th 2021, CentCom, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/Transcripts/Article/2589847/general-kenneth-f-mckenzie-jr-aei-transcript-april-28th-2021/>.

10 Save the Children, “Repatriation of Foreign Children from Syria Slowed due to Covid”, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/repatriation-foreign-children-syria-slowed-covid-19-new-footage-emerges-life-camps>.

discrimination. A second limitation of this analysis is that the voices and views of returnees is largely absent from this review, and there is a risk of misperceiving them as passive recipients of government led interventions.

Gendered Experiences

There are no gender-neutral interventions when the ultimate goal of returnee management programming is to improve the lives of all people - women and men, girls and boys, as well as individuals of diverse sexual orientation and/or diverse or plural gender identities. Gender-sensitive approaches are those which address gender differences regarding the needs of and risks to returnees and the communities to which they return; and do not reinforce gender inequalities in programming design and delivery.¹¹ This is important to establishing the background for SPRR. Three factors are particularly relevant to this discussion.

Gender and radicalisation pathways

The first factor is radicalisation pathways. While understanding how an individual begins their journey to Syria is not always an indicator of how to help them succeed post-ISIS, it is nevertheless helpful to understand their prior triggers and vulnerabilities and environmental factors which influence their journey. These are influenced by gender and age, as well as other social markers—class, education, ethnicity, and geography. It is helpful to think of it as a ‘gendered radicalisation’.¹² Radicalisation is understood to be the process of adopting extreme views, extreme behaviours and extreme identities.¹³

Young children, especially those born within Iraq and Syria, cannot be said to be actively radicalised. Expressing radical views and behaviours, or associating with radical identities is not necessarily reflective of their conscious agency. Rather—as with other children who have faced violent trauma—they will speak and behave in a way that they believe is approved by adults. This means child psychologists working with child returnees will need to interpret children’s initial statements and actions in light of the child’s understanding of ‘normal’. Additionally, especially with pre-teen minors, the influencers in their lives—often older siblings or parents—are the gateways to understanding their normalisation of extreme beliefs, behaviours and modes of belonging.¹⁴ Therefore, understanding the mother’s journey to Iraq and Syria is key—especially if the father was a fighter and/or had departed to the conflict zone before her departure.

Importantly, understanding the mother’s radicalisation journey should not lead to assumptions about their parenting, despite either taking their children to a conflict zone or giving birth there. FTF-affiliated¹⁵ mothers often understand their decision to travel to ISIS territory as demonstrat-

11 I. Ndung’u, and M. Shadung, “Can a gendered approach improve responses to violent extremism?” Institute for Security Studies, 2018, <https://community-democracies.org/app/uploads/2018/06/aitwr-5-1.pdf>.

12 Pearson, E. Winterbotham, E. and K. Brown, *Countering Violent Extremism: Making Gender Matter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

13 A. Silke and K. E. Brown, ‘Expert Witness Testimony’ *London Borough of Tower Hamlets v B* [2016] EWHC 1707 (Fam), 2016.

14 Project Based Collaboration (PBC) and RAN, ‘Conclusion Paper: Management of Relationships Between Child Returnees and Their Mothers’, Brussels: EU and RAN Policy Support, 2021; K. Sischka, ‘Female Returnees and their children. Psychotherapeutic perspectives on the rehabilitation of women and children from the former territories of the so-called Islamic State’, 2020, https://violence-prevention-network.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Violence-Prevention-Network-Schriftenreihe-Heft-4_EN.pdf.

15 FTF is an acronym for “foreign terrorist fighter”. We note in line with UN statements that women are more likely to be affiliates of, or associated with, foreign terrorist fighters and groups than being FTFs – although this remains a possibility. See: The Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), Analytical Brief on the prosecution of ISIL Associated Women, UN, 2019, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/files/documents/2021/Jan/cted_analytical_brief_the_prosecution_of_isil-associated_women.pdf.

ing their *good* parenting—they expected their children to be brought up in within an idealised and glorified Caliphate, or saw it as the only way to keep their family (and marriages) together if fathers insisted on travelling. Motherhood and ‘good mothering’ may be experienced differently by children of FTFs—often based on the gender ideology of ISIS. ISIS turned mothering into a duty for the group, and linked child-rearing to the idea of an ahistorical inter-generational conflict. This means in some cases that mothers prioritised love and affiliation to the group over mother-child bonds, and their affection was linked to children performatively supporting ISIS. In other cases, we see mothers strengthening bonds to the extent of co-dependency, especially where the environment is hostile and insecure—such as in the IDP camps, or during bombing of cities. In these cases, mothers will inculcate a lack of trust in others, suspicion, and fear in the children.¹⁶

With teenage minors, the network of influence is wider, including those they encounter in school, social spaces, and online spaces; we have seen cases of their radicalisation without parental influence. These wider networks of involvement are gendered: girls are more likely to be radicalised online or in a small network of peers; boys, in social spaces, often outside of mosques—favoured ‘recruiting sites’ but often without mosque knowledge or endorsement—and sometimes through hero worship—reputation and rumours surrounding those who travelled, a notion of ‘jihadi cool’, and masculine bravado.¹⁷ There are also gendered differences in how motives are expressed where frequently, boys’ narratives focus on adventure and being ‘protectors’, while girls’ narratives focus on alleviating suffering or living a ‘pure life’. In both cases political and personal motives are evident. Also, it is important to note is that teenage minors with these pathways of radicalisation became the mothers and fathers of the pre-teen minors returning now. Strict gender norms and ideology were central in ISIS propaganda, and therefore misogynist and gender-essentialist ideas also feature as part of the radicalisation journey. This gives rise to extreme ideas of male entitlement and valorising a ‘warrior-protector’ model of masculinity in teenage boys.¹⁸ For teenage girls, they express disdain for European Muslim men who allow themselves to be emasculated by the state, and express marriage expectations of being ‘provided for’. This should not be dismissed as misplaced ‘romantic’ emotions (per stereotypes of ‘jihadi brides’) but rather, aligning personal aspirations with the wider gender ideology and structures of ISIS.

How gender shapes experiences of children

The second factor to consider is that gender shapes the experiences of children in terrorism generally, and in ISIS territory specifically. ISIS ‘weaponised’ children in two senses: first, in normalising and glorifying jihad and violence in their schools; second, in encouraging children to ‘spy’ on adults, and report them for non-compliant thoughts and behaviours. However, this is mostly relevant for children who were pre-teens and teenagers during the height of ISIS rule. Younger children lived more secluded lives. Girls before the age of nine lived sheltered lives with

¹⁶ Project Based Collaboration (PBC) and RAN, ‘Conclusion Paper: Management of Relationships Between Child Returnees and Their Mothers’, Brussels: EU and RAN Policy Support, 2021; Radicalisation Awareness Network, ‘Repatriated foreign terrorist fighters and their families: European experiences & lessons for P/CVE’, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_ad-hoc_repatriated_ftfs_june_2021_en.pdf; Radicalisation Awareness Network, ‘Conclusion Paper: Dealing with returning children and their mothers from Daesh: taking stock and going forward’, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/orphan-pages/page/ran-fcs-multi-meeting-dealing-returning-children-and-their-mothers-daesh-taking_en.

¹⁷ M. Aslam, ‘Gender-based explosions: The nexus between Muslim masculinities, jihadist Islamism and terrorism’, 2012, UNU Press; A. Speckhard and M. Ellenberg, ‘ISIS and the Allure of Traditional Gender Roles’, *Women & Criminal Justice*, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/08974454.2021.1962478.

¹⁸ K. E. Brown, ‘Gendered Violence in the making of the proto-state Islamic State’, in Parashar, S. et al. (Eds.) *Revisiting Gendered States*. (Oxford: OUP, 2018), pp.174-190; K. E. Brown, *Gender, Religion and Extremism: Finding women in anti-radicalisation*. (Oxford: OUP, 2020).

limited exposure to the outside world. Attendance at ISIS schools was intermittent and variable with different mothers taking different strategies—some reducing children’s schooltime as they didn’t speak Arabic, or as a form of passive resistance against indoctrination, others sending children to schools in order to develop those skills, yet others because they followed ISIS regulations and ideology. All children experienced insecure and temporary living accommodation, frequently moving to avoid bombing, upon mothers remarrying or fathers moving roles within the territory, and when moving as refugees to and within IDP camps.¹⁹

According to ISIS fatwas, upon puberty girls were expected to marry and join their husband’s family. We have reports of child marriages, and that this figure is particularly high in IDP camps—making young European girls particularly vulnerable. For teenage girls arriving in Iraq and Syria, if they came without family, they were not allowed to leave the ‘women’s hostels’ until they married fighters. Reports of these hostels suggest they were not safe spaces, lacking basic amenities, and while the girls ‘chose’ to marry, there was limited agency. Additionally, given sexual violence is a notable tactic of terrorism, girls are at risk of sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases.²⁰

In contrast, young and teenage boys initially experienced freedom and power that they would not have experienced living in the Europe. Alongside these positive memories, boys report multiple experiences of violence—both as victims and perpetrators. Boys were also vulnerable to torture and violence if accused of homosexuality. Some boys report actively rebelling and running away from ISIS and their parents, while others embraced the ideology in schools and the surrounding environment. Teenage boys were often expected to take on the burdens of adulthood, to take on breadwinner and head-of-household roles for mothers and younger siblings if the father was absent. Boys’ identities are shaped by superficial independence, unstable and violent environments, and strict gender norms, rewarding both risk-taking behaviours and paradoxically, a burden of expectation.²¹

A significant influence on young boys and girls are the ‘recruitment arenas’ that ISIS formed—they took over 1,350 primary and secondary schools to deliver a restricted curricula to 100,000 boys and girls.²² The curriculum was limited to ‘Islamic subjects’²³ and ISIS withdrew topics that encouraged creativity and critical thinking, and which normalised gender-based hierarchies. In addition, young boys received military training, becoming the so-called ‘Cubs of the Caliphate’.

19 Project Based Collaboration (PBC) and RAN, ‘Conclusion Paper: Management of Relationships Between Child Returnees and Their Mothers’, Brussels: EU and RAN Policy Support, 2021; Radicalisation Awareness Network, ‘Repatriated foreign terrorist fighters and their families: European experiences & lessons for P/CVE’, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_ad-hoc_repatriated_ftfs_june_2021_en.pdf; Radicalisation Awareness Network, ‘Conclusion Paper: Dealing with returning children and their mothers from Daesh: taking stock and going forward’, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/orphan-pages/page/ran-fcs-multi-meeting-dealing-returning-children-and-their-mothers-daesh-taking_en.

20 The Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), Analytical Brief on the prosecution of ISIL Associated Women, UN, 2019.

21 Save the Children, “North East Syria Repatriations shows Giving Children a Future is Possible with Political Will”, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/north-east-syria-repatriations-show-giving-children-future-possible-political-will>; Save the Children, “Repatriation of Foreign Children from Syria Slowed due to Covid”, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/repatriation-foreign-children-syria-slowed-covid-19-new-footage-emerges-life-camps>.

22 G. Vale, Cubs in the Lions’ Den: Indoctrination and Recruitment of Children Within Islamic State Territory, ICSR, 2018, pp. 3, <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Cubs-in-the-Lions-Den-Indoctrination-and-Recruitment-of-Children-Within-Islamic-State-Territory.pdf>.

23 As ISIS understood these topics – therefore there is also a need to encourage the boys and girls to expand their Islamic education to provide them with alternative perspectives on their faith and practice.

In both training and schools, ISIS used a variety of techniques to normalise violence—attempting to emotionally reprogramme the children by making them watch public stonings, amputations, and beheadings, and in rare cases forcing the children to participate.²⁴ School gave boys their ‘quest for significance’ linked to radicalisation, it enabled them to see violence as a solution to their problems, and encouraged them to welcome death through propaganda.

Since the fall of the Caliphate, 700 boys and girls with links to Europe have been living in IDP camps. These gendered experiences also need to be taken into account within the SPRR process. The IDP camps are insecure places with smuggling and corruption as well as other violent and non-violent crimes, and night raids from security staff which add to a culture of fear; basic human needs are not always met. Reports suggest that within the ‘foreign nationals’ quarter there are signs of increased and more intense support for ISIS than elsewhere in the camp, prompting some women to try to ‘escape’ with their children. Some women escape through marrying local aid workers, others by relying on smugglers in a hope to get to the border. It is alleged that others ‘escape’ in order avoid repatriation or incarceration in Iraq or Syria, and remain loyal to ISIS.²⁵

The biggest gender difference in terms of experience is for boys aged 11 or above. The UN Special Rapporteur reports that teenage boys are being tried and treated as adults within Kurdish-controlled areas; not all boys are sent to the Huri Centre. Significant human rights concerns are also raised regarding the Huri Centre, as the boys are involuntarily and indefinitely detained there. They are separated from their families and not allowed to visit those living in the camps. Some European countries actively promote the distancing of children from mothers, saying mothers are a negative influence on children in the camps. The long-term implications for these boys’ relationships with their younger siblings and mothers will need to be assessed.²⁶

These experiences matter to SPRR and FTF child management and professional training; we need to be aware of differences in experience due to both gender and age of child returnees—even within the same family unit. For both boys and girls, it means being aware of gender-based violence, experiences of parental intimate partner violence and domestic violence, and the normalisation of violence in everyday lives; in adult populations, that women are at greater risk of PTSD following assaultive violence.²⁷ Professionals must be mindful that young girls present symptoms of PTSD differently to young boys—other studies show that both boys and girls respond to trauma with anger and disassociation; girls are more likely to experience depression and anxiety. While PTSD appears to be confirmed in professionals’ experiences with those children who have already returned, reports do not show attention to gender differences.²⁸ Boys are

24 G. Vale, *Cubs in the Lions’ Den: Indoctrination and Recruitment of Children Within Islamic State Territory*, ICSR, 2018, <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Cubs-in-the-Lions-Den-Indoctrination-and-Recruitment-of-Children-Within-Islamic-State-Territory.pdf>; F. Tirêj and L. Michel, ‘Hidden Battlefields: Rehabilitating Isis Affiliates and Building a Democratic Culture in their Former Territories’. Rojava Information Centre, 2020, https://rojvainformationcenter.com/storage/2020/12/RIC_HiddenBattlefields_-DEC2020.pdf.

25 Save the Children. 2021. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/when_am_i_going_to_start_to_live_final_0.pdf; B. McKernan and E. Graham-Harrison, ‘How women of Isis in Syrian camps are marrying their way to freedom’ *The Guardian*, 2 July 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/02/women-isis-syrian-camps-marrying-way-to-freedom>.

26 F. Ní Aoláin, ‘Position of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism on the human rights of adolescents/juveniles being detained in North-East Syria’, OHCHR, New York, 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Terrorism/SR/UNSRCT_Position_human-rights-of-boys-adolescents-2021_final.pdf.

27 N. Breslau, ‘Gender differences in trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder’, *The Journal of Gender-specific Medicine: JGSM* 5(1)(2002): pp 34-40, PMID: 11859685.

28 S. Koller, ‘Reintegration of Returnees from Syria and Iraq: Issue Paper from InFoEx Workshop, Berlin, December 05-06, 2019’, DGAP, Berlin, 2020, https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/reintegration-returnees-syria-and-iraq#_ftn13; K. Sischka, ‘Female Returnees and their children. Psychotherapeutic perspectives on the rehabilitation of women and children from the former territories of the so-called Islamic State’, 2020, https://violence-prevention-network.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Violence-Prevention-Network-Schriftenreihe-Heft-4_EN.pdf.

more likely to experience PTSD where they have been victims of violence, whereas girls show similar levels whether they were witness to or direct victims of trauma.²⁹ This means that although girls may have had less direct experience of violence and trauma while living in ISIS-controlled territory, we should not diminish the impact it has had upon them. Their gendered experiences of living under ISIS also matter for training purposes when seeking to manage the bonds between mothers and children in the reintegration and rehabilitation stages. For girls, it means recognising high levels of dependency on mothers; for boys, frustration with being treated as ‘children’ again. It also matters because boys may not respond well to interventions by women in the early stages of their reintegration and rehabilitation.³⁰

Gender, rehabilitation, and reintegration

The third factor where gender is influential is in the pathways to rehabilitation and reintegration. Gender includes socially constructed norms and roles which are determined by the environment in which someone lives in. Therefore, reintegration and rehabilitation processes need to consider gender norms as appropriate to the communities and families, as well as wider European societies to which children return. Expectations must be set so children do not feel forced to choose between cultural and community gender norms or those of wider society—for example, not expecting young girls to stop wearing a hijab, which might be a particularly difficult adjustment where laws or norms proscribe wearing a hijab (or other religious clothing) in schools.

Additionally, there is a general expectation of remarriage for returnee women once they have been reintegrated into their communities. This can mean further disruption in children’s lives as they may for the first time have a male role model living with them, disrupting the teenage boy’s adopted role as responsible for, and in authority over, his mother or sisters. Managing wider family dynamics is therefore an important part of the longer-term reintegration process.³¹

As already highlighted, there is a tendency to see boys on the threshold of adulthood as more threatening and riskier—and therefore less ‘deserving’ of return – than girls.³² This means increased security attention upon repatriation, which makes it harder for communities to accept boys back—or puts them at risk of future radicalisation, as radicalised communities see them as carrying their father’s radicalised status/authority.

As these three factors demonstrate, gender matters to SPRR and FTF child management and professional training because models of SPRR are currently based on adult male norms and assumptions that integration is based on employment and demonstrating activity in communities.³³ This is not appropriate for children, or their mothers. Additionally, it matters for training in terms of identifying success measures for reintegration and rehabilitation, and for reducing intensity and frequency of interventions for child FTF returnees.

29 N. Breslau, ‘Gender differences in trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder’, *The Journal of Gender-specific Medicine*: JGSM 5(1)(2002): pp 34-40, PMID: 11859685.

30 F. Tîrêj and L. Michel, ‘Hidden Battlefields: Rehabilitating Isis Affiliates and Building a Democratic Culture in their Former Territories’. Rojava Information Centre, 2020, https://rojavainformationcenter.com/storage/2020/12/RIC_HiddenBattlefields_-DEC2020.pdf.

31 Radicalisation Awareness Network, ‘Working with children returning from Daesh-affiliated territories: exploring multi-stakeholder approaches to rehabilitation’, December 2021.

32 F. Ní Aoláin, ‘Position of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism on the human rights of adolescents/juveniles being detained in North-East Syria’, OHCHR, New York, 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Terrorism/SR/UNSRCT_Position_human-rights-of-boys-adolescents-2021_final.pdf.

33 K. E. Brown, ‘Gender-sensitive responses to returnees from foreign terrorist organisations: insights for practitioners’. RAN. Brussels, forthcoming.

Gender Analysis of SPRR Provision

The above section shows that experiences of radicalisation within ISIS, and expectations of rehabilitation and reintegration, are gendered, but does not show significant variation *across Europe*—there appears to be little difference between women and children based on nationality. However, given the different institutional structures and expectations, we can anticipate difference in responses and planning. This section first situates existing responses in the wider context, it focuses four European countries' experiences and preparation for child FTF returnee SPRR—Netherlands, France, Belgium and Finland—to identify where and how training will need additional consideration of gender. We also provide information on Kenya and Somalia's response to al-Shabab, and the Caucasus SPRR efforts in relation to ISIS (please refer to Appendix 1 and 2).

Alongside the EU and UN conventions for the rights of the child, the UN Security Council in UNSCR 2396, recognised the particular importance of providing timely and appropriate reintegration and rehabilitation assistance to 'children associated with foreign terrorist fighters returning or relocating from conflict zones, including through access to health care, psychosocial support and education programmes that contribute to the well-being of children'.³⁴ There are two main UN handbooks for supporting the SPRR of children linked to terrorism.³⁵ These handbooks emphasise health and psychosocial recovery and support, developing vocational and educational opportunities and return to family and community life as essential for the long-term social reintegration of children, and promoting their human rights. UNODC notes particular challenges for the reintegration of girls—first exposure and consequences of violence are often gender-based, and sexual violence is a tactic of terrorism.³⁶ Boys may also be vulnerable to violence if they are accused of homosexuality. The report notes how teenage girls who left to join terrorist groups are often considered perpetrators of violence, not victims; they are subject to 'deep suspicion' and their children face stigma in communities, which has resulted in cases of re-recruitment. The UNOCT handbook highlights Netherlands for its child rights-centred individual cases assessments. It also highlights the specific gender-based needs of children.³⁷ Additionally, there are international obligations that EU member states hold in relation to the UN Women Peace and Security Agenda (as established in UN Security Council Resolution 1325), specifically in 2015, UNSCR 2242 called for the specific inclusion of women in devising P/CVE programmes, as there was a notable gender gap, with women primarily viewed as beneficiaries.³⁸

34 United Nations, Security Council Resolution 2396, Paragraph 36, 2017, <https://undocs.org/S/RES/2396>.

35 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 'Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System', (Vienna), 2017; United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism (UNOCT), 'Handbook Children affected by the foreign-fighter phenomenon: Ensuring a child rights-based approach', 2018, https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/0918_fff_handbook_web_reduced.pdf.

36 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 'Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System', (Vienna), 2017.

37 United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism (UNOCT), 'Handbook Children affected by the foreign-fighter phenomenon: Ensuring a child rights-based approach', pp. 70, 2018, https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/0918_fff_handbook_web_reduced.pdf.

38 K. E. Brown, *Gender, Religion and Extremism: Finding women in anti-radicalisation*. (Oxford: OUP, 2020); R. Schmidt, 'Duped: Examining Gender Stereotypes in Disengagement and Deradicalization Practices', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2020, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2020.1711586.

Initial guidelines and advice at the EU level were provided by RAN,³⁹ with additional work via the EU Project Based Collaboration.⁴⁰ However, it remains the case the majority of these efforts are focused on the immediate and short-term management of FTF child returnees, rather than long-term rehabilitation. In these support documents, it states the need for professionals to receive additional training in this area of work but this is not specified. Gender is sometimes mentioned in these documents, mostly noting that women's roles in conflict zone are complex; it is not an integrated component of these supporting documents.

These global and regional guidelines indicate the normative expectations for child gender-sensitive repatriation and SPRR. Appendix 1 shows the European countries studied and their practices. All facilitate the repatriation of orphans under the age of 12, all offer "case by case" repatriation of children under the age of 12 while parents remain in Iraq or Syria, some offer "case-by-case" repatriation of all minors, and only Finland guarantees to repatriate mothers and children together. The norm is that repatriation is facilitated by security officials and diplomatic ministries, who provide biographical and available medical information to social workers and criminal justice teams in the home country. According to interview data in the UK, the families of those repatriated have also received welfare, social and legal support from charities and advocates in Europe. Families are also reported to have deep suspicion of authorities who they perceive as having failed them in this process.

However, once repatriated all EU member states situate their SPRR processes within the wider goal of achieving a 'child wellbeing' and 'child-centric' response. In all instances, children returning from the conflict zone are *formally* treated as victims. In most cases this means a multi-agency model is followed, however in France and Belgium the process is more heavily guided by medical professionals in comparison to other countries. National policies and laws vary on prosecution of returning mothers, and whether child protection requires care for FTF children is provided by other family members, foster families, state-run institutions, or by the mother—whether in prison or not. In some cases, it is worth noting that mothers prosecuted for non-terrorism-related offenses, such as kidnap, may struggle to access reintegration and rehabilitation support services in the long-term. Additionally, all member states note that there are challenges with securing formal identification and citizenship for children who are born outside of Europe, and that this is a lengthy process (taking many years and sometimes requiring numerous legal name changes). Aside from France, the policy priority is for repatriated children to be cared for by extended families.

SPRR decisions are made within modified child welfare legal frameworks rather than relying on bespoke terrorism-related procedures. Most European countries have built on existing programmes and structures intended for homegrown radicalised individuals or minors in need of protection, and have adapted these to address the specific challenges presented by returnees.

39 Radicalisation Awareness Network, 'RAN Manual: Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families', 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/ran_br_a4_m10_en.pdf; Radicalisation Awareness Network, 'High-Level Conference on child returnees and released prisoners. Ex Post Paper', 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/high-level_conference_on_child_returnees_and_released_prisoners_en.pdf; Radicalisation Awareness Network, 'Repatriated foreign terrorist fighters and their families: European experiences & lessons for P/CVE', 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_ad-hoc_repatriated_ftfs_june_2021_en.pdf; Radicalisation Awareness Network, 'Conclusion Paper: Dealing with returning children and their mothers from Daesh: taking stock and going forward', 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/orphan-pages/page/ran-fcs-multi-meeting-dealing-returning-children-and-their-mothers-daesh-taking_en; Radicalisation Awareness Network, 'Study visit: Returned women and children – studying an ongoing experience on the ground', Ex post paper, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_study_visit_kosovo_11_10122019_en.pdf.

40 Project Based Collaboration (PBC) and RAN, 'Conclusion Paper: Management of Relationships Between Child Returnees and Their Mothers', Brussels: EU and RAN Policy Support, 2021.

In this way, FTF child (and adult) returnee SPRR is practically and conceptually linked to wider prevention efforts. For example, Denmark adapted its *Back on Track* mentoring programme for inmates and remand prisoners, and the *Aarhus Exit* programme was adjusted to apply to adult returnees – but we question their appropriateness for children. However, although coordination among professional groups is recognised as essential, according to one participant at the InFoEx workshop in 2019 on FTF SPRR there was often a lack of coordination and holistic strategy, meaning too many actors were involved, some of whom did not have sufficient understanding of the specific situation of children.⁴¹ Few entirely new institutions and/or procedures have been created in European countries to address the SPRR of child or adult returnees, although Germany’s ‘Returnee Coordinator’ role and accompanying institutional structures is one example.⁴²

It is also important to note that much of child FTF returnee management is delegated to the local or municipal level after their initial arrival. In some countries, responsibility for the children lies within the municipality of the port of arrival, while in others it is the municipality where the mother has links, or where the child’s wider family might live. This means considerable variation in approaches, community resilience to radicalisation, and information-sharing agreements and practices between agencies and professionals involved in each case, even within national contexts. It also means that national resources and training will need to be targeted within country. Based on RAN and EU PBC meetings, provision and training for professionals involved in cases at the municipal level is currently *ad hoc* and reactionary, often occurring only once children are known to be returning. This runs the risk of knowledge and expertise not being embedded in key institutions, and suitable preparations and resources not being in place.

Gender-Sensitive Lessons Identified

These country-specific provisions and accounts lead to a number of gender-based observations and gender-sensitive considerations. However, we must be cautious before generalising and drawing too many conclusions from this for three reasons. First, there is insufficient data from any one country to argue for a systematic approach to practitioner training as we cannot yet determine ‘best practice’. Second, the political will *not* to form general policy, insisting instead on a ‘case-by-case’ approach, means practitioner responses remains *ad hoc* and reactive. Third, although every country is committed to acting ‘in the best interests of children’, each maintains different ideas about what those are.

Aside from provision through RAN, the Violence-Prevention Network, and some support from think-tanks or NGOs, there is little guidance for professionals, and a lack of policy-established best principles. There is no professional guidance or training from the governing bodies of the different agencies involved, for example, from medical councils or social work bodies. Relatedly, processes and procedures in place are ‘gender-blind’—there is little specific reference to the gendered needs of girls and boys.

That management of child returnees is often driven on arrival by security concerns rather than child welfare principles is problematic. Specifically, administrative security and surveillance measures are male-dominated processes which may not be appropriate for young girls returning—especially those subjected to early marriage or gender-based violence. It’s notable that as the SPRR process have developed social welfare professionals or medical professionals appear to

41 S. Koller, ‘Reintegration of Returnees from Syria and Iraq: Issue Paper from InFoEx Workshop, Berlin, December 05-06, 2019’, DGAP, Berlin, 2020, https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/reintegration-returnees-syria-and-iraq#_ftn13

42 Radicalisation Awareness Network, ‘Repatriated foreign terrorist fighters and their families: European experiences & lessons for P/CVE’, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_ad-hoc_repatriated_ftfs_june_2021_en.pdf.

lead multi-agency decision making.⁴³ French clinical and psychological approaches aim to normalise life for the children as far as possible, similarly in Belgium ‘the hospital’ is seen as a literal ‘buffer’ to help children acclimatise to their new environment. Yet, none of the processes seek to address the underlying reasons for parent’s radicalisation, and with the exception of Finland, we generally do not see attention to gendered experiences of children in legal, policy or practitioner documents.

Practitioners also need to navigate complex relationships with wider families and communities who may remain distrustful of authorities and resist psychotherapeutic interventions. Boy returnees often struggle to identify with women, and as a result may not accept their authority, acting aggressively. In the long-term, this may result in practitioners pathologising teenage boys, seeing their behaviours as signs of continued radicalisation. Very few of the documents or provisions integrate community consultation or civil society actors into their planning—exceptionally, Strasbourg and Kosovo.⁴⁴ This can contribute to community resentment in which returning women/children are seen as threats which increase surveillance, and the bullying of children (especially boys) in schools. In other contexts, there is an increased risk of rehabilitation failure where stigma of parentage and experiences linked to terrorism are not addressed within the community to which they return, and where opportunities for meaningful reintegration of mothers are limited.⁴⁵ Existing research has found *no direct links* between childhood experience of violence and violent extremism.⁴⁶ The EU commission RAN argues that that experiences of trauma and subsequent psychosocial conditions are relevant risk factors to radicalisation not because of the trauma per se, but because of the conditions and causes of that trauma, and the extent to which an extremist narrative/recruiter might be able to connect these to their cause. RAN further remind us that very few traumatised young people turn towards violent extremism, even with the extra risk of online recruitment.⁴⁷

The training lesson is that gender-sensitive training is needed across those involved in child SPRR. There are three different groups and with different foci for such training: professional groups involved in SPRR (such as social and welfare workers, probation services, educational providers and psychological and medical professionals); policy makers of security and rehabilitation processes; civil society partners in preventing and combatting violent extremism. There is also a need for technical knowledge about the gendered experiences of child returnees to be better shared among these three groups so that this can be used to inform decision making. Third there is a need to establish gender appropriate metrics for measuring R&R among children, especially as they reach the threshold into adulthood.

43 Katherine E. Brown and F. Nubla Muhamed (forthcoming) “Logics of care and control: governing European “returnees” from Iraq and Syria” Critical Studies on Terrorism.

44 Radicalisation Awareness Network, Study Visit Strasbourg, RAN, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_study_visit_strasbourg_21-22052019_en.pdf; Radicalisation Awareness Network, Study visit: Returned women and children – studying an ongoing experience on the ground, Ex post paper, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_study_visit_kosovo_11_10122019_en.pdf.

45 ICAN & UNDP, ‘Invisible Women: Gendered dimensions of return, rehabilitation and reintegration from violent extremism’, International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and UNDP, 2019, <https://icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ICAN-UNDP-Rehabilitation-Reintegration-Invisible-Women-Report-2019.pdf>; K. E. Brown, ‘Gender Mainstreaming, Principles, Dimensions and Priorities for PVE’, UN Women, New York, 2019.

46 D. O’Driscoll, ‘Links between childhood experience of violence and violent extremism. K4D Helpdesk Report’, Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2017, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c1903f740f0b60c2c1c798a/248_Childhood_Experience_of_Violence_and_Violent_Extremism.pdf.

47 RAN, ‘A mental health approach to understanding violent extremism’, Ex-Post Paper, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-h-and-sc/docs/ran_hsc_prac_mental_health_03062019_en.pdf.

There are three key policy implications from these insights. First that the case-by-case approach means that there is dependency on existing approaches and institutions that lack the technical knowledge, gender insights and gender specific resources to support child returnees. Second, the child-centric and multi-agency approach is normalised across Europe increases the gender-balance among management teams, however knowledge sharing and trust building with male-dominated police and security services remains fragile.⁴⁸ Third, understanding and measuring acceptable risk regarding unknown future security threats should be balanced with human rights, including child and women's rights, obligations and established thresholds.⁴⁹

Conclusion: Gender Matters

This brief has established the need for gender-sensitive management of the SPRR of children with FTF (and affiliated) parents. The normative framework establishes the obligation for gender-equal provision; the gendered experiences of children (radicalisation within ISIS, and in returning communities) highlight the need for gender differences to be addressed. Consequently, it is expected that training for professionals associated with supporting children in the SPRR process also requires consideration of gender-based needs, opportunities and vulnerabilities. Given EXIT work and Prevent work to date across Europe has not been particularly mindful of gender considerations and targets adult men almost exclusively, professionals cannot simply borrow blindly from these areas.

48 Katherine E. Brown and F. Nubla Muhamed (forthcoming) "Logics of care and control: governing European "returnees" from Iraq and Syria" *Critical Studies on Terrorism*.

49 K. E. Brown, F. De Londras, and J. White. 'Embedding human rights in Countering Extremism: reflections from the field and proposals for change'. Commission for Countering Extremism, HMG. London, 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/embedding-human-rights-in-countering-extremism-reflections-from-the-field-and-proposals-for-change>.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Western European experiences with and preparation for child FTF returnee SPRR

	Netherlands	Belgium	Finland	France
Numbers remaining in September '21	120 (75-210 children) ⁵⁰	44 (22 children) ⁵¹	18-25 (13-20 children)	280 (200 children)
Policy	Case by Case for children and mothers with "links" to NL.	Case by Case. In principle repatriation <12	Mothers and children to avoid re-traumatising children; align with convention on rights of the child	Case by Case for unaccompanied children
Pre-repatriation process				
Pre-arrival data gathering	Questionnaire. "Special Envoy" facilitates	Yes – security services provide; Accompanied by a social 'support worker'	Yes – provided by special envoy.	Unknown
Multi-Agency Team established	Yes	"Taskforce"	Yes	Yes
Screening and repatriation process⁵²				
Arrival process	Case by Case	At airport child-friendly facilities, (re)unions with carers. Go to hospital for psychological and medical evaluation. Children interviewed by security services about experiences	Case by Case	Case by Case
Orphans returned or repatriated	2	42	29 (of whom: 2 under 6 years old; and 2 are orphans- the remaining 21 age is unknown)	10 (< age 10)
Pre-teens (12-) returned or repatriated (excl. orphans)	5			118 (< age 10) ⁵³
Teenagers (12+) returned or repatriated (- orphans)	0			No
Adults (18+) returned or repatriated	3	6	27 ⁵⁴	No
Prosecution/ administrative measures	Yes – against adults	Yes – against adults	Not systematic for adults – some prosecuted for other offences, e.g. kidnap	N/A

50 <https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2021/11/the-netherlands-to-try-to-repatriate-five-terrorist-suspects-from-syria/>; Save the Children (2021) When am I Going to Start to Live? The urgent need to repatriate foreign children trapped in Al Hol and Roj Camps. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/when_am_i_going_to_start_to_live_final_0.pdf; <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/turkey-repatriates-two-women-to-netherlands-over-isis-membership-1.4090014> ; Chrisje Sandelowsky-Bosman & Ton Liefwaard (2020) Children Trapped in Camps in Syria, Iraq and Turkey: Reflections on Jurisdiction and State Obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*, 38:2, 141-158, DOI: 10.1080/18918131.2020.1792090

51 Save the Children (2021) When am I Going to Start to Live? The urgent need to repatriate foreign children trapped in Al Hol and Roj Camps. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/when_am_i_going_to_start_to_live_final_0.pdf; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57870808>;

52 These number are derived from a variety of sources, and should be seen as indicative rather than absolute. Where information is not clear, or unavailable, the column is left blank. Moreover, unless stated, there is no distinction between repatriation, assisted return, self-return or defection.

53 <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/france-repatriates-7-minors-from-syria/2108756>; additional information from RAN in December 2021.

54 Save the Children (2021) When am I Going to Start to Live? The urgent need to repatriate foreign children trapped in Al Hol and Roj Camps. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/when_am_i_going_to_start_to_live_final_0.pdf; <https://intermin.fi/en/police/violent-radicalisation/returnees-from-syria>

Rehabilitation and Reintegration process				
Repatriation/ rehabilitation centre	No – but a women’s prison has been adapted for young children visiting/ living with incarcerated mothers	No – but hospital are treated as equivalent as a ‘buffer’ to normalisation and familial repatriation ⁵⁵	No	No
Voluntary participation	Unclear	Unclear	Adults - Yes	Adults - No
Return to extended family	Case by Case	Foster care for 6 months to 1 year; then if appropriate care provided by extended family	Yes- priority is to remain with mother	Children are placed in state care or foster care. Involvement of the family and the extended family in a highly controlled and monitored environment ⁵⁶
Psychological medical	Unknown	Three-month evaluations of older children	Trauma informed	Medical teams lead. based upon a three-month series of physical and mental health evaluations
Social welfare	“Child Protection plans” ⁵⁷	Unclear	SOCCA (2021)	Pre-existing services for endangered or vulnerable minors adapted
Long term/ other				
Gender considerations⁵⁸	None mentioned	None mentioned	Yes- SOCCA (2021) re: neo and post-natal care ‘be gender-sensitive’ ⁵⁹	None mentioned
Integrated in P/CVE community	No	No	No	No
Self-sufficiency and integration activities	Mostly provided via educational settings			
Additional comments	Legal judgement says no obligation to repatriate	Identity questions regarding ‘missing fathers’; using story telling to create animations for children of life in Iraq/Syria.	Concern with identity- treated as adults by ISIS, now treated as children	Has concerns about establishing legal identities for children

55 Save the Children (2021) When am I Going to Start to Live? The urgent need to repatriate foreign children trapped in Al Hol and Roj Camps. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/when_am_i_going_to_start_to_live_final_0.pdf

56 Koller, S. (2020), Reintegration of Returnees from Syria and Iraq: Issue Paper from InFoEx Workshop, Berlin, December 05-06, 2019. DGAP. Berlin. https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/reintegration-returnees-syria-and-iraq#_ftn13

57 RvdK & NCTV (2019) “Guide for dealing with minor returnees,” published by the Child Care and Protection Board (RvdK) and National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), 2019 – briefly outlined here: <https://www.kinderbescherming.nl/themas/radicalisering-van-jongeren/terugkerende-kinderen-uit-voormalig-is-gebied>

58 Those raised in documents or in discussion of country programmes.

59 “be gender-sensitive and consider the influence of religion in the everyday life of the child and the parents.” (p.46). And potential trauma relating to pregnancy, childbirth and conflicting emotions regarding the father, and by extension the father’s family (p.35). SOCCA (2021) National modelling for arranging long-term support measures for children returning from conflict zones and their family members. Helsinki [http://www.socca.fi/files/9312/National_modelling_for_arranging_long-term_support_measures_for_children_returning_from_conflict_zones_and_their_family_members_Expert_report_\(2\).pdf](http://www.socca.fi/files/9312/National_modelling_for_arranging_long-term_support_measures_for_children_returning_from_conflict_zones_and_their_family_members_Expert_report_(2).pdf)

Appendix 2. Kenyan and Somalian SPRR efforts in relation to Al-Shabaab and Caucasian SPRR efforts in response to ISIS

	Kenya (Al-Shabaab)	Somalia (Al-Shabaab)	Caucasus (ISIS) ⁶⁰
Numbers remaining in September '21	2017 -2019 4,000 children 'recruited' to Al-Shabaab –approximately 230 were girls ⁶¹		Russian delegation - 474 ⁶²
Policy	Security-driven CVE policy, Muslim community target. Amnesty since '15	Amnesty since 2009 ⁶³	Voluntary Repatriation facilitated
Pre-repatriation process			
Pre-arrival data gathering	Unknown		Registration process
Multi-Agency Team established	No – military and security services lead	No- military and security services lead	Kazakhstan- yes
Screening and repatriation process⁶⁴			
Arrival process	"Filtering" and "identifying crimes" ⁶⁵	Biometric data gathering; foreign nationals separated; interviews to screen high/low level; high level defectors/ returnees detained ⁶⁶	Arrest on arrival & police interrogation.
Orphans returned or repatriated	Since 2016, the NGO AWAPSA have assisted over 100 women and girl returnees in Kenya ⁶⁷	Approximately 520 <18s have been through rehabilitation centres; government claims 2,0 ⁶⁸	Russian Delegation: 169
Pre-teens (12-) returned or repatriated (excl. orphans)			Uzbekistan: 240
Teenagers (12+) returned or repatriated (excl. orphans)			Kazakhstan: 413
Adults (18+) returned or repatriated			Kyrgyzstan: 79
			Tajikistan 200 people registered for repatriation ⁶⁹
		Unknown	Kazakhstan: 187 adults
Prosecution/ administrative measures	Yes – despite Amnesty	Has detained children for alleged ties to Al-Shabab; has prosecuted children in military courts, for terrorism-related offenses. No juvenile justice measures in place. ⁷⁰	Majority not prosecuted. Dagestan administrative measures: 'preventative registry' list ⁷¹

60 Not all data/information is given equally across the region. There are therefore gaps/inconsistent reporting. Save the Children (2021) When am I Going to Start to Live? The urgent need to repatriate foreign children trapped in Al Hol and Roj Camps. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/when_am_i_going_to_start_to_live_final_0.pdf; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57870808>

61 UNSOM/OHCHR, (2020). 'Protection of Civilians Report...': https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SO/UNSOM_protection_of_civilians_2020.pdf: 32; Guterres, Antonio (20 January 2017). "Guterres: Thousands of child soldiers fight in Somalia". Aljazeera. Associated Press.

62 Figure derived from Kvakhadze, Aleksandre. (2020). Gender and Jihad: Women from the Caucasus in the Syrian Conflict. Perspectives on Terrorism, 14(2), 69–79. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26910408>

63 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933800/Somalia_-_Al_Shabaab_-_CPIN_V3.0e.pdf#:~:text=22%3A150%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C69%2C210%2C0%5D

64 These number are derived from a variety of sources, and should be seen as indicative rather than absolute. Where information is not clear, or unavailable, the column is left blank. Moreover, unless stated, there is no distinction between repatriation, assisted return, self-return or defection.

65 https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_fewer-kenyan-youths-joining-al-shabab/6207483.html

66 ADF, 'There is a Way Out' (Returning to the Mainstream), 10 May 2017 - <https://adf-magazine.com/2017/04/there-is-a-way-out/>

67 ICAN & UNDP (2019). Invisible Women: Gendered dimensions of return, rehabilitation and reintegration from violent extremism. International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and UNDP. <https://icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ICAN-UNDP-Rehabilitation- Reintegration-Invisible-Women-Report-2019.pdf>: 72.

68 <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/reporters-diary-heal-somalias-former-child-soldiers-heal-nation>

69 Could include children in this number.

70 <https://cpr.unu.edu/publications/articles/disengaging-children-in-violent-extremist-contexts.html>

71 This list is linked to the Profuchet list that was successfully challenged in court in 2017. Those on the list are detained at checkpoints and borders, sent to police stations and subjected to humiliating procedures to gather bio-data; limiting freedom of movement and association.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration process			
Repatriation/ Rehabilitation centre	Negligible rehabilitation and reintegration services	Low-risk group transferred to rehabilitation centres; those 18 years are placed in separate centres ⁷²	Kazakhstan – ‘adaptation centres’
Voluntary Participation	Unclear	No	
Return to extended family	No	No	Kazakhstan – yes, release from ‘adaptation centres’ rely on ‘families’ returning to live with family/friend
Psychological medical	HIV infections a concern	Social-Psychological counselling offered	
Social welfare	Business start-up costs reduced; soft loans offered	Vocational training Government organised EXIT process for men; NGOs run program for children. ⁷³ None exist for women ⁷⁴	All - activities targeted at youth are primarily ‘displacement activities’; employment
Long term/ other			
Gender considerations⁷⁵	None mentioned ⁷⁶	None mentioned	None mentioned
Integrated in P/CVE community	Community NGOs provide space for discussions; support R&R and integration ⁷⁷	IOM run a community-based R&R programme supported 475 ‘women associated with armed forces and groups’ ⁷⁸	
Self-sufficiency and integration	Limited Economic opportunities; educational barriers; stigma; mothering responsibilities	Similar to Kenya	Tajikistan –expectation for easy reintegration Kazakhstan - Clean passports given to reduce stigma
Additional comments	Lack of trust, fear of reappraisals> state led programmes underutilised	Youth aged 10–15 years as Al-Shabaab’s primary recruitment targets & SNA also accused of recruiting children ⁷⁹	Religious support offered in Kazakhstan

72 Gjelsvik, I. M. (2019). *Should I stay or should I go?: Security considerations for members leaving al-Shabaab in Somalia*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep19876>

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About the Authors

Katherine E. Brown

Katherine E. Brown is a Reader in Religion and Global Security, at the University of Birmingham, UK. She specialises in gender, jihad and counterterrorism. Her research engages directly with public debates on security, radicalisation, Islamophobia and women's rights. Her policy work has been funded by UN Women, UNDP, the British Council, Research England, and NATO. She has published widely including *Gender, Religion and Extremism* (2020); and *Gender-Mainstreaming Principles and Priorities in PVE* (2019).

F. Nubla Mohammed

F. Nubla Mohammed is undertaking an MPhil at the University of Birmingham on the topic Sufi responses to violent extremism. Since 2018, she has also been working in the CVE sector, as an analyst and consultant for Moonshot CVE and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Her research / practice specialism is in violent extremism in the Maldives and South East Asia. She is currently working on a project on takfirist hate speech in the Maldives.

International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT)

T: +31 (0)70 763 0050

E: info@icct.nl

www.icct.nl