



## **Gender Perspectives in Preventing Violent Extremism - A Conversation with Carol Bellamy**

6<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Geneva, Switzerland

On the heels of the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and the United Nations Plan of Action for PVE, GCERF in partnership with the Graduate Institute Centre on Gender and Global Change, co-hosted a discussion on “Gender Perspectives in Preventing Violent Extremism”. The event featured **Ms Carol Bellamy**, Chair of the Governing Board of GCERF and was moderated by **Dr Elisabeth Prügl**, Professor of International Relations and Political Science at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. The event aimed to bring to the fore gender dimensions in PVE.

The interactive and frank conversation underscored the need for more research on how gender relates to recruitment and radicalisation to violent extremism. Commenting on what pushes and pulls individuals towards engaging in violent extremism, Ms Bellamy stressed, it is “worth remembering that for the most part there are not a totally different set of drivers for men and women”. The conversation also emphasized the unique niche GCERF fills as a cohesive funding source to complement national PVE efforts. Speaking anecdotally about her years at the helm of UNICEF, Ms Bellamy highlighted the need for women to play a greater role in peacebuilding and conflict negotiations, reminding participants that “during conflict and instability it is often the women who keep things going, but women are frequently left out of peace negotiations.”

Speaking to members of Geneva’s international development and security community, Ms Bellamy and Dr Prügl reminded the audience that we must be careful how we categorise and engage with a gender perspective. Ms Bellamy cautioned against viewing women as merely victims of violence, recalling that they also perpetrate and enable violence. Still, the positive role of women as peacebuilders and policy-makers needs to be given more attention. Dr Prügl reiterated the need for more research on the gender dimension of drivers of radicalisation to violent extremism. It was agreed that any research should take into consideration the varying geographical, cultural, social, and economic contexts at play (as violent extremism is itself highly contextual and localised). Ms Bellamy concurred that research on these issues will allow for the formulation of a more holistic approach to the development of policies and programmes within PVE. She highlighted GCERF’s part in this holistic approach, as it was launched to fill a funding gap at a grassroots level. What makes the GCERF model unique, she said, is that it pools donor funding and is focused on interventions that prioritise locally-driven, community-based solutions to violent extremism.

In closing, Ms Bellamy noted that gender mainstreaming had yet to bring about significant change at both international and national levels of politics and peacebuilding. However, progress has been made in the field of peacekeeping, as illustrated by the existence of women-led peacekeeping groups. Greater commitment and funding, according to her, should be given to not only mainstreaming gender, but also to the prevention of violent extremism. “PVE is a critical part of counterterrorism efforts, and part of that must include a gender perspective to empower women, and educate girls.”

For further information please contact [info@gcerf.org](mailto:info@gcerf.org).

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