

## Mid-term workshop report for the project

### **“Towards more effective human security approaches in the context of the emerging threat of violent radicalisation in Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia”**

Marriott Hotel, Amman, Jordan  
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## Summary

On 12 August, 2018, the WANA Institute organised the mid-term workshop for the project “Towards more effective human security approaches in the context of the emerging threat of violent radicalisation in Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia,” which was held at the Marriott Hotel in Amman, Jordan.

The workshop aimed at critically discussing research findings collected through field research in 18 communities across the three countries, and to seek guidance and input from regional and international experts and practitioners on the challenges impacting the project’s progress.

The workshop brought together twenty key experts and practitioners from the region and beyond to allow for a comparative discussion during the workshop. Participants included consortium members (Mercy Corps and the Arab Institute for Security Studies); in-country partners (the Jasmine Foundation in Tunisia and the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies in Lebanon); regional experts from UNDP, UNWomen, and the British Council; international practitioners like Human Security Collective, the Strong Cities Network, Generations for Peace, and Action Aid; and local youth activists.

This report offers an overview of main themes discussed and elaborates on most important challenges faced by the research teams.

## Session One: Introducing the project

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The first session introduced the project for external experts and practitioners to explain the rationale and objectives of the project before seeking their critical assessment and evaluation of project findings. Project objectives, time frame, country focus, research activities, and expected research output were presented. The project objectives are:

1. To produce an evidence base on the (i) effectiveness of human security approaches in promoting security, conflict resilience and countering violent radicalisation, (ii) impact of security-centric policies on the implementation and effectiveness of human security approaches (iii) impact of security-centric policies on community conflict dynamics and violent radicalisation triggers.

2. To bring together community stakeholders, security policy-makers and development-humanitarian practitioners to develop an evidence-based theory of change for human security that better contributes to the new threat architecture.
3. To translate this theory of change into concrete, evidence-based recommendations for human security policy and programming, and articulate practical measures for how community stakeholders can participate in policy development on human security and counter-extremism.
4. To build the capacity of policy-makers, programmatic agencies, community stakeholder representatives and donors in four countries to design and implement human security approaches that complement counter-extremism efforts.

The working definition of human security used throughout field research in local communities was also presented and discussed. An Arabic definition was selected that captures the focus of the concept on the state of safety and ability to avert threats, develop a sense of belonging to communities, and having human needs in the seven pillars of human security met.

In response to this overview of the project, participants raised important points related to the project objectives, design, and follow up out-reach and/or advocacy activities.

## Influencing Policy Makers and Security Actors

One of the project research goals is to provide an evidence base on the impact of human security approaches on countering violent extremism, and on the impact of state-centric security policies on implementing human security programmes and CVE policies. The point was raised on the actual impact of this research on influencing change among policy makers and the security forces to transform current policies in a way to enhance resilience to conflict in the region and to enable security measures to contribute positively to CVE efforts.

This potential shortfall in the project design was acknowledged, and is impacted by two factors: influencing policy change and monitoring it requires a different project design, duration, and partnership structures with related stakeholders that allows for trust-building and acceptance of research findings, and then influencing policy change. The WANA Institute, as a leading partner in this project, is a policy think tank working to provide the evidence-base to policy makers and key stakeholders, but has no tools to monitor the implementation of recommended policy changes. But it was also acknowledged that certain police units, like the community policy unit in Jordan, are more approachable than other security actors. Now, after completing a third of field research, is the right time to approach this unit to transfer research knowledge on regular basis and introduce a policy dialogue on community policing and how it impacts CVE measures and human security programmes locally.

## Marginalised Communities

One participant questioned the research focus on marginalised individuals in the 18 Focus Group Discussions of this project, when research findings point to well-educated and rich individuals who choose to join extremist groups for ideological reasons. For him this focus is probably misplaced.

Although there is research evidence to this point, research findings from North Africa and Jordan has repeatedly pointed to the incubating local environments that encourage and facilitate the transition to radicalisation and then violent extremism. These local environments are usually marginalised communities. It is both contextual socio-economic drivers and psychological conditions that contribute to marginalisation and the sense of alienation from one's community. It is for this reason that this project focuses on communities as units of analysis instead of individuals. The project examines the nexus between human security, CVE, and state security policies on the community level.

The 18 communities studied in this project also include control communities to allow for the comparison between marginalised radicalisation hotbeds and other communities. Research findings from the latter will allow the research teams to assess whether marginalisation is perceived differently in radicalisation hotbeds, and will allow for a comparative analysis on how the role and impact of human security and security policies are perceived.

## Session Two: Preliminary Findings

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In this session, the research teams shared key findings based on field research conducted so far in the three countries. These preliminary insights offered participants a sense of the complications encountered when attempting to examine the dynamics dictating the relation between state security policies and human security programming in relation to CVE efforts in the region.

### Ambiguous and Evolving Concepts

Throughout research activities, it became evident that research participants, whether key stakeholders, participants in FGDs, or workshops, lack a concrete understanding of the term human security. Instead, participants talk about human insecurity. Research participants are unable to articulate their concept of human security but are instead able to affirm its importance by discussing problems arising from its absence. Although they may have not heard the term human security before, they are able to understand it and relate to it when introduced to them.

Similarly, research participants in local communities define violent extremism in various ways. It is often defined as drug use, riots, and even domestic violence. The research team in Lebanon noted that people define violent extremism in the way they experience it and not in the way researchers define it. This is also true for Jordan and Tunisia, with minor variations.

Local diversities also impact people's understanding of these concepts. For example, in Lebanon the sectarian makeup of the six communities studied under this project affect the way people define state security, their trust in state and non-state actors, and perceptions on credibility of these actors particularly that most security providers in Lebanon are not affiliates of the state.

### Comfort with Hard Security

In exploring the relation between state-centric security policies, human security, and CVE for this project, state security policies are defined as hard security *measures* like arrests, raids, and

attacks. But hard security also includes a legislative aspect like anti-terrorism laws or cybercrime laws that criminalise individuals for posting or ‘liking’ posts that advocate violent extremist groups, etc.

Generally, there is a level of acceptance of state security measures aimed at countering violent extremism in local communities. For most participants across the three countries these measures are necessary at times of threat, and can guarantee a level of security for civilians. In Lebanon, Syrian refugees are also welcoming of these measures to guard against any local or sectarian unrest. In Jordan, state security measures are believed to limit the scope and reach of human security programmes implemented by local CBOs in Jordan, and to contradict attempts for political reform in the country. Nevertheless, generally the public accept state security policies as a necessary measure to face current threats.

## Perceptions of the State

Research findings also point to the mistrust in state institutions as providers of human security for citizens. In Jordan and Tunisia, the focus of this discussion was on preferential treatment for the capital and marginalisation in other governorates in terms of available services in health and education and in resource allocation from the central government. For Jordanians in Tafleh, in southern Jordan, Amman is perceived as the center of human security programming. Upcoming field research in Amman will highlight any national variations on these perceptions and whether Ammanites agree with this understanding. The perception that the further you are from Amman the less human security you attain, have intensified feelings of mistrust in the government and anger against state institutions.

In Lebanon, participants feel that the state’s authority is absent and that its jurisdiction is limited to the provision of social services only. Therefore, people resort to political and local leaders to address their needs. This ‘clientalistic network’ undermines the potency of the government and leads to lower access to services. In this context, the army has become a visual representation of state power towards which anger is sometimes directed.

Similar views are found in Tunisia. The state’s inefficiency in providing services and equal treatment for citizens has led to violent extremism through a web of social and economic drivers in addition to corruption and marginalisation. This absence of the state in marginalised areas negatively impacts citizen’s belonging to the state and encourages the formation of marginalised identities.

## Marginalisation and Belonging

Findings from Tunisia offer a clearer insight into how marginalisation leads to the formation of a new collective identity. Raw data indicates two forms of belonging: Self-exclusion belonging (الانتماء الاستبعادي) and fellow-belonging (الانتماء التابع). The former refers to rejection of all that is state-run, owned, and managed. In this way, marginalised areas exclude themselves from the formal structure of the state and develop a belonging to all that antagonises it.

The second type relates more to areas at the periphery of luxurious areas/cities. At these peripheries, a sense of belonging develops that associates this periphery to the luxurious area nearest to them. It is here where fluctuations in urban planning and related services are most felt. As a result, the sense of exclusion from the state develops even further. Radicalisation and migration to areas controlled by extremist groups is one response among others (like drugs, illegal migration, and suicide) to this sense of marginalisation. As mentioned earlier, research on extremism in the region refers to local incubating environments, in this sense marginalisation contributes to the creations of ‘areas of monstrosity’ that are hotbeds of angry and disgruntled citizens vulnerable to extremist recruitment.

## Session Three: Research Challenges

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In this session, the research teams and participants discussed implementation challenges including those that pertain to conceptual ambiguity and those related to logistics and access to research participants.

### Ambiguous Concepts

As discussed earlier, most research participants could not define human security or violent extremism. Although they understood the practical implications of human insecurity, articulating a definition of human security was a challenging task for participants. This impacts progress and the time needed to conduct Focus Group Discussions and workshops. For this reason, the research teams find it important to offer participants –particularly in the 36 workshops of this project- an introduction to the concepts of human security and violent extremism before examining local definitions, challenges, and the needed re-conceptualisation.

There is also a general fear from discussing state-security policies. People hesitate to voice their opinions and it takes more effort from the facilitators to create inroads to encourage them to either criticise these measures or express their reservations on these policies.

### Connecting Human Security to CVE

One methodological shortfall in the guidelines for the workshops and FGDs -that were developed by WANA for this project- is the abrupt transition from human security to violent extremism. Field research activities start with a discussion on human security, areas of human security, and gaps in human security programming in local communities. Then the discussion is designed to proceed to discuss drivers of violent extremism (in an attempt to link shortfalls in human security to drivers of VE). However, the research teams noted that this transition confuses participants who are unable to see the link and instead feels like a complete transition to a new topic.

Since this problem is most felt in workshops, the research teams in Lebanon and Jordan have developed presentations/brief lectures explaining the concepts of human security, linking it to VE, CVE, and state security policies in order to explain how these concepts are interlinked. These are to be used in workshops to be conducted after the mid-term workshop. The research

team in Tunisia is yet to conduct workshops, and this will help avoid this earlier shortfall in the design of the workshops.

## Security Sector Participation

Participation of security actors and police officers is necessary for answering the research questions and triangulating the research findings. But there are three types of challenges related to their participants. First, the security sector is not open to participation in field research and even when willing to participate on personal informal level, they ask not to represent their institutions. In some cases, this requires home visits instead of participation in workshops or interviews. Second, when certain police actors –like community police unit in Jordan- are willing to take part in workshops, their availability is often subject to the general security condition in the community or on whether there is an emergency on the day/time when field research is scheduled for. In some occasions, they cancelled their participation last minute. Third, the participation of police officers in some workshops has intimidated other participants who were unwilling to express their views openly on the state or on state security policies.

## Generic Policy Recommendations

Research participants offer generic policy recommendations. Although participants in interviews and workshops are local actors, leaders, and CBO and NGO actors, their limited understanding of human security as a concept limits their ability to offer specific action-oriented policy recommendations. This is also related to the general sense of cynicism towards similar research projects where concerns of research participants did not translate into any change on the ground in terms of services offered. Participants confuse research projects with implementation projects.

In addition, most policy recommendations are directed towards the state. The perception that the state/government is responsible for gaps in human security programming and has for years marginalised its own citizens, has led to the conviction that it is the responsibility of the state to correct these wrongs and to fill in the programming gaps across all areas of human security (health, food, employment, education, political inclusion, and women empowerment). Overall, the field research activities are taken as an opportunity to express anger and frustration towards governments' inefficiency instead of offering concrete policy recommendations.

## Managing Expectations

The research teams discussed the challenge of managing the expectations of research participants, who expect services in return for their time and participation. Most participants confuse the workshops and FGDs with training sessions, and expect to be educated on the subject matter. Therefore, it is important to include educational elements even in the form of a short lecture and/or interactive learning styles during the workshops.

In most cases, participants also look for a tangible output in their own communities. In the workshop, the potential for using the research methodology as a participatory action research tool was explored to meet these expectations. But research teams agreed that this project is designed as a research project and have already completed more than a third of its field research



activities. Partners are free to explore follow-up implementation projects that are based on the findings of this research.

## Conclusion

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The workshop ended with a closed third session for project research teams to discuss better mechanisms for progress updates, workshop design, and qualitative analysis. Tips and advice were shared among partners about the objectives of workshops compared to the FGDs and the interviews, tools to better engage participants, and ideal numbers for FGDs. The tools to be used for qualitative analysis were also agreed on.

This report will be disseminated to project partners and experts and practitioners who attended the workshop for their feedback, input, and reference.