



CONNEKT

COUNTRY PAPER ON MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS

Drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism
in the light of community dynamics in MENA and the Balkans

JORDAN

Barik Mhadeen, Aisha Bint Faisal, Jadranka Štikovac Clark



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Karak area

Barik Mhadeen, Aisha Bint Faisal, Jadranka Štikovac Clark

Introduction

One of the conclusions of the macro-level analysis in Jordan was to look beyond specific spaces or territories, and to identify relational frameworks between drivers, interventions, and shifting institutional patterns arising in response to violent extremism (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021). Specifically, that research highlighted that economic deprivation is the most prominent driver impacting dynamics of violent extremism (VE) in Jordan (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021). Same research confirmed that this driver has caused, among other impacts, a shift from vulnerability-based approaches to prevention of violent extremism (PVE) to the approaches which rely on the resilience of young people. Another change was noted regarding the geographical focus: the majority of early institutional PVE interventions have taken place in areas that were considered “underprivileged” or “hotspots” for radicalisation (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021).

4 These macro-level findings explain the rationale behind the selection of this case study. The selection of Karak as a location for this case study was not based on the geographic or territorial setting, but rather on the breadth of relational frameworks in this governorate in terms of interplay between drivers, interventions, and social interaction contexts. To do so, this case study opted for understanding what affects vulnerable young people at risk of radicalisation, both male and female. In its conclusion, the case study sheds light on emerging shifts in the local community that offer a fitting venue for understanding micro-path interventions. Overall, the case study tries to explain why this specific community of Karak, with its prominent tribal context, has not been affected more significantly by radicalisation and violent extremism despite the evident presence of key macro-drivers such as economic deprivation and territorial inequalities.

CASE STUDY CONTEXT

The macro-level analysis revealed that a more in-depth investigation of the changing patterns in the understanding of causes and addressing violent extremism in Jordan is needed, specifically in the communities that are under-studied yet are of high relevance to the topic. Different contexts specific to Karak prompted the choice of this location, and a specific sub-community within, for this case study.

To start with, up until 2016, violent extremism literature and research in Jordan did not show Karak as a flashpoint or a location whose population expresses support for violent extremism. Since, the levels of radicalisation have gone up in the country. The available albeit scarce existing data, (Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, 2018) including a nationwide sociological analysis of terrorism in Jordan, has shown Karak on the list of “radicalisation hotspots”, along with the “traditional” locations, such as Ma’an, Zarqa, and parts of Amman (Al-Assaf, 2018). The radicalisation levels continued to rise (Al-Shawabkeh and Ghorabi, 2016),

prompting the need for more evidence-based interventions. Whilst not considered a trigger of radicalisation, the December 2015 incident in which Daesh (ISIS) took Royal Jordanian Air Force Pilot Lt. Muath Al-Kassasbeh as a hostage is worth mentioning, as the widely shared images of Lt. Al-Kassasbeh's brutal murder resounded throughout his hometown of Karak. The 2016 deadly terrorist attack (Deutsche Welle, December 19, 2016) on city's famous Castle, for which ISIS claimed responsibility (MCD, December 20, 2016), revealed that four of the perpetrators were residents of the city, raising concerns about the extent to which radical ideology and extremism implanted itself among the younger population: at the time of the attack, all perpetrators were between 28 to 30 y/o (7iber, December 19, 2016; Al-Shawabkeh and Ghorabi, 2016).

In Jordan, Karak city has long been known for its history of political activism, with politics exercised through the tribes, the most important and powerful social political structure in the governorate (Gubser, 1985). Although the recent years have seen tribal powers, including their voice, decline both geographically and thematically (Alterman, 2019), their pull in Karak is still important, and their input listened to. It is, therefore, a fitting model to explore in the context of Karak, the impact of drivers such as political grievances, or educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities – an impact that might threaten the “social safety net” which has long covered Jordan's tribal South and ensured its stability (Todman, 2019).

Furthermore, Karak has a relatively significant Christian population, with a solid, historical record of Christian-Muslim's peaceful coexistence and interdependence (Luck, 2017). Examining the role of religious reference through the institutions or the activation of religious affiliations as a factor that can enhance or dismantle the processes of polarisation in regard to “other” groups or religious communities, is another reason for choice of Karak as a case study on the meso level. This is in line with the macro-level findings that showed the state's strong focus on the dimension of religion/ideology in its conceptualisation of and response to the PVE.

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Likewise, macro-level analysis findings disclosed the state's strong focus on the dimension of security. In this area, too, Karak provides a compelling case to explore, particularly in relation to the traditional state-centred security vs the provisions of human security (economic, political, social, etc) (Bandokji and AlHaj, 2019). The city has been central to the 1989 events in Jordan, as it was the second city to rise and join the protests originated in Ma'an, following the price increase of fuel, other commodities, and of food products (Andoni, 1989). Similarly, the city was occupied by the army in light of the 1996 so-called “bread riots”, and was put under a strict curfew for 11 days, with hundreds of detainees arrested in connection with the protests (Andoni and Schwedler, 1996).

Finally, since the emergence of Arab Spring, Jordan has witnessed an active tribal Hirak—social movement (Economic Research Forum, 2021), and the Hirak in Karak provides an additional venue for investigating the meso-level dynamics relating to political and social participation, with the increasingly difficult socio-economic situation including unemployment and poverty offering a leeway for examining the employment and labour relations. The challenging socio-economic context has left a mark on the city, and has and is manifested through the limited opportunities (Milton-Edwards, 2018) for young people, a prevailing inequality (Economic Research Forum, 2021), and a difficult relationship (Yom and Al-Khatib, 2018) between the state and the citizens.

Research methodology

RECAP OF RESULTS FROM MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The macro-level research noted several studies that highlight the role of economic deprivation as a push factor towards joining violent extremist organisations (VEOs), with state and non-state respondents affirming this as the most prominent driver affecting the radicalisation process of Jordanians (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021).

Results of the macro-level research also showed that the territorial inequalities are significant driver in Jordan, in particular in the situation which is marked by increasing unemployment rates and public debt that affects the majority of population. A real concern, when coupled with economic deprivation, these inequalities produce effect that is noticed in at least two ways. First, certain areas are being more targeted with prevention or countering of violent extremism (CVE) programming than others, meaning that these territories were also the ones either experiencing more distress due to these inequalities and/or are being categorised as “radicalisation hotspots”. Second, the by-product of the first effect—excessive targeting of territorial inequalities in certain areas—has been the mushrooming of local actors directly linked to the abundance of funds that were channelled to P/CVE efforts in these locations. In turn, this has encouraged the creation of numerous community-based organisations (CBOs) that “neither had the previous PVE expertise nor the level of sensitivity” needed to deal with such an issue (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021).

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MESO-LEVEL ANALYSIS ADDED VALUE

This level of research allows for an in-depth analysis of drivers of violent extremism on a community level. Coupled with data obtained through the previous macro-level research, the resulting scheme helps in building a multi-dimensional map of such drivers. The analysis also provides an opportunity for combining and testing the seven drivers pre-identified by CONNEKT with a set of contexts of social interaction. This combination cements a key premise of the CONNEKT project that relates to the radicalisation and violent extremism being approached and analysed as a social phenomenon that develops from contexts of social interaction and intersections between individuals, ideas, and contexts. The added value of this meso-level analysis can be summarised as follows:

- The study allows for an analysis of VE drivers that affect young people in a community deemed as a “hotspot”. It should contribute to better understanding of territorial inequalities as an important, confirmed driver that is very present and prominent between the central region of the Kingdom, with capital Amman in its heart, and the southern region with the city of Karak which is a focus of this research.
- This meso-level research also enables primary data collection with a young demographic, children and youth 12 to 18 y/o and beyond, which is a real added value not only of this case study and research in Jordan, but of the CONNEKT project in general. Enabling the discussions on drivers of violent extremism with young people who have been on a brink or had crossed the invisible and often hidden boundaries that led them to violence, is a contribution to the field in which the

majority of learning comes from “recycled” secondary data as opposed to a very little direct contact with communities, youth included.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study examines drivers of violent extremism that have affected or are affecting young people in a southern hub of Jordan known for its political activism, multi-religious identity, and since recently, more radicalised views of some of its inhabitants. It specifically looks at youth of certain age and “at-risk”, to gain insights into the drivers that have either pushed them or could be pushing them, and others, towards violent extremism. The research seeks to benefit from the exclusive access the research team has secured by engaging a group of “at-risk” youth, selected based on the level of exposure to or engagement with violent extremism. As these youths have embarked, with different speeds and outcomes, on the radicalisation path, their insights and knowledge on several dimensions: their access to leisure and cultural activities, the impact of territorial inequalities or economic deprivation, or the extent of technological use and digital socialisation, should help us clarify the interlinkages between these different factors.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Building on the findings of CONNEKT’s macro-level research phase, a sensitive framing of the research was applied, and has included looking at the groups of youth between 12 and 30 y/o who were at risk of joining VEOs. The key criteria for their selection were defined as:

1. Having attempted to cross the Jordanian or other borders (towards Syria) to join VEOs,
2. Having been detained in Jordan for expressing support for and/or desire to join VEOs,
3. Having expressed support for and/or desire to join VEOs but faced no detention, and
4. Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate religious ideologies.

SAMPLING DESCRIPTION

For this case study, the selection was carried out through a mixture of purposive sampling and snowballing sampling strategy. Applying this strategy meant that the challenge of accessing hard-to-reach youths could be overcome by asking initial research subjects and their personal relations to introduce the research team to other subjects (who meet the criteria and are willing to get involved in the research) through referrals.

The case study’s primary data was collected using various Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The FGDs were conducted with two groups of in total 18 participants, out of which five were female. The first FGD was conducted with eight “at-risk” male youth participants, while the second FGD was conducted with 10 “at-risk” youth with five male and five female participants. In spite of best efforts invested in selecting the research respondents that correspond to the required age bracket, the access to research respondents, as well as the respondents’ willingness to take part in this research in view of its sensibility, limited the representation, resulting in the age range for the first focus group discussion being between 20 to 46 y/o, whilst the age of respondents in the second focus group discussion ranged between 20 to 29 y/o.

The discussions were conducted in a semi-structured manner, giving the respondents the opportunity to freely shape the conversation. Throughout the FGDs, notes were taken and compiled, and then used to identify recurrent and emergent themes and patterns based on the respondents’ answers. Transcriptions

of FGDs recordings were used to compare the notes and confirm the identified themes, both manually and through the Atlas.ti.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, a series of phone call consultations was carried out with the local partners to better understand the local scene and youth who have been exposed to/involved in radicalisation processes in Karak, liaise on research authorisations, communicate the research objectives and the criteria for selection, and generally prepare all aspects of data collection. This initial phase of research served as an insightful mapping exercise in which the primary data collected through several conversations with the local partners helped in dividing of the groups, and choice of key individuals to invite in each group.

TABLE 1. Focus Group Discussion 1 with Youth in Karak

Respondent's Code	Age/ Sex	Criteria
FMR1	37 (M)	Having expressed support for and/or desire to join VEOs but faced no
FMR2	33 (M)	detention
FMR3	43 (M)	Having expressed support for and/or desire to join VEOs but faced no
FMR4	36 (M)	detention
FMR5	26 (M)	Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate
FMR6	20 (M)	religious ideologies
FMR7	42 (M)	Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate
FMR8	46 (M)	religious ideologies
		Having expressed support for and/or desire to join VEOs but faced no
		detention
		Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate
		religious ideologies
		Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate
		religious ideologies
		Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate
		religious ideologies

TABLE 2. Focus Group Discussion 2 with Youth in Karak

Respondent's Code	Age/ Sex	Criteria
FFR1	22 (F)	Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate
		religious ideologies
FFR2	22 (F)	Having expressed support for and/or desire to join VEOs but faced no
		detention
FFR3	22 (F)	Having expressed support for and/or desire to join VEOs but faced no
		detention

FMR4	22 (M)	Having been detained in Jordan for expressing support for and/or desire to join VEOs
FMR5	29 (M)	Having attempted to cross the Jordanian or other borders (towards Syria) to join VEOs
FFR6	28 (F)	Having attempted to cross the Jordanian or other borders (towards Syria) to join VEOs
FMR7	20 (M)	Having attempted to cross the Jordanian or other borders (towards Syria) to join VEOs
FMR8	28 (M)	Having been detained in Jordan for expressing support for and/or desire to join VEOs
FMR9	20 (M)	Having been detained in Jordan for expressing support for and/or desire to join VEOs
FFR10	28 (F)	Having gone through informal processes of adopting more moderate religious ideologies

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

In conducting the research, the main challenge was first identifying then getting access to and acceptance of youth that are deemed to be “at-risk”. This was due to the sensitivity of discussions with youth who were involved with VEOs, and the security access and clearance to conduct FGDs with them. The research team also faced the challenge of presenting the research and its objectives in a simple, neutral, and context-sensitive manner that had to ensure that there will be:

1. No (further) stigmatising of the research participants involved (Do No (More) Harm), and
2. No misunderstanding as to the added value of their participation in this project, without any compensation before offered in return.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

To ensure confidentiality and privacy of the data, the information and data collected were kept and handled with utmost privacy. The data collected was protected on encrypted digital drives that only researchers have access to. Answers were anonymised and all personally identifiable information from the notes was deleted. The participants’ identity was kept confidential/coded to ensure anonymity, with this treatment/process being explained to the respondents prior to obtaining their consent. To ensure autonomy and voluntariness, a consent form was thoroughly explained and shared with participants ahead of the focus group discussions. The data collectors/researchers explained research purpose as well as the research ethics measures verbally prior to the start of data collection process.

Meso-level dynamics

SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE RESULTS OF THE MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The findings of this case study point to the two contexts of social interaction that are directly linked to the results of the macro-level analysis. These are:

- **Cultural and leisure activities:** artistic and cultural expressions as mechanisms of intervention and reflection on social realities, and leisure activities of a diverse nature (cultural, educational, sports, artistic, etc.), which constitute specific contexts of social interaction for young people, and
- **Employment and labour relations:** unemployment as a factor that limits access to a decent level of social welfare.

Regarding the first social context, the respondents acknowledged general lack of cultural and leisure activities for youth to get involved with. One respondent recalled how in 1980s and 1990s, Karak used to have the “Sons of Karak Social Club”, categorised as a civil society space in the city centre which youth would join to partake in a host of social and leisure activities.¹ The respondent noted that what used to set this space apart was the fact that it was genuinely a venue open for all, “leftists, Baathists, communists, tribals”,² who would all attend the club regularly, and engage in discussions and sometimes “quarrels”³ about the general situation in the governorate and in Jordan at large. Today, the lack of such physical spaces in the city centre makes it logistically difficult, and costly, for an average young Karaki citizen to commute and participate in activities regularly—and even if such a space was available, the respondents agreed the quality of interactions would not have been the same, as the shrinking and contrived civil space meant the discussions and activities could not be “intellectually stimulating” or “political” as they used to be.⁴ It is not the first time that the research team has heard the mention of the shrinking civil space across Jordan: the macro-level research respondents from the group of non-state actors discussed the compound effects of freedom of speech restrictions and of COVID-19, resulting in an increasingly narrow civic interactions and shrinking space for civic activism.

Discussions about the second context of social interactions, the one of employment and labour relations, were particularly significant. In the macro-level analysis, the economic deprivation was singled out as the most prominent driver affecting the radicalisation process of Jordanians (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021). But in these meso-level discussions, predominant position was plainly clear as of the beginning: as opposed to the traditional reference to the “culture of shame” (Azzeh, 2014) which links the existing high unemployment rates with the vast majority of Jordanians shying away from non-governmental jobs and handicrafts, the respondents confirmed the existence of “culture of fixed salary”. This, they explained, is people’s preference for a fixed income, albeit small, which is usually provided by the public-sector jobs as opposed to jobs in other fields including non-governmental, the technical, and vocational fields in

¹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

particular, which were considered as risk-taking options that offer a higher but likely unsustainable pay.⁵ In further explanation why these jobs are not sustainable, the respondents referred to the non-profit sector which offers quite a lot of employment opportunities but all short and project-based, which end once the donor funding has been spent.

Additionally, the respondents unpacked the impact of employment and labour relations on the broader individual-society relations. Specifically, they linked the impact of these relations to the high expectations the society places on young people, namely on men. As participants of one of the FGDs said, "youth are placed under the hammer of the lack of employment opportunities and the anvil of their pressuring and demanding families"⁶ who all have high expectations of them. These pressures become higher if the youth are educated. Example was given of the families in Karak which often resort to selling land/property or borrowing money for education of their children, young men in particular, with the expectation of (fast and) positive return.⁷

Reality, however, is different. Their attempts are faced with a frustrating situation in which there is a very few jobs that could employ those young, educated males and females. Every year, based on Jordan's demographics, approximately 160,000 young people attain the stage of entering the employment market.

For an economy of Jordan's size, it will need to grow every year by 7% in order to create 100,000 jobs for young people. Or Jordan's economic growth is at 2%, projected to either stagnate or go below that percentage, and the unemployment of young people is at 52%. Currently, 50,000 new jobs are created each year, which covers only about 40% of university graduates (Challenge Fund for Youth Employment, 2021). This is where *wasta*, or nepotism, further exacerbates the situation according to the participants. One young male shared his experience with the Civil Service Bureau, Jordan's key national entity governing public sector employment, citing that his number on the list of those awaiting employment in Karak was 40 (as in 39 individuals ahead of him), yet it became 60, then 70 over a period of time. That meant that he was moving further down the list, while those with a "strong *wasta*" kept moving up "at the expense of those more deserving",⁸ as he described. To him, the immediate result of this situation was the young peoples' frustration and "strong and long-present lack of hope".⁹

On employment and labour relations, participants added another lens in their discussion: that of "security procedures",¹⁰ which contribute to individuals being denied security clearances for jobs, hence remaining unemployed, due to "their history or the history of their grandparents",¹¹ as one of the participants commented on. Here, "history" refers to the individual's record, or that of his/her relative, in being linked to the violent extremism or violent extremist organisations, or generally being "critical" against the government or its policies.¹²

⁵ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

⁶ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

¹¹ Ibid.

HOW MACRO-LEVEL DRIVERS WORK AT THE MESO-LEVEL STUDIED (THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF FOCUS)?

The findings of this case study have revealed how different drivers work at the meso-level. This includes the VE drivers such as the economic deprivation and territorial inequalities. In the context of the CONNEKT project, these two drivers are defined as the following: economic deprivation is the inequality that is experienced by sectors of the population that lives in precarious social conditions, and that turns them into fragile subjects, while the territorial inequalities refer to being part of a territory that is subject to an evident inequality with respect to other territories and experiencing this situation as a comparative redress.

Regarding the economic deprivation, it is very important to note that this driver has gained great prominence in the macro-level analysis findings (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021). Specifically, the economic deprivation “carved” a space for itself in the PVE strategies and national action plans discussed in macro-level analysis, meaning that said strategies had a clear call for economic empowerment, which in turn have encouraged both governmental and non-governmental actors to rethink the design of their PVE interventions to ensure that participants are equipped with sustainable employability skill sets (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac, 2021). However, the way this macro-level driver works at the meso-level has been found to be counterproductive. Participants in this case study have cited the inability of government and its policies to address the “culture of a fixed salary” explained earlier, thus seeking to address the question of economic deprivation and unemployment by offering more jobs in the public sector, or the armed forces and security establishment which are two main “traditional” employers.¹³ In turn, research respondents commented that such approach in fact further reinforces the issue of economic deprivation as opposed to addressing it.

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Further, the practice and spread of wasta or nepotism was noted as a key issue to account for in how the macro-level driver of economic deprivation works at the meso level. For example, government initiatives such as the Development and Employment Fund (DEF),¹⁴ which was set up to stimulate development by providing lending and microfinancing services for small and medium enterprises in the governorates, are subject to a great deal of wasta. Respondents noted how loans are not always given to “real development projects/programmes on the ground”, and people with connections leverage their wasta to get loans from DEF which they then use for daily needs or expenses, accumulating more debt that they then cannot pay back.¹⁵ As a result, this ends up creating more poverty, and significant debt and unemployment.

With respect to territorial inequalities, it was notable to hear how this macro-level driver which is typically manifested in people citing the distance from the capital, Amman, to be an impediment to economic growth and development, had its unique meso-level manifestations in and within Karak. In

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

¹⁴ <http://www.def.gov.jo/Pages/viewpage?pageID=3>

¹⁵ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022.

other words, the impact of territorial inequality in Karak was not only felt from outside, i.e., between Karak and Amman, but also from within Karak. The research respondents in the first FGD¹⁶ referred to the large national company dealing with potassium production, known as the Arab Potash Company (APC),¹⁷ as one of the reasons they experience the territorial inequalities. Despite APC being based in Karak, the respondents shared the perception that APC “does not benefit Karak”¹⁸ and only provides “small and pitiful” support to the governorate through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme, with “no big, sustainable, and real development projects and benefits”¹⁹ for Karak and its residents. For respondents, APC’s largest benefits and profits seemed to go to the central government in Amman and did not reflect positively on the local development and economic scene, hence contributing to the evident inequality the governorate suffers with respect to other territories, Amman in this specific case.²⁰

Overall, the way the two macro-level drivers of territorial inequalities and economic deprivation seem to work at the meso-level is by fuelling the youth’s sense of alienation. One participant explained it through the metaphoric phrase of “the sons of the black swan”,²¹ denoting that due to being denied economic opportunities and residing in an area that experiences territorial inequalities, he feels discriminated against and outcasted.²² Other participants laughed at this expression but nodded in agreement.²³

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS AND INTERACTIONS AMONG DRIVERS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

13 The findings of this meso-level analysis show direct intersections between the drivers. As explained in the section above, both economic deprivation and territorial inequality are present in the context of Karak, and combined they produce a strong feeling of injustice and alienation.²⁴ Participants referred to the high spread of unemployment and lack of socio-economic opportunities as a characterisation of the situation in Karak, partially linking this to the strong focus on development in Amman and surrounding areas.²⁵ Additionally, the participants cited low income and the hardships associated with starting one’s own business – including an extraordinary amount of red tape – to be a strong negative determinant of the economic deprivation,²⁶ a situation that has been more difficult due to the negative impact the COVID-19 has had on Karak’s local economy (Aragie et al., 2021)²⁷ Therefore, the drivers of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <https://www.arabpotash.com/Default/En>

¹⁸ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

²⁵ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022.

²⁶ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

²⁷ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

economic deprivation and territorial inequality intersect at the point where being distant from the centre of economic focus and activity (Amman) is reflected in lower socio-economic opportunities that feed economic deprivation.

As for the interaction amongst drivers and social contexts, both drivers of economic deprivation and territorial inequality have interactions with the two factors of social context: cultural and leisure activities as well as employment and labour relations. These interactions were captured in the focus group discussions in the following manner:

The impact of the economic deprivation extends to and affects the level and type of cultural and leisure activities provided to youth in Karak. Research respondents in second focus group discussion noted that the lack of spaces for cultural and leisure activities in the governorate also means that there is a “lack of space for generating innovative ideas, initiatives, and opportunities” for employment and economic growth.²⁸ Business incubators and hubs are “unfortunately non-existent in Karak”, added one participant.²⁹ Further, the participants underscored that whilst “males are impacted more negatively by the economic situation than females” as they are expected to be the “breadwinners” in society, the limited employment opportunities for females are also coupled with their low access to cultural and leisure activities due to “societal and material restrictions”, such as societal norms and views around female roles in society as well as the unreliable transportation which makes it harder for females to access said cultural and leisure opportunities outside their immediate local communities.³⁰

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Still, the research has found that whilst territorial inequalities present in Karak do negatively impact the two identified social contexts, cultural and leisure activities as well as employment and labour relations, there seems to be a positive development in recent times. That development is notable move towards digital space, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that has made “more jobs available online”, according to the participants in both FGDs.³¹ The examples of this burgeoning gig economy that thrives in the digital space were of locally produced handicrafts, or of use of social media to market homemade products and organic food, such as locally made yoghurt, milk, and other dairy products. These were all seen by research respondents as a welcomed shift in young people’s attitudes towards employment and economic opportunities. The participants noted that the potential for this shift is important given that “it does not depend on your physical territory”,³² but is rather something that can be done online, hence overcoming the barrier of distance to/from the capital.

²⁸ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

³² Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

Analysis Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS

The meso-level analysis has revealed several key findings. First, no single driver is present in Karak, rather it is the combination of several drivers that explains the meso-level situation. Namely, the most prominent drivers in Karak are the ones of territorial inequalities and of economic deprivations. In turn, said drivers interact with other contexts of social interactions, such as cultural and leisure activities as well as employment and labour relations and, as a result, seem to produce greater frustration, lack of hope, and a strong sense of social injustice amongst youth.

Second, youth's idle time remains a strong factor limiting the constructive life prospects for young adults in Karak. As a result, they opt for less constructive pathways such as drug use, which was a prominent phenomenon that the overwhelming majority of participants in both FGDs have voiced concerns about, noting its spread in the governorate.³³ Interestingly, whilst participants condoned the use and spread of drugs, they still consider it as a "natural outcome to people's lack of jobs and alternatives".³⁴ They commented that youth's idle time feeds off of both social interactions and the VE drivers, including the lack of cultural and leisure activities, the existing and extended economic deprivation and the lack of socio-economic opportunities, which interact with present territorial inequalities to further limit development opportunities and prospects in the governorate.³⁵

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Third, the COVID-19 pandemic has had both positive and negatives effects on the macro-level drivers and meso-level contexts of social interactions. On one hand, prolonged period of the closure of public spaces and limited economic movement and activities (during health-induced curfews and lockdowns) have resulted in a "miserable" economic situation, as described by one participant, further exacerbating the impact of the economic deprivation.³⁶ On the other hand, the pandemic has also carved a new digital space for a modest gig economy activities including e-commerce that overall have been helpful in addressing the territorial inequalities resulting from the geographic distance of Karak in relation to the capital city Amman, which remains the focus of economic activities and development.³⁷ Fourth, wasta seems to play a key role driving economic deprivation as it negatively impacts employment prospects and labour relations in Karak and seems to further cement the already-existing lack of development. Additionally, it was interesting to note its impact on the territorial inequalities impacting people, young people in particular, both from within Karak as well as between Karak and Amman.

³³ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

³⁴ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

³⁵ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

³⁶ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

³⁷ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

PREVENTION INDICATORS RESULTING FROM THE MESO ANALYSIS

Prior to discussing the prevention indicators, a note should be made on how the research discussing the prevention indicators was conducted. Technically, the focus group discussions were divided in two parts: in the first part, participants were allowed a room to voice out their concerns and describe the general socio-economic situation in Karak as they perceived it, making it clear that they see as “difficult and deteriorating”.³⁸ In the next part, participants were asked to think and reflect on the potential situations, experiences, or measures they have experienced that might have had an effect on the described harsh reality.

As such, the research team was able to directly solicit the participants’ views on the prevention indicators. The added value of their input stems from the fact that the group was made by young people who have been experienced vulnerabilities and got exposed to different types of VE risks, hence their testimonies are closer to first-hand experiences and not mere opinions. Here, whilst they noted the following three key prevention indicators, the notion of consequences was clear in their calculations, and it seemed to be a recurrent theme across the three notions, as will be explained below.

To start with, family was listed as the first and foremost preventative factor deterring the young people from pursuing the appeal of violent extremism.³⁹ For the research respondents, their families were the “first layer” of defence against pursuing destructive pathways. By speaking of family, they referred to them being part of Karak’s tribal society, therefore as individuals they all had a strong sense of belonging to the tribe. They clearly acknowledged the fact that their personal/individual actions have had “consequences beyond them as individuals”.⁴⁰ As such, the respondents are/were deterred by the thought that their actions might bring shame and discomfort to their immediate relatives, or potentially taint the reputation of their tribe at large.

As important, it is the family that serves(ed) as their social support unit; at least 3 participants mentioned how it is one’s parents in such a closely-knit community who are expected to continue to take care of one’s financial, economic, and social wellbeing “even if you’re married and unemployed at the age of 30”.⁴¹ It was clearly this centrality of the role of family in a tribal society such as the one in Karak that serves as a prevention indicator. In other words, participants confirmed that as long as the family and tribe continue to play this supportive role in their lives, they would “cling to hope”⁴² and push forward. The state was noted as the second layer of prevention. This was put in the context of accounting for the consequences of one’s actions not only in terms of potential imprisonment or individual suffering, but also interestingly in the context of collective consequences. The participants alluded to how not only the state has the power to deny the access to employment opportunities due to a “red flag on your security record”, but is equally able to do the same for one’s relatives who do not necessarily have

³⁸ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

⁴¹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022

⁴² Ibid.

anything to do with choice if one of their family members to join VEOs or harbouring support for VE/VEOs.⁴³

The third noted prevention indicator was religion. Here, participants explained that the strong religious motif (الوازع الديني) serves(ed) as a key prevention indicator to pursuing the VE pathway.⁴⁴ When asked to elaborate, the participants' explanation was that religious ideology was barely a slim part of why violent extremism was appealing to them; rather, it was the narrow socio-economic prospects, the lack of a better alternative, or the marginalisation they felt as individuals.⁴⁵ In fact, "it is religion that asks us not to steal, kill, or do harm to others", as one participant put it.⁴⁶ Another participant echoed this by stating that it is religion that asks one to always "pursue and persist", as this (السعي) is a key pillar of Islamic teachings and philosophy.⁴⁷

MICRO-PATHS REPORTED FROM MESO ANALYSIS

When asked about the specific micro paths that might be resulting from the prevention indicators mentioned above, participants noted that the micro paths should be derived from the positive shifts they see in their local community. In answering this question, the participants shared those emerging shifts and noted their notable recurrence in the local community, which makes them a fitting venue to look for the micro paths.

The first positive shift the participants noted was the changing, more positive attitude towards community-based organisations (CBOs) and their work in the local community. For respondents, this is a welcomed shift in view of the rising number of CBOs in Karak, with which come new possibilities. In other words, it is possible to now see in Karak increasing number of young adults who are embracing the work of CBOs, initiating their own organisations, or simply cementing the culture of volunteering and active citizenship.⁴⁸

The second positive reaction relates to the role of females in society. Whilst indeed females are still facing "social restrictions",⁴⁹ there is on the other side, increased presence, and activism of females in the local community of Karak. Families are slowly becoming more accepting of females joining the armed forces or police, which has been an exclusive domain for males in Karak.⁵⁰ One participant narrated how during a recent royal visit, tribal figures were asking His Majesty the King to call for female recruits in Jordan's armed forces and police – which is unheard of given the highly patriarchal nature of the community in Karak.⁵¹

⁴³ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022

⁴⁸ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

⁴⁹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Karak on March 7, 2022

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

The third micro path relates to young people's greater embracing and use of digital spaces to generate income by selling homemade and other products and services. Participants mentioned a several of said initiatives, with one of the participants selling wood crafts,⁵² and another female participant selling homemade sweets online,⁵³ while a third attempted to make and sell natural and herbal cosmetics through an Instagram page she created.⁵⁴ Here, the basic premise is to look for and support individual initiatives that seek positive alternatives to the negative socioeconomic situation, which is deemed responsible for pushing young people towards violent extremism and VEOs pathways.

⁵² Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Karak on April 25, 2022.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

General Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study sought to examine the question of resilience in the southern governorate of Karak. Namely, it opted for understanding the resilience factors affecting a group of vulnerable youth (at risk of radicalisation), some of which having a proven past record of an explicit appeal to radical thought or behaviour.

Hence, the importance of this case study stems from what could be described as a first-hand recipe on how radical behaviour was unlearned amongst those individuals. Further, the case study has shed light on the resilience factors to consider in future PVE interventions. The findings presented above are of specific relevance and importance to designing grassroots approaches to the prevention of VE not only in Karak, but also beyond across Jordan. This is based on the fact that most of the identified prevention factors and micro-paths reported are similar to, and found in, other contexts in Jordan. These include the prominent role of family; the wide presence of the tribal culture; the strong regime of punishment put by the state; as well as the strong religious motif. In short, whilst these were revealed during the discussions in Karak, they are not exclusive to this specific context.

As for the drivers and social contexts' factors, the meso level findings point to a direct link between at least two social contexts factors (culture and leisure activities & employment and labour relations) and two macro drivers (economic deprivation & territorial inequalities). The way in which these drivers intersect with the identified factors of social contexts manifests itself in commonly known notions and issues such as *wasta* (nepotism), unequal distribution of development gains, as well as the perceived sense of alienation and marginalisation amongst the young participants.

Consistent with findings from previous case studies, this case study has also shown that no single macro driver is at play in understanding the meso-level situation. Additionally, idle time of the younger population (whether in Karak, in Irbid and Mafraq with the urban Syrian refugees, the in-camp young Syrian refugees at Zaatari; or the young females in Ma'an), remains a prominent factor in understanding the choices these young demographic makes. Likewise, COVID-19 was also a recurrent theme in Karak and beyond; linked to fastening the pace of digital socialisation (with urban refugees), the impact of transnational dynamics (informal preachers), and craving new spaces for economic activities amongst the young, and often vulnerable, youth in Karak.

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Annex I: Questions for Focus Group Discussions

The Annex 1 contains the main set of questions that have been used as a guidance for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The questions below were used in the course of the FGDs, once the safe space was established, and were asked and alternated as the discussion developed.

1. As you may know, around 3,000 Jordanians have joined armed groups in Syria and Iraq, while an unknown percentage of Jordanians seems to support these groups as indicated by some surveys conducted in Jordan. However, the majority of Jordanians are not radical and do not support these groups. Karak has also seen one extremist attack on its historical castle in December 2016; those involved were Jordanians and some were from areas near Karak. In your opinion, what deters youth in society from becoming radical?
2. Some research findings generally argue that religious ideology can be a factor in radicalisation in addition to other contextual and psychological factors. In your opinion, did religion play a role in the radicalisation of some Jordanians? If yes, how?
3. What socio-economic opportunities are you provided with, or have access to? If little to none, how does the absence of such opportunities might impact/is impacting you?
4. How do youth perceptions about the economic situation in Jordan affect their worldview and the options they take in their lives?
5. Regarding the Karak terrorist attack, what are your reflections about that incident, almost 5 years after it has happened? Do you think the way we now know the incident was handled could have been different, or even better?
6. What do you think is the impact of the issues you have mentioned on females in your community? Do you think the (same) issues play out differently for females? If so, how?

1. ربما تعلمون أن ما يقارب 3000 أردني التحقوا بالجماعات المسلحة في سوريا والعراق، وتشير بعض الاستبيانات في الأردن إلى أن هناك نسبة من الأشخاص الذين يدعمون هذه الجماعات. ومع ذلك، فإن معظم الأردنيين ليسوا منطرفين ولا يدعمون هذه الجماعات. وشهدت الكرك واحدة هجوماً متطرفاً في قلعتها التاريخية في شهر كانون الأول 2016، وكان بعض المتورطين في الهجوم أردنيين ومن مناطق قريبة من الكرك. برأيكم، ما الذي يمنع الشباب/المجتمع من السير في مسار التطرف؟
2. تقول بعض الدراسات بأن الايديولوجية الدينية عموماً قد تشكل عاملاً دافعاً للتطرف مع غيرها من العوامل النفسية والعوامل المتعلقة بالسياق العام. برأيكم، هل لعب الدين دوراً في تطرف بعض الأردنيين؟ إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، كيف تم ذلك؟
3. ما هي الفرص الاجتماعية والاقتصادية المتوفرة لكم ويمكنكم الوصول لها؟ إذا لم يكن الأمر كذلك أو كانت قليلة جداً، فكيف يؤثر غياب هذه الفرص عليكم؟

4. كيف تؤثر آراء الشباب حول الوضع الاقتصادي في الأردن على نظرتهم للحياة وعلى خياراتهم فيها؟
5. فيما يخص الهجوم الإرهابي في الكرك، كيف تنتظر للهجوم الآن بعد مرور حوالي 5 سنوات عليه؟ هل تعتقد أنه كان من الممكن التعامل معه بشكل مختلف أو بطريقة أفضل بعد ما نعرفه اليوم عن الهجوم؟
6. ما أثر جميع القضايا التي تناولناها اليوم على الإناث في مجتمعك؟ هل تعتقد أن هذه القضايا تتبلور بشكل مختلف بالنسبة للإناث؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك، كيف؟



Refugees in Northern Jordan

Aisha Bint Faisal, Neven Bondokji, Jadranka Štikovac Clark

Introduction

This case study examines radicalisation drivers among urban and camp-based Syrian refugees in the two northern cities of Irbid and Mafrq. The focus on refugees stems from conflicting findings about radicalisation among refugees, generally, and among Syrian refugees, more specifically. Available literature shows, for example, a policy brief which warns the EU actors about Daesh (ISIS) members infiltrating Syrian refugees in the EU, (Funk and Parkes, 2016) whereas a different study argues that Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan have no desire to migrate to the West, particularly those who hold radical worldviews (U.S Department of Homeland Security, 2018). Another study argues that 46.7% of Syrian refugees in Jordan hold radical views. (Al-Badayneh, Alshawy and Alhasan, 2017). However, field work in Jordan negates any strong correlation between Syrian refugee youth and violent extremism (VE) (Bondokji, Wilkinson and Aghabi, 2016).

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Most studies that generalise radicalisation among Syrian refugees measure radicalisation based on respondents' agreement to vague sentences about religious practices and value systems that cannot be specifically associated with radicalisation.¹ These generalisations stigmatise the refugee population. Therefore, this case study examines the radicalisation drivers that may affect Syrian refugees in Jordan within the general framework of the seven drivers of radicalisation identified by the CONNEKT project. CONNEKT's macro-level analysis of drivers of radicalisation and VE in Jordan revealed the need to reconceptualise VE in Jordan based on the reality of contextual grievances, rather than ideology to understand dynamics of VE at the meso-level (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal. and Štikovac, 2021). Selecting Syrian refugees for this case study highlights how contextual grievances of Syrian refugees shape drivers of VE, and the work on the case study has identified the most prominent drivers and social contexts of VE in Jordan.

The analysis reveals the prominence of three drivers of VE: educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities; transnational dynamics; and digital socialisation. These drivers interact with two social contexts identified by CONNEKT project: education/socialisation, and cultural and leisure activities.

This case study argues that educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities are in shortage, particularly for Syrian refugees in camp, Za'atari camp in particular. The only available opportunities are in schools

¹ For example, one survey with 840 residents in three cities in Jordan in 2017 had measured radicalisation against indicators such as wearing a headscarf (in a conservative city in south Jordan), and the frequency of praying at a mosque. Both indicators are common practices among Muslims, and are practiced due to various social and religious beliefs or conviction, thus do not necessarily signify radicalisation. In this specific example, the pollsters were advised against publishing it.

that are overcrowded. In contrast, urban refugees have better access to these opportunities, but they are not always affordable either due to the fees required to be paid to access the opportunities or the high transportation costs. The limited access to these opportunities makes the family the key provider of informal educational opportunities and sometimes leisure activities. The role of the family is mainly shouldered by female members, making them a key agent of prevention efforts. Families also shape the identities and cultural references adopted by young refugees.

The findings also reveal that digital socialisation attains prominence among refugees as a potential driver of VE due to the lack of educational, leisure, and cultural activities, and due to difficulties of accessing work opportunities. Having nothing else to do, many refugee youth spend considerable hours every day using their mobile phones. This makes them vulnerable to the influence of narratives circulating online, including extremist ones. Although refugees did not directly refer to radical online context, and since there is no evidence of radicalisation among Syrian refugees in Jordan, the finding on this driver points to an important prevention of violent extremism (PVE) entry point to protect against radicalisation among refugee youth.

Likewise, the significance of transnational dynamics as a driver of VE stems from the impact of digital socialisation and the identification of Syrian victims of the war. Digital socialisation increases the potential impact of transnational dynamics because of widely spread narratives of victimisation, the views of injustice regarding fellow Syrians and Muslims, and the news about atrocities in Syria that are communicated online. In addition, Syrian refugees are proud of their Syrian identity and culture, identify with relatives and friends who are still in Syria, and are empathetic to their plight, in addition to their sense of frustration with their status as refugees.

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The findings highlight the intersectionality between drivers of VE: that between the transnational dynamics and digital socialisation on one level, and between educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities and digital socialisation on another level. These three drivers also interact with social contexts identified in this case study (education/socialisation, and cultural and leisure activities) mainly in how socialisation takes place in the family and through limited leisure activities available to urban refugees.

CASE STUDY CONTEXT

Jordan hosts over 1.3 million Syrian refugees—nearly 20% of the country's population (UNHCR, 2022b). As of March 2022, there were 674,268 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR, with Amman, Mafrqa, and Irbid governorates in the north of the country hosting the largest numbers (UNHCR, 2022c). Of these, 130,000 live in Za'atari, Emirates Jordanian Camp, and Azraq Camp (UNHCR, 2022c). The rest live in urban areas, so called host communities. In addition, not all Syrian refugees register with UNHCR, hence the discrepancy between figures for registered refugees and their total number in Jordan. Syrian refugees live across the Kingdom, although there is a higher percentage in the North due to the geographic proximity to Syria.

There is no data on the number of refugees who have joined Violent Extremist Organisations (VEOs), and no concrete evidence on radicalisation among Syrian refugees in Jordan. However, Jordanian

authorities have captured members of a Daesh cell that attacked Jordanian army post near Rukban camp in 2016 (Al-Khitan, 2017). The Rukban Camp is located inside Syria on the Syrian-Jordanian border. Although the camp is inside Syria, the attack and the uncovering of the cell members sparked concerns regarding whether Daesh members have infiltrated Syrian refugees in Jordan. But these fears lack evidence.

The conditions in which Syrian refugees live in Jordan is widely documented. Despite significant efforts of the international humanitarian sector, some service provision is in shortage. As the Syrian conflict enters its eleventh year, the situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan is still a source of concern for the international community and Jordanian government.

For the purposes of this case study, we limited this overview to available educational, cultural, and leisure opportunities for Syrian refugees. A 2017 UNICEF report documents the shortage of these opportunities and how that shortage impacts on educational and employment prospects for Syrian refugees in the future, despite the eagerness of refugee children (as defined by the UN) to have access to these opportunities (UNICEF, 2017). Financial difficulties, including copying mechanisms such as children being forced to work to help their families, and the cost of access to recreational opportunities are found to be one barrier to the social development of refugee children (Al-Sarayrah and Al Masalhah, 2019). Therefore, this case study believes that unpacking this driver (cultural, educational, and leisure opportunities) will be important for CONNEKT's contribution to examining the threats of VE.

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Jordan's response to the Syrian refugee crisis was framed through the concept of social cohesion as a response to early concerns about social tensions between host communities and Syrian refugees. As a result, refugee participants in this case study are familiar with the terminology of social cohesion, as opposed to VE. The participants mentioned a few of such programmes, including a programme that was provided by Generations For Peace on life skills,² another provided by a local community-based organisation (CBO) targeting young Syrians to enhance their entrepreneurial skills,³ a third by a local religious organisation on integration with host communities,⁴ and a fourth provided by an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) to teach music, drawing, and football inside the camps.⁵

Social cohesion offers a familiar umbrella for discussions on social dynamics of drivers of VE and is far less stigmatising than VE. This substantiated the evidence from the macro-level findings on how social cohesion is increasingly seen by PVE actors as a more acceptable term for local work on PVE programmes and measures (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac Clark, 2021).

² Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

³ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁴ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁵ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

Research methodology

RECAP OF RESULTS FROM MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The macro-level analysis showed that the state conceptualisation around the violent extremism threats and dynamics is heavily viewed through an ideological lens, with little consideration for the contextual grievances. In the macro-level phase of the CONNEKT project, the sub-national community of Syrian refugees was mentioned 'in passing', despite refugees constituting a significant component of the population and of Jordan's demographics.

This case study focuses on Syrian refugees because research findings indicate that militants – in general and VEOs – attempt to recruit youth from refugee camps (Sude, B.H, 2022). While there is no evidence of this in Jordan, the findings in the literature globally warn that this is worth examining. Likewise, a study in 2017 has argued that 46.7% of Syrian refugee youth in Jordan hold radical views. This was measured against statements such as "Muslims feel grievance in this world", "I consider the offense to a man of my religion, is offense to my father", and "In my country, women must be prevented from traveling to foreign countries alone". These first two sentences apply to many Muslims as a denominator of shared Muslim identity and do not necessarily indicate radicalisation. Similarly, the sentence on women being able to travel, although problematic in several aspects, is not necessarily an indicator of radicalisation per se.

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Despite the findings of this article and on recruitment in refugee camps in general, and in view of the percentage of Syrian population in Jordan, this case study opted to indirectly examine drivers of VE that might affect young Syrian refugees in Jordan. Within the framework of CONNEKT project, this will allow the research team to develop inclusive PVE analysis where Syrian refugees are considered in suggested designs on PVE measures at a later stage of the project.

Further, macro-level analysis also showed stark absence of an effective coordination mechanism that ties the different state and non-state PVE and countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts within a common vision. As will be explored below, the situation of Syrian refugees presents one manifestation of this lack of coordination, as refugees in general are treated with high sensitivities among state actors. Furthermore, there are real difficulties in accessing groups of refugees, particularly the ones residing inside the camps, as was experienced by the team of researchers working on this case study.

MESO-LEVEL ANALYSIS ADDED VALUE

The added value of this meso-level analysis can be presented in three different ways, as follows:

1. This meso-level case study allows for an in-depth analysis of drivers of VE that affect refugees in a camp setting compared to refugees in urban areas, or to other settings examined in the CONNEKT project.
2. The analysis contributes to comparative knowledge on how Syrian refugees experience the seven drivers pre-identified by CONNEKT, and how these drivers manifest in social contexts.

The case study offers analytical insights into understanding how Syrian refugees in the EU might be affected by drivers of VE.

3. Lastly, research participants in this meso-level analysis include a rarely accessed demographic, that is: children from 10-18 years old. Although the sample is not representative of all diversities among refugee children, it sheds light on the experiences of this age group.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This case study examines drivers of VE that can affect or are affecting Syrian refugees in the two northern cities of Irbid and Mafraq. The case study also examines discrepancies between urban refugees and those living in Za'atari Camp to analyse the impact of life in a refugee camp on drivers of VE that affect refugees.

The research sought to solicit insights and knowledge on a number of dimensions: the accessibility of services available to them, how they compensate for lacking leisure and cultural activities, the discrepancies in access to these activities between urban refugees and those in the camp, the extent of technological use and digital socialisation they experience, the impact of digital socialisation on refugees, refugees' relation with the host community, as well as the life prospects they identify for themselves.

By exploring these dimensions, the research clarifies the interlinks between these factors. This will in turn translate into analysing the interaction between different drivers of VE and the specific social contexts they operate in within the framework of CONNEKT project.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Building on the findings of CONNEKT's Working Package 4, a sensitive framing of the research was applied, and has included looking at the full life-experience of young Syrian refugees in select community/ies. The key criterion for selection was defined as being a Syrian refugee in the age bracket of 12 to 30 y/o living in the two northern cities of Irbid and Mafraq, where the majority of urban Syrian refugees live in Jordan today (UNHCR, 2022b). Additionally, the research team sought to engage Syrian refugees of the same age living in a refugee camp, for the purpose of this research in the Za'atari Camp. With a total population hovering around 80,000 individuals in the last few years, Za'atari has 32 schools serving nearly 21,000 children (76% of which are enrolled at schools), and registers some 6,500 average weekly health consultations (UNHCR, 2022a).

As a result, the research engaged a group of Syrian refugees, females and males, living in host communities and in the Za'atari refugee Camp, of the combined age groups ranging from age 10 to 23 (see details below).

The criteria were established based on the macro-level findings, which highlighted the impact of transnational dynamics in the work with Syrian refugees and their inclusion in numerous programmes delivered in the north of Jordan. The common threads among the groups that were interviewed were their long residency in the cities of Irbid and Mafraq, as well as their perspectives as young people living inside the Za'atari Camp.

SAMPLING DESCRIPTION

For this case study, the selected sample was composed of young Syrian refugees attending public schools in the cities of Irbid and Mafraq along with an additional group living inside the Za’atari refugee Camp. The selection was carried out through snowball sampling mixed with purposive sampling, meaning the recruitment of research respondents corresponding to select criteria described in the previous section. For the reasons of access and time constraints, the selected respondents were within the category of young Syrian refugees between the ages of 10 to 23 y/o.

Then, the empirical research employed focus group discussions (FGDs) to ensure consultations with the relevant identified participants. Primary data was obtained by consulting with two groups: a group of Syrian refugees living in urban settings, aged 13 to 18 y/o, and a group of young Syrian males living inside the Za’atari Camp aged 10 to 23 y/o. For the urban group, four focus group discussions (FGDs) with 18 young Syrians (nine males and nine females ensuring a 50:50 gender balance) were conducted and data collection took place during February 2022. For the group living inside the camp, one FGD was conducted with six males, age 10 to 23 y/o. Total number of participants engaged from inside and outside the camps was 24, nine females and 15 males. The research team was unable to engage females from within the Za’atari Camp due to logistical reasons and local gender sensitivities. Data collection for the in-camp group was carried out during April 2022 (during the month of Ramadan).

Specifically, FGD 1 engaged five urban male Syrian refugees, FGD 2 engaged five urban female Syrian refugees, FGD 3 engaged four urban male Syrian refugees, FGD 4 engaged four urban female Syrian refugees, and FGD 5 engaged six male refugees living inside Za’atari. Two FGDs engaged only male participants and two FGDs engaged only female participants. The discussions were conducted in a semi-structured manner, giving the respondents the opportunity to freely shape the conversation. Throughout the FGDs, notes were taken and compiled, and then used to identify recurrent and emergent themes and patterns based on the respondents’ answers. Table 1 below presents a breakdown of the research participants in terms of average age, location, gender, and total number:

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TABLE 1.

	FGD1 (Urban: Mafraq)		FGD2 (Urban: Irbid)		FGD3 (Urban: Irbid)		FGD 4 (Urban: Mafraq)		FGD5 (Za’atari)	
	Sex/ Age	Date	Sex/ Age	Date	Sex/ Age	Date	Sex/ Age	Date	Sex/ Age	Date
1	(M) 13	9 Feb 22	(F) 17	10 Feb 22	(M) 13	10 Feb 22	(F) 15	13 Feb 22	(M) 10	25 Apr 22
2	(M) 14	9 Feb 22	(F) 17	10 Feb 22	(M) 13	10 Feb 22	(F) 15	13 Feb 22	(M) 12	25 Apr 22
3	(M) 16	9 Feb 22	(F) 15	10 Feb 22	(M) 16	10 Feb 22	(F) 14	13 Feb 22	(M) 15	25 Apr 22
4	(M) 14	9 Feb 22	(F) 10	10 Feb 22	(M) 14	10 Feb 22	(F) 15	13 Feb 22	(M) 16	25 Apr 22
5	(M) 10	9 Feb 22	(F) 10	10 Feb 22					(M) 21	25 Apr 22
6									(M) 20	25 Apr 22
Avg. Age	13.5 y/o		13.8		14		14.75		15.6	
Totals	(M) 5		(F) 5		(M) 4		(F) 4		(M) 6	
	18 (urban; nine males and nine females)									6 (camp; all males)
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Prior to conducting the focus groups, a series of phone call consultations was carried out with the local partner to better understand the scene of young Syrian refugees and how to engage them, liaise on participants consent and parental or caretaker/guardian assent, communicate the research objectives and the criteria for selection, and generally prepare all aspects of data collection. This initial phase of research served as an insightful mapping exercise in which the primary data collected through several conversations with the local partner helped in dividing of the groups, selection the areas they represent, and choice of the schools they attended.

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

In conducting the research, the team faced two key challenges. First, the challenge of ensuring the research respondents were of the age required by the CONNEKT project. Given that the participants are in the below-18-y/o age bracket, parental/guardian assent was needed in accordance with the CONNEKT research ethics procedure. Gathering the assents required time, in addition to requiring additional information sessions to explain the purpose of the project, why the assent is needed, provide reassurances about the data being anonymised, and generally get the “buy-in” of parents/guardians of minors involved in the research. Second, the research team faced the challenge of presenting the research and its objectives in a simple, neutral, and context-sensitive manner that had to ensure the following:

1. Not stigmatising the research participants involved (Do No (More) Harm)
2. Not exposing the young respondents to the (significance of) appeal of VE, and
3. Explaining the added value of their participation without offering something tangible in return.

Additionally, the research team faced several technical challenges as the five FGDs were conducted via Zoom, while the fifth was carried out late in the evening given the month of Ramadan, with poor internet connection experienced particularly during the call with the in-camp refugees. In fact, the participants limited access to the internet has led to the postponement and rescheduling of two FGDs.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

To ensure confidentiality and privacy, the information and data collected were kept and handled with utmost privacy. All data collected through the focus group discussions was protected on encrypted digital drives that only researchers had access to. Answers were anonymised and all personally identifiable information from the notes was deleted. The participants’ identity was kept confidential/coded to ensure anonymity, with this treatment/process being explained to the respondents and their parents/guardians prior to obtaining their consent/assent. The young participants were then asked for their oral consent on record. To ensure autonomy and voluntariness, a consent/assent form was thoroughly explained and shared with the parents/guardians of the participants ahead of the focus group discussions. The data collectors/researchers explained research purpose as well as the research ethics measures verbally prior to the start of data collection process.

Meso-level dynamics

SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE RESULTS OF THE MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The findings of this case study point to a direct relation between three drivers of VE:

- educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities,
- transnational dynamics and digital socialisation;

and two social contexts:

- cultural and leisure activities, and
- socialisation/education.

The social context of socialisation/education is defined by the CONNEKT as the educational contexts in society, both formal and informal, which are mechanisms of transmission of ideas, values, and identities. Educational, cultural and leisure activities, as a social context, are defined as the artistic and cultural expressions as mechanisms of intervention and reflection on social realities. Leisure activities of a diverse nature (cultural, educational, sport, artistic, etc.) constitute specific contexts of social interaction for young people. Both social contexts interact closely, particularly in how informal education occupies a grey area between the two social contexts.

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These two social contexts interact with the three drivers of VE among young Syrian refugees in Jordan: 1) educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities; 2) transnational dynamics; and 3) digital socialisation. The following sections of this case study will elaborate on the relations between these; this section explains the two social contexts of relevance to this case study.

Socialisation/education

The macro-level analysis of VE drivers in Jordan recognises the role of female family members. This is indirectly addressed through the institutional measures regarding the informal religious education of mothers. This case study clarifies why this focus on female family members is crucial. Young participants have heavily cited their female family members as the foremost channel of formal/informal education. This can be presented in the form of informal religious education and teachings at home, or by assisting young refugees with their formal education when helping them in subjects like math and English.⁶

Notably, the family plays a prominent role in shaping the social context of socialisation/education.⁷ However, in urban settings, support in formal education is gender segregated. That is: the female in the house, be it their mother, aunt, or the older sister, support young females in their study of "math

⁶ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

⁷ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; 2, Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

and English”⁸ whilst the relevant male figure, be it a father or an older brother, support young males in the same subjects.⁹ Inside Za’atari Camp, the female figure is responsible for formal or informal education.¹⁰ Informal education mainly relates to religious education at home. Female family members shoulder this responsibility more than men.¹¹ Female participants said their mothers or older sisters have the most “influential” role in shaping their religious beliefs and practices, whether by encouraging them to “learn, study, and memorise the holy Quran”,¹² or by making sure that they commit to the “five daily prayers”.¹³ This was true of both groups, urban refugees and those in refugee camps.¹⁴ The role of males is limited to male-only domains such as when “fathers take their sons to the Friday prayer at the mosque”.¹⁵

Therefore, when it comes to education/socialisation “family is the first and foremost religious reference”¹⁶ for the participants, and they enjoy “good and positive relations with them”.¹⁷

Cultural and leisure activities

The macro-level analysis of drivers of VE and social contexts in Jordan has revealed that the state’s institutional response to VE has not prioritised the driver of educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities. The only exception to this negligence was the recognition of the potential role of female members (mothers, sisters, wives) in (de-)radicalisation efforts, where previous research finding has highlighted the role of mothers in religious informal education, and in instilling cultural norms in their sons.

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This prominent role of mothers in the analysis of VE and PVE in Jordan derives from the fact that mothers compensate for the absence of educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities that are either non-existent or unaffordable. As one participant puts it: “... whilst [formal] educational opportunities are offered through school, and through schools only, you have to look for your own cultural and leisure activities outside school”.¹⁸ This in turn places the burden of finding these scarce opportunities on refugees themselves, instead of these being provided widely and free of cost to refugees and host communities as part of the institutional PVE efforts. Participants made little to no mention of cultural and leisure activities being sponsored institutionally.¹⁹

⁸ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

¹⁰ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

¹¹ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

¹² Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

¹³ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

¹⁴ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

¹⁵ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

¹⁸ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

¹⁹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

The participants noted that such opportunities are modestly available. “There are opportunities”,²⁰ as one participant notes, yet they are inadequate not in the sense of quantity, but rather affordability. The participant added that opportunities are usually “geographically distant”, therefore, the “transportation costs that are usually needed to get to those opportunities are not affordable to most Syrian refugees”. Whilst participants from Mafraq echoed the same concern, participants from Irbid were more vocal about this factor, which was attributed to Irbid’s size and geographical spread compared to Mafraq. For the refugees from Za’atari Camp, educational opportunities were nearly “non-existent.”²¹ Apart from “overcrowded classrooms”²² which suffer from frequent “electricity cuts”²³ that make it “hard for us to see the board [no proper light]”,²⁴ the participants made no reference to any other viable educational alternatives. As a result, “families do not send their kids to school”.²⁵ They prefer their children to “go and find a job”.²⁶

When the Camp was first established in 2012, families decided not to enrol their children from schools, “because we did not have caravans yet, and all families were living in tents, with few schools scattered across the large areas of the camp. Families did not want their kids to be lost whilst on the way to school as the camp was too crowded and did not have clear streets or pathways”.²⁷ The situation described here changed gradually as more schools were opened, and the camp went through the urbanisation during which the tents were replaced with caravans, as two participants commented.²⁸ Nevertheless, educational opportunities focused, and still largely focus on “basic literacy”.²⁹

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Refugees in urban areas access educational opportunities for “learning English”,³⁰ “computer skills”,³¹ or leisure opportunities related to “sports, football, or arts”.³² Participants in one FGD referred to a variety of in-school activities such as “drawing lessons, arts, and sports”,³³ while the rest of the groups mentioned mainly out-of-school activities, in what could reflect a discrepancy in the provision of leisure and cultural opportunities between the different schools. This confirms the lack of institutional support in providing these opportunities as part of the PVE efforts.

The findings regarding the social contexts of socialisation/education and cultural and leisure activities highlight the failure of different institutional structures in Jordan to recognise the significance of these social contexts in PVE efforts. Socialisation/education relies heavily on the family. The identities and

²⁰ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

²¹ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

³¹ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

³² Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

³³ Ibid.

worldviews of Syrian refugees are mainly shaped through their interactions with their female family members. The experience of refuge itself, with the sense of victimisation, injustice, and frustration be it with the war at home or with their situation as refugees in Jordan are all transmitted to refugees who carry the trauma and continue to perpetuate that trauma. While this reliance on family members strengthens family ties and offers a reference point for refugees helping them consolidate their emotional sense of security, it leaves refugee women very much alone in shouldering a remarkable responsibility.

However, this reliance on family members and the lacking opportunities for engagement in cultural and leisure activities deprive refugees from widening their perspectives and worldview, engaging with peers in joint activities that can shape their identity through sports or arts for example, and not through the frustrations and hardship of the refugee experience. Cultural and leisure activities can help refugees develop inclusive worldviews that help guard and protect them against radicalisation. More importantly, cultural and leisure activities offer hope, which is a crucial factor that encourages refugees to look forward to a positive future away from war and destruction.

HOW MACRO-LEVEL DRIVERS WORK AT THE MESO-LEVEL STUDIED (THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF FOCUS)?

The broader framework of CONNEKT's multi-level analysis establishes that VE cannot be attributed to one single driver. This stage of meso-level analysis has shown that certain drivers are more prominent in a given context than others. Often, this means that delving deeper from one level of analysis to another (in this case from macro to meso) reveals lower/greater prominence of drivers as they are combined with specific factors of social contexts.

The findings of this case-study confirm this trajectory. Digital socialisation did not emerge as a major driver of VE at the macro-level analysis in Jordan. However, the results clarify that digital socialisation attains equal significance as a driver of VE in spite of the fact that it did not attain a prominent place in the macro-level analysis in Jordan (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac Clark, 2021). This section discusses how these three drivers of VE operate in the social contexts discussed above.

Educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities

In the CONNEKT project, the driver of educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities refers to the lacking opportunities for youth to express frustrations, grievances, and expectations, which can drive people to radicalisation. Among Syrian refugees in Jordan, this driver is captured at the meso-level through the form/type of opportunities offered. Three points deserve highlighting in relation to this driver: the prominent role of the family; these (educational, leisure, and cultural) opportunities as a key prospect for social mobility; and freedom of movement.

The family provides the main support system for access to informal education, and controls access to cultural and leisure activities. Participants distinguished between the three types of opportunities, noting that educational opportunities are, for instance, made available to them mainly through

schools, with the family playing a secondary role in the provision of their educational opportunities.³⁴ The “teachers”³⁵ provide and deliver these opportunities, and “we are lucky to have teachers that love us and deliver those opportunities to us in the classroom”,³⁶ noted one female participant from Irbid.

In contrast, family seems to be the key source shaping their leisure and cultural opportunities by “allowing us to engage with other peers and Jordanian friends in the neighbourhood”.³⁷ This applies to artistic and cultural expressions that are accessible to young Syrians. But the family gains prominence in this sphere as well, due to the role of “parents in building the character and enhancing our awareness, especially when it comes to daughters”.³⁸ This finding places the family in a central position in forming identities of their children and of youth, and as a key target for PVE efforts to ensure that the phenomenon of radical(ised) families that has been confirmed in Jordan, is not at play among Syrian refugees. Research on sociology of radicalisation in Jordan has demonstrated that radicalisation is a family phenomenon with three generations of radicals within these families (Abu Rumman and Shteivi, 2018). Although there is no such evidence among Syrian refugees, it is important to design PVE efforts on a family level instead on the level of individuals or a community.

Refugees perceive educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities as a vehicle for social mobility. The place of residence for refugees determines the likelihood and success of social mobility, and affects levels of despair and hope among refugees. Nearly 78% of male participants (seven out of nine) in two FGDs³⁹ expressed that “more educational, leisure, and cultural activities are offered to young Syrians living outside the camps [in urban settings]”,⁴⁰ attributing this to having access to “better lives outside, better medical services, and more availability of educational opportunities”,⁴¹ and concluding that the refugees in host communities have greater “social mobility” compared to the refugees living inside the camps.⁴² The 22% who disagreed (two out nine males) referred to the “higher costs of living outside camps, as we have to pay rent and food”,⁴³ whilst at camps “the aid”⁴⁴ is provided, in a higher amount, and youngsters are “provided with free opportunities and trainings”.⁴⁵ In spite of these claims, the respondents based in the Za’atari Camp referred to the “non-existent”⁴⁶ opportunities and life-prospects. They placed special emphasis on their limited social mobility.

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³⁴ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

³⁵ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

³⁹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022, and Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

⁴⁴ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

Social mobility attains this significance in the eyes of refugees, regardless of where they are based, because it offers hope. Reintegration efforts of former extremists focus on social mobility in order to enable individuals to break away from a group they identify with (Jense and Simi, 2021). However, in the context of refugees, and given the several pressures and traumas they experience (Al-Badayned, Alshawi and Alhasan, 2017) social mobility offers hope by widening one's social network, enhancing creativity, and improving existing or helping acquire new skillsets. For refugees, access to educational, leisure, and cultural activities is a vehicle for social mobility and for a career aspiration.

In describing their life-prospects ahead, the participants reported several pathways/careers they wish to pursue. Those in host communities listed studying medicine "so that I can help people in need, Syrians specifically",⁴⁷ law "to be able to defend the weak",⁴⁸ fashion design as "she is passionate about drawing and clothes",⁴⁹ and economics to better understand "investment in digital currencies".⁵⁰ Interestingly, three females (out of nine; 33%) have expressed a desire to join the "police" but regrettably admitted that this is not possible as they are not allowed to join the force without having a Jordanian citizenship.⁵¹ Significantly, no specific life-prospects were provided by those inside the camps.

Young urban female refugees overwhelmingly commented that "these [educational, leisure, and cultural] opportunities are more available outside camps",⁵² as one is able to "visit libraries, public gardens, local youth centres, and so-on"⁵³ when living in an urban setting. Importantly, they have noted that this discrepancy creates "tension" between the two groups, especially when it comes to formal education. One female participant explained:

"In camps, the schools do not offer the scientific direction of Tawjihi [Jordan's high school degree, which determines the university majors one is allowed to pursue], whilst we who are living outside camps can choose to go in a school that offers the scientific stream if we wish".⁵⁴

The same respondent added that at times such schools are distant from where they live, and are difficult to afford in terms of daily costs of transportation, "yet at least we have the option and access... in the camps they don't".⁵⁵ Participants in the Za'atari Camp confirmed this situation but refused to acknowledge that this is a cause of tension, commenting that "everyone has a different life",⁵⁶ exhibiting what could be described as a high level of self-awareness and being reconciled with the situation they are in.

⁴⁷ Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁴⁸ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁴⁹ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁵⁰ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

⁵¹ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁵² Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

Refugees above 18 y/o living in the Camp focused more on procedural/normative limits of social mobility. To leave Za'atari Camp, these refugees need first to secure exit permit. "The procedure takes long and one have to pay high fees [10 Jordanian Dinars JODs equals 14 US Dollars USD] to get issued permit".⁵⁷ In the case of work permits, certain professions require paying higher fees: the fees for a work permit in the agricultural sector, for example, are 10 JODs, whilst in construction sectors the fees are 60 JODs, and "both are expensive" as two participants noted.⁵⁸ Work permits are valid for one year, before they need to be re-issued (through payment of same fees).

Although work permits are not a focus of the discussion here, the exit permits signify the financial burden of access to opportunities, whether for work or leisure. This security and administrative procedure in Syrian refugee camps entrenches the feeling of entrapment the refugees feel, and increases their frustration levels. Measures such as this one limit access to opportunities outside the camp, and increase feelings of injustice, which can in turn lead to radicalisation. Access to leisure and cultural opportunities should be mainstreamed as a PVE strategy applied to refugees across Jordan first and foremost, and ideally, applied to all Jordanian citizens, who are equally experiencing limited access to free leisure and cultural opportunities (UNESCO, n.d).

Transnational dynamics

Transnational dynamics, as a driver of VE in CONNEKT project, refer to flows of people, information, and ideas that are shared between groups of similar membership despite being in different national contexts. The findings of this case study reveal that this driver works at the meso-level in two forms.

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First, the young Syrians interviewed in both settings (urban and camp) have all expressed a pride and an allegiance to Syria despite having been in Jordan for most of their lives. As they stated, "we have lost many relatives and friends in the war in Syria, and we always remember them",⁵⁹ expressing gratitude for having come to Jordan whilst "other people could not leave and still have a difficult life [back home]".⁶⁰ One of the participants summarised it with the following words: "I don't feel like a refugee. I am living as if I am in Syria".⁶¹ For others, it is not difficult to maintain this transnational link between Jordan and Syria: "... we have the same close family relations, without many differences... we have the same religion, the same values, and the same social norms".⁶² Other respondents have also acknowledged that this is especially the case between those who arrive to Jordan from bordering districts between Syria and Jordan, such as Dara'a and Ramtha. However, "if you come from other Syrian cities [that are not geographically close to Jordan], you start noticing cultural differences".⁶³

Second, the young participants cited close family relations and visits between the Syrians inside and

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

⁶² Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁶³ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

outside camps.⁶⁴ The clear transnational solidarity and bonds were captured between those inside and outside the camps, as well as between those living in Jordan and their Syrian counterparts and relatives who are still in Syria.⁶⁵ Additionally, participants noted that “camps are more diverse”⁶⁶ in terms of being a community that brings together Syrians “from all Syrian backgrounds, cities, and regions”⁶⁷ to live in one place, whilst outside the camps, in the host communities, most of the Syrians who live in urban settings come from geographically close cities, or have even had prior family relations with Jordanian families.⁶⁸

This offers the following key take-away: the transnational dynamics shaping the identities, motivations, and solidarity among Syrians in Jordan are not exclusively governed by the geographical proximity to Jordan and/or the degree of prior exposure to Jordanians (through familial links or kinship). Rather, these are also shaped by the backgrounds, origins, and circumstances amongst Syrians themselves. The meso-level findings from the urban settings give evidence of the former, whilst the meso-level findings from within the refugee camps such as Za’atari provide evidence on the latter.

And, in spite of lack of clear evidence, the current findings about this driver point into transnational dynamics being able to increase the risk of radicalisation among refugees. From a prevention perspective, services offered to the refugees settled in urban settings and those in the refugee camps should identify pathways for helping them express their identities, vent the feelings related to them being survivors of the Syrian war and being displacement affected, and offer the opportunities for expressing support and channelling support to fellow Syrians. Refugees carry their own trauma caused by displacement. They live under the extreme uncertainty, in conditions of economic hardships and despair, and are faced with severe prolonged stress. The constant flow of stories from Syria portraying violence and daily hardships of fellow Syrians increase levels of powerlessness.

PVE interventions can guard against potential radicalisation through establishment of safe and transformative spaces in which carefully selected behavioural and cognitive tools are applied to enable refugees to express themselves, and express their support to fellow Syrians. Such interventions can be inspired by findings which testify of Syrian refugees overwhelmingly voicing positive sentiments and views regarding their relationship with Jordan. For most of them (at least 15 of the 18 participants engaged; 83%) they have been residing in Jordan for more than eight years, in some cases even 10 years. One participant in the fifth FGD explained how he was born in the Za’atari Camp, therefore for him Jordan and Syria are “one nation”, not two.⁶⁹ Case study participants, younger ones in particular, consider Jordan to be a “second home”,⁷⁰ noting that they have not been “bothered by anyone”,⁷¹ and have “many

⁶⁴ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁶⁵ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022

⁶⁸ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁶⁹ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

⁷⁰ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁷¹ Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

Jordanian friends, sometimes even more Jordanian than Syrian friends... and we exchange visits and share the same classrooms".⁷²

The group of participants living outside the refugee camp offered more insights on their views towards Jordanian hosts given their more frequent interaction with Jordanians. In describing this, they attributed the positive relations to different factors ranging from being able to share the same language, values, religion, and culture⁷³ to having the geographical proximity between where they are currently living (Irbid and/or Mafraq) and where they hail from originally (mainly the neighbouring Dara'a and Hama districts in Syria).⁷⁴ For the young participants from inside the Za'atari Camp, the positive relations with Jordan are attributed to "having been born and raised here",⁷⁵ and not having known other home elsewhere.

Digital socialisation

The driver of digital socialisation refers to the impact of digital tools in shaping narratives, which in turn demonstrate the influence of transnational dynamics on receiving audiences. In the macro-level analysis in Jordan, digital socialisation did not gain prominence. However, the meso-level analysis in this case study shows a notable role for digital socialisation in the potential radicalisation of Syrian refugee youth in Jordan, as it is explained in the section below.

First, technology and the internet occupy a sizable portion of refugee youth's time in both urban and camp settings. While urban setting refugees clearly admitted that technology plays a significant part of their daily lives, the same was less applicable to Syrians living inside the Za'atari refugee Camp.⁷⁶ Urban participants commented on that situation explaining that technology is lacking inside the Camp not only due to the available poor infrastructure, which is captured in having "less phones, very few stores to purchase devices or technicians,"⁷⁷ but also in how the key priority for those inside the Camp is in meeting basic daily needs. The frequent "cuts in electricity inside the camps"⁷⁸ are, for instance, a contributing factor to the poor technological infrastructure, as noted by one of the participants.

Findings about the use of internet inside the Za'atari Camp however, refute the opinions of urban setting refugees. The majority of respondents (83%; five out of six) said they excessively use technology on a daily basis. "Because we lack other things, I am on my mobile all day playing games, checking social media, or browsing the internet".⁷⁹ Participants living in the Camp confronted the point mentioned by the urban group regarding the "lack of stores and technicians inside the camps," arguing that there is rather an "abundance of" stores and technicians; yet, the key issue they face is the "poor

⁷² Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

⁷³ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁷⁴ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁷⁵ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

⁷⁶ FGD1, Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; 3, and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁷⁷ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

⁷⁸ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

⁷⁹ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

connection, unreliable network coverage, and the high cost of the communication services in general”.⁸⁰

Second, female participants conceptualised and discussed digital socialisation through a safety lens. They were concerned that as the role of technology is becoming “more present and prominent in one’s life”, a parallel attention should be made to how children are “being brought-up” by parents; what “teachings and convictions” should be very carefully instilled in children and young people by their parents, to make sure that technology does not become a “source of moral and ethical deception”.⁸¹ Third, video games increased social isolation and feelings of anger among urban setting female refugees, but video games were not mentioned by refugees living in the Camp. Interestingly, some females (at least three out of nine engaged through this case study) have explicitly shared several testimonies of their wide use of technology and video games, citing personal experiences of their “addiction” to games like Pokémon-GO and PUBG, which had caused them “to withdraw and isolate socially”, and/or have made them more “angry and violent”.⁸² For others, these video games have caused their poor academic performance and attainment, and thus have negatively impacted their self-esteem and personal lives.⁸³ No testimonies from those living inside the Za’atari Camp were given regarding this point of view.

Fourth, urban refugee youth acknowledged the risks of digital socialisation in radicalising youth. In one focus group discussion, young respondents made a clear reference to “an uncontrolled digital space presenting an open door for youngsters being misled by Daesh and other groups”.⁸⁴ The reference came in the context of the discussion about technology and its widespread use, and the participants confirmed that the way to ensure that one is not “lost [to said groups]” is by having a “firm upbringing and a more solid religious teaching and beliefs”.⁸⁵

In the Za’atari Camp, respondents were very cautious in the discussion about extremist groups and the risks of radicalisation. The research team used the phrase “extremist groups” to solicit direct insights and opinions. However, the participants did not react to the term and did not repeat it. They expressed their opinions indirectly referring to “groups”. The Camp respondents were short and cryptic in their expression following the mention of “extremist groups” by the research team, which was interpreted as them being intimidated by discussions, as well as living in a highly securitised and surveyed environment within the Camp.

Jordan’s P/CVE response strategies are security focused. This approach is understandable given the security challenges in the country, particularly the extremist attacks that took place in 2016, in Karak (Husseini, 2016), Irbid (BBC, 2016a), and Balq’aa (BBC, 2016b). However, the risk of radicalisation

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁸² Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

through digital spaces among Jordanian citizens and refugees alike necessitates a preventative approach that leans more towards digital awareness, and safe opportunities for self-expression and self-development through educational, cultural, and leisure opportunities.

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS AND INTERACTIONS AMONG DRIVERS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

The data collected through this case study shows intersections between three drivers: educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities; transnational dynamics; and digital socialisation. The following discussion clarifies the intersections between these drivers and how they interact with the two prominent social contexts of education/socialisation, and leisure and cultural activities.

Educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities, and digital socialisation

As discussed earlier, Syrian refugees have limited access to educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities due to the lack of institutionally sponsored opportunities. A few available opportunities are also not largely accessible to Syrian refugees due to their geographical distance (in the case of urban setting) or limited freedom of movement (in the case of living inside the camps).⁸⁶ In addition, the transportation costs and financial fees that need to be paid to access these opportunities makes them de facto inaccessible.

Refugees consider these opportunities as a key element to their own social mobility. To compensate for this shortage, they spend more time online, accessing educational or leisure opportunities, filing their time in latter case. This in return makes digital socialisation the most prominent factor when examining the potential impact of VE drivers on radicalisation of youth in two ways.

First, respondents seem to have a positive view of technology when it comes to accessing educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities. Access to internet allows them “to google” and look for opportunities that are not offered in-person or are not accessible due to the obstacles mentioned earlier.⁸⁷ Participants illustrated this point with some examples: four female participants (44% of females engaged) mentioned that they take free English lessons online to improve their language skills which they consider absolutely necessary for their personal and professional development,⁸⁸ two male participants (22% of males engaged) mentioned taking online courses on coding programmes such as C++, and learning about bitcoins and digital currency investment,⁸⁹ while a mixed group of males and females (five; 27% of total research sample) cited YouTube channels and online courses as source of their non-academic learning.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁸⁷ Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁸⁸ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁸⁹ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁹⁰ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

Examples on the impact of technology by respondents from the Za'atari Camp were not offered, and there seems to be little to no usage of technology in making educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities widely available to Camp residents,⁹¹ which in turn creates a notable discrepancy in the role of digital socialisation based on place of refugees' residence.

This lack of access however, seems to stir a shared sentiment amongst the refugees, confirming their belief that they have limited life prospects as a result of sharing the same identity (as Syrians), despite living in different sub-national contexts within Jordan.⁹² In extension of the same transnational dynamics at play, the urban setting refugee respondents still saw their lives to be better than those living within camps, or those living in Syria who, according to participants, do not have this access to said opportunities at all.⁹³

Second, the internet is "there" to fill the free time of refugees – and there is an abundance of free time, particularly for refugees in Za'atari Camp. Idle time mostly means using mobile phones for all educational and recreational options. This makes refugees vulnerable to radicalisation, if they are specifically targeted. As noted earlier, militants generally tend to recruit youth in refugee camps (Sude, 2022). This deserves particular attention in PVE efforts, and the institutional responsibility of the government and the international community to provide recreational and cultural activities in the camp settings should be a priority for the PVE purposes on three levels: to protect young refugees based in the camps against the recruitment; to enhance refugees' self-esteem and hope; and to offer avenues for self-development and skills development and attainment.

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Digital socialisation and transnational dynamics

Heavy reliance on the internet as a medium used to fill idle time as well as a tool that helps to access educational opportunities, increases the influence of transnational dynamics as a potential driver for VE among Syrian refugee youth. Narratives of victimisation of Syrians in general, information about extreme conditions of life experienced by those who remain in Syria, and the plight of Syrian refugees in general are all transmitted daily to refugee youth via internet. Participants in this case study were all proud Syrians who identified with their country, culture, and history. Their identification with the (in)group, when combined with a heavy sense of victimisation, might lead to radicalisation, if other radicalisation factors are at play (Falkowski and Lang, 2015). The transnational dynamics therefore, when influenced by digital socialisation, might potentially lead to radicalisation among Syrian refugees.

However, the findings of this case study also point to a high level of social cohesion and positive perceptions about Jordan and Jordanians among Syrian refugees. This in turn protects to a certain extent from radicalisation, particularly in that the refugees the research team spoke to continuously compared the difficulties they experience to the difficulties of those who remain in Syria. Despite the struggles they face, all research participants acknowledged by far better situation they are in compared

⁹¹ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

⁹² Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁹³ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

to Syrian refugees in other countries in the region or to Syrians still in Syria. This balances the influence of transnational dynamics as a VE driver, therefore reinforcing the strengthening of social cohesion as a present, and future, PVE strategy in Jordan.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS OF VE AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

The interactions between the two social contexts: of socialisation/education, and leisure and cultural activities, cannot be discussed within the clear dividing lines. The discussion below will summarise these deep interactions that were explained in detail in previous sections of this case study.

First, the refugee family units compensate the shortage in educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities. The families support young refugees in their formal education, and female family members in particular bear the responsibility of informal education of refugee youth. This makes females the single most important agent in any potential radicalisation or in preventing the radicalisation of refugee youth. Females shape the identity, the worldview, and modes of self-expression of refugee youth. The implied risk here is that if females in the family are radical, they will in turn radicalise youth. The opposite is true, if females in the family are equipped with tools of critical assessment, and are exposed to de-radicalisation narratives, they will be the most influential actor able to prevent radicalisation among refugee youth.

Second, the potential impact of digital socialisation as a driver of VE can be controlled if wider educational, leisure, and cultural activities are provided in the camp, or if they are affordable and accessible in urban areas in which refugees reside. This finding does not reveal any potential radicalisation role the cultural and leisure activities might have, simply because they are not easily accessible. When available, these are cherished as opportunities for recreational purposes, and for social development and mobility. In fact, the provision of these activities will control the impact of digital socialisation and transitional dynamics. In this way, these activities (could) become a key approach to prevention of violent extremism among youth.

The above summary of the intersections and interactions between the drivers of VE and social contexts clarify the complicated web of factors that can radicalise refugee youth, and illustrate how digital socialisation, prominently featured at the meso-level, can activate other drivers of violent extremism.

Analysis Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS

The analysis of meso-level VE drivers has revealed that three drivers are at play amongst young Syrian refugees: educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities; transnational dynamics; and digital socialisation. The third driver of digital socialisation offers a new window for understanding this sub-national group as it seems to have gained increased prominence that has not been captured in the macro-level analysis.

Overall, educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities seem to be available in principle, yet hard to access in practice due to different factors. Some of these factors are institutional, such as the opportunities not being widely offered in schools or being offered via formal channels of education,⁹⁴ while other factors point at logistics, such as living in remote urban areas distant from the city centre where these opportunities are concentrated⁹⁵ or residing in refugee camps,⁹⁶ or uncover the financial hardships as one of the reasons, in that the young refugees (or their families) are simply not being able to afford these opportunities (a price of a course and/or price of transportation fees, for example).⁹⁷

Further, the meso-level analysis shows that the family plays a primary role in shaping informal education amongst the young refugee respondents.⁹⁸ Families, therefore, can help instil and develop views and values that could protect youth against radicalisation, but there is no evidence that they encourage or harbour radical views. Mainly, the informal education the respondents mentioned was related to religious education, and it had revealed an interesting gendered dimension: female figures within the family were the ones undertaking this role more prominently than males; the role of males was exclusive to domains that are male-associated, such as attending the prayers at the mosque.⁹⁹ In contrast, the role of family in fostering and supporting the young participants' formal education reflected a gender-consistent trajectory, whereby older males supported the studying of younger males, and older females supported the studying of younger females.¹⁰⁰ This challenges the stereotypical understanding of the role of older females, typically the mother, being the one exclusively supporting the formal education of the children (both males and females).

Digital socialisation attains prominence among refugees as a potential driver of VE due to the lack of educational, leisure, and cultural activities, and due to the difficulties of accessing work opportunities.

⁹⁴ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁹⁵ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022.

⁹⁶ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

⁹⁷ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

⁹⁸ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

⁹⁹ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

¹⁰⁰ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

The digital space has the potential to radicalise refugees. Youth in general has easy access to internet and can select the content they want to view. With the absence of alternative activities that will help youth fill their time, and with the lacking life skills such as critical thinking, fact-checking, etc, young refugees become as vulnerable as other youth to radicalisation through digital means. The frustrations refugees face due to the struggles they are facing can make them potentially more susceptible to radicalisation. However, this area of research requires further examination.

In this context, transnational dynamics become more prominent because narratives are easily transferrable in the digital space. Refugees already hold emotional connections with fellow Syrian survivors of the civil war, and empathise with them because of what they feel are the injustices Syrians are faced with. This, alongside the stigma of being the refugees, and the contextual grievances related to their economic and social position, can attract refugee youth to extremist narratives.

PREVENTION INDICATORS RESULTING FROM THE MESO ANALYSIS

In the context of this case study, prevention indicators are understood as areas of engagement at the meso level that could help hinder the appeal of VE. Yet, in the case of refugees in Jordanian urban settings, these were withheld from the discussions, as the terms of violent extremism, prevention of violent extremism, or countering of violent extremism had intentionally been avoided by the research team due to the sensitivity of the group, its young age, but also as a means to verify whether the participants themselves will voluntarily refer to any of these terms.

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Our analysis points to four prevention indicators implied by research respondents that could be capitalised on in situations where an engagement is deemed positive to PVE efforts, or in opposite, to limit the appeal of VEOs.

The first prevention indicator is the notable positive relationship with and perception of Jordan(ians) amongst young Syrian refugees. As one participant noted, "most of the young Syrians today are now speaking with the Jordanian dialect",¹⁰¹ using this to acknowledge how integrated – or included – the young Syrians feel in the Jordanian society. This social capital should be tapped into when discussing PVE efforts amongst urban Syrian refugees. The young generation of Syrian refugees in Jordan have known no other home but Jordan, and their positive interaction with their local host communities is a key dimension of future PVE efforts or research.

Second, as demonstrated earlier, parents and families play an integral role in shaping the formal and informal education of refugee youth, be it religious, academic, or personal development skills. This provides another key avenue for effective PVE efforts by intentional engagement and working with parents, male and female figures alike, to encourage the use of and build competence in applying tools that instil transformation skills, critical thinking, and empowerment of refugee youth and children. One female participant noted a welcomed development for women, saying "... there is a growing

¹⁰¹ Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

positive role for and acknowledgment of the female [young girls or daughters] amongst Syrian families".¹⁰² This is a development that should be equally capitalised on in any efforts focused on prevention of violent extremism. Another research participant spoke of a personal experience with her family providing her with support in dealing with addiction withdrawal symptoms, "anger, rage, and violence" as she was going through that process after having been an intensive user of destructive video games for a longer period.¹⁰³ This reflects the significant influential role parents might have in relationship with their children, which could offer an effective PVE investment. Although females have a more prominent role in this regard, efforts should target both male and female family members.

Third, given the positive view of the police and the expressed desire by some female participants to join the force, one might deduct that an effective prevention effort could be in having more frequent and sustained engagement between young Syrian refugees and the Community Police Unit of Jordan's Public Security Directorate. The finding of this case study revealed a positive outlook and wide acceptance of the local police among some participants, so this can be attributed to the Community Police Unit's local and communal outreach. PVE efforts could focus on institutional participation of Syrian refugees inside and outside the camps. This should not be limited to PVE goals but could also enhance social cohesion, respect for law and order, and local ownership of security local efforts.

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Fourth, the enhancement of basic services inside the camp(s) should be a PVE priority. Participants living in the Za'atari Camp were overwhelmingly occupied with the provision of services. Referring to the "frequent electricity cuts", installing "AC units inside the caravans", building a public "swimming pool for youngsters", extending "the duration of the exit permit" (currently an exit permit to go out for visits or for seeking leisure opportunities outside the camp which is granted for seven days only, while the refugees are asking for it to be valid 15 days or more), and "forgoing the fees for issuing a work permit", have all seemed possible intervention measures that would "enhance the quality of our life and keep us busy", as opposed to the current situation in which residents "spend the entire day on their mobile phones", and do not contribute positively to society.¹⁰⁴

MICRO-PATHS REPORTED FROM MESO ANALYSIS

This case study focused on two distinct groups of Syrian refugees in Jordan: urban refugees in Irbid and Mafraq, and those settled in the Za'atari Camp. It was expected that micro-paths would not be identical. The data generated through this case study clarified how urban refugees have a sharper understanding of their individualised paths ahead when compared to those living inside the Camp.

Urban refugees in Mafraq and Irbid named specific professional pathways they wish to undertake, such as "becoming a petroleum engineer in the UAE", a "lawyer", a "doctor", a "fashion designer", an

¹⁰² Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za'atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

“economist”, a “policewoman [although not possible in Jordan for Syrian refugees]”, or an “English teacher”.¹⁰⁵ Their micro-paths were outward looking using the “I” single pronoun.

In contrast, those living inside the Camp have displayed a genuine struggle to name one specific professional career goal. In fact, the question seemed to have taken them by surprise as something they have not thought about or considered before. After a short silence, they timidly shared thoughts about what “they” – in the plural pronoun – wish to have, not to be, to enhance their life-prospects. Options included “a swimming pool”, “AC units”, “having electricity at school”, or “extended duration of the exit permit” when they go outside the camp for leisure or family visits. At best, the most personal articulation of all was a “lowered fees for issuing my work permit”.¹⁰⁶ The micro-paths of Camp refugees were defined by their group identification as refugees in Za’atari, using the “we” plural pronoun.

It is unclear whether these insights on micro-paths are driven by the greater possibility of realising one’s ambitions outside camps in the case of urban refugees, or by the stark contrast of limited opportunities and social mobility for those living inside the camps. However, it was clear that micro-paths amongst young Syrian refugees are determined by the role of the individual’s relationship with their immediate social environment and the individual internalisation of the conditions, drivers, and messages which are of relevance to one’s life-prospects.

¹⁰⁵ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 9, 2022; Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 3, conducted in-person in Irbid, on February 10, 2022; and Focus Group Discussion 4, conducted in-person in Mafraq, on February 13, 2022.

¹⁰⁶ Focus Group Discussion 5, conducted in-person in Za’atari Camp, on April 25, 2022.

General Conclusion

In conclusion, this case study sought to examine the case of young Syrian refugees in Jordan, inside and outside the refugee camps. This sub-national group provides a fitting case for understanding a community-level context that allows for testing the social factors that could potentially feed patterns of violent extremism amongst this group, and determine relations between the national, community, and individual dimensions of the CONNEKT research project. With Syrian refugees constituting nearly 20% of Jordan's population, it was simply impossible to overlook the PVE/VE dynamics amongst this group. Yet, the case study considered the notable sensitivities that are typically associated with this topic, and sought to carefully avoid stigmatising the refugee population or feed the prejudices and stereotypes around refugees in Jordan, particularly Syrian refugees.

The insights solicited from the respondents clarify that the family is the first and most prominent "shaper" of their identities and growth opportunities. Captured across the three macro-level drivers examined in this case study (educational, leisure, and cultural opportunities; transnational dynamics; and digital socialisation), the family supports formal and informal education of youth refugees. Notable gender variations were also revealed. Family support in formal education is gender segregated, whereas female family members take full responsibility of informal education of children and youth.

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Additionally, a clear variation was noted in the availability, quality, and nature of educational, cultural, and leisure activities provided to young Syrian refugees, inside and outside refugee camps. Opportunities are more abundant for urban refugees. Inside the camps, cultural, leisure and informal educational opportunities are very limited or not widely available, therefore, the respondents indirectly alluded to their feeling of entrapment. However, the refugees inside the camp exhibited a level of self-awareness and reconciliation – or unspoken despair – with the situation they are in, which would require further research. Generally though, Syrian refugees voiced positive views about Jordan, and this positive outlook should be a key area to capitalise on in PVE efforts to strengthen social cohesion.

Finally, as drivers of violent extremism, both digital socialisation and transnational dynamics offer a clear channel for shaping the identities, motivation, and solidarity amongst young Syrians in Jordan. Transnational dynamics are evident from the sense of victimisation of Syrians, feelings of sympathy and identification with the plight of Syrians still living in the conditions of war, and the pride in their own shared Syrian identity. This case study provides no evidence on radicalisation due to transnational dynamics, but these might be at play if and when a Syrian individual develops radical ideas. Likewise, digital socialisation is a determinant factor in examining drivers of VE among Syrian refugees, not because of concrete evidence on this, but rather due to the high level of consumption of digital media. This is apparent from testimonials of young refugees spending long hours using their mobile phones as they cannot pursue other educational and leisure activities, or the lack of and difficult access to work opportunities – abundance of free time increases the risk of radicalisation through digital socialisation.

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Annex I: Questions for Focus Group Discussions

The Annex 1 contains the main set of questions that have been used as a guidance for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The questions below were used in the course of the FGDs, once the safe space was established, and were asked and alternated as the discussion developed.

1. In your opinion, are the refugees inside and outside the camps (in the host communities) exposed to the same opportunities for religious education? If yes, can you give some examples? How does this affect the role religion plays in the lives of both groups of refugees? Do you think this affects polarisation in any form?
2. Are the refugees inside the camps given the same life opportunities as the ones outside the camps (host communities)? Do they experience more economic deprivation within the camps? If so, does this create tension for between urban refugees and those in the camps?
3. [You referred to a number of differences in daily lives between refugees inside the camps and those who live outside it.] How do these daily inequalities (due to different geographical locations) exacerbate/enhance the appeal of groups that uphold different ideologies or armed groups in Syria?
[Daily inequalities: education, health, transportation, income/jobs, internet connectivity, leisure activities, etc. Which inequalities were common and felt by the majority.]
4. Is the quality and frequency of access to, and use of, technology the same for the refugees in the camps as it is for urban refugees?
[Confirm what is the situation in and out of the camps, assumption being that the ones outside the camps have access to and use freely the technology (within the economic limitations, that is).]
5. Can the collective experience of deprivation of services and/or psychological frustration of refugees inside the camps be identified as a contributing factor to creating more conducive context to radicalisation?
6. In your opinion, are there better prospects outside the camps? What are they? What opportunities exist inside the camps? What impact do they have on people's sense of belonging and inclusion (in the host communities)?
7. [Based on input from participants on access to goods/ services/ opportunities/ ideas/ leisure and cultural activities for those inside and outside camps.]
What is the impact of these opportunities on the life-prospects of refugees? What do those who do not have that sort of access do? What are their life prospects? Do they compensate for that lack of (goods/ services/ opportunities/ ideas), and if yes, how?
[What do they turn to instead?]

1. برأيكم، هل اللاجئون داخل المخيمات وخارجها يحصلون على نفس فرص التعليم الديني؟ إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، هل ممكن إعطاءنا بعض الأمثلة على ذلك؟ كيف يؤثر هذا على الدور الذي يلعبه الدين في حياة اللاجئين داخل المخيم واللاجئين في المجتمعات المضيفة؟ باعتقادك هل يؤثر هذا على الاستقطاب بأي شكل من الأشكال؟
2. هل يُمنح اللاجئون داخل المخيمات نفس الفرص المتاحة للاجئين خارج المخيمات؟ هل يعاني اللاجئون داخل المخيمات من المزيد من الحرمان الاقتصادي؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك، فهل هذا يخلق هذا توتراً بين من هم في المخيمات وخارجها؟
3. [لقد ذكرتم بعض أوجه الاختلاف في الحياة اليومية بين اللاجئين داخل المخيمات وخارجها]. كيف تؤدي أوجه التفاوت اليومية (بسبب الموقع الجغرافي) إلى تفاقم/تعزيز جاذبية الجماعات التي تعتنق إيديولوجيات مختلفة أو الجماعات المسلحة في سوريا؟
[أوجه التفاوت اليومية، التعليم والصحة والمواصلات ومصادر الدخل/العمل وخدمات الانترنت والأنشطة الترفيهية وغيرها. أي من أوجه التفاوت هذه كانت سائدة بين أغلبية المشاركين]
4. هل اللاجئون في المخيمات قادرون على الوصول إلى التكنولوجيا بنوعية وتكرار مثل اللاجئون الذين يعيشون خارج المخيم؟
[تحقق من طبيعة الوضع داخل وخارج المخيمات حيث أنه من المقترض أن يكون لدى اللاجئون خارج المخيمات وصول وحرية أكبر في استخدام الانترنت (وفق ما تسمح به ظروفهم الاقتصادية).
5. هل تعد خبرة الحرمان الجمعية للاجئين داخل المخيمات و/أو ضعفهم النفسية عامل مساهم في خلق سياق أكثر ملاءمة للتطرف؟
6. برأيكم، هل هناك آفاق أفضل خارج مخيمات اللجوء؟ ما هي هذه الفرص؟ وما الفرص الموجودة داخل المخيمات؟ ما هو تأثير هذه الفرص على شعور الناس بالانتماء في مجتمعاتهم وبالاندماج في المجتمعات المضيفة؟
7. [بناءً على إجابات المشاركين حول الوصول إلى السلع والخدمات والفرص والأفكار والأنشطة الترفيهية والثقافية داخل المخيمات وخارجها]، ما هو أثر هذه الفرص على آفاق حياتهم؟ وبالنسبة لأولئك الذين لا يصلون لمثل هذه الفرص، ما الذي يلجؤون إليه بدلاً من ذلك؟ وما هي آفاق حياتهم؟ وهل يعوضون عن النقص في السلع والخدمات والفرص والأفكار والأنشطة الترفيهية والثقافية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة نعم، كيف يقومون بذلك؟
[ما البديل الذي يلجؤون إليه؟]



Female preachers in Ma'an

Aisha Bint Faisal, Neven Bondokji, Jadranka Štikovac Clark

Introduction

The CONNEKT project's macro-level analysis of drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism (VE) in Jordan (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac Clark, 2021) revealed a gap in the acknowledgment as well as in the understanding of the role women and girls play in violent extremism (VE). In that specific phase of CONNEKT project completed in 2021, which examined drivers of VE on a macro level, the research participants seldom referred to the gendered dimension referring in passing to the role of ideology/religion. This has emphasised the lack of acknowledgment regarding the role of women and revealed a limited understanding of the role of a particular segment of female population—the one of female preachers (Grieve, 2016).

This case study examines the drivers of VE that affect female preachers in the governorate of Ma'an. The evidence here is based on field research with two groups of preachers: first are formal preachers who are employees of the Ministry of Awqaf, Islamic Affairs and Holy Places. These are formal government employees who abide by the operational structures and discourse authorised by the Ministry. The second group are informal preachers who operate on a voluntary basis without state regulations or monitoring structures.

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Undoubtedly, religious institutions and preachers have been engaged in several state-led and voluntary efforts to prevent and counter radical ideologies through capacity building and self-education endeavours to be able to counter radical narratives they encounter in local communities. However, this case study examines how female preachers can potentially contribute to radicalisation of youth in Ma'an. It is important to warn against taking this research question out of proportion since there has been no concrete evidence of this. Instead, the case study sought to examine how radicalisation drivers identified at the macro-level and social contexts in Ma'an as a meso-level- can influence or contribute to radicalisation through female preachers. The conclusions are inconclusive and speculative of potential causal relations.

The underlying assumptions in this case study are, first, that if female preachers are radicalised, they will radicalise youth in the ages of 12-30 years due to preachers' relations and access to families and youth formally and informally. Second, if female preachers are not radical but reach a climax of frustration with socio-economic conditions in Ma'an and institutional negligence of their role, this frustration with the state will be transferred to their audiences, which in turn leads to alienation and radicalisation.

We argue that the loose structure in which informal preachers operate can encourage extremism in two distinct ways. First, informal preachers can receive their Sharia degrees from institutions outside Jordan, and they maintain contact with loose networks of preachers in the region. The teachings they

disseminate and the ideology they carry is not monitored or institutionalised in terms of their teachings or religious opinions they disseminate. Therefore, if some preachers are radical, they will easily affect the radicalisation of their audience, which includes youth of 12-30 years old and their families.

Second, informal preachers feel discriminated against in two ways. First, as citizens of Ma'an governorate, they suffer the marginalisation of all Ma'anites in level and reach of services, and availability and accessibility to employment and educational opportunities. Second, they are discriminated against as informal preachers in terms of access to facilities, regular income, and operational support that formal preachers enjoy. Although there is no concrete evidence on this, this frustration with the state and security agencies can be transferred to their audiences. With no avenues for political or social protests in Jordan, this frustration might find an outlet in radicalisation for the preachers themselves and their audiences.

These findings highlight the intersections of territorial inequality, digital socialisation, transnational dynamics, and religion/ideology as specific radicalisation drivers examined in the CONNEKT project. These drivers interact with three social contexts as defined by the CONNEKT project: socialisation/education, employment and labour relations, and urban and peri-urban spaces.

Some readers might assume that the focus on female preachers in this case study is to argue for religion as a main driver of VE. Although Jordan as a state has focused its response to VE on ideology and religion, this emphasis does not reflect findings on VE in Jordan which point to both ideology AND structural grievances as drivers of VE. The state's emphasis on religion reflects government's officials' attempt to avail their responsibility in the rise of VE in the country.

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Nevertheless, informal religious education, especially by female preachers deserves attention to understand factors that may lead to the radicalisation of female youth between 12-30 years. The case study examines the role of female preachers as potentially one factor among many others that can lead to the radicalisation of youth.

CASE STUDY CONTEXT

The broad context of women and VE in Jordan can be described as difficult and undisclosed. Women's role is both underestimated and under-investigated, and scarce local knowledge resulting from high sensitivities related to VE at large does not help improve that understanding. Our previous macro-level research confirmed this stance: the research respondents, including female ones, did not acknowledge how the radicalisation process affects women—they simply dismissed the subject of women in general.

Several factors deepen the impact of drivers of VE on women in Jordan, with the male-guardianship system being particularly important in the socio-economic sense. The male-guardianship system implies that a woman must have a male guardian, normally a father or husband (but in some cases a brother or even a son) who will make all critical decisions on her behalf. Women are subject to the ill-treatment if they disobey their male guardian or transgress gender norms, with measures ranging from imprisonment, detention, to separation of the women from her children (Amnesty International, 2019).

Further, current data shows low rates of Jordan's female economic participation and imbalanced gender dynamics (Abu Shamma, 2019), leading to an unequal access to power and opportunities between women and men. In fact, Jordan has one of the world's lowest rates of women's economic participation, with only 14% of women being engaged in the formal economy, and an additional 15% engaged in the informal economy, according to recent estimates (Jacobs-Anderson, 2020). While the evidence on the relation on unemployment and radicalisation is inconclusive at best, dissatisfaction about one's income compared to their employment and education is found to contribute to radicalisation in Jordan. Although this evidence is drawn from research subjects that are mainly male, there is no reason to assume this affects men only (See for example Abu Rumman, Gouda and Bondokji, 2022).

Very few studies have examined radicalisation specifically among Jordanian women, but two studies have cautioned against women being more vulnerable to extremism and recruitment via social media (Bagenal, 2016). Local evidence points to the influence of partners and despair as factors behind Jordanian young women joining or attempting to join Daesh (ISIS).¹⁰⁷ The male-guardianship system mentioned above contributes to both factors. Some Jordanian women left to join Daesh with their husbands who were extremists and their wives simply joined. However, there is also evidence of women who refused to join their husbands.¹⁰⁸ Thus, different levels of women empowerment have led to the decisions women took in this regard even when the wives were ideologically radical. Like other women in the region, Jordanian women who joined extremist groups have been influenced by the empowerment agenda of Daesh. Although it seems contradictory with the overall ideology of Daesh, it has provided women agency and leadership roles compared to extremist groups like Al-Qaeda that limited the role of women in caring for households. Extremist women across the region were attracted by this unique place for women in an extremist group (Abu Hanieh and Abu Rumman, 2017).

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This evidence encourages further investigation of radicalisation drivers affecting women. We examine how drivers of VE affect women preachers in the governorate of Ma'an, as a unique segment of women actors in the radicalisation process. However, it should be noted from the outset that this case study does not assume preachers contribute to radicalisation. In fact, the findings shed more light on their role in PVE efforts. But since this will be the focus of another CONNEKT report, this case study focuses on VE drivers and the role of female preachers in Ma'an.

Female preachers

Female preachers operate in two parallel structures in Jordan resulting in two types of preachers:

- A 'formal' type that is part of the official state structures through its affiliation to the Ministry of Awqaf, Islamic Affairs and Holy Places. Also considered as a formal type of female preachers are the ones appointed by security and military agencies, within the military and security ranks, who are typically part of the Women Police Unit, (Jordan Times, 2017) and

¹⁰⁷ Three Focus Group Discussion with females in Rusayfeh, 14-20 July 2016 for an unpublished study on Radicalisation Drivers among Jordanian Youth (Amman: WANA Institute, 2017).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

- An 'informal' type that exercises preaching and Islamic missionary role voluntarily, often affiliated with Islamic groups such as the Salafi stream or the Muslim Brotherhood. This also includes Sufis and other groups active in Jordan, most notably the all-women preaching group of Al-Qubaysiat (Al-Qubaysiat (2017)). This group is neither appointed nor acknowledged by formal structures – civil or military.

These structures affect two aspects of the female preachers' work.

First, this context gives the former –formal– group a greater access to the existing state structures, such as schools, youth centres, hospitals, etc.,¹⁰⁹ whilst it pushes the latter –informal– group to operate outside said structures and take on a more personalised, communal role based on their own relations and networks.¹¹⁰

Second, due to their relationships with the Ministry of Awqaf, the formal group of female preachers operates in a more transparent hierarchical model, and being paid by the Ministry, reports their weekly and monthly activities to the Ministry.¹¹¹ The individual female preachers belonging to this group are appointed through the Civil Service Bureau based on qualifications and relevant degrees in Islamic studies or Sharia (Islamic Law System). The most recent data indicates that the number of formal female preachers in Jordan is 506 across all 12 governorates (Ministry of Education of Jordan, 2022). Completely opposite to this group, the 'informal' female preachers operate in a decentralised model, with unreported/unknown, but what looks like diverse channels of funding, with their numbers not being captured in any official statistics, and their qualifications, geographic distribution, or any other characteristic being scarcely, if at all, documented.¹¹²

Ma'an

The southern governorate of Ma'an makes up just over one-third of the land mass in Jordan, with nearly half of its population residing in rural areas. In 2016, unemployment rate in Ma'an was 19.10% and poverty was 26.6%. Both were the highest in the country at 26.6% (national average 14.4%). (Governorate Development Plan 2016-2018, n.d). In 2007, a new Ma'an Development Area was launched to create an economic, social, and scientific hub to address the rampant unemployment and poverty. The initiative unfortunately did not produce desired results, further plunging the city and its surroundings into economic deprivation. The governorate shares a long border with Saudi Arabia, where smuggling and illegal activities are not rare.

Gender divisions are also pronounced: as of 2020, the illiteracy rate among women in Ma'an is nearly 5% higher than the national average – and twice the rate of Jordan's capital city, Amman. Unemployment for women in Ma'an is also nearly 3% higher than the Kingdom's average (Perrin, 2021).

¹⁰⁹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹¹⁰ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹¹¹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on December 6, 2021.

¹¹² Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

There are widespread perceptions of marginalisation in Ma'an. Not all of which stand to scrutiny. For example, 83.2% of Ma'an citizens are covered by health insurance compared to the national average of 87%, and 26.7% of students pass the national secondary exam Tawjihi compared to the national average of 36.6%. (Perrin, 2021). Although lower than the national average, Ma'an fares better than other governorates in Jordan.

But the south of Jordan has historically seen active social movements, opposition, and anti-government protests. The famous 1989 'April's Uprising' started in Ma'an as a result of the economic recession. Fast spreading across the southern region, a series of protestors' demands resulted in resignation of the then-Prime Minister, lifting of martial law in force since 1957, restrictions on freedom of expression and of press removed, reinstatement of parliamentary elections that had been paused since 1967, and an appointment by His Majesty the late King Hussein of a royal commission that drafted the National Charter, a document that set a timetable for reforms and democratisation of Jordan—a move that was not well received amongst Jordan's neighbours in Arabian peninsula. The city played a similar role in subsequent protests and social movements (bread riots in 1996, 1998 protests, 2002 (Tell, 2015) and 2014 protests during the Arab uprisings). According to the city's (Al-Fadilat, 2015) inhabitants, little to nothing has changed since then, and a difficult relation with the state and security actors (Elizabeth Williams, 2018) has characterised Ma'an, in which a significant security forces' presence is palpable.

Finally, on top of the anti-government protests, Ma'an is also known across Jordan as a city with strong historical presence of an active Salafi-Jihadist movement (Osborne, 2017a). Home of the leader of the movement in Jordan, Mohammad Al-Shalabi (Abu Sayyaf), and a base for his activities, (Katulis, Awad, and Lang, 2014) the city is one of five major Jordanian cities where the Salafi-Jihadist movement has 'the greatest concentration and expansion' (Combaz, 2015). In 2014, its citizens actively rallied in support of Daesh (Ghboun, 2014), raising its flag (Su, 2014) and encouraging tens of individuals to join the violent extremist groups (VEOs) in Iraq and Syria.

The geographical relevance of the city of Ma'an for this case study stems from this unique socio-political context and relation with the state. Unsurprisingly, the city of Ma'an within the governorate is a key radicalisation hotspot in Jordan. A nationwide study conducted to explore factors impacting propensity and influence of pathways toward violent extremism in Jordan had alarmingly shown high quantitative scores in the south of the country in general and in Ma'an in particular. Factors include boredom, drug abuse, negative impression of authorities, inequality, social injustice, etc. (MSI, 2017).

Research methodology

RECAP OF RESULTS FROM MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

Four results from the macro-level analysis provide the broader context to understand the findings of this case study. First, state conceptualisation around violent extremism threats and dynamics are heavily viewed through an ideological lens, with little consideration for the contextual grievances. In the macro-level phase of the CONNEKT project, the role of female preachers was mentioned 'in passing', in spite of them being established as an important grassroots level PVE actor in the existing literature (Jordan Times, 2017) and only viewed through an exclusive religious/ideological lens. Macro-level state efforts sought to provide female preachers with various capacity-building workshops and trainings aiming to "enhance their religious knowledge and their capacity/competency at addressing religious questions and concerns." (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac Clark, 2021).

It should be noted, however, that the state's focus on religion and ideology in its PVE measures does not reflect findings on radicalisation in Jordan. Instead, it reflects the state's unwillingness to admit that structural grievances have led to the rise of VE in Jordan. Research points to both ideological and structural factors. The emphasis on ideology reflects government's officials' attempt to avail their responsibility in the rise of VE in the country. Therefore, this case study does not examine the role of female preachers as key actors within the realm of religion NOT as the main driver of VE. Instead, it examines this understudied role as potentially one factor among many others.

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It was also noticed that the efforts that address VE have moved from individuals to family cells (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac Clark, 2021): radicalisation within intricately linked family networks, as opposed to lone individuals, was an emerging trend in Jordan (Abu Rumman and Shteiwi, 2018). Yet, response to this trend regarding the actors who have access to and influence over families has been limited to ad hoc family PVE sessions, and occasional capacity building courses to Imams and preachers, according to the results of our macro-level research. Female preachers are one such actor whose role is gaining more prominence as radicalisation and violent extremism patterns shift towards families, not individuals. They interact with families and children in closed off locations and shape religious orientations and behaviour in local communities. Preachers shape how religion is understood and practised in local communities.

Third, macro-level analysis has pointed to the prominence of territorial inequalities in the rise of VE in Jordan, where not only perceived and actual marginalisation of certain governorates by the central government. This pertains to the quality of services provided, employment and educational opportunities in local communities, and available infrastructure. Together these factors limit the prospects of youth to attain satisfying employment opportunities. As a result, economic deprivation becomes a direct result of territorial inequalities giving rise to antagonism towards the state. Similarly, most PVE initiatives in Jordan have focused on radicalisation hotbeds which are marginalised. This further stigmatised the local communities and contributed to their alienation from and anger towards the state (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac Clark, 2021).

Finally, digital socialisation was not directly linked to recruitment for extremist groups. Instead, social media played a role in disseminating other forms of radicalisation in Jordanian society like mutilation crimes. However, given the international evidence on online radicalisation, state institutions supported and led several initiatives to encourage digital literacy. Despite this marginal role digitalisation attains in the discussion of drivers of VE on the macro-level in Jordan, digital socialisation -as will be discussed later- is probably the most prominent factor to be examined in relation to female preachers, particularly informal ones who attain their education online and maintain direct and diverse contact with loose regional networks of preachers.

Together, these, as we called them in the previous report, 'shifting' patterns of violent extremism make a compelling case for examining the specific role of female preachers given their centrality to different societal and familial dynamics. The findings highlight what factors can contribute to the radicalisation of female preachers, who, if radicalised, can contribute to the radicalisation of their audiences. There are no concrete findings on this causality. But the case study pinpoints potential links between VE drivers and social contexts as defined in the CONNEKT project.

MESO-LEVEL ANALYSIS ADDED VALUE

The added value of the meso-level analysis can be presented in four different ways, as follows:

- First, the meso-level case study allows for an in-depth analysis of context and drivers of VE on a community level, as identified by the results of macro-level research. In short, it is another block in building a multi-dimensional map of drivers of violent extremism.
- Second, it allows for using of a new analytical tool, the case study, in investigating local communities to better understand the violent extremism scene.
- Third, the analysis provides an opportunity for combining and testing the pre-identified seven drivers with a set of social interaction contexts. This combination cements a key premise of the CONNEKT project that relates to radicalisation and violent extremism being approached and analysed as a social phenomenon that develops from contexts of social interaction and intersections between individuals, ideas, and contexts.
- Fourth, the meso-level analysis is considered a stepping-stone into implementing a pilot intervention on preventive measures against violent extremism, which in other words moves the CONNEKT project one step further from research to action.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Overall objective of this case study is to examine the role of female preachers in the radicalisation process affecting youth in Jordan. Specifically, the research sought to solicit insights and knowledge on three factors:

- The informal religious educational role played by female preachers;
- The impact of socio-economic factors such as marginalisation, and whether this has a stronger impact on females than males;

- The role of technology and digital literacy in the work of female preachers, as well as to enhance/diminish radicalisation prospects;
- The impact of transnational dynamics and links on the role of female preachers in the rise and or prevention of VE; and
- The self-assessment of female preachers on the effectiveness of their preaching role.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Building on the findings of CONNEKT's Working Package 4, this case studies focuses on female preachers as a significant and often overlooked segment of the female population to explore their role in the radicalisation process of youth.

Although the focus in CONNEKT project is on youth of 12-30 years old, female preachers attain this role after completing a level of higher education in Sharia. Therefore, the youngest possible age in this research sample is 22 years old. Likewise, many female preachers, especially the more experienced and trusted by the community, are older than 30 years. Therefore, the age group for this case study is 22-30+ years old.

Primary data was obtained by conducting two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 23 female preachers. The first FGD 1 engaged 12 formal preachers and the second FGD 2 engaged with 11 informal preachers (one last-minute cancellation in the latter group). The age group for FGD 1 ranged from 27 to 42 y/o, whilst FGD 2 participants ranged from 22 to 60 y/o. (See Annex II for age details). However, it should be noted that female preachers usually work with families and children that include those between 12-18 years, thus, this case study indirectly examines the influence of female preachers on the radicalisation of this age group. The other case studies on Jordan will examine the desired age group of 12-30 years.

All selected female preachers live and operate in the governorate of Ma'an, whether through the formal structure of the Ministry of Awqaf or informally by volunteering to preach in the community amongst females. The two groups were split according to their (lack of) alignment with the Ministry of Awqaf.

SAMPLING DESCRIPTION

A snowball sampling method mixed with purposive sampling was used to select research participants. The participants in the formal group of female preachers were selected through consultation with the local directorate of Ministry of Awqaf in Ma'an, whilst the informal group of participants was selected through the personal access and trusted relationships of the local partner who was engaged in this research.

The local partner was Charity Lights Association (Jam'yet al-Anwar al-Khayreyya). This association is a social and charity women CSO working in Ma'an since 2010 to provide psycho-social and financial support to women. It also has a record of working with families of extremists and returnees from Ma'an. It was deemed the most appropriate and trusted CSO actor in Ma'an to approach women generally and

families and/or individuals with proximity to families of fighters and returnees. The partner helped in dividing the groups, selection of the geographic areas they operate in, and the choice of key to invite in each group.

TABLE 1. Formal preachers

Participant Number	Age	Area of Residence
1	28	Shoubak
2	38	Shoubak
3	38	Jafar
4	38	Ayle
5	37	Petra
6	37	Petra
7	29	Petra
8	42	Ma'an
9	29	Ayle
10	42	Ma'an
11	28	Ma'an
12	30	Ma'an

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TABLE 1. Informal preachers

Participant Number	Age	Area of Residence
1	60	Ma'an
2	56	Ma'an
3	27	Ma'an
4	29	Ma'an
5	23	Ma'an
6	52	Ma'an
7	40	Ma'an
8	22	Ma'an
9	20	Ma'an
10	44	Ma'an
11	50	Ma'an

RESEARCH TOOLS DESCRIPTION

For the discussion with formal and informal female preachers, two FGDs were arranged. The discussions were conducted in a semi-structured manner, giving the respondents the opportunity to freely shape the conversation (See Annex I for the questions). Throughout the FGDs, notes were taken and compiled, and then used to identify recurrent and emergent themes and patterns based on the respondents' answers. Prior to conducting the focus groups, a series of phone call consultations was

carried out with the local partner to better understand the scene of female preachers in Ma'an, liaise on authorisations, communicate the research objectives and the criteria for selection, and generally prepare all aspects of data collection.

The discussion addressed informal education in Ma'an, the role of female preachers in informal education. The discussion explored issues related to digital literacy, skills of female preachers in using online platforms and their usage patterns. In the process, references were made to narratives and type of content female preachers engage with. In investigating the preachers' role and access with family members, the discussion sought the self-assessment of preachers on their role and influence on individuals on family patterns and dynamics in Ma'an. Direct questions on radicalisation of female preachers were avoided to maintain a trusting and open discussion with respondents, but the discussion generally referred to VE in Jordan and in Ma'an.

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATIONS

In conducting the research, two key challenges were faced.

First, the challenge of ensuring the research respondents were of the age by the CONNEKT project. Female preachers are typically older women who do not necessarily fall within the 12-30 age bracket sought by the project. Furthermore, the most influential female preachers tend to be older in age as this is associated with one being more knowledgeable and respected in the community. The FGDs were therefore composed of female preachers between 22-60 years old.

Second, the project faced challenges with securing official clearances due to the high sensitivity regarding both the group being selected to take part in the research, and the topics being discussed. By utilising local partners and existing relationships with the Ministry of Awqaf, the research was conducted in a familiar-for-respondents setting provided by one of the local partners, with locally trusted female facilitators engaging respondents in the discussions. As a result, the selection of participants was influenced by the knowledge and relations of the local partner with some of the respondents. This did not affect the quality of the discussion or findings, but an element of bias in the selection of respondents is probable although not objectively established.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

To ensure confidentiality and privacy of the data, the information and data collected were kept and handled with utmost privacy. All data collected from the discussions was protected on encrypted digital drives that only researchers have access to. Answers were anonymised and all personally identifiable information from the notes was deleted. The participants' identity was kept confidential/coded to ensure anonymity, with this treatment/process being explained to the respondents prior to obtaining their consent. To ensure autonomy and voluntariness, a consent form was thoroughly explained and shared with participants ahead of the focus group discussions. The data collectors/researchers explained research purpose as well as the research ethics measures verbally prior to the start of the data collection process.

Meso-level dynamics

SOCIAL CONTEXTS AND THEIR RELATION TO THE RESULTS OF THE MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS

The findings of this case study point to two social contexts directly linked to the drivers of violent extremism that were identified at the macro-level in Jordan. These are: socialisation/education, and urban and peri-urban spaces. These are related to two drivers of VE identified on the macro-level: religion and territorial inequalities.

Socialisation/education and religion:

Socialisation/ (informal) education attains a prominent focus among Salafis generally in Jordan and beyond. The most extremist of Salafi groups reject state educational curriculum and opt to educate their children informally in social and locally familiar groups and centres. In previous field work in Ma'an, this was highlighted by several research subjects who are proximate to families of radical individuals.¹¹³ The social acceptance and acknowledgement of the informal educational structure facilitate the flourishing of informal religious education circles for both male and female children. Informal female preachers attain this responsibility among females. In Ma'an, 3.25% of children are at risk of dropping out of school for various reasons compared to 1.84% in Karak, for example (UNICEF, 2020). There is no data on the number of children of Salafi families who drop out of school for ideological reasons, but field research activities point to a sizable percentage.

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Ideology/religion as a driver of VE is transmitted to individuals through the formal religious educational structures managed by state institutions like the Ministry of Awqaf and the Iftaa' Department. More importantly, ideology/religion is communicated in several informal channels like religious preaching gatherings run by preachers at homes or CSOs, WhatsApp and social media, and limited group channels on Telegram and the like. Regardless of the ideology they hold, female preachers are active agents in these domains partly responsible for the religious views harboured by youth of ages 12-30 years by preaching to this age group directly or to their family members, and mothers in particular.

Furthermore, links were found between socialisation and close familial dynamics and the spread of religious ideology,¹¹⁴ in that the socialisation serves as a vehicle for transmitting religious ideas, values, and practices. Female preachers operate in intimate family circles, among mothers, grandmothers and daughters. It is in these unmonitored and close environments that religious informal education shapes behaviour. This becomes problematic since as the Working Package 4 confirmed, there is a lack of institutional coordination governing the work of informal preachers who operate outside any national framework/institution.¹¹⁵ This poses a risk if female preachers are disseminating radical ideas or if they are contributing to confusion about religious ideas without actively and effectively countering extremist views that are harboured by female family members.

¹¹³ Two Focus Group Discussions with Male and Female Youth in Ma'an, 20 August 2016 for an unpublished study on Radicalisation Drivers among Jordanian Youth (Amman: WANA Institute, 2017).

¹¹⁴ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

¹¹⁵ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

The results of the macro-level analysis have further highlighted the lack of a clear and officially adopted roadmap for both governmental and non-governmental actors involved in the fight against VE, including on the definitional issue of what VE and PVE efforts are (Mhadeen, Bint Faisal and Štikovac Clark, 2021): This macro-level finding relates to the issue of 'conflicting fatwas', which, according to the female preachers, refers to the presence of several religious references each issuing different fatwas, or religious rulings, all on similar subject matters.¹¹⁶ This, according to the respondents, causes conceptual concerns around the same issues and weakens the effectiveness of preaching as people hear different rulings on the same issues.¹¹⁷

Additionally, the results of the macro-level analysis have revealed the state's strong focus on (ideology/security), paying little heed to other dimensions such as contextual grievances. The informal preachers reported greater security scrutiny they are subjected to as opposed to their colleagues from the formal group: they reported difficulties acquiring visas for travel abroad or having been asked to close local associations and organisations due to not being able to get required security clearances. This poses another threat whereby female preachers feel discriminated against and treated as a threat rather than an asset to fill a gap in the preaching domain since the Ministry of Awqaf lacks the required numbers of preachers to serve local communities in Ma'an. This frustration leads to anger towards the state. If female preachers are indoctrinated into extremist views or are overwhelmed by their rejection of the official religious narrative, which will be intensified by these frustrations, these frustrations will be transmitted to their audiences and, thus, lead to radicalisation.

63**Urban and peri-urban areas and territorial inequality:**

The social context of urban and peri-urban areas refers to areas where daily interactions and relations take place. The findings in Ma'an on this social context highlight the impact of territorial inequalities as one driver of VE. As mentioned earlier, Ma'an has a history of perceived and actual marginalisation by the state and heavy stigma related to crimes and VE. This means that availability of urban spaces where female preachers operate is limited by the number of schools, centres, and mosques available for official preachers, on one hand. On the other hand, poor quality and availability of safe and reliable transportation limits the access of both formal and informal preachers to peri-urban spaces where they can form relations and links of influence positively or negatively with local residents. This shortage of services affects the work of preachers and adds additional physical and financial burdens on them.

In addition, most preachers, formal and informal, engage in charitable work in their communities to address socio-economic gaps that are a consequence of state's policies and territorial inequalities. On one level, preachers are helping address serious shortages in service provisions. On another level, these same preachers suffer from the lack of services as citizens residing in Ma'an, and state marginalisation of their role as preachers. This leads to dual forms of frustrations of female preachers. In this way, socialisation/education and urban and peri-urban spaces interact with religion and territorial inequalities as drivers of VE identified at the macro-level analysis of Jordan.

¹¹⁶ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on December 6, 2021

¹¹⁷ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on December 6, 2021

HOW MACRO-LEVEL DRIVERS WORK AT THE MESO-LEVEL STUDIED (THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF FOCUS)?

In the previous section, the relation between specific social contexts and drivers of VE as identified at the macro-level were discussed. In this section, we elaborate on two other drivers on which the findings in this level diverge from findings on the macro-level. These are digital socialisation and transnational dynamics. Digital socialisation was not identified as a major driver on the macro-level but is the main crucial driver of VE in this case study. Similarly, transnational dynamics as a driver of VE were found to impact state response to VE. Interestingly, in this case study the direct potential impact of transnational dynamics on individuals is established. We, therefore, focus here on these two unexpected findings at this meso-level.

Before delving into this interlink, it is important to remind readers that in this case study we are examining a potential but unestablished causal relation between female preachers and the radicalisation of youth of 12-30 years. It is unfair to stigmatise preachers since the conclusions are inconclusive. The research assumptions are that if female preachers are radical, they will disseminate radical views to female youth between 12-18 in schools or in informal activities, and to older female youth through interactions at mosques, CSOs, or homes. Similarly, if female preachers are not radical but reach a climax of frustration with socio-economic conditions in Ma'an and institutional negligence of their role, this frustration with the state will be transferred to their audiences, which in turn leads to alienation and radicalisation. This section examines these assumptions in relation to digital socialisation and transnational dynamics.

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The question of digital socialisation did not attract great prominence in macro-level research. In fact, the Working Package 4 findings revealed no significant mention of digital socialisation or its impact on radicalisation. In contrast, the meso-level analysis in this case study sheds a bright light on the notable use of technology amongst female preachers (more prominent amongst informal preachers), and the deployment of several digital platforms, such as Telegram, TikTok, and Facebook in their daily activities.¹¹⁸ This finding is consistent with the emerging literature on the shifting patterns of online Salafi activism and the increased prominence of technology, social media platforms, and use of encrypted messaging applications to their activism (Ayad, 2021).

Additionally, the use of technology by female preachers brings another dimension into play: transnational dynamics. More than half of the female preachers from the formal group have indicated a reliance on technology to coordinate preaching lessons and reach out to other females in the community, notably through WhatsApp.¹¹⁹ Likewise, at least four female preachers from the informal group (37%) have indicated that they are part of Telegram/WhatsApp groups that are composed of counterparts from across the region – other female preachers from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹¹⁹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

¹²⁰ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

For the informal preachers, these online groups are typically used to exchange knowledge, trainings, and even enable their users to take part in reciting competitions and book reviews with other female preachers, in this case, with female preachers from outside Jordan.¹²¹ Some Jordanian participants interviewed for this case study have even received certificates from Saudi-based Islamic centres and organisations, such as Al-Maerefah Organisation in Medina (Maerefah, 2022). Others have indicated that the curriculum they follow is that of the Saudi cleric Saleh Al-Usaimi, who is a member of the Saudi Council of Senior Scholars, and is known for his prolific work on Quranic and Sharia studies (J-Eman, 2022).

In this context, it is important to note that the interaction with female preachers' counterparts outside Jordan was only present amongst members of the informal group. The preachers from the formal group had no similar interactions, as this form of transnational cooperation is carried out through the official structures of the Ministry of Awqaf, and is not something the female preachers are authorised to do on their own.¹²² In contrast, the fact that the informal group sits outside official structures seems to have given it a greater freedom in being exposed to, and interactive with, other schools of Islamic thought and literature.¹²³

Four concerns clarify the potential role of female preachers in radicalisation in this regard. First, the expansion of the informal networks of preachers in the region and access to educational and informal religious spaces outside the formal structures in Jordan can potentially lead to the radicalisation of female preachers through the religious curriculum they study, the ideological views they grapple with, and the peer groups they form through digital spaces. It is true that this wider horizon of interaction can lead to their empowerment as constructive actors more knowledgeable and more skilled in the PVE domain. However, this digital space keeps the door wide open to receiving and interacting with extremist ideologies and ideologies, the results of which are unknown.

Second, this wide digital space strengthens the impact of transnational dynamics. Two authors argue that all extremist activities in Jordan are influenced by transnational factors (Nesser and Gråtrud, 2019). Therefore, interaction with informal or formal religious groups in the region will build on a shared identity and Sunni Muslim grievances in the region. This will bond female preachers in Jordan with their counterparts who may have extremist ideological views. These peer groups, albeit online, can facilitate radicalisation as established in several studies on peer influence (ARTIS, 2009).

Third, territorial inequalities play out in a very unique way in this case. As mentioned earlier, Ma'an is a marginalised governorate with a turbulent history with the state and security forces. There are high perceptions of victimisation and anger among Ma'an residents due to the inadequate services provided by the state. In addition, informal preachers across Jordan do not receive the support, training, or acknowledgement of their voluntary efforts from the Ministry of Awqaf. Most informal preachers expressed their anger and frustration at this negligence of their role. They feel unappreciated and discriminated against in denied access to schools and mosques, and in security measures that place them under scrutiny

¹²¹ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

¹²² Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹²³ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

affecting their daily lives and choices.¹²⁴ It is not surprising that they feel victimised, first, as citizens in Ma'an, and second, as informal preachers.

The digital space they engage in offers a refuge where their knowledge and efforts are acknowledged and where they are treated as equals with other peers of online groups. In addition, absence of state patronage makes female preachers vulnerable to protection and support of, and affiliation to, other entities -ideological or not- that offer acknowledgement, validation, and appreciation. "It is as if we do not exist," exclaims an informal preacher about the state's neglect of their efforts.¹²⁵ This is identical to the experiences of individual radicals who felt alienated and joined extremist groups to satisfy these psychological needs. State marginalisation of informal preachers is creating the potential for their radicalisation, which in turn will radicalise youth.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has given an advantage to informal preachers. Formal preachers indicated that the physical spaces they have had prior to the pandemic were limited to mosques and other official channels such as schools,¹²⁶ whilst informal preachers have always been denied access to such spaces.¹²⁷ Thus, when restrictions on mobility and physical gatherings were imposed, informal preachers were ready to fill the void. They were already more familiar with the use of digital space, and thus the pandemic has fostered the presence and use of technology in their daily activities, making digital interactions and online activism more central to their work.¹²⁸ Consequently, informal preachers were able to solidify their contact and interaction with young females in more attractive mediums compared to traditional face-to-face lecturing. This increases the acceptability of ideas communicated by preachers, which has the potential to increase radicalisation IF the preachers are radical or frustrated with their own circumstances as discussed above.

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These factors clarify how digital socialisation of female preachers has expanded their reach locally to their audience and have also expanded their networks, peers, and educational sources in the region. The networks they formed, the shared identity they developed, and the unknown religious education they attain leave speculation wide open on the potential radicalisation of female preachers in the absence of state formal recognition of their role and patronage of their local efforts. This digitalisation of the preaching sphere also expands the influence of translational dynamics on preachers due to the different ideologies and socio-political conditions other Islamic political and preaching groups are experiencing in the region.

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS AND INTERACTIONS AMONG DRIVERS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

The data collection that informed this case study points towards intersections of at least four drivers: religion, digital socialisation, territorial inequalities, and transnational dynamics and three specific

¹²⁴ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

¹²⁷ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

¹²⁸ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

contexts of social interaction (socialisation/education, employment and labour relations, and urban and peri-urban spaces). We discuss here the intersections between drivers and then the interactions between specific drivers and social contexts.:

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS

The findings reveal specific intersections between drivers of VE in Ma'an. The intersections are multi-dimensional, and the findings point to four intersections:

1. Digital socialisation and transnational dynamics (discussed in section 3.2)
2. Digital socialisation and territorial inequalities (also discussed in section 3.2)
3. Religion and transnational dynamics
4. Religion and digital socialisation

The interaction between religion and transnational dynamics is similar to findings in other studies on VE. Regional political dynamics that have led to a political Sunni power vacuum in the region has led to the rise of Shia-Sunni sectarianism, which includes radical elements that justify extreme violence against the religious "Other." Likewise, the protracted Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the sense of deep injustice and humiliation of Arabs and Muslims has led to the search for alternatives away from the political diplomatic track (Sean and Sammour, 2017). Similarly, the failed experiences at representative and fair governing systems in the region after Arab Spring revolts has led to the conviction among youth that violence is the best tool to attain political power for one's ideology (Ashour, 2015). These dynamics affect individuals across the region, and female preachers examined in this study are no exception. They grapple with these ideas, search for answers and questions from religious thinkers across the region. The influence pathways between these ideas and the radicalisation of preachers is not openly discussed, but like other findings in this study, it leaves the door wide open for radical ideas to influence preachers.

Religion offers a sense of purpose for individuals in their quest for justice and good in the cosmic battle between good versus evil.¹²⁹ Who and what is evil gets shaped by ideology. When frustrated or alienated individuals search for alternate worldviews away from their daily misery (whether due to structural grievances or psychological/ideological factors) (Seul, 1999) religion offers a way out. Religion, of course, can influence constructive modes of action to instil good and forge constructive relations with the "other." But religion can also be used to justify violence against the religious other.

These factors become more probable with the digitalisation of the preaching space for female preachers in terms of access to educational knowledge and networks of peers. In this way, religion, or more accurately specific religious ideologies- intersect with digital socialisation as drivers of VE potentially affecting female preachers in Ma'an. The limitations imposed on field research for this case study, and the several sensitivities associated with it, hindered asked direct questions on the intersections between religion and transnational dynamics and religion and digital socialisation. Therefore, the findings are indicative at best.

¹²⁹ For a discussion of this in Islam, see Richard C. Martin, "The Religious Foundations of War, Peace, and Statecraft in Islam," in *Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Tradition*, eds. John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 104.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN DRIVERS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Religion and socialisation/education:

The findings point to central interaction between religion as a driver of VE and the social context of formal and informal education as a mechanism for transmitting ideas, values, and identities, and influencing behaviour. Accordingly, the relation of female preachers to this specific factor is captured in the significant role they play in providing different forms of informal education. Religious education connects individuals' beliefs to a world view of good versus evil, whereby the parameters of defining good and evil and prescribing desired behaviour towards fighting evil are shaped. This gives preachers in general a central role in influencing worldviews and behaviour. Religious education impacts the various stages of radicalisation in, for example, reinforcing alienation from society, offering alternative worldviews, defining role models, and providing new criteria for selecting one's peers. All these factors can shape the radicalisation process, if the religious ideas being offered to audiences are radical. It goes without saying that these same factors in religious education can influence moderation and constructive social roles for individuals.

Thus, and as mentioned earlier, if preachers are radical or frustrated with the state, they can communicate radical ideas and feelings to their audiences and thus facilitate directly or indirectly the radicalisation process, whereby individuals seek alternate worldviews and socio-economic realities that are offered by extremist groups.

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Notably, there is a discrepancy in the areas of informal education provided by formal and informal preachers. Because the former operate within the official sphere of the Ministry of Awqaf, they have the official cover to address legal or economic issues beyond worship and religious rulings. This group of preachers cited the "lack of legal awareness"¹³⁰ as a key gap they try to fill in their local outreach efforts, elaborating that this legal awareness extends to issues of marriage and divorce, alimony, and a host of other civil status issues.

According to respondents from this group, women in their community are generally unaware of their legal rights, which contributes to their disempowerment. The respondents gave a few examples: for instance, the marital relationships are rarely (officially) documented in a way that protects women, leaving them at a greater vulnerability when issues arise between the two partners. Or women's decision in parliamentary and local elections is still to a large extent dictated by their husbands or male guardians. In another example, women are frequently hassled by their first-degree relatives to give special power of attorney or a form of a proxy to their male relatives, consequently giving up their rights to land and/or property ownership.¹³¹

These examples highlight the broader socio-educational role (beyond purely the religious one) this particular group of female preachers—supported by the governmental structures—play in households of Ma'an's urban and peri-urban spaces. This role contributes to women empowerment and agency, and does not have a direct impact on radicalisation, but it points to the trust-building impact of these

¹³⁰ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹³¹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

informal activities. This is an important asset for PVE efforts but can also contribute to radicalisation if preachers are radical.

In contrast, informal preachers (not acknowledged by the Ministry of Awqaf), seem to focus mainly on religious issues like jurisprudence, ethics, heaven and hell, and worship. Their outreach and activities are all centred around cementing their interpretation of Islamic texts and practices, teaching different Quranic citations and underscoring issues such as the importance of daily prayers and Islamic uniform.¹³² They have also reported their extensive efforts invested at correcting what they described as the 'conflicting Fatwas scene' amongst females, and at unifying the religious references according to [their] one school of Islam. [Fatwas are simply defined as Islamic rulings that are part of the Islamic legal system; they legally define what could and could not be done from a point of Islamic law.] This religious mandate is exercised in social settings, such as women gatherings after funerals, or celebrations to welcome the birth of babies, or attend graduation celebrations.¹³³

The interaction between religion and informal education is the most prominent link in this case study, whereby the role of female preachers takes place entirely through informal religious education.

Economic deprivation and employment and labour relations:

Within the CONNEKT project, this social context of employment and labour relations refers to unemployment as a factor that limits access to a decent level of social welfare. The intersection between this social context and economic deprivation as a driver of VE is an intriguing finding in relation to the role of female preachers. It also points to the connection between informal religious education and this social context.

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On one hand, it was interesting to learn that both groups of female preachers were leaning towards women's unemployment. They see "harm" in women's employment,¹³⁴ and encourage religious views of traditional female roles as housewives. Their rationale is linked to access to their female target group which drastically changes if the local women are not available for the visits and consultations the preachers provide due to women's employment. Because the 'unemployed female who sits at home' has more time to attend or organise religious gatherings and interacts with preachers, both groups viewed the greater levels of female empowerment, employment included, as adversely proportional to their role, limiting their mission and results. Having younger women at work means that the preachers can only reach out to, and interact with, elderly women who have more availability, and who are, for the good part, already receptive to the messages of these preachers.¹³⁵

But this view critically challenges the conventional wisdom around the PVE efforts and the role of female preachers. The interactions between the drivers and social contexts point to an even situation in which one of the PVE traditional actors, female preachers in our case, deems addressing one of the key VE drivers, economic deprivation/unemployment, as counterproductive to its mission and mandate. Additionally,

¹³² Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹³³ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹³⁴ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021

¹³⁵ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

both groups of female preachers have used the same argument in relation to unemployment, commenting that it has a greater impact on 'males than females'.¹³⁶ For the respondents, society places greater expectations on males and views them as the breadwinners for their families, hence they suffer more various psychological, social, and economic consequences when being unemployed compared to women.¹³⁷ This is expected in a socially conservative setting like Ma'an.

On the other hand, it shows poor assessment among preachers of how economic deprivation affects radicalisation. Female unemployment contributes to economic deprivation of households in general, leading to more frustrations about socio-economic status of individuals, which in turn contributes to their radicalisation. In addition, the views preachers hold on this unintentionally makes Daesh's narrative more attractive for young women searching for active social/political agency. It is worth noting that the documented cases of Jordanian women attempting to join Daesh are all of young university educated women (Wattan, 2015). Therefore, it is worth offering women empowerment avenues through, among other things, employment.

But both groups of preachers, cited cases of 'educated and employed' youth who have joined violent extremist organisations (VEOs). In their opinion, it is the lack of religious education that pushes young people to join VEOs, whereas evidence in Jordan generally points to structural drivers like dissatisfaction with income levels and corruption as well as peer influence.

Territorial inequalities and urban and peri-urban spaces:

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The social context of urban and peri-urban spaces refers to urban areas where social interactions take place in daily relationships, which are a key aspect of the role of both groups of female preachers: they operate within circles of personalised interaction and close relationships. Yet, the formal, officially recognised group of preachers benefits from their institutional cover to access peri-urban spaces in addition to the urban ones in the city of Ma'an, whilst the other, informal group lacks similar access and thus operates in a close circle within the urban settings.

The first group uses their institutional links to engage in official structures such as schools, mosques, youth centres, and hospitals, often in remote places and areas outside the boundaries of the city of Ma'an.¹³⁸ The second group deploys their personal connections and relationships to engage in social/private gatherings and carry out their outreach activities in local neighbourhoods within the city of Ma'an, without being able to operate outside these geographically and socially closed communities.¹³⁹ Not being recognised by the Ministry of Awqaf means the latter group is not granted the authorisations to enter such premises, thus they must operate with resources and within limits imposed by their own status.

Consequently, findings highlight the notable inactivity of female preachers in the peri-urban spaces, which fall outside the centre of Ma'an city. They attributed this inactivity to several factors, including the smaller

¹³⁶ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹³⁷ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹³⁸ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹³⁹ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

demographic size of those living in remote areas as well as the overall low number of active female preachers in Ma'an, which, as a result, makes it difficult for them to cover peri-urban spaces in the governorate and outside the city centre.¹⁴⁰

Two factors explain how this social context relates to territorial inequalities as a driver of VE. First, the lack of institutional cover for informal preachers has led to frustration and anger towards the state, because they feel that despite their voluntary efforts and services to the community, they are unappreciated and are subject to scrutiny. This felt injustice is dangerous. Perceptions of victimisation and marginalisation leads to radicalisation, whereby individuals feel alienated, and search for ideologies and worldviews that satisfy their self-esteem, pride, and self-worth (Wiktorowicz, 2004). Communities enter a very critical stage when state institutional measures radicalise preachers because they can radicalise others and use their religious knowledge to shape religious beliefs and behaviour towards extremism.

Second, territorial inequality translates into shortage of services. In particular, the unavailability of safe transportation for women significantly limits their access to education and employment opportunities across Jordan (Bondokji and AlHaj, 2019). This increases the frustrations of informal preachers and places difficulties for formal ones. Given the shortage of preachers at the Ministry of Awqaf, the territorial inequality is evident even in the lack of formal preaching services that are not compensated for by informal preachers who can access peri-urban communities. As a result, there is a segment of residents in peri-urban spaces that rely on unknown methods for their religious education that might be available from unqualified or radical individuals either online or in-person.

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On another level, the COVID-19 pandemic expanded the provision of services in digital space unthinkable just two years ago, and by extension, access to new audiences that are in geographically remote areas that were out of reach before COVID-19.¹⁴¹ As the pandemic expanded the audience of female preachers, it has also widened the gap in provision of services due to varying degrees of digital literacy among female preachers, raising the question of much needed capacity-building of female preachers, whether through the Ministry for formal preachers, or by outside groups for the informal preachers.¹⁴²

These distinctions between informal and formal preachers in relation to urban and peri-urban spaces and territorial inequalities affect the radicalisation of youth between 12-18 years. As mentioned earlier, informal preachers feel discriminated against both as residents of Ma'an and as informal preachers. If they become radicalised either through their own frustrations or through religious education they are attaining online or the influence of online peer groups, they will communicate radical teachings to youth and their families. On another level, and since informal preachers are more skilled with online formats of preaching and reaching their audiences, the COVID-19 pandemic gave them a comparative advantage in filling gaps in the preaching space. Since these online spaces are neither monitored nor regulated, it poses threats of radicalising female youth and their families ONLY IF the preachers themselves are radical.

¹⁴⁰ Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹⁴¹ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹⁴² Focus Group Discussions 1 and 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

Analysis conclusions

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ANALYSIS OF MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS

The analysis of meso-level drivers has revealed the prominence of three drivers: digital socialisation, transnational dynamics, and territorial inequality in relation to the work of female preachers in Ma'an. In addition, religion as a driver of VE directly intersects with these drivers because of the informal religious educational role the preachers play. These drivers interact with three social contexts in the governorate: socialisation/education, employment and labour relations, and urban and peri-urban areas.

The focus on female preachers in this case study goes against the state's presumption of religion as the main driver of VE in relation to preachers and highlights how structural and even regional dynamics can affect the radicalisation of female preachers, who might then influence the radicalisation of their audiences, whether these are youth between 12-30 years or family members of youth.

Radicalisation is a family phenomenon in Jordan (Abu Rumman and Shteivi, 2018). Therefore, the relations that female preachers have with female family members are crucial to radicalisation dynamics, and equally to PVE efforts. The assumptions underlying the case study are that, first, the informal loose structure in which informal preachers work can lead to their radicalisation due to their wide online reach and access to peer networks and educational opportunities. Second, if female preachers are frustrated and antagonistic towards the state as citizens of the marginalised governorate of Ma'an and as informal preachers ignored and side-lined by the state, these frustrations can be communicated and transmitted to their audiences. Frustrations lead to radicalisation as individuals search for different avenues to meet their material and psychological needs. This can lead to the frustration of youth.

The focus on the potential radicalisation of female preachers should not stigmatise the group. In fact, our findings point to important roles preachers have in PVE. These will be the focus of another report within the CONNEKT project. Our findings here should not be exaggerated or decontextualized.

The main findings can be summarised as follows:

1. The discrepancy between the formal and informal structures in which female preachers operate in Ma'an, and the informal preachers' limited access to services and capacity building and educational opportunities, as well as the security scrutiny they are subjected to, are deeply frustrating to informal preachers who feel unappreciated and neglected.
2. Formal and informal preachers stand at different points of the digital socialisation spectrum. For the informal group, they have had an early start at using/integrating technology into their preaching and missionary work, as they have been denied access to official state structures and have simply adopted to this non-existent physical access by utilising technology. In contrast, the formal group has indicated a more recent engagement with communication technologies. The degree of digitalisation of their work is low but has seen notable improvement as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴³ But it does not, yet, extend to engaging with social media and internet narratives relevant to the radicalisation process, or gets used in capacity building and knowledge sharing with other female preachers.¹⁴⁴

3. The marginalisation of informal preachers as well as their digital literacy have expanded their contacts, reach, and interaction to educational online opportunities offered by entities and/or Islamic groups in the region as well as allowing them to build networks of peers in the region. The influence of these peer networks and the curriculum they receive remains unexamined. But this digital space can lead to the radicalisation of female preachers, who can radicalise their audiences. The same applies to formal preachers who expanded their online activities during and after COVID-19.
4. This online access and reach of female preachers make them susceptible to the influence of transnational dynamics in identifying with religious groups, building peer networks, finding empowerment and appreciation denied to them by state structures. The greater the degree of digitalisation (such as with the informal group of female preachers),¹⁴⁵ the greater the degree of transnational dynamics at play. The opposite holds true, as evident in the case of the formal group.¹⁴⁶ The wider the digitalisation of preachers, the more they are influenced by feelings of disempowerment of Sunni groups, and exposed to narratives of various Salafi groups, including extremist ones. Extremist narratives that build on religious interpretations or political Muslim grievances can attract female preachers and indoctrinate them.
5. Perceptions of territorial inequalities are evident among preachers, but more pronounced among informal preachers who feel alienated by state structures as preachers in addition to the general marginalisation of Ma'an. This contributes to their frustration and anger towards the state. Lacking infrastructure and educational centres seriously limits their access to residents of different areas in the governorate and costs them extra time, effort, and resources to reach target audiences. These territorial inequalities shape the extent and content of relations in urban and peri-urban spaces preachers operate in.
6. Economic deprivation was not discussed widely by female preachers. But it was interesting to note the relation between the informal religious education they deliver on women employment and employment and labour relations in Ma'an. Preachers encourage women to be housewives. In their estimate, unemployment is more dangerous to male members. Women should focus on traditional roles and on the religious education of family members. These views contribute to economic deprivation of households, which overall contributes to radicalisation. It also indirectly reinforces Daesh's empowering narrative for women, whereby Daesh offers unique active agency for women.

PREVENTION INDICATORS RESULTING FROM THE MESO ANALYSIS

Given the nature of the group involved in this phase of CONNEKT research project and the findings of this case study, we believe potential entries for prevention indicators are mainly centred around digital socialisation, and territorial inequality. Considering the notable use of technology and digital

¹⁴³ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹⁴⁴ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Focus Group Discussion 2, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

¹⁴⁶ Focus Group Discussion 1, conducted in-person in Ma'an on 6 December 2021.

communication amongst both formal and informal female preachers (albeit more advanced with the latter group), digital socialisation provides a relevant entry for prevention. Namely, prevention indicators in terms of populating the digital space with alternative narratives to combat radical thought/ideology and using digital communication platforms to build the capacity of female preachers.

In addition, any form of regulating/institutionalising or recognising informal preachers will help assess and understand the nature of how digitalisation is affecting female preachers and to offer alternate avenues for capacity building, empowerment, and developing trusted peer networks. This is not to call for strict state monitoring of the preaching space. Instead, forging trusting and acknowledging environments between informal preachers and state institutions will curb the interest and attraction of radical narratives on their online educational and peer networks.

Territorial inequalities are a main structural aspect of state relations with Maan residents that require attention and should address the contribution of this driver to the radicalisation of individuals in Ma'an. Several studies and reports addressed this, but so far -and despite state efforts- perceptions on inequalities and stigma of Ma'an prevail. More serious long-term efforts are required in this regard.

MICRO-PATHS REPORTED FROM MESO ANALYSIS

Given the sensitivities regarding the respondents and the subject matter, respondents were not asked to directly comment on micro-paths of radicalisation. However, four micro-paths can be identified: digital socialisation, transnational dynamics through online peer groups, and territorial inequalities felt by citizens of Ma'an, as well as informal religious education that can promote interpretations justifying violence against the religious "other." These micro-paths can directly affect female preachers in their current operational conditions and through them can indirectly influence radicalisation pathways of individual youth they preach to or the families of youth.

General Conclusion

The case study has examined the role of female preachers in the governorate of Ma'an in south Jordan as a meso-level investigation of radicalisation drivers affecting youth between 12-30 years. Female preachers access female family members and youth formally through schools, mosques and other state institutions, or informally in CSOs and houses. Two groups of preachers operate in Jordan, and in Ma'an: formal preachers affiliated with the Ministry of Awqaf and informal preachers who voluntarily preach and are affiliated with various religious groups. The marginalisation of informal preachers by state institutions has placed them in a unique position where they are alienated by the state but who volunteer in various charity and preaching roles, thus allowing them to build direct and trusting relations with audiences.

The findings in this case study showcased the intersections between four drivers of VE as identified by the CONNEKT project: digital socialisation, transnational dynamics, territorial inequalities, and religion. These interact with three social contexts of CONNEKT: socialisation/education (particularly informal religious education), employment and labour relations, and urban and peri-urban areas.

Compared to state response to radicalisation identified in Work Package 3 of this project, where state response focuses on religion as a driver, this case study places more importance on territorial inequalities, digital socialisation, and transnational dynamics. Interestingly, and contrary to findings in Work Package 4 on macro-level drivers of VE, digital socialisation stands out as the most crucial driver that can radicalise female preachers, compared to all others. It was hardly addressed or identified by respondents on macro-level drivers as a concern.

If female preachers are radicalised, through the identified drivers, or through their frustrations due to state marginalisation of their role and contributions, the preachers can radicalise female youth and their families. The findings do not establish a direct causality but points out plausible casualties in this regard.

Research findings also point to several pathways and contributions of female preachers to PVE. These will be addressed in later reports. The focus in this case study is limited to radicalisation of youth potentially through female preachers in Ma'an.

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Annex I: Questions of FGDs

The Annex 1 contains the main set of questions that have been used as a guidance for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The questions below were used during the FGDs, once the safe space was established, and were asked and alternated as the discussion developed.

1. Icebreaker: can you tell us more about yourself, about your work in preaching?
[To tease out how long they have been at it, formal/informal, and possibly which geographical areas within Ma'an they cover; to build a general profile about the preachers.]
2. Our previous research in Jordan has indicated the important role of females in the family. But this remains an under-studied area. What role do female preachers play in shaping family patterns and communal relations?
3. What role does informal (religious) education play in your society? Is it, for instance, a primary, a secondary, or perhaps a marginal source for shaping female awareness on controversial issues like radicalisation dynamics, for example?
[Investigating the informal (religious) educational role played by female preachers who offer religious advice and awareness to other females (who might be sisters, mothers, wives of young people vulnerable to radicalisation or other forms of destructive choices among youth).]
4. Does the lack of access to formal education that girls and women experience enhance the role/importance of female preachers (who are already present and visible in the community)?
[Explore how the lack of economic opportunities and safe transportation for women affect women's access to education (both formal and informal).]
5. Do the female preachers in poor/underdeveloped areas have a more or a less active role in providing religious education? How receptive are females in remote areas to the teachings of preachers? How do your female audiences receive your preaching ideas and style? Are they receptive generally? Or do they challenge your ideas, and cross-examine your teachings? Does the lack of access to education that females in remote areas experience affect their critical thinking and analysis skills?
6. What digital literacy programmes/initiatives are made available to women in the communities in Ma'an?
7. Are the preachers aware of specific social media narratives tailored to women's recruitment
[If existing, did these digital literacy programmes and initiatives try to build females' capacity to detect/ deal with the radical narratives.]

8. To what extent are female preachers digitally literate? What forms of online learning and preaching tools they use? and to what purposes? How has access to the internet and their wider use of it influenced their preaching efforts?
9. What links exist between local and cross-national family networks (family and blood relations)? Do these links influence the worldviews of women and youth in matters like radicalisation processes and drivers (of VE), for example?

1. تقديم: هل يمكنك إخبارنا أكثر عن أنفسك؟ وعن عملك في الوعظ؟

[لمعرفة مدة عملك في الوعظ، وهل هو بشكل رسمي أم غير رسمي، والمناطق الجغرافية التي يعملون بها داخل معان، بهدف خلق تصور عن سيرة عملك في الوعظ].

2. عملنا السابق في الأردن يشير إلى أهمية دور النساء في العائلة. لكنه مجال يظل غير مدروسًا بالشكل الكافي. ما الدور الذي تلعبه الواعظات في تشكيل العلاقات الأسرية والمجتمعية؟

3. ما الدور الذي يلعبه التعليم (الديني) غير الرسمي في مجتمعنا؟ هل هو مثلاً دور أساسي، ثانوي، أو هامشي في تشكيل وعي الإناث حول المواضيع الإشكالية مثل ديناميكيات التطرف مثلاً؟

[للتحقق من الدور التثقيفي غير الرسمي (الديني) الذي تؤديه الواعظات اللواتي يقدمن المشورة الدينية والتوعية للإناث الأخريات (اللائي قد يكونن أخوات وأمهات وزوجات للشباب المعرضين للتطرف أو غيره من السلوكيات الهدامة)].

4. هل تؤدي صعوبة وصول الفتيات والنساء إلى فرص التعليم الرسمية إلى تعزيز أعمية ودور الواعظات (الموجودات والملاحظ حضورهن في المجتمع)؟

[التحقق من أثر الافتقار إلى الفرص الاقتصادية وسبل الواصلات الآمنة للنساء على حصول المرأة على التعليم (الرسمي وغير الرسمي)].

5. هل تحظى الواعظات في المناطق الفقيرة/ والأقل تنميةً بدور أكثر نشاطًا أو أقل نشاطًا في توفير التعليم الديني؟ لأي مدى تتقبل الإناث في المناطق النائية المحتوى الوعظي من الواعظات؟ لأي مدى تتقبل الإناث من جمهوركن لأفكاركن وأسلوبكن في الوعظ؟ هل يتقبلن ذلك بشكل عام؟ أم هي يتحدين أفكاركن ويتوثقون من المعلومات التي تزودنهن بها؟ هل يحد نقص الوصول إلى فرص التعليم في المناطق النائية من مهارات التفكير النقدي والتحليل؟

6. ما هي برامج/مبادرات محو الأمية الرقمية المتاحة للمرأة في معان؟

7. هل الواعظات على علم بأية سرديات اجتماعية في الإعلام تسعى تجنيد النساء؟

[إذا كنا على علم بها، هل قامت برامج ومبادرات محو الأمية الرقمية ببناء قدرات الإناث للتنبه لهذه السرديات المتطرفة والتعامل معها؟]

8. إلى أي مدى تعد الواعظات مثقفات رقميًا؟ ما هي أشكال التعليم والوعظ الإلكتروني التي يستخدمونها؟ ولأي غرض؟ كيف أثر استخدام الإنترنت الواسع على عملك في الوعظ؟

9. ما هي الروابط القائمة بين شبكات الأسرة المحلية وعبر الوطنية (علاقات الأسرة والدم)؟ وهل تؤثر هذه الروابط على نظرة النساء والشباب للعالم في قضايا مثل دوافع التطرف وعملياته؟