Promoting Intersectional Development Research

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Undoing "Violent Extremism": a Three Country Collaborative Research Study by the Women and Media Collective Foregrounding the Need for a More Complex Analysis of Women's Experiences of Political Violence

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Executive summary

Women and Media Collective undertook a three-country study entitled "Women's agency and the gendered impact of violent extremism in Sri Lanka Indonesia and India" from January 2020 to November 2022. This report lays out how the research project adopted an approach and a methodology that produced results similar to an intersectional approach that currently has global traction.

The project was conceived as a necessary intervention and as a corrective to contemporary global debates on political violence, which were framed using the terminology of "terrorism" and "violent extremism." These terms have no agreed upon definitions and they have also been criticised for being inflected with racism. The way the terms are used suggests that the groups referred to lack a rational political agenda, unlike earlier political groups, and the groups discussed using such terms are often Muslim.

After much historical feminist agitation aiming for the inclusion of women into peace negotiations and similar processes, there is a now a recognition that there is much less violence in communities where women have a measure of empowerment (Coomaraswamy, 2015). However, this realization has been used to instrumentalise women to security ends, leading to their use as spies in their own communities. Instrumentalising women in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) projects not only jeopardises women's safety but also fosters unease among communities. This perspective also lacks sensitivity to the way women's lives are impacted by violent movements or States.

The validation of the State building security infrastructure, especially through the UN's introduction of the UN's Counter Terrorism Committee in 2004, has exacerbated problematic State actions and obfuscated the criminality and violence of the State in many of these contexts. This project was envisioned with the three above problems in mind, serving as a necessary and timely intervention. Its central objective is to highlight women's lived experiences as a way of intervening at the level of policy and discourse.

The project was conceptualised by three senior feminists with long histories of engagement in all three contexts. Informed by their experiences and praxis, the project was designed to include other local organisations and activists. This approach was intended to facilitate network and movement building while also enhancing research skills of young feminist activist researchers.

For the purposes of this particular report, we looked at how our activities and project design choices mapped onto an intersectional methodological orientation (see Misra et al., 2021) and discovered many overlaps. There were overlaps in terms of the identification of factors of oppression, and having as our goal the need to intervene in policy and discourse change. We considered the *relationality* of oppression, where advantages for some were premised upon the exclusion and the marginalisation of others. Furthermore, we embraced *complexity* by selecting women who had experienced violence and ensured representation of the relevant

ethnic groups, as well as consideration of caste and class dynamics, to reflect the marginalised within these groups. Since we conducted the research project in three different geographical contexts, we had to pay attention to the specificities of each national context. Additionally, we had to take into account the particular political projects that each of the country leads were interested in contributing to through the research. Hence, the contextual nuances became a critical consideration throughout the entire planning, research and analysis process. We did not deconstruct the categories we used, especially those of ethnicity and religion, that were crucial to the conflict contexts we were studying. However, the philosophical and political orientation of the research was to question the manner in which such identity projects mobilised women's roles in ways that were not always in the interest of the women concerned.

The project was conceptualised as a three country study, with research carried out in three strategically chosen locations in each country, identified for their importance with regards to incidents of political violence. In each of these three locations in country we planned to formulate case studies of five women. The case studies would be constructed through collecting women's life histories and also through focus group discussions and key informant interviews with those with local and context-specific knowledge. We specifically targeted activist communities in those areas.

Nivedita Menon[1] (2015), in her discussion of the relevance of intersectionality in the Indian context, argues that it is important that the historical emergence of practices and theories be kept in mind when considering the application of an intersectional framework. She argues that activism in India emerged from the multiplicity of identity categories that persons are impacted by, and this multiplicity has arguably always been taken into consideration in academic writing and politics in colonial and Independent India. The manner in which the identity categories come together in impactful ways and the importance of their presence strikes differently in different contexts. While "woman" was considered a universal term in the Western context where multiplicity was resisted, in India the dominant discourse was precisely about the constant adding to of qualifier categories. There was never an idea of a non-marked woman in the Indian contexts where politics always already emerged from the categories of religion and caste.

Taking from Menon's (2015) argument regarding the histories from which perspectives on politics and activism emerge, we would like to suggest that our project be considered as one where the philosophical orientation and political emphasis of intersectionality emerged via a different path. The long history of work with women in communities that have experienced violence informed our perspective, and our methodology was constituted to reflect the complexity of their lives. Having worked within the UN system, our team recognises the important impact of the intersectionality framework in broadening the way treaty bodies recognise oppression. The possibility of working without maintaining a strict separation between Economic and social rights and civil and political rights, for instance, has been a direct outcome of the impact of the intersectionality

[1] Menon is a respected feminist thinker and is a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi India.

framework. Consequently, we are appreciative of the intersectionality framework and argue that it should constitute a baseline for all development research. While we would like our project to be recognised as contributing to the global conversation regarding such a baseline, it's essential to note that it emerged from a history different to that of intersectionality.

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Introduction

The research project "Women's agency and the gendered impact of violent extremism in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and India" was conceptualised against the dominance of the "violent extremism" language that political violence in contemporary times has been framed in by the security discourse as well as elements of the global development infrastructure. We felt such a framing was not sufficiently informed by local socio economic issues or historical complexity, nor the State's disregard for human rights norms as experienced by women we constantly engaged with at the grassroots level. Furthermore, considering that feminism had undergone a transformation in the context of discussions on violent extremism – shifting to focus on supporting counter-terrorist approaches where empowering women was deemed advantageous for security – we felt the time was ripe for a critique that foregrounded the complexity of women's experiences. The objective of the project was to push for the inclusion of women's experiences in a conversation on political violence that is not limited to a discussion about the advantages of including women when pursuing a narrow security agenda. Such an intervention was conceptualised as providing an illustration of how both political violence and States' attempts to respond to this violence, were targeting and affecting women in ways that had not yet received adequate attention. The project draws on long feminist engagement in the three national contexts of India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, where women have been actively engaged in local communities for social justice initiatives. Additionally, the project intended to include young women in its research teams, as part of a broader effort to provide training, foster movement building and promote solidarity.

The project was designed to include several levels of complexity, as befits a research project that wanted to posit a critical corrective to prevailing discourses. This complexity manifested itself – as will be discussed further below – in several aspects of our project. This included incorporating the histories of violence at both national and local levels, integrating factors in the economy that led to deprivation and assessing the actions of the State that were discriminatory, exclusionary and violent, as well as in the selection of research participants. Our approach was not named "intersectional" at the outset, and even in response to the current prompt there is some resistance from our team to naming our intervention using the terminology of intersectionality. Our long experience at the ground level working with communities compelled us to constantly appreciate the complexity of their lives and to strive to illustrate this complexity. The methodology we adopted was informed by such a need. We hope that our illustration of how our project ticks the intersectionality boxes while not naming our project intersectional will push the discussion opened up by Menon (2019) to resist the need to contain different experiences and approaches to complexity within only one preferred term. Categories and approaches emerging from other political experiences and histories of exclusion must be permitted to exist in conversation with intersectionality and not necessarily be contained by such a framing. We appreciate the importance of the intersectionality framework in a global conversation about exclusion and marginalisation and the contribution the term has made to complicate this conversation in very useful ways. We hope to contribute positively to the same conversation.

Our main task was to highlight how different women experienced political violence, and developments related to and leading to violence in contemporary Sri Lanka, Indonesia and India. We feel that women's experiences rarely inform the larger political and policy conversations regarding contemporary political violence. Conversations on "violent extremism", deriving from an earlier discourse on "terrorism", both locally and at the level of international administrative infrastructure, discussed issues of security with little regard to histories of political violence and marginalisation that led to the violence being considered. Furthermore, the particularities of women's experiences of violence were rarely part of any analysis. When women were included in research it was as victims of violence, in relation to individual stories of engagement with terrorist networks, or as possible support personnel for community-based counter terrorism initiatives. These discussions rarely included an analysis of the political economy impacting such women's lives, the political histories that led to the emergence of movements, women's gendered experiences within such movements, or how women's everyday lives are affected in contexts where there is a preponderance of violence. Our research objective therefore was to call for the inclusion of multiple vectors, structural and historical, that lead to the violence impacting women's lives.

The next sections of the report will provide an overview of the research project followed by a discussion of how our project fits within a methodological framework using the concept of intersectionality. This is followed by a discussion on how project participants relate to the issue of intersectionality, and, finally, a discussion of the field work approaches employed in the two field sites that considered identity categories, structural backgrounds and feminist political praxis as key components.

Overview of Research Project

The idea for this research project emerged from a history of engagement among feminist activists working in India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Roshmi Goswami (India), Kumi Samuel (Sri Lanka) and Kamala Chandrakirana (Indonesia) initiated the project based on their longstanding friendship emerging from feminist activism, collective organising and movement building in the three countries. Their decades-long work in contexts of conflict and violence and their engagement with women who had been affected by political violence and who had worked against nationalist, religious and sectarian mobilisation informed the initial project design. At a time when responses to violence were discussed using the facile and unhelpful terminology of "counter terrorism" and a narrow understanding of security, and in a climate where the use of nationalism and religion for political ends was not talked of as related to the violence being responded to, it became evident that a research project that foregrounds these aspects could inform policy at the national and international level. The discourse and practice of counter terrorism, gaining ground after the establishment of the dedicated Counter-Terrorism Committee of the United Nations Security Council in 2004, was leading to the institutionalisation of a host of country specific laws that were being used to harass already marginalised

communities and to crush dissent. Research that countered such developments was urgent and it was necessary that such work be undertaken by feminists.

The goal of our project was to produce a study that would enable a push for a more contextualised, informed understanding of on-the-ground realities when speaking of violence – currently *violent extremism*—and devising appropriate responses. Doing such a study from a perspective that foregrounds women's experiences was essential. After decades of feminists driving the need to include women in policy and for participation in conflict resolution processes, women's experiences were being used in the context of CVE (countering violent extremism) and PVE (preventing violent extremism) in a purely instrumental manner, as helpful in fulfilling security and information requirements alone. An intervention that centered women's experiences in all their complexity and called for the inclusion of women – not instrumentally as connected with security but with a fuller recognition of their humanity – was necessary (Coomaraswamy 2015). It was also essential that the analyses foreground the often egregious and excessive responses of the State to violence by non-State actors that was hidden when security was emphasised. And as in the case of both India and Sri Lanka, the violent acts of the State, its violent instrumentalisation of existing societal differences, were obfuscated under the new dispensation. The research intended to render visible such obfuscation as well. The proposal highlighted how contexts within which violence was most prominent were those where rule of law and respect for human rights-based activism was at its lowest. The project, through foregrounding women's participation at all levels of the experience of violence and conflict, pushed for a different approach to security at the local and international level. It also promoted a different understanding of feminist interventions in communities in distress, and offered a novel analysis of the role of women in movements espousing violence.

Language of Violent Extremism and International Counter Terrorism Legislation

Interrogating the language of "violent extremism"

At the outset, the project challenged the terminology of "violent extremism". We identified from the literature that PVE and CVE had become the catch-all terms to describe political violence and violent movements in the global context after 9-11. The terms were considered an improvement on the term "terrorism". "violent extremism" attempted to define new movements under the term as different from past movements that used violence – such as the IRA (Irish Republican Army) or the Black Panthers. The latter were seen as motivated by rational political projects while the former were not. Further, while VE was used as if its definition was accepted and agreed upon, there was actually no agreed upon definition of the term. It was often used to define movements considered to be "irrational" and without a political agenda. It was also clear that the term

was mainly used to name Muslim groups. The literature that we reviewed indicated the prevalence of the discourse in the Euro-American context, and the literature critiquing its usage emerged from and addressed problems very specific to the context and the moment when youth from the West were travelling to join the Islamic State. In the Indonesian context, the language was used by NGOs for research and activism, but had no local equivalent. In Sri Lanka, after the Easter Sunday bombings in 2019 the language became more prominent. Sri Lanka was already struggling with addressing issues of hate speech and faced challenges in recognising Muslim communities without resorting to the naming of all elements of Muslim community life as "Islamic fundamentalism". Additionally, reformism was often unfairly characterised as inherently oppressive to women. The tendency in Sri Lanka to think of Muslim communities as run by "extremist" men and as inordinately misogynistic persisted despite the rampant misogyny prevailing throughout Sri Lankan society. The Sri Lankan academic and activist communities continue to struggle with finding language that is not easily dismissive of Muslim life using the above terms. In the research it became clear that the terminology had no local purchase. Later sections will explore more fully how the conversation regarding terminology proceeded at the local level.

There is already a critical understanding among scholars that the terminology of Violent Extremism is racist and has no social scientific basis. The terminology of extremism itself has been critiqued as a value laden way of describing ideologies that those wielding the language may not agree with. We initially discussed if we should avoid the terminology completely and use other older, arguably more descriptive terms such as political violence or ideologically motivated violence. However, in both the Indonesian and Sri Lankan context, the language persisted among activists. In Sri Lanka, all recent instances of violence within the country were discussed as violent extremism, thereby avoiding singling out the most recent acts of violence carried out by Islamic militants. In the Indonesian context, Islamist activism was written about as Islamic extremism to highlight the insidious nature of the Islamist political project that was heading to capture the State at the cost of Indonesia's ethnic pluralism while diminishing the role of women and marginalising sexual minorities.

It is important to note here that the Indian team could not carry out field research. Therefore their contribution to the research was a desk study that attempted to lay out the political intervention that the Indian research team wanted to make. In relation to the terminology of Violent Extremism, the Indian team were committed to discussing the actions of the contemporary Indian State as Violent Extremist. The desk study on India lays out the many ways in which the Indian State instituted violence against its own communities through legislation, structural marginalisation and harassment. The Indian case is indicative of a wide-ranging institutionalisation of a Hindutva ideology that marginalised all who were framed as other. A summary of the Indian component of the study is discussed below.

The Global Response to Violent Extremism

Much of the global response to “Violent Extremism” is devised in terms of what is now known as counter terrorism, which comprises, inter alia, the United Nations Counter Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288). This is a global instrument, adopted by consensus in 2006, that is reviewed every two years to purportedly enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter terrorism. This development followed the Security Council resolution which first established the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Council. In 2016, the UN secretary-general proposed a plan of action that urged States to create their own national and regional plans of action. This initiative advocated for a comprehensive strategy that included not just security-based counter terrorism measures but also systematic preventive efforts. Unsurprisingly, States across the world have been compelled to develop their own “counter terror” measures, particularly legal interventions, which are often designed as punitive to fit in with this political narrative. They supplement a plethora of international legal instruments adopted as far back as the 1960s.

Such efforts at legislative intervention exist in all of the countries in this study. In Indonesia, these include a set of legal and policy instruments that constitute a national framework to address terrorism: an anti-terrorism law (2003, revised in 2018); a special force within the national police to combat terrorism called Detasemen 88 (established in 2003); a national body for the preventing and combating terrorism named Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT); and a national action plan adopted in 2021 to address violent extremism (See the Indonesian Case Study in WMC, 2022). Sri Lanka adopted a Prevention of Terrorism Act – initially as a short-term temporary measure in 1978, quickly converted to full-fledged legislation in 1979 – and is now in the process of drafting an even more draconian Anti-Terror Act, primarily to curb dissent and restrict rights to freedom of assembly, expression and religious belief. India has a spate of anti-terror legislation, including The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967, amended to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) of 2002. Additionally, the National Investigation Agency Act, enacted in 2008, established India’s primary counterterrorism law enforcement organisation.

Fundamental to this practice of counter-terror is national legislation on terrorism that goes against the principle of legal certainty, criminalising acts that are protected by international human rights law (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2020).

Equally critical to note is the misuse and abuse of terms such as extremism and radicalisation in many legal and policy interventions dealing with counter terrorism. The fact that “violent extremism”, which is frequently used interchangeably with the term "terrorism", lacks an internationally enforceable legal definition raises serious concerns, particularly because it is often incompatible with the exercise of fundamental human rights. These concerns have been raised and discussed by the UN Special Rapporteur (2021) on Counter Terrorism and Human Rights in her annual report, “Human rights impact of counter-terrorism and countering (violent) extremism policies and practices on the rights of women, girls and the family”. The UN Special Rapporteur also

raises concerns about the securitisation of care services and the extension of counter terrorism approaches to domestic violence regulation. The inclusion of youth care workers, social workers and mental health service personnel educators, and medical personnel in security interventions affects the quality of the service that they deliver to vulnerable populations (UN Special Rapporteur, 2021).

As will be discussed below, our research found that the instrumentalisation of vulnerable populations by actors pushing agendas supporting violence – including state actors – has impacts similar to those discussed by the special rapporteur.

Intersectionality and the WMC Project

Nivedita Menon (2015) argues that the concept of intersectionality has little to contribute to the way politically engaged scholarship has framed its object of study in the Indian context. Menon draws on Nash (2008) to describe intersectionality as naming a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment that understood identity as formed by "interlocking and mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality". It recognised that "woman" itself is a "contested and fractured terrain", and that the experience of "woman" is always "constituted by subjects with vastly different interests" (Menon, 2015: 38). Menon further argues that the adoption of such a framework, pushed by the UN and other international bodies, obfuscates the origin of women-centred activism in India, which always emerged from a position that recognised the communities women were part of. In the Indian context, the Euro-American notion of a non-locatable "woman" as the subject of feminism was rarely relevant. Menon argues, therefore, that the imposition of an intersectionality framework does not recognise or allow for the particular histories from which activism emerges in different contexts. Menon critiques the assumption that frameworks generated in the West are universally applicable, as opposed to the particularity of frameworks emerging from elsewhere. Menon concludes by suggesting that structural means of oppression – patriarchy, capitalism, caste – are not in and of themselves closed, and further, that they are not always mutually reinforcing.

> Capitalist globalisation undermines traditional patriarchies and caste hierarchies, and globalisation of capital also leads to globalisation of dissent and struggle. Dalits abandon traditional occupations and enjoy the new anonymous worlds that replace the "old worlds" the loss of which ecological frameworks mourn. Women get work – exploitative work – in sweat shops, and they become the main earners of their families, challenging internal family hierarchies of age and gender, while many of them also learn to organise against capital itself. (Menon. 2015: 39)

Menon's intervention is suggestive, and pushes us to think about the shortcomings and limits of an intersectional framework that may overemphasise the valence of identity categories and blind us to ongoing transformation in identity discourses. Her position should therefore inform our perspectives.

Menon's position in turn has been strongly critiqued by Mary John (2015) and Meena Gopal (2015). They have found Menon's dismissal of intersectionality insufficient and John (2015) has reminded readers that intersectionality was important in its identification of a problem – of identity categories and their disappearance at moments of intersection. John sees this disappearance of black women at the intersection of race and gender categories as a powerful metaphor for the articulation of Dalit women's experiences in India. John also makes the important point that while identification of problems may have been done as Menon describes in the case of Indian feminism, no substantive solutions have been brought about through such an identification. Therefore, while the intellectual ground of debates and articulations of problems may be rich with analytical specificity, the lack of progress in bringing about actual changes leaves open the necessity of engaging with other frameworks such as intersectionality. John also calls for a greater complication of the history of intersectionality and its radical promise emerging from the history of black feminist struggles, suggesting that it should not be reduced to an idea from the West. John, together with Gopal (2015), has argued that the framework of intersectionality offers productive possibilities for highlighting the experiences of Dalit women and that its usage is therefore politically expedient. The theoretical and political conundrum that these respective positions illustrate applies to our own project's engagement with the concept. One might even be tempted to read the conundrum as indicating an academic-theoretical and activist-transformational divide. In our team discussions, some members used such terminology when referring to theoretical points made by the likes of Menon and Radhika Coomaraswamy (2015) in the context of the ideologically loaded nature of the term "extremism". Therefore we found ourselves thinking in the somewhat dated terms of the two poles of academic inquiry and theorisation vs the practicability of concepts and approaches for mobilisation for action, as well as for lobbying for policy change. We finally concluded that, while the changes brought about through adopting an intersectional framework must be acknowledged, a politically informed perspective that is sensitive to the complicated nature of identity categories can emerge from more than one approach to activism.

In thinking about our work using intersectionality language, we have come to realise that the political ethical and methodological requirement that adherence to such a framework represents was already fulfilled by our project even without using the term. However, given the global prominence of the term we are open to its use and possible usefulness. As was raised by a member of the team, the term intersectionality already has great purchase within the UN system and it behoves us to engage with it for the sake of possible concrete transformations. For instance, the Committee on Social Economic and Cultural Rights (CEDAW) makes reference to it in its General Comment No. 20 on non-discrimination, particularly with regard to the notion of multiple discrimination (para. 17) and in articulating the nature of discrimination (para. 27). The CEDAW Committee has a paragraph on intersectionality in relation to discrimination against women in its General Recommendation No. 20 on core state obligations (para. 18) and No. 30 on conflict (para. 7). UN Women (2021) also published a resource guide on intersectionality, followed by the OHCHR (2022) in Geneva.

The intersectionality framework has informed and transformed UN processes, and that should be acknowledged. Human rights activism had long had to contend with civil and political rights being argued for separately from economic and social rights, and the intersectionality framework has enable a discussion of rights more holistically. Further, as scholars have noted, the CEDAW committee members, as late as the year 2000, were unable to identify discrimination that included ethnicity when making recommendations about specific cases (Bond, 2022). Therefore we must acknowledge the important shift that using the framework has entailed.

However, it is important, especially for development research, that we recognise that what an intersectional framework promises might already be achieved by those of us who do not use such a name for our political and academic work. The grounded nature of our engagement with the communities among whom we worked, as well as the discourse against which we planned to direct our intervention, ensured that we fulfilled the political and ethical requirements posited by the intersectionality framework. We value the overlap that clearly exists between our work and intersectionality. We see the approach, however, not as a guiding principle but as a necessary baseline that should be required of all politically informed research. We would like an acknowledgement that such an approach can emerge from other directions and not only through a commitment to using an available framework.

We engage, therefore, with a recognition of the contingent and contextual (Misra et al., 2021) importance of the intersectional framework at this historical juncture, but keep in mind Menon's (2015)) critique regarding the background from which the preoccupation with intersectionality emerges. We claim that our project's approach has many features that overlap with an intersectional framework, but hesitate to have it defined as one that can only be named as such.

Intersectional Research and Praxis

We want to emphasise that our project was, from the outset, committed to highlighting the multiple complexities of the contexts in which the research was carried out. The complexities were informed by an understanding that ongoing national and international approaches to the issues of violence which were driven mainly by a "security" preoccupation did not have in mind he best interests of communities facing multiple vulnerabilities, and especially not women in those communities. To achieve this, we needed to identify a methodology that foregrounded how the violence affecting vulnerable communities was driven by particular State and non-State discourses about national liberation, the preferred form of the State, and security. We were therefore required to construct a methodology that would provide information and insights that would challenge the above discourses by highlighting their impact on women, either as participants in the propagation of the discourses or as victimised by the violence engendered by them.

The initial discussions regarding the project's direction took place at the project's inception workshop. held online in February 2020. At this meeting, key decisions were made around each team's interpretation of the main objectives of the research and how the field work would be carried out.

We adopted a methodology that was committed to understanding the history of each country context and the politics that brought about the movements and policies that led to the contemporary violence in the contexts that we were trying to analyse. Early on, we identified that the project would be guided by the political preoccupations of each country's research team. Prior to the identification of individuals to interview, we had to identify the sites that would be most appropriate in drawing out the complexities of each of the conflict experiences. This was difficult, given that each of our contexts had multiple experiences of violence to draw from. After identifying the affected locations for research, we highlighted the vectors of community (ethnicity, religion, caste) and class that were important to the location, and ensured that the women we identified for the life histories were representative of relevant communities. It is important to note that our usage of life histories was informed by the need to understand women's lives in all their complexity.

Early into the inception workshop it became clear to us that different political preoccupations emerged from each of the different contexts, and therefore many of the decisions made regarding the above points would also be informed by the particular political projects that the different research teams felt were important. Each country team committed to discussing the relevance of the terminology of violent extremism in each country context, providing the social and political history of the context in which the violence occurred at both national and regional level; and discussing the political economy as relevant to each regional context, as well as the role of the State in each regional context. Each country team also committed to study the importance of social media in mobilisation for political violence in each country context.

Methodological overlaps between our approach and an intersectional approach

Using the framework shared by the SCIS team, leading the research initiative on intersectionality, we have attempted to match our project's methodological approach to the key methodological tenets that have been highlighted by Misra et al. (2021). There are five terms that Misra et al. (2021) propose as indicative of an intersectional methodology. We see our project matching these tenets in a number of ways and argue here for our methodology to be recognised as overlapping with what is defined as "intersectionality".

Oppression: Misra et al. (2021) emphasise that the emergence of intersectionality as a framework was precisely to lay bare the manner in which experiences of black women were circumscribed by race, gender and class (Misra et al., 2021: 11). Recognising oppression, and how oppression shapes the human experience, is therefore key to an intersectional methodology. Misra et al. (2021) propose that the formulation of research that results in knowledge that subsequently shapes policy to address oppression, along with methodologies that recognise power hierarchies in knowledge production and include participatory methodologies, can be

understood as utilising an intersectional perspective. They argue that critical praxis in the research process and shaping policy through research constitutes a strategy for addressing oppression.

As discussed above, our project's understanding of oppression was multiple. Our focus was on women whose lives were impacted by political violence.

We understood violence as impacting them through several vectors of oppression: their gender, their class locations within communities, ethno-religious ideologies, and the State's anti-democratic securitisation measures. We also found that geographical location was important In the case of both Sri Lanka and Indonesia, where the States have centralised administrative structures; the distance to the peripheries had decisive economic and political implications.

Our research was designed to generate insights to influence policy to change the above. Our methodology highlighted the history of each of these locations in a narrative of struggle and of state violence against such struggles. Additionally, it emphasised not only women's victimisation but also their activism and participation in violence. Our research methodology was designed to involve local activist groups and our praxis was conscious of training emerging young women researchers and activists.

Relationality: Misra et al.'s (2021) usage of this concept indicates the necessity of recognising that within a complex matrix of domination, the disadvantage of one group of people is connected to the advantages enjoyed by another. In the case of the WMC project, in the case of ethno-religious identity, we foregrounded intragroup relationality more than intergroup relationality. In the Sri Lankan context. the majoritarian State's minoritising initiatives had led to violent protest movements. The relationality there was fairly clear. We therefore wanted to foreground how. within established understandings of oppression of one community by another, there are instances where the marginal sections of the dominant community – usually poor women – are instrumentalised in the service of the hegemonic action of the leadership. The Sinhala nationalist instrumentalisation of poor Sinhala women's anxieties regarding their reproductive health in Sri Lanka was especially illustrative. In the case of Indonesia too, the instrumentalisation of young women's search for relevance in the service of different Islamist groups through the promise of leadership positions was important.

Complexity: This methodological tenet recognises that there are multiple vectors through which the matrix of domination is constituted. For instance, race, class and gender may be compounded by sexual orientation, caste and disability. Our focus was on women who had a relationship to violent events either as victims or as perpetrators, as supporters of and participants in violent groups. Within such a sample, we ensured that the women that we chose to interview represented the ethno-religious groups pertinent to the conflict context and were also drawn from various age cohorts. We were also committed to highlighting the experiences of the most marginalised women from these ethno-religious groups and therefore caste and class were also

relevant in the selection of participants. When relevant, we also drew attention to the cases of middle-class women whose experiences were different from those experiencing greater marginalisation.

Context: This methodological tenet recognises that the above dimensions are not fixed and can change depending on contextual specificity, regional disparities and historical significance. It emphasises that recognising contingency in the way power relations play out is a key factor in intersectional analysis. Contextual specificity was one of the most important factors in our research and was featured from the moment the project proposal conceptualised the intervention. We were carrying out a project across three different countries and highlighted the need to focus on three different locations in each of the countries. We were committed to illustrating the specificity of women's experiences in these different contexts, and that required paying attention to the contingencies of each context. We therefore paid close attention to the history of violent political mobilisation in the different locations and to the particular socio-economic background of the contexts we were exploring. Additionally, we highlighted the importance of the region's relationship to the centre, the impact of state security discourses, and the transformation of the national economy on the basis of neoliberal principles.

Comparison: This term references the limits that an intersectional perspective will inevitably face when being operationalised as a method. What vectors are considered relevant will depend on the nature of the inquiry and what the inquiry proposes to achieve. Therefore not all prevailing issues affecting identity may be deemed salient for consideration. We primarily used the vectors of gender, ethno-religious identity, caste and class, and ensured that the women we interviewed represented different generations. The life histories methodology also ensured that the material collected about women's lives was complex and yielded information that was not limited to how the identity categories above impacted women's lives.

Deconstruction: According to Misra et al. (2021), the category of deconstruction references the possibility that intersectional scholars will question identity categories in their research and critique the possibility of essentialisation as well as reification through overuse of such categories (Misra et al., 2021: 14). In this project, we did not call attention to the necessity of deconstructing the categories of ethno-religious identity, for instance, that were salient for our research. We used those categories to identify research participants but also highlighted as a problem the circumscription of women's roles as a function of such categories. In many instances, women experienced violence when they challenged roles prescribed by community norms. Since the identities built upon those categories, and claims made as a result of such categories, were the salient factors for our research, we kept the categories intact. The entire philosophical orientation of the research however, critiques the prominence placed on such categories.

We have matched our project's methodological orientation with the intersectional approach in order to indicate the distinct overlap that exists between our approach and an intersectional approach. The fact that we were embedded in communities within which we did research ensured that we were sensitive to the

complexity of women's lives. Additionally, our research objectives and methodological approach was designed to capture such complexity. In the next section, we provide a detailed account of the methodological approach used in the three country contexts of India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The following illustrative accounts indicate that preoccupations similar to the intersectionality framework informed the baseline we worked from.

Lessons from the three country contexts.

Indonesia

In Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country with a history of violence in the name of Islam spanning more than two decades, there was much already written about such violence, the organisations that were engaged in such acts, and their political affiliations. The Indonesian research team therefore prioritised understanding underlying ideological forces and the complex interplay of historical and contemporary factors contributing to the persistence of these movements committing violence. The team identified Indonesia's post authoritarian democratisation process and a rising middle class in a growing national economy as constituting the background to the spreading and deepening of these ideologies. They concentrated on understanding the way organised Islamist networks operationalised, using a variety of strategies with an ultimate goal of state take-over. These included both violent and nonviolent strategies in different contexts, mobilising different groups. Foregrounding this ideological unity was an important background to the Indonesian team's analysis of these organisations' impact on women. The particular political project for Indonesia was in response to the threat to Indonesia's status as a secular State while being the country with the largest majority Muslim population. Defeating the threat that Islamists posed to the secular State was identified as the motivating goal of the project. Therefore the intention was not to analyse the particular localised manifestations of Islamist violence in the different contexts but to understand the persistence of these movements, with varying guises and different degrees of intensity across the archipelago, but aspiring to the same goal.

Within the overarching framework of the project, the Indonesian team posed their own country specific research questions:

- Given current understanding on the pathways of radicalisation, how are they related to the spread of extremist/chauvinist ideologies over the past twenty years?
- How has this spread benefitted from and contributed to the shaping of Indonesia's democratisation process and rising middle class?
- In what ways have these intersecting dynamics provided fertile ground for competing narratives, activisms, and changes – within State and society – in relation to women's position and roles in the family, community and nation? How has this played out in social media? And how have these

contestations of opposing worldviews played out in changes over time in law and practice with regard to marriage and the family?

In an expansive archipelago with 270 million people of diverse ethnicity, race and religion, the task of understanding complex dynamics of a particular context in Indonesia requires recognition of the multiple ways in which unequal power relations play out. In addition to the social and economic dimensions of inequality, there is also a geographic dimension, particularly in the form of power inequality between the national centre and the local in the peripheries of power. This is the legacy of Indonesia's three decades of authoritarianism in which political and economic power was concentrated in the national capital. Meanwhile, the local itself is not a singular entity, as the multitude of Indonesia's localities are shaped by distinct histories and ecologies. To address the chronic imbalance of power between the national/centre and the local, the Indonesian researchers set up a partnership model in which the local research partners were given sufficient space to establish and articulate their distinct interests and positioning on the way the research was to be conducted at field level. The research project's recognition of the need for foregrounding the local political necessities at the country level was taken forward by national teams in the local political contexts as well.

Organisation of teams

The Indonesian empirical research team consisted of eight local activist researchers who are deeply engaged in their respective communities on issues of women's rights, social justice and peace. They were central to ensuring that all the intended aims of this research would be achieved, including the effectiveness of youth- and women-led community-based strategies to combat violent extremism beyond a state/security-centred approach. All the local researchers work in the community in which the fieldwork was conducted. Each partner organisation has deep networks in these communities and has brought young researchers into the team. Their active networks and engagements enabled them to find women to interview and to gain their trust in the process. Their respective mission on women's rights and social justice would ensure the active use of the research results.

Rahima, an association that works on women's rights within Islam, coordinated the fieldwork in West Java; Mosintuwu Institute, a civil society organisation based in Poso, Central Sulawesi, which works on women's rights, peacebuilding and ecological justice, together with Suar Asa Khatulistiwa (SAKA), a local foundation based in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, that supports youth and women in advocating for pluralism and tolerance, coordinated the work in the two respective locations. All local teams had to interview five women from different age groups, backgrounds and positions vis-à-vis the Islamist movements. Beyond the basic criteria in selecting the women to interview, they were given leeway to include additional considerations that made the research meaningful within the context to each organisation's mission. This ensured that the research was not solely aiming to achieve national or global objectives but also aligned with the specific goals of each organisation within their respective contexts.

In light of this, Rahima in West Java interviewed women who joined Islamist movements as well as those from minority communities who were victimised by them. Meanwhile, Mosintuwu Institute in Central Sulawesi found it necessary to include women combatants from among the Muslim and Christian communities to show the inter-connection between Islamist extremism and past conflict. Each research team was also asked to produce a paper that described the broader socio-political context of their respective localities.

Aside from the interviews in the three localities, the Indonesian team also initiated another form of documentation of women's life stories. Through a member of its advisory group, the team invited seven women to write about their experience of joining and then leaving Islamist organisations. These women had all been students in universities in Yogyakarta and Jakarta. Their life stories provided valuable insight into the inner workings of Islamist recruitment systems in schools and communities as well as into the inner thought process that the young women went through as they navigated their Islamist involvements.

The empirical research process was conducted in three stages: preparation, interviewing and post-interview. In the preparation stage, the local research teams participated in a three-day "reframing workshop" that was intended to provide information on the research aims and methods as well as to build a shared understanding of key social-political phenomena in the Indonesian context by bringing together experts on a range of relevant topics, such as the history of Islamist extremism in Indonesia, gender and identity politics, young Muslim women's agency in social media, and the Indonesian government's policy framework on terrorism. Preliminary discussions were also conducted on methodological issues, such as on virtual ethnography and on writing life stories. The local researchers were also required to share background on their respective local contexts to start building the comparative perspective. For most of the local researchers, separated by significant distances across different islands in the archipelago, this workshop was the first time they met one another.

The reframing workshop, in May 2021, marked the inception of a collective virtual space where researchers could meet and discuss the challenges of the research process. These gatherings continued to take place regularly, typically every two weeks, and sometimes even on a weekly basis, up until January 2022 when the local researchers were finalising their writings. All conversations in this collective space were facilitated by the country lead researcher. As the specific dynamics in the three local research sites became clear, it was agreed that each locality would highlight their unique contexts. For West Java, it was the centrality of social institutions, such as the family and education, as the spaces in which Islamist political agendas and recruitment occurred; for Central Sulawesi, it was its past of inter-religious conflict and the current post-conflict situation; while for West Kalimantan, it was the intersection of Islamist agendas with historically deep-seated inter-ethnic identity politics. Each team's selection of women to interview was guided by this local emphasis.

To assist the writing process, the country lead researcher partnered with an expert of cultural studies with experience conducting writing workshops on life stories. The post-interview stage of the research began with a writing workshop in November 2021. This workshop was followed by bi-weekly virtual meetings, including

each local team meeting separately, which were conducted over the months of December 2021 and January 2022 and where comments were provided for first drafts. Revised write-ups from the local researchers were submitted in batches between February and March 2022.

The eight local researchers in this study have diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, race, religion and gender. Situated on different islands of the archipelago, they are also separated by geographic distance and have limited opportunities to develop a comparative understanding of violent extremism across Indonesia's diverse local contexts. Throughout the research process, regular online spaces were created for exchanges across the three research sites over three stages of the research: the preparation, implementation and write-up. These exchanges played a pivotal role in enhancing understanding of the distinctiveness of each local context with regard to experiencing Islamist extremism and violence. They also provided support in addressing on-the-ground challenges in implementing fieldwork and interviews, particularly as researchers were intent on reaching out to Islamist groups to engage in the study. Additionally, these interactions strengthened the capacity of the researchers in writing and analysing women's life stories using the study's framework of inquiry. These online spaces also became a means of mentoring with active participation and substantive contributions from the country lead researcher and a senior feminist academic who engaged in the discussions.

Key Insights from the Indonesian research included:

1. The Indonesian team were able to engage with women who had left Islamist movements and thereby were able to develop many insights into these movements' recruitment and engagement practices. The study noted the elaborate planning and process that was involved in the building and maintenance of the Islamist movements. The movements set goals and targets that the recruits had to achieve. There were rewards and opportunities provided to those who excelled at the assigned tasks. These tasks often involved actions that grew the movement.
2. The research documents the way the movements fulfilled young women's needs for friendship support, direction and ideas, and provided opportunities for growth. It demonstrates the energy that the young women bring to these movements and how they thrive and grow. The research was clear in the demonstration of engagement on the part of the young women and that they were usually captivated by such movements because they themselves were seeking some direction for their lives.
3. The research also demonstrated that young women left such movements when exposed to ideas that contradicted the claims of the movement and when their own past experiences made them question the truths that these movements were espousing. The availability of alternative ways of thinking that the women could access was seen to be important for them to transition away from the movements.
4. The research also drew attention to the fact that there wasn't an adequate presence of the thinking of feminist, pluralist and pro-democracy movements in the places where these young women lived, and that the presence of such movements and their thinking being reachable for all young women is

a goal that the Indonesian women's movement and progressive movements in general should strive towards.

5. The research also indicated an important lesson that religion and religious difference was not always the primary motivation in conflicts that were planned on religious grounds. The role played by economic concerns was highlighted in many instances.
6. The research also pointed out that, although the Indonesian State may not yet fully identify with the Islamist project, those in power have instrumentalised Islamists for their own ends. For instance, the regime in power has enabled the growth of the Islamist project (under SBY) and consolidated its own repressive power (first under Megawati and more recently under the current regime).

Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan fieldwork component was designed to foreground the country's most recent encounter with mass violence – the Easter bombings of 2019 by Islamic militants – and its aftermath. It was established at the inception workshop that the Easter bombings, and especially their effects, could not be understood without locating the event in Sri Lanka's fraught post-independence history (after 1948), where different groups chose to resort to forms of violent mobilisation against the State, and in one instance mobilised in collusion with the regime. The complexity of the country's history of violence was thought to require four different mappings (background papers) to adequately account for them. Four papers were commissioned where political projects that espoused violence as a means of engagement were discussed. The four papers dealt with the left-leaning Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) insurrections of 1977 and 1989, the Tamil Nationalist uprising in the North and East that escalated in the 1980s and was militarily defeated in 2009, the violence espoused against minority religious communities – especially Muslims and evangelical Christians – by fascist Buddhist groups aligned with the State in the aftermath of the war in 2009, and lastly, the ISIS-inspired violence of the Muslim suicide bombers in April 2019.[2] In the Sri Lankan case too, it was important that the State as perpetrator was highlighted due to the long history of anti-minority legislation and policy making as well as decades of war. The 2009 end of the war, brought about through great brutality against trapped civilian populations, continues to be a festering wound. After the war, the country saw the institutionalisation of anti-Muslim sentiment. To the mix, the manner in which the State quelled the Marxist uprising in the South, carried out by poor Sinhala youth in both the early 1970s and late 1980s, needed to be included. The requirement to formulate a language through which to understand Sri Lanka's Muslim community was also raised.

[2] The four papers are: Women's agency and gendered impact of violence in Sri Lanka: Tamil nationalism and violence, by Ambika Satkunanathan (2022); The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the insurrections of 1971 and 1988, by Rosa Levi (2022); Emergence of the recent "national liberation movement" in Sri Lanka by Geethika Dharmasinghe (2022), and Islamic "Radicalization" in Sri Lanka? by Farzana Haniffa (2022). The four papers are available on the WMC website.

The Sri Lankan field work

The field research in Sri Lanka aimed to capture women's experiences in negotiating patriarchal, heteronormative, racist practices in their everyday lives, where often, family structures, state institutions, political actors and even the law were intertwined and executed oppressive, restrictive and often violent actions upon women. The research focused on specific actors, including the State, media institutions, legal authorities, education institutions, armed militant groups, religious reformist groups and decision-makers within the home.

The fieldwork was carried out in 2020 – following the Easter attacks in April 2019 and the violence unleashed on Muslim communities thereafter – when the broader context remained volatile and tensions were high in the communities where we worked.

The project was conceptualised at the outset as one that would involve local-level activists and women community leaders as researchers. We hoped to build networks and build upon existing networks across locations as part of this research process. In the Sri Lankan case, we wanted to generate rich insights and create sustained connections across historically divided communities. We worked with two young researchers in Batticaloa and Negombo who were also activists. The field work and grounded analysis would not have been possible without the presence of members of trusted local women's groups with in-depth knowledge of the local context who were part of the research process. This was crucial, considering the extremely volatile political context and the prevailing suspicion and tensions in the areas where our work was carried out.

Why the everyday? Why focus on women's bodies?

At a community level, women were prevented from taking action when counter-terrorism strategies were employed against them and their communities. The space for women's autonomous work was restricted. These experiences informed our quest to understand "violent extremism" from the perspective of women's lived experiences in local contexts. Feminist theorising about how women's bodies, honour and sexuality were the ground on which socio-economic and political battles about notions of community were carried out helped us frame the research questions and focus.[3] This research takes forward the arguments in this body of literature that controlling and regulating women's everyday lives – their negotiations and interactions – in homes, on the street, at workplaces, in political spaces, during wars and violence – are all related to the control of sexuality and reproduction. The social and economic work carried out by women, including reproduction, is often instrumentalised in the service of nationalist political and economic projects. Women who are thus

[3] See Mani (1987), Menon and Bhasin (1998), Butalia (1998), de Alwis (2002), Maunaguru (1995), De Mel (2001), Emmanuel (2006) and Satkunanathan, (2012).

instrumentalised are often supportive of and complicit in the larger projects. However women also constituted communities that resisted.

Interrogating frames and terms from grounded contexts

In order to develop the research methodologies to capture women's and girls' everyday experiences of living in divided societies, we had to first interrogate terms such as "violent extremism". In the inception workshop for this research project, we decided not to use the term, as this term emerged from problematic global discourses of counterterrorism and had not emerged out of the local realities of the research sites. The term did not exist in local languages.

While we did not use the term "violent extremism", we reflected on different aspects of the experience of violence, and particularly political violence, in women's lives. These reflections were based on their own experiences of bodily integrity, sexuality, sexual control, motherhood, sexual and domestic violence, autonomy and choice, as well as the stories about violence that they had encountered through media and public discourse. All those interviewed identified moments in their own lives when they faced violence, oppression and patriarchal control. For some women, these moments epitomised "extremist" violence, while others made sense of these moments as "everyday patriarchy".

Tracing the root causes of prejudice, discrimination and violence

We chose to place women's everyday experiences in Sri Lanka in the broader context of systemic prejudice in the laws and policies of the State. This prejudice, which primarily targeted ethnic and religious minorities in Sri Lanka, has a history spanning several decades. These laws have had a wide range of impacts, including thirty years of conflict and ongoing discriminatory laws targeting specific groups, anti-terror laws that target dissent, ethnicised land dispossession, control of women's dress and bodies and discriminatory health regulations in the Covid-19 response of the State. Foregrounding this structural background, we established our foundation by mapping other diverse histories of Sri Lanka along the following lines:

- Political histories – including violent political movements
- Socio-economic histories
- Women's gendered experiences
- Resistance movements

This mapping was done by incorporating the insights from the background papers on histories of radicalisation in Sri Lanka, and through secondary literature. In terms of fieldwork, we conducted in-depth interviews with senior activists, journalists and State officials who were involved in various events and movements at different historical moments. Some of the interviews were with key stakeholders who knew the histories of field areas and the changes that had taken place over the past few decades. Many of them were civil society actors who knew the history of movements of resistance and of community responses during periods of violence.

Three geographical sites were selected for the empirical research and life stories of women were collected at each site. The three research sites – Negombo in the Western Province, Batticaloa in the Eastern Province and Kurunegala in the North-Western Province – were chosen to capture a diversity of women's experiences. Negambo and Batticaloa had experienced bombings in churches on Easter Sunday 2019, and the anti-Muslim violence in May 2019 in the aftermath of the bombings was carried out in Kurunegala. Kurunegala was also the site of some of the most frenzied anti-Muslim mobilising in the aftermath.

Life stories as a research tool to map diverse contexts and inter-generational changes

In total, 50 people were interviewed, either individually or in focus groups, in the three locations. The interviews followed a loose structure: an intimate story-telling format, including questions that explored women's life stories. This methodology was important to build trust with the women interviewed and to broach sensitive conversations, as explained in the ethical considerations section below. Fifteen interviews were carried out in Negombo, twenty-one in Kurunegala and fourteen in Batticaloa.

The women who were interviewed were selected according to criteria developed in the inception workshop. Following those criteria, all interviews were required to have as their background one or more of the following: the impact of Sinhala Buddhist extremist mobilisations, war histories of women from army families as well as women who were former militants, a history of JVP[4] violence, a history of Tamil-Muslim conflicts, and the direct impact of the Easter attacks and the violence in the aftermath.

With the suggestions of experienced community-based women activists, the following kinds of interviewees were chosen:

1. Women who had directly witnessed or experienced violence, and who responded and intervened to support victims, in the post-Easter attacks.
2. Women who were part of groups and discourses which were anti-Muslim and perpetuating hate speech.
3. Women who could provide specific experiences of marginalisation based on class, work, ethnic identity and gender.
4. Women who were from different generations.

The research also focused on various class and caste experiences. Women who were interviewed were involved in different kinds of work such as sex work, fishing, business, teaching, politics, social activism and religious work.

[4] Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) is a Marxist-Leninist communist party and a former armed resistance group.

Life stories were a powerful research tool to explore inter-generational changes in terms of identities and women's experiences as well as diverse cultural and social norms based on ethnic identities. We specifically explored how women's experiences changed after the Easter attacks, as two of the churches that were attacked were in Negombo and Batticaloa. The life story approach provided the possibility of encompassing a holistic picture of the women's lives which in turn organically provided a complex (intersectional?) picture.

The life story method helped us as interviewers and those we were speaking with to reflect on intergenerational changes. It gave a reference to reflect on what was happening in the current context. Also, by anchoring the story within the personal, it was possible to understand complex and even contradictory histories, moving away from more generalised narratives of the past about the "other', about the nation State and about history and truth.

Key Insights from the Sri Lankan research included:

1. Nationalist movements and religious reformist movements often targeted women in ways that limited women's movement, self-expression and choice, and had little respect for their dignity.
2. In the Sri Lankan case, women from all communities were affected by the nationalist and reformist movements that have been working in Sri Lanka since independence.
3. Such movements were inevitably faced with resistance from women and women were invariably punished for their recalcitrance.
4. Women also participated in and enabled such movements and were victimised by the masculine discourses that supported othering and violence.
5. Even progressive and well-intentioned community mechanisms (the interfaith committees for instance) were often unable to intervene on behalf of women who fell victim to such processes.
6. Women who were instrumentalised by nationalist forces participated in rhetorical othering of different ethno-religious groups in pursuit of justice for their own circumstances, but were often abandoned by such movements.
7. Even under the most difficult circumstances there were women who valued and worked towards community and solidarity.

The State has done little to address the differences between communities and state functionaries, and the police have participated in and benefited from the cultivation of animosities.

The country remains highly militarised and the oppositional polarisation, together with the confrontational ethos of the conflict period, continues to impact communities. The maintenance of conflict era practices by the military and the police continues to affect families

India

No field work was carried out in India. However, the Indian team used existing materials to trace how the Indian State cultivated the Hindutva project and produced itself as "violent extremist". It was important for the Indian team to use the space provided by the language of "violent extremism" to draw attention to the manner in which States were permitted to use restrictive measures against dissent in the name of security and could thereby get away with their own projects of violent exclusion. The India-specific paper in the research project begins by describing incidents of brutal violence in the period before 2014 and places them in a broader socio-economic and political context (Manimekalai, 2022). It then proceeds to show, in the period after 2014, systematic setting up of legal, social, economic, political and administrative mechanisms by the State across Indian society to further the Hindutva way of being. These included measures specific to the control of caste and sexuality, by enacting and using extraordinary laws. The State also used existing laws for incarceration (of minorities and dissenters) and erosion of public institutions, including educational institutions, media, elections, NGOs and the judiciary, among others. State functionaries also engaged in acts of actual physical violence against minorities and dissenters; there was resistance to such violence, and suppression of such resistance. The takeover of India by violent extremist Hindutva ideology has been multi-pronged and extensive. The paper lays out multiple examples of how the Hindutva ideology has morphed across the years covered, as well as the multiplicity of locations and the means through which it is spreading its influence in a wide variety of communities across India. Although the paper is fairly detailed, the team was clear that it was unable to capture the entire gamut of interventions through which the State is firmly establishing fundamentalist Hindutva ideology as its method of governance and as the way of life in India.

The paper ends by asserting that the use of "hate as a method" in the running of the State and, by extension, society was well under way in India. This method uses oppressive heteronormative family structures as its foundation, which is further strengthened in new and creative ways by the spread of hatred and majoritarianism, which has become a default way of being in India. Thus this hate is inherently gendered. This method, and its thoroughness, is making the use of actual physical violence less and less necessary. The actions of the State in India then sound the death knell of aspirations for a society that is diverse, tolerant, democratic and non-violent in India.

Conclusion

The project was committed to a methodology that would reveal the complexity of the lives of affected women which was inadequately accounted for in the language and frameworks that were being used globally to address political violence ("violent extremism"). This commitment to revealing complexity – through highlighting issues of history and context as well as by ensuring the participation of different groups of women- – yielded rich results, as demonstrated in the report. The commitment to understanding the socio economic

history of each location, the importance of listening and engaging closely with our interlocutors throughout the research process, and negotiating the complexities presented by researchers' own identities, are just some of the ways in which we ensured the project would yield a richer and fuller understanding of the conflict contexts we studied. The project also resulted in newly energised activist groups in Sri Lanka and Indonesia and a commitment to push for a more substantive ground level engagement in conflict contexts to inform policy decisions. Working across three country contexts compelled us to see the different strategies that States and movements used in their respective countries, and thereby complicated researchers' own understanding of the specificities of their country context within a global arena.

While we were committed to the possibility of conducting comparative research, we were ultimately unable to make detailed comparisons of the three contexts. Instead, emphasis on the contextual detail compelled us to make comparisons at a very general level. In both Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the project was carried out amidst many challenges due to Covid and, as noted above, the derailing of the Indian component of the project. The economic crisis in Sri Lanka further exacerbated the challenges due to the limitations of transferring money between countries during that time. The project report launch occurred in Sri Lanka with the virtual participation of the Indonesian team. The report has also been shared with stakeholders at the government and non-governmental levels, and we also had a policy discussion with civil society actors who attempted to take forward the findings. We are currently in the design stage of strategies for further dissemination of the findings.

The writing of this report, which compelled us to think through the way we designed the research and its overlap with an intersectional framework, has been a useful exercise in revisiting and reframing our work. We hope that our case study will contribute towards broadening the understanding of how development research committed to a transformative politics can be carried out from perspectives that are informed by multiple histories of struggle. Globally the use of the intersectionality framework has brought about important changes in the ways in which the various treaty bodies, for instance, approach the possibility of understanding and critiquing state action vis-a-vis a whole host of identity issues. It has also brought about a method through which all manner of infringements against the rights of persons can be addressed simultaneously without resorting to piecemeal analysis of either civil and political rights infringement or social and economic rights infringements. Therefore the importance of the framework at this historical moment must be acknowledged. However, following from Menon's (2015) important intervention, we should also acknowledge the existence of histories of activism that have not been as well integrated into globally relevant systems of thought at the current moment. Acknowledging these absences, we would like to argue for a recognition of our work as contributing to the feminist conversation regarding the need for greater complexity and nuance in research and writing and more sustained attention to inequalities in praxis. We would like it recognised that our approach, emerging from the need to be fully cognizant of the richness of our interlocutors' life experiences, is an example of an alternative approach that could also be taken.

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